

PURSUE YOUR CHEESE BUT DON'T FORSAKE YOUR PHYSICAL ETHOS!

The Cheese and the Maze

Among the works of Spencer Johnson, an internationally bestselling author, is *WHO MOVED MY CHEESE?* It is a story about change that occurs in a maze where four characters look for "cheese," a metaphor for what we want in life. Each of us has our own idea of what "cheese" is, and we pursue it because we believe it makes us happy. The "maze" is where we spend time looking for what we want. Some tenets of the book are that change is inevitable; that one should adapt to it; and that one should enjoy it and urge others to enjoy it, too.

Much current debate theory and practice exemplify the above story. Change has occurred, for instance, in the theoretical and critical treatment of the rhetorical canons of *Inventio*, *Dispositio*, and *Elocutio*. For illustration, many of the "older generations" treated the above canons by employing such terminology as:

Argument (i.e., *logos*, *pathos*, *ethos*); **Burden of Proof** (i.e., *prima facie*); **Enthymeme and Syllogism** (i.e., categorical, hypothetical, alternative, disjunctive, conjunctive); **Evidence** (i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic, primary and secondary, empirical and circumstantial); **Fallacy** (i.e., *ad baculum*, *ad hominem*, *ad populum*, *ad verecundiam*, *ad misericordiam*, *ad ignorantiam*, *ipse dixit*, *secundum quid*); **Induction by Example** (i.e., uniformity and regularity); **Induction by Analogy** (i.e., allegory, fable, metaphor, parable, simile); **Induction by Causal Relation** (i.e., *post hoc ergo, propter hoc, non sequiter*); **Inherency**; **Presumption**; and **Square of Opposition** (i.e., contraries, subcontraries, superimplications, subimplications, contradictions, independencies, equivalencies).

Many current debate textbooks, manuals, articles, and summer workshops utilize

such terms as:

Agent Counterplans; **Alternate Agency**; **Minor Repair Scenario**; **Balanced Negative Technique**; **Extra-Topicality**; **Generic and Case Specific Harm**; **Generic Disads with Shells and Extension Blocks**; **Incremental Inherency**; **International Fiat**; **Micro and Macro Analytic Support Blocks**; **Modular Topic Argument**; **Paradigm Instruction**; **Permutations**; **Performative Contradiction Objections**; **Plan, Delay, and Executive Order Counterplans**; and **Second and Third Level Extension Blocks**.

Indeed! Change does occur, but not all of the past should be abandoned, and one of the major traits of good debating, namely **physical ethos**, has been minimized in much debate theory, practice, and criticism. The purpose of this article is twofold: (1) to encourage the reader to pursue his or her **cheese**, but not to forsake his or her **physical ethos**, for without the latter the former and all of its new terminology will not be effective; and (2) to present some brief but comprehensive advice (and reminder) on how to enhance one's **physical ethos**. If debaters understand and appreciate specific elements of delivery and become more sensitive to certain self-possessed strengths and liabilities, then they should be better prepared to maintain or even enhance the strengths and make appropriate corrections to improve or even eliminate the liabilities that stymie effective debate.

Audience Sensitivity

Fortunately, some ancient and modern critics of public speaking have been very sensitive to nonverbal behavior. For example, Cicero praised Antonius for "his gesture did not seek to reflect words, but agreed with the course of his thoughts--

hands, shoulders, chest, stamp of foot, posture in repose and in movement, all harmonizing with his words and thoughts (BRUTUS, xxxvii)."

In *Select British Eloquence* Chauncey Goodrich analyzed twenty-one speakers and reported, for example, that Edmund Burke's "gait and gesture were awkward (237)"; that Charles James Fox "stood on the floor of the House like a Norfolkshire farmer in the midst of his fellows; short, thick-set, with his broad shoulders and capacious chest, his bushy hair and eyebrows, and his dark countenance working with emotion, the very image of blunt and honesty (460)"; that William Pitt's "gesture was animated, but devoid of grace (577)", and that Thomas Erskine was "animated and graceful in gesture, with an eye of piercing keenness and power (636)."

Prepared under the auspices of The Speech Association of America, three volumes of *A History and Criticism of Americal Public Address* (1943-1955) revealed detailed analyses of the mannerisms of forty public speakers.

K. C. Beighley and M. A. Leitner reported in *Speech Monographs* that quality of delivery has a significant effect on the amount of information obtained from a verbal message. In each case they found that subjects exposed to good delivery achieved significantly higher scores than did subjects exposed to poor delivery.

In *Theory and Research in Administration* Andrew Halpin stated that "the language of words is only a fragment of the language we use in communicating with each other. We talk with eyes and hands, with gestures, with our posture, with various motions of the body (254)."

Dean Barnlund reported that "many, and sometimes most, of the critical meanings generated in human encounters are elicited by touch, glance, vocal nuance, gesture, or facial expression with or without the aid of words."

After studying the effects of evidence in persuasion, J. C. McCroskey reported that poor delivery usually weakens or inhibits the normal effect of strong ideas.

Finally, Wayne C. Mannebach discovered that during his thirty-five years of teaching and coaching on the high school, college-university, and adult education levels in the United States and abroad (42 countries), students who revealed good delivery usually received higher grades, whether in formal classes or in extracurricular activities in debate and forensics, than did those students who displayed poor delivery.

Indeed! Good delivery is vital to speaking effectiveness.

No Debater Is Immune

No debater is immune to audience criticism. This is evidenced, for example, by the following comments from judges at high school, college, and university debate tournaments in the United States and abroad.

Criticism of Eye Contact

"Quit staring at the windows, floor, or ceiling. I'm sitting right in front of you."
"You really bore me. Why should I listen to you when you failed to recognize me?"

"Make me feel wanted, that you enjoy my presence. Look at me occasionally - at least once during your presentation."

"If I ever have to judge you again, I will get a pillow so I can sleep with comfort. You never looked at me or the others. Why don't you like us?"

"I, too, began to look at the ceiling, but I saw nothing unusual. What was up there to capture your attention through most of your address?"

Criticism of Facial Expression

"Either feel your message or get out of competition! Your sterility of facial expression makes me fight to keep awake. Try to show some sincerity in what you say."

"I don't know how to interpret your remarks. Are you frightened, sad, or happy? You keep a deadpan expression throughout the debate."

"A corpse shows more expression than you do. You tell your audience to fear Red China. Why? Your same facial ex-

pression shows no sign of fear. If you don't fear Red China, why should I?"

"You never seem to care about the rising crime. You assert it exists, but you don't make me feel it. I don't believe you; your face shows no evidence."

"Hashimoto meant well, but he looked ridiculous using a different facial expression for everything he said. Variety is appreciated, but not of such proportion."

Criticism of Movement

"How old are you? 90? 100? Quit slouching and bending. Stand straight and appreciate your height."

"You look lazy the way you lean on the rostrum. Perhaps you are ill."

"Don't stand or walk about so rigidly; loosen up. Perhaps you should be a guard at Buckingham Palace."

"Stop wiggling your legs. You look like you are trying to do the Chinese Splits."

"I felt sorry for you during your refutation. You crossed your legs as though you had to go to the potty."

"Quit bouncing on your toes and jingling the coins in your pocket. So you have money; big deal!"

"I got seasick from your constant swaying and walking about. I'd like to nail your shoes to the floor. Sometimes you resembled a caged tiger pacing back and forth."

"I do not want to be rude, but I can't help laughing. You seem like a boy trying to sneak out of church the way you walk on your tiptoes."

"My, but you are pompous! You seem so arrogant with your nose in the air."

"Slow down; you returned to your seat as though you were running a spring at the Olympic Games."

Criticism of Gesture

"Quit cracking your knuckles. What does that have to do with teenage suicide?"

"Take a shower or both; you constantly scratched yourself during rebuttal."

"Let's play poker. You shuffled your cards throughout your constructive speech and refutation."

"Just raising an arm doesn't have anything to do with NATO's liabilities."

"Either wear your glasses or keep them off, but don't play with them while discussing the epidemic of immorality among today's youth."

"Put your watch in your pocket. Were you showing it off during your cross examining?"

"So you have a beard! Well, it won't last if you keep stroking it during your presentations."

"Fingernails should be treated at home, not on a debater's platform."

"Maybe some day your suspenders will snap and hit someone in the audience. Quit pulling on them while speaking."

"You resemble an orchestra conductor, always waving your arms."

Criticism of Visual Aid

"How can I appreciate your visual aids when you stand in front of them? Are you protecting them from terrorists?"

"Your so-called evidence was useless. The print was so tiny that I couldn't read a word."

"Why don't you prepare your visual aids before coming to competition? By drawing them on the blackboard you wasted much speaking time and control of your audience."

"Your posters were nonproductive. Frankly, they were sloppy, misspelled, and poorly color-coded."

"When you no longer needed pictures of the accident, you should have put them away. I kept looking at them and not listening to what you were saying."

"Your visual aids were nothing but a manuscript of your address. If you use this procedure again, just send me a copy and I can judge "your speaking" from my home."

The above remarks reveal that certain visual elements of delivery are not conducive to effective debating. Not every debater can be the best, yet everyone to be competitive must establish eye contact with the audience; must coordinate facial expressions with ideas; must employ movements and gestures that appear natural, not rehearsed; and must employ only functional visual aids.

Guidelines for Effective Eye Contact

Gilbert Austin wisely regarded the eyes as the most expressive part of the countenance. For instance, he said that as the principal object of every speaker must be to obtain the attention of the audience, so every circumstance which can contribute to this end must be considered important. In the external demeanor nothing will be found so effective

tually to attract attention, and detain it, as the direction of the eyes. It is well known that the eyes can influence persons at a distance; and they can select from a multitude a single individual and turn their looks on him alone, though many lie in the same direction. The whole person seems to be in some measure affected by this influence of another's eyes, but the eyes themselves feel it with the most lively sensibility (CHIRONOMIA 101).

Like Austin, debaters should appreciate eye contact, for it is so operative during performance. For instance, eye contact generates **pathos**, making the audience feel important and appreciated. Audiences want to hear speeches; soliloquies are for the theatre. Why should an audience listen to a debater who ignores their presence?

Eye contact generates **feedback**, the process whereby the debater receives gestural and verbal signals emanating intentionally or unintentionally from the audience. Feedback enables the debater to evaluate effectiveness. For illustration, feedback can show when an audience is becoming confused, bored, angry, or sympathetic.

Perhaps most importantly is that eye contact enhances or weakens a debater's **ethos**. Good ethos refers to how someone appears as having **intelligence, high character, and good will**. For example, intelligence is revealed when the debater is not completely dependence on note cards or manuscript. By freely looking at the audience, the debater demonstrates mastery of subject matter and preparation for the occasion. Of course, many speaking situations, especially professional presentations, require manuscript reading, and such usage does not necessarily show that the speaker is ignorant or unprepared. What is important is that even readers of manuscripts must maintain some eye contact with the audience.

Character is connoted by the debater's firmness and confidence. A debater who cannot, or will not, look directly at his audience tends to display fear; fear can display weakness; and weakness can be highly incompatible with gaining respect.

Good will is demonstrated by eye contact, for the latter enables the debater to recognize the audience and appear as being happy because of the audience's good fortune, or sympathetic because of their sorrow. Identifying with one's hearers can be rewarding.

Probably one of the best illustrations of the value of feedback comes from *Up From Slavery*, the autobiographer of Booker T. Washington. The master of persuasion

said that "if in an audience there is one person who is not insympathy with my views, or is inclined to be doubtful, cold, or critical, I can pick him out. When I have found him, I usually go straight at him, and it is a great satisfaction to watch the process of his thawing out (243)."

Feedback informed Washington not only when his audience disagreed with him, but also when he was affecting them favorably. He said:

There is great compensation that comes to me after I have been speaking for about ten minutes, and have come to feel that I have fully mastered my audience, and that we have gotten into full and complete sympathy with each other. It seems to me that there is rarely such a combination of physical and mental delight in any effort as that which comes to a public speaker when he feels that he has a great audience completely within his control. There is a thread of oneness and sympathy that connects a public speaker with his audience, and is just as strong as though it was something tangible and visible (243-44).

In short, weak eye contact prevents appropriate feedback and, in turn, insufficient feedback makes debating ineffective.

Guidelines for Effective Facial Expression

Facial expression is important, for it can reveal the constructions of the mind. A constant or monotonous facial expression makes the debater indifferent to the message and the audience. If a debater fails to appear moved by the message, then why should the audience become involved? At best, a debater's monotonous facial expression breeds audience contempt.

Then, too, "kaleidoscopic" facial expression can be detrimental to debate effectiveness. Using multiple facial expressions for variety itself is not the gateway to success.

In short, debaters should adhere to Hamlet's advice, namely "that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature (HAMLET, III, iii)." In other words, debaters' facial expressions should appear natural, adapting to the meaning and mood of the message.

Guidelines for Effective Movement

When used appropriately, movement aids the debater several ways. For illustration, appropriate movements helps to release tension in the stomach and legs.

Nearly all debaters have stage fright, and its severity depends heavily on the debater's attitude toward speaking. If the debater stresses **performance** rather than **message**, and is **self-centered** rather than **audience-centered**, then stage fright most likely will increase. However, whatever attitude the debater maintains, appropriate movement can release tension.

Appropriate movement can stress ideas. By taking a step forward, for instance, when saying, "Now this is important," message is strengthened.

Appropriate movement can be a good transition. For example, by taking a step after concluding a particular topic, the debater enables both self and audience to prepare for the next topic.

Appropriate movement also helps to enhance the debater's confidence and poise. By not having to lean on or appear as being "glued" to the lectern, the debater is free to maintain directness with the audience and thus increase rapport.

To be **appropriate**, movement must be **functional and natural**. Functional means that movement coordinates with the debater's intended message; that movement draws attention to the debater's message, not to self.

Natural means unrehearsed. Movement should come from sincerity that is spontaneous, not memorized or rehearsed. In *A Course of Elocution* Thomas Sheridan well explained natural movement by saying:

When we reflect that the end of public speaking is persuasion and that in order to persuade others to the belief of any point, it must first appear that the person who attempts it is firmly persuaded of the truth of it himself; how can we suppose it possible that he should affect this, unless he delivers himself in the manner which is always used by the persons who speak in earnest? How should his words pass for the words of truth, when they bear not his stamp (5)?

In short, a display of insincerity and clumsy or mechanical movement is counter-productive to any debater wanting to be persuasive.

Guidelines for Effective Gesture

Gesture can be valuable in that it clarifies size, shape, position, and movement; and identifies and reinforces feelings or attitudes. However, gesture, too, must be **natural**, not planned. Debaters again would be wise to follow Hamlet's advice, namely: "Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, (*Mannebach to Page 35*)

(Mannebach from Page 33)

thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say, whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness (III, iii)."

Cicero's BRUTUS also well exemplifies how awkward gestures are recognized. For instance, because Curio showed awkward gestures and movements while speaking, Gaius Julius Caesar Strabo asked, "Who is the fellow there talking from a skiff (lix)?" Also, Gnaeus Sicinius said to Curio's colleague, Octavius: "You can never thank your colleague enough, Octavius, for if he had not thrashed about in his way, the flies would surely have eaten you alive right here and now (lx).

In short, like movement, gesture must be natural, not calling attention to itself.

Guidelines for Effective Visual Aid

Visual aid includes diagrams, graphs, maps, models, slides, pictures, Microsoft Powerpoint, Claris Works, and the like. Regardless of the kind of visual aid used, the **debater** is the primary aid. The debater must give purpose to the material; h/she must give reason for and meaning to it. To do this, the debater must make certain that visual aid is clear, correct, attractive, and employed only to communicate message, not self. The latter violation often occurs when debaters get "carried away" with their cleverness of display. Such debaters apparently forget, or are unconcerned, that their primary mission is to present and defend a message, not show off a talent for art or "gimmick."

Concluding Remarks

Debater's visual presentations should never call attention to themselves, but always and only to the intended message. To be functional, the elements of delivery should appear natural, not rehearsed. Debaters should follow Booker T. Washington's advice, namely that one should never speak.

unless deep down in his heart, he feels convinced that he has a message to deliver. When one feels, from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head, that he has something to say that is going to help some individual or some cause, then let him say it. When I have an address to deliver, I like to forget all about the rules and the proper use of the English language, and all about rhetoric and that sort of thing, and I like to make the audi-

ence forget all about these things, too (243-244).

Good delivery is habitual, but so is bad delivery. Which habit a debater has during his or her career depends upon the attitude developed towards the occasion, audience, and message; and upon the willingness the debater has to improve the traits of poor delivery. The debater alone must decide the final outcome. Hopefully all debaters will not forsake physical ethos.

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Wayne Mannebach directed debate and forensics at Ripon College for nine years, and for the past twenty-five years he has taught English at St. Mary Central High School in Neenah (WI).

Mannebach's professional career includes reciprocity of over thirty government or private grants and fellowships. He has conducted humanities tours to forty-two countries and has been a guest professor or lecturer in many of them, the most recent being, Istanbul, Turkey and Athens, Greece (1999); London, England and Edinburgh, Scotland (1999 and 1998); Delphi, Greece and Florence, Italy (1997); and Stockholm, Sweden (1995).