Summer 7-30-1951

The Development of the Theory of the Conversational Mode of Speech

Norman Joseph Attenhofer
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses
Part of the Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/8241

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEORY OF
THE CONVERSATIONAL MODE OF SPEECH

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Speech

by

Norman Joseph Attenhofer
B.A., Tulane University, 1943
August, 1951
MANUSCRIPT THESSES

Unpublished theses submitted for the master's and doctor's degrees and deposited in the Louisiana State University Library are available for inspection. Use of any thesis is limited by the rights of the author. Bibliographical references may be noted, but passages may not be copied unless the author has given permission. Credit must be given in subsequent written or published work.

A library which borrows this thesis for use by its clientele is expected to make sure that the borrower is aware of the above restrictions.

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Grateful appreciation is extended to Dr. Giles W. Gray for his
tireless guidance and assistance, and to Dr. Waldo W. Braden for his
constant encouragement and suggestions.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE CONVERSATIONAL MODE (CURRENT CONCEPTION)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE CLASSICAL PERIOD</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE PERIODS</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CLASSICISM AND ELOCUTION</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. EARLY MODERN CONCEPTS</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTOBIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation into the origin, history, and implications of the conversational mode of speech. It undertakes through historical and chronological data to determine the sources of the elements or qualities which constitute the conversational style and to place tentative credit for their origin. The importance of this concept of delivery to the field of speech is witnessed by the wide authoritative acceptance which it enjoys in contemporary theory.

The method of investigation employed is historical, in which examination of commentaries, translations, and historical and documentary evidence is used as source material.

Obviously, the concept, completely stated, did not just suddenly appear. It represents the culmination of many theories and the embodiment of countless principles which have stood the test of time and practice. Therefore, a thorough analysis of the current conception of the conversational mode is first made in order that not only the mode but even its elements might be identifiable in the investigation.

The investigation reveals that modern authorities consider the conversational style in terms of its descriptive qualities, namely, naturalness, directness, and full realization of the meaning of words at the time of utterance. Recognition is also given to the degree of similarity existing between public and private discourse.
The roots of the conversational mode are traceable to ancient rhetorical doctrine. And while the Medieval and Renaissance periods present a dark chapter in the history of oratory, traces of the conversational elements can be found in the best oratory of the period.

The greatest impetus to the development of the conversational style is provided in the classical and elocutionary theory of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Based upon contemporary advancements in theory, the first complete statement of the conversational style of speech is presented by James A. Winans in 1915.
INTRODUCTION

The attempt to discover and codify the most effective means of public speaking has continued through the ages as incessantly as has the quest for the proverbial fountain of youth. Historical records reveal that the controversy over the sources of effectiveness entails a long and involved story. Aristotle, in his Rhetorica, written as early as 325 B.C., dealt with "... discovering ... the available means of persuasion,"¹ and the systematization and analysis of rhetorical doctrine which had been taught before his time. The process of investigation and speculation continued through the history of oratory. Modern writers continue to labor in an attempt to improve upon established doctrine.

From the early scholars on the subject we have learned certain principles which seem to have survived the test of time and criticism. From Greek and Roman rhetoric a theory evolved which insisted that certain essentials or "ingredients" be present in order for a speech to be effective. Cicero analyzes the problem in the following manner:

[The speaker] ... must first hit upon what to say [inventio]; then manage and marshal his discoveries, not merely in orderly fashion, but with a discriminating eye for the exact weight as it were of each argument [dispositio]; next go on to array them in the adornments of style [elocutio]; after that keep them guarded in his memory [memoria]; and in the end deliver them with effect and charm [pronuntiatio].²

Through the varying degrees of acceptance of these canons of rhetoric (as they became known) in part or whole, numerous "modes" of speech evolved, each of which purported to be the best adapted to the problems of persuasion. This study proposes to investigate and evaluate the origin, history, and implications of one of these modes. The theory in question has become commonly known as the conversational mode—a mode currently accepted as the standard of public speech.

The conversational mode, as treated in this study, encompasses not only *elocutio*, or style, but also *pronuntiatio*, or delivery of the material. The former treats of the clothing of ideas with language, and the latter, of vocal utterance and bodily action. The speaker intent upon adopting the conversational mode must therefore concern himself not only with the selection and arrangement of words, but also with voice and gesture—the combination of which will enhance the possibility of the speaker's message reaching the auditor.

This study proposes to do the following things:

(1) To discover what there is in conversation that justifies the setting up of conversation as the norm of speaking, and the "conversational manner" as the desideratum in good speech.

---


4Ibid., p. 81.
To determine what elements constitute the conversational mode as it is understood today;

To trace these elements to their historical sources;

To note the general acceptance and rejection of these elements from time to time;

To investigate the other modes or systems as they relate to the mode in question; and

To note the individuals who were instrumental in the development or retardation of the theory of the conversational mode of speech.

The first part of this study will take into consideration the conversational mode as it is understood and presented by modern authorities. The various constituents of the mode will then be enumerated and classified. Thus it will be possible to trace these conversational qualities from their sources to their present functions as parts of a style of speaking, and the justification for establishing them as a basis for effective speech.

The rhetoric of antiquity will then be examined for any trace of the roots of the theory of the conversational mode. An analysis will be made of the ancient concepts of eloquentia and pronuntiatio to determine if there is present any indication of an implied or expressed conversational element. Here, commentaries, translations, and historical and documentary evidence will be used as source material.

The investigation will be carried from classical rhetoric through the comparatively barren period which preceded the age of the Sixteenth
Century educators to the philosophy of the elocutionists and the "psychology-minded" early twentieth century.

Does the conversational mode belong exclusively to the present age? Has it become accepted only within recent times? It is the intent of this paper to determine the sources of the elements of this mode of speech and to place tentative credit for their origination.
CHAPTER I

THE CONVERSATIONAL MODE (CURRENT CONCEPTION)

What is conversation; what is it for; why do people converse with each other? The Latin conversari, from which the English conversation is derived, means to associate with, or to commune with. It is a mental and spiritual fellowship, adjustment, pleasure, fun. ... 1

Under normal conditions a human being engages in many conversations in one day. It is not unusual, therefore, that he pays no particular attention to the way he speaks. As Palmer has suggested, "If anybody talking to us visibly studies his words, we turn away. What he says may be well enough as a school exercise, but it is not conversation." 2

The speaker is not looking upon his participation in the conversation as a performance. He is relaxed and generally quite composed. He is engrossed in the idea which he is trying to convey to his auditors. "He forgets himself and his delivery in his absorption in what he is saying. His expression is unfettered and real, devoid of formality, affectation, or timidity." 3

There seems to exist some sort of a rapport between the parties engaged in a conversation. Oliver describes the bond as one of sympathy, wherein there flows a current

---


of warm and cordial understanding. But take one of the party, put him upon a platform, tell him he has a speech to make, and at once a very strange transformation takes place within him. At once he becomes self-conscious about the way he talks and sounds. To a degree this state of emotional instability is conveyed to the audience. The speech has become a performance. Our speaker has forgotten temporarily what he has to say and has become intensely interested in how he is saying it. And the audience has become amused and curious of the performance. The all-important bond has been broken.

Why did the sudden transformation take place? Does the fact that one has suddenly become "the speaker," talking to a larger group, suddenly require a different mode of presentation? What relationship, if any, exists between public and private speech?

PART I — PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPEECH COMPARED

Sarett and Foster reveal that persons conversing "... are striving to reveal ideas and to win response; they are not exhibiting arts." How does this basic function of conversation differ from that of public speaking? Gray and Braden have indicated that "... in any speaking situation there are two basic factors: what is being said and the people to whom it is being said. The immediate purpose of the

---


speaker is to get across to his audience a specific idea. Similarly, Parrish points out that "The only valid test of the effectiveness of delivery [in public discourse] is whether it serves to get the speaker's message delivered to the audience." He indicates further that the speaker is only an instrument to convey the message. Or as Sarett and Foster put it, "The chief justification of a speaker is his success in communicating ideas that have value for his audience." Public and private speaking, therefore, have the same basic function. The interchange or transfer of ideas is, in the final analysis, the primary objective of both. Logically the same type and quality of presentation would serve equally well for both. A speaker as effective upon the platform as in a reasonably acceptable everyday conversation can be classified as an effective public speaker. This is the major premise from which we approach the study of the conversational mode of speech.

Unfortunately, many speakers, both beginners and experienced, take no cognizance of the fact that conversation and public speech have the same general purpose. Public speaking to these people is an abnormal act. As Winans so aptly states it, when they get up to speak, "... they cease at once to be their normal selves, assume strange tones and speak

---


8. *Basic Principles*, p. 94.
in stilted language. . . ." 9 What is the basis of this sudden change in
the physical and mental set of the speaker? What is the source of the
concept that a special "manner" must be assumed in order to "make a
speech"? Obviously, the change in attitude is due in large part to the
psychological reaction caused within the individual when suddenly
confronted with a strange, unfamiliar situation. Thus fear and nervous­
ness are responsible for many of the involuntary, physical changes. But
there are those speakers who consciously and purposely assume what they
believe to be a "speaker's manner." The origin of such an attitude can
be explained. In the history of oratory there is a period in which an
attempt was made to reduce the art of speaking to a system of rules.
This trend, known as the elocutionary movement, brought the subject of
speech-making into disrepute. Oratory became the object of ridicule.
Then gradually the movement lost its momentum and became a matter of
history. But the damage had already been done. The speaker who assumes
the "speaker's manner," then, is quite possibly being strongly influenced
by the perseveration of the elocutionary rules in our present society.
Obviously, the influence of the "systems" is still at work in the minds
of some even today.

Fortunately, this trend exists only to a minor degree in the
rhetorical theory of today. Even the layman has come to think of the
words expression, elocution, and, at times, oratory as being restricted
to the pompous delivery of our political speakers, the shoutings of our
ministers, and the tear provoking utterances of our high school orators.

Company, Rev. ed., 1938, p. 11.
In its place has come the conversational mode, now generally conceded to be the accepted standard of speech-making. Among the advocates of this style today are Winans, Woolbert, O'Neill and Weaver, Hedde and Brigance, Gray and Braden, Parrish, and a host of others. As O'Neill and Weaver point out, "It is a commonplace of textbooks that the most effective public speaking is in the conversational mode."\(^{10}\)

Most contemporary authorities consider public speaking in terms of modified conversation. More specifically, private and public speaking have so many common attributes that one is led to the speculation that the two are one and the same. Existing opinion seems to indicate that there is some difference.

What is the difference between conversation and platform speaking? To what degree do they differ? As has been suggested above, public speaking is now considered a modified form of conversation. According to O'Neill and Weaver, "Conversation — private speaking — is in every sense of the word the true prototype of all speaking."\(^{11}\) The degree of their similarity, however, does present some area of controversy in the field of speech. Williamson, Fritz, and Ross have referred to James A. Winans' chapter dealing with the conversational style as "the most borrowed from chapter on speaker-audience relationship."\(^{12}\) Certainly Winans has done much to project the conversational style into a position of importance and

\(^{10}\) *Elements of Speech*, p. 308.


\(^{12}\) *Speaking in Public*, p. 53.
respect in the modern concept of speech-making. Although Winans does not claim that public and private speech are identical in all respects, he probably comes closer to this contention than do the other major speech theorists. He concludes that

... since there is practically nothing true of public speaking that may not be true of conversation and nothing true of conversation that may not be true of public speaking, we can hardly hold the differences of fundamental importance. Rather we shall get on best by thinking of our speech-making as conversation, enlarged and modified but still conversation.13

And while other authorities admit the similarity, few draw the line of distinction as fine as does Winans. It must be noted that Winans does indicate that there is some difference but proposes that what difference exists is in degree and not in kind.14 It is from this premise that most authorities begin their discussion of the relationship of private to public speaking. A similar view is noted in the observation made by Hedde and Brigance. "Good speaking, whether in declamation or elsewhere, is simply enlarged and heightened conversation."15 To a large degree, O'Neill and Weaver also concur with Winans, at least in principle. They affirm that "A safe rule to follow is to have one's speaking on every

13Speech Making, p. 16.
14Ibid., p. 12.
occasion as close in every way to one's best conversation as circumstances will allow. But to O'Neill and Weaver the "degree of difference" manifests itself exclusively in the size of the audience. Sarett and Foster extend this breach to include not only the size of the audience but also the occasion. To further Winans' contention that the difference is one of degree, they maintain that these two elements [audience and occasion] should cause the speaker to speak with greater volume and greater force, to be more dignified, to use more bodily action, and to choose his English more carefully.

Woolbert presents an interesting analysis of the problem. While acknowledging that "The norm, or standard, for sensible and effective speech is conversation," Woolbert hastens to point out that its use is definitely limited by the audience size and the occasion.

When two people talk together they use a manner of expression very different from the manner of a man addressing a very large audience. Several degrees of difference in manner can be noted. Slightly changed from the manner of conversation between two is the manner one uses when he is the center of conversation at a dinner-table or before a small roomful of people. There is something more full,
more important, more dignified about the manner employed under such circumstances. Then again, given the same circumstances, but assume that the speaker is somewhat excited, and the manner changes again. The speaker may become more noisy, may make gestures, may energize his face, and in general may show more animation and activity.

Another degree of difference can be noticed in the speaker for a set occasion. There is likely to be more of an air of formality about his manner; possibly even a suggestion of stiffness or extreme deliberateness. But let this speaker become excited, and though he may still retain his formality he will also become more free, possibly intense; while his eye and face and whole being will reveal meanings that he would not otherwise employ. Finally, at the farthest extreme of speaking is that which is used on an exalted occasion for the expression of high sentiments and before a vast crowd. This permits of almost any extreme.

In short, he is emphasizing the degree of difference. Professor Woolbert very significantly points out that in public speech "... whatever you do do more so." His concept can be described by what he terms a public manner — an expansion of everyday speaking. It is Woolbert's contention that effectiveness in public address is a matter of asserting oneself.

Many will have to forget the advice of parents and teachers to make themselves inconspicuous in public places, and will have to learn their first lessons in assertiveness, aggressiveness, and dignity. At first they will find it hard;
but as soon as they realize that public speaking operates under a code distinctly different from the code that governs the dinner-table at home or the social gathering, they will learn the way to acquire effective speaking manners for the platform and the stage.23

Woolbert has indicated that public speech may be characterized by a heightened emotionalism, formality, dignity, and elegance. Weaver warns that this deviation can also operate in the opposite direction, thus precluding the use of this change as a description of public speech.

There seem to be no qualities which belong to either private speaking or public speaking exclusively. Someone may say that public speaking is more impassioned than private speaking, that it is more dignified, more formal, and more elegant; but it seems the simple truth to say that sometimes it is and sometimes it is not. Occasions can easily be found on which private speaking is supremely impassioned, dignified, formal, and elegant and occasions upon which public speaking is almost totally lacking in these qualities.24

The controversy continues. A conclusive answer to the problem is not suggested. It is the intent of this study merely to point out the fact that such a controversy does exist. And while we cannot assume that the conversational mode of speech is accepted unreservedly as the best standard of public speaking on all occasions there are certain tentative conclusions which seem warranted on the basis of the evidence examined above:

23Ibid., p. 35.

The conversational mode has become accepted as the norm of public speaking.

Public and private speech are similar in many respects. As to the degree of this similarity, however, there is some disagreement. But as Winans puts it, it is a difference in degree and not in kind. To this attitude most of our present-day authorities would subscribe.

PART II

THE CONVERSATIONAL MODE — A SYSTEM OR A DESCRIPTION?

It is evident throughout the examination of the above material that some misunderstanding is brought about through the use of the term mode. Funk and Wagnall define the word in terms of way, method, form, or style. It is to this use of the term that some authorities object. Winans states the problem in an interesting manner.

... The important matter for us just now is not conversational style but conversational quality. So please note that we are not talking in this chapter of "conversational style" or "mode." This may go with conversational quality; but a speaker may have either without the other.

Styles may come and go; but there is no good speaking without this conversational quality. . . .

Sarett and Foster attempt to describe good public speaking in terms of the characteristics of good conversation. They further imply that it would be erroneous to use the term mode since the term connotes that there is no difference whatsoever between public and private speech.

The best public speakers use, as a basic pattern upon which to make variations, the conversational manner of speech. This — let us emphasize the point — does not mean that they speak on the platform exactly as they speak in conversation. It is a mistake to say that they use the "conversational mode." However, their speaking does have the characteristics of conversation which we have just discussed.26

Writers have variously referred to the kind of delivery discussed in this study as conversational speaking, spirit, quality, style, and attitude. Most authorities use the terms interchangeably.

It is safe, however, to assume that the mode can be defined in terms of conversational quality or conversational characteristics. It is only through the existence of these characteristics in rhetorical theory that the development of the theory of the conversational mode can be traced.

PART III

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONVERSATIONAL STYLE

It has been suggested that the characteristics of good everyday

---

26 *Basic Principles*, p. 32.
speaking be carried over into public speaking. However, the advice to imitate "everyday conversation" in public speaking is often misleading. Many such conversations are far from being representative of good speech. According to Sarett and Foster, ordinary conversation is often characterized by the following traits: "... the range of voice is too narrow; the rate too rapid and too uniform; effective pauses are too few; language is too informal; and articulation too slovenly. ..." Unfortunately, these are just the elements carried over into platform speech by many students of speech who are faithfully following the advice to "be conversational." Rather it is those desirable characteristics which make conversation good speaking which should be imitated. What, then, are these characteristics?

**Naturalness:** It is almost without exception that present-day writers recommend that speakers be "natural" in their delivery. Unfortunately, much of the advice concerning the acquisition of a "natural manner" assumes the form of negative instruction. Weaver chooses "ministerial" speaking to exemplify the opposite of natural speaking. He avers that conversational speech lacks "... the long-drawn singsong, the prolonged vowels, the song notes, the hollow cadences of 'ministerial' speaking. . . ." Similarly, Higgins describes enjoyable natural speech

---


29 *Speech*, p. 78.
It at once becomes evident that much of the instruction in the cultivation of a natural style frequently begins with reference to its opposite, mechanical speech; and it is to the practices of the mechanical school that the advocates of the conversational mode are generally opposed.

Some authorities, however, are more positive in their assertions about the meaning of the term "natural," suggesting that the advice to be natural is meaningless, confusing, and misleading. Gray and Braden suggest that "natural actions" are merely "learned actions."

As a measure of delivery, however, naturalness is misleading. What is often called natural is likely to be nothing more than the "habitual." You are so accustomed to doing certain things in certain ways — like tying your shoe, for example — that that way feels perfectly natural, and any other way is awkward. Any other habit that we may have learned feels just as natural because it is performed almost automatically. It is removed from the focus of consciousness. But any new habit which is built up to replace the old one comes to feel just as natural as the old, when it too can be performed without conscious thought.

Similar advice is offered by Sarett and Foster, who make the following recommendation:

In one sense, a speaker should strive to be "natural." But naturally a speaker may be afflicted with many defects of speech; naturally he may have bad mannerisms; naturally he may be too voluble, too discursive, or

---


31 Public Speaking, pp. 483-484.
too explosive. One of the objectives of training in speech is to bring a man who does the wrong thing "naturally" to the point where "naturally" — at least by second nature — he does the right thing. 32

Another proposal offered for the avoidance of the shortcomings of ordinary speech in the acquisition of that style is offered by Hedde and Brigance. They propose the development of what they refer to as an appearance of naturalness. 33 However, the recommendation to "be natural" by imitating naturalness is somewhat confusing.

Probably the most comprehensive and exhaustive analysis of the meaning of "naturalness" is offered by Professor Woolbert, who lists what he terms "some understandable qualities of being natural." He recommends that, as a speaker, one should (1) be unaffected; (2) be normally vigorous; (3) seem to be at home; (4) be your best; (5) be free from stiffness; (6) be simple; (7) be forthright; and (8) be communicative. 34

The use of a natural delivery can be easily justified. It becomes as effective in platform speaking as it is in private speech. To a large degree the acceptance of the speaker's ideas hinges upon the impression which he, as a speaker, creates upon the audience. Glasgow, therefore, places great importance on straightforwardness and naturalness in delivery.

32 Basic Principles, p. 89.
33 Speech, p. 116.
34 Fundamentals, Rev. ed., p. 23.
The speaker's statements should seem to represent his true beliefs and his real attitude toward his audience. Any signs of pretense or guile will be interpreted by the audience as evidence of the speaker's intention to deceive them, and disbelief will inevitably follow.  

**Directness:** A speaking situation is a communicative situation. There must be set up a system of communication whereby the "message" or speech can be transferred from the mind of the speaker to the mind of the auditor. Nothing enhances the possibility of this message being delivered more than does **directness.** Sarett and Foster stress the importance of the role of directness in establishing a communicative situation.

A speaker who is genuinely communicative is direct; he establishes close contact with his audience. There is no gap; no barrier. There is an easy flow of thought and emotion. The audience feel it; the speaker feels it. Without it there is no such thing as effective speaking. And it comes only when the speaker forgets himself and his techniques in his eagerness to communicate.  

Gray and Braden have pointed out that the entire communicative situation is based upon "an urge to communicate."

... the speaker, to be most effective, must feel the urge to communicate. He must, in other words, feel that the idea which is in his mind is one that should be in the possession of his hearers and that he is the medium by which this audience and this idea are to be brought together. There is no effective speaking that does not arise from the urge to communicate.

---


36*BASIC PRINCIPLES*, p. 86.

37*Public Speaking*, p. 13.
Winans insists that this motivation is necessary for a "genuine delivery" or a "lively sense of communication." There must be in public speaking the same close, warm bond (Oliver's rapport) which exists in conversation.

Directness plays a very significant role in establishing an effective delivery. Indeed, the conversational mode is often described in terms of "communicativeness" and "directness."

The most illuminating word to use in connection with conversational speaking or the conversational mode is the word "directness." Conversational speaking is direct. It seems to be aimed at the particular persons to whom the speaker is speaking. It has the life, the inflection, the meaning, of intimate, purposeful conversation.

From the above definitions, therefore, it is safe to assume that one of the basic requirements of a communicative situation is the establishment of a personal contact between the speaker and the audience.

But there are other implications of the term directness. Woolbert speaks of "ease" and "simplicity," and of "familiarity." He adds that "When men get together to talk about the affairs that concern their daily work, they are almost invariably free, easy, uninhibited, and communicative; they are 'direct'." It is obvious that communication is established only with an intimate, friendly, and uninhibited attitude on the part of the

---

39 Elements of Speech, p. 312.
40 Fundamentals, p. 57.
It is further suggested\(^1\) that the delivery to be effective should be characterized by a complete absence of formality, and by an earnest alertness in delivery. Woolbert subscribes to this idea when he says, "More particularly does this mode reveal itself when the talkers know one another thoroughly and are not afraid of committing a faux pas when they essay to speak..."\(^2\) Fear, according to Hedde and Brigance, presents one of the obstacles to directness.\(^3\)

A method of developing the much-sought-after contact is suggested in the definition of directness offered by one authority. Higgins offers the following definition of the term:

*By being direct we mean that the public speaker should talk directly to his hearers in a straightforward manner as he does in good conversation, looking, at the same time, into the eyes of the persons to whom he speaks. In conversation we are not very well impressed by the person whose eyes are shifty and who seldom looks at us; exactly the same is true in the public speaking situation.*\(^4\)

It thus becomes apparent that contact is established not only by the attitude and voice of the speaker, but also by the use of his eyes. Winans, in his treatment of communicativeness in conversational style, makes particular note of the effect of the eye in establishing directness.

\(^1\)Glasgow, p. 27.
\(^2\)Fundamentals, p. 57.
\(^3\)Speech, p. 117.
\(^4\)Influences Behavior Through Speech, p. 176.
We should emphasize in connection with directness, the **effect of the eye**, which is quite as important as the voice in maintaining contact. The speaker should look at his hearers squarely. No dodging will do; no looking just over their heads, or down the aisle, or at a friendly post. The speaker who meets the eyes of his hearers — not merely looks toward them but definitely sees them — will rarely see their eyes turn away from him and he will rarely lose contact. But the temptation is often strong upon the young speaker to turn away; not merely because of nervousness, but also because the necessity of thinking tempts him to drop his eyes to the floor, or raise them to the ceiling. But the time for meditation has passed; his facts, arguments, and conclusions should be clearly arranged in his mind. His thinking now should be of that objective sort that is best stimulated by contact with his audience. Of course a speaker who has had no opportunity to prepare has some excuse if he fails to follow this suggestion, and one dependent upon notes cannot fully; but the loss of force is noted.\(^{45}\)

**Realization of Meaning:** Winans has made another significant observation in his treatment of the conversational quality which is worthy of consideration. He reveals that the conversational style is characterized not only by naturalness and directness, but also "by a full realization of the meaning of the words the speaker is uttering."

A close examination of this phase of his treatment of thought and speech is here in order.

Mind you, no half grasp will do; there should be full and sharp realization of content. And this includes more than bare meaning; the implications and emotional content must also be realized. The reference here is not merely to those striking emotions commonly recognized as such, but also to those attitudes and significances constantly present in lively discourse: the greater or less importance of this or that statement, the fact that

\(^{45}\text{Winans, p. 29.}\)
this is an assertion and this a concession (with an implied "granted" or "to be sure"), this is a matter of course while this has an element of surprise, and so on through all possible changes. Moreover, Winans makes the point that not only should a speaker "... think and feel the full meaning of his words as he utters them ..., but that he should also ... have his attention focused upon the content of his sentences." The means is then suggested whereby this "attention of the speaker" can be assured.

He can do much by determined effort to attend, by shutting out intruding thoughts and by forming a habit of never working or speaking with wandering attention. But much more than sheer will power is needed. It is desirable that attention should be as unconscious as possible; that is, that it should be of the secondary passive order. To this end, the speaker should, in the first place, choose topics of interest.

He then recommends complete mastery of the subject on the part of the speaker. Thus through a wise choice of subject and complete preparation, the speaker will be able to devote his undivided attention to the words he is uttering.

This characteristic (realisation of meaning) is referred to as spontaneity by Glasgow. He claims that "Nothing will make an audience lose interest in a subject quicker than the insipid delivery of stale

---

46 Ibid., p. 25.
47 James A. Winans, "The Attention of the Speaker," The Public Speaking Review, 1(September, 1911), 41-47.
48 Ibid., p. 44.
thought. To be effective, the thought must be re-created each time it is spoken and its values must be fresh and clear in the speaker's mind. 49

It is thus apparent that a speaker to be effective must have a complete realization of content of the words he is uttering. Moreover, that realization must be accompanied by the undivided attention of the speaker. These, then, are the qualities of the conversational mode as presented by contemporary authorities.

In summarizing the current conception of the conversational mode of speech, the following tentative conclusions can be drawn:

I. While private and public speaking are not identical, there does exist a great similarity.

II. This similarity manifests itself in a carry-over into public speaking of the characteristics which make conversation appealing to the listener.

III. These characteristics of good conversation which should be carried over into public speech are

A. Naturalness — habitual (that which can be learned), unaffected, vigorous, unconstrained, relaxed, simple, straightforward, communicative.

B. Directness or Communicativeness — rapport, an audience-speaker bond, talking with and not to an

49 Dynamic Public Speaking, p. 28.
Audience. Directness can be established if there is present in the speaker the urge to communicate, ease, simplicity, familiarity, earnestness, informality, and an ability to make use of eye contact.

C. Realization of the meaning of the words as they are uttered — "vivid thinking," accompanied by the undivided attention of the speaker.

It is obvious that the qualities of the conversational mode are so closely related that in many cases they overlap. It is also obvious that not one, but all of the above-listed characteristics comprise the conversational mode. It is now possible, with the mode broken down into its integral constituents, for an examination to be made into the origin of these elements.
It is obvious that this investigation will not reveal a specific period in which there develops a sudden interest and consequent acceptance of the conversational mode of speech. Furthermore, as was indicated in the previous chapter the object of this investigation is not merely a "system" of style and delivery, but a number of qualities which are characteristic of good conversation. The conversational mode as we recognize it today is the result of the incessant ingress of the conversational qualities into the accepted methods of public address. Those earliest traceable suggestions of the conversational mode may therefore be somewhat vague and indefinite. But the point of acceptance of each of the conversational qualities marks another step toward the development of a complete mode. The theories presented, therefore, are merely straws at which to grasp in the search for the origin and development of the conversational mode.

Naturalness, simplicity, and moderation have led parallel and opposing existences with exhibitionism and ostentatiousness. The conversational attitude is referred to as the diametrical opposite of the so-called declamatory style.¹ Evidence seems to indicate that early in

¹Williamson, Fritz, and Ross, p. 55.
the history of rhetorical theory there was recognized the need for simplicity and moderation in delivery.

The tendencies of *pronuntiacio* in this period of oratory [the age of Pericles] might well be summarized in one word — moderation (borrowing from Aeschines). It seems evident that ostentatiousness and shouting and even spontaneity and briskness, were undesirable traits in oratory. Cleon was severely criticized by Aristotle who accused him of just such exhibitionism. Perhaps the tragedies and their influence played an important role in swaying the public opinion, but, whatever the cause, the demands on the orator were quiet modulation of voice and complete mastery of himself, no matter how stimulating the oration.2

Thus there is evident an early tendency toward directness through simplicity and moderation. Simplicity in the age of Pericles was stressed to the point of not only prohibiting a mechanical delivery but going beyond a natural delivery to the suppression of spontaneity.

The struggle between the natural and the adorned delivery continues. Atticism, a direct outgrowth of the Periclean oratory, was also characterized by a simplicity and moderation. Thonssen and Baird describe Atticism as implying "... tempered restraint and decorum in expression."3 Early in the introduction to *The Attic Orators* Jebb cites the most general characteristics of the Attic writers of the fifth and fourth centuries as

---


3Speech Criticism, p. 152.
being "... the subordination of the form to the thought, and the avoidance of such faults as come from a misuse of ornament."4 The danger of overadorned language and delivery was apparent in the earliest recorded rhetorical doctrine.

Highly representative of the trend toward moderation during the Attic period was Lysias. Lysias was born at Athens about 459 B.C. and began the teaching of oratory in Athens in 412 B.C.5 While he is best known "... for his power of adapting himself to the character of his clients, making the ordinary citizen speak according to his personal traits..."6 he is also known for his utilization of the common, current words of everyday expression.7 The selection of words naturally falls into the classification of elocutio. But as was indicated in the basic criteria of this study, the selection and arrangement of words plays an integral part in the establishment of a communicative mode of speaking. In light of the objective of this study, therefore, the style of Lysias is worthy of close scrutiny. Regarding the philosophy of Lysias as to the selection of words in delivery, Dionysius had the following comment to make:

5Ibid., I, 141 ff.
6Gasparovich, p. 17.
7Charles A. Joller, The Style of Lysias as Characterized by Three Ancient Critics. (M.A. Thesis, St. Louis University, 1936), p. 4.
The average man, who Lysias seems always to have in mind, will not use many poetical words or phrases, he will use the common figures though — metaphors, hyperbole, — his language will not be pedantic or studied or overwrought but clear, if possible, and plain, using current expressions.

Lysias occupies a definite position in the history of style. The Greeks early recognized (as did Cicero several centuries later) three classifications of style — the grand, the plain, and the middle.

The grand style aims constantly at rising above the common idiom; it seeks ornament of every kind, and rejects nothing as too artificial if it is striking. The plain style may, like the first, employ the utmost efforts of art, but the art is concealed; and, instead of avoiding it, imitates the language of ordinary life. The middle style explains itself by its name.

In using the "language of ordinary life," therefore, the plain style suggests a basis for the development of the conversational mode. Cicero later describes the plain style in more specific terms.

1. In regard to composition — a free structure of clauses and sentences, not straining after a rhythmical period. 2. In regard to diction — (a) purity, (b) clearness, (c) propriety. 3. Abstemious use of rhetorical figures.

Such a style would seem to promote simplicity, informality, ease, and familiarity — in short, a conversational attitude. Lysias is

---

8Ibid., p. 12.
10Ibid., p. 159.
characterized by Cicero as the representative of that style. Two mistaken impressions about the oratory of Lysias should be here corrected. The first is that his is a careless, misguided, and faulty oratory. And the second is that his oratory was completely unadorned. In de Lysias Dionysius commented that

... in achieving this union, [briefness and clarity] Lysias, who seems to those acquainted with him to have nothing obscure or not to the point, shows himself not the least inferior to the other orators. And the reason of this is that, with him, the matter is not subject to the words, but rather the words are adapted to the thought. What is more, he seeks adornment not in forsaking entirely the language of everyday but in imitating that language.  

Thus in seeking a close word-thought relationship, clearness, moderation, simplicity, and naturalness, Lysias might easily be considered one of the earliest contributors, if not the creator, of the concept later to be known as the conversational mode.

Brief mention should also be made of another Attic orator, Isocrates, who emphasized the importance of clarity and assurance in delivery. Isocrates was born in 436 B.C. By the end of that century (392 B.C.) he was actively engaged in the teaching of rhetoric. In his 82nd year he published a discourse entitled On the Antidosis in which he stresses the

11 Ibid.
12 Geller, p. 7.
13 Jebb, II, p. 6.
need for clarity of utterance. He suggested that this clarity of utterance be accompanied by an assurance tempered by sobriety, which so fortifies the spirit that the orator "... is no less at ease in addressing all his fellow-citizens than in reflecting to himself...". Again he warns

... For if one should take lessons in all the principles of oratory and master them with the greatest thoroughness, he might, perhaps, become a more pleasing speaker than most, but let him stand up before the crowd and lack one thing only, namely, assurance, and he would not be able to utter a word.\[15\]

These allusions to assurance and clarity of utterance are referred to by Krass-Kestin as concepts "... which today we might designate by the term, conversational mode. ...".\[16\]

But the method of Lysias and the advice of Isocrates represent only minute facets in the total description of classical rhetoric. It would be misleading and, indeed, erroneous to suggest that the plain style of Lysias and the clarity and assurance suggested by Isocrates are typical of Greek (or for that matter, Attic) oratory. Oratorical style was in a transitional stage during the fifth century. Jebb indicates that the close of that century is marked by the growth of a prose literature.\[17\]

---


15 Ibid., p. 295.


early prose is characterized by an attempt on the part of the orator to be better than the ordinary man in matters of speech. Meaning became sacrificed for adornment. The orator has become a craftsman.

He does not care to be simply right and clear: rather he desires to have the whole advantage which his skill gives him over ordinary men; he is eager to bring his thoughts down upon them with a splendid and irresistible force.  

Ritter describes the change as indicative of "approaching blight and decay."

Among the deepest of these [vestiges of decay] was the corruption of the rhetorical art, which from a natural and spontaneous expression of thought and feeling, in which the matter was more regarded than the form, had been debased into an artificial and meretricious oratory, aiming principally at pompous and sonorous diction, out of which there naturally grew up an art of language, which never looked beyond the impressions of the moment.

Jebb attributes this change in large part to the influence of the Sophists. But whether the move indicated "blight and decay" or what caused it is beyond the scope of this study. The importance of the movement lies in the fact that it is away from the conversational mode. It stressed form and adornment in style — it denied the importance of simplicity and content.

As early as the year 325 B.C. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher and analyst, had presented the first systematic investigation of rhetoric.

---

18Jebb, v.1, p. 20.
20Jebb, I, p. 20.
Actually the school of Aristotle produced only one orator of note, Demetrius Phalereus. Had Aristotle lived a century earlier he would have had a profound effect upon the Athenian oratory. But as it was, it had very little immediate effect.

Aristotle's philosophy of Rhetoric proved comparatively barren, not at all because Rhetoric is incapable of profiting materially by such treatment, but because such treatment can be made fruitful only by laborious attention to the practical side of the discipline. Had Aristotle's Rhetoric been composed a century earlier, it would have been inestimable to oratory. As it was, the right thing was done too late.22

There were just no orators available to practice the Aristotelian doctrine. But in the centuries to follow, its effect on rhetorical theory is immeasurable. Thus a consideration of Aristotle's evaluation of the relative importance of the conversational qualities to delivery and the part played by elocutio in the creation of a conversational attitude is hardly avoidable.

What did the great philosopher have to say about delivery? Actually, he has very little to say about delivery in his treatment of rhetoric. Nevertheless he does not overlook its importance in the process of speechmaking. "As far as can be ascertained, Aristotle is the first to make a separate division of delivery in connection with rhetoric."23 Aristotle states that "... It is not enough to know what to say — one must also

21Thomsen and Baird, p. 57.

22Jebb, II, p. 433.

23Gasparovich, p. 33.
know how to say it. . . . for success in delivery is of the utmost importance to the effect of a speech."24

Aristotle spends considerably more time in the discussion of style or *eikosia*. It is in this canon that he urges the avoidance of the artificial. He ascribes great importance to natural speech, and deplores artificiality.

Thus we see the necessity of disguising the means we employ, so that we may seem to be speaking, not with artifice, but naturally. Naturalness is pers- suasive, artifice just the reverse. People grow suspicious of an artificial speaker, and think he has designs upon them — as if some one were mixing drinks for them.25

In this passage he is alluding primarily to the adaptation of words to the speaker. But he goes further in his analysis of word selection in prose. He recommends that the way to achieve "naturalness" is to build the speech with the idiom of everyday speech.

In the language of spoken prose, only the current term, the distinctive name, and metaphors can be used to advantage; we so infer because these, and these alone, are what every one uses in ordinary conversation.26

Moreover, Aristotle indicates that it should be one of the prime concerns of the orator to secure clarity in his style. He explains " . . . that a good style is, first of all, clear. The proof is that language which does not convey a clear meaning fails to perform the very function of language."27

24 Rhetoric, bk. 3, p. 132.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., Bk. 3, p. 135.
He then proceeds to suggest the means of securing this important attribute of style. "Clearness is secured through the use of name-words (nouns and adjectives) and, verbs, that are current terms; freedom from meanness, and actual embellishment, through the use of the other terms mentioned in the *Poetics.*"  

It is true that Aristotle is recommending an "art," (disguising the means we employ), deliberately preconceived to establish the *ethos* of the speaker. But the fact cannot be overlooked that the method by which he chooses to do so places emphasis upon clarity, naturalness, and the use of current speech. The effect of such a style upon the creation of a conversational situation should not be underestimated.

Oratory had already begun its decline. Jebb dates the decline of Attic oratory from the loss of political freedom. He attributes the fall of oratory to two causes: (1) a capricious and absolute oligarchy, and (2) the depravation of the Greeks. This decline continues until the revival of interest in the scientific methods of oratory which manifested itself in the year 92 B.C. It was in this year that "... L. Plotius and others opened schools for the teaching of rhetoric in Latin." Previous to this time oratory was either of the florid and bombastic Asiatic type or had languished to the degree of oblivion. But now the

---

28 Ibid.
30 Ibid., pp. 435 ff.
31 Ibid., p. 449.
struggle to get back to the classical tradition of meaningful and scientific oratory had begun. Jebb cites 60 B.C. as the beginning of pure Atticism in Rome.

Engaged in forensic pleadings at this time were Calvus and Calidius. According to Thomsen and Baird they were among the Roman orators who favored a revival of the Attic standards. They favored a style characterized by simplicity, restraint, purity, correctness, and clearness. Once more the emphasis was upon style. But here again the tendency is away from the mechanics and adornment of language, and consequently a move toward the encouragement of the conversational mode.

Cicero (106-43 B.C.) is named as the representative of the revival of Atticism in Rome. The struggle between Asianism and Atticism still persisted. When Asianism reached Rome it conflicted with the principles of the Rhodian school. The Rhodian school is characterized by D'Alton as being somewhere between the Attic and the Asiatic schools. Cicero, a member of the Rhodian school, was inclined toward Attic principles. The school had apparently done much to arrest the relentless spread of Asianism.

Yet, in its degree, it must have done good service at a time when florid declamation was almost universally popular; and, through Cicero, it brought

32 Ibid., p. 450.
33 Speech Criticism, p. 153.
34 Jebb, II, p. 449.
the better of two rival influences into the mighty stream of Roman life.36

But does this mean that Cicero's rhetorical doctrine is characterized by the simplicity and plainness of Lysian oratory? Jebb suggests that "Cicero, like his Rhodian masters, is by no means emancipated from Asianism ..."37 In his criteria which he sets up for the perfect orator in Orator he stresses eloquence as the distinguishing feature of greatness. In many respects he is exceedingly mechanical, often indicating the proper rhythm, bodily movements, and facial expressions for given situations.38

At first glance it is difficult to see the course of conversational quality through the Ciceronian pedagogy. Close examination, however, reveals that with all his precise actions of eloquence, he could not overlook the fact that the mind controls the emotions and consequently the movements of the body. He speaks of the necessity of relating the action of the body to the thought. "... For all the factors of delivery contain a certain force bestowed by nature."39 Moreover, he speaks of the effect of nature upon the modulation of the voice.

Here I ought to emphasize a point which is of importance in attaining an agreeable voice: nature herself, as if to modulate human speech, has placed an accent, and only one, on every word, and never

36Jebb, II, p. 448.
37Ibid., p. 449.
farther from the end of the word than the third syllable. Therefore let art follow the leadership of nature in pleasing the ear.\textsuperscript{40}

Cicero's keen scientific analysis does not overlook the importance of moderation in the "perfect orator." At one point in \textit{Orator} he intimates that the orator should "... use gestures in such a way as to avoid excess. ..."\textsuperscript{41}

While Cicero, as an orator and teacher, places great stress upon eloquence, he does not condemn the plain style as being impractical. He simply asserts that the selection of style is determined to a large degree by the speaker and the particular speaking situation.

One who has studied the plain and pointed style so as to be able to speak adroitly and neatly, and has not conceived of anything higher, if he has attained perfection in this style, is a great orator, if not the greatest. ... For a man who can say nothing calmly and mildly, who pays no attention to arrangement, precision, clarity or pleasantry — especially when some cases have to be handled entirely in this latter style, and others largely so, — if without first preparing the ears of his audience he begins trying to work them up to a fiery passion, he seems to be a raving madman among the sages, like a drunken reveler in the midst of sober men.\textsuperscript{42}

Thus it is evident that through the base of Asianism the conversation-al qualities of naturalness and moderation have survived to become a part of Roman oratory.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Orator}, p. 349. (Underlining by author).

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 377.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 378-379.
The task of preserving the classical tradition was passed on to Quintilian (35?–95 A.D.). Thomsen and Baird express the opinion that "... In the Institutes of Oratory he reveals a remarkably wide familiarity with and deep appreciation of the Greek and Latin writers." It is not surprising, therefore, to find that investigation reveals very little original material in the teachings of Quintilian. His doctrine is essentially Ciceronian insofar as prime importance is attached to the promotion of eloquence in the "perfect orator." But here again, preserved along with the classical doctrine, are remnants of the earliest roots of the conversational mode.

Although a firm believer in ornateness, Quintilian recognizes the value of ordinary language in delivery.

They contend that the most ancient speakers were most in conformity with nature; and that there subsequently arose others, with a greater resemblance to the poets, who showed (less openly, indeed, than the poets, but after the same fashion) that they regarded departures from truth and nature as merits. In this argument there is certainly some foundation of truth, and accordingly we ought not to depart so far as some speakers do from exact and ordinary language.

If it is conceivable that Winans' theory of the "realisation of meaning" had its inception in Lysias, it gained impetus in the Quintilian philosophy. In his treatment of "extempore" speaking, Quintilian indicates that there is an important relationship between the thoughts and the words of the orator.

43 Speech Criticism, p. 91.

But the crown of all our study and the highest reward of our long labours is the power of improvisation. The man who fails to acquire this had better, in my opinion, abandon the task of advocacy and devote his powers of writing to other branches of literature. . .

If, however, chance should impose upon us the necessity of pleading a case at such short notice, we shall require to develop special mental agility, to give all our attention to the subject, and to make a temporary sacrifice of our care for the niceties of language, if we find it impossible to secure both.45

Quintilian is here giving priority to thought over adornment. This is an important step in the development of the theory later to be known as the "realisation of meaning" in delivery.

The era of declamation had already made its appearance on the scene. "Quintilian conjectures that Demetrius Phalereus invented the declamation on fictitious subjects."46 With the exodus of democratic practices, rhetoric lost its raison d'être.

Why was the declamation so popular? The answer probably can be traced in part to the changed political conditions. The Republic was dead and the power of Augustus was established. Assemblies were both infrequent and perfunctory, for their decisions could be altered at any moment "by the Emperor's personal intervention." Pleading in the courts was restricted, and the causes were not of the type that evoked great oratory. There was no longer free outlet in public life for oratorical activity. Consequently, other fields for such endeavor were sought.47

---


46Thonessen and Baird, p. 98.

47Ibid.
The practice of declamation is one of the distinguishing marks of the second, third, and fourth centuries A.D., the period generally referred to as the "second sophistic." As far as the development of the conversational mode is concerned, the second sophistic is totally barren, for as Thonssen and Baird describe the declamation,

... it became a hollow, sterile showpiece, divorced from reality and serving only one purpose fully — that of providing students with a vehicle of display. The mere declaiming became an all-sufficient end in itself.

And so, the classical period closes on a bitter note in the history of oratory. Bombast and eloquence now occupied the pinnacle of intellectual thought. Simplicity, moderation, and naturalness have temporarily lost their position of prominence.

In summary we might draw the following tentative conclusions about the classical period:

(1) From the very beginning the antithesis of a conversational style has been the so-called mechanical school. The conflict continues through the classical period, no one "system" ever existing completely without the influence of the other. Social and political conditions generally have much to do with the predominance of a particular mode.

48 Ibid., p. 96.
49 Speech Criticism, p. 99.
(2) Obviously, the conversational mode is not an "invention" of the twentieth century. The evidence examined herein seems to indicate that the mode has its roots deep within antiquity. The simplicity of the Periclean oratory appears to be the first implication of the birth of a new style. This simplicity of delivery was preserved in the philosophies of Lysias and the Romans Calvus and Calidius.

Similarly, the moderation of Pericles became the keynote to Attic oratory. Lysias, Aristotle, and Quintilian were the foremost exponents of the importance of the utilization of common words — the idiom of everyday speech. Clarity receives careful treatment in the hands of Lysias, Isocrates, Aristotle, Calvus, and Calidius. Attic oratory, extended by Lysias and Quintilian, gives full recognition to the value of thought over form, and the importance of thought to word meaning and physical action. The naturalness, communicativeness, and realization of meaning of the conversational mode have entered the realm of rhetorical theory.
CHAPTER III

THE MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE PERIODS

"The long sweep from the period of the second sophistic to the sixteenth century is not distinguished by great effort in the investigation of rhetorical theory." ¹ Without motivation, the second sophistic oratory had degraded to the point of becoming an effete art. That art took the form of the declamation, a mere academic drill. Its sole purpose was the pleasure it brought to the auditor. The declamation, therefore, had reduced the art of oratory to a study of style. And ornamentation and bombast had become the characteristics of that style. The advent of the medieval period presented no immediate relief to this condition of degradation. Sandford points out that "Medieval rhetoric inherited the cult of declamatio from the second sophistic." ² The stress on style had merely gained the impetus supplied by time and custom.

Because of political conditions, there was little opportunity for deliberative oratory; forensic oratory was far less important than in ancient times; and the emphasis, even in preaching, fell upon epideictic or occasional oratory, the oratory of display. Thus by the nature of things, the medieval tendency to put emphasis on style was enhanced. ³

The emphasis on style extended well into the late middle ages, its purpose remaining the same as that of its predecessor.

¹Thomassen and Baird, p. 10.
³Ibid.
As to the late middle ages rhetoric had come to mean to all intents nothing more than style, it is frequently personified in picturesque medieval allegory, never as being engaged in any useful occupation, but as adding beauty, color, or charm to life.  

A hasty examination of the medieval period would, therefore, give little promise of a trend toward a conversational style. But this is not entirely the case. Thonassen and Baird imply that the period was not totally barren. There were those during the medieval age who have gained prominence in rhetorical history. These figures loom as beacons in the age of rhetorical darkness.

Christianity had begun to take a firm hold on Roman civilization. and with its acceptance came an increased interest in rhetoric on the part of those who were called upon to preach. Charles A. Fritz implies that the only oratory of the Middle Ages comes from the missionaries. The first of these luminaries to appear upon the horizon seems to have been St. Augustine (fifth century). Although schooled in the sophistic doctrine St. Augustine soon learned that effectiveness could be achieved without the close adherence to the rules of the sophistics.

At Milan the professor of rhetoric [St. Augustine] came under the influence of the eloquent Ambrose.


5*Speech Criticism*, p. 10.

It was only natural that the teacher should manifest a professional interest in the oratorical methods of the minister. He who had been trained in all the intricacies of sophistic rhetoric discovered, to his own amazement, that here was a speaker who achieved effectiveness and oratorical power by ignoring the sophistic system. Ambrose evaluated thought content as of greater worth than form of expression, and presented fundamental truths in a simple manner. His addresses were plain, yet refined and dignified. He "held the mirror up to nature," and the effect upon Augustine, upon his ideas and methods, was tremendous. 

The effect of this early association is easily perceived in his De Doctrina Christiana. The work came out in the form of a manual for the oratory of preachers. Thomsen and Baird describe it as follows:

Although it is neither as comprehensive nor as important [as Quintilian's Institutes of Oratory] to the development of rhetorical theory, it has much the same pedagogical flavor. It is intended as a teaching device, supplying both a point of view toward Christian preaching and a small body of general principles for practical use. Augustine's work has historical significance in that it restored rhetoric to the high estate of the best Ciceronian tradition. It ignored sophistic — to the advantage of the cause of rhetoric — and established the pursuit of Truth as the guiding principle of public speaking.

Both the oratory and writings of St. Augustine strongly suggest that he never fully escaped the smothering influence of sophistic oratory. Nevertheless, there are some characteristics of his oratorical philosophy which are worthy of close examination.

8 Speech Criticism, pp. 110-111.
Riley indicates that "At times he seems to base his idea of eloquence on the practices of his ideal orators, Cicero and Ambrose, both of whom developed a direct manner of speaking."\(^9\) St. Augustine implies that the most important attribute of rhetoric is perspicuity.\(^10\) And this doctrine in Christian preaching can be easily understood. To St. Augustine, the importance of rhetoric lay in the fact that it was merely a vehicle to serve as a conveyance of a message. Thus there is evident a strong "urge to communicate" in the oratory of the early Christian fathers. To this end he urges an avoidance of elaborate constructions and adorned language. "Language, he thinks, is not the greatest asset of a speaker, but it is important; the main thing is to strive for clearness of statement."\(^11\) And again, "... that beauty of expression must be subordinated to meaning."\(^12\)

As a final evaluation of the contribution of St. Augustine to rhetorical doctrine, Thonssen and Baird offer the following:

On Christian Doctrine is important for setting a high ideal of truth before the Christian preacher; for avoiding the excesses and obvious falsities of sophistical rhetoric; and for revitalizing the best in Ciceroian doctrine at a time when oratory was largely a showy recital of themes possessing neither public urgency nor motive.\(^13\)

---


\(^10\) Thonssen and Baird, p. 113.

\(^11\) Ibid., p. 576.

\(^12\) Ibid.

\(^13\) Speech Criticism, p. 113.
In reasserting the importance of directness, clearness, and avoidance of the excesses of the sophists, St. Augustine has provided an invaluable thread of continuity in the development of the conversational mode of speech.

Nor was the moderation and directness of St. Augustine an extreme deviation from the oratory of his fellow clergymen. Platz indicates that "The style of the early church fathers was simple and direct...." With the influx of the more learned leaders into later medieval preaching, however, the style of the oratory changed.

Leading theologians of the day had had careful preparation in all the arts of oratory. Many of them had been pagan orators and teachers of rhetoric before they turned to the new faith. Thus the artistically arranged speech became more and more prominent, especially in the East. The burning zeal of the faith was not an ample preparation for conviction; so the Greek arts of logic, rhetoric, declamation and gesture were studied. Rigid preparation was given to the spoken word. It was no longer a simple conversational appeal from one individual to another. Theatrical effects were introduced and the praise of the audience was sought. Consequently, as in Greece and in Rome, when the actuating motive promoting the oratory was lost in the labyrinth of externalities, there was a corresponding decadence in oratory.

Thus the Medieval Ages brought for the conversational mode a short acceptance of its principles but an eventual repudiation at the hands of the clergy.

---


15 Ibid.
During the period in which ecclesiastical oratory was undergoing this slow metamorphosis there occurred an interesting event in the field of education which throws some light upon the fortunes of the conversational elements during this period of formalistic rhetoric. In 794, Alcuin, the English educator and scholar, collaborated with Charlemagne, the king of the Franks, to produce a dialogue entitled *Rhetoric of Alcuin and Charlemagne*. The dialogue is described by Thonssen and Baird as "... a fairly substantial restatement of Cicero's *De Inventione* and Julius Victor's *Ars Rhetorica*. ¹⁶ It is in Alcuin's treatment of *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio* that we are interested. To Alcuin, delivery is a matter of practice. In the dialogue, Charlemagne suggests that the training of the public speaker begin in the home. To this Alcuin readily subscribes — hastening to add a description of the kind of speech to be practiced in the home.

In a man's ordinary speech the words should be well-chosen, reputable, clear, and simple; and should be pronounced with undistorted mouth, a tranquil expression, a calm face, and without unseemly jeers or undue loudness of tone. The right method is to speak as we walk — to move calmly, without haste and without delay — until the time when every trait reflects the temperance of moderate control.¹⁷

It is then suggested that the philosophical axiom of "nothing to excess" be applied to speech. The allusion in Alcuin and Charlemagne's treatise to the use of ordinary language (*elocutio*) pronounced with moderation

¹⁶ *Speech Criticism*, p. 110.

(pronuntiatio) is unmistakable. Alcuin has added nothing to rhetorical theory which could properly be classified as contributing to the "development" of the conversational mode. But he has kept alive the spark started by the ancients.

But the stepping stones in the continuity of the conversational mode become fewer and less pronounced as the Medieval period unfolds. Following the treatment of oratory by Alcuin and Charlemagne nothing of great significance is contributed to rhetorical doctrine until the Renaissance period. Even the oratory of the clergy began to decay.

In the Tenth Century a great cloud of ignorance settled down over the world. The schools of Charlemagne had died out. Even religion had degenerated into a mere form of doctrine carried out by the corrupt monks. Such a religion as this could inspire no man to lofty eloquence, and men almost ceased to preach.18

This condition of decadence continues to exist until the fifteenth century when the fire of Christianity began once more to flare up.

The oratory of the Reformation, the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, suggests a revival of the "urge to communicate." As was the case in the early Christian era, the oratory of this period "... was composed with rare exceptions of the oratory of ecclesiastics."19 The period is marked by great efforts in oratory on the part of a few in an attempt to rouse the people from their lethargy and corruption. Society and the church

18 Fritz, p. 37.
alike were corrupted and decadent, and the individuality of man had been lost therein. The history of oratory suggests that great oratory grows out of a need for redress. Such a need existed during the 15th century.

The leader of the Reformation movement in Germany was Martin Luther. In his extreme desire to reform he was typical of the orators of that period. The characteristics of his oratory were simplicity and earnestness.

He was essentially a popular preacher, for he tried in every way to present his subject so the simplest might understand. He was often rude, coarse, violent and even grotesque. His unmistakable purpose was to impress justification by faith alone. He was not eloquent in an academic sense, but the result of his preaching is the proof of its effectiveness.20

The speaking of another reformer, John Calvin, is described in terms which are highly suggestive of a conversational quality.

His style was without rhetoric, simple, direct, calm, clear, and logical. Yet it carried great weight. Although he lacked the imagination of Luther, he had the same willpower, intense piety, and extreme earnestness.21

In the preaching of both these men there is a careful avoidance of any artificiality or adornment which might interfere with the delivery of the all-important message to the listener. Similarly, a later French Reformer, Francis de Sales is described as

... extremely simple in his preaching and [he] studied for brevity and clearness. There are few outbursts of eloquence in his works. He attempted neither to display learning nor subtle argument.22

20Platz, p. 115.
21Ibid., p. 118.
22Ibid., p. 120.
The interest in classical tradition had already been revived. With the renewed interest in learning came a rebirth of the early rhetorical doctrine. Sandford suggests, however, that the Renaissance actually had little effect upon the oratory of the day.

The renaissance brought to light the great rhetorical treatises of antiquity; at the same time it continued the medieval interest in declamatio and style. So far as rhetoric was concerned, then, it was essentially a continuation of the Middle Ages, save that it led to a greater knowledge of, and interest in, the important works of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.²³

Probably the greatest contribution to rhetorical doctrine during the Renaissance was the writing of such men as Leonard Cox, Thomas Wilson, Richard Sherry, and Richard Rainolde. Sandford indicates that their works were representative of each of the various traditions of rhetoric.

Leonard Cox's *Arte or Craffe of Rhetorike*, ca. 1530, restated the classical doctrine of inventio; Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetorique*, 1553, treated all five parts of rhetoric in a manner largely classical; Richard Sherry's two books, *A Treatise of Schemes and Traces*, 1550, and *A Treatise of the Figures of Grammar and Rhetorike*, 1555, dealt with style; and Richard Rainolde's *Foundation of Rhetorike*, 1563, presented the theories and technique of the school of declamatio.²⁴

Examination of these treatises reveals that of the five contributions, only Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetorique* suggests anything which resembles the utilisation of a conversational element. True to classical tradition, he stresses the importance of plain language and simplicity to the conveyance of meaning. He points out that

²³ *English Theories*, p. 20.
an Orator must labour to tell his tale, that the hearers may well know what he meaneth, and understand him wholly, the which he shall with ease do, if he utter his mynde in plaime woordes, such as are usuallie received, and tell it orderly, without goyng about the bushe.25

The 17th century presents a brighter picture in the history of oratory than does the preceding period. Classicism is beginning to take a stronger hold in rhetorical principle and practice. And with the reversion to the ancient tradition comes a rejection of the excessive practices of affectation and ornamentation, and consequently a step in the direction of simplification. Scholars such as Francis Bacon strongly criticize the excesses of style popular in the Elizabethan age. Concerning this matter, Bacon has the following comment to make:

This grew speedily to an excess; for men began to hunt more after wordes than matter, and more after the choiseness of the Phrase and the round and clean composition of the sentence, and the sweet falling of the clauses, then after the weight of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention, or depth of judgement.26

One of the writers of this period, Thomas Hobbes, makes an interesting allusion in his interpolation of Aristotle to the control which the mind and emotions have over bodily action.

If the Words, Tone, Greatness of the Voice, Gesture, of the Body and Countenance, seem to proceed all from one Passion, then 'tis well pronounced. Other-


wise not. For when there appear more passions than one at once, the mind of the Speaker appears unnatural and distracted. Otherwise, as the mind of the Speaker, so the mind of the Hearer, always.27

The implications of the passage are subtle but the importance cannot be underestimated. Hobbes has indirectly intimated that physical manifestations of speech are controlled by the mental processes of the speaker. Otherwise, such actions are, or appear to be, "unnatural" acts. If this concept were true, the mechanical approach to delivery would appear to be rendered less feasible.

The support of men like Bacon, and the influence of such works as Hobbes' Whole Art of Rhetoric added to the growing predominance of the classical doctrine. But concurrent with the establishment of classical authority was an increasing interest in the mechanics of delivery. The middle of the 17th century witnessed the presentation of "... the first elaborate treatments of the art of gesture in the language."28 In 1644, John Bulwer wrote his Chirologia and Chironomia. Chirologia literally means the "language of the hand," while Chironomia is translated as "the rule of the hand."29 Bulwer gives names to specific gestures which he attempts to describe and indicates upon which occasions each should be employed. Obviously, such a mechanical and artificial approach to delivery is diametrically opposed to natural speech. Still, Bulwer is

28 Sandford, p. 76.
29 Ibid., p. 89.
careful to point out that the same minute attention was paid by the ancients to the art of gesture and that his treatises grew out of a demand by Francis Bacon for a thorough treatment of the subject. Thus it is evident that the two great forces—the elocutionists and the classicists, already girding for battle, both claim classical doctrine as a progenitor.

In sum, the years herein grouped as the Medieval and Renaissance period present a very dubious future in the development of a conversational style. Oratory of the Medieval Age is almost without exception restricted to the clergy. Political conditions were such that oratory had no justification for existence. Ecclesiastical oratory, therefore, came forth into its own, generally being characterized by simplicity. But even the preaching of the period is pictured as gradually losing its incentive, and thus reducing itself to a study of style. A few exceptions to the rule such as St. Augustine and Alcuin and Charlemagne, provide occasional references to a conversational inclination.

Although the Reformation provides little change in rhetorical doctrine, it does present an interesting group of orators. Fired to a point of revolution against the corrupt practices of the church of their day, the reformation orators gave to the world an oratory characterized by earnestness and simplicity. So here again the conversational elements are practiced. The Renaissance witnesses a revival of classical doctrine and

30 Ibid.
some important contributions to the history of oratory. But the conversational style here plays no prominent role. As Classicism becomes deeply entrenched, there suddenly appears a mechanical treatment of delivery. The feud between the so-called mechanical and natural schools has begun.
CHAPTER XV
CLASSICISM AND ELOCUTION

The eighteenth century witnessed a growing interest in the art of oratory. The period is marked by an increasing number of editions of the classics. To a large degree this was indicative of the growing acceptance of classical doctrine. As early as 1726 the universities in England had begun to utilize Aristotle's Rhetoric as textual material.\(^1\) Cicero's De Oratore and Quintilian's Institutes of Oratory had undergone a number of editions during the first half of the century.\(^2\) The interest in the classics had not only continued from the 17th century but gave evidence of a growing popularity.

The classical movement during the 18th century produced many notable contributions to the history of rhetoric. Prominently representing the movement during this century were John Lavson, John Ward, George Campbell, Joseph Priestly, and Hugh Blair. Their works "... either follow the ancient models closely or reinterpret them in the light of current criticism."\(^3\) Pertinent to this study are the contributions of Ward and Blair.

John Ward, in his System of Oratory, 1759, presents a typical rhetorician's reaction to the florid style which was so prevalent in the era

---

\(^1\) Sandford, p. 101.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 107.
preceding the advent of classicism. Sandford quotes him on the subject.

Nothing is more common, than to suppose that only to be oratory, which is delivered in a florid and pompous style. Whereas Elocution comprehends all characters of stile, and shews how each of them is to be applied; and directs as well to a choice of words, and propriety of expression, as to the ornaments of tropes and figures. To suppose that the oratory is wholly confined to these, or that the orator acts out of his sphere, when he does not use them, is equally to mistake in both cases.4

Similarly, the introduction to Hugh Blair’s Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, 1783, provides a stern denunciation of ornamentation in speaking and writing.

I am sensible that prejudices against them are apt to rise in the minds of many. A sort of art is immediately thought of, that is ostentatious and deceitful; the minute and trifling study of words alone; the pomp of expression; the studied fallacies of rhetoric; ornament substituted in the room of use.5

Blair then explains that the purpose in presenting the lectures is to substitute the application of these principles in the place of artificial and scholastic rhetoric. To explode false ornament, to direct attention more towards substance than show, to recommend good sense as the foundation of all good composition, and simplicity as essential to all true ornament.6

In effect, Ward and Blair are urging that public speakers should be unaffected and simple. It must be noted that among the qualities which

4 Ibid., p. 108.


6 Ibid.
Woolbert uses in describing the term "natural" are unaffectedness and simplicity. 7

But Blair makes a more positive contribution to the development of the conversational mode, when, in his treatment of delivery, he makes the following observation:

For when a speaker is engaged in a public discourse, he should not be then employing his attention about his manner, or thinking of his tones and his gestures. If he be so employed, study and affectation will appear. He ought to be then quite in earnest; wholly occupied with his subject and his sentiments; leaving nature, and previously formed habits, to prompt and suggest his manner of delivery. 8

Blair decries affectation and artificiality. He urges a natural approach to the problem of public speaking. In short, he suggests that there is no difference between the spontaneous actions of private discourse and the manner of the public speaker.

Nothing can be more absurd than to imagine, that as soon as one mounts a pulpit, or rises in a public assembly, he is instantly to lay aside the voice with which he expresses himself in private; to assume a new studied tone, and a cadence altogether foreign to his natural manner. This has vitiated all delivery; this has given rise to cant and tedious monotony, in the different kinds of modern public speaking, especially in the pulpit. Men departed from nature; and sought to give a beauty or force, as they imagined, to their discourse, by substituting certain studied musical tones, in the room of the genuine expressions of sentiment, which the voice carries in natural discourse. Let every public speaker guard against this

8 Lectures, p. 337.
error. Whether he speak in a private room or in a
great assembly, let him remember that he still speaks.
Follow nature; consider how she teaches you to utter
any sentiment or feeling of your heart. Imagine a
subject of debate starting in conversation among grave
and wise men, and yourself bearing a share in it.
Think after what manner, with what tones and inflexions
of voice, you would on such an occasion express your-
self, when you were most in earnest, and sought most
to be listened to. Carry these with you to the bar,
to the pulpit, or to any public assembly; let these be
the foundation of your manner of pronouncing there; and
you will take the surest method of rendering your
delivery both agreeable and persuasive. 9

As Winans points out, the importance of Blair's contribution is
not in its profoundness nor its completeness, but in the fact that his
ideas are unique for his time, and his "... words may have had a part
in setting to work the more logical mind of Whately." 10

The net result of the growing interest in classical rhetoric was
an extremely close examination of contemporary oratory. English orators
of the day were found to be greatly deficient in light of the standards
prescribed by the ancients. Sandford describes the criticism which was
leveled at the public speaking of that day by such leading men as Addison,
Swift, and Chesterfield.

The inertness and colorlessness of delivery, pre-
valent at the time, were criticized severely. More
attention was urged to correctness of pronunciation,
vocal expressiveness, and the like. Similarly, the
absence of proper gestures was noted. 11

9Ibid., p. 334.
10 James A. Winans, "Whately on Elocution," The Quarterly Journal
of Speech, XXXI (February, 1945), 1-8.
11 English Theories, p. 102.
Such a situation provided an excellent medium for the development of new theories and methods of teaching the art of delivery. It is not surprising, therefore, that contemporary with the growing enthusiasm for the classics there developed a movement aimed at the perfection of the art of delivery. Sandford theorizes that herein lies the birth of the elocutionary movement which was to survive well into the twentieth century.

In short, the ground was being prepared for the elocutionists, who about 1760 were to begin the publication of numerous works purporting to teach the art of effective speaking by meticulous attention to matters of voice, posture, and gesture. The criticism of English oratory during the first half of the century, turning more and more to the details of oral presentation, is probably the principal cause of the elocutionary movement.¹²

Important to this study is the further bifurcation which materialized within the elocutionary movement. Robb indicates that out of the elocutionary movement there arose two schools — the natural and the mechanical.¹³ She further intimates that these two opposing entities originated in the inimical pedagogical philosophies of Locke and Rousseau, the former’s theories producing rather mechanical methods and the latter’s relying upon nature for its development.¹⁴

It will be recalled that as early as 1644, John Bulwer had given careful consideration to the matter of delivery in his Chirologia and Chironomia. By the middle of the 18th century the elocutionary movement

---

¹²Ibid., p. 106.


¹⁴Ibid.
was in full swing and gathering momentum. At the hands of the elocutionists, increasing attention was to be paid to voice and gesture. Since these two elements are so involved in the theory of the conversational style, a close examination will be made of the theories of the elocutionists.

John Mason had in 1743 published a small book of only thirty-nine pages entitled An Essay on Elocution, or Pronunciation. The work is interesting for two reasons; (1) it appeared fourteen years before Sheridan’s Lectures on Elocution (Sheridan is considered by Robb to be the leader of the natural school.); and (2) in his essay, Mason makes some recommendations which closely resemble our present-day conversational mode.

For this close approach to the current conception of the conversational mode Mason must be given full credit. Flavored by the advice of the classical rhetoricians and adjusted to suit the current need for moderation, his rule for correcting faults of speech and voice is a statement remarkably similar to the Winans’ theory of the relationship existing between public and private speech.

Study the most easy and natural way of expressing yourself, both as to the tone of voice and the mode of speech. And this is best learnt by observations on common conversation; where all is free, natural and easy, where we are only intent on making ourselves understood, and conveying our ideas in a strong, plain, and lively manner, by the most natural language, pronunciation and action. And the nearer our pronunciation in publick comes to the freedom and ease

15 Ibid.
of that we use in common Discourse (provided we keep up the Dignity of the Subject, and preserve a Propriety of Expression) the more just and natural and agreeable it will generally be.

Above all Things then study Nature; avoid Affectation; never use Art, if you have not the Art to conceal it; For whatever does not appear natural, can never be agreeable, much less persuasive."

Mason also presents one of the first implications of eye contact which this investigator has uncovered. His advice follows:

The Eyes. These should be carried from one Part of the Audience to another, with a modest and decent Respect; which will tend to recall and fix their Attention, and animate your own Spirit by observing their Attention fixed. But if their Affections be strongly moved, and the observing it be a Means of raising your own too high, it will be necessary then to keep the Eye from off them. For tho' an Orator should always be animated, he should never be overcome by his passions.

Apparently mechanical in his treatment of gesture and bodily action, Mason has nevertheless presented some very pertinent steps in the development of the conversational style.

Fourteen years after the Mason work, there appeared a compilation of lectures entitled Lectures on Elocution by Thomas Sheridan. The theories presented in the lectures provide some solidity to the principles expressed by the so-called "natural" school. It is possible that Mason and Sheridan could have drawn upon the same source (or sources), for the theories which they set forth are remarkably similar. In Lecture I, Sheridan sets a

---


17 Ibid., p. 40.
standard for propriety and force in public speaking just as Mason had
done for speech and voice.

There can not be a better clue to guide us to the
source of the malady complained of [a deficiency in
reading and speaking], than a due attention to an
observation before made: "That there are few persons,
who, in private company, do not deliver their senti­
ments with propriety and force in their manner,
whenever they speak in earnest." Consequently here
is a sure standard fixed for propriety and force in
public speaking; which is, only to make use of the
same manner in the one, as in the other. And this,
men certainly would do, if left to themselves; and
if early pains were not taken, to substitute an
artificial method, in the room of that which is
natural.\th

Thus Mason and Sheridan have both established conversation as a model for
public speech. Sheridan proposes a similar standard in regard to the
choice of accent.

The only rule, with regard to this head, necessary
to be observed by all public speakers, who can pro­
nounce English properly, is to lay the accent always
on the same syllable, and the same letter of the
syllable, which they usually do in common discourse,
and to take care not to lay any accent or stress,
upon any other syllable. A rule so plain and easy,
that nothing but affectation, or bad habits, contract­
ed from imitating others, can prevent its always taking
place. And yet the want of knowing, or attending to
this rule, is one of the chief sources, of the un­
natural manner of declaiming, which is so generally
complained of, tho' few can tell exactly where the
fault lies.\nin

In respect to simple emphasis he suggests that the speaker recall the
placement in a statement which was predicated by a similar sentiment

\th Thomas Sheridan, A Course of Lectures on Elocution. London:
J. Dodsley, Revised ed., 1737, p. 4.

\nin ibid., pp. 70-71.
in private discourse. As to gesture, he recommends that the speaker "... speak entirely from his feelings; and they will find much truer signs to manifest themselves by, than he could find for them."

Sheridan has by no means reached the ultima in the development of the conversational style. This is true for two reasons: (1) he is recommending an "imitation" of the conversational attitude; and (2) in many respects he is just as mechanical as any of the elocutionists who have been relegated to the mechanical school. Winans carefully points out that Sheridan is interested in creating a "Manner," adopted so as to create "... the air of genuineness." Winans further suggests that Sheridan advocated a premeditated delivery for a given reading.

Sheridan has carefully avoided the use of specific rules in all cases. Sandford is therefore justified in his final evaluation of Sheridan's philosophy.

... we find in the works of Sheridan a sane and natural approach, with great emphasis upon the conversational manner as the norm of good presentation, and with definite opposition to mechanical means of teaching expression. He gives a simple, direct analysis of the important problems of voice and gesture.

The matter of the place of nature in expression experiences varying degrees of acceptance at the hands of the elocutionists of the period.

---

20 Ibid., p. 87.
21 Whately on Elocution.
22 Ibid.
23 English Theories, pp. 131-132.
In James Burgh's *Art of Speaking*, 1762, there is a peculiar interpretation placed upon the employment of natural expression in public speaking. He concedes that natural actions are essential to expression, but he then proceeds to prescribe the specific "natural" gestures for the various emotions. His book contains the detailed rules for the expression of ninety-eight different moods and emotions which were later borrowed by Walker in his *Elements* (1781). As Robb points out, Burgh proceeded on the assumption that emotion is expressed alike in all individuals. In Burgh's work is seen an early tendency toward the reduction of expression to a set system of rules. The mechanical system, or so-called mechanical school, has begun to develop. And with the acceptance of set standards comes a general trend away from a reliance upon nature for individual physical manifestations of thought and emotion.

A similar trend toward the mechanical development of speech is noted in the "systems" of Joshua Steele and Gilbert Austin. In 1775, Joshua Steele's *Prosodia Rationalis* appeared. The book presents a system for indicating such things as accent, quantity, pause, emphasis, and force. Sandford states that the work's significance lies in the fact that it "... represents a development of the tendency to devise marks to represent the various vocal phenomena."25

The "system" of Gilbert Austin consists primarily of a set of symbols whereby specific movements of the body, face, and hands might be

---

24 *Oral Interpretation*, p. 39.

25 *English Theories*, p. 133.
indicated. In the preface to his *Chiromonia*, 1806, Austin justifies his labors. His contention is that "other nations" can dispense with rules, but the English speakers cannot depend solely on nature. He, therefore, proposed a set of rules whereby the English orator will be aided in the improvement of his expression. Austin is as mechanical in his approach to delivery as Burgh or Steele. His treatise is replete with rules designed to improve and preserve the voice, and to assist in the control of the countenance and gesture. Austin illustrates his suggestions in a series of 122 plates at the end of his book.

The last and probably best known contributor to the development of the mechanical school to be considered in this study is John Walker. Just as Sheridan was considered by Robb to be the leader of the natural school, Walker is named as the head of the mechanical movement. Walker's contribution is developed in his *Elements of Elocution*, 1781, in two volumes. He indicates that the purpose of the essay is "... an attempt to reduce the whole doctrine of rhetorical punctuation to a few plain simple principles. ..." The *Elements of Elocution* provides rules for pauses, inflections, emphasis, modulation of the voice, and gesture. His analysis of the passions and descriptions of their physical manifestations would seem to indicate that, like Burgh, he seeks the appearance of the passions.


27 *Oral Interpretation*, p. 31.

natural, but uses a mechanical approach to that end. An illustration of this would be his description of "reproach":

Reproach is settled anger or hatred chastising the object of dislike, by casting in his teeth the severest censures upon his imperfections or misconduct: the brow is contracted, the lip turned up with scorn, the head shaken the voice low, as if abhorring, and the whole body expressive of aversion. 29

The period which began with Sheridan and extended into the early twentieth century, broadly known as the elocutionary movement, cannot be overlooked in a consideration of the history of the conversational style of speech. The period represents two centuries in the development of rhetorical theory. Both schools of the elocutionary movement are important to this study. The followers of the natural school, in particular, have contributed much to the concept of the "natural delivery" which later leads to more important treatises in the next century. But the advocates of the mechanical approach were equally important. An examination of the works of both groups reveals the futility of attempting to isolate the theory of one from the other. The natural school is not completely devoid of mechanical influence and principle, nor does the mechanical group deny credence to the importance of natural appearance. Winans admits that he can find no fundamental difference between the leaders of the two movements. 30

One of the very important contributions of the mechanical tendency is the reaction it caused in at least one rhetorician of the early 19th century.

29Ibid., p. 325.

30Whately on Elocution."
In Richard Whately’s *Elements of Rhetoric*, 1828, appears “. . . the first strong protest against the elocutionary movement, which had flourished for nearly sixty years.” Whately bases his criticism of the systems of the elocutionists on his estimate of the results of their efforts.

Probably not a single instance could be found of anyone who has attained, by the study of any system of instruction that has hitherto appeared, a really good Delivery: but there are many, — probably nearly as many as have fully tried the experiment, — who have by this means been totally spoiled; — who have fallen irrecoverably into an affected style of *spouting*, worse, in all respects, than their original mode of Delivery. Many accordingly have, not unreasonably, conceived a disgust for the subject altogether; considering it hopeless that Elocution should be taught by any rules; and acquiescing in the conclusion that it is to be regarded as entirely a gift of nature, or an accidental acquirement of practice.

Whately presents some interesting ideas, which, while not new, do preserve the continuity of the development of the conversational style. He clearly relies upon nature to provide the proper physical action to accompany the thought.

The practical rule then to be adopted, in conformity with the principles here maintained, is, not only to pay no studied attention to the Voice, but studiously to withdraw the thoughts from it, and to dwell as intently as possible on the Sense, trusting to nature to suggest spontaneously the proper emphases and tones.

---

31 Sandford, p. 121.


He opposes artificiality and adopts what he terms a "natural manner."

How closely, then, does this philosophy of Whately approach today's conversational mode? It has already been pointed out that he favors naturalness. Winans would agree with Whately on this point. Nor would he quarrel with Whately when he discusses the effectiveness of good, earnest conversation in the following passage:

The advantage of this Natural Manner — i.e., the manner which one naturally falls into who is really speaking, in earnest, and with a mind exclusively intent on what he has to say — may be estimated from this consideration; that there are few (as was remarked in the preceding chapter) who do not speak so as to give effect to what they are saying. Some, indeed, do this much better than others. Some have, as I observed above, in ordinary conversation, an indistinct or incorrect pronunciation, — an embarrassed and hesitating utterance, or a bad choice of words; but hardly any one fails to deliver (when speaking earnestly) what he does say, so as to convey the sense and the force of it, much more completely than even a good reader would, if those same words written down and read. The latter might, indeed, be more approved; but that is not the present question; which is concerning the impression made on the hearers' minds. It is not the polish of the blade that is to be considered, or the grace with which it is brandished, but the keenness of the edge, and the weight of the stroke.34

Whately takes cognisance of the fact that not all conversation is good. The speech in everyday discourse is frequently faulty. He therefore recommends that such defects be corrected before the person's natural speech be carried over into public delivery.35 It will be recalled that

33Ibid., p. 404.
34Ibid., p. 415.
Sarett and Foster point out that "One of the objectives of training in speech is to bring a man who does the wrong thing 'naturally' to the point where 'naturally' — at least by second nature — he does the right thing." It can be safely assumed, therefore, that Whately's doctrine thus far presented is fairly well substantiated by present-day authorities on the conversational mode.

The "think-the-thought" school, a later development in the rapidly expanding concept of delivery, begins to take shape in the philosophy of Whately's Elements. It is difficult to place credit for the origin of the "think-the-thought" concept, but it can be safely assumed that Whately was a pioneer on the subject. In his treatment of delivery, he indicates that the speaker should "... fix his mind as earnestly as possible on the matter, and to strive to adopt as his own, and as his own at the moment of utterance, every sentiment he delivers. . ."

In sum, Whately has suggested that delivery be characterised by the following elements: (1) naturalness; (2) simplicity and earnestness; and (3) concentration on the content at the moment of utterance. An examination of the current conception of the mode will disclose that Whately's doctrine closely approaches the style as it is understood and taught today. Winans, however, believes that Whately has fallen short of this goal in at least one respect. He points out that Whately's theory

---

36 Basic Principles, p. 89.

37 Elements of Rhetoric, p. 415.
collapses because he neglects the most important phase of delivery, namely, the establishment of a communicative situation. In recommending that the speaker pay exclusive attention to the subject, continues Winans, Whately has overlooked the audience as a part of the communicative setup. It is possible that this criticism is justified. Nevertheless, Whately's importance in the history of oratory is evidenced by the numerous references made to his work during the early part of the 20th century. It is clear that he did much to promote the acceptance of the conversational mode of speech.

The period following the introduction of Whately's philosophy would seem to indicate that his "radical ideas" on delivery were very influential in the further development of oratory, especially insofar as the first three canons are concerned; it even induced many teachers of rhetoric to abandon altogether the attempt to teach delivery. It is somewhat paradoxical, therefore, that the major contributions to elocutionary theory during the period extending from 1827 to 1870 were based on the Rush philosophy. This, however, does not mean to imply that the Rush philosophy dominated the practice and teaching of the period. Actually, because of the Whately influence, the theory of the American colleges of the period with reference to rhetorical delivery was predominantly that of the Natural school. According to the findings of an examination of the period made by Coulton, the rhetorics of Campbell and Blair were used most widely between the years 1820 and 1830. After 1830, Whately was the most
generally used. Gray indicates, however, that Rush's analysis exerted a tremendous influence upon the teaching of speech for a period of a hundred years. His philosophy, therefore, cannot be passed over as insignificant.

Rush grants nature an important role in his philosophy, describing it as "... the directive principle or general agent over these subordinate and perceptible agents [the ear and the tongue]," Once again, the mechanical and natural approaches to speech-making follow parallel lines of development. As the scientific method is passing through the developmental stage, the natural philosophy can be seen enjoying the light of authoritative acceptance. But here again, the impossibility of totally isolating one school from the other becomes increasingly evident. Even within the Rush movement, which Robb describes as intolerant of the natural method, there are in reality ample evidences of a degree of acceptance of the underlying philosophy of the Natural school.

Rush was an analyst, not a teacher. His work, therefore, represents an attempt to break down human speech into its basic parts in order that elocutionists would be enabled "... to reduce to established form,

---


41 Oral Interpretation, p. 86.
the best modes of speech in his language.\textsuperscript{42} Behind his philosophy is a desire to reproduce the best in nature. He concludes his analysis by saying, "I have thus far set before the eye of philosophy a copy of the designs of nature, in the construction of speech."\textsuperscript{43}

Just as Rush had granted credence to the theory that "nature directed the subordinate agents," so Erasmus D. North (classified by Robb as a Rush follower) in 1846, stresses the function of thought to speech. He points out that the student "... must acquire those unfettered bodily habits, in consequence of which attitude and gesture become as varied and graceful as the impulses from which they spring."\textsuperscript{44} It is interesting to note also that North condemns the mechanical efforts of writers such as Austin and refers the reader to Whately's \textit{Rhetoric} for further explanation of his own work.\textsuperscript{45}

J. H. McIlvaine, a later Rush follower, admittedly goes beyond the theory of Rush. And it is in this extension of the Rush philosophy that there is evident a further development of the theory of the conversational mode. He discusses the importance of suppressing in oral expression the mental operations which accompany the threefold objectives of

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{42}\textit{Philosophy}, 1st. ed., xv.
\item \textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 461.
\item \textsuperscript{44}E. D. North, \textit{Practical Speaking as Taught in Yale College. New Haven: T. H. Pease}, 1846, p. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{45}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 23.
\end{footnotes}
expression which are (1) the effect upon the audience for which you are striving; (2) the perception and feeling for the meaning of the words and their grammatical connections at the very moment of utterance; and (3) the necessity of talking directly to the minds of the audience. Thus in McIlvaine's contribution reference is made to two important attributes of a conversational attitude, namely, the attribute later referred to by Winans as "the realization of the meaning of words as they are uttered" and directness. The conversational mode has survived the period of the scientific as well as the mechanical approach.

It must be recalled that out of this period came one of the greatest living testimonies to the effectiveness of the conversational style — Wendell Phillips. George William Curtis, one of his contemporaries, referred to his speaking as "simple colloquy — a gentleman conversing." In 1886, Thomas Wentworth Higginson expressed the opinion that "The days of pompous and stilted eloquence are gone by, and it was perhaps Wendell Phillips more than anybody else who put an end to it and substituted the conversational manner." A clue to the source of Phillip's effectiveness may be found in Ralph Korngold's account of his training under Edward T. Channing.

... Yet he did carry away something of great value — the teachings of Edward T. Channing, Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, who stood almost


alone in combating the spread-eagle style of public address fashionable at that time, and dared to express his dislike of the pompous oratory of Daniel Webster and Edward Everett. . . . He insisted on directness and simplicity in the written and spoken word: "I believe that showy writing is always cold, and reaches but a very little way below the surfaces of men's minds. He agreed with Samuel Johnson that when an author has written a page which appears to him especially eloquent the best place for it is the wastepaper basket. Then a student spoke in a composition about "Afric's sable sons," Channing drew a determined line through the words and substituted "negroes." He liked the blunt Anglo-Saxon word, the terse, pointed sentence, without adornment or circumlocution. He "hated a purple patch as he hated the devil." How greatly Phillips profited by this teaching is evident from his speeches. Simplicity is their hallmark. Ninety per cent of the words he uses are of two syllables or less. His average sentence is composed of twenty-three words and conveys the thought it was meant to convey as unmistakably as a rifleshot.48

In 1819, Edward Channing was appointed Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Cambridge, with Dr. Jonathan Barber (a Rush student) as an assistant. Undoubtedly, Rush and Barber did much to influence the speaking of their time. It is therefore quite fortunate that the caliber of their teaching was high. Channing's philosophy was simple. He concurs with Whately in his condemnation of the artificial oratory of his time.49 Moreover, he agrees with those who place their trust in nature in the matter of delivery.


In them [children] we have the genuine disciples of nature, — the natural orator in the truest sense. The boy is not yet infected with affectation, or hypocrisy, or vanity, or anxiety about his appearance, or consciousness of effort. He has something to communicate; and he seeks some way to utter it, as instinctively as the body moves under the excitement of the briskly flowing blood and the delightful sensation of new and healthy life. How intelligible is every gesture, look and attitude which waits upon his imperfect speech or interprets his silence. Every feeling, wish and thought has its messenger. No actor, no pantomime of elder growth is to be compared with him. They should study him; so should the painter, — so should the sculptor. He is one visible mental expression. And all because he is full of the matter and has nature to help him out in the utterance. In this we all agree.50

Thus in Channing the teacher and Phillips the student and orator are found evidences which seem to indicate that the conversational mode had reached a point of respectable acceptance. The two great leaders advocate three important attributes of the mode: (1) directness; (2) simplicity; and (3) a close reliance upon nature for the proper gestures and mode of utterance.

Phillips was also the student of Dr. Jonathan Barber. According to a letter from Phillips written to James E. Murdoch, Barber played an extremely important part in his speech training.

... Based on Rush, the Doctor's system was at once philosophically sound and eminently practical. I am sure he taught me all I was ever taught, except by a school master, ... whom I lost at ten years old. Whatever I have ever acquired in the art of improving and managing my voice I owe to

50 Ibid., pp. 47-48.
Dr. Barber's system, suggestions, and lessons. No volume or treatise on the voice, except those of Rush and Barber, has ever been of any practical value to me. The Doctor's reliance on principle, and comparative disuse of technical rules, seem to me a great advantage over all the other systems with which I am acquainted. His teachings tended to make good readers and speakers, not readers or speakers modeled on Barber. It brought out each pupil's peculiar character of utterance and expression, without attempting or tending to cast him in any mold.51

Thus in Barber's influence on Phillips there is provided further evidence of Rush's contribution to the furtherance of the conversational style.

As the century closes the conversational style is rapidly gaining acceptance. As early as 1836, the completeness of the development of the theory is exemplified in an article written for popular consumption in Harper's Magazine. In citing rules for speech-making, Higginson describes two very important requisites for the effective speaker.

The first requisite of speech-making is, of course, to have something to say. But this does not merely mean something that may be said; it means something that must be said — that presses on the mind uncomfortably until it is said. . . . And nothing so creates and intensifies this desire as an earnest purpose. . . . The first rule of public speaking therefore is: **Have something that you desire very much to say.**

Thus in this first principle is found the codification of a theory which had been expressed centuries before by St. Augustine and recently by

---


52"Hints on Speechmaking."
such modern writers as Gray and Braden (the "urge to communicate").

Higginson then cites as the second rule of effective speaking: "Always speak in a natural key, and in a conversational way." He also offers a suggestion as to the method of acquiring this "conversational way."

There is one very simple method — as simple as to swallow a mouthful of water slowly to cure one's hiccup — and yet one which I have seldom known to fail. Suppose the occasion to be a public dinner. You have somebody by your side to whom you have been talking. To him your manner was undoubtedly natural, and if you can only carry along into your public speech that conversational style of your private talk, the battle is gained. How then, to achieve that result? In this simple way: Contrive to say over to your neighbor conversationally the thought, whatever it is, with which you mean to begin your speech. Then when you rise to speak, say merely what will be perfectly true, "I was just saying to the gentleman who sits beside me that" — and then you repeat your remark over again. You thus make the last words of your private talk the first words of your public address, and the conversational manner is secured.

The close of the century finds not only the recognition of the need for the "urge to communicate" as a prime requisite of effective speech, but also an expression of the similarity of private to public discourse.

Before the turn of the century, Trueblood lends support to the belief that Rush may have been more instrumental in the development of the natural school than Robb seems to indicate. At the first meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists (1892), he insisted that the

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
Rush system was not mechanical. At a later date he is reported as expressing an opinion on the similarity of public and private speech.

... Oratory of the highest type is nothing more than a dignified, energetic, magnified, one-sided conversation — one-sided in this sense: that in oratory you take into account what the audience is thinking about, what they would say if they had an opportunity to answer the speaker, or propose questions to those thoughts and feelings that are engendered in the audience.

He further proposes that "It is a very simple and easy transition from the ordinary conversational method into oratory." He then proceeds to stress the importance of the student's understanding of the idea, which leads to directness, without which it is almost useless for him (the speaker) to appear before an audience. The greatest secret of success in oratory, is the directness which comes through the conversational method just described; ...

In short, Trueblood recommends the following elements of effectiveness: (1) "A burning desire ... to give out a message which (the speaker) feels the people ought to know;" (2) directness; and (3) a knowledge of men. He summarizes his views on effectiveness when he says:

---


57 Ibid.


59 Ibid.
"The effective oratory of today is plain, straight-forward business speaking, with tones and gestures as direct as men use in conversation, dignified, but not to the point of frigidity." 60

These observations indicate that as early as 1395, Trueblood had very carefully analysed the conversational style of speaking. It is highly possible that he acquired the basis of this theory from the Rush doctrine as passed on by Murdoch.

The same tendency toward a conversational delivery is noted in other figures of that period. Kellog, in 1380, recommended "a conversational pattern of speaking." 61 Eleven years later, Brainerd Smith stated that his objective was to instill "a conversational manner in delivery." 62

The Classical and Elocutionary period has proven a fruitful one in the development of the conversational mode. The period presents two primary trends of teaching — the classical and the elocutionary. The classical represents the utilization of ancient doctrine in the teaching of speech. Its main contribution to the objective of this study lies in its rejection of artificiality and the emphasis which the movement placed upon content. The elocutionary movement is further subdivided into two

60 Proceedings of the National Association of Elocutionists, Seventh Meeting, June 27 to July 1, 1898. Cincinnati. p. 38.


distinct movements — the Mechanical school and the Natural school.

Strangely enough, the so-called Mechanical school holds interest for a study of the development of the conversational mode of speech. Men such as Walker, Sheridan, and Rush actually based their "systems" upon what they believed were natural rules. Through their rules they "prescribed" the natural expressions and actions. To this end they acknowledged the importance played by nature in expression. Mason cited the close relationship which exists between public and private speech. He was also the first to mention the importance of eye contact to directness. Sheridan adds to this theory the importance of nature in the selection of gestures for delivery. Whately proposed the "natural manner," and sows the seeds of the "think-the-thought" school. One of the followers of the Rush system, McLlvaine, proposes the concept of the "realization of the meaning of words as they are uttered." The period also produced the greatest practical exponent of the conversational mode, Wendell Phillips. As the century closes, the conversational mode is no longer viewed as a radical concept. The private and public discourse similarity has already been freely and favorably discussed by Trueblood before the National Association of Elocutionists. Other writers have begun to recommend the "conversational manner." Its place in rhetorical doctrine has been assured. The conversational qualities have begun to take their places as parts of a mode of speech.
CHAPTER V

EARLY MODERN CONCEPTS

The introduction of modern psychology at the end of the 19th century greatly influenced the methods employed in the teaching of speech. The old philosophy which taught that man was composed of two separate entities, a mind and a body, had been largely replaced among teachers of speech by the new conception of man as a whole being. The dichotomy was no longer accepted as a basis for understanding of the speech processes. Mind and body now functioned as a unit. The implications which the acceptance of this concept held for speech theory are at once apparent. Robb indicates its significance as follows:

... emphasis is now upon mental processes rather than the physiology of speech. The great interest in the mind and in the outward manifestations of its activities diverted the attention of the teachers of speech from the emphasis established by the preceding period on physiology and the mechanism of the voice.

The trend, therefore, was to be away from the mechanical and elocutionary approaches. The way had been paved for a smooth reception of the natural methods which became prominent during the early part of the twentieth century.

The "think-the-thought" school gained considerable impetus from this new intellectual movement. Wollbert defines the "think-the-thought"

---

1Oral Interpretation, p. 142.
school as "... the method that insists that expression is entirely dependent upon the intent of the expressing mind to utter thoughts sincerely and honestly." The concept is a "method" of achieving an effective delivery. Its acceptance is significant to the development of the conversational mode for two reasons: (1) by its very nature it rejects artificiality and the mechanical approach; and (2) it presents an approach to a conversational attitude.

The outstanding example of the "think-the-thought" school was Samuel Silas Curry. In his Province of Expression, 1927, he reveals the relationship of mind or soul to body in the following manner:

We find that expression is not of the body, but through the body. "It is the soul that speaks." Actions of the body may be merely external, accidental, mechanical or utilitarian. Nothing is ever expressive which is not the transparent means of manifesting the soul; that is not directly caused by some thought, emotion or condition of the speaker's psychic faculties and powers.

Thus to Curry, if the mind completely comprehends the thought or idea, the physical manifestations of that idea or expression will be dictated. Nature has once more taken the place of the mechanical system.

Curry also emphasizes the importance of spontaneity to an effective natural delivery. He proposes that "The importance of spontaneous

---


action in expression can hardly be overestimated. It is the basis of all naturalness, and unless the spontaneous energies are awakened, expression will lack completeness.

Woolbert implies that the fault of the "think-the-thought" school lies in the fact that it does not take into consideration the fact that the audience completes the communicative system. He suggests that the hearer must be made to "think-the-thought" just as much as the speaker. Winans has attempted to adjust this shortcoming of the "think-the-thought" school in his statement of the conversational mode. In his definition of the mode he conceives of the audience as responding, asking questions, approving and disapproving. The speaker talks with the audience, not at it. The doubt expressed by Woolbert as to the effectiveness of the "think-the-thought" method may be well founded. Its importance as a method or approach to the conversational attitude, however, cannot be denied. For his development of the "think-the-thought" theory, therefore, Curry must be considered as an important link in the chain of development of the conversational mode.

The first part of the twentieth century is marked by the proposal of other theories belonging to the natural school which bear upon the final acceptance of the conversational mode. Because of the implications

---


5"Theories of Expression."

6*Speech Making*, p. 13.
which the acceptance of these new theories holds for the conversational
mode, a brief consideration must be given here to their underlying
principles.

The method urged by Clark and Chamberlain and known as expressional
paraphrasing was based to a large degree upon Curry and was fundamentally
a product of the "think-the-thought" school. They define paraphrasing
as "... the essential principle of translating or carrying over into
one's own realm of experience, observation, and communication, things
that are found in some less familiar realm."7 The basis of the theory is
made very clear — an idea to be expressed by a student must become his
very own before he attempts to deliver it. To Chamberlain and Clark,
"The conversational manner is the basis of all good speaking."8

Mention must also be made of another system similar to that of
paraphrasing. In 1909, Arthur E. Phillips presented his natural or tone
drills which were fundamentally based upon the same principle as the
paraphrasing system. One of the principal aims of the system is "... to
rid the pupil of artificiality and assure naturalness." The system
also purported to develop spontaneity.9 Briefly stated, the drills were
simply exercises which were given to the pupil in order to acquire

7 Wm. B. Chamberlain and S. H. Clark, Principles of Vocal Expression.

8 Ibid., p. 272.

9 Arthur Edward Phillips, Natural Drills in Expression. Chicago:
The Newton Company, Rev. ed., 1927, p. 3.
proficiency in expression of the various emotions. Here again, the object was to acquaint the pupil with the emotion (to make it his own) before he attempted to express it.

Extremely important to the present-day statement of the conversational mode is the work of Edward N. Kirby. In the preface to his Public Speaking, (1915), Winans acknowledges his wide use of Kirby in his chapter on delivery. In his chapter on speaker-audience relationship, Kirby very adequately expresses his concept of the conversational mode. Kirby treats of the establishment of a communicative system, which precludes the rendering of a performance before an audience. He also establishes directness and simplicity as attributes of good speaking. These elements are to be found as essential qualities of the conversational mode as expressed by Winans nineteen years later.

In 1903, Edwin DuBois Shurter’s Public Speaking appeared with a thorough analysis of the conversational mode. His analysis is quite similar to that of Winans. Shurter begins by establishing conversation as the norm of public speaking. “Obviously the best way to convey your thought to a collection of individuals — your audience — is the way you would speak to a single individual in earnest conversation.” It must be pointed out that Shurter’s approach to the conversational style


is the "think-the-thought" method. He indicates that in order to obtain directness, the speaker must be sure that he conveys the impression that the thoughts he is expressing are his own. The two basic criteria on which he bases his theory of speech-making are: (1) the speaker must have something to say; and (2) he must have a clear and vivid concept of what he is saying at the moment of utterance. He then presents a clear breakdown of the conversational style into qualities. "Among the various qualities that denote the best conversational style such as naturalness, simplicity, vivacity, and sincerity, the most important for the beginner in public speaking is that of directness." His method of achieving directness is through the establishment of a communicative attitude on the part of the speaker. Shurter and Kirby both place emphasis on the speaker-audience relationship.

The first complete statement of the conversational mode in modern terms is presented by James A. Winans in his Public Speaking, 1915. Winans' approach is familiar. His objective is the creation of a normal or natural behavior upon the platform. His approach is through the adaptation of the qualities of good conversation to the public presentation.

12Ibid., p. 12.
13Ibid., p. 1.
14Ibid., p. 11.
His standard for public speaking, therefore, is conversation. The qualities of conversation which he believes make conversation lively and which he believes should be carried over into public speaking are:

(1) full realization of the content of your words as you utter them, and
(2) a lively sense of communication. His "realization of meaning" is clearly an outgrowth of the "think-the-thought" approach. "Mind you, no half grasp will do. Nor is it enough to grasp the bare meaning; the emotional content also must be realized." To Winans the communicative attitude is established by: (1) having something to say; (2) having a sincere desire to say it; (3) talking with and not simply before the audience; and (4) talking straight to the audience with a proper utilization of eye contact.

To attempt to present the source of Winans' theory would be merely conjecture. He does, however, give credit to Kirby for his treatment of delivery. The evidence examined in this study would tend to indicate that the mode was in the process of development over a long period of years. Toward the middle of the 19th century this development seems to gain momentum. By the beginning of the 20th century, the conversational style was being favorably considered by authorities in the field of public speaking. The ideas had existed before Winans' presentation of the theory,

---

16Ibid., p. 31.
17Ibid., p. 32.
18Ibid., pp. 32-39.
but it remained for Winans to codify the statement of the conversational style. After Winans' presentation of the theory it is needless to trace the development any further. As was indicated in the first chapter of this study, most modern authorities choose Winans as the starting point from which to begin their discussion of the conversational mode of speech. Variations from and elaborations of Winans' concept of the mode are not drastic. His treatment is thorough and appears to be the culmination of the efforts of many men and many theories — from the age of Pericles to the present day.
CONCLUSION

Modern authorities have indicated that the norm of public speaking is conversation. The evidence examined in this study would seem to indicate that there are inherent in conversation certain characteristics which justify such a selection. It has been determined that the qualities which make conversation effective are naturalness, communicativeness, and a full realization of the meaning of words as they are uttered. And it has been proposed that the way to effective public speaking is through the carry-over of these conversational elements into the public situation.

Examination revealed that the concept of the conversational mode does not belong exclusively to this age. Rather it would seem to indicate that the mode has grown out of the gradual acceptance of its several constituents.

The qualities of the conversational have their roots early in the history of oratory. The value of simplicity and moderation was recognized in the earliest native oratory. Moreover, an examination of the classical rhetoricians, Lysias, Aristotle, and Quintilian, reveals that they were acquainted with the benefits to be derived from the use of the idiom of daily speech. The concept of the advantage of concentration on thought rather than form also finds its origin in antiquity.

The thread of continuity is almost lost during the Medieval Ages. For various reasons, interest in speechmaking had greatly diminished. However, in the practice of public speaking which was kept alive by a small
group of enthusiastic orators, there was evident a strong element of
earnestness and simplicity. Thus, at its lowest ebb, oratory had found
a place for the conversational element.

With the advent of the elocutionary movement and the parallel
development of rhetorical theory there emerged a more definite trend
toward a conversational style of delivery. The 18th and 19th centuries
are marked by an ever increasing interest in the fifth canon. The
evidence examined reveals that credit for the evolution and gradual acceptance of the conversational mode cannot be placed upon any one school. Actually, the various "systems" or "schools" possessed many common characteristics. It is safe to assume, however, that there existed during the period the basic concept that nature had provided the ideal. The objective of speech, then, was to duplicate, in some manner, the actions of nature. Various schools chose various methods to achieve this end. But the fundamental concept of naturalness had taken firm hold on both the rhetorical and elocutionary doctrines. By the middle of the 18th century recognition had been granted to the similarity of public and private speech. It was at this time that Mason mentions the part played by eye contact in establishing communication between the speaker and the audience. The priority of thought over form is suggested in this period. With the presentation of Whately's doctrine the "think-the-thought" school receives great impetus. Toward the end of the 19th century, the mode was assuming a prominent role in speech-making. Delivery was spoken of in terms of the "conversational manner."
The modern period is characterized by a codification of the conversational delivery. The revolutionary advances and radical changes made in the field of psychology at the turn of the century provided a scientific basis for the numerous theories which were to be advanced in the early part of the 20th century. Prominent among these theories were the "think-the-thought" school, the "expressional paraphrasing" method, and the "tone" system. All were purported to produce a natural delivery. Drawing in large part upon the work of Kirby, Winans in 1915 produced the first complete statement of the conversational mode. His philosophy presents an integration of the conversational qualities presented in this study into a complete style of delivery.

From Pericles to Winans the mode has developed. It has proven to be the outgrowth of many theories, of many "systems." No one individual or group can be given credit for its total development and subsequent acceptance. Its acceptance and rejection from time to time have been the result of many influences. Tentatively, the conversational mode of speech enjoys authoritative acceptance. But the demands of effectiveness in the future may require an entirely different approach to speechmaking. Posterity may yet come to view the conversational mode as just another "system."
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS


PERIODICALS


'Trueblood, Thomas C., Proceedings of the National Association of Elocutionists, from June 27, 1892 to July 1, 1898.

Winans, James Albert, "The Attention of the Speaker," The Public Speaking Review, I (September, 1911).


AUTobiography

Norman Joseph Attenhofer was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1923. Here he received his elementary and high school education at the Martin Behrman High School of the New Orleans Public School System. Upon graduation from high school in 1940 he entered Tulane University of Louisiana. He was awarded the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with a minor in Political Science in 1943. The period from 1943 to 1946 was spent in the service of the United States Marine Corps. Upon his return to civilian status in early 1947, he entered Louisiana State University as a graduate speech student. While at Louisiana State University he taught public speaking as a graduate assistant. In August of 1951 he completed the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Norman Joseph Attenhofer

Major Field: Speech

Title of Thesis: The development of the theory of the conversational mode of speech

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination:

July 30, 1957