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## EDITOR'S PAGE

The Speech Association of Minnesota Journal is an annual publication of the Speech Association of Minnesota. Manuscripts dealing with a wide variety of issues and ideas related to Speech Communication and Dramatic Arts are encouraged. Contributions may be either (1) an article of 1000 to 4000 words, written in formal or informal style, and ranging in content from the theoretical/speculative to the pedagogical/pragmatic, or (2) a broadside, in effect, a brief essay of about 500 to 700 words, written in an informal style and discussing or outlining such diverse matters as teaching tips, classroom exercises, observations about our profession, the state organization, or any other developed statements relevant to Speech/Theater policies, programs, and practices in secondary schools and colleges.

Two sections of this year's Journal may be of particular interest to some of our readers. In September 1980 one of the programs which generated a great deal of positive discussion at the Speech Association of Minnesota Convention held at St. Catherine's was a program entitled: "Is Competitive Debate as Generally Practiced a Desirable Speech Contest Activity?" Regardless of one's initial position on this issue, the thoughtful ideas articulated by the participants on that panel are ones that those involved in forensics competition at all levels must address in one form or another. I felt that these ideas should be shared beyond the immediate audience who heard that program, so each of the participants was invited to submit an essay summarizing his position--the first three articles in this Journal are the essays of those participants who accepted the invitation. The three rhetorical analyses which conclude this Journal provide examples not only of interesting communication analysis per se, but also of the differences in composition (word selection, sentence structure, etc.) between effective oral and written communication.

Persons interested in publishing in the Journal should submit to the editor one copy of their article or broadside for consideration by the editorial staff. Please be sure to retain one copy for your records--frequently minor "editing" can be discussed by phone if the editor and author each have a copy. Articles submitted for publication in the 1982 Journal should be submitted by 15 March 1982. Send your article to: Stephen T. Olsen, S.A.M. Journal Editor, Speech Theater Department, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota 55057.

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## COMPETITIVE DEBATE AS GENERALLY PRACTICED SHOULD BE ABOLISHED

Don Sikkink 1

These words of Professor William DeMougeot of North Texas State University (1972) summarize my position:

What surely should give pause to those responsible for the present state of . . . debate is that it is being censured not only by those who do not understand the purposes of the activity, but also by those who do understand and who believe that it once served those purposes. 2

I once believed competitive debate had considerable value as an educational activity closely related to the curricular work in speech. I now believe competitive debate has limited educational value and if one compares those educational values to financial costs and negative learning outcomes, it is an activity that does NOT deserve the support of the field of Speech Communication.

In taking this position, I need to list two qualifications. The first is that I am discussing inter-school competitive debate and not classroom, parliamentary, or audience debate. Secondly, I am discussing competitive inter-school debate as generally practiced. "Generally practiced" is a term difficult to define but when used in this paper it implies a sort of "circuit" of intense competition, many tournaments, numerous rounds involving only the two teams, a judge and timekeepers, and normally includes eliminative rounds resulting in a single "winner." Success is measured in terms of how much hardware you win and the ultimate success is to win a state, regional, or national debate tournament.

In this essay I will stress two of the several reasons why I take the position that such "generally practiced" debate programs should be abolished.

### I. The Skills of Logical Analysis Have Been Distorted

A long time claim for the value of debate has been that it develops skill in logical analysis. I challenge this assertion about present day debate on two counts. First, it is my feeling that the use of debate handbook cases, excessive use of coach collected material, and coach written cases has steadily increased in the past few years due to the "importance" of winning. An even worse and new distortion of logical analysis has been the tendency to allow teams to argue off topic. Instead of insisting that teams produce the strongest reasoned arguments on the resolution, it has become quite common for teams to use the strangest possible arguments. The apparent objective of such

analysis seems to be to produce a case only remotely related to the resolution and then score a stunning victory because the opposition cannot produce a single evidence card in refutation!

Doesn't it seem remarkable that two of the judges in the final debate of the 1979 National Debate Tournament took time in their critiques to compliment the teams for debating the real topic (guaranteed unemployment opportunities)? Here is how judge Michael Kidwell put his comment:

After living through a year of nuclear holocaust, starving millions, military shortfalls, and greatly increased beef consumption, it was a distinct pleasure to be privy to a discussion of unemployment and its effects. 3

Judges for a previous NDT final debate on wage and price control were not that fortunate. The affirmative managed to use a definition of wage and price controls as meaning a guaranteed annual income for migrant farm workers, supplemented by federal control of the prices migrant workers would pay for goods. 4 I ask my readers how many of them would accept such a limited and distorted definition in a speech course they were teaching? We might wonder at the shock that would have been suffered by a government official, a company president, or a labor leader who decided to treat themselves to an "intellectual" afternoon by listening to a debate on wage and price controls!

## II. The Delivery Skills of Effective Oral Communication Have Been Distorted

The problem of excessive delivery rate seems to have become even worse in the past few years. The villain again appears to be the emphasis on winning; the more you say, the less the chance the opposition can respond to everything and the better the chances of your winning! Add to this a new evil of the past few years which I label "abbreviated speech." It involves numerical and letter designations for key verbal elements in the debate case. For example, the second affirmation need argument becomes "2AN" and rather than verbalizing about whether the plan meets the need arguments, the negative will "now move to 'PMN.'"

I have two objections to such abbreviations. First, this skill has nothing to do with the real world of public speaking either in practice or theory. It is a perversion of most of what we try to teach. Second, it has reduced communication (e.g. "shared meaning") to an exclusive few. You have to be another active debater or a coach currently dealing with that particular resolution in order to have some sense of what is being communicated. This creates a limited audience, a limited experience and limited support. In a period of financial crunch how do you sell a debate program when you do not dare invite in as judges the superintendent who was once the debate coach or the chair of the



local bar association who was once a national tournament debater or even your friendly local speech teacher who teaches courses in argumentation and debate. Sad, isn't it-- an activity that was once the keystone activity in speech communication has now become the domain of a small group of "true believers" who seem to have so little in common with the rest of the discipline.

DeMougeot makes this point in a slightly different way:

Rules for the various tournaments further the development of an elite group. One such rule, for the National Debate Tournament, excludes as judges people who have coached for 20 years or more, but have heard only a few debates in the current year . . . such rulings produce an elite group that . . . operates largely in a strange world somewhat akin to Alice's Wonderland . . . ." 5

A key example to illustrate my personal feelings on these two distortions in competitive debate as generally practiced came during the fall of 1980 when the following debate tournament notice crossed my desk:

The Marshall-Wythe Tournament is distinct in providing an atmosphere conducive to educational debate for varsity teams. The victorious debaters are, by and large, not those who propose the most bizarre interpretations of the debate topic or who speak at incredible rates of speed; instead judges here usually reward sound thinking, thorough research, and the articulate presentation of arguments. 6 (Author's underlining.)

Why must such experience be distinct?

I believe my feelings about competitive debate are indirectly shared by others in Minnesota. In the period of 1969-1979 the number of four-year Minnesota colleges and universities sponsoring competitive debate programs decreased from 18 to 10 and the number of students participating in those college programs dropped from 234 to 94. 7 A similar drop occurred in Minnesota high school debate, where in the five year period of 1976-1980 the number of high schools entering section tournaments decreased from 104 to 77. 8

Such decreases result, I believe, from an analysis by colleges and high schools of the benefits of debate in contrast to doubtful practices and costs. The Minnesota State High School League office reported last year that on a per student basis, debate was the most expensive league activity. I personally question such costs in light of the number of students served and the lack of documentation on values produced.

I predict these drops in debate activity will continue until only a handful of schools continue in competitive debate. That may seem unfortunate to some, but despite a few promising experimental programs, real reform under the existing pattern does not seem likely. Instead, we must hope, as in the story of Phoenix, that out of the impending crash of competitive debate as generally practiced a new emphasis will arise that will return debate to the significant position it once held in the field of Speech Communication. Until then I would urge Minnesota Speech Communication professionals to stop supporting competitive debate.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Don Sikkink earned a B.A., M.A., and Ph. D. at the University of Minnesota. He debated for three years in college and coached college debate for ten years. Presently, he is Professor of Speech Communication at St. Cloud State University. This essay is a shortened version of a presentation made at the Speech Association of Minnesota Convention in September of 1980.

2. William R. DeMougeot, "Intercollegiate Debate: Intrapersonal, but Still Unrealistic," Speech Teacher 21 (March 1972): 135-7.

3. John K. Boaz, ed., "National Debate Tournament Final Debate," Journal of the American Forensics Association 26 (Summer 1979).

4. "National Debate Tournament Debate," Journal of the American Forensics Association 8 (Summer 1971): 1-28.

5. William DeMougeot.

6. Taken from an August 26, 1980, Debate Tournament invitation mailed by the College of William and Mary.

7. The author surveyed four-year colleges and universities during the spring and summer of 1980. Twenty-four of the twenty-six schools responded. This data is reported in full in "The Status of Competitive Debate in Minnesota Colleges." The article may be found on pp. 11-13 of this issue of the Speech Association of Minnesota Journal.

8. Information provided by the Minnesota State High School League Office.



## IN DEFENSE OF ACADEMIC DEBATE AS CURRENTLY PRACTICED

John O. Burtis and John S. Bourhis 1

Debate needs no apologia. . . . Whenever and wherever debate is brought into disrepute, it is due to the errant practitioners of debate and not due to any inherent weakness in debate itself. On the contrary, debate, when it is properly practiced, is of inestimable value to its participants and contributes much toward an intensive analysis of major public issues.

--Prof. Martin J. Holcomb

The general value of debate as a tool of learning cannot be denied. Debate has served mankind, in a variety of forms, throughout the ages and it is only our current mode that is under scrutiny today.

There are always ways to improve upon a skill building device. Certainly there is never any shortage of criticism from those who would change existing practices. However, we do not feel it necessary to defend debate as an academic tool. Rather we will concentrate on those criticisms which are made as a result of the manner in which debate is currently practiced.

Any dialogue which is justified as a search for truth and understanding requires at the outset a statement of position. We feel compelled to present our general perspective before getting into specifics so that our views may be taken in the proper context.

To begin with, we will focus on debate as it is currently practiced in Universities and Colleges. That is the primary concern of our present employment and as such we feel most qualified to comment in this area. Since we are somewhat removed from the high school debate circuit we should feel less at ease directing our remarks toward high school practices. Besides, the high school coaches are perfectly capable of defending and explaining their own ways.

Furthermore, criticism of any system is valuable if it is based on a sincere desire to improve the system and if it comes after a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of the workings of the system. In fact, we believe that such criticism should be a primary function of those involved in the system. Those who are dissatisfied may either try to change something which is inherently good or escape to find something different. It is the former approach that we believe to be superior and indeed to be our right as professionals.



Implicit in our concept of improvement directed from within is the desire to change our system incrementally as needs demand. Radical views that debate should be eliminated from a college program because of how it is practiced does not fit into our paradigm. Rather they represent a defeatist attitude which does not belong within the realm of education. As we seek to explain, defend, and improve our system we will begin by directing our attention to those characteristics which draw the loudest cries from the critics.

The argument that excessive speed produces poor communication is reasonable were it true. The ability of debaters to adjust to other types of public speaking situations is an indictment of the transfer effect asserted in such a claim. What is even more important is the fact that "being comprehensible" is a function both of the speaker and the audience. We find that speed is not a negative factor as long as we can understand the debate. Thus, we are lead to the conclusion that speed, as a variable, is relative in its effects. If debaters cannot or will not adjust to the needs of a particular judge or audience, they will and should lose. However, to indict speed when the judge hearing the round doesn't mind it is to claim the existence of an absolute standard of correct delivery. Rather than go back to a prescriptive Del Sartian approach, we believe that debaters should strive for flexibility. In other words, they should assume the philosophy of "when in Rome . . . ."

Generally, we base our defense of debate on the fact that there are all too few activities which really challenge a bright student to excel mentally. The promised budget restrictions of the future threaten to eliminate the more exotic sources of such stimulation which appeared in the experimentation of the 1960's and 1970's. Therefore, we believe that debate should continue to push the exceptional student. We find the argument that "debate is for the common man" to be possible but fundamentally untrue. Debate has as its goal the changing of the common man, the improvement of the common man, the excellence of the common man, and the raising of the "common" man.

A mind which is not forced to exercise logic, analysis, concise phrasing, and argument in front of people who are skilled at such processes is a mind which is not exercised. In addition, to claim that the exercise should be as "real world" as the later applications is to indict every system of training in every area of learning the world has ever known. Just as athletes struggle with excessive weights, debaters must work out with complicated and sometimes seemingly obscure arguments.

Of course, debaters will have to leave their professional judges and enter the real world upon their graduation. Of course, they will have to adjust to the language and thought processes of the "man on the street." That does not, however, imply--no matter how strongly it is asserted--that debaters



should be trained with the expectation that there is no better way, no hope for individual improvement, and no means of strengthening the thought process.

We view debate as the epitome of the liberal arts philosophy in that it forces students to learn to think before requiring practical application. Were we to accept the idea that all education should be based on its direct, dollar and cents value to the user we would be hard pressed to justify our classes in philosophy, history, and the classics. We believe debate to be fully justified on the basis of what it does to the way a student's mind performs regardless of the communication skills it produces. None of the criticisms most often heard have addressed this issue.

In addition, we believe that the true value of debate is not that which is observable in a given round or at the end of a given tournament. To do so would be laughable just as it is wrong to indict debate in general because of a specific instance. Rather, we must judge the activity on what the participant will become once the experience is over and has been put into a lifetime of perspective. As such, debate is truly a liberal arts, interdisciplinary and education oriented activity. We do not eliminate tests because they are not oriented toward the common man in a common situation. We should not attempt an elimination of debate on the basis of such a premise.

Finally, we do not totally abandon the concomitant communicative advantages produced by debate. There is little doubt that debaters learn to think and speak well under pressure. We are merely asserting that debate as an activity can never be indicted solely because it seems to lack communication skills as its sole base. Thus, in this paper we felt compelled to argue communication quality as an important but somewhat extraneous issue to the core values provided by debate.

The debate on debate will not end soon. Nor should it. However, if we are to continue the dialogue we should keep in mind that our goal is to preserve and strengthen what should be accepted as an inherently fine educational activity. It is with such intent that we offer these remarks.

#### ENDNOTES

1. John Burtis and John Bourhis are instructors of speech in the Speech Communication/Theater Arts Department at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota. John Burtis is the Director of Forensics at Concordia College; John Bourhis is active as a coach for the Concordia College forensics team.

## IN-HOUSE DEBATE IS SUPERIOR TO "THE CIRCUIT"

Don Blore 1

Two decades ago at Robbinsdale I was part of a High School Debate Program remarkable for its dissimilarity to the present system. One staff member and one student stood for the affirmative. One staff member and one student stood for the negative. Resolutions contested were changed weekly. My staff colleague (Critchfield) and I (Blore) were "permanent members of the company"-- ONE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE TOPIC EACH WEEK. Youngsters were invited to volunteer to be "student partners"--one-on-each-side. They came forward in significant numbers and we sometimes named participants by "common consent" due to the expertise or interest in a topic. Other times we "drew straws" to find two "among the many." We never had a "dry week" without volunteers and we never saw development of a "student monopoly" on available speaker-stations. Such was the spontaneous joy we all took in spirited public discourse in those days! How brightly that time now shines in my memory--and how attractive the notion of "in-house" debate programs now seems in a period of energy crisis and fuel shortage! By changing topics weekly we avoided the problem of one team being markedly more prepared than the other. Research was intense, even frenzied at times! We avoided other problems, too. Commercial evidence cards were unheard of. No trophy or award was ever given. Satisfactions, such as they were, (for both speakers and audience) came after the fashion of an old New England Town Meeting. When we went home we went home with a feeling. It was a feeling of being "involved in mankind." It was a feeling there are no words to describe. It was a feeling "without country" (experienced equally by "soap-boxers" in Hyde Park and by exiles like Alexander S. from the Soviet Union). No man who has never had this feeling can claim to have lived a full life; and every person who has had this feeling knows he has had one of life's richest fulfillments. Permit me now to describe the Robbinsdale "in-house" program of the 1960's and to assert it was/is superior to Debate as it is currently practiced in Minnesota.

Students on Study-Hall and/or unassigned time were invited to attend. Audiences were from 50 to 200 strong and voted a secret paper ballot after each debate. These "results" were never publicly announced, but were rather for the information and amusement of participants at informal sessions later in the week. We entertained questions and comments from the floor when time permitted, and often got lively participation from both students and staff. We argued everything from Reform of the Judiciary to Foreign Policy, to the Welfare State, to Congressional Reorganization, to Presidential Power, to Tax Revision, to Repeal of the Mandatory Motorcycle Helmet Law--and all points between.



I remember the Helmet Debate more than any other for reasons which (in retrospect) seem unusual. The topic was "light." The effect of that debate upon my mind was "heavy." My partner that day was a 300-lb. adenoidal ape who had been shaving twice-a-day since the 7th grade. It hadn't done any good. His face (even on good days) looked like shark-skin, and his eyes were a hybrid cross between cobra and mongoose. We were assigned the Negative and part of our burden was to find fault with the state law. I remember hoping no administrator would "happen-by" to drop-in that day because I fully expected a riot (at least) and possibly total mayhem! Like a sea-captain pledged to go-down-with-the-ship, I decided to "go down with the program I had helped to create," and duly appeared for the SHOW.

I COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG IN MY ORIGINAL INSTINCTS. Jerry (my "cave-man" partner) listened to Critchfield's beautiful 17-year-old First Affirmative partner deliver a KINDLY and THOUGHTFUL endorsement of the State Helmet Law with supporting hospital emergency room statistics. He even joined the polite applause when she had finished. His First Negative Constructive speech and the hour which followed stand as the high-light of my career in VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS. He spoke with quiet dignity about government regulation of every aspect of human life: of federal regulation; state regulation; city regulation; school regulation--and of everyman's NEED TO BE FREE and to make his own mistakes. HOW A LINE MUST BE DRAWN SOMEWHERE AGAINST government paternalism which smothers spontaneity and robs life of its natural richness. He spoke with the unmistakable eloquence of DEEP CONVICTION. For the first time in his life the words just came because THEY WERE THERE. I was intensely ashamed of myself for having put such a low estimate on the COMMON MAN as to believe his black leather jacket (with rivets and reflectors) which I could see, were the only things about him THERE WERE TO BE SEEN!

Mine was not the only heart touched that day. Several in his peer-group were moved to tears --and those weeping were not all females. They saw something in him they had never seen before; and, seeing it in him, THEY REAFFIRMED IT IN THEMSELVES. When he sat down they paid him the supreme compliment of SILENT TRIBUTE (for about 10 seconds)--and then the damndest standing ovation I have ever seen or heard. In that moment he gave me the cardinal conviction I bring to this meeting today. As we left the room when it was over he held my arm and said, "Jesus Christ, Mr. B., I didn't think they'd listen to me--but they did, didn't they?" Yes, Jerry, THEY DID. When that young man walked out of Robbinsdale High School that afternoon, he carried a conviction (shared by his friends) to last a life-time: Public Discourse is for every member of a democratic society. WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY.



DEBATE IS NOT AN ELITIST ACTIVITY!!!! To the degree we have "acquiesced" in making public high school debate center around trophies, ribbons, certificates, awards, standings, "win & loss records," and the like, WE HAVE ERRED. To the degree we have looked upon high school debate programs as EXTENSIONS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ARMS OF OUR SCHOOLS, WE HAVE ERRED. To the degree teams are coached by frustrated, middle-level bureaucrats in their mid-to-late twenties (who never achieved any distinction on-their-own) who (like "little league fathers") regard debate teams as an "extension of self-concept," WE HAVE ERRED. We must consider the product of our labors. Which law firm, University, or multi-national corporation, for that matter, will seek the services of 600-word-per-minute MOTOR-MOUTHED-ROBOTS produced by our present system without regard for spirit, or conviction, or what one poet called: "the things which are more excellent"??? How many more years will we tolerate coaches who plaster their ears against debate competition doors; who coach between rounds; who keep elaborate WIN-LOSS records; and who look upon high school debate teams as extensions of their warped egos??? We have reached the point where SMALLER IS BETTER AND LESS IS MORE.

On June 1, 1980, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, on Educational Channel 2, debate as it is currently practiced in Minnesota reached the quintessence of its public expression. Play that video tape for yourself (if you are a professional in verbal communications in public schools of Minnesota). Having done so, ask yourself: "Which program will serve young people better--the program shown on the High School League tape OR the in-house program in practice at Robbinsdale two decades ago?"

I will rely upon your judgment. These remarks are tendered for thoughtful consideration in faith there is collective wisdom in majority opinion garnered openly across our profession. I say debate as it is currently practiced in Minnesota REQUIRES MODIFICATION that we may be worthy to serve young people assigned to our care.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Don Blore is on the faculty at Cooper Senior High School, Robbinsdale, Minnesota, where he teaches American Government, is active with the student council, and is the current debate coach. He has been active with forensics for the past twenty-one years. This article is an edited transcription of his remarks in the program entitled "Is Competitive Debate as Generally Practiced a Desirable Speech Contest Activity?" presented September 1980 at the Speech Association of Minnesota State Convention, College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota.



## THE STATUS OF COMPETITIVE DEBATE IN MINNESOTA COLLEGES

Don Sikkink 1

### Introduction

At the 1979 Speech Association of Minnesota Convention in Mankato, Minnesota, a college participant in a panel on "How to Start a Debate Program" commented on the expanding number of college debate programs in Minnesota. The statement startled me for my perception was that college programs were decreasing. Realizing how our perceptions can fool us, it seemed desirable to try to more accurately answer the question of the status of college debate in Minnesota.

To attempt to answer that question a one-page survey form was developed, revised, and mailed to the Academic Dean or Vice President at the twenty-two public and private community-junior colleges in Minnesota and to the twenty-six four-year or more public and private colleges-universities that are accredited by both the North Central Association and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). All twenty-two of the two-year colleges returned the forms and twenty-four of the twenty-six four-year institutions returned the form.

Besides instructions and demographic items, the form asked three questions:

1. Did you have an organized, school supported competitive debate program which involved travel off your campus to participate in debate tournaments during the academic year 1969-70 (circle) YES NO

If yes, approximate number of students involved \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did you have an organized, school supported competitive debate program which involved travel off your campus to participate in debate tournaments during the academic year 1979-80 (circle) YES NO

If yes, approximate number of students involved \_\_\_\_\_

3. If you added or dropped competitive debate during this period, please indicate the major reason(s) for this decision.

### Results

The data from the eighteen public and four private two-year colleges indicated that only two debate programs existed in 1969-70 and that one of those programs, involving twenty

students, continued in 1979-80.

The data from the twenty-four four-year institutions is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

STATUS OF DEBATE IN MINNESOTA FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

Academic Year	Number of Schools With a Program	Number of Students Participating
1969-70	18	273
1979-80	10	94

\*Based on 24 of 26 such schools accredited by  
North Central and NCATE.

Discussion

The results indicate very limited competitive debate activity in the two-year colleges of Minnesota in 1969-70 and today.

The results for the four-year colleges show a substantial decline during the past ten years in both the number of schools and especially in the number of students involved in competitive debate. Thirty of the ninety-four students presently participating come from one college and thirty-four other students from three other schools. This means that six of the ten remaining colleges have "squads" of four, five, or six students.

In studying responses to question number 3 on the survey form, three themes seem to converge: (1) financial reasons; (2) questions about the value of debate; and (3) an increasing interest in competitive individual events. These themes are illustrated in the following responses:



"The funding from our Student Association was cancelled. Even if it had not been cancelled, I think our staff would have phased it out of our program as a relatively valueless activity."

"Our direction in the next few years is to continue heavy emphasis on I.E. and we will do more experimental style debate than National Debate Tournament style."

"I have become increasingly disenchanted with the style of delivery, the impossibly broad resolutions, and the win mentality; hence, I have not enthusiastically encouraged debate participation. Instead, more effort and time has been spent on individual events."

This debate about the value of debate is likely to continue. Hopefully the data presented here will eliminate that part of the debate about the present amount of competitive debate in Minnesota colleges.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Don Sikkink is Professor of Speech Communication at St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minnesota.

## AN AFFIRMATION OF SILENCE

Marvin D. Jensen & David A. Laube 1

Thomas Carlyle wrote: "Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together." 2 Perhaps, it is also the element in which human beings affirm themselves, together.

Yet, in our highly verbal world, silence is little valued. It is avoided by broadcasters, feared by novice teachers, distrusted by lovers, and often literally eliminated by the noise pollution of our technology. Wayne E. Oates suggests: "We run from silence because we meet our real selves there." 3 Moreover, those of us who are professionally responsible for understanding and improving communication sometimes offer too many words about words. Our linguistic preoccupation makes it difficult to recognize silence as an integral and positive element of human communication. Even the subdiscipline of nonverbal communication defines itself in relation to words--in this case, their absence.

We need to recover the view that silence can be constructive and communicative. In fact, silence can be one of the most thoughtful and intense forms of human expression. Martin Buber wrote: "Dialogue ought to be continued until . . . it culminates in a wordless being-with-one-another." 4

This paper explores some of the important purposes that silence serves in human dialogue.

### Silence That Liberates

Silence can be liberating. Rollo May has said that "freedom is the capacity to pause." He compared this pause to the "state of readiness" which precedes a dive, and enables the diver to assert self-control. In the silence which precedes a response, there is time to break the reflexive stimulus-reaction pattern. In the pause before speaking or acting, a person can exercise imagination, reflection, and decision--from which comes a chosen response instead of a dictated reaction. 5 This moment of creative silence is the essential point of Albert Ellis's rational-emotive therapy. He believes there can be a moment of "rational dispute" in which helplessness is overcome. By pausing to analyze the stimulus and one's feelings toward it, a person can choose among alternative responses--and no one who perceives alternatives is helpless. 6 This ability to respond has been identified by Viktor Frankl as the means of retaining personal freedom even against the strongest stimuli or most oppressive conditions. 7



If this creative silence is exercised, it does interrupt persuasion, behavior modification, and manipulative patterns of interaction. But it does not interrupt dialogue. Buber's extensive writings about I-Thou relationships include frequent references to the kind of dialogue in which partners confirm one another. Part of this mutual confirmation occurs in the silence which precedes address; it is this pause that allows acceptance and response to be deliberate. <sup>8</sup> It might even be said that a mature relationship is one in which the partners can be silent together without apprehension or suspicion. When that point is reached, each partner is liberated from social rituals--and uses words by choice instead of obligation. Thus, through the combination of constructive silence and chosen speech, both individual freedom and mutual confirmation can be sustained.

### Silence That Expresses Appreciation

Silence can be appreciative. In fact, active silence is essential to the reception of language or any other expressive form. Susan Sontag writes: "Silence remains, inescapably, a form of speech . . . and an element in a dialogue." In discussing creative expression, Sontag believes that artistic forms which elicit verbal responses have failed by "inviting a hyperactivity of consciousness that is not only dysfunctional, in terms of human capacities and feeling and acting, but actively deadens the mind and blunts the senses." In contrast, she contends that successful creative expression requires silence as a precondition to its reception, and "leaves silence in its wake." <sup>9</sup> Her conclusion echoes the ancient insight of Petrarch: "The applause of the foolish crowd will not please us so much as truth in silence." <sup>10</sup>

The accomplished public speaker, actor, or musician knows the moments of synergy, of oneness, with an audience. These rare moments almost always occur during the pauses of anticipation or appreciation in which the performer and each auditor are in silent communion. No one present in such a moment can doubt the reality of the dialogue which is occurring.

Edward Amend describes the best audience as "a seeing and hearing community." He suggests a level of hearing which is kind of artistry in itself.

To hear is to grasp for the whole in the parts, to attend to the aim of the performance toward which the artists are pressing. Surely the orchestra or the cast is aware of this attention given their performance. The audience is trying to gain access to the totality of their achievement. That kind of response does not need to wait for the final chords or the curtain call. Hearing is silence that is attempting to take measure and understand. <sup>11</sup>



In a world of noise, discourtesy and distraction, this level of appreciative silence--this level of dialogue--is infrequent, but still possible. Perhaps those who preserve some solitude in their lives best understand the value of silence, and can then bring appreciative listening to dialogue. John Berry's short story portrays such a listener. He writes of a Czech concert violinist who is lost in a storm and taken in by a lighthouse keeper. During the course of the evening, it becomes clear that the lighthouse keeper has never heard a violin. The violinist plays for him a Beethoven sonata against the background of the raging storm. The old man sits in silence "listening massively." When the violin is stilled, the silence continues until finally the old man looks up and says: "Yes, that is true." 12

### Silence That Heals

Silence can be healing. This is true in at least two contexts. First, therapists have found that silence is an important means of communication with clients. Eugene T. Gendlin uses the phrase "subverbal interaction" to describe the role of silence in his psychiatric counseling. He has described the effects of silence on one client:

When I stood next to this man in silence, it was not the case that nothing happened when we were silent. Clearly, he was very active inside himself, and . . . I had a great deal to do with the process, and with the quality of this process, within him.

Perhaps most important, Gendlin writes that the proportions of speech to silence rarely change during a series of thirty counseling interviews; his approach does not press the client to become more verbal, but welcomes both words and silences as parts of the evolving therapeutic dialogue. 13 Tindall and Robinson confirm the importance of silence in their study of twenty-two counseling interviews. They conclude that deliberate pauses by counselors are frequently successful in eliciting constructive client responses--in the forms of additional information, self-assessment, and development of plans of action. 14

Silence can also be healing in personal relationships. At times, it may be the only way of putting conflict to rest. Contemporary literature often demonstrates the inadequacy of words to resolve crises in human relationships. A recurring theme in existentialist philosophy and literature is that separation and isolation are thus inevitable. However, an alternative theme suggests that separation can sometimes be bridged in silence. In Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, a war of words rages for three acts; but the venom is finally exorcised when George and Martha acknowledge in silent embrace that their only certainty is each other. 15 In Larry McMurtry's The Last Picture Show, no verbal explanations nor apologies can resolve the



betrayals; yet, in silence, two people choose to return to each other. 16 In examples such as these, it can be said that dialogue begins when words end.

### Silence That Fosters Renewal

Silence can be renewing. The last decade began with much attention to encounter groups--which were characterized by excessive verbalization among strangers. It is not difficult to see how these trends evolved into a narcissism which Peter Marin, Christopher Lasch and others have described as a dominant pattern in contemporary America. 17 Too much self-explanation leads to self-preoccupation, and self-preoccupation leads finally to stagnation and isolation--the destruction of dialogue. Daniel Boorstin has expressed an historian's fear of too many self-centered words, and says "democracy depends on communication which is sharing, not that which is purely self-expressive, explosive or vituperative." 18 Lance Morrow agrees and is among those who believe the eighties "may be a time for a touch of reticence." 19

Masters of words have often been seekers of silence, and have found in brief or extended quiet a renewed perspective and sharpened focus. After his first presidential nomination, Adlai Stevenson returned to Illinois and spent an hour of silent reflection in the living room of Abraham Lincoln's Springfield home. 20 Buckminster Fuller took a sabbatical from writing and lecturing to recover the language of insight without pretension. 21 A few years ago, Jane Howard launched a concerted search for silence--which finally became a quest for her own identity. 22 In each instance, these thoughtful, creative people emerged from their silences with renewed purpose and went on to find their most memorable words.

Tillie Olsen regrets the silences in the careers of many creative writers (including Hemingway, Cather, and Melville). 23 Nonetheless, the silences finally ended for most of these writers, and their later work often shows a spare and graceful precision of language. Their silences, although agonizing at times, may have been tempering--not a wasting--of their creative voices. Moreover, the end of silence and the renewal of creative expression may yet come after the words seem forever lost. In her journal The House By The Sea, May Sarton wrote with regret that the voice of poetry was stilled within her. 24 Yet, three years later, she published a new book of poetry, rightly entitled Halfway to Silence. 25

### Conclusion

Adlai Stevenson believed: "In quiet places, reason abounds; in quiet people, there is vision and purpose." 26 Liberation, appreciation, healing, and renewal are born of serious thought--and Robert Reilly writes that "solitude and silence are the crucibles of serious thought." 27 Out of these crucibles, we may draw the vision and find the language to ask the needed questions, and venture together the better answers.

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**A STUDY OF TEACHER IMMEDIACY,  
TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS, AND STUDENT ATTENTIVENESS  
AT THE JUNIOR HIGH AND SENIOR HIGH LEVELS**

Earl E. McDowell  
Carlene E. McDowell  
Janet Hyerdahl 1

**Introduction**

Each academic year teachers at various educational levels and from various course areas are evaluated by students. The items of the teacher evaluation questionnaires are designed to measure the affect dimensions of teaching, e.g., attitudes toward the classroom atmosphere, content of the course, exercises in the course, and nonverbal and verbal behaviors of the instructor. The implicit assumption with these evaluation forms is that they can measure what constitutes good teaching. Past research by Getzels and Jackson, 2 Brim, 3 and Cyphert 4 has concluded that investigators know relatively little more today about what constitutes good teaching than they did at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Research in the early 1960's by Travers, 5 Cronbach, 6 and DeCecco 7 suggested that systematic investigations of affect, behavioral, and cognitive learning domains would aid our understanding of the teaching evaluation construct. For example, in 1968 Bloom conceptualized relevant areas of learning as: (1) affect domain (development of a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward learning); (2) behavioral domain (behaviors that are called for or implied by cognitive knowledge); and (3) cognitive domain (attention, perception, comprehension, and retention of knowledge). 8

In a 1979 study, Janis Andersen defined a good teacher as one who produces positive outcomes in the affect, behavioral, and cognitive domains which are termed "teaching effectiveness variables." 9 Since positive student affect is essential if the learning process is to be enhanced, comprehensive studies are needed to help us better understand just what constitutes effective teaching. Believing that positive student affect evolves from positive interpersonal relationships, she designed a study to isolate nonverbal immediacy variables and to examine their relationship with the three domains (affect, behavioral, and cognitive) as well as their relationship with an interpersonal solidarity measurement. From Andersen's extensive review of literature, we may conclude that "immediacy" consists of communication behaviors engaged in when a person (1) maintains close physical distance, (2) communicates on the same spatial plane, (3) is not in front of or behind the other interactant, (4) touches, (5) uses direct body orientation, (6) is relaxed, (7) uses overall purposeful body movement, (8) engages in positive head nods, (9)



uses eye contact, (10) spends time with the other interactant, (11) dresses informally, and (12) is vocally expressive. Her research was a pioneer effort to determine the role of immediacy in evaluating teaching effectiveness. The results for college students revealed that significant positive relationships exist between immediacy variables and affect, behavioral, and solidarity variables, but there is no relationship between immediacy variables and cognitive learning.

In this paper, we will report the results of our experiment which utilized the same testing instruments used by Andersen with college students, but our study applied the instruments to junior high and senior high students enrolled in communication courses. Two exploratory variables were also included to determine if homophily (perceived similarity among people) and student attentiveness variables correlate with immediacy variables, teaching effectiveness variables, and the interpersonal solidarity variable.

Sex (male or female), educational level (junior high or senior high), and final course grade (A, A-, B, B-, C, C-, D, D-) were the independent variables in this study. These independent variables were used to determine if they help to explain the large variance which was first reported in Andersen's study. Our hypothesis is that much of this variance may be explained by demographic variables.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided interpretation of the data:

1. Will there be significant relationships among immediacy variables, teaching effectiveness variables, and the attentiveness variables?
2. What are the means for male and female students in rating teachers on immediacy variables, teaching effectiveness variables, and students' perception of their nonverbal attentiveness signals variables?
3. What are the means for junior high and senior high groups in rating teachers on immediacy variables, teaching effectiveness variables, and students' perception of their nonverbal attentiveness signals variables?
4. What are the means for final grade level groups in rating teachers on immediacy variables, teaching effectiveness variables, and students' perception of their nonverbal attentiveness signals variables?

### Procedures

The sample consisted of junior high students (n=163, 89 males and 74 females) and senior high students (n=212, 85 males and 127 females) from two Minnesota schools. Students who completed the questionnaire were enrolled in communication courses during spring, 1979.

### Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale (BII), Generalized Immediacy Scale (GI), affect variable scales (communication practices, subject matter or content, and course instructor), behavioral commitment scales (engaging in communication practices and enrolling in another course), homophily scale, interpersonal solidarity scale, attentiveness scale, and cognitive learning scores (course grade).

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### Statistical Analysis

Pearson product coefficients and means were computed for each variable. T-tests were computed between the means on dependent measures for the various groups.

### Results

In Table 1 the correlation among variables is reported. The results revealed significant relationships between and among affect, behavioral, immediacy, homophily, and attentiveness variables, but low correlation between these variables and the cognitive learning variable (final grade groups).

The means are reported in Tables 2 through 4. T-tests were completed to determine significant differences between groups. These results indicated significant differences between biological sex groups and educational level groups in rating the Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy scales and Interpersonal Solidarity scale. Significant differences also occurred between educational level groups in rating homophily scales. The results of the final grade groups revealed significant differences among groups on all dependent measures.



Table 1

Correlation Coefficients  
Teaching Effectiveness Variables and Predictors

	ACC	AI	BCEP	BCED	CL	BII	GI	SOL	HOM	ATT
Affect:										
Comm Practice	.67	.63	.59	.46	.16	.38	.50	.55	.17	.44
Affect:										
Course Content		.61	.65	.56	.11	.37	.44	.51	.18	.43
Affect: Instructor			.56	.63	.36	.39	.54	.72	.18	.41
Behavioral Commitment:										
engaging in Practice				.67	.19	.39	.37	.52	.18	.39
Behavioral Commitment:										
enrolling in another course					.12	.43	.47	.47	.19	.32
Cognitive Learning						.32	.17	.19	.26	.31
BII Scale							.60	.43	-.01	.13
GI Scale								.53	.21	.20
Solidarity									.31	.54
Homophily, Attitude, Attentiveness										.20

Table 2

Means for Biological Sex Groups  
on Dependent Measures

		Means				
		BII	GI	ACP	ACC	AI
Males		73.6	33.2	15.1	15.5	16.8
Females		70.4	33.2	15.3	15.7	15.9

		BCEP	BCEC	CI	SOL	HOM	ATT
Males		14	12.8	4.2	82.9	11	18.0
Females		15	12.8	4.6	78.0	11.2	18.5

Table 3  
Means for Educational Level/Groups  
on Dependent Measures

	Means					
	BII	GI	ACP	ACC	AI	BCEP
Junior High	68.7	17	14.7	15	16.8	13.9
Senior High	74.8	16.3	15.7	16.2	16.1	15.1

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	BCEC	CL	SOL	HOM	ATT
Junior High	12.1	4.5	85.5	16.4	18.1
Senior High	13.3	4.3	76.1	10.9	18.4

Table 4  
Means for Final Grade Groups  
on Dependent Measures

	Means									
	BII	GI	ACP	ACC	AI	BCEP	BCEC	SOL	HOM	ATT
D-	63.4	15.4	14.7	14.5	15.4	13.4	11.0	71.9	9.7	17.1
D	63.1	14.7	13.2	13.7	14.6	12.3	11.4	68.4	11.2	16.7
C-	73.4	14.2	15.9	16.1	17.0	12.9	11.2	69.6	9.7	17.4
C	70.6	16.9	15.8	16.0	16.2	14.9	12.6	80.1	11.0	18.5
B-	71.4	15.5	15.2	15.3	16.9	14.8	13.3	81.2	11.0	18.7
B	71.3	17.3	15.1	15.6	17.0	15.0	13.1	84.8	11.4	17.8
A-	76.2	16.7	16.1	17.0	17.5	15.9	13.8	90.5	12.3	20.1
A	76.2	16.4	16.5	16.8	17.6	16.0	15.0	89.4	13.1	20.5

### Conclusion

This study indicates that high school teachers who demonstrate good nonverbal communication (immediacy), engage in interpersonal communication with students and utilize an informal approach in teaching are rated higher by students in terms of teaching effectiveness. Thus, students who perceive teachers' communication behaviors as immediate are more willing to answer questions in class, engage in group discussions, and present speeches. Students indicate that they would enroll in other courses taught by teachers who utilize good nonverbal communication.



Students also indicate that they are more nonverbally active toward teachers who utilize good nonverbal communication and delivery. For example, students would "nod their heads," "lean forward," and "smile" at teachers who use good immediacy cues. Not only are students more attentive toward teachers who utilize good nonverbal communication, but they develop closer personal relationships with them. For example, students indicate that they "like this teacher," "trust this teacher," "are influenced by this teacher," and "interact with this teacher." In addition, students perceived that they think and behave more like teachers who utilize good nonverbal communication.

As Table 3 indicates, students who receive "A" or "A-" in the course rated teachers higher in immediacy variables, teaching effectiveness variables, and were more attentive toward their teacher. Unlike Andersen's study which found no correlation between cognitive learning and instructor evaluations at the college level, we conclude from our study that teacher immediacy at the high school level is extremely important in order for students (1) to develop a positive attitude toward the teacher and the communication activities, (2) to engage in communication exercises, (3) to give nonverbal feedback to the teacher, (4) and to prepare well for tests.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Earl McDowell is Associate Professor in the Department of Rhetoric and the Laboratory for Research in Scientific Communication, University of Minnesota, St. Paul; Carlene McDowell is a Language Arts teacher at Burnsville Senior High School, Burnsville, Minnesota; Janet Hyerdahl is a Language Arts teacher at Buffalo Junior High School, Buffalo, Minnesota.

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**WILLIAM GLADSTONE'S SPEECH AT WEST CALDER:  
A Rhetorical Analysis**

Steven Zelinsky 1

Historian David Strother described the man as the "most prolific speaker Britain has ever known." Historian Erich Eych described the event as "an epoch in British history." The man was William Ewart Gladstone. The event was Gladstone's speech, "On Foreign and Domestic Affairs," delivered November 27, 1879, at West Calder, in the district of Midlothia, Scotland.

In order to analyze Gladstone's historic speech, I have chosen Richard Whately's Elements of Rhetoric, first published in 1828. I chose Whately for two reasons. The first is that in this, Whately's most famous work, he first conceives and explains the theory of presumption and the burden of proof. These concepts can be used by a speaker to identify and conditions which a rhetorical strategy must meet or overcome in order for persuasion to occur. The second reason I chose Whately is because Gladstone was a student of Whately at Oxford. Both were at Oxford from 1828 through 1831--Richard Whately teaching his theory of presumption and burden of proof and young William Gladstone learning them. Gladstone's friend and first biographer, John Morly, wrote in 1902 that Gladstone attributed his success as an orator from studying Aristotle and Richard Whately.

In order to understand the significance of Gladstone's speech we must first understand the historical situation. At the age of 65, William Gladstone decided to retire from politics. He had served in the House of Commons for over 43 years--the last seven years as Prime Minister of England. After three years of retirement Gladstone felt compelled to return to the political arena. Three years of watching the British government being run by his arch rival, Benjamin Disraeli, was apparently more than he could stand! In 1879 Gladstone turned down the chance to stand for election in Leeds, England, where his Liberal party was in control and where virtually any candidate they put forward was sure to be elected. Instead, Gladstone chose to oppose Lord Dalkeith in Midlothia, Scotland. Dalkeith was a member of the Disraeli government and had represented Midlothia for over 38 years. William Gladstone was a great politician, but he was undertaking a very difficult task.

Turning to Richard Whately's theory of presumption and burden of proof can help us understand the magnitude of Gladstone's rhetorical task. I will be using three aspects of Whately's theory in my analysis: the first is presumption for the existing institution; the second is presumption against paradox; and the third is called deference. Whately states that presumption assumes that the policy in effect at the present time will continue to stay in effect. Those values accepted at the present



time will continue to be accepted. Those things acknowledged as fact at the present time will continue to be acknowledged as fact. Presumption favors the status quo, the current state of affairs. The burden of proof is the obligation to provide good and sufficient reason for changing the current state of affairs. By identifying presumption and the burden of proof a speaker can identify the conditions a rhetorical strategy must meet or overcome in order for successful persuasion to occur.

Whately states there is presumption for the existing institution. No defense is necessary until sufficient evidence has been adduced against it. One of the major campaign issues of 1879 was the crumbling British economy. American corn and wheat were entering England duty free and were undercutting the prices needed by British farmers. Gladstone favored the current system of free trade and wanted no new duties placed on American corn and wheat. The Disraeli government, however, proposed changing the current system and placing new duties on American grains. If Whately's theory is applied, that presumption favors the current situation (in this case, free trade and free entry of American products), then presumption favored Gladstone's position.

Rhetorically, this was a positive factor. It meant that Gladstone need only defend the current system, which according to Whately, is much easier to do than to argue for a change in the system. Gladstone defended the current system when he stated:

Gentlemen, I believe your fair claims are two. The first is to be able to buy every article in the cheapest possible market and have no needless burdens laid upon you. But this claim has been conceded, for it is currently fulfilled.

Gladstone defended the current system by reviewing the arguments which caused the system to be instituted to begin with. Gladstone, therefore, chose the easier rhetorical strategy of defense--easier because presumption was on his side.

A second kind of presumption according to Whately is presumption against paradox. Whately states there is presumption against anything paradoxical. Anything which goes against the audience's preconceived beliefs or attitudes would be paradoxical. The audience which Gladstone addressed was comprised mainly of farmers and other individuals who depended upon agriculture for their livelihood. They were being hurt economically by the lack of agricultural tariffs. Therefore, the initial prevailing attitude among the audience favored change. This supported the Disraeli position and opposed Gladstone's. In terms of presumption against paradox, it meant that Gladstone had the more difficult burden of proof to show that the audience's attitudes were wrong. These attitudes are extremely important since they represent an obstacle for persuasion.



Gladstone overcame this potential dilemma by proposing an alternative solution—one which solved the farmers economic problems without changing the tariff structure and solved Gladstone's problem with the burden of proof. He stated: "Among meeting the means of the difficulties in which we are placed (perhaps) we should direct our attention to the production of fruits, vegetables, or flowers, of all things which have previously been consigned solely to garden production." By proposing this change Gladstone met the audience's demand for a change and eliminated the paradox. With the elimination of the paradox, Gladstone no longer had the obligation to accept the burden of proof. Gladstone could, therefore, maintain his previous, easier, rhetorical strategy of defense.

A third aspect of presumption according to Whately is deference. Deference is the way in which the audience views the speaker as an authority figure. It is based on feelings, often, according to Whately, upon whimsical and unaccountable feelings. William Gladstone was a well known politician and orator—well liked by the people in general. Gladstone played upon this fact when he began his address with: "I am warmed with the enthusiastic welcome which you have offered to me in every form and every quarter." By recognizing the truly warm welcome he had received from the audience and through the use of the term "we" throughout the speech, Gladstone reminded the audience of the audience's and the speaker's past, friendly bonds. Whately says that deference will have an effect upon the burden of proof. If the audience accepts the speaker as an authority figure, they are more likely to trust and, therefore, accept the speaker's statements as facts. Gladstone did not leave all this goodwill to chance, however. His campaign manager hired approximately one hundred individuals to greet Gladstone at the train station and carry Gladstone on their shoulders to the speaking hall amidst a fanfare of cheers! Gladstone, therefore, enhanced his deference both rhetorically and situationally.

Gladstone chose a speaking strategy of defense based on the presumption for the existing institution. In order for this strategy to work, however, Gladstone had to overcome the presumption against paradox which he did by providing a change the audience demanded but with a solution which did not change the tariff structure. Gladstone then enhanced his role as an authority figure, increasing his deference both rhetorically and situationally.

The London Times, November 29, 1879, reported that Gladstone's speech was a great feat of great eloquence. The 4,000 member audience gave Gladstone a standing ovation. Most historians agree that the address at West Calder was the turning point in Gladstone's campaign. He went on to win the election by a narrow margin, was immediately elected Prime Minister once again, and for the next 16 years Gladstone's policies would



dominate British policy.

My analysis of Gladstone's speech demonstrates two things. First, Richard Whately's theory of presumption and burden of proof are useful concepts for the rhetorical critic. Using these concepts can help us, like Gladstone, identify the conditions which a rhetorical strategy must meet or overcome in order to be successful persuasion. And second, William Gladstone was indeed a good student. He was able to master and use skillfully his teacher's theories in everyday life--which allowed him to become one of Britain's greatest and most skillful orators.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Steven Zelinsky is a 1981 graduate of St. Olaf College where he majored in speech and economics. This article is a transcription of his competitive forensics speech used in the events of "Communication Analysis" and "Rhetorical Criticism." Mr. Zelinsky placed second at the American Forensics Association National Individual Events Tournament held in Towson, Maryland, (April 1981), and fifth out of 173 competitors at the National Forensics Association tournament held in Bowling Green, Kentucky, (April 1981). Since this was originally an oral presentation, the original oral style has been retained in this written version.

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**ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE MUTINY AT OPIS:  
A Rhetorical Criticism**

Jeffrey D. Brand 1

His military career was probably the greatest the world has ever known. At the time of his death at age 32, he ruled over more than two million square miles of land and was richer than any man of his time. He was even claimed to be the begotten son of a god. He was remembered in legend from Iceland to China; he is still invoked as ancestor patron by tribesmen in Afghanistan and fishermen on the Aegean Sea. 2

His name was Alexander III--better known as Alexander the Great. His success and reputation extended much further than exploits on the battlefields, however. He was also known as a scholar and as a public speaker whose ideas changed much of Western civilization.

An ancient Greek handbook on rhetoric entitled Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum, or Rhetoric to Alexander, written in the early fourth century B.C., provides an appropriate means for analyzing Alexander's speech at Opis. There are two reasons why this particular work is appropriate. First, although he was a Macedonian, Alexander became fascinated with the Greek way of life. Like most members of royalty, he received a rather extensive education--ranging from history to natural science to rhetoric. Influenced by this education, Alexander sought to speak, think, and even to act as a Greek. 3 Using Rhetorica, the Greek influence in Alexander's speech can be examined. Second, while Rhetorica is closely related to Aristotle's work, it is today considered to be the work of Anaximenes of Lampsacus. 4 Rhetorica represents the rhetorical training that Alexander received as a student. Two of his tutors were, after all, Aristotle and Anaximenes. 5

Using Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum to analyze one of Alexander's speeches provides a unique opportunity. Most rhetorical criticisms will compare a speech with a method, but that method is rarely known to the speaker. In this case, a comparison can be made between a speaker's rhetorical training and one of his later speeches. Using Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum, the rhetorical method Alexander studied, the practicality of Alexander's rhetorical training may be seen in a real life situation.

It was at Opis, an area just south of present day Bagdad, that Alexander faced a problem that was much different from the enemies he had faced on the battlefields. The "enemy" in this situation was Alexander's army, threatening to mutiny because of Alexander's decision to send back those men he viewed as too old to be effective in combat.



It was not a mutiny of men who wished to go home, it was a mutiny of men who wished to stay put! Those scheduled to go saw no future at home tending sheep or working at other boring jobs. They were not upset at how Alexander was leading them; they wanted to remain to reap more of the wealth and excitement which they thought would be inevitable if they continued to fight for Alexander. 6

This was not, therefore, a situation that Alexander could resolve through fighting; it was a rhetorical situation that required a method of persuasion to resolve it. With his troops threatening to abandon him, Alexander had the task of persuading them to stay.

In *Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum*, the oratory called "dissuasion" is defined as "an attempt to hinder people from some line of speech or action." 7 This was Alexander's goal, and so it will be the guidelines in *Rhetorica* about this form of oratory that will be used to analyze Alexander's speech. Speeches of dissuasion, says the handbook, are broken down into four parts. The first part is an "introduction"; the second part is the "exposition"; the third part is "anticipation" of the "arguments of the other side"; and the final part should be an "appeal to feelings.

It should be noted that one difficulty in examining speeches of this time period is that they are rarely genuine. Most are examples of what would probably have been said at that occasion. In Arrian's account, however, the speech at Opis can be considered a fairly accurate version of not only what was said to Alexander's men, but also of how it was said. 8

In the "introduction," or request for attention, Alexander reminded his soldiers of his father (Philip) and the successes his family had brought to them. He did so by recounting for them the kind of life they were leading before the time of his father.

Philip found you a tribe of impoverished vagabonds, most of you dressed in skins, feeding a few sheep on the hills and fighting, feebly enough, to keep them from your neighbors . . . . He gave you cloaks to wear instead of skins; he brought you down from the hills into the plains; he taught you to fight on equal terms with the enemy at your borders, till you knew that your safety lay not, as once, in your mountain strongholds, but in your own valor. 9

This introduction helped Alexander request attention by using his father's favorable reputation; on that basis, he asked that his men listen to him.

In the second major part of the speech, the "exposition" or stating of past facts or the present situation, Alexander reminded his men of what he had done to carry on his father's deeds.

These services which my father rendered you are, indeed, intrinsically great; yet they are small compared with my own. I inherited from him a handful of gold and silver cups, coin in the treasury less than sixty talents and eight times that amount of debts incurred by him; yet to add to this burden I borrowed a further sum of eight hundred talents, and, marching out from a country too poor to maintain you decently, laid open for you at a blow, and in spite of Persia's naval supremacy, the gates of the Hellespont.

In the third section, the "anticipation of arguments of the other side," Alexander again sought to tie himself more closely to his men. He did so by pointing out how he did not live any better than his men, and how he, too, had sustained injury in battle. He challenged any of his men to compare injuries with him.

But does any man among you honestly feel that he has suffered more for me than I have suffered for him? Come now--if you are wounded, strip and show your wounds, and I will show mine.

These first three sections seem to show a very developed Greek style. They follow the format of the Greek speech of dissuasion. In addition, the boasting by Alexander of his achievements and successes was rather typical of an ancient Greek's reaction to such an opportunity! 10

The fourth part, however, is different in Alexander's application. The "appeal to feelings" he used was the standard envy and hatred that *Rhetorica* proclaimed the most effective. But Alexander, perhaps remembering Aristotle's teaching, adapted his conclusion to his immediate audience. The Greeks, in concluding their speeches, never ended on a harsh note--even their most fiery oratory seemed to taper off at the end. Alexander, however, ended this speech with a final, single harsh word--an ending that would not be used by the Greek orators. 11

And now, as you all want to go, go, every one of you, and tell them at home that you deserted your king who had lead you from victory to victory across the world, and left him to the care of the strangers he had conquered; and no doubt your words will win you the praises of men and the blessing of heaven. Go!



By using that last word, which in Greek signified a dismissal or refusal, Alexander drove home his point. This adaptation to his audience was necessary because his audience was Macedonian, and not Greek; and this is the only place in Alexander's speech in which the Greek form is not used. With that single exception, however, the prescribed format--taught to and then used by Alexander--fit the occasion perfectly.

After delivering his last words, Alexander left his troops and confined himself to his tent, refusing to speak to anybody. The response by his men was silence, with no attempt to question Alexander's speech. It wasn't until the third day after Alexander's speech that the full effect sunk in. On that third day, Alexander ordered that the countrymen in his army be replaced by men from other countries who supported him. This implied that Alexander was abandoning his own men! This proved to be too much for his countrymen, however, and out of shame for their actions, his men surrounded Alexander's tent, threw down their weapons as a sign of surrender, and cried and begged for his forgiveness.

Analysis of this speech shows how Alexander used the "introduction," "exposition," and "anticipation of the arguments of the other side" to bring his men from a position of hostility and anger to one of almost equal footing. The "appeal to feelings" showed a leader deeply hurt by his men's actions. The abrupt conclusion of the speech combined with the personnel order on the third day to provide effective emotional appeal that enabled Alexander to persuade his audience to abandon their threat of mutiny.

Alexander's speech at Opis followed the standards, style, and strategy which he had been taught as a young man by his tutors. Alexander's speech demonstrates to us, again, that speaking is a skill which has been and still can be taught. Speakers are made, not born. Aristotle and Anaximenes of Lamp-sacus would surely have been proud of their pupil--Alexander the Great.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Jeffrey Brand is a speech major at St. Olaf College. This article is based upon his competitive forensics speech used in the categories of "Rhetorical Criticism" and "Communication Analysis."

2. Most of the background on Alexander's life and the mutiny at Opis can be found in Robin Lane Fox, Alexander the Great: A Biography (New York: The Dial Press, 1973).

3. William W. Tarn, Alexander the Great, Volume II Sources and Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 295.

4. Aristotle, Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 261.

5. Ibid.

6. Fox, p. 424.

7. Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum, p. 377.

8. Tarn, p. 286.

9. All of the speech quotations are from Arrian, The Life of Alexander the Great, trans. Aubury de Selincourt (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 232-35.

10. Tarn, p. 291.

11. Ibid., p. 295.



**THE DONAHUE INTERVIEW WITH JERRY FALWELL AND WILLIAM COFFIN:  
A Case Study of Language Use in Communication**

Linda Snyder 1

On October 20, 1980, Phil Donahue interviewed two diverse religious personalities: (1) William Sloan Coffin, senior minister at Riverside Church in New York City who has been involved in "liberal causes" such as protest of the Vietnam war and (2) Jerry Falwell, a highly publicized minister who has his own television show and is politically active as a private citizen associated with the moral majority. The interview took place in Chicago, Illinois, with about two hundred people present in the immediate audience and six million present in the television audience, 2 of which the majority is usually women. 3

This paper is a rhetorical criticism 4 of the interview conducted by Phil Donahue. To effectively criticize his act, I have applied Burke's rhetorical philosophy as described by Bernard Brock 5 and Richard Weaver's language-action approach. 6 I combined these particular theories because Burke does not deal as specifically with language as Weaver does, thus it seemed appropriate to apply Weaver's standard under the pentad term "agency." The task of this analysis is three-fold. First, I will review Bernard Brock's presentation of Burke's rhetorical philosophy and review Weaver's "Grammatical Categories" essay. Second, I will apply their ideas to the discussion-interview between Jerry Falwell and William Coffin. 7 Finally, I will draw conclusions from the analysis.

Burke asserts that verbal symbols (words) are meaningful acts from which motives can be derived. The substance of language is nothing but symbols; for humans, all communication is dependent upon symbols. Therefore, symbols and language are reality. Burke contends that the interrelationships of society can be explained by considering: (1) the concepts of hierarchy; (2) the acceptance or rejection of this hierarchy; and (3) the guilt, purification, and redemption processes that accompany a hierarchical system. Brock points out that there must be structure of some kind to analyze these interrelationships, which Burke has provided. Professor Brock states: "The pentad, together with the knowledge of identification, and the innately dramatic nature of human society, provides the critic with a vocabulary and a way of proceeding."

Identification occurs to the extent that the audience accepts and rejects the same ideas, people, and institutions that the speaker does. The speaker's language reveals the substance which he expects his listener's to identify. Consciously or subconsciously, his words reveal his attitudes. The other tool, the pentad, is descriptive. It gives the answers to what? who? when?

where? why? and how? Its five major terms are act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose.

Richard Weaver's essay provides additional perspectives when he states (1) that language is reality and (2) that language reflects a hierarchy as the language user sees it. Weaver writes: "In this approach, then, we are regarding language as a standard objective reality." By applying all of his knowledge, one is able, as Brock says, "To uncover the substance of speech and rhetorical strategies used by the speaker for three reasons: (1) because verbal symbols are meaningful acts that are strategies reflecting the attitudes of the speaker; (2) because these attitudes represent the speaker's acceptance and rejection of the present hierarchy of society; and (3) because acceptance and rejection results in the eternal process of guilt, purification, and redemption for society."

In Burkeian terms, the agents of my analysis were Phil Donahue, Jerry Falwell, and William Coffin. The purpose for each agent was different. Donahue hoped to contrast two types of Christian thought on controversial issues. Falwell's purpose was to gain support for his ideas and make them appear somewhat logical. Coffin's purpose was to refute Falwell and possibly to get people to examine issues on a more complicated level. The agency is how they did it. Each man tried to achieve his goal by espousing his view on the issue at hand. For each to be successful, his language had to be successful.

Weaver claims that sentence structure can reveal a lot about a speaker. So, he first analyzes sentence structure and then deals even more specifically with language as he analyzes specific parts of speech such as verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Weaver says that a simple sentence can relate two classes, making a simple categorical proposition. It can be used when a person sees the world as a conglomeration of things, like a child, or it can be used for a synoptic or dramatic spot in one's discourse. Falwell used simple sentences in the categorical sense, relating two classes by saying: "We're pro-life. We're pro-moral. We're pro-traditional family. We're pro-American." Weaver says such usage indicates "a positive mood on the part of the speaker and often induces a generality approach." Another example of Falwell's usage is: "We're very nationalistic. We're not isolationists."

Coffin did not use simple sentences in the same way. He used them for a dramatic or synoptic spot in his speech. In about four or five places in the script he said: "It's more complicated" or "It's more complicated than that"--emphasizing the complexity of a world situation or important issues. While trying to make his case for decreasing the defense budget, Coffin used simple sentences for emphasis again. He said:

There is no defense in the nuclear age. We have no



defense against strategic nuclear missiles, and the Soviets have no defense. We have offense. We have offense. We have offense budget. We don't have a defense budget.

The complex sentence distinguishes rank or value or places them as cause and effect. Weaver said, "The complex sentence be found nearly always to express some sort of hierarchy, whether spatial, moral, or causal, with its subordinate members describing the lower orders."

Falwell said, "And I think our country for the last twenty years has been going through some international embarrassment because we've been violating some moral principles!" This statement expresses Falwell's idea that America is "number one," that it, as a great, well-meaning country, should not have to go through embarrassment. Also, the moral principles that America has "violated" are obviously the proper ones to live by--the best ones--which in this case constitute Falwell's interpretation of Christian morals. Hence, a hierarchy of countries and moral principles emerges. Later in the hour, when defending his position on the ERA, he said, "For example, I think that women could lose some financial benefits from deserting husbands, who I think have an obligation to support a woman for the rest of their life, if he marries her, and I think that would endorse homosexual marriages, and I think it would put women in combat, all of which I oppose." By this statement, he splits man and woman into two distinct classes: he does not detail what roles he thinks each should play; he takes such knowledge as obvious. Similarly, on government defense, he said, "And I think that the government has--not just as a right, an obligation to protect its citizenry." This complex sentence reveals his belief in a hierarchy where government is above citizens. Later in the interview, he explicitly confirmed this when he said, "Government isn't always right, but someone has to be in charge."

Coffin also used the complex sentence which reveals some of his hierarchical notions. In their discussion about disarmament, Coffin said, "We haven't been serious because we've always wanted to be number one." He does not believe that we Americans are number one and he also does not believe we should attempt to be number one. He supported his view with Biblical examples and references. Therefore, his hierarchy of nations is quite different from Falwell's. Likewise, his hierarchy between government and people (citizens) differs. Coffin said, "And this is the wake up and think kind of thing that I would hope the Christian churches would be concerned enough about because it is not our obligation as Christians to return God's love with the ashes of our grandchildren." In a hierarchy, he sees the Christian church above the government; the church is a responsible group that must act on the government's mistakes.



The compound sentence, which was used more by Coffin than by Falwell, can be interpreted in many ways. Weaver says a complex sentence can express a balance between parts. Also, that by "the very contrivedness of its structure, it suggests something, formed above the welter of experience." If the complex sentence is about the world, the compound sentence can express more of a philosophical interpretation, but can also express, once, again, a simplicity--the simple pouring together of simple sentences, like a child would do. If used in a child-like way, the juxtapositioning of ideas is interesting, sometimes amusing in a compound sentence.

Falwell said, "I have an obligation to my three children to see to it that they enjoy the same free America that we have known, and I think that freedom is the basic moral issue of them all." He speaks as though he has risen above the situation and can see that it is a moral issue--he has the "welter of experience" that Weaver describes. When speaking about the free enterprise and capitalist systems, Falwell also said, "None of those are perfect, but they certainly outdistance anything else human minds have come up with in our world in human history." Here, he is making balance with his compound sentence. He is using it for a type of justification, a statement of qualification.

Many of Coffin's attitudes are revealed. First of all, he said, "He's quoted Solomon, you know, about the greatness and shame of a nation, and I agree with that, but what constitutes, you see, the greatness?" Coffin speaks from a higher level of experience--showing that he has thought through these issues before. He truly believes in his answer. After Falwell declaims about the Russians, Coffin comes back by saying, "I agree with you on all that, but I also trust that the Russians live and breathe the same way we do, and that it may be possible for both sides to transcend their ideological differences and realize that we have a moral responsibility to avoid global conflict." Once again, he is looking at the problem from a different angle; he sees all that Falwell sees, and more.

One last example of Coffin's use of the compound sentence is when he said, "I'm very sympathetic, but we cannot as pastors, teachers, give people what they want, which is obviously nice, clean, clear, neat answers." He produces a balance, but also shows that wisdom gained from a different level of experience. This emerges from Coffin's speech much more than from Falwell's.

The contrast between the attitude of the two men is shown further by looking at nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Weaver says there is a resentment of any attempt to gain maximum effect through the adjective because it cannot stand alone. It represents a defective reality. He said, "A style is stronger when it depends mainly on substantives sharp enough to convey their own attributes." In examining the script, I found that adjectives were not misused in any extreme way. Falwell refers



to "national honor" once where "honor" would have been sufficient, and Coffin, likewise, says "innocent people" where "people" would have been satisfactory. Both were small attempts for emotional appeals, but I would say, in general, this tactic was rarely used. Once, in sarcasm, Coffin actually struck at Falwell with his adjective "thoughtful" when he said, "That's a very thoughtful comment."

Verbs were used as an expression of the world as the speaker saw it or for audience adaptation. Falwell said, "We do not believe it's wrong to be flag-waving Americans and to love our country and respect our government and believe in the free enterprise system and capitalism." Love, respect, and believe all come off as being "American" verbs. He thus creates identification with the audience.

Connotative nouns were another way the men strengthened their positions. Falwell accused Coffin of being in a tirade against him. Tirade does not carry good connotations. An excellent example of how choice of words illustrates reality is this:

Falwell: I disagree with the philosophy that we should encourage young people to defy their government in a time of war and refuse to defend the peace.

Coffin: You see, that's one way of putting it. Another way of putting it for a pastor would be, we can't bring up our youth to be conscientious and then desert them in their hour of conscience.

What Falwell would call "encouraging defiance," Coffin would call "helping in their hour of conscience. Coffin would say that not helping them resist is deserting them at the worst time. Falwell would probably call it loyalty to the country.

I mentioned before that Coffin seemed to have a higher level of thought, or at least his attitude reflected that. He often had to say "Now . . ." or "You see?" In words like these his opinion of Falwell was revealed. He kept saying, "But it is more complicated." His remarks often seemed directed toward a child. Falwell fit perfectly into this role as a child. He jumped to conclusions, brought up irrelevant subjects, and made disjointed statements. For example, when Coffin agreed that the free enterprise system was outlined in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible, but added: "But not to say in the Book of Acts they lived as communists. You know, it's a little misleading, all right?" Falwell replied, "Well, do you think that the Book of Proverbs is less the word of God than the Book of Acts?" Coffin had made no assertion even implying that, but Falwell asked the question anyway.

One more example during the interview centered around the Iranian situation. Coffin was defending a statement that he had made earlier that year which said that the United States should apologize to Iran if we had something to apologize for. Along these lines, he continued by saying, "Well, if you know something about what Amnesty International's been saying about the torture, imprisonment and torture of prisoners over the last years in the Shah's regime, when you figure out we gave \$8 billion worth of arms--" Falwell interrupted with this question: "What about the 25,000 Baptist preachers that the Soviet Union murdered the last 20 years?" Although the situation Falwell presented may have been a very serious one, it had nothing to do with Iran.

Falwell created much more identification with his audience. He did so by using simple easily caught ideas and laying down rigid rules. He presented a hierarchy through his language which allowed a listener a "way out"--a way to change. He had previously gone through the hierarchy (or so listeners were led to believe), and thus, listeners could identify with him. He presented the concepts they could grasp, remember, and live by much more so than did Coffin, whose explanations were too flexible and complex.

Falwell appealed to their loyalty and their desire for America to be number one. When he stated that he was pro-life, pro-moral, and pro-traditional family, he made it easy for listeners to identify. He once said, "I think this (reversing the backward trend) is what 72,000 pastors in moral majority are doing now, rabbis, priests, 2,000,000 lay-people, not interested in regression, but progress, but not believing that going backwards is necessarily progress." Giving large numbers of people working together, like Falwell did in this sentence, makes listeners want to "jump on the band wagon!" If the audience wanted easy answers, they identified with Falwell.

Coffin explicitly said, "But we as pastors, teachers, cannot give people what they want, which is obviously nice, clean, clear, neat answers." So, he did not in all probability gain the support from identification that Falwell did. He did not want generalized terms used for his beliefs--as illustrated by his term "twice born" instead of "born again." He gave no bandwagon remarks, like Falwell did, and did not supply easy answers. So even though he had a more structured, sensible, coherent argument in every area, he did not come out ahead. At the very end of the interview, we got a precise example of how this worked. A woman in the audience stood up and asked Reverend Coffin what he would do if his children were drafted. Coffin again started in with an explanation, not a quick "yes" or "no." Falwell interrupted and said, "My two boys would go." The audience reacted favorably to Falwell's response.



Both of the men reject the present hierarchy. Falwell's hierarchy recognizes America as number one. The guilt that he sees inherent in this hierarchy is the essentially evil nature of man. He sees that the act of purification can occur through victimage, or the "purging of guilt through a scapegoat that symbolizes society's guilt." That scapegoat is Russia, or the Ayatollah, or the nearest enemy at hand--perhaps even William Coffin! One can seek redemption by adopting Falwell's ideas and by joining the moral majority.

Part of the reason that Coffin was less successful was probably because his hierarchy could not be so easily divided. Coffin's hierarchy placed the United States as a nation equal to other nations and set the people of America at a higher level in the hierarchy than the government. He also believed that the essentially evil nature of man was the guilt inherent in the hierarchy, but his solution (that we restrain human nature) did not fall into either one of Burke's categories of victimage or mortification. He did not identify an enemy or scapegoat, or identify one who is or would be the self-sacrifice for their cause. Because he did not offer a clear path for purification, redemption could not be identified either.

In short, analysis of the interview revealed Coffin as the more thoughtful person, but in all probability, Falwell gained more support from the audience. His identification was on target with the current demand for a definite plan. Coffin, however, did not present a clear plan and, therefore, did not succeed with his more thoughtful presentation.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Linda Snyder is an undergraduate speech communication major at Moorhead State University, Moorhead, Minnesota. This article is based on a project for a rhetorical criticism class at MSU taught by Professor Timothy Choy.

2. "Talk of Television," Newsweek, 29 October 1979, pp. 76-79+.

3. "Blessed are the Housewives of America," Esquire, 30 January 1980, pp. 40-42.

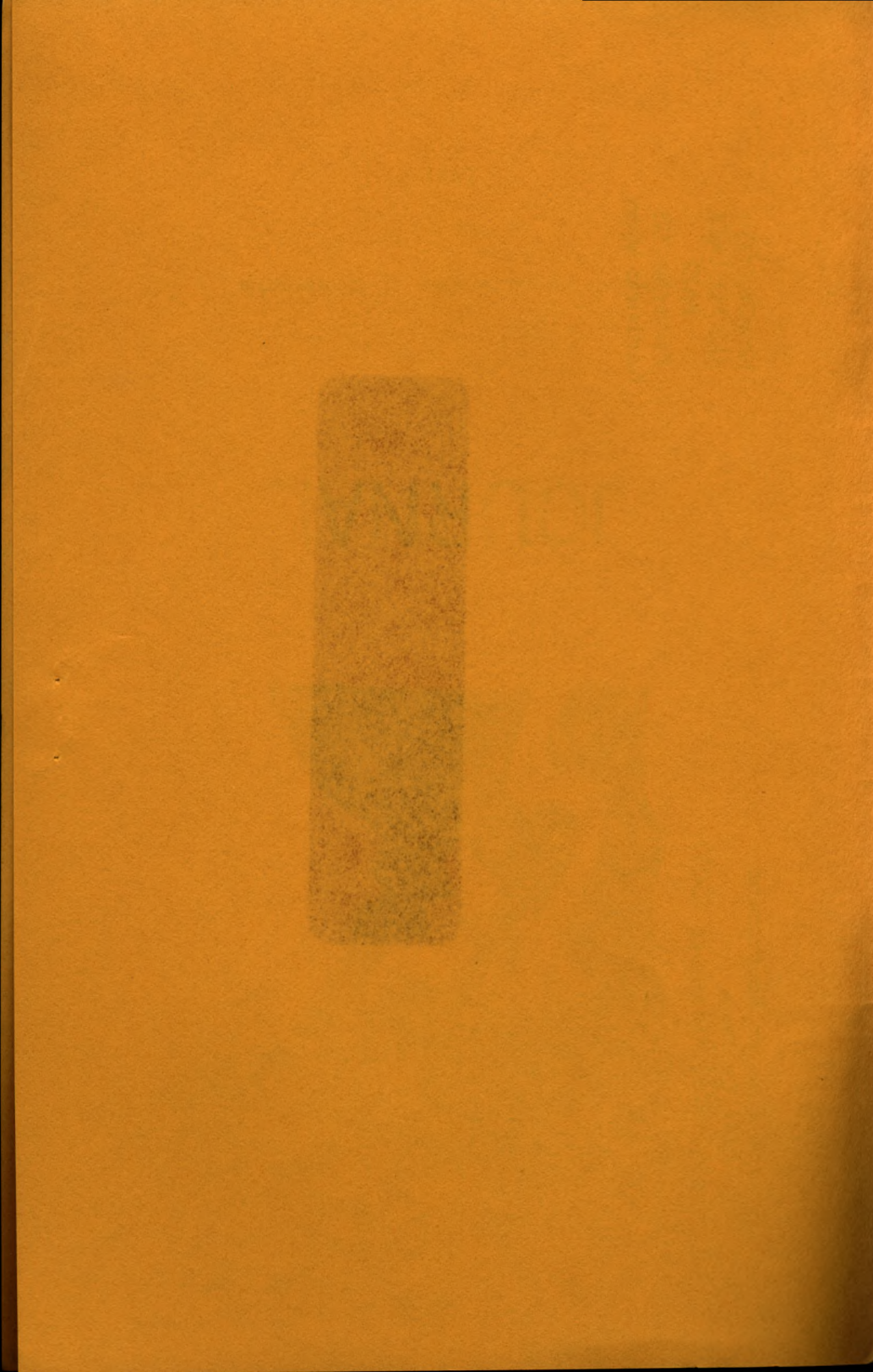
4. Lloyd F. Bitzer and Edwin Black, The Prospect of Rhetoric, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 220. A rhetorical criticism is the description, interpretation, and evaluation of any human act which may formulate, sustain, or modify behavior.

5. Bernard L. Brock, "Rhetorical Criticism: A Burkeian Approach," in Methods of Rhetorical Criticism, ed. Robert L. Scott and Bernard L. Brock, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980), 2nd ed., pp. 348-60. All references to Burke & his method are taken from Professor Brock's essay.

6. Richard M. Weaver, "Some Rhetorical Aspects of Grammatical Categories," in Methods of Rhetorical Criticism, ed. Scott and Brock, 2nd ed., pp. 278-97. All references to Weaver & his methods are quoted from this essay.

7. My criticism is based upon the written script of the October 20, 1980, DONAHUE program. I ordered and received the text from the producers, Multimedia Program Production, 140 W. Ninth St., Cincinnati, Ohio. All references and quotations from the program are taken from that text.





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