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4

STASIS

Moving People to Action

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4.1 Introduction

In an unsettled era of global crises, it is more important than ever to understand how discourse moves people to action or impedes them from it. Faced with a crisis, rhetors attempt to move hearers who can make a difference to act, or, short of that, at least to adjust their beliefs or attitudes, with attitudes themselves constituting "incipient action."[1] (See Camper, Chapter 5 of this Handbook, for a discussion of *interpretive* stases).

The stases are a sequence of five types of claims (existence, definition, cause, value, and action) for building persuasive arguments that induce action, modify beliefs, and shift attitudes. Traditionally, stases guided forensic arguments for the prosecution and defense in criminal trials. Rhetors followed the stases to select *topoi*, inventional prompts for generating lines of argument, and to develop the most persuasive lines for the situation.

Today, the stases are recognized in a wide array of discourses. As an analytic method, identifying the stases in a text clarifies how the parts of the argument are meant to fit together, points to weaknesses in the argument, and reveals persuasive techniques. Applied comparatively, the stases reveal persuasive proclivities in the discourse of a culture, profession, or individual. The stases manifest themselves in patterns of language and clusters of lexical items. As long-standing moves that often occur in public arguments, they are also epitomized in a variety of commonplace and idiomatic expressions. This chapter explains the stases as a system and then takes up each stasis individually.

4.2 The Stases as a System

The stases originated in ancient Athens for constructing a criminal case or defending against one. In the terms of a modern courtroom, they: establish the occurrence of an offense (existence); identify the type of crime (definition); associate an alleged perpetrator with the means, motive and opportunity to commit the crime (cause); rate the significance of harm (value); and ask the jury for a verdict on guilt or innocence (action). If I want to prosecute my neighbor for stealing my bicycle, I have to work to establish at least two facts at the stasis of existence: that I had a bicycle and that it is now in her possession. At the stasis of definition, I have to establish that the transfer of the bicycle was a theft, not a gift, loan, or sale, or agreed upon storage arrangement. At the stasis of cause, I must show that my neighbor was able-bodied,

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had access to my garage, and coveted my bike. At the stasis of value, I might argue that my old battered bicycle has great sentimental value as a cherished heirloom. Finally at the level of action, I might demand that the bicycle be returned and that my neighbor be punished. My neighbor, anticipating this sequence, can plan a defense accordingly, devising questions to ask my witnesses and challenges to my points. Fearing defeat, she may plan to appeal the verdict (action), arguing that the case was heard in the wrong jurisdiction or that the judge made procedural mistakes.

Since the revival of rhetorical theory in the twentieth century, application of the stases has broadened far beyond the legal arena. Today, the stases are recognized as undergirding discourse in academic disciplines, civic debates, media productions, and a full array of professions. For discussions of the stases as a system, see Carter (1988), Fahnestock and Secor (1985, 2022), Heath (1994), Hoppmann (2014), Marsh (2018), Prelli and Pace (1987), Pullman (1995), and Yuan, Harris, and Jiang (2017). For studies of the stases in the sciences, see Fahnestock and Secor (1988), Graham and Herndl (2011), Hite and Carter (2019), and Walsh (2010). For studies of the stases in political and legal discourse, see DeVasto, Graham, and Zamparutti (2016), Keremidchieva (2013), Kornfield (2017), Thénard (2020), and Walton and Macagno (2015). For discussions and studies of stasis as part of a writing pedagogy, see Raign (1994) and Slater and Groff (2017). Studies focusing on the deployment of individual stases will be discussed in turn.

The sequence of stases makes sense from an ontological perspective, starting from positing the existence of putative phenomena and events in a real or hypothetical world. Once sufficient phenomena are accepted, their similarities and differences can be debated to assort them into categories that change in character depending on what is included and excluded. Changes in a phenomenon over time may be attributed in a causal or associative way. Factors may be identified that bring an item into existence or obliterate it, or change its nature sufficiently to move it from one category to another (e.g., climate change turning a prairie into a desert) or raise or lower its standing along some evaluative dimension (e.g., an intervention may be anticipated to mitigate or exacerbate a problem). Issues of action and jurisdiction influence who is entitled to intervene to make changes or how changes may proceed.

The grain-size of analysis for identifying stases has been a matter of debate. Much of the scholarship on argumentation, whether rhetorical, philosophical, linguistic, or psychological, focuses on individual propositions or claims – discourse at the level of the sentence or clause. Of course, a great deal of work has examined small networks of statements, such as syllogisms. Stephen Toulmin's (1958) argument model relates multiple statements: a claim to data, warrant, backing, qualification, and rebuttal. (For extensions and modifications of Toulmin's model, see Hitchcock & Verheiji, 2006). The stases are often discussed and exemplified at the level of individual statements as well.

However, I take paragraphs as the optimal analytic unit for most discourse. (For recent work on the validity of paragraph-level discourse analysis, see Lai, Farrús, & Moore, 2020). Developing a point at a stasis often involves a constellation of statements that appear to belong to different stases but that instead provide support or address germane sub-topics. For example, an existence claim that climate change is real might be supported with vivid descriptions that allude to effects (cause) and significance (value): melting glaciers on Mt. Everest revealing dead bodies or severe storms in Tennessee causing lethal floods. Complex points may develop at length, as passages, sections, and even chapters.

The degree of elaboration of a point – what I term its *amplitude* – arguably reflects its importance relative to the text as a whole (Charney, 2018). As Chaïm Perelman and Lucille Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) put it, a speaker seeking to persuade will allocate time carefully so

that "the length of each part of his speech will usually be in proportion to the importance he would like to see it occupy in the minds of his hearers" (143). Michael Leff and Andrew Sachs (1990) see this phenomenon as a form of "iconicity," whereby added bulk in itself makes a passage more convincing.

A point's amplitude often reflects the degree of resistance that a rhetor anticipates from the audience. A point with which the audience is likely to agree needs little elaboration; it can even be left tacit for hearers to infer, as in an enthymeme. But "stasis," standing still, contrasts with "kinesis," movement; a stasis is a point where an opponent refuses to go along with the flow of reasoning. Canny rhetors anticipate points where opponents will "dig in their heels" and supply persuasive elaborations to preempt them, while giving minimal space to shared ground. For example, in the case of my stolen bicycle, my neighbor is free to oppose every one of my claims at length. But she need not. She might stipulate at the outset that I had a bicycle, that it is the one in her garage, and even that it was stolen. But then she may fasten onto the causal stasis, arguing at length that she was not and could not have been the thief.

Rhetors who jump into an argument at, say, the causal stasis are judging that readers are so likely to agree with them on issues of existence and definition that nothing explicit need be said. But of course they may be wrong. In policy debates, activists often leap to propose solutions, mistakenly (or ungenerously) assuming that all "right minded" citizens see the problem in the same way they do. Guessing wrong leaves rhetors open to charges of "begging the question."

The mark of a master rhetor is knowing which points need to be argued in a given situation. Abraham Lincoln's mastery as a trial lawyer is illustrated by Garry Wills with an anecdote from Leonard Swett, a lawyer who had faced Lincoln in court:

> As he entered the trial, where most lawyers would object he would say he "reckoned" it would be fair to let this in, or that; and sometimes when his adversary could not quite prove what Lincoln knew to be the truth, he "reckoned" it would be fair to admit the truth to be so-and-so. When he did object to the Court, and when he heard his objections answered, he would often say, "Well, I reckon I must be wrong." Now, about the time he had practiced this three-fourths through the case, if his adversary didn't understand him, he would wake up in a few minutes learning that he had feared the Greeks too late and find himself beaten. [Lincoln] was wise as a serpent in his trial of a cause, but I have had too many scars from his blows to certify that he was harmless as a dove. When the whole thing was unraveled, the adversary would begin to see that what he [Lincoln] was so blandly giving away was simply what he couldn't get and keep. By giving away six points and arguing the seventh, he traded away everything which would give him the least aid in carrying that. Any man who took Lincoln for a simple-minded man would very soon wake up with his back in a ditch.
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> *(qtd. in Wills, 1992, 96–97)*

Following the sequence of stases is at the rhetor's discretion. However, in legal, civic, and academic fields, the stases tend to exert an "upward pull," from description, classification, and cause towards value and action (Walsh, 2010). In child psychology, for example, Susan Peck MacDonald (1994) traced how the concept of infant attachment developed over time, starting with studies of how to observe it (existence), to studies distinguishing different types of attachment (definition), studies of what socio-economic or hereditary factors were associated with attachment types (cause), what effects attachment types had on children's achievements (cause and value), and what therapies might be most effective (value and action).

While the sequence of stases does not seem to be fully recursive, it may be deployed more than once in the same text. A full-blown public policy text often opens with a section on the problem followed by a lengthy analysis of solutions. The problem section can include points at all five stases: the problem's existence, category, causes, and significance, ending with an action claim justifying the seeking of a solution. The solution section itself can address each stasis: laying out the available solutions; predicting their effects on the problem and any side effects; assessing their relative feasibility, costs, and benefits; and laying out paths for carrying out any recommendations.

In some situations, rhetors must address a different audience regarding the solution; the readers/hearers who are capable of getting a problem attended to might not be the ones with the power to consider and execute solutions. In the U.S. criminal justice system, a jury of citizens usually determines guilt or innocence, but only judges impose sentences on the guilty. So arguments concerning punishment are directed to the judge. However, for capital crimes, the same jury of citizens participates in both phases of a trial, first deliberating over the guilt or innocence of the defendant and then, if guilty, deliberating over whether to impose the death penalty. In the punishment phase, the jury considers value-laden testimony from victims or their families and supporters of the defendant, as well as causal arguments about extenuating circumstances leading to the crime and probabilities of future crimes if the defendant were ever to be released (points Cicero termed *remotio criminis* and *relatio criminis*). Rhetors might address a variety of audiences over the course of their engagement with an issue.

A more complex model of the stasis system has been proposed by Lawrence Prelli (2005). Prelli notes that a key choice for an issue is framing (a matter of definition). For example, the use of illegal narcotics may be framed as a criminal issue, a medical issue, or even an economic issue. Rhetors employing different frames may seem to be inhabiting completely different realities. Accordingly, Prelli proposes a set of four "superior" stases: evidential, interpretive, evaluative, and methodological. Crossing these with four "subordinate" stases (existence, definition, value, action – omitting cause), Prelli derives a matrix of 16 possibilities. He illustrates the system with an analysis of debates over the domestic violence issue, showing how stakeholders and researchers established seemingly incommensurate framings, with just one researcher attempting to bridge the gap. A version of Prelli's system was used by Graham and Herndl (2011) in an ethnographic study of a diverse group of professionals involved with treating, studying, and managing pain. While the group began with quite different epistemologies for pain, they ended up with a productive hybrid discourse.

4.3 The Special Features of Individual Stases

Each stasis is associated with its own array of subtopics that may be developed at length or left tacit depending on the rhetor's goals and judgment of the rhetorical situation. Alternative models of subtopics and lexical items associated with the stases have been advanced. Yuan, Harris, and Jiang (2017), for example, base theirs on a review of theorists from Cicero to Kenneth Burke. Rather than attempting a comprehensive listing, I present a sampling of questions, lexical items, and commonplaces in Table 4.1.

The left column of Table 4.1 presents questions that may be posed at a particular stasis, including versions for both problems and solutions. The middle column includes different parts of speech to suggest how claims may be expressed in both affirmative and negative forms. The right column lists commonplaces that epitomize aspects of each stasis, at least in the U.S.

Table 4.1 Questions, Keywords, and Commonplaces Associated with the Five Stases

	Questions	*Common Keywords*	*Commonplaces*
Existence	Did something happen or not? Does/did something exist or not? What approaches are available? What solutions have been tried?	**Verbs**: exists, happened, took place, occurs, is found, is plentiful, is impossible, went away, was nothing	"He's just crying wolf"; "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"; "Houston, we have a problem"; "Let's not reinvent the wheel"
Definition	What kind of event, phenomenon, or object is it? What category does it belong to?	**Verbs**: includes, counts as, qualifies as, typifies, can be considered, belongs to **Adjectives**: classic, typical, central, representative, borderline, fringe, outlier **Nouns**: case, instance, member, candidate, class, kind, family, species, group	"This will separate the sheep from the goats"; "Let's call a spade a spade"; "They're as alike as two peas in a pod"; "If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it's a duck"; "Calling a tail a leg doesn't mean a dog has five legs"; "That's a distinction without a difference"; "You're splitting hairs"; "I am not a crook"
Cause	What brought it about? What changes it? What changes does it lead to? What factors are correlated with it or orthogonal to it? What prevents or hastens it? What effect will this have on the problem? What side effects might occur?	**Verbs (Existence)**: create, invent, produce, bring forth, introduce, arise, appear, wipe out, obliterate, vanish, prevent, remove **Verbs (Definition)**: convert, change, transform, turn into **Verbs (Value)**: improve, increase, promote, lower, worsen, reduce, decline **Adverbs**: before, then, next, slowly, gradually, suddenly **Adjectives**: necessary, sufficient, correlated, unrelated **Nouns**: prime mover, culprit, catalyst, source, act of God, cause, factor, impetus, effect, result, outcome, factor, consequence	"You're barking up the wrong tree"; "Where there's smoke there's fire"; "Don't change horses in the middle of the stream"; "That dog won't hunt"; "Don't borrow from Peter to pay Paul"; "That's treating the symptom and not the disease"; "That's throwing good money after bad"
Value	How good or bad is it? Is it better or worse than other items? Where does it belong on some scale(s) of quality? How far is it from some benchmark? What scales are most important/ appropriate? What are the costs and benefits or advantages and disadvantages?	**Verbs**: likes, approves, prefers, chooses, favors, rejects, criticizes **Adjectives**: good, healthy, fair, worthwhile, important, trivial, useless, harmful, unjust, bad, unsafe; certain, probable, possible, unlikely; tops, average, bottom of the heap; better, worse, best; least, above, below, greater, the same, equal, more, less **Nouns**: criteria, yardstick, standard, strengths, weaknesses	"It's later than you think"; "That's making a mountain out of a molehill"; "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander"; "They paved paradise to put up a parking lot"; "The cure is worse than the disease"; "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"; "That's using a sledgehammer to kill a fly"; "No pain, no gain"; "Rome wasn't built in a day"; "You can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs"

(*Continued*)

Table 4.1 (Continued)

	Questions	*Common Keywords*	*Commonplaces*
Action	Should someone try to solve the problem? Who should do what about it, when, and how?	**Verbs**: consider, start, enact, approve, stop, refuse, delay, recommend, ask **Modal Verbs**: should, ought, need to, must, have to	"Let's let sleeping dogs lie"; "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness"; "Let's cross that bridge when we come to it"; "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step"

In the sections that follow, I review and summarize scholarship on each stasis and discuss passages from a magazine article to illustrate how arguments at a stasis unfold, how arguments at early stases set up later ones, and how stasis choices influence a rhetor's persuasive language.

4.3.1 Existence

The existence stasis is used to establish (or deny) the existence of a phenomenon, event, or concept as well as detailing its attributes and distribution. Existence claims may be advanced for items – concrete or abstract – as well as categories. Syntactically, existence claims are often stative propositions (see keywords in Table 4.1). However, as the commonplaces in the table indicate, no particular syntax is required.

As the first or "bottom-most" stasis, existence claims are often found in introductions, where the purpose is to raise the salience of a known but neglected phenomenon rather than to take up a contested phenomenon. Once raised, the phenomenon may serve as context for more controversial elements or recharacterized in a novel way. For this reason, "existence" seems preferable to "conjecture" or "fact," terms that tilt toward nonexistence and existence, respectively.

Debates over putative phenomena are central in natural sciences such as particle physics and astronomy (e.g., dark matter) as well as the social sciences and professions. In policy debates, existence claims address both problems and solutions (see questions in Table 4.1). At the existence stasis, a rhetor may direct attention to a vivid case of a problem when the audience is unaware that it happens in their locality. But at the point of considering solutions, an audience may already know about and feel resistant toward policies adopted in other communities. Any rhetor who ignores existing alternative solutions risks appearing closed-minded.

In the left-leaning monthly U.S. magazine, *Mother Jones*, health practitioner Michael Castleman (1995) takes on street crime in an article arguing that residents of "nice" neighborhoods are unaware of how much crime actually occurs. In the opening, establishing the existence of the phenomenon, he devotes a long first paragraph packed with concrete details to describing his picturesque San Francisco neighborhood. Then, as shown below, he undermines this positive image by raising and then rejecting an assertion that the neighborhood is safe, an assertion that he attributes to a typical resident.[2]

Castleman: Existence Argument

2 The neighborhood's popularity and tranquility have driven housing prices sky-high, but many residents choking on rent or mortgage payments believe that they have purchased reasonable safety from crime. As I overheard one woman say to another outside our local Starbucks coffee shop recently, Noe Valley is a place where a single woman can feel safe going out alone after dark for a decaf latte. It's a good place, she added, to raise a family.

> 3 I agree – my little corner of the cosmos is a reasonably decent place to raise a family. But anyone who calls Noe Valley "safe" is living in a daydream. I know because I'm a devoted reader of the police column in our monthly neighborhood newspaper, the *Noe Valley Voice*. In a typical month, our 100-block neighborhood experiences a few burglaries and car thefts, one or two muggings or sexual assaults, and a half-dozen acts of vandalism.

Castleman's reversal technique is a common and effective one for introductions. The opening description is likely to attract the young progressive urbanites who typically read *Mother Jones* and live in cityscapes with diverse residents. Personalizing a widely shared belief and then denouncing it as a "daydream" lures such readers to keep reading. Notably the introduction lacks an explicit thesis statement like "my neighborhood is plagued by street crime and yours probably is too." He does support that tacit claim though in several ways: by setting out statistics and vivid anecdotes of local and nearby street crimes, by quoting an expert who says "crime can happen anywhere," and by commenting that "we're all too close to crime for comfort." Thus, while the passage as a whole operates at the stasis of existence, it embeds numerous references to values such as safety, aesthetics, and diversity.

Ideally, debates at the stasis of existence set the table for consideration of issues at higher stases, as Castleman's does. However, in separate post-mortem analyses of political controversies, George Pullman (1995) and Sarah Kornfield (2017) argue that inadequate handling of debate at the existence stasis can block desirable outcomes. Pullman focuses on the U.S. Senate hearings that confirmed Clarence Thomas's appointment to the Supreme Court. He argues that debate stalled at the question of whether sexually harassing events happened because the witnesses were equally credible and no confirming or disconfirming evidence was available. Other questions about Thomas's fitness were circumvented.

Similarly, Kornfield finds that news coverage of women's career and family choices stalls at the question of whether it is possible for any woman to "have it all." She analyzed two news stories: the hiring of Marissa Mayer to be the CEO of Yahoo! when she was six months pregnant and the imminent birth of Hillary Clinton's grandchild at the outset of her 2016 presidential campaign. By dwelling on individual cases, often of unrepresentative celebrities, the media never moves on to defending their definitions of "it all," their assumptions about "its" value, or factors that could aid women in the workplace. The discourse surrounding a controversy, then, affects whether the "upward pull" of the stases succeeds in leading toward action.

4.3.2 Definition

In contrast to the popular association of definitions with dictionaries, the stasis of definition concerns the classification of an existing phenomenon, event, or concept. Definitions come into play when the existence of items and categories has already been argued or can be assumed. Definition becomes crucial when a rhetor wishes to add a previously excluded item to a category, remove a previously accepted item, challenge the membership criteria, or dispute a category's nomenclature (see keywords in Table 4.1).

Definitions confer status, especially when they involve official categories, such as those covered by laws or regulations. A phenomenon deemed to fit a category immediately becomes subject to an accepted set of attitudes and actions. The well-known equation "abortion is murder" moves a medical procedure into a criminal category that confers opprobrium onto the clinicians and the mothers, who become co-conspirators rather than patients. Issues of definition are central in biological and environmental sciences, where classifying a terrain as

a "wetland" or a species as "invasive" subjects them to different policies (Schiappa, 2003). Definitional issues arise in the arts and humanities when attributing a painting to an artist or debating whether a nation is a democracy (Fahnestock & Secor, 1985).

Once a classification becomes a settled part of law or public policy, the persuasion needed to get it established as such disappears and it takes on the aura of fact. As Edward Schiappa (2003) puts it, "established definitions are assumed to represent the way things 'really are' (facts of essence)" until situations arise that suddenly call them into question, what Schiappa calls "definitional ruptures" (167). Ruptures are often initiated by new technologies that allow new differentiations, such as when brain activity surpassed heartbeats as the preferred means to determine whether a person is alive or dead.

The name given to a category is never value-neutral (Schiappa, 2003; Walton & Macagno 2009, 2015). Activist groups strive to impose names that serve their interests, to propel the argument towards issues of value, cause, and action. George Lakoff and Sam Ferguson (2006), who use the term "framing" rather than "definition," discuss the effect on the immigration issue of terming people as "illegal aliens," "illegal immigrants," "undocumented workers," "temporary workers," or "guest workers." Workers and asylum seekers have rights that aliens and invaders do not. The use of "freighted" terms in itself may lead toward claims at other stases, sometimes as digressions within a passage and sometimes as the next move in the argument. For an example, see the discussion of "homelessness" in Fahnestock and Secor (2022).

Apart from adjusting status, definitional arguments establish the scope of an argument and raise the salience of attributes relevant to later arguments at the cause or value stases. Michael Castleman does both in his article. After establishing that neighborhood crime exists, he narrows the scope to street crime committed by young men. He sets up this move in his examples of crimes that have occurred: "In a typical month, our 100-block neighborhood experiences a few burglaries and car thefts, one or two muggings or sexual assaults, and a half-dozen acts of vandalism." He also distinguishes his neighborhood from "hotbeds of crime" that are "closer to crack-gun-gang territory than most *Mother Jones* readers." Castleman has already depicted street crime in a way that excludes lower-class inner cities.

Then Castleman presents a definition claim, spelling out who he includes in his narrower category of street criminals.

Castleman: Definition Argument

8 Overwhelmingly, street criminals are young men. More than 80 percent of those arrested are male. Men aged 15 to 24 account for 40 percent of all arrests, and men 15 to 34 account for 70 percent. Why? Because no one makes a career out of street crime. Criminals rob and steal on and off for a few years until they grow up and make a startling discovery: Considering all the costs and benefits, the income from crime versus the risks to life, limb, and freedom, a job – any job, even one at the minimum wage – pays better.

9 For street criminals, crime is a grubby, risky existence. In 1992, the average mugging netted $672 in cash and property (watches, jewelry, etc.), the average burglary $1,278, according to victims' reports to police. Thieves must sell stolen property at a substantial discount to unload it quickly with no questions asked. Assuming, I believe generously, that crooks net 50 percent of what statistics say they steal, a criminal from one of the crime hot spots near me would have to pull eight burglaries a month just to afford rent and groceries in San Francisco's comparatively low-rent Mission District. But my neighborhood has only two or three burglaries a month, not even enough to support one burglar at poverty level.

This excerpt is part of a four-paragraph passage portraying the young men who commit street crimes as uneducated, lacking competence in the adult world, and far from masterminds. Castleman's language is packed with value-laden terms ("grubby," "masterminds") and even causal inferences about why young men give up on street crime when they get older and smarter. But the thrust of the passage is definitional with the goal of highlighting attributes that pave the way for later claims that street crime is caused by impulse, alienation, and opportunity.

In specialized disciplines, definitions play a more central role. Walton and Macagno (2009, 2015) review philosophical treatments of definitions from Aristotle onwards and delve into the workings of the semantic structure of definition arguments, laying out the premises, inferences, and conclusions involved in different types of classification. In their 2015 article, they work through cases drawn from law and politics, distinguishing quasi-definitions from genus, from analogy, metaphor, and example. Ed Schiappa's (2003) extensive work on definitions in legal and policy issues includes in-depth analysis of cases involving death, rape, wetlands, abortion, and obscenity.

4.3.3 Cause

The cause stasis involves arguments about how and why some phenomenon, event, or concept changes or fails to change. It encompasses points about agents, settings, actions, motives, and means as well as descriptions of the initial and final states of the object of change. With change at its center, the causal stasis frequently employs the language of narrative, a story of what things were like initially, what happened to create change, and how things were afterwards. Accordingly, Table 4.1 gives terms related to agents, settings, motives, and means in noun form with actions and change-terms in verb form. Of course, the nominalized styles predominate in formal academic genres.

Ancient rhetoricians did not designate cause as its own stasis. Probably for that reason, cause is omitted from many contemporary models of stasis. But the ubiquity of cause in modern discourse fully warrants a separate stasis. Theories of causality advanced dramatically starting in the early modern period with the contributions of Francis Bacon, David Hume, and John Stuart Mill. (For a broad history, see Kern, 2004). The first rhetorical theorists to include a separate cause stasis are Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor (1985, 1988), who note the burgeoning of causal arguments as well as their centrality to scientific discourse. In fact, Iliev and Axelrod (2016) found a 40% increase since 1800 in the use of causal terms in a wide range of English texts, with substantial growth occurring in the twentieth century.

Some of the growth comes from popular usage, even though ordinary people have trouble drawing valid causal inferences, as psychologist Deanna Kuhn (2007) has shown. Stronger reasoning abilities are found in students who specialize in some academic disciplines, such as history and psychology, that provide training in distinct forms of causal reasoning (Lehman & Nisbett, 1990; Coffin, 2004). In psychology, experiments conducted in laboratory settings are designed to control what factors are present; the results are subjected to statistical analyses to assess the likelihood that differences are due to chance. In contrast, historical studies cannot normally eliminate alternative factors. As a result, historical reasoning involves "evaluating the relative contributions of different theorized causes whose importance and effects might develop dynamically over an extended period of time" (Bateman & Teele, 2020, n.p.).

Causal arguments are key to public policy debates over problems and solutions. As political scientist Deborah Stone (1989/2019) notes, the public often won't perceive a situation as a problem unless it is framed in terms of causal factors or agents who can be assigned blame or responsibility. (Her approach is grounded in social construction and is consonant with Smith

Table 4.2 Matrix of Causal Attributions of Responsibility to Agents by Intentionality of Consequences and Purposiveness of Actions

	CONSEQUENCES	
	Intended	*Unintended*
Unguided	**Mechanical Cause** intervening agent machines trained animals brainwashed people	**Accidental Cause** nature weather earthquakes machines run amok
ACTIONS **Purposeful**	**Intentional Cause** assault oppression conspiracies that work programs that work	**Inadvertent Cause** intervening conditions unforeseen side effects neglect carelessness omission

Source: Stone (1989/2019), reprinted with permission.

and Lybarger's (1996) less deterministic modification of Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation). Stone constructs a matrix (reproduced in Table 4.2) that maps intentionality against the purposiveness of an agent's actions. Any characterization of motive, of course, is often a subject of dispute.

Stone then identifies three broad types of problems that arise due to complex systems, institutions, and structures – such as structural racism. As she puts it:

> social patterns tend to reproduce themselves. People with power and resources to stop a problem (for example, mining accidents) benefit from the social organization that keeps them in power and maintain it through control over selection of elites and socialization of both elites and non-elites. People who are victimized by a problem do not seek political change because they do not see the problem as changeable, do not believe they could bring about change, and need the material resources for survival provided by the status quo.
>
> *(288)*

Castleman devotes most of his article to the cause stasis – roughly 13 out of 40 paragraphs. He begins by even-handedly laying out the factors usually cited on the political right and left. Then he systematically downgrades each of these accepted factors, realizing that readers who attribute crime to big social forces are unlikely to consider it worthwhile to take smaller scale steps to reduce the opportunity to commit crimes, a solution that he turns to at the action stasis.

Castleman: Causal Argument

17 Liberals blame crime on poverty, racism, and lack of educational and job opportunities, which leave people so bereft of hope that they fall victim to anti-social rage. The conservative line is that the ACLU has hog-tied the police and forced the courts to coddle criminals when we ought to lock them up and throw away the key.

18 Both sides also blame crime on the breakdown of the family, but for different reasons. Liberals maintain that a lack of childcare, social services, and affordable health care turns the disadvantaged into vengeful victims. Conservatives insist that liberal secularism – sex education and opposition to school prayer – has rent the nation's moral fabric.

19 Political progressives dismiss the pro-prison argument with one quick statistic: In 1980, there were 139 prisoners per 100,000 Americans; this figure had doubled to 373 per 100,000 as of last June, when the number of state and federal prisoners topped 1 million for the first time. "More than ever," says sociologist Marvin Wolfgang, a professor of criminology and law at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, "we are locking 'em up and throwing away the key. Does anyone feel safer? I don't think so."

20 But conservatives have a point: Punishment can be an effective deterrent when it is immediate, certain, and severe. Touch a hot stove once or twice, and you stop doing it because the punishment meets these criteria. But the criminal justice system does not. Prison sentences are neither immediate nor certain, thanks to the little detail of innocent until proven guilty.

By taking up a full array of societal factors likely to be well-known both to allies and to opponents, Castleman avoids the all-too-common "my-side bias" for only presenting material supportive of one's own position that depresses ratings of argument quality (Wolfe, Britt, & Butler, 2009). By then systematically rejecting each of these social factors, Castleman clears the way for raising three more personal factors that induce individuals to commit crimes: impulse, alienation, and opportunity. These smaller-scale factors build on his earlier definition of street criminals as young, uneducated, and immature males. As he moves toward his recommended action, he evaluates the feasibility of addressing these factors for people in neighborhoods like his.

4.3.4 Value

The value stasis involves efforts to change (or resist change to) the assessment of a phenomenon, event, or concept. The standing of an item within a category may be adjusted by evaluating items against each other as greater or lesser in some qualities or against some benchmark criterion; in complex decision-making, the evaluative dimensions themselves can be debated or assigned relative weights.

Value claims always convey a comparative aspect: an item is assessed relative to others in the same category, relative to a former state, or relative to some standard or norm (see keywords in Table 4.1). Saying "it's a nice day" carries along assumptions about what days are usually like in this location at this time of year. The criteria by which items are evaluated are themselves subject to argument – including their appropriateness to the situation and their relative weights.[3]

Assessments have dimension: better/worse, more/less, stronger/weaker. But the end-points of a scale do not have inherent value; having more of a quality can be a good thing in some situations and bad in others. As shown in Table 4.3, English is amply supplied with positive and negative terms for describing the strong and weak ends of a scale for a wide array of qualities. Groups seeking to change how they are perceived may choose to deny that some attribute is characteristic of them or to accept it but reverse its valence. For example, feminists fighting the stereotype that women are less rational than men may deny the difference (at the stasis of existence) or downgrade the value of rationality, characterizing it as robotic or heartless, while

Table 4.3 Matrix of Value Qualities Showing a Strong/Weak Dimension and Positive/Negative Valence

Quality		*Positive Valence*	*Negative Valence*
Durability			
	Strong	sturdy, eternal, permanent	rigid, incessant
	Weak	fragile, fleeting, spontaneous	flimsy, transient, accidental
Availability			
	Strong	plentiful, universal	infested, rampant
	Weak	rare, unique, singular	meager, peculiar
Age			
	Strong	classic, experienced	dated, jaded
	Weak	avant-garde, fresh	faddish, green
Complexity			
	Strong	intricate, complex	complicated, tangled, chaotic
	Weak	simple, neat, elegant, orderly	simplistic, transparent, formulaic
Source			
	Strong	cultivated, trained, planned	mechanical, artificial
	Weak	natural, organic, emergent	wild, cancerous, mutating
Stability			
	Strong	fixed, solid, stable	rigid, inflexible
	Weak	flexible, pliant	precarious, shaky
Status			
	Strong	elite, genius, eminent	snob, know-it-all, show-off
	Weak	normal, common, general	run-of-the-mill, ordinary
Concreteness			
	Strong	real, concrete, particular	blockish
	Weak	abstract, idealized	squishy
Rationality			
	Strong	logical, reasonable	calculating
	Weak	intuitive, emotional	crazy, irrational, flighty
Cost			
	Strong	valuable, costly	over-priced, expensive
	Weak	inexpensive	cheap, bargain-basement
Efficiency			
	Strong	efficient, fast	routinized, hasty
	Weak	deliberate, leisurely	wasteful, pokey
Receptivity			
	Strong	liberal, bold	radical, reckless
	Weak	conservative, careful	obstructionist, timid
Efficacy			
	Strong	helpful, effective	expedient, opportunistic
	Weak	harmless, benign	useless, toothless
Morality			
	Strong	scrupulous	puritanical
	Weak	tolerant	slack
Aesthetics			
	Strong	pleasing, interesting	ingratiating, weird
	Weak	provocative, everyday	irritating, boring

characterizing women with positive terms such as "intuitive" or "sensitive" rather than "unreasonable" or "irrational." For a detailed account of evaluative language from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics, see Martin and White (2005).

Values constellate in ways that contribute to a culture's zeitgeist. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) note, classicism and romanticism are characterized by opposing pairs of values. Whereas classicism foregrounds the stable, the universal, and the harmonious, romanticism prefers the ephemeral, the unique, and the disruptive.

The value stasis is important across genres and disciplines. Academic disciplines vary in the centrality of value claims. As Fahnestock and Secor (1988) note, a key mission of the arts and humanities is to reassess the value of cultural artifacts. In the social sciences and STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), value arguments are prominent in funding proposals to establish the importance of the research questions, the plausibility of the proposed studies, and the competence of the investigators. In scientific research articles, the very first sentence may be a claim of the high degree of interest that the topic has fostered in the readership that the scientists would like to attract. In John Swales's (1990) robust model of the introductions of academic research articles, the first move of establishing the centrality of the topic leads to revelation of a contradiction or gap in the current scholarship that justifies the current study. As shown in Michael Carter's (2016, 2021) corpus studies, scientific disciplines differ in the values that warrant new work, with some claiming pragmatic value for addressing real-world problems and others claiming intellectual value for advancing field-specific priorities.

In policy arguments, the value stasis plays an important role both in establishing (or undermining) the significance of the problem and in evaluating the merits of any proposed solutions. But value arguments may also cap off subsections. Castleman (1995) argues for the urgency of street crime.

Castleman: Urgency Value Argument

7 Of course, some places have more crime than others. I live about a mile from two different hotbeds of crime – probably closer to crack-gun-gang territory than most *Mother Jones* readers, but still far enough away so that for me, and I daresay for the vast majority of you, moving somewhere else wouldn't take us much farther out of harm's way. Which means we're all too close to crime for comfort. What can we do?

8 One common response is to retreat into blissful ignorance, to turn the page quickly when the headlines refer to blood and gore. But when it comes to crime in one's own neighborhood, ignorance is not bliss. It's a significant risk factor for victimization. That's why each month, the first thing I read in the *Noe Valley Voice* is the police report. Most criminals commit their crimes within a mile or so of where they live, according to Rykert, so every crime in my neighborhood represents a potential threat to me and to my family. I'm by no means alone in my fascination with neighborhood crime. According to Tonda Rush, president of the National Newspaper Association, similar police columns are among the most avidly read sections of the 4,000 community newspapers they represent. Why? "Because," she explains, "any crime that happens next door to me is a major crime."[4]

The major focus of Castleman's article is the causes of street crime because his solution is to recommend ways to prevent it. But he uses value arguments in two crucial ways. First, he discusses some social factors that he evaluates as impractical for individuals to address. Then he considers personal characteristics of the young men he has defined as street criminals: impulse, alienation, and opportunity. Of these, he rates opportunity as the most feasible for ordinary citizens to address.

Castleman: Feasibility Value Argument

28 Impulse, alienation, and opportunity. I seriously doubt that the left or right, the church or state, the family or schools will ever rid us imperfect human beings of our criminal impulsiveness. I see it already in my son. Not long ago, he swiped some money off our kitchen counter that had been left for a baby-sitter. Why? "I don't know," he said. "It was there."

29 I also seriously doubt that the alienation engendered by youth, poverty, racism, or Bill making the basketball team over Jim can ever be eliminated. As a person of the left, I abhor all the nefarious "isms," and want to see liberty, justice, and single-payer health care for all. But I'm not holding my breath. And I confess considerable discomfort with letting people off the hook simply because they've been victimized in one way or another. Who hasn't?

30 That leaves reducing criminal opportunity as our best bet for controlling crime. As Robert Frost wrote: "Good fences make good neighbors." Good dead bolts help, too. That's why all successful crime prevention programs focus on opportunity control – street smarts to prevent assault, and "target-hardening" to prevent burglary.

Value arguments are most central to epideictic, discourse that confers praise or blame without the audience being expected to decide on the matter. Epideictic genres include: reviews of all kinds; hymns and odes; dedicatory ceremonies, commencements, and funerals; as well as annual addresses and reports by leaders of governments or corporate bodies. In ancient and medieval classrooms, students composed encomia out of value arguments about a person's ancestry, upbringing, character, and deeds. Public epideictic discourse rehearses – and thereby reinforces – common cultural values that can then be used as warrants for claims in other kinds of discourse. But in cultures deemed autocratic, unjust, or oppressive, epideictic genres of protest can effectively undermine trust in established institutions.

4.3.5 Action

The action stasis concerns arguments over who should do what, when, and how with respect to some phenomenon, event, or concept. In the ancient criminal justice setting, arguments at this "jurisdiction" stasis concerned the proper conduct of the trial, such as its venue, the make-up of the jury, and rulings by the presiding officer. These are the final moves available to the prosecution and defense before the case goes to the jury. Even in this legal context, though, the broader term "action" is preferable to "jurisdiction" to accommodate the closing arguments in which each team asks the jury to decide in its favor.

Apart from raising procedural issues, action claims lay out the details of a rhetor's recommendations and proposals, each of which confers responsibility for acting. To avoid seeming to scold, rhetors may begin employing "we" to signal willingness to be part of the solution. Rather than giving explicit directions to readers about what they should do, Castleman (1995) sets himself up as a model for others. He works to improve the cohesiveness of his neighborhood to increase surveillance and promote "target hardening," thereby decreasing opportunities for street crime in his vicinity.

Castleman: Action Argument

36 I've now lived on my block eight years, and I'm enough of an old-timer to feel concerned about the recent turnover. So recently my wife and I organized a little potluck dessert party in honor of the new arrivals. Most of our immediate

> neighbors came. There were no formal crime prevention speeches. There didn't have to be. Everyone was an urban survivor (knock on wood), in love with San Francisco and Noe Valley, but also perpetually, realistically nervous about crime. The neighbors knew exactly why we'd invited them, and thanked us for taking the initiative. They dutifully signed in with address, phone number, and the names of everyone in their household. (A few days later, I distributed copies up and down the block).

Castleman ends up with quite a short action passage that never develops into a full-blown solution section. The few actions he describes include collecting and distributing contact information, sharing tips for preventing car break-ins, and checking locks on doors and windows. Clearly, however, the article as a whole has been pointing in this direction: his establishment of the existence of street crime, his definition of street criminals as young immature males, his elimination of social factors to focus on the psychological traits of young men, and individual actions that anticipate and block criminal impulses.

When policy arguments do include a full-scale solution section, the transition may be a tacit action claim that the problem is urgent enough that a solution should be sought. The solution section then unfolds by recapitulating the stases to consider what solutions exist or could be invented, what effects and side-effects they might bring about, and what costs and benefits they incur, ending with a final recommendation.

Jurisdictional arguments arise whenever someone claims the power and authority to act or to challenge the actions of others. Peter Cramer (2015) usefully examines how jurisdictions are constituted and what confers their legitimacy. His central case is a "sensational" art exhibit in New York City in 1999 that then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani attempted to close on religious and moral grounds. While Giuliani's actions led to a lawsuit that the judge adjudicated on free speech grounds, experts in the arts argued that their standards for judging art should apply. Cramer notes the rhetorical challenges facing would-be "referees," experts who feel entitled to speak but who lack shared backgrounds and even physical proximity with the people who are empowered to act.

Similarly, Alan Gross (2004) argues that no single discipline has jurisdiction over whether developments in the sciences amount to a Kuhnian paradigm shift. Rather, understanding paradigm shifts and claims of incommensurability depends on input from several disciplines: philosophy, history, rhetoric, and psychology. Gross laments how seldom scholars in these disciplines interact and pleads for more cross-disciplinary collaboration.

A similar issue arises over the standing of scientists to pronounce on matters related to public policy, whether climate change or pandemics. As Lynda Walsh (2010) notes, scientists have traditionally enacted a "Mertonian ethos," confining their claims to existence, definition, and cause, while abjuring responsibility for drawing social or political implications at the stases of value or action. When scientists do make policy recommendations, those who agree applaud their skill while those who disagree are apt to discredit scientific work itself.

4.4 Conclusion

The stases are an important tool for rhetors who wish to move an audience towards action on social, business, legal, and academic issues. The stases form a sequence of interlocking arguments that build from establishing the existence of an issue toward recommending action on it. However, stases are a flexible framework, not a formula. Depending on the rhetorical situation, an author may devote an entire text to just one stasis or – as Castleman does – address

all five stases concerning a problem without providing a full-blown analysis and evaluation of the available solutions.

The flexibility of the stases raises the question of whether they can be identified by recognizable clusters of lexical items, syntactic constructions, coherence ties, or other stylistic regularities. To date, I know of no study that has attempted to divide a text into stases on this basis. When I analyze a text or teach students to do so, I treat the process as an interpretive enterprise that is open to critique (e.g., Charney, 2018; and the chapter on "Critical Reading" in Charney & Neuwirth, 2006).

The absence of necessary and sufficient signals makes understanding the stases rather more important than less for language scholars. The stases are major clues to the structure of the rhetor's argument, his or her representation of the audience and their current views, and estimation of just how far they might be willing to go on this occasion toward changing their attitudes, beliefs, and actions.

Notes

1 I.A. Richards (1926) first posited that attitudes, triggered by language, constitute "incipient" or "imaginative" actions (p. 111). For how Kenneth Burke developed this notion (e.g., in *A Grammar of Motives*, 1969) see Heath (1989).

2 For the full text see Michael Castleman (May/June 1995), "Opportunity Knocks," *Mother Jones* 20, 26+ (www.motherjones.com/politics/1995/05/opportunity-knocks/). Excerpts used by permission. The paragraph numbers in this and following excerpts correspond to a slightly abridged version of Castleman's essay used in Charney and Neuwirth (2006).

3 Formal techniques for assigning weights to criteria (linear modeling) underlie the decision sciences and have long been used in decision-making in a wide variety of domains; research suggests that decisions are improved even by consulting informal ("improper") criteria (Dawes, 1979).

4 Castleman uses the language of action – what can we do? Introductions can include action language as a transition from what *seems* to be the problem to an analysis of the "real" problem. Castleman's framing follows from setting up readers to identify with a woman "living in a daydream" and constructing himself as a wiser, more alert resident.

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