

**THE JOURNAL OF THE
TENNESSEE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION**

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THE TENNESSEE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

Spring 1982

Volume VIII

Number I

THE JOURNAL OF THE
TENNESSEE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION
published by

The Tennessee Speech Communication Association

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THE PRACTICE OF ARGUMENTATION IN SOCIETY:

"Ehninger's Paradigm and Religious Controversy"

James N. Holm, Jr.

Douglas Ehninger, in 1970, presented his conception of "Argument As Method: Its Nature, Its Limitations And Its Uses."¹ His conception, as he duly noted, was "Paradigmatic rather than descriptive." His concern was with the defining "characteristics of argument . . . with those abstract conditions or presuppositions upon which 'acts' of argument are predicated."² In short, Ehninger built a rational or formally logical model of argument which, insofar as possible, was uncorrupted by empirical or existential conditions.

To any student of argument interested in both in theory and practice, however, one question concerning Ehninger's paradigm must inevitably arise: "To what degree does, or should, Ehninger's conception represent reality?"³ It is the purpose of this paper to attempt to answer that question by measuring Ehninger's paradigm against the practice or argumentation in a selected segment of society. In so doing, not only will Ehninger's theory be tested, though, but the structure and function of specific argumentative practices clarified.

To measure the paradigm against the practice of argumentation in the courtroom, the campaign, labor negotiations or even the family would be, perhaps, to confound the issues rather than to clarify them. In each of these cases, the process or argumentation has been contaminated, altered from its natural course by factors extrinsic to the

process itself. Courtroom arguments are generally limited to propositions of fact and limited by traditional procedures as well.⁴ Campaign arguments deal primarily with policy and have been greatly affected by the media.⁵ Labor negotiations are often constrained by contracts; and family controversies by the "game playing" nature of people.⁶ One must, therefore, select instances of argumentation which appear to have evolved as naturally as possible; for only if the practice is relatively free from contamination will it provide an adequate test of the paradigm.

Several instances of such basically uncontaminated argumentation have occurred during key moments in the historical development of the Christian church. One such moment was the point at which the church became aligned with the Roman state during the reign of Constantine. The Reformation provided a second, extended period of religious controversy. A final period emerged in America during the first half of the nineteenth century. Insofar as can be determined, none of these periods were regulated by any preconceived notions of proper argumentative behavior; thus, they provide good test cases for Ehninger's theory.

In the following paragraphs, then, key points of Enginger's paradigm will be outlined briefly and, subsequently, tested against the practice of religious controversy.

Ehninger constructs his paradigm on the premise that A argues with B "not to add to B's repertory of facts or data, but to reshape a belief or alter an attitude which B already entertains."⁷ Two critical aspects of this premise need to be noted: first, that

Ehninger appears to believe that argument is two-sided, with A and B trying to convince each other; second, that argument is not informative nor instructive, but merely corrective. The historical evidence drawn from the practice of religious controversy does not support the first aspect of Ehninger's premise, but tends to support the second.

The religious controversies tended to be three-sided. In most cases, opponents recognized that they could not persuade each other but chose public debate anyway, in order to win the assent of an audience. During the reign of Constantine, for example, Arius debated the religious leaders of Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea and Nicomedia not to persuade them of his beliefs, but to persuade the people of those cities. His strategy was, in fact, so effective that Constantine was forced to call the Council of Nicaea to settle the issues raised by Arius.⁸ Similarly, Martin Luther debated Eck, and Zwingli debated the anabaptists to strengthen their respective positions among the people rather than to change their opponents' minds. Only in the debate in which Luther and Zwingli confronted each other was there a case of two-sided argumentation. Of course, the unhappy and very unsuccessful results of that debate establish even more strongly the proposition that argument should be three-sided.⁹ Alexander Campbell, in the introduction of his famous debate with Robert Owen, gives an excellent summation of this point.

When we agreed to meet Mr. Owen in public debate, it was not with any expectation that he was to be convinced of the error of his system . . . nor . . . that I was in the least to be shaken in my faith . . . But the public, the wavering, doubting, and unsettled public are those for whose benefit this discussion has . . . been undertaken. They are not beyond the reach of conviction, correction, and reformation.¹⁰

Campbell's statement, even as it supports the conclusion that argument is three-sided, also illustrates the attitude that argumentation is primarily corrective rather than instructive. In each of the instances of religious controversy cited above, the goals of the disputants were to reform attitudes or beliefs thought to be already held by the members of the various audiences. In every case, the controversies rested on the interpretation of data generally accepted by both sides. The men battled over what the scriptures meant rather than over the authority or truth of the scriptures.

The practice of religious controversy, therefore, appears to support the contention that argumentation is more corrective than instructive. At the same time, however, the preponderance of evidence suggests that argumentation has been, and ought to be, three-sided; for head-to-head disputes seem to have been significantly less effective in reforming beliefs than those encounters in which the decision-making powers resided in a third party.

II

Following the exposition of the premise on which he based his paradigm, Ehninger begins to develop his conception of the nature of argumentation. By comparing it with other modes of correction or decision-making, he arrives at the conclusion that argumentation is fundamentally antithetical to coercion, that its purpose is more to expose choices for the participants than to eliminate choice. From this essential nature, then Ehninger derives several attributes.

Argumentation is "bilateral and non-enforceable, permits of various levels and kinds of success, demands a posture of restrained partisanship, and places the 'person' in a position of genuine existential 'risk.'" ¹¹ This entire conception is at odds with the evidence provided by the chosen historical cases.

The essential nature of religious controversies seems to have come not from the fact that the participants were opposed to coercion but from the fact that they chose to interact symbolically rather than directly. First of all, it appears clear that many of the religious combatants did attempt to coerce their opponents. Excommunication, threats of damnation, loss of citizenship, and book-burning all characterized Luther's struggle with the Roman Catholic Church. ¹² Similar attitudes existed among church controversialists on the American frontier. In the words of Methodist William Burke, "the Baptists did all they could to draw off our members and get them into the water." ¹³ In short, the motives of the religious disputants appeared quite coercive and, hence, could not have provided the essentially non-coercive nature which Ehninger attributes to argumentation.

The fundamental ingredient, however, which was shared by most of the religious controversialists was the choice of interacting indirectly or symbolically rather than directly upon one another. The Catholic Church could have silenced Luther a great deal more quickly and completely than it chose to do. The tragic history of the Mormons in America, the deaths and tar-and-featherings, indicates that churchmen actually did take direct action upon occasion in order to silence opposing points of view. ¹⁴ Yet in the vast majority of cases, religious disputants advanced or defended their cases symbolically.

In choosing symbolic interaction as the primary mode of problem-solving, it is probable that the religious leaders were moved at least as much by the political and social setting of the arguments as they were by any desire to avoid direct coercion. When Constantine became the Emperor of Rome, for example, the majority of his people were well aware of his sympathy for Christians and of the apparent power of that faith in battle. Thus, to have ended the issue of Arianism militarily was out of the question.¹⁵ Luther and Zwingli, as well, were protected by the strongly favorable and quite nationalistic attitudes of the people of their respective locales.¹⁶ In neither case could the Catholic churchmen have physically silenced their opponents without simultaneously causing a rebellion or revolution. Thus it would appear that the essential nature of religious arguments was rooted in the setting from which the controversy emerged and not in the desires of the disputants to remain non-coercive.

Because the nature of the religious argumentation was rooted in its setting, many of the attributes ascribed to it by Ehninger's theory in fact did not exist. Specifically, while the historical controversies were bilateral and not self-enforcing, they did not permit of various levels or kinds of success, did not require a posture of restrained partisanship, and often did not place the participants in positions of existential risk. First, victory or defeat was the typical conclusion of church combat, with the decision being made either by a town council as in the case of the Zwingli debates, or by the people as in Arius's first four debates and in most of the American controversies. Second,

the actions of many of the participants, notably Luther and Eck, were anything but those of a restrained partisan.¹⁷ Finally, it did not appear that most of participants were placed in any position of existential risk precisely because the results of many of the controversies were not enforceable. When Arius lost a debate, he simply moved to another city and began again. Certainly, the fact that Robert Owen lost his debate to Alexander Campbell by a vote of nearly 1200 to 3 did not in the least convince him that he was wrong nor deter him from subsequently promoting his utopian schemem.¹⁸

In examining religious controversy, therefore, one is moved by the evidence to conclude that Ehninger's paradigm does not offer an accurate description of the nature of argumentation. Arguments, it seems, arise not from any motivation to avoid coercion but from the recognition that the setting for the confrontation requires symbolic interaction rather than the application of direct force. Furthermore, because it is essentially symbolic, the disputants can avoid most existential risk. In short, the nature of religious controversy tends to be in direct opposition to most of the points derived from Ehninger's paradigm.

III

Turning from his discussion of the nature of argumentation, Ehninger focuses, in turn, upon its limitations and its uses. In regard to its limitations, he suggests that argumentation is indecisive, restricted to a single pair of mutually exclusive alternatives, applicable only to topics which can be treated symbolically, and capable of dealing solely with issues of means, and not those

of ends.¹⁸ The test of these limits by historical evidence, however, appears to establish that Ehninger's list is partially incorrect and incomplete.

On the one hand, the last three limitations he posed are substantiated by the evidence. Almost all of the religious argumentation, for example, did resolve itself into one set of mutually exclusive alternatives. Interestingly, these alternatives were usually symbolized in terms of the men who advocated them. The popular choices, then, were those of Luther or Eck, Luther or Zwingli, and Campbell or Owen, rather than of the acceptance or rejection of the doctrines of transubstantiation, adult immersion, or the coming millennium.

On the other hand, Ehninger's proposed limitation of indecisiveness was not supported by historical fact. As has been previously noted, in most of the religious controversies the decision-making power lay not with the disputants but with a third party. In these cases, there was a strong element of decisiveness at the conclusion of the arguments; for even though the arguers themselves might not have achieved a resolution of the issues, the judge usually had. Thus, Arius was banished from his country and the antibaptists ordered to stop the practice of adult immersion in Switzerland.

Furthermore, to the degree that the setting of a controversy does indeed determine whether it will be settled symbolically or coercively, as history suggests, then argumentation has a limit which Ehninger fails to point out. If it is true that the nature of controversy is a product of its setting, argumentation therefore is also limited by its setting.

It is limited to those settings in which there is a third party with interest both in the issues involved and in its own well-being sufficient to promote symbolic interaction and to prevent direct coercion. From this analysis and discussion of the historical evidence, thus, it can be seen that Ehninger's list of limitations is both incorrect and incomplete.

Finally, in regard to the uses of argument, Ehninger proposes that it may be, and ought to be, used in the resolution of problems because it is both more reliable and more humane than other methods of decision-making. He concludes:

The ultimate justification of argument as method, therefore lies . . . in the fact that by introducing the arguer "into a situation of risk in which openmindedness and toleration are possible," it paves the way toward "personhood" for the disputants, and through them and millions like them opens the way to a society in which the values and commitments requisite to "personhood" may some day replace the exploitation and strife which now separate man from man and nation from nation.¹⁹

With this vision of a peaceful and humane society one should have no quarrel. But to suggest that argumentation, per se, is the path by which one can attain that goal is to neglect the lessons of history. For it has been established, at least within the history of religious controversy, that argumentation has been successfully pursued only when the society in which the controversy is set, itself is willing to listen to reason, to be moved by logic and evidence, and to abstain from violence. Thus, it is the nature of society itself, and not the nature of argumentation, which provides the key to a peaceful and humane existence. In sum, while one can acknowledge the validity of

the use Ehninger posits for argumentation, one is nevertheless constrained by the weight of historical evidence from putting too much faith in the effectiveness of the method itself.

IV

In conclusion, from the practice of argumentation in religious controversies one can draw two tentative conclusions: first, that argumentation requires at least three participants -- the arguers and a third party to make the decision; and second, that argument derives its essential nature from the fact that it is symbolic rather than direct interaction. To the extent that these two conclusions are valid, one can begin to derive from them principles of argumentative behavior which will, indeed, make the practice of this method of decision-making reliable and humane. One cannot, however, place his faith for achieving a peaceful or happy existence solely in this method or process; for the lessons of history suggest that unless mankind is willing to listen to reason, argument can have little effect.

FOOTNOTES

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¹Douglas Ehninger, "Argument As Method: Its Nature, Its Limitations And Its Uses," SM, 37 (June, 1970), 101-110.

²Ibid., 101.

³For a good definition of a "paradigm" and a solid justification for testing them against reality see Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 10-18.

⁴Abraham L. Freedman, "On Advocacy," Villanova Law Review, I (May, 1956), 293-309. See also Francis X. Busch, Law Tactics in Jury Trials (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950).

⁵Howard H. Martin, "Effects of Increased Use of TV Spot Announcements on the Level of Public Political Debate," (unpublished paper read before the Central States Speech Association in April, 1975). See also Stephen C. Shadegg, How To Win An Election (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1964).

⁶For a discussion of negotiations see Lowell Laporte, "Labor Relations, Unions, and Strikes," (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, Inc., 1968), 3-10. On the topic of family games see Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 92-109.

⁷Ehninger, 101.

⁸Philip Hughes, The Church In Crisis: A History of the General Councils, 325-1870. (Garden City, New York: Hanover House, 1961), 11-36.

⁹Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. VII: Modern Christianity: The German Reformation (2nd ed., rev.: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 620-653. See especially, pp. 637-50. The work cited is a photolithoprint of the original second edition published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1910.

¹⁰Alexander Campbell, The Evidences of Christianity (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1957), 6-7. The work cited is a photolithoprint of the original work published by Alexander Campbell at Bethany, Virginia (West Virginia), 1829.

¹¹Ehninger, 102-105. See especially the summation of Section II on page 105. In this passage Ehninger is quoting from Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., "Some Reflections on Argumentation," Philosophy Rhetoric, and Argumentation, ed. Maurice Natanson and Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (University Park, Pa., 1965), 1-9.

¹²Schaff, 565.

¹³James B. Finley, Sketches of Western Methodism (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall Publishers, 1855), p. 54.

¹⁴Emilius O. Randall and Daniel J. Ryan, History of Ohio (6 vols.; New York, 1912), III, 414-415.

¹⁵B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A. D. 461 (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), II, 28-34.

¹⁶Carlton J. H. Hayes, Marshall Whithed Baldwin, and Charles Woolsey Cole, History of Europe (rev. ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), 469.

¹⁷Schaff, 178-179.

¹⁸Ehninger, 105-108.

¹⁹Ehninger, 110. Here again Ehninger is quoting from Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Argumentation, 3.

SELF-FACILITATING COMMUNICATION

T. Win Welford

As a small boy I remember listening to my grandmother talk to herself as she went about doing her housework. At the time I found it a curious and humorous phenomenon. Since that time I have observed many other people doing the same thing, and have even found myself doing it occasionally! The simplest explanation for such behavior is that it is just the price one has to pay for getting old. However, this does not seem to be a adequate answer, since small children and middle-aged people often employ the same kind of communication.

Self-communication possesses an incredible power to determine what we become. It generally falls into two broad categories: (1) self-disparaging, self-defeating, self-destructive communication; or (2) self-facilitating, productive communication. When used improperly, speech may become an albatross around one's psyche. Mental institutions are full of people using disparaging self-talk. "Dummy," "stupid," "idiot," and "I'm no good" can be muttered against oneself till no hiding place can be found. However, it is not self-disparaging communication that I wish to discuss in this article, but rather, the more positive uses of self-communication.

I have chosen the label "self-facilitating communication" to describe a certain type of communication with one's self. It refers to a kind of self-talk which enables an individual to function better

in a given context. It may occur in solitude or in the presence of others. However, the impact of the message on others is of secondary importance. The fact that others may be present is incidental as far as this function of language is concerned. Self-facilitating communication is basically a type of intrapersonal communication, though the problem is compounded by the fact that it often occurs in the presence of others. Difficulty in classifying the term, however, does not diminish the importance of this communicative behavior.

It might logically be argued that all communication is self-facilitating, just as some would argue, in a broader context, that all behavior is communication. However, I am using the term to refer to the impact of silent or vocalized messages on the sender in several specific ways: (1) self-communication to aid in solving an immediate problem; (2) self-communication to release emotional tension (catharsis); (3) self-communication by which one is persuaded; (4) self-communication which provides diversion from a painful situation; and (5) self-communication for the purpose of amusing or entertaining oneself.

In recent years many articles have dealt with various aspects of interpersonal and mass communication, and a somewhat smaller number with intrapersonal communication. Some have argued that "all speech is a form of interpersonal behavior."¹ Judging by the number and nature of the articles published in journals, one could certainly be led to this conclusion. However, if one listens closely to the talk going on around him, he quickly discovers that much of it is not designed to communicate

information to others. It is directed more toward helping the individual cope with his own needs of the moment.

Some have suggested that self-communication--especially when it takes place out loud--is an elementary function of language development, soon left behind in the maturation process.² It is my contention that we never outgrow the need to talk-out our problems or needs, even if there is no one to hear them but ourselves. Meerlo, perhaps better than most, understood the importance of self-facilitating communication (although he did not call it that) when he said: "The built-in intention and goal of communication is always to arrive--at least for oneself--at a greater feeling of certainty and security, in short to a better adaptation. . . . Besides the information imparted, communication should contain an actualization of the self, a creative rhetorical assertion."³

I would like to look at five specific ways in which self-talk can help the individual to better cope with his surroundings. I make no claim that the categories discussed are discrete, but for the sake of analysis they will be considered separately.

Problem Solving

One of the most important uses of self-communication is in problem solving. The self-facilitating effect of such communication is clearly demonstrated in an incident related by Dr. George I. LeBaron, Jr. Dr. LeBaron, a psychiatrist and an airplane pilot, tells of the following experiences during one of his solo flights:

I began a climbing turn to a heading of 270 degrees toward the practice area west of the Sacramento River. At 1,200 feet, virtually everything, including the airport, disappeared. I was in a white haze seemingly at the apex of a cone providing me with about one mile of circular visibility below. I leveled off, throttled back to cruise and experienced a sudden attack of the hot chills accompanied by the realization that I was in real big trouble. There was an intense urge to deny the fact that I was airborne and I sincerely hoped that I would quickly awake from this nightmare. I had no chart. Total instrument time was 15 minutes. A little voice kept saying "fly straight and level and watch the artificial horizon." I kept wishing I were back on the ground. My paralysis was shattered by my own voice which said, "Okay, start thinking." At this point my brain shifted to the reflective level of functioning because I began to consider alternatives. To help the process, I talked. I reminded myself that I could keep flying straight and level; that the country was flat; that the Sacramento River was beneath me; that I had four hours of fuel; that calling for Mother wouldn't help; and that all I had to do was to get back over the airport. . . I reasoned that I could follow the river north, making a right turn when the Port of Sacramento appeared beneath me, and end up over the airport where visibility should be better. Fortunately, it worked. . . From that experience, I learned two important lessons. First, plan every flight with your own limitations in mind, and second, when you really need to start thinking, start talking--to yourself. Any time we think, we initiate an inner conversation with ourselves. Thinking out loud forces us to the reflective level of mental functioning, removing us from the urge to act impulsively. . . . If two heads are better than one, and you've got a problem, use your other head.⁴

Problem solving may call not only for mental alertness and rationality, but for physical strength and endurance as well. Talking to oneself may play a major role in achieving such strength. An excellent example of physical and mental endurance being enhanced may be seen in the account of Bishop and Mrs. Pike's ill-fated trip to the Holy Land. Diane Kennedy Pike related in her book, Search, the details of her struggle to find help for her husband after she

had left him behind in the desert. They had gone there to explore the countryside and meditate. Their car became stuck in the sand and they abandoned it, hoping to find help. Finding help on foot, they soon realized, was a nearly impossible feat, since they were several miles from civilization. Dr. Pike soon tired and Mrs. Pike left him to search for help alone. Help was not to arrive in time, however, and Dr. Pike died there in the desert. The following is Mrs. Pike's account of some of the hardships she went through during her several hours of wandering in the desert:

Not long after I climbed out of the base of the canyon, I began to feel utterly exhausted and depleted of all energy. I had not rested since leaving Jim, and I began to realize that getting help was not going to be a simple matter of climbing for an hour or two. The mountains went on and on, still looking like endless desert and canyon. I felt my body was too exhausted to make it.

Then a strange thing began to happen. I became aware that I was communicating with my body as if it were a friend along for the trip. . . . As I lay on the side of the cliffs, resting against the pointed, jagged rock, I would say to my body, "Thank you for not hurting when you lie on the rocks. Thank you for resting."

Then I began to say, "We must walk all night." I knew when the sun came up neither Jim nor I would have much chance of survival, but I thought if I kept walking all night at least I would be that much closer to someone's discovering me in the morning.

So I began to say to my body, "We must walk all night long. We will walk a few minutes at a time and then rest. Get up now. Go just a little way farther, just five minutes. Then I'll let you rest again."

When I spoke lovingly to my body, it was somehow able to respond. Strength came from somewhere, and it would get up and begin to climb again. To my right hand, these

words: "You must find a rock to take ahold of, a rock that will support you." It would search looking for a rock, and finally find one to hold onto. To my right foot, these: "You must find a rock to stand on." It would probe and search until it found something that wouldn't slide or give way. Then I would speak to my left hand and my left foot in the same manner.

My body somehow made its way along, hanging on the cliffs, climbing over the rocks, going around points of jagged rocks that stuck out where there was really nothing to hang onto, climbing up sheer rock faces where there was nothing to do but lift myself from level to the next. I would say to the muscles in my arms, "You 'll have to lift the whole body, you'll have to lift the body up." And the muscles would cooperate by lifting me.

I developed a strange kind of affection and love for this friend, my body, that was with me on this journey. I could tell the tremendous effort it was making--trying so hard to cooperate, trying to do what I was asking it to do.

I was also grateful to my body for not causing me any pain. I could feel my flesh being torn; my legs got bumped and scraped, my feet bruised and cut, my bottom gouged my hands and arms punctured and lacerated--but I did not suffer from the wounds. "Thank you for not hurting," I said over and over again to my body. "Thank you."

Once in stepping I turned my left ankle and sprained it badly. Out loud I said--as though speaking out loud would make a greater impact--"I know I've sprained you, but you cannot get stiff and you cannot swell up because we must walk all night." The ankle did not swell or get stiff; I was aware it had been injured, but I felt no pain.

"Thank you for not swelling," I repeated to the ankle each time I turned it again.⁵

Talking to oneself also proved to be facilitating for Charles Lindberg on his famous 33 1/2 hour flight from New York to Paris.

In order to stay awake, he often talked to himself. Several of these conversations are recorded in his book, The Spirit of St. Louis. One sounded like this:

If the turn indicator ices up, it'll get out of control anyway. There's no time--only a few seconds--quick--quick--harder rudder--kick it---

Don't do anything of the sort. I've thought all this out carefully and know just what's best to do. You remember, you are to obey my orders!⁶

The talking to oneself may facilitate other less serious endeavors such as athletic competition or studying for an exam. The unusual communication behavior of Mark "The Bird" Fidrych has drawn much attention. Part of his antics on the mound includes talking to the baseball--or if you will--to himself. Probably few observers would attribute his skill as a baseball pitcher to his self-talk. However, opposing batters probably wish his lips would stop moving.

From my own personal experience and in the opinion of several psychologists, it helps to study "out loud." For most people, this procedure tends to make the information more easily recalled at testing time. No scientific explanation will be offered here, but it does seem to work.

Interpersonal communication clearly seems to have a facilitative effect in the area of problem solving. It is such a common and widespread behavior that it is often overlooked. Indeed, the individual talking to himself may not be conscious of the fact that he is engaging in such behavior. Surely only the most skeptical will deny that communicating with oneself is beneficial when it comes to problem solving.

Tension Release

A second way in which self-communication facilitates behavior is through tension release or catharsis. Much of the talk of psychotic and neurotic, as well as normal individuals, serves the basic function of releasing emotional tension.

One interesting example of communication used as a method of releasing tension may be seen in Hannah Green's book, I Never Promised You A Rose Garden. In this particular episode, Debbie, a sixteen-year-old institutionalized schizophrenic, is conversing with her doctor about her strange way of communicating:

"And it has a language of its own?" the doctor asked, remembering the alluring words and the withdrawal that came after them.

"Yes," Deborah said. "It is a secret language, and there is a Latinated cover-language that I use sometimes--but that's only a screen really, a fake."

"You can't use the real one all the time?"

Deborah laughed because it was an absurd question. "It would be like powering a firefly with lightning bolts."

"Yet you sound quite competent in English."

"English is for the world--for getting disappointed by and getting hated in. Yri is for saying what is to be said."

"You do your drawing with which language--I mean when you think of it, is it in English or Eerie?"

"Yri."

"I beg your pardon," the doctor said. "I am perhaps a little jealous since you use your language to communicate with yourself and not with us of the world."

"I do my art in both languages," Deborah said.⁷

Catharsis may also be achieved through the use of expletives. Words uttered when one is tense, angry, or hurt or not usually meant

to convey great cognitive content to people who may be within ear-shot. Whether the words used are the more or less standardized forms or those of a more personalized nature, the same release may be effected. For example, those with aversion to using certain "standard" profane words often find that the same goals can be accomplished through "euphemistic cussing"--that is, substituting acceptable words in the place of those an individual finds particularly abhorrent: "Shoot!", "heck!", or "darn it!" may serve the same functions as their more ribald cousins.

Catharsis achieved through self-communication often promotes a sense of well-being and emotional stability. Brown and Van Riper relate the following example:

We knew a little old lady once whose face was beautiful and serene despite some eighty years that had held much tragedy. We asked her secret. "I'm not sure it's any secret," she replied. "But every night after I'm in bed and before I go to sleep, I tell myself about every single good thing that happened to me during the day. . . . 'Sometimes I'm a bit embarrassed,'" she told us, "because occasionally I talk aloud to myself about these things and then other people think I'm getting senile. So I try not to do it aloud when other people are around. But I do it to myself anyway."⁸

Undoubtedly, catharsis is also achieved through various religious chants and vocalizations. One specific form of expression which has gained rather widespread usage in our present society is the practice of "glossolalia" or "speaking in tongues." There are perhaps as many as 5,000,000 people in the U. S. today who consider themselves to be a part of the charismatic movement.⁹ Many of this number either

practice glossolalia or aspire to. One of the main functions of such expressions seems to be that it gives vent to pent up emotional tensions in a manner that is acceptable and even edifying in the eyes of some. Though usually done in an audible manner, the content is incomprehensible to others unless an "interpreter" explains it for them. Indeed, the vocalizations are often not understood by the person uttering them. Though some studies have attempted to prove that an actual language is being used (usually an ancient or exotic one), most linguists conclude that no identifiable linguistic units are being uttered. In other words, modern glossolalia consists of a series of vocalizations (usually with repetition of certain sounds) which do not fit into any present or past language system. This portmanteau of sounds does, nonetheless, serve a very useful purpose for the individual who feels a need for tension release. The need to "speak in tongues" may be brought about by a crisis in the individual's personal life or by the need for a more obvious and visible way to express one's faith.

It would be easy to conclude that "speaking in tongues" is a mark of a neurotic personality. However, such is apparently not the case for most users. Some studies indicate that users of glossolalia are no more neurotic than the general public--perhaps less so. Kildahl cites a study by the National Mental Health Institute indicating that individuals who spoke in tongues maintained a better state of emotional well-being than did non-tongue speakers: "They reported being less annoyed by frustrations, showing greater patience with their families, and having a deeper love for mankind in general."¹⁰

Wayne Robinson, himself a former user of tongues, also indicates that speaking in tongues is not necessarily a negative experience. He states: "If kept within the boundaries of common sense and propriety, tongues can be a source of emotional release and an aid against depression."¹¹

Talking to oneself, then, may serve the useful function of helping one to relieve emotional tension.

Self-Persuasion

A third result of self-communication--whether intended or not--is self-persuasion. By self-persuasion I mean a change in attitude and/or behavior on the part of a message source which results from listening to his own messages.

For example, Charles Lindbergh made his famous New York to Paris flight on May 20-21, 1927. For the next fourteen years Lindbergh was the best-known and best-loved private citizen in the world. In 1939 he became an anti-war activist, making countless speeches over the next couple of years. Some critics feel that his notoriety caused him to take himself too seriously. He started believing his pronouncements on a wide range of topics on which he had little expertise. He apparently fell into the trap of being convinced by his own words.

Psychologists have known for some time that under certain conditions behavioral compliance may prompt attitude re-evaluation. Verbalizing a particular proposition also tends to change belief/attitude in the direction indicated by the proposition.¹² Although some studies indicate that verbalization or active participation is

not a requisite for shaping attitudes most hold the position stated by Weiss:

It is generally well established that opinion change is greater when the subjects participate actively in the persuasion (role playing) than it is when they passively receive the persuasive communication.¹³

There appears to be further evidence indicating that a persuasive message repeated more than once may be more effective in bringing about self-persuasion than a message stated only once.¹⁴

The fact that words do have a potent effect on the sender as well as the listener is probably so obvious that it needs no documentation. However, I would like to mention two or three additional common situations where self-persuasion is likely to occur.

Consider the minister who speaks week after week on a finite number of topics. Perhaps he starts out with a mild conviction about the evils of alcoholic beverages. However, after hearing himself talk on the topic number of times he becomes a modern-day Carey Nations.

In the political arena it is undoubtedly very easy to talk oneself into certain positions. For example, it is quite possible--as President Carter has observed--that Richard M. Nixon actually convinced himself by his own repeated declarations that he bears no guilt for Watergate.

An additional area in which self-persuasion most certainly occurs is in the field of education. Many a young teacher, acutely aware of his/her limitations, has hesitatingly uttered purported facts and theories with fear and trembling. However, after several years of hearing oneself expound these ideas they become pearls of wisdom, and the teacher a clarion trumpet of omniscience.

Diversion

A fourth function of self-communication is to provide diversion.

I refer to this kind of communication as "transmediational communication."

It consists of blotting out or ignoring the unpleasant realities of the moment by talking about trivial or unrelated topics. This serves to transport the individual away from the real-life trauma into a more pleasant, acceptable world. Psychologists have referred to it as "psychological closure" or "psychic numbing."

For example, have you ever listened to the inane topics discussed at a wake or funeral for a deceased person? If not, try it sometime! You may be amazed to hear information exchanged as to which make-up is prettier, whether radial tires are really better than non-radials, the chances of the Yankees winning the pennant, or why the weather has been so severe. Surely such topics have little to do with the death of a friend or relative. And that is precisely the point. Communication of this nature is not intended to convey pertinent information to others, but rather to remove oneself from an awkward or painful situation. It may be described as non sequitur at times, or perhaps presymbolic communication. What matters is whether it enables the user to escape, even if for a short time the trauma of the moment.

Examples of this kind of communication are not hard to find. A few years ago Time magazine¹⁵ carried the story about the behavior of the survivors of a plane crash immediately after the disaster. Dead and wounded fellow-passengers were all around them. One might assume that the conversations of the survivors would center around

their recent experience. For the most part, this was not the case. According to the report most stood around talking about what they did for a living and singing "Frosty The Snow Man."

I recently heard of a former Vietnamese prisoner of war who talked out an imaginary game of golf with his non-present father and brother every day he was in prison. Such self-communication about his favorite hobby allowed him to maintain his sanity during the imprisonment.

Shelley may have been more on target than he realized when he said that we often use "a shroud of talk to hide us from the sun of this familiar life."

Amusement

One last function which may be facilitated through self-communication is entertainment or amusement. Many normal individuals often direct funny or sarcastic remarks at themselves. The obese person lying down for the night may humorously remark, "Hello toes. Long time no see!" It's the person who cannot poke fun at himself who is in danger of becoming psychotic.

An excellent example of humorous monologue may be found in Fiddler on the Roof. Tevye's daughter has told him that she plans to get married. He begins talking to himself about his prospective son-in-law:

What kind of a match would that be, with a poor tailor? . . . On the other hand, he's an honest, hard worker. . . . On the other hand, he has absolutely nothing. . . . On the other hand, things cannot get worse for him, they can only get better.¹⁶

Doubtless many other such examples could be cited where talking to oneself produced self-amusement or entertainment, even in rather serious circumstances. Suffice it to say, however, that self-amusement is a very important aspect of interpersonal communication.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has not been to give an in-depth analysis of the various side effects facilitated through self-communication. What I have attempted to do is simply to point out some very practical facets of interpersonal communication seldom discussed in communication studies. We should not always assume that when a person talks he is doing so for the benefit of others. He may be reaping the major benefits himself in terms of problem solving, tension release, self-persuasion, diversion from traumatic situations, or self-amusement.

FOOTNOTES

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¹⁰John P. Kildahl, The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 83.

¹¹Wayne A. Robinson, I Once Spoke in Tongues (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publisher, 1973), p. 111.

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¹³Robert F. Weiss, "Role Playing and Repetition Effects on Opinion Strength," The Journal of Social Psychology, 1971, volume 85, pp. 29-35.

¹⁴Weiss, p. 32.

¹⁵"Air Crash Survivors" The Troubled Aftermath," Time, January 15, 1973, p. 53.

¹⁶Joseph Stein, Fiddler on the Roof (New York: Music Theatre International, 1964), p. 45.

TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO RHETORIC AND COMMUNICATION

James N. Holm, Jr.

The purpose of this paper is to present a basis for comparing, contrasting and, perhaps, combining theories of rhetoric and communication. The proposal is rooted in three of the major trends within the field of Speech Communication: the Doctoral Honors Seminar Program, the National Rhetoric Project, and the growing influence of General Systems Theory.¹ By synthesizing elements from these three trends, it is hoped that the proposal will prove to be a new development in rhetorical and communication theory.

I

The idea for the proposal was first conceived at the Doctoral Honors Seminar in Comparative Rhetoric. It began with Professor Sereno's intriguing question: "Of what use to the rhetorician is Katz's 'Functional Approach'?" The immediate response at the Seminar was that Katz's paradigm for understanding attitudes was employable as an analytic and critical device.² Several years of thinking, however, have led to the conclusion that the immediate response failed to capture the essence of the question and, thus, to capitalize on the implicit question of Professor Sereno. From the vantage point of several years' time, the issues inherent in the question seem to concern the merits of combining theories as much as they concern the merits of a particular theory. A better answer, then, perhaps should have addressed itself both to the particular theory and to the issue of integrating theories.

The workshop on the National Rhetoric Project at the Central States Convention brought the same pair of issues to an even more clearly defined point. In seeking to redefine the "Province of Rhetoric," to renegotiate the functions and scope of the art, the workshop and the Project before it gave evidence of the desire for a reunified theory. Professor Johnstone's reported comment that he would publish any article on Rhetoric having the word "ontological" in the title gave more evidence on the same point. In support and development of the reunified theory, one of the conclusions of the workshop, a conclusion that brought great nods of approval from Professor Wallace and great clouds of smoke from his cigar, was that communication, however one defined it, was a survival skill.

At the same time, the workshop concentrated on the neglected canon of invention. The concern of the scholars involved was to find a better way of offering man a viable method of consciously recognizing the full range of communication alternatives afforded to him in any situation. The problems of perception inherent in this discussion of invention brought to mind once again Professor Sereno's question. In the context of the workshop, Katz's theory took on new meaning. The contention of Katz that man's attitude or mental posture vis-a-vis his environment functioned to help man survive began to translate into the hypothesis that any attitude was simply an informal theory of invention.³

Based on that hypothesis, new ideas began to formulate immediately. Inverting the initial proposition, for example, any rhetorical theory became a rather complex attitude towards language, man, and human interaction. Furthermore, if the previous proposition were true, then the history of the growth and development of rhetorical theory seemed

as if it ought to follow very closely the developmental patterns of attitudes.⁴ In essence, the effect of the seminar and the workshop was to generate a series of propositions which themselves needed substantiation and integration.

General Systems Theory provided the basis for integrating and elaborating on the ideas generated earlier. While Systems Theory did not provide the substantiation necessary for validity, it did bring the concepts to a point where they might be operationalized and tested. What follows, therefore, is a proposal to be developed further and evaluated along the lines of the number of new ideas it can generate, the potential for operationalizing hypotheses, and the utility, validity, and reliability that such hypotheses prove to have.

II

"A system may be defined as a series of specified variables standing in direct relationship to one another and operating as a single unit."⁵ Open systems have exchange, actual or potential, of energy and information with their environments. Closed systems have no environment, or at least no exchange with environments. Finally, any environment is a set of objects and their interrelationships which has the potential of interacting with the given system.

Within this frame of reference, the human being can be considered as a system existing in its environment. During the life span of the human, a constant exchange of energy and information flows between the human system and the environment. The process of energy exchange is termed metabolism; information exchange, communication.

Generally, in exchanging energy, systems budget themselves. An identifying characteristic of open systems, self-regulation or budgeting operates at the energy level to reach a limit of taking no more out of the environment than is necessary to maintain existence within that environment. A system which cannot balance its budget, or loses its balance after once achieving it, will quickly deteriorate or close. Thus, at least in energy budgeting, survival depends upon balance.

While there are some points of direct interconnection between energy and information, most theorists have yet to claim a complete parallelism.⁶ Thus, it has not been established that a human takes no more information out of the environment than is necessary to survive. It has been established, however, that without some balancing limit, communication gluttony or starvation will not only occur but will seriously threaten the survival of the system, and perhaps the environment.⁷

From systems theory, then, one can summarize that communication is the exchange of information between a system and its environment. Furthermore, although the process is self-regulating, it needs an outside, neutral, universal standard against which to measure itself. Without a standard, the system will fall out of its steady, balanced state with the environment.

A key to the problem of communication standards is suggested in Katz's "Functional Approach."⁸ Katz argues that attitudes/for which we might substitute "informal theories of invention"/perform one of four functions for an individual: an ego-defensive function; a value-expressive function; an instrumental function; and a knowledge-seeking

function. The ego is defended, for example, when attitudes prevent an individual from seeing or acknowledging truths about himself or the environment. Obviously, this function is performed by controlling the exchange of information between man and world. At one level, therefore, ego-defense is a pattern of information exchange.

Each of the other functions is also performed by controlling the flow of information. The goal of the adjustment or instrumental function is to maximize rewards and minimize punishment; the goal of the knowledge-seeking function, to find meaning in the universe; the goal of the value-expressive function, to establish or imprint a self-identity upon the world. These goals can only be achieved through the sending and receiving of information. Thus, each of the functions is a standard for regulating the flow of information.

When acting separately, moreover, at least two of the functions control the flow of information in an imbalanced fashion. Ego-defense prohibits some input. Value-expressive prohibits some output. On the other hand, the remaining two functions, especially when they are working in conjunction with one another, create a balanced flow. In essence, one can conclude that when a single function serves as the standard by which the flow of information is regulated, the system begins to move out of balance. In contrast, when the knowledge and adjustive functions serve as standards simultaneously, it would appear that balance can be maintained.

For Professor Johnstone one can ontologically summarize that being is the process of exchange. Non-being is a closed system. Being is comprised of the flows of energy and information. Survival, the maintenance of being, depends upon a balanced exchange among systems. That

balance among humans, in turn, depends upon a regulating standard serving a dual function for the individual: one of seeking information in the universe, and of maximizing rewards.

Communication, thus, is necessary for survival but insufficient without exchange of energy as well. Communication can support survival, moreover, only as long as the balance between input and output is maintained and the process of exchange continued. Finally, the standard by which the process is maintained and balanced must have at least two aspects to it. First, the standard must promote and evaluate investigation, the seeking for meaning in the universe. Second, the standard must promote and evaluate the effects of input.

It is the major contention of this paper that the "standard" which balances the flow of information in a self-regulating fashion is and/or ought to be a theory of rhetoric or communication. Furthermore, following from the criteria established in the previous paragraphs, the function and scope of such a theory ought to encompass three major categories: (1) the investigation of environment; (2) the promotion of input; and (3) the evaluation of such input. Not only would any theory adequately covering these three areas have a strong emphasis on invention, but more importantly the skill in employing such a theory would indeed be a survival skill. For all of these reasons, the "Functional Approach" proposed here does provide a taxonomy for comparing and integrating present theories of rhetoric and communication.

III

The proposed approach to rhetorical and communication theory deserves the name functional for a variety of reasons. First, it grew

out of the "Functional Approach" of Katz and others. Second, at an ontological level the theory is a function, much like a calculus function, of an understanding of being. In addition, it is functional because it deals with a vital human function. Most importantly, it's functional because it's handy.

First of all, the approach is handy because it equips one with the potential for dealing with theory on a sophisticated level. Any rhetorical or communication theory may be measured through any methodology against the standards proposed above. The Functional Approach, thus, provides a potential basis for comparing, integrating, and building theories.

Similarly, the functional approach is of great value within the classroom. First it provides the teacher with a basis for setting goal for the students not only in terms of the acquisition of knowledge but more importantly in terms of behavior. In addition, it is helpful in designing courses to meet those goals.⁹

In research as well, the approach can be of service. The example of the proposal's leading to the rhetoric of the Oxford Reform Movement was previously cited. Inherently, all description, analysis, evaluation and prediction of cases in which the data are derived from the system-environment relationship will be accomplished in the service of understanding and, perhaps, maintaining a balanced flow of information.

In teaching, theorizing, researching, the approach is functional. In addition, the concept of self-regulation provides the grounds for reinstating ethics as an integral portion of the theory. The same grounds have the potential for simplifying some of the problems of the

freedom of speech. Yet, in spite of all this potential, perhaps the greatest strength of this proposal is that it does not depend upon scapegoating some other theory as primary justification for acceptance. Indeed, it is a proposal which admits of the proposition that we may all grow upon the industry of past scholars. Born of three trends within the field, this proposal is presented in the hope that it might repay in some small measure the gift of life of its parents.

FOOTNOTES

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¹The most comprehensive definition of the theory is Ludwig von Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory (New York, 1968). Systems theory often reminds me of a line from one of Pat Boone's earliest songs: "Her separate parts are not unknown, but the way she's assembled them's all her own!" For further selected reading, see bibliography.

²Daniel Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXIV (1960), 163-204. Katz suggests that holding an attitude towards a given object may serve one of four functions (ego-defense, adjustive, value-expressive, and knowledge-seeking). These functions have been used in research as paradigms to explain the motivation of speakers although I am not aware of any widely published work of this nature.

³By informal I mean to suggest that while attitudes and theories of invention share an almost identical function of helping a person to perceive (or not perceive) the world about him, they critically differ in origin and sources of growth and development. The canon of invention, when presented, is most generally found in a formal educational setting.

⁴Following this line of thinking that rhetoric was an attitude, I was led while teaching Renaissance Rhetoric to seek out why rhetoric came to Oxford. Contrary to the answers most often suggested in histories of rhetoric, I found that the initial outburst of interest in the art came from Colet, Linacre, More, and crowd who wished to use it for critical purposes. The results of this research are presently being prepared for publication as "Rhetoric and The Oxford Reformers."

⁵Raymond K. Tucker, "General Systems Theory: Application To The Design Of Speech Communication Courses," The Speech Teacher, II (September 1971), 159. For further selected reading see Tucker's bibliography in footnote on 159.

⁶"Energy and Power," Scientific American, 224 (September 1971). See especially the sections comparing energy and information.

⁷William N. McPhee, "A Note on Feedback and Instability," Studies In Public Communication (Chicago, 1962), 35-44. McPhee writes: "The danger in feedback in culture and its companion, forward feed, is not a too-conservative stability but a too-radical instability. Without a healthy independent norm, the culture will quickly close down and die." The norm he refers to is akin to setting a thermostat at a given temperature.

⁸See also: M. Brewster Smith, Jerome S. Bruner, and Robert W. White, Opinions and Personality (New York, 1967). Instead of four, three functions are presented here. The "social adjustment function" of this work is a combination of Katz's adaptive and knowledge functions.

⁹Tucker, 159-166.

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PUBLICATION INFORMATION

THE JOURNAL OF THE TENNESSEE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION is published twice yearly in the Winter and Spring. Subscriptions and requests for advertising rates should be addressed to David Walker, Box 111, MTSU, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. Regular subscription price for non-members is \$4.00 yearly, or \$2.00 per issue. The TSCA JOURNAL is printed by the MTSU Print Shop, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. Special fourth class postage is paid at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN.

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