

SOME DO NOT'S FOR ORATORICAL CLARITY

by
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PART SEVEN: Lip Service, Faulty Evidence and Causal Relations, and Boring Transitions

LEARN WHAT NOT TO DO!

As stated in Part One of this series treating oratorical clarity (See *Rostrum*, March 2002, p. 43), perhaps the most practical way to improve oratorical effectiveness is to emphasize what not to do. In other words, the orator should focus on those features which compete with clarity. Like the first six, this article does not treat every obstacle to clear thought, for such endeavor would be futile for any person. Instead, this article covers four of the most notorious obstacles and sufficiently warns the orator to examine carefully language usage. The author as-

..."Students of oratory must carefully prepare not only their major arguments and subpoints, but also the means for tying them together"...

sumes from his teaching and coaching experience that, if the orator knows **what should not be done**, he or she will employ **what should be done**. This article stresses lip service, faulty evidence and causal relations, and boring transitions.

DON'T USE LIP SERVICE!

Lip service usually occurs when someone says one thing but then does another, often the opposite of what was first said. Like much faulty reasoning, lip service often goes undetected because it is so hidden in verbiage that an announced ideal and the speaker's inconsistent behavior are not exposed to sharp contrast. However, when detected, lip service can cloud an audience's clarity of thought and even make them angry because they have been deceived.

A clear explanation of lip service comes from W. Ward Fearnside and William B. Holther, who in *Fallacy - The Counterfeit of Argument*. said:

All of us are more or less restrained by the taboos current in our particular society, in our culture. Perhaps this is fortunate since it promotes

the stability of social institutions and makes for cultural unity. At any rate, the pressure which society exerts to make individuals conform to its beliefs and ideals is generally sufficient to prevent all but occasional individuals from openly repudiating the prevailing notions. Examples may be found in any culture. The principles of orthodox Marxism have been so enshrined in the Soviet Union that Lenin and his successors have constantly made obeisance to Marx even though departing widely from his notions. In America,

almost every group renders homage to the ideals of the U.S. Constitution, although it is quite clear that neither the communist, neo-fascist nor super-patriotic elements actually uphold the civil liberties essential to the plan of government which the Constitution provides. In American culture it takes a hardy individualist to express dissent from the principles of Christian ethics or to idealize war. One may, without evoking any intolerable hostility, advocate or do all sorts of things inconsistent with Christian ethics or continued peace; only open acknowledgment of the consequences of one's acts is apt to bring immediate public repudiation. Consequently,

individuals who find themselves opposed to some cultural norm often see the wisdom of giving lip service to it. In fact, a person may render lip service to an accepted ideal of his group without even realizing that he is constrained in his belief. For instance, an individual may support an ideal such as racial equality without ever questioning the depth of his belief until one day he is called upon to put it into public practice. Sometimes lip service is a smoke screen consciously created, as with the person who proclaims his support of sexual taboos which he clandestinely violates.

John Stuart Mill exemplified how even very good people fall short of their professed standards of behavior. In *On Liberty* Mill said that

Christians believe that the blessed are the poor and humble, and those who are ill-used by the world; that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven; that they should judge not, lest they be judged; that they should swear not at all; that they should love their neighbor as

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themselves; that if one take their cloak, they should give him their coat also; that they should take no thought for the morrow; that if they would be perfect they should sell all that they have and give it to the poor. They are not insincere when they say that they believe these things. They do believe them as people believe what they have always heard lauded and never discussed. But in the sense of that living belief which regulates conduct, they believe these doctrines just up to the point to which it is usual to act upon them.

Lip service occurred, for example, when a lobbyist for government subsidies addressed an Independent Farmer's Association and said that "our country has grown great under the system of free private enterprise. We are proud of the industry and initiative of the millions of individuals who have worked out their destinies under our flag. Free enterprise has built up our nation and will continue to build it up." Indeed, but after his introduction, the speaker devoted the main part of his address to advocating government subsidies for wheat based on a system of price and acreage controls. Subsidies and government controls, whatever their form or merit, are not applications of free and private enterprise. The speaker completely switched ground; his main address did not match his *lip-serviced* introduction.

Another speaker addressed a group of military veterans and said that "democracy must be alert against government by special interest and pressure groups. The legislator should listen to the farmer, the businessman, the veteran—but he must decide for the good of all." However, the speaker went on to explain how he was supporting a bill that greatly extends benefits for veterans. He even stressed that "your Congressman won't be against this bill if he gets a lot of letters from you!" Though the speaker seemed to deprecate special interests and pressure groups, he apparently could not resist the temptation to appeal to such a group when opportunity appeared and the question concerned his own interests. The speaker completely switched ground; he employed lip service.

Lip service was identified in the August 4, 1997 issue of The Oshkosh Northwestern. In her editorial entitled "Whole Math Taking Hold in Schools," Mona Charen, a columnist for Creators Syndicate, said that "the spirit of the '60's—small-minded, Third-World worshipping, standards-loathing—is alive and well and living in your poor child's public school curriculum." In her indictment of the stupidity of Whole Math, she said that "in the world of Whole Math, the kids are not expected to get any answers—just to have the right attitude"; and that

one popular textbook, *Secondary Math: An Integrated Approach: Focus on Algebra*, begins by extolling the virtues of teamwork, offers the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in three languages, mentions that in the future, computers will do all of our math computations for us, and asks the kids what role they suppose teamwork plays in conserving natural resources. The text then introduces characters named Taktuk, Esteban and Minh, who offer thoughts on life, environmentalism and such. But equations don't show up until page 165.

Charen accused the authors and their supporters of fostering the teaching and learning of mathematics, but actually doing something else. Their switching ground was lip service.

In another of her editorials, namely "Israel Held to Impossible Standard" (Oshkosh Northwestern, March 10, 2002), Charen argued that "everyone acknowledges that we [the United States] have the perfect right to defend ourselves against those who have

done us grave harm. Nor are we asked to sit by and wait for our enemies to do us even more catastrophic damage if they get the chance." Then Charen countered the above by saying:

But when it comes to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the context is removed. Bleeding Israel is daily exhorted to stop contributing to the cycle of violence. Her teenagers are blown to bits at discotheques. Her babies are approached outside a synagogue by a suicide bomber who waits until he is next to the strollers before blowing himself apart. Her adolescent boys who wander off in the desert and get lost are torn to pieces.

All of this is applauded and celebrated by Yasser Arafat and most of the Arab governments in the region.

Some Arabs (those among the minority who acknowledge that Arabs are responsible) condemned the bombing of the World Trade Center. But not a single Islamic scholar or cleric has condemned the systematic policy of blowing up Israeli civilians. Israelis are demoralized and terrified. Restaurants and shops are nearly empty. And alone among nations apparently, Israel is not permitted to engage in simple self-defense.

Obviously lip service is not virtuous for oratorical effectiveness. At best, it confuses or angers those members of the audience not on the side of the lip service advocate.

DON'T USE FAULTY EVIDENCE!

Evidence is the raw material of proof. It is the substance from which inferences or conclusions derive. Many students often rely on the words of specialists like physicians, lawyers, scientists, politicians, and economists because the students have neither the time nor the wherewithal to get the facts themselves. The students tend to accept a conclusion because an authority says it is true. However, orators must realize that an authoritative opinion does not prove a proposition, but it is a reasonable basis for believing it. To accept an authority's word for something is to *assume* that the authority has the evidence. However, in Logic: An Introduction, Lionel Ruby contends that, "If we wish to *know*, rather than merely to believe, we should inquire into the evidence on which the conclusions are based."

Orators must be careful to employ evidence that is clear. In other words, evidence should not be vague; it should not contain indefinite terms. For example, several indefinite terms (italicized) were employed as evidence in the following report of the Scripps Howard News Service, cited in The Oshkosh Northwestern of August 5, 1997.

FBI PROBES ISRAEL BOMB LINK TO NEW YORK

JERUSALEM -*FBI agents* flew to Israel Monday to investigate links between last week's suicide bombing in Jerusalem and the discovery the next day of what *they* suspect was a plot to bomb the New York subway.

Israeli sources said *they* had sent *their investigators* to New York, where two Palestinians were arrested on Thursday.

U.S. authorities say they found two bombs in the suspects' apartment which they believe were for a double suicide attack on the subway. The attack on a Jerusalem market was carried out by two suicide bombers.

A leaflet circulated after the Jerusalem bombing claimed that the attack was the work of the militant Islamic group Hamas. FBI officials say the two Palestinian suspects telephoned Hamas offices in the days before their arrest.

Israel and U.S. officials refused to comment on reports about the FBI investigation here. But relatives of Lafi Khalil, one of the Palestinians held in New York, told ABC News that they had been questioned by federal investigators in the West Bank.

Hamas denied any connection with the alleged New York conspiracy and has not claimed responsibility for the Jerusalem attack, which killed 13 people and wounded 150.

Israeli and Palestinian officials say they are no closer to discovering who carried out the Jerusalem bombing. The bombers died in the attack.

What a sea of confusion! What FBI agents and officials? What Israeli sources, investigators, and officials? What U.S. authorities and officials? What Palestinian officials? What leaflets and reports? What Hamas officials? What relatives of Lafi Khali? What sources at ABC News? Orators must be certain that their evidence is clear .

Orators must employ evidence that is also accurate. In The Oshkosh Northwestern of March 10, 2002, Mona Charen contended that "nearly every dispatch from the Middle East lacks basic context. Here are some of the facts to keep in mind when reading these flawed reports." She then reported:

- The PLO was not formed in order to secure a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. It was created in 1964, when both territories were under Arab sovereignty. Jordan and Egypt did not create a state for the Palestinians because they preferred to keep the refugees angry and homeless.
- It is not "Palestinian Land." There has never been an independent state on the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. The area—which always contained Arabs and Jews—was under Ottoman control for several hundred years until World War I, then British control under the League of Nations Mandate and finally under United Nations control.
- The United Nations approved a partition plan in 1947 that would have created two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jews accepted the arrangement. The Arabs refused. Five Arab armies invaded the new state of Israel. In the ensuing war, thousands of refugees fled. Jews fled Arab nations for Israel, and Arabs fled Israel for Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon. The Jewish

refugees became full citizens of Israel. The Palestinian refugees became pawns. Israel came into possession of the West Bank and Gaza only because she was attacked again by five Arab armies in 1967.

- If the Palestinians are fighting for a state on the West Bank and Gaza, why do their maps show Palestine as filling the entire territory that is now Israel? Why do they marinate their people in Hitlerian anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism? Further, why—when Ehud Barak offered just such a state, or 95 percent of it—did Arafat walk away and start this latest round of violence? Palestinian spokesmen say it wasn't everything they wanted. But if they truly want a separate state on so-called "occupied territory," why did Barak's office not form the basis for further talks?
- The Palestinians are said to be chafing under the "occupation." But in obedience to the Oslo process, Israel has given administrative authority over 98 percent of the Palestinians in the disputed territories to Arafat. Israel has further permitted the Palestinian Authority to arm 40,000 "police."
- If the Saudi "peace plan" were serious—and not an attempt to divert attention from the Saudi role in 9 -11 and its sponsorship of Islamic extremism worldwide—why didn't Saudi Arabia offer it before?
- Why is it impossible for the Palestinian Authority to give Israel what Sharon has demanded—just three days of respite from terrorist attacks?

Students of oratory must evaluate their evidence and make certain that it is clear and accurate. Evidence which fails to meet these standards is faulty; it should not be employed.

DON'T USE FAULTY CAUSAL RELATIONS!

The nature of causal relations has long been a matter of dispute among many professions, including theologians, philosophers, scientists, and politicians. This section is not intended to extend the history of this dispute, but rather to recommend four basic tests which should help students of oratory to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments alleged to be causally related. Too often communication breaks down because the orator is unclear when attempting to identify the cause or causes of certain effects.

The **first test** is to make certain that coincidence, happenstance, or an isolated example of sequence has not been mistaken for cause. Failure to do so can result in the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, a Latin phrase meaning *after this therefore because of this*. This phrase is an elliptical way of saying, "That event came after this event, so that event came because of this event."

For example, suppose that at 6:00 a.m., a black cat crossed the path of Mr. Jones, while Mr. Jones was walking to his automobile parked in his garage. At 6:30 a.m., Mr. Jones ran into a deer

crossing the highway; at 6:55 a.m., he was ticketed for speeding; at 7:15 a.m., his car ran out of gas; and at 8:00 a.m., Mr. Jones sprained his ankle while running up the stairs to his office. Immediately after the last incident, Mr. Jones said, "That darned cat!; I knew something like this was bound to happen!" Obviously the black cat had nothing to do with Mr. Jones' misfortune, yet Mr. Jones quickly established a causal relation. Orators who mistake coincidence for causal relation do not send clear messages to their hearers.

The **second test** is to make certain that regularity has not been mistaken for either cause or effect. For instance, suppose that on three occasions Mr. Southey went golfing with Mr. Patroni, and that on each occasion the men were drenched from being caught in heavy rain. After the last incident, Mr. Southey went home and informed his wife that he never again would play golf with Mr. Patroni because "he is nothing but a jinx!" Little wonder that Mrs. Southey laughed at her husband's remark. Certainly Mr. Patroni had nothing to do with causing the ill weather, yet Mr. Southey established a causal relation. Orators who mistake regularity for cause or effect also may be ridiculed by their hearers.

The **third test** is to make certain that a necessary factor has not been confused with a sufficient factor, or that the alleged cause is inefficient to produce the alleged effect. In other words, a causal factor may be necessary but by itself insufficient to produce a given effect. For instance, the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife at Sarajevo, Bosnia, immediately caused hostilities, but history reveals it was not the *primary* cause of World War I. Such causal relations should be abandoned by orators.

The **fourth test** is to make certain that other relevant factors which could obstruct or prevent the alleged cause from producing the alleged effect have not been overlooked. For instance, some people predicted that, when World War II ended, the unemployment resulting from factories which stopped making war goods would lead to economic disaster in the United States. However, those people failed to consider such intervening factors as shortages of consumer goods created during the war, other countries' extreme demands for United States goods, an expanding population and their needs, and the Marshall Plan and Point Four Program. To overlook relevant factors is not conducive to clear thought and effective oratory.

DON'T BE BORING IN TRANSITION!

An audience can become lost in a multitude of fragments, but it can appreciate and respond favorably to a cohesive and unified presentation. In other words, transitions are indispensable to oratory because they help in the building, developing, and tying together of main arguments and their relationship with subpoints.

However, some orators are ineffective because they lack a variety of transitions. Constant repetition of a limited vocabulary becomes boring. In turn, boredom lessens listening acuity, and the

latter leads to communication breakdown.

The following transitions should enable the student of oratory to move quite easily from one argument to another and to clarify the relationship between main points and subpoints.

accordingly	for this reason	moreover
after all	further	namely
again	furthermore	nevertheless
and so	however	notwithstanding
and thus	in addition	now
another	in any event	once again
as a result	in as much as	on the contrary
as has been stated	incidentally	on the other hand
as I have said	in case that	second
as you see	indeed	since
at any rate	in fact	so that
at first glance	in other words	still
at least	in short	that is to say
at the same time	instead	then
because	in sum	therefore
besides	in the meantime	thirdly
but	in the next instance	thus
by contrast	in the same manner	to begin with
consequently	in this regard	to continue
contrary to	in this respect	to go back
finally	I repeat	to go further
first	lastly	turning to

In short, students of oratory carefully must prepare not only their major arguments and subpoints, but also the means for tying them together. A variety of transition is indispensable for effective communication.

CONCLUSION

The tie between context and form, between message and expression, should never be broken. The seven articles in this series treating oratorical clarity fail to exhaust all of the obstacles to clear expression, but they sufficiently warn orators to be clear, if persuasion is the objective.

Orators can enhance their opportunity to be clear, if they fail to employ verbosity, profoundness, cloudy imagery, vague pronouns, improper subordination, weak parallelism, and lip service; if they don't mistake similarity for sameness, don't mistake words for reality, and don't abuse definition evaluation; and if they are cautious when employing euphemism, slang, shoptalk, foreignism, colloquialism, evidence of authority, causal relation, and transition.

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