

Speaking from the Heart: Mediation and Sincerity in U.S. Political Speech

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of Communication Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Chapel Hill
2013

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ABSTRACT

David Supp-Montgomerie: Speaking from the Heart: Mediation and Sincerity in U.S.
Political Speech
(Under the direction of Christian Lundberg)

This dissertation is a critique of the idea that the artifice of public speech is a problem to be solved. This idea is shown to entail the privilege attributed to purportedly direct or unmediated speech in U.S. public culture. I propose that we attend to the *ēthos* producing effects of rhetorical concealment by asserting that all public speech is constituted through rhetorical artifice. Wherever an alternative to rhetoric is offered, one finds a rhetoric of non-rhetoric at work. A primary strategy in such rhetoric is the performance of sincerity. In this dissertation, I analyze the function of sincerity in contexts of public deliberation. I seek to show how claims to sincerity are strategic, demonstrate how claims that a speaker employs artifice have been employed to imply a lack of sincerity, and disabuse communication, rhetoric, and deliberative theory of the notion that sincere expression occurs without technology.

In Chapter Two I begin with the original problem of artifice for rhetoric in classical Athens in the writings of Plato and Isocrates. Plato values immediate modes of speech because mediation, such as writing, is for him a fundamentally artificial construction of appearance. In contrast, Isocrates placed writing at the center of good thinking and defended the use of logography for the betterment of civil society. He presented a case for what I will call rhetorical literacy: the learned skill of creating and interpreting morally prudent persuasive discourse.

In Chapters Three and Four, I turn to two contemporary cases beginning with a context considered to be rife with artifice: political campaigns. In Chapter Three, I discuss how the problem of artifice prompts both a crisis of *ēthos* for political speakers and an opportunity for opponents to strategically point out the presence of artifice. Criticism of Governor Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama often attended to the artifice of their speech, while President George W. Bush's speeches and the myth of unmediated speech indicate the tendency for some technologies to more successfully allow a speaker to conceal her or his rhetorical craft. Chapter Four examines how the appearance of unmediated communication in facilitated dialogue and deliberation requires active concealment and denial of technique. While Open Space Technology might appear to be less staged than National Issues Forums and, therefore, more natural, they both rely on the concealment of the artifice of their technique.

To Jenna.
Your heart is true, you're a pal and a confidant.
Thank you for being a friend.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I decided to pursue my doctorate in UNC's Department of Communication Studies because I had a passion for rhetoric and cultural studies. While this passion was my wind, I had no rudder. My colleagues at Carolina were brilliant, passionate, and above all, curious. We wandered the intellectual high seas together and I am forever grateful for that journey. I am deeply indebted to my committee, whom I assembled because I knew they would pull no punches and could help discipline my work on political speech and challenge my faith in democracy's radical—if precarious—potential. Without this particular group this particular project would not have been completed. First, I thank Bill Balthrop. His teaching will serve as a benchmark for me because he always had the nicest way of telling me when I was not making any sense. I also thank Larry Grossberg. His enthusiasm for ideas and relentless spirit has been an important inspiration as I come to think of myself as a scholar. Additionally, I must thank Bill Keith. His willingness to read my draft writing and provide detailed comments, and his patience for Skype, were unending. Carole Blair has served as my tireless mentor. She taught me about the profession I was entering and what my ideas could accomplish—with a healthy dose of tenacity. I am deeply proud to know Carole and always look forward to our next back deck conversation. Finally, I thank Chris Lundberg, my adviser, for his earnestness and rigor. Inside and outside of the classroom, Chris modeled the

highest quality of charitable reading and careful thinking. His love of the big ideas was infectious and I learned a great deal about how to think from him.

I must also thank several other people who have helped me complete this project. First, I thank my family for their support. In particular, my sister Jessica Montgomerie and Mother-in-Law Katrin Tiitsman were willing to read every word of this project and gently ask if a particular term would be meaningful to my audience. Both Jessica and Katrin were more helpful than they realize in helping me articulate my thoughts. In addition, I wish to thank Janel Beckham, Carey Hardin, Julia O'Grady, Stace Treat, and Alia Wegner for reading portions of this project. Finally, I thank my partner, Jenna Supp-Montgomerie. Whoever thought forging a relationship in the dissertation fires could be so enjoyable? Your emotional support and intellectual guidance vie for top honors; I owe you everything everyday.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Dissertation Overview	13
Sincerity and the Figure of the Sincere Speaker	14
Technology	18
Speech/Writing/Presence	21
Rhetoric, Deliberation, and Democracy.....	23
Chapters	25
CHAPTER 2: LOGOGRAPHY IN ATHENS: PLATO VS. ISOCRATES.....	29
Democratic Speech in Athens.....	35
Writing and Logography.....	38
Plato and Immediacy.....	42
Plato, Parrhesia, and Non-Rhetoric.....	49
Isocrates and Rhetoric.....	52
Isocrates' Defense of Rhetorical Literacy.....	57
Conclusion	63
CHAPTER 3: THE TELEPROMPTER AND THE BULLHORN	67
Technological Styles and Techniques of Concealment	72
Crisis of Ëthos.....	77
Ordinary Ethos	81
Staging the Unscripted.....	84
The Script and High-Tech Speech	89

Technological Form	92
Cultural Significance	96
Low-Tech Style: The Bullhorn and the Myth of Unmediated Speech	102
Bush's Low Style	106
Low-Tech Form and Significance	112
Conclusions	118
CHAPTER 4: DIALOGUE, DELIBERATION, AND THE DENIAL OF TECHNIQUE	124
Dialogue, Deliberation, and Debate for Democracy	134
The Pursuit of Natural Deliberation in Facilitated Dialogue	137
Facilitation	144
Open Space Technology	145
A Spontaneous Breath	149
Immediate Presence	151
Responsive	152
The OST Technique	153
National Issues Forums	157
The NIF Technique	161
CHAPTER 5: POSTSCRIPT	170

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Almost from its very inception, the rhetorical tradition has confronted the critique that oratorical skill was a hodge-podge of techniques for persuasion more akin to deception than to a *technê* or art of deliberation.¹ This critique maintains that rhetoric is little more than a set of parlor tricks that lends a speaker the appearance of virtue, good will, and credibility without any necessary relation to actual virtue, knowledge, or argumentative soundness. While critics argued that rhetoric was, at best, mere ornamentation, Aristotle took the criticism to heart but believed that rhetoric was a necessary, if insufficient, *technê* for prudence (*phronêsis*) in the absence of certainty.² Furthermore, Aristotle sought a way to make rhetoric workable in an Athenian democracy that at times, was more akin to mob rule or soft oligarchy.³ While he lamented the insufficiency of *logos* to win the day, it did not stop him from theorizing the supplementarity of *êthos* and *pathos*. He noted, for example, that when the artifice that produces *êthos* becomes apparent, both speaker and speech lose

¹ Plato, for example, avoided granting oratory the status of *technê* in *Gorgias*. Plato, “Gorgias,” in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including The Letters*, ed. Huntington Cairns and Edith Hamilton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 462c3.

² For Aristotle’s account of prudence and moral choice, see *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 3.3, 6.4.3, 6.9.

³ George Kennedy, commentary in *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, by Aristotle, trans. George Kennedy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 29.

persuasive force. Thus, Aristotle advised speakers to compose without being noticed.⁴

Audiences, after all, become resentful if they perceive that a speaker is attempting to manipulate them, which Aristotle aptly compares to someone being caught mixing wines to make them more intoxicating.⁵ If an audience recognizes that it is the target of a speaker's persuasive effort, uncertainty regarding the characteristics (*hexeis*) of the speaker emerges from a perceived cleavage between the appearance and reality of his or her character (*ēthos*).⁶

This skepticism towards evident persuasion, what I call “the problem of artifice,” is the centerpiece of this dissertation. As political theorist Bryan Garsten asserts, “the reigning view of persuasion is that it is a disruptive force in politics and a threat to democratic deliberation.”⁷ Yet, as was the case during democracy's early years, public speech also enjoys a cherished place for its role in making democratic governance accountable to the voice of the *demos*. Without speech, there is democracy in name only, but with speech there can be mob rule, ill-advised decisions, and so on. As a *pharmakon* for democracy, speech

⁴ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1404b17-18.

⁵ Ibid., 1404b20.

⁶ This is akin to the slippages between the literary author's many voices. See Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 50-53, 169-266. Unlike literary fiction, the presence of a “second self” poses a rhetorical problem in political speech. As Edwin Black remarks, “we have learned to keep continuously before us the possibility, and in some cases the probability, that the author implied by the discourse is an artificial creation: a persona.” “The Second Persona,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (1970): 111.

⁷ This skepticism towards evident persuasion was in effect in Renaissance Italy in the suspicion and unease concerning *sprezzatura*, a term for the skillful simulation of the natural graces of noble birth through the elegant performance of nonchalance. Harry Berger, *The Absence of Grace: Sprezzatura and Suspicion in Two Renaissance Courtesy Books* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Heinrich F. Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture* (New York: Gruyter, 2004).

resides in the ambiguity between medicine and poison. Perhaps it is this ambiguity coupled with its necessity that explains the persistent drive to ascertain the character of public speakers. Nevertheless, just as the Greeks of classical antiquity, contemporary audiences are unsatisfied by the appearance of character cultivated by speakers—they want the real thing. As such, public speech is both always artificial and under constant demand to hide all signs of artifice.

In this dissertation, I challenge the primary response to the artificialness of public speech, namely, to conceive of it as a problem to be avoided or otherwise reconciled. I advocate thinking of artifice as a necessary precondition for all public speech. I examine the effects of these responses and support the latter by showing the failure of the former in three contexts of democratic speech—speech writing in Greek antiquity, contemporary political speech, and methods of facilitated deliberation.

When artifice is thought of as a problem to be solved, speakers attempt to conceal their rhetorical craft through a rhetoric of anti-rhetoric.⁸ This common anti-rhetorical trope is the contrast of rhetoric with action wherein rhetoric is “mere” words without substance. For example, anticipating President Barack Obama’s jobs speech to Congress, Amy Tarkanian, Nevada Republican Party Chairwoman, summed up the anti-rhetorical impulse, “We’re hurting. And we do need results. We don’t need rhetoric.”⁹ When orators use the rhetoric of

⁸ Jon Hesk has documented some of the anti-rhetorical impulses in the classical Greek context. *Deception and Democracy In Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). 202-40. For the most part, the reasons for rejecting rhetoric have remained the same since Plato forcefully made them in the *Gorgias*: rhetoric is at best the appearance of truth and at worst the willful deception or flattery of an audience without regard for its goodwill. 453a2, 455a3, 457e, 502a6-c12.

⁹ Amy Tarkanian, interview by John King, *John King, USA*, CNN, October 17, 2011, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/111017/jkusa.01.html>.

anti-rhetoric, they imply that their speech is praiseworthy by denigrating the symbolic function of others' language. Rhetorical form and artifice are disavowed as ornamentation while the rhetorical practices of the anti-rhetorical orator are purported to be only content without the trappings of rhetorical flourish.

The problem of artifice is not only responded to through anti-rhetorical rejection. The problem of artifice may be avoided through attempts to circumvent it when a wholesale rejection of rhetoric is impossible. In fact, wherever an alternative to rhetoric is offered by carving out a domain that purports to be free of rhetorical artifice, one finds what I term the "rhetoric of non-rhetoric" at work.¹⁰ Such rhetoric conceals artifice so thoroughly as to deny the possibility of rhetorical craft altogether. This explains why the suspicion of rhetoric as artificial has functioned as counterpart to the trust of spontaneous speech as sincere.¹¹ Spontaneous speech is often thought to be beyond the reach of strategy and, as such, beyond the craft of the rhetor. Such is the *ēthos* effect of a rhetoric of non-rhetoric that is thought to be free of the calculation required for flattery.

This rhetorical maneuver does not primarily rely upon the rejection of rhetoric. A speaker in a debate might begin by stating that before working to persuade the audience, she would first like to provide some basic information about the facts of the matter. In the case of political speech, even the most persuasive speakers avoid attention to their skill at persuasion. For example, while his skills as an orator were thought by many to be one of his most significant assets of his candidacy, Barack Obama strived to focus attention on the

¹⁰ Chapter Two documents how dialectic enables Plato's rhetoric of non-rhetoric, but Bryan Garsten, using the phrase "rhetoric against rhetoric," similarly observes how passion, patriotism, and public reason serve this role for Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant, respectively. *Saving Persuasion*, 11, 25-112.

¹¹ Miller, "Should We Name the Tools?," 21-23.

content of his message rather than to the design of its form.¹² It was Obama's political opponents, both Hillary Clinton and John McCain, who drew attention to his skill at speaking.¹³

When artifice is approached as a problem for democratic speech, its obvious presence risks a form of persuasive blowback. As a result, orators must carefully craft messages that accomplish their goals while appearing to do so without technique. Speakers deal with this paradox through the strategic use of sincerity in order to conceal the artistry of rhetoric.¹⁴

Sincerity is the claim of correspondence between what one avows and what one believes to be

¹² Consider the plagiarism flap of Obama's 2008 campaign. It was discovered that Massachusetts Governor and close friend of Obama, Duval Patrick, had given a speech that largely resembled comments that Obama made on the campaign trail about the power of words and the promise of hope. While an obvious and swift answer might have been issued by the Obama campaign that they simply shared a speechwriter, the official line was that they were friends and commonly shared ideas. There was no explanation provided by the campaign that referred to a common logographer working behind the scenes. David Greenberg, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, Lend Me Your Speech," *New York Times*, February 24, 2008.

¹³ Hillary Clinton accused Obama of flattering his audience and using several pollsters to design his message. Jeff York, "Not So Fast, Clinton Says About Obama Momentum," *New York Times*, January 7, 2008. John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign released an advertisement called "Celeb" that featured large speech audiences chanting "Obama." John McCain, "Celeb," YouTube video, :32, posted by "JohnMcCaindotcom," July 30, 2008, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHXYsw_ZDXg.

¹⁴ Political theorist Elizabeth Markovits documents how the "sincerity norm" is a condition of the discourse ethics that underwrites most of deliberative democratic theory. "The Trouble with Being Earnest: Deliberative Democracy and the Sincerity Norm," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 14, no. 3 (2006); *The Politics Of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech, And Democratic Judgment* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 13-46. Markovits argues that sincerity is a poor standard by which to judge political discourse. She traces a rhetoric of sincerity and irony to Plato, but, while noting his use of irony, diminishes his own use of rhetoric in order to establish a sincere voice. Ibid., chaps. 3-4. While she notices Plato's Socrates undermining the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric, I argue in Chapter Two that he replaces it with a more insidious rhetoric of non-rhetoric. She sees Plato as appreciating rhetoric and celebrates Socrates for subverting parrhesia. Yet it is Plato (through the voice of Socrates) who reinforces the sincerity demand by regularly concealing his artifice and revealing the artifice of his opponents.

true. Because sincerity implies access to and representation of what is authentic, it counterbalances the problem of artifice; the sincere speaker is representing what is real as opposed to creating an artificial appearance.

The rhetorical effect of this sincerity demand produces a double bind: on one hand, it is powerfully persuasive because it is understood to be natural, non-technological, and pre-rhetorical, and on the other hand, it prompts a crisis for the speaker if artifice is revealed. In this dissertation, I will analyze the function of sincerity in contexts of democratic speech; more than pointing to purportedly sincere statements and revealing them to be factually inaccurate or insincere, I seek to show the performativity of sincerity, demonstrate how claims that a speaker employs artifice have been employed to imply a lack of sincerity, and disabuse rhetoric and communication theory of the notion that sincere expression occurs without the mediation of artifice.

The “problem” response to the artifice of public speech is prompted by a desire to know the strangers who address us and a belief that this knowledge can be ascertained through unmediated forms of communication. In rejecting this response, this dissertation forms a critique of the privilege attributed to purportedly perfect communication. This study, therefore, focuses on the notion of immediacy and distinguishes between two primary definitions. One conception of immediacy holds that it is the perception of a close connection between people that results from certain communication behaviors.¹⁵ Examples of this conception of immediacy include self-disclosure, talking about commonalities, and

¹⁵ In the field of communication studies, “immediacy” is most often used in studies of interpersonal communication to refer to behaviors that tend to communicate attention, feature an increase in sensory stimulation, and produce the perception of closeness. Andersen et al., 153.

maintaining eye contact.¹⁶ This dissertation critiques a second mistaken conception of immediacy as that of the lack of mediation, that is, the unmediated connection between a person's soul and a person's speech or between speaker and audience. I would like to emphasize the ways that immediacy is a perception forged from the successful concealment of rhetorical artifice and not a lack of artificial mediation. As a human activity, immediacy is necessarily mediated. The task here will be, in each subsequent chapter, to describe the formal elements and conditions of mediation in different contexts of public deliberation primarily using the resources of rhetorical theory and criticism.

The prestige of forms of communication thought to be unmediated is made possible by a negative theology of communication wherein perfect communication is fixed through the work of negation: it is *not* mediated, *not* distant, *not* dissemination, and so on. This negation will echo in the case of facilitated deliberation and definitions of dialogue as essentially *not* debate. However, so-called perfect forms of communication, such as dialogue, are mediated. Beginning with the assumption that dialogue involves an immediacy of presence, John Durham Peters locates "distortions" of dialogue that allow for communication across physical and cultural distances.¹⁷ While he presses for the good in other forms of

¹⁶ Peter A. Andersen, "Immediacy," in *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, ed. Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009).

¹⁷ John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into The Air: A History Of The Idea Of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). 34. Peters sets out to expose the impossibility of immediate connection between human souls, but he maintains the problematic division between forms of communication (e.g., dialogue and dissemination) in terms of mediation and its absence. This buttresses the very moral privilege that Peters attempts to undermine. Arguing for an appreciation of dissemination, for example, he concludes, "open scatter is more fundamental than coupled sharing; it is the stuff from which, on rare, splendid occasions, dialogue may arise." *Ibid.*, 62. In this formulation, one-way communication, such as mass media dissemination, is relegated to the role of catalyst for the more exceptional and difficult to attain dialogic moment.

communication—"the marriage of true minds via dialogue is not the only option"—Peters holds firm to the status of dialogue as unmediated communication.¹⁸ Against this line of argument, I contend that perfect communication is impossible because all communication is mediated, including those forms that we take to be unmediated. "Dialogue," for example, is a form of mediated communication marked chiefly by the performance of immediacy of presence. Because he maintains dialogue's status as unmediated communication, Peters leaves the door ajar for a rhetoric of non-rhetoric that gestures toward dialogue as a non-rhetorical horizon.

I share a point of departure with much of contemporary rhetorical theory in moving away from the sole focus on "persuasion" and the formation of public judgements. Often organized around the alternative keyword, "identification," such a definition of rhetoric is at once more expansive and more specific.¹⁹ As Jeffrey Walker notes, defining rhetoric broadly as persuasive discourse (implying an opposition with nonpersuasive discourse) is problematic for the academic discipline of rhetoric because it is too general and can "make 'rhetorical studies' the study of all signification and human behavior, a task performed already by a range of other disciplines."²⁰ More problematic, and germane to this study, is the way in which these traditional definitions of rhetoric actually enable the devaluation of rhetoric by reifying the category of the non-rhetorical. As Walker makes clear, such definitions of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric Of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 49-69; Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case Of The People Québécois," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987).

²⁰ Jeffrey Walker, *The Genuine Teachers of This Art: Rhetorical Education in Antiquity* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 1-2.

rhetoric reduce it to “something added to communication,” which, I would add, implies that rhetoric can be something taken away from communication as well.²¹

There is no zero-degree speech that is a direct representation of a referent.²² Because direct representation is impossible, I am attending to the consequences that ensue from the necessary performativity of subjects as they assume public personae. This implies a more expansive notion of what constitutes “persuasion,” but it is also a specific focus among human behavior and signification. As Blair, Dickinson, and Ott define it, rhetoric is “the study of discourses, events, objects, and practices that attends to their character as meaningful, legible, partisan, and consequential,” and they add, involves “what it means to be ‘public.’”²³ A “public persona” is the constructed appearance of a subject. Persona was originally a Latin term that referred to the masks worn by actors in ancient Greece.²⁴ Today

²¹ Ibid., 2. Walker lists the four most common modalities for defining rhetoric as: persuasive discourse or practical oratory, persuasive practices and the devices of persuasion, critical analysis, description, or theory of persuasive practice, and teaching persuasion or the cultivation of rhetorical capacity. Ibid., 1.

²² Christian Lundberg draws upon a rhetorical theory of Jacques Lacan to argue that all discourse is tropological. Trope, for Lacan (and the ancient Greek tropos), is a “turn” instead of a direct pathway. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric*: 79. While I focus on speech practices in public deliberation, rhetoric is more than speech. Contemporary rhetorical study examines the rhetorical effects of a wide range of communication modalities, including photographs, writing, cinema, music, art, architecture, cultural practices, and so on.

²³ Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L Ott, “Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place,” in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L Ott (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 2-3. Importantly, rhetoric is also pedagogical. As Jeffrey Walker demonstrates, the critical-theoretical agenda is set and the objects of rhetorical study are selected in order to “critique practices and articulate general principles” in service of training rhetors and equipping citizens to be better consumers of rhetoric. Walker argues that what makes rhetoric rhetoric is its pedagogical project. *The Genuine Teachers of This Art*, 3.

²⁴ Robert C. Elliott, *The Literary Persona* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 19.

the term is often used to distinguish a constructed appearance of an author or speaker in contrast to the real author or speaker, as in the example of Mark Twain's writing persona that may or may not correspond to the author Samuel Clemens.

Real or constructed, or both, the speaker is made textually present through *ēthos* appeals. The stable and unique characteristics (*hexeis*) of the individual are displayed through *ēthos* as the habits of body and mind.²⁵ As such, *ēthos* is the character of a persona as opposed to a person insofar as *ēthos* is the representation of that which the audience does not have direct access.²⁶ As a supplement to *logos* and *pathos* as means of persuasion, *ēthos* underscores how the arrangement of discourse may be particularly moving for a given audience by demonstrating the habits (*ethos*) of intellectual and moral virtue (*aretē*). Thus, even when speech is thought to emerge unmediated from a speaker's soul, the speaker comes to foreground a particular *ēthos* that is quite different from a speaker whose rhetorical artifice is more pronounced.

In the case of public deliberation, we have such an aversion to persuasion that we invent tortured ways of denying the rhetorical basis of speech that only elevates the role of concealment to the extent that artifice must be concealed for rhetoric to be effective. That effectively addressing others in public requires an element of concealment has always been

²⁵ Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, glossary in *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle, 306. Aristotle considered *ēthos* to be the most effective means of persuasion. *On Rhetoric*, 1356a8. An audience would have confidence in the speaker's character if what they said produced a belief regarding three items: practical wisdom, good moral character, and goodwill. Ibid., 1378a6.

²⁶ *Ēthos* is often considered along with "source credibility." These are attributes, such as perception of intentions, expert status, and trustworthiness, affect how persuasive the source of the message is. Others have identified factors such as competence, trustworthiness, good will, or how similar the sender is to an audience. Roderick P. Hart, *The Sound Of Leadership: Presidential Communication In The Modern Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 292-93.

central to rhetoric and led Plato to compare the art of rhetoric to arts such as cosmetics, seduction, enchantment, hunting, and military strategy.²⁷ The need to conceal the work of rhetoric emanates, in part, from a general sense of suspicion about the use of language. According to rhetorical theorist Carolyn Miller, this suspicion emanates from the notion that language is an adversarial game—one must be vigilant about someone trying to gain advantage through words. Spontaneity is thought to be more worthy of trust in this rubric because those statements that come easily and without planning, it is thought, are less likely to be crafted for the sake of gaining advantage. However, public communication is *technê*, so apparently spontaneous action actually emerges from “learned repertoires of possibility.”²⁸ What is held to be spontaneous is the product of rhetorical labor just as that which is held to be figural because spontaneity, as rhetorical form, produces an *ēthos* effect. Rather than escape rhetoric, we need to understand its effects in constituting the conditions of public speech.

There is an alternative response to the artifice of public speech that better responds to the demands of democratic speech. Rather than viewed as a problem to be solved (or avoided) artifice is best conceptualized as a necessary condition for public speech. This helps us tell a better story about speech for democracy by avoiding the metaphysical trappings of the pursuit of perfect communication and the problematic political implications it entails. I propose that we attend to the *ēthos* producing effects of rhetorical concealment by asserting that all public speech is constituted through rhetorical artifice. Rather than disparaging

²⁷ David Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Technê* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

²⁸ Jonathan Sterne, “Communication as Techné,” in *Communication as—: Perspectives on Theory*, ed. Gregory Shepherd, Jeffrey. St. John, and Theodore G. Striphas (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2006), 94.

rhetorical practice, this view promotes rhetorical literacy for the delicate interplay between concealment, *ēthos*, and persuasion. In many ways, this is a more realistic approach to the warp and woof of quotidian political discourse than either aggrandizing rhetoric or rejecting it offers.

The approach to artifice as a necessary condition of democratic speech encourages us to consider the conditions of speech's mediation—as both content and form. As medium theorists would remind us, it is impossible to arrive at message content without mediation.²⁹ Rhetorical artifice is a form of mediation and the rhetoric of non-rhetoric is an attempt to erase this fact. The problem of rhetorical artifice, then, is a problem of mediation insofar as mediation reminds audiences of the distance between them and the speaker. In so doing, the appearance of mediation undercuts the dream of perfect communication that provides a direct, unmediated connection between subjects.³⁰ The pursuit of unmediated communication is part of a larger cultural rejection of mediation that occurs paradoxically in the midst of the proliferation of forms of mediation. In the words of media theorists Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, “our culture wants to both multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation.”³¹

²⁹ For exemplars of medium theory, see Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: New American Library, 1964); Eric Alfred Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Harold Adams Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

³⁰ “The Force” in George Lucas’ Star Wars series epitomizes this dream. This metaphysical ether is ubiquitous, powerful, and difficult to master. Those persons that achieve a mastery of it are no longer bound to imperfect communication. They have direct access to others’ thoughts and feelings, can teleport, and can even communicate from the grave. Because it portrays perfect communication, the power of the Force is fundamentally about distance and our desire to conquer it.

³¹ Jay D. Bolter and Richard A. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 5.

Contemporary public culture is characterized by the dual demands for mediation beyond face-to-face address and mediation *as if* it were face-to-face address. In efforts to locate a mode of deliberation that provides a direct connection between participants, as we will see in the case of facilitated deliberation, mediation is a problem to be dealt with—a barrier to be overcome. Communication theorist Rob Anderson argues that a “mediated culture” makes dialogue more difficult to achieve.³² Technological innovation, for Anderson, improves a medium until it becomes less media-like; technology in Anderson’s view helps achieve dialogue only when it removes the markers of technological mediation (read: concealed).³³ The demand to speak without artifice in the context of public deliberation is a demand for direct access to a speaker.

Dissertation Overview

I would like to argue that despite our preference for “authentic speech”—that is, speech that lacks artifice—all public speech is artificial. In this study I will both demonstrate this claim about the inevitability of artifice, and, further, I will specify the strategies that speakers employ in pursuit of erasing artifice. Finally, I describe the implications of these strategies for democracy. To support my contention, I engage limit cases: those examples in which it is widely thought that speech is highly artificial and those examples in which it is thought that speech is very natural. I have selected vignettes that help me tell stories about rhetorical practices rather than demonstrate a historical cause-and-effect relation. “The task is

³² Rob Anderson, “Anonymity, Presence, and the Dialogic Self in a Technological Culture,” in *The Reach of Dialogue: Confirmation, Voice, and Community*, ed. Rob Anderson, Kenneth N. Cissna, and Ronald C. Arnett (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 1994), 91. However, the solution is found, in part, in the problem because some technology that emerges from out mediated culture has the potential to create the presence needed for dialogue through interaction. *Ibid.*, 92.

³³ *Ibid.*, 98.

to construct addresses out of the fabric of mediated experience,” Raymie McKerrow writes, by bringing together “disparate scraps of discourse which, when constructed as an argument, serve to illuminate otherwise hidden or taken for granted social practices.”³⁴ These limit cases provide useful evidence to warrant my claims about the problem of artifice in public deliberation because they represent moments when public audiences are most relentless in their quest to root out the false appearance of natural speech. In this section, I first discuss several key words that are integral to the problem of artifice for public deliberation. Second, an overview of the three chapters that form the body of this dissertation—speech writing in Greek antiquity, contemporary political speech, and methods of facilitated deliberation—is provided.

Sincerity and the Figure of the Sincere Speaker

There is little doubt that sincerity is in vogue in American politics even as it seems to be very elusive. During the height of the 2012 GOP primary, CNN even proposed a “Political Sincerity Test” to evaluate candidates. Points reflecting insincerity were awarded for faux-folksy behaviors such as “taking off your jacket mid-sentence,” “insisting you’re not a politician,” using the phrase “humble roots,” “eating fried food in front of cameras at a fair,” and “speaking within kicking distance of a bale of hay.”³⁵ Derived from the Latin word *sincerus*, sincerity initially referred to a condition of purity. One could refer to a wine that was sincere—meaning, Lionel Trilling conveys, “that it had not been adulterated, or, as was

³⁴ Raymie McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” *Communication Monographs* 56, no. 1 (1989): 101.

³⁵ Dan Szematowicz, Emma Lacey-Bordeaux, and Steve Brusk, “American Sauce: Political Sincerity Test,” *Political Ticker* (blog), CNN.com, August 23, 2011, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/23/american-sauce-political-sincerity-test/>.

once said, sophisticated.”³⁶ It is here that we see the connection between efforts to create an appearance through sophistry and adulterating wine. Plato lamented that the sophists created the appearance of truth as opposed to demonstrating its actuality. In politics, as in wine, one expects to get what the label promises.

To understand the nature of rhetoric as *technê* in the context of contemporary politics, it is helpful to distinguish between the demand for sincerity and the demand for the appearance of sincerity. It is obvious that political messages and campaigns are constructed. It is highly unlikely that people are dupes who think that their favorite politician is the only one that does not use talking points issued by political consultants. The vast majority of people know that while some politicians may be motivated more or less by self-interest, there is always an attempt to invent certain appearances (e.g., hardworking, caring, ordinary). However, we are less critical in certain situations and more attendant to the mediation of speech in others.³⁷ As I will show in the case of ancient Greece, we too are steadfast in our pursuit to root out deceptive performances, and in addition, we demand that the truth be told with the performative posture of sincerity.

³⁶ Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (New York: Harcourt, 1980), 13.

³⁷ The presence of artifice, even when it is fully obvious, does not always lead to distrust and suspicion. For example, some of President Obama’s most celebrated speeches were highly scripted and ornate affairs. His speech about race during the 2008 campaign and his victory speech in Grant Park after his 2008 election did not appear unscripted but still garnered positive appraisals. In part, attention to artifice is prompted as a political strategy when opponents sense a value in revealing artifice. In the above examples, there was little opportunity to benefit from calling attention to Obama’s artifice. In addition, there are generic expectations that fuel the reception of given messages. In the example of acceptance speeches and formal occasions, scripted speech is less noteworthy. If there is a more general change historically, it might be the changes in news media, in particular, the 24-hour political punditry that obsesses over minutia such as verbal blunders. Commentators pay attention to technique, strategy, and tactic as a way of explaining the news to viewers. See Dan Schill, *Stagecraft and Statecraft: Advance and Media Events in Political Communication* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

Sincerity is such a prominent feature of American political culture because, as a virtue of democratic speech, it is used to assert immediacy between the speaker and the audience. In response to a demand to publicly present the self, sincerity is a strategy for signaling a lack of artifice. As Lionel Trilling notes, “society requires of us that we present ourselves as being sincere... we play the role of being ourselves, we sincerely act the part of the sincere person, with the result that a judgment may be passed upon our sincerity.”³⁸ The fact that sincerity is a primary means of managing the suspicion of political speech reveals a cultural assumption connecting sincerity, understood as immediate speech, and the speaker's true self. Sincerity is a particular mode of rhetorical performance and not a transcendent relation to truth. Bill O'Reilly's “No Spin Zone” employs the cultural work of sincerity with or without his belief that he faithfully represents issues and speaks frankly. Regardless of our lack of access sufficient to verify the correspondence between thoughts and speech acts, sincerity as a rhetorical technique exerts real effects in public speech.

Sincerity and authenticity are closely related yet conceptually distinct. Sincerity is a subset of authenticity that relies upon a notion of *ēthos*. Sincerity presupposes authenticity and adds a condition of avowal; to be sincere is to represent what is authentic. Part of President Bush's *ēthos*, for example, stemmed from his success at concealing the mediation of his speech. He helped to cultivate a sincere dwelling place for his rhetoric, an *ēthos* rife with the earnestness of frank speech.³⁹ When applied to speech, sincerity expresses what one believes rather than what an audience wants to hear. Thus, the embrace of the sincere speaker occurs with a strong moral inflection. As Jay Magill suggests, “judgments of insincerity,

³⁸ Ibid., 10-11.

³⁹ For a reconceptualization of *ēthos* as “dwelling place,” see Hyde, “Introduction.”

hypocrisy, and fake authenticity float like hyper-charged electrons around the ancient moral nucleus of sincerity, nodding to its decline with a kind of resentful remorse.”⁴⁰ There is a sense that sincerity is a struggle to throw off the yoke of social influence and risk baring yourself in society. Lionel Trilling observes that references to both sincerity and authenticity frequently suggest a “strenuous moral experience.”⁴¹ For example, Holden Caulfield in J. D. Salinger's novel, *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) launches the persistent insult of “phony” upon his least favorite people.⁴² What irked Caulfield was a perceived lack of correspondence between the interior self and the exterior appearance.⁴³ As Cheever argues, the notion of phoniness requires a certain model of authenticity and selfhood wherein the self is composed of an inner core and outer façade.⁴⁴ The phony does not faithfully represent an interior core self but makes an appearance of an exterior self for a social audience. Moreover, the phony is not merely someone who is uncomfortable in her own skin or is not in touch with his interior self; “phony” is reserved as a bad word for someone who has self-knowledge and purposefully misrepresents who they are.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ R. Jay Magill, *Sincerity: How a Moral Ideal Born Five Hundred Years Ago Inspired Religious Wars, Modern Art, Hipster Chic, and the Curious Notion That Ae All Have Something to Say (No Matter How Dull)* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 18.

⁴¹ Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 11.

⁴² “Phony” was a popular epithet during the postwar period in the United States. Abigail Cheever, *Real Phonies: Cultures of Authenticity in Post-World War II America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁵ The term “phonies” compares to the less anachronistic notion of being “real” today. Being “real” is analogous to being sincere because it signals a rejection of appearances and outer-motivated behavior. Herman Cain’s 2012 presidential campaign attempted to leverage his status as “real” by releasing one of the oddest political ads of all time, what Conor

One effect of valorizing the performance of sincerity is the mythologizing of the sincere agent in public culture. The sincere speaker deviates from a prepared script when it deviates from what he or she knows to be true. In the cinematic cliché, the speaker might throw the script aside or tear it into pieces to dramatize the moment of going “off” script.⁴⁶ The ideal political actor, then, is captured by Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and public memory of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sitting by the fireside to chat intimately with Americans. Such performances and their public remembrances capture our imagination by appealing to a heroic notion of political agency: it is the political actor motivated not by self-interest but by sincerity—nothing more than the virtuous desire to be true to oneself.

Technology

This dissertation observes that a significant component of rhetoric’s negative reception in public deliberation is fueled by its implication in a related set of terms: technology, technique, and *technê*. Thinking rhetoric *as technology* requires conceptual

Friedersdorf in *The Atlantic* referred to as a “Dadaist Meta-Western.” Titled, “He Carried Yellow Flowers,” the advertisement provides a story within a story and is an attempt to use the frame of performance to highlight Obama’s artifice while contrasting it with Herman Cain’s lack of artifice and real, as opposed to apparent, accomplishments. The video begins as a western film when a fight breaks out. Off screen, a director yells “cut,” and the cowboy, the main character, walks off the movie set, is handed a drink, doted on, and then speaks to the camera. Nick Searcy introduces himself and says that, while he has played many tough guy roles, “looking cool and saying lines that somebody else wrote for me doesn’t make me a real tough guy, anymore than looking cool and reading lines off a teleprompter that someone else wrote makes a community organizer a real leader. But Herman Cain is a real leader.” The character then goes on to list the many ways that Cain is “real.” “Herman Cain’s ‘Yellow Flowers’ Ad Is a Dadaist Meta-Western,” *The Atlantic*, October 26, 2011.

⁴⁶ Cinematic examples of a speaker deviating from the script include *Listen to Me* (1989), *West Wing*, “The Contender” (2000), *The American President* (1995), *Network* (1976), *Wedding Crashers* (2005), *Dave* (1993), *Legally Blonde* (2001), *Milk* (2008), *Hoosiers* (1986), *Scent of a Woman* (1992), *Hook* (1991), *Up Close and Personal* (1996), *Love Actually* (2003), *The Great Debaters* (2007), and *The Verdict* (1982).

clarity; it is more common to consider rhetoric *and* technology. For example, by asking how different forms of technology influence the persuasiveness of messages, or how technological change creates new social meanings. In order to understand rhetoric *as* technology, it is helpful to consider the root of “technology” in the Greek term, *technê*. Rhetoric has, from its ancient Greek origin, been viewed as a *technê*. *Technê* is a Greek word associated with craft production and practical knowledge.⁴⁷ As a decidedly human skill, *technê* shifts agency from the gods toward humanity.⁴⁸ In this way, *technê* is inherently tied to artifice because it signals human intervention. In tracing the problematization of speech artifice, this dissertation describes public speech practices in democracy as *technê* that are constituted, in part, through their rejection.

As a result of suspicion and uncertainty in the context of public deliberation, there are particular symbolic consequences for the use of *technê*. The character of rhetoric as human craft is a problem insofar as it is held to mark artificiality in contrast to the more natural immediacy of connection and authenticity of presence. The articulation of rhetoric, mechanical technology, and artificiality is tidily made by U.S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge taking issue with President Wilson’s proposal for a League of Nations, “The mechanical appliances of the rhetorician designed to give a picture of a present which does not exist and of a future which no man can predict... are as unreal as... the artificial lights on the stage.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ As Eric Havelock argues, the term is not readily translatable to English, but benefits from the fusion of “technology” and “art” into one concept. *Literate Revolution*, 269. In the rhetorical tradition, *technê* also refers to the extensive handbook tradition that today is akin to technical manuals and public speaking textbooks. Janet Atwill, “Technê,” in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication From Ancient Times to the Information Age*, ed. Theresa Enos (New York: Garland, 1996), 719.

⁴⁸ Atwill, “Technê,” 719.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Leroy G. Dorsey, *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership* (College Station:

Anxiety regarding the appearance of *technê* in public deliberation causes practitioners to go to great lengths to conceal their work. I will illustrate, for example, how theorists and practitioners of dialogue and deliberation conceal technique in order to appear natural.⁵⁰ The denigration of rhetoric as a technology for human craft has been manifest in the denigration of the entire realm of the technical vis-à-vis the denigration of handbooks and how-to manuals in antiquity. This denigration persists to this day in anxieties regarding communication technologies that fail to conquer the distance between people. After the 2008 U.S. presidential election, conservatives and Republicans frequently cited a national speech that Obama delivered from a grade school classroom using a teleprompter. Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty mentioned the speech while addressing the Conservative Political Action Committee in the wake of 2008's wave of Democrat victories, "Did you see, by the way, the other day?... President Obama was in a grade school classroom... speaking to elementary children, and he was using teleprompters. I mean, you've got to be kidding me. That's not a joke. That's a real story."⁵¹ This is the view of the technical sphere as dystopia: the ideal communal past destroyed by the artifice of technology. In the cold and heartless

Texas A&M Univeristy Press, 2002), 5.

⁵⁰ Rob Anderson, Ken Cissna, and Ron Arnett claim that technology and technique are facets of culture that stand in the way of immediate connection and authentic presence. "Dialogue's Limits," in *The Reach of Dialogue*, 54.

⁵¹ Steven Thomma, "Pawlenty Repeats False Tale About Obama Teleprompter." *McClatchy* (blog), February 19, 2010, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2010/02/19/86508/pawlenty-repeats-false-tale-about.html#.UjObeGTwKQk>.

technological future imagined in films in which robots have taken over humanity, this vision of *technê* as cold calculation destroys the soul of humanity.⁵²

Jonathan Sterne claims that there is a tendency in accounts of communication to consider speech to be non-technological. The “primacy of speech” assumes that technology is added to speech in order to produce mediated forms of communication.⁵³ As Sterne notes, this “add technology and stir” model of communication tends to blame technology for individuals’ alienation and communities’ decline. To reject rhetoric because it is technological and, therefore, artificial in the pursuit of unmediated communication imagines an extra-rhetorical pipeline between humans. This is unscripted speech as self-presence and tends to mistakenly entail the assumption of what Walter Ong describes as the “prior presence of an extramental referent which the word presumably captures and passes on through a kind of pipeline to the psyche.”⁵⁴

Speech/Writing/Presence

Understanding rhetoric as technological helps to explain anxieties regarding artifice and human agency in speech. Anxiety regarding written speech scripts is a persistent rehearsal of the metaphysics of presence that Jacques Derrida sought to deconstruct.⁵⁵ In addition to the ontological question of presence, there is a discourse of presence (e.g.,

⁵² In describing the dystopic role of technology for a society in need of dialogue, William Barrett laments the technical sphere because true genius and creativity are beyond the reach of technique. “Technique, Technicians, and Philosophy,” in *The Reach of Dialogue*, 58.

⁵³ Sterne, “Communication as Techné,” 96.

⁵⁴ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 163.

⁵⁵ For Derrida, the metaphysics of presence, wherein “to be” is to be present, leads to the unnecessary dichotomy of the privileging of speech over writing because the speaker is taken to be more present in the speech than the author of a written text. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

“speaking from the heart”) that governs audience expectations of persuasive speech and writing. Western civilization since the Greeks has been characterized by a near-total fixation on “presence” that implies a particular notion of human voice that wells up from the soul of the speaker unless it is obscured by a technological mechanism that controls what may be avowed. Such an emphasis on presence leads to the unnecessary privileging of speech over writing; the speaker is taken to be more present in the speech than the author is in the written text.⁵⁶ For example, Walter Ong refers to the “mask” of a writer that must always address a fictional audience. “Oral communication,” Ong writes, “has within it a momentum that works for the removal of masks.”⁵⁷ He continues, “no matter what pitch of frankness, directness, or authenticity he [sic] may strive for, the writer’s mask and the reader’s are less removable than those of the oral communicator and his hearer.”⁵⁸

Lurking within this discourse concerning the primacy of speech is the aforementioned dream of perfect communication. However, speech is also necessarily mediated by distance. When we rid ourselves of the notion of perfect communication, we recognize that the speaker, too, always wears a mask. This is because all public speech involves the use of artifice; there can be no direct encounter of the speaker’s soul. The mask of the speaker may be less visible but all the more powerful as a result. Considering writing to be less direct, Ong maintains that speech is nobler because, without the indirections of writing, the true nature of the human can be found.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “The Writer’s Audience Is Always a Fiction,” *PMLA* 90, no. 1 (1975): 425.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 426.

⁵⁹ “Writer’s Audience,” 427.

Rhetoric, Deliberation, and Democracy

Rhetoric plays an essentially ambivalent role in democracy by both allowing democracy to actualize its ideals and threatening those ideals. Rhetoric can enable citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities and can limit these rights or violate these responsibilities. As Garsten observes, persuasive speech is prone to two corruptions because of its necessary relation to democracy: a speaker may manipulate an audience and a speaker may flatter an audience. “The two vices thus arise from the dual character of persuasion itself,” he explains, which, like democracy, “consists partly in ruling and partly in following.”⁶⁰ As a result, rhetoric is, to evoke Derrida’s use of an ancient Greek term, a *pharmakon*: an elixir caught in the ambiguity between medicine and poison.⁶¹ This dissertation does not clarify this ambiguity but uses it to account for the persistent concealment of rhetoric in public deliberation. I seek to understand the conditions of what American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey suggested was the central problem of the American public: the sorry state of “the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion.”⁶² Ultimately, I am defending the role of rhetoric in democracy and rejecting the overvaluation of immediacy.

The cleavage between mediation and immediacy is foundational to the development of the discipline of communication studies. In the terms of interpersonal research, immediacy is the perception of physical and/or psychological closeness as indicated by behaviors such as

⁶⁰ *Saving Persuasion*, 2.

⁶¹ Derrida’s notion of the *pharmakon* is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

⁶² *The Public and Its Problems* (Denver: Swallow, [1927] 1957), 208.

eye contact, smiling, vocal expressiveness, and so on.⁶³ In communication pedagogy, there is a challenge to cultivate a sense of immediacy in the context of digital learning—the mediated classroom introduces both physical and psychological distance between teacher and student.⁶⁴ In performance studies, liveness refers to a dimension of immediacy, one that is in crisis in a mediatized culture.⁶⁵ Rhetoric has a long tradition of training speakers how to overcome the suspicion that their speech is mediated by self-interest, ideology, or ill will and how to achieve a sense of closeness with an audience. These disciplinary examples indicate a general tendency to value certain speech practices that are thought to offer immediacy; immediacy has acquired a normative quality that can limit the critical potential of communication research and teaching. The discipline of communication studies has historically borne a deep commitment to deliberation and privileged immediacy. In the early days of communication departments, almost every class related to the practice of public

⁶³ Janis F. Andersen, Peter A. Andersen, and Arthur D. Jensen, “The Measurement of Nonverbal Immediacy,” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 7, no. 2 (1979); Scott A. Myers and Megan F. Ferry, “Interpersonal Communication Motives and Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors,” *Communication Research Reports* 18, no. 2 (2001); Paul L. Witt, Lawrence R. Wheelless, and Mike Allen, “A Meta-Analytical Review of the Relationship between Teacher Immediacy and Student Learning,” *Communication Monographs* 71, no. 2 (2004); Barbara M. Montgomery, “Verbal Immediacy As a Behavioral Indicator Of Open Communication Content,” *Communication Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1981); Timothy P. Mottet and Virginia P. Richmond, “An Inductive Analysis of Verbal Immediacy: Alternative Conceptualization of Relational Verbal Communication,” *Communication Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1998); Graham D. Bodie and Susanne M. Jones, “The Nature of Supportive Listening II: The Role of Verbal Person Centeredness and Nonverbal Immediacy,” *Western Journal of Communication* 76, no. 3 (2012).

⁶⁴ Lori J. Carrell and Kent E. Menzel, “Variations in Learning, Motivation, and Perceived Immediacy Between Live and Distance Education Classrooms,” *Communication Education* 50, no. 3 (2001).

⁶⁵ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd ed. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

speech and modes of deliberation such as debate.⁶⁶ Democratic speech is thought to offer immediacy between citizen and society.

Embracing natural style and sincere expression functions to obviate ideological critique. Sincerity is ideological in that it denies ideology by promising direct representation without mediation and, therefore, without the possibility of distortion. In the terms of rhetorical theory, the invention of sincere expression (e.g., unscripted speech) accomplishes this by functioning as an artistic means of persuasion that announces itself as “non-artistic.” Non-artistic proofs work in large part because they are regarded as direct evidence, such as eyewitness testimony in a courtroom. A representation that is considered to naturally emerge is valorized as being extra-rhetorical and beyond the reach of ideological distortion. Sincerity is also often regarded as being naturally emergent or non-artistic as opposed to being invented by speakers and audiences through performances and their receptions.

We need to recover discursive space for rhetorical criticism by noting the rhetorical character and effects of that which is purported to be non-rhetorical. In the case of public deliberation, this is often packaged as the sincere speaker. The cinematic moment of the speaker tearing up the script or looking away from the teleprompter and speaking from the heart works for staging a dramatic moment, but sincerity is not a natural result of a speaker giving an audience unmediated access to interior substance.

Chapters

⁶⁶ Gustav W. Friedrich and Don M. Boileau, “The Communication Discipline,” in *Teaching Communication: Theory, Research, and Methods*, ed. John Daly, Gustav W. Friedrich, and Anita L. Vangelisti (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999), 7. However, debate was not sufficient, and, as William Keith has detailed, the fact that debaters were taught how to advocate both sides only fueled the suspicion that speakers only seem to speak from the heart. William Keith has detailed the 1930s and 1940s rise of discussion in speech pedagogy from disquiet regarding intercollegiate debate. See *Democracy as Discussion: Civic Education and the American Forum Movement* (New York: Lexington, 2007), chapter 1.

In Chapter Two I begin with the original problem of artifice for rhetoric in the classical period in Athens (ca. 508 – 322 BCE). I note that artifice needs to be carefully practiced and hidden and that Plato and Isocrates work out this paradox differently. Plato values immediate modes of speech because mediation, such as writing, is for him a fundamentally artificial construction of appearance. Plato's rejection of rhetoric and writing emanates from his understanding of the relation between truth (*aletheia*) and knowledge (*gnōsis*), in particular, the highest form of knowledge (*epistēmē*): to know the truth is to unconceal it. In contrast, Isocrates placed writing at the center of good thinking. Isocrates defended the use of logography for the betterment of civil society and presented a case for what I will call, "rhetorical literacy": the learned skill of creating and interpreting morally prudent persuasive discourse. Isocrates was keenly aware of the performativity of public life. Rhetorical literacy allows a speaker to become aware of public performances and their receptions.

I argue that the battle between philosophy and rhetoric, here represented by Plato and Isocrates, was prompted in part by an anxiety over mediation in the emerging technological frontier of writing.⁶⁷ Their different approaches to rhetorical *technē* change the role of the citizen and take differing views on the nature of communication agency. Because Plato (427 – 347 BCE) is concerned with the attainment of transcendent, absolute Truth, he is invested in immediacy as a method for the unmediated relation to the forms. Because Isocrates (436 – 338 BCE) seeks the perfection of civic life through moral and prudent political wisdom, his philosophy is concerned with effective public performance and civic education. For

⁶⁷ As Robert Hariman describes, Plato's denigration of rhetoric also served to elevate his philosophical program. "Status, Marginality, and Rhetorical Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 40.

Isocrates, rhetoric is a new technology for public communication in the nascent context of democracy. While Plato, suspicious of public speech, sought to deny rhetorical mediation, Isocrates valued rhetoric as a critical tool for civic life. He was critically aware of the importance of *ēthos* and believed firmly in the capacity for rhetoric to reflect a speaker's virtuous character.⁶⁸

In Chapters Three and Four, I turn to two contemporary cases beginning with a context considered to be rife with artifice: political campaigns. In this context, where audience attention to artifice is vigilant, there arises a set of normative conditions that govern the use of artifice. In Chapter Three, I discuss how the problem of artifice prompts both a crisis of *ēthos* for political speakers and an opportunity for opponents to strategically point out the presence of artifice. To illustrate what is here termed “high-tech style,” the 2012 presidential election is employed. Popular criticism of Governor Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama often attended to the artifice of their speech. Discourse concerning Obama's teleprompter indicates a broader denigration of technological mediation and the dream of unmediated communication. Finally, I illustrate low-tech style in speeches in which there is little or no attention to artifice. I focus on President George W. Bush's speeches and the myth of unmediated speech in the use of the bullhorn as an allegorical tool to indicate the tendency for some technologies to more successfully allow a speaker to conceal her or his rhetorical craft.

Chapter Four examines a context that promises more direct communication: dialogue and deliberation. I examine how the appearance of unmediated communication in facilitated dialogue and deliberation requires active concealment and denial of technique. From their

⁶⁸ Hyde, “Introduction,” xv.

inception, the two methods that are examined in this chapter are quite different. Open Space Technology (OST) begins without any written agenda while National Issues Forums (NIF) structures interaction with prefigured topics and questions. While OST might appear to be less staged than NIF and, therefore, more natural, they both rely on the concealment of the artifice of their technique. OST conceals technique through the themes of simplicity, voluntary action, and ordinariness. As a method, it is framed as the absence of complex and overbearing structures that impede human creativity. Instead, OST purports to be a natural way of self-organization. NIF is more formal and structured and conceals through the use of questioning, naming, and framing. The formal apparatus that NIF deploys in deliberations is designed to divert attention away from its deliberative form and the choices that were made in framing the issue at hand.

While all three cases (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) include examples of speech that are purportedly less artificial, all rhetorical practice involves artifice. However, the demand to appear without artifice raises a critical paradox for political speech: an orator does not appear unmediated without mediating speech with techniques that produce that appearance. I argue that whenever speech is valorized as being immediate, direct, or unmediated, a concealed form of mediation is at work. Valorizing speech as immediate is itself a form of rhetorical mediation—albeit one that functions by attempting to conceal the presence of artifice. Because of the successful concealment of mediation, these speech practices are less likely to be analyzed critically by citizens and rhetorical critics alike. I will argue that more thoughtful analyses of the techniques of sincerity and other forms of immediacy will enable better participation in a democracy that depends on persuasive communication.

CHAPTER 2: LOGOGRAPHY IN ATHENS: PLATO VS. ISOCRATES

In Greek antiquity, when a King needed unadulterated advice, he often turned to an oracle. The oracle offered wisdom not through intellectual or moral excellence but divine inspiration made possible by an immediate connection to the gods. Similarly, the Muses of Greek mythology represented the inspired sources of human knowledge. A poet, for example, was eloquent if and only if the gods smiled upon him. The oracle and the poet benefited from *eudaimonia*, literally “being moved by a good spirit.”¹ For centuries of Greek culture, human knowledge was thought to be a gift from the gods. What held true for kings and poets did not extend to the political sphere, where public speakers did not enjoy the notion of divinely inspired eloquence and were often met with great distrust. In the context of Athenian democracy surging and retreating with the fits of political victory and loss, Greeks feared that an unscrupulous speaker could employ *technê* (craft knowledge) to imitate *eudaimonia*, bolster *ēthos*, and gain the public’s assent.² As a decidedly human skill, *technê*

¹ *Eudaimonia* is often translated as “happiness,” but it signifies more than a positive feeling or sentiment—it encompasses the best of human life which, for the Greeks, was possible through the will of the gods. See Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, “Introduction,” in *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), x.

² See Richard Leo Enos, *Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle* (Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 1993), 1. Negative attitudes toward persuasion and charming speech in ancient Greece were common. See Hesk, *Deception and Democracy*. The gift of an eloquent tongue was both cherished and reviled—there was an awareness that persuasion was a great force, and one that could be overwhelming. The myth of Peitho, the feared Greek goddess of persuasion and seduction, represents these attitudes. The notion that an eloquent speaker’s persuasiveness was a coercive force is indicated by the common depiction of Peitho fleeing the scene of a rape, carrying a ball of binding twine. Aaron J. Atsma, “Peitho: Greek Goddess of

enables craft production and invention and represents a shifting balance of power between humanity and the gods.³

As secularity emerged in Greek antiquity, truth (*aletheia*) was not divinely inspired but discovered through human creative invention. In the absence of divinely inspired knowledge, individual opinion (*doxa*) became a legitimate form of knowledge.⁴ Attention to rhetoric as a *technê* for persuasion emerged from this shifting source of truth.⁵ The assumption was that inspired speech did not rely upon any technology to mediate the divine; the speaker was not applying technique or showing their mastery of a certain *technê* (craft). Alternately, with the aid of rhetoric, the fear that a speaker could inauthentically evidence

Persuasion,” in *Theoi Project*, accessed October 25, 2013, <http://www.theoi.com/Daimon/Peitho.html>. Isocrates claims that those who are envious of good speakers are disrespectful to Peitho. He says that while they regard her as a god, those who wish to share her power are being corrupted by evil desire. *Isocrates I* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 15.249. The notion of evil desire being at the base of persuasion is found in contemporary approaches to rhetoric, too. Wayne Brockeiede argues that rhetors rape, seduce, or love their audiences. The first two alternatives are motivated by the rhetor’s desire to gain assent at any cost, including manipulation and trickery. The lover, however, implies immediacy in that the loving rhetor treats the other as equal and values the relationship at stake more than the goal of gaining assent. “Arguers As Lovers,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 5, no. 1 (1972). For the ancient Greeks, a silver tongue was known to be seductive, but unlike a lover, the persuader might not be motivated by goodwill.

³ Atwill, “Technê,” 719.

⁴ Takis Poulakos and David J. Depew, *Isocrates And Civic Education*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004). 46-47. the term is used by literary figures such as Homer to refer to skill and art—and even deception. For Aristotle, *technê* refers to productive knowledge (*poesis*). As such, Aristotle compares medicine, architecture, poetics, and rhetoric because they all are associated with “making.” In the history of rhetoric, the term refers to “the extensive handbook tradition of rhetoric that reportedly goes back to Corax and Tisias in the fifth century B.C.E.” Janet Atwill, “Technê,” 719.

⁵ Rhetoric became the practice of honing one’s thoughts and communicating them for a desired effect. In fact, we can separate rhetoric from earlier forms of public speech by noting the self-aware use of technique published in fifth-century handbooks, as opposed to the earlier focus on divine inspiration as the source of persuasive effect.

good will was only made worse by the introduction of a new media technology: writing. The introduction of writing highlighted an already fraught relationship between *technê* and authentic speech. The written script was a visible reminder of the strategy that came between what orators thought and what they said.

In this chapter, I will take up the problem of writing in Greek antiquity to discuss how the emergence and denigration of rhetoric during the classical period in Athens (ca. 508 – 322 BCE) relates to the privileging of immediacy in political speech (*politikoi logoi*). Athenian culture lay in the shadow of tyranny and perched at the precipice of democracy while simultaneously making the critical transition from orality to literacy. I argue that the battle between philosophy and rhetoric, here represented by Plato and Isocrates, was prompted, in part, by an anxiety over mediation in this emerging technological frontier of writing. Plato and Isocrates offer different rhetorical programs based on their notions of the ideal civic life. Because Plato (427 – 347 BCE) was concerned with the attainment of ideal forms, he was invested in immediacy as a method for the unmediated relation to the forms. Isocrates sought the perfection of civic life through moral and prudent political wisdom, and, therefore, his philosophy was concerned with effective public performance and civic education. For Isocrates (436 – 338 BCE), rhetoric was a new technology for public communication in the nascent context of democracy.

The mediation of speech is a problem for the cultivation of knowledge if it is assumed that true knowledge, under natural conditions, wells forth from the speaker's soul like pure wine from an unadulterated bottle. Under such a Platonic rubric, the mediation of speech by a script is a barrier to the highest form of knowledge (*epistēmē*) because the script signaled a separation of speech from the form it attempted to represent. Plato favored the Socratic

dialectical method over logography because, he insisted, it allowed an interlocutor to discover truth rather than create the appearance of truth.⁶ For Plato, the dialectical method did not rely upon imitation, persuasion, and lower forms of knowledge such as common sense and popular opinion (*doxa*).

Scholars have long noticed the fact that Plato's denigration of rhetoric was itself rhetorical. Famed Roman orator Cicero (106 – 46 BCE) remarked, "What most surprised me about Plato... was that it seemed to me that as he was in the process of ridiculing rhetors he himself appeared to be the foremost rhetor."⁷ Scholars have noted Plato and others in antiquity using a "rhetoric of anti-rhetoric" that functioned to bolster their persuasiveness by denigrating rhetoric.⁸ This scholarship helps critics understand the anti-rhetorical notion of "mere rhetoric," but it fails to provide a complete image of the rhetorical tradition by appreciating how rhetoric is also derided through its quiet obliteration. Rhetorical scholarship has overlooked the persistent and pernicious effect of the rhetoric of non-rhetoric that, I argue, stems from Plato's pursuit of unmediated communication for his philosophical project.

Isocrates valued the role of human agency in the cultivation of a good society. He believed in the morally prudent possibility of communities to design and implement just policies that required design of effective rhetoric. Isocrates defended instruction in rhetoric

⁶ Plato, "Gorgias," in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including The Letters*, ed. Huntington Cairns and Edith Hamilton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 448d10, 57e-58a, 59d-e.

⁷ W. Kendrick Pritchett, "Commentary," in *On Thucydides*, ed. W. Kendrick Pritchett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 1.11.47.

⁸ Hesk, *Deception And Democracy*, chap. 4; Markovits, *The Politics Of Sincerity*, 74-77. The rhetoric of anti-rhetoric is an *ēthos* strategy that contrasts one's message with messages designed to persuade. The implication, or explicit statement, is that the speaker is to be trusted because they do not practice rhetoric and the speech at hand is frank speech as opposed to a designed appeal.

because he believed that training in the arts of language (*logos*) was central to humanity. He challenged his students to achieve more than good ends and to perceive how all individual ends are tied to a greater social good. He advocated for a public rhetoric capable of moralizing Athens by instructing its citizens. He defended his school as a place where future leaders would learn to speak about important civic matters. He had such a high standard for rhetorical literacy that his defense of the civic role of rhetoric required writing as a means for careful and deliberate design.

Isocrates' defense of rhetoric prefigures his defense of the mediation of writing because *logography* allowed for the careful design of civic rhetoric that he believed was essential for Athenian society. He defended the use of logography by presenting a case for what I will call rhetorical literacy: the learned skill of creating and interpreting morally prudent persuasive discourse. Isocrates embraced the contingency of rhetoric, insisting that those who developed good opinions (*doxai*) to guide their behavior acted more justly than those who claimed knowledge (*epistēmē*). Rhetorical literacy is essential for citizens to make public judgments and evaluate others' opinions. For Isocrates, rhetorical literacy was essential for political life because decisions regarding the most important matters could never be based on certainty.

For Isocrates, writing was an essential *technē* because it allowed for good thinking on complex public issues. In this way, rhetoric was not only compatible with philosophy; it *was* philosophy because it was the art of deliberate thought. While he lamented speech writing geared toward self-interested strategies, such as flattery, he valued the critical reflection that writing afforded. His method sought a balance between the morally desirable and politically possible. One of the problems with Isocrates in the rhetorical tradition that has required some

recovery is that, in part because he lived in the midst of the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric, he rarely used the term “rhetoric” to describe his own work, instead referring to it as “instruction in philosophy” (though he does occasionally use the adjective form, “rhetorical” (rhētorikos)).⁹ Isocrates emerged at a time when a rhetorician was taken to be a profiteering fraud. I use “rhetoric” to describe his professional pursuit because Isocrates was a teacher, first and foremost, and a center piece of his subject was how citizen-leaders could craft oratory capable of improving Athenian society through the craft of persuasion.

Because the goal of this study is to provide a robust account of anxieties about the scripting of speech, classical Athens, which saw the inception of writing as a mechanism for public rhetorical exchange, is a useful place to focus if we would like to grasp the relationship between writing as a sign of *technê* and means of exercising *technê* and anxieties about insincere and unethical speech.¹⁰ Writing exploded during the classical period, in the midst of democratic reforms, and had a profound impact on Greek life and culture.¹¹ In this

⁹ David C. Mirhady and Yun Lee Too, “Introduction to Isocrates,” in *Isocrates I*, ed. David C. Mirhady and Yun Lee Too (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 8.

¹⁰ The relationship between orality and literacy is even more complicated for this study because in classical Athens, there is no neat division between written texts and oral performances. It was common for written works to be designed for oral performance. See Rosalind Thomas, “Prose Performance Texts: Epideixis and Written Publication in the Late Fifth and Early Fourth Centuries,” in *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece*, ed. Harvey Yunis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 163.

¹¹ There is some disagreement regarding how best to think about these impacts. Eric Havelock represents a broad and universalizing approach to thinking about the effects of writing in antiquity. *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); *Literate Revolution; The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy From Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986). In particular, he argued that the abstraction of the Greek alphabet promoted abstract thinking. I follow Harvey Yunis and others who find that Havelock’s approach is too general to be properly supported and to account for specific cultural practices. “Introduction: Why Written Texts?,” in *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece*, ed. Harvey Yunis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9.

moment of cultural change we are able to observe discourse that reflects the anxieties of the emergence of a new media technology.¹² As is common for new media technologies, the arrival of writing as a technology for political community spurred debate regarding its normative status.

Democratic Speech in Athens

By the time that Plato and Isocrates were opening their schools (ca. 387 BCE and ca. 392 BCE), Athenian oral culture was beginning the transition to literate culture, but the public square was thoroughly organized around spoken addresses. A simple fact illustrates the oral nature of classical Athenian public life: there were no lecterns in the agora.¹³ It was unthinkable for speakers to have a script in their hand while they were addressing the *polis*.¹⁴ As classicist Johan Schloemann explains, the presence of the written text was too “closely connected with a suspicion against an intellectual specialization and expertise that was associated with the use of books and writing.”¹⁵

In the time period that Plato and Isocrates were teaching and writing, the protracted Peloponnesian War ended (404 BCE) and the Thirty Tyrants were expelled (403 BCE). At

¹² As Carolyn Marvin notes, it is useful to return to the site of emergence, before anxieties have been internalized and tensions have been incorporated. *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Communications in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹³ Johan Schloemann, “Entertainment and Democratic Distrust: The Audience's Attitudes Towards Oral and Written Oratory in Classical Athens,” in *Epea and Grammata: Oral and Written Communication in Ancient Greece*, ed. Ian Worthington and John Miles Foley (Boston: Brill, 2002), 135; George Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963). 3-9.

¹⁴ Schloemann, “Entertainment And Democratic Distrust,” 136.

¹⁵ Ibid.

the start of the fourth century, Athens lay bruised and battered, but democracy was restored.¹⁶ Athenian democrats valued speech and rejected the ways that the tyrants had silenced them. The Athenian legal concept of *isegoria* (equality of speech) protected the right of citizens to address the assembly (*ecclesia*). While political speech—the kind of civic discourse that was referred to as *politikoi logoi*, was a cherished component of democracy, it was unnerving enough that it was common for each assembly meeting to begin with a herald proclaiming a curse against anyone who would come to the speaker's platform and deceive the people.¹⁷ Athenians were highly concerned with the techniques of political speech and were relentless pursuers of deceptive performance.¹⁸

As a result of this suspicion and uncertainty regarding democratic speech, various protocols were designed to prevent deceitful, unwise, or insincere advice by punishing the speaker in question.¹⁹ These speech protocols still demanded oratorical skill, for the right to

¹⁶ Prior to the Peloponnesian War, there had been numerous democratic institutions in Athens. John V. A. Fine, *The Ancient Greeks: A Critical History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 383. Notably, more census classes were eligible to hold public office, and for the first time in recorded history, pay for government service allowed the non-wealthy to pursue public service. Ibid., 391-92. In addition, a large number of officials were appointed by lot. Ibid., 403-05.

¹⁷ Ibid., 409.

¹⁸ Hesk, *Deception And Democracy*, 203-04. Hesk suggests that the anti-rhetorical reflections of orators explain why democracy survived for as long as it did because this helped to prevent deception. But rhetoric is not the same as deception, and what is ironic about these anti-rhetorical speeches is that they are deeply rhetorical. I would disagree with Hesk, and instead say that there is a benefit, to a point, to the diligence that democratic culture employs in rooting out deception. However, this benefit is outstripped because eventually we have just invented rather tortured ways of denying the artifice of public speech. Schloemann argues that this dual demand for entertaining performances and a mistrust for persuasive technique created an ambivalence in the Athenian public culture that both sustained and mistrusted rhetoric. Schloemann, "Entertainment and Democratic Distrust," 135.

¹⁹ Susan Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 59.

speak did not mean that the several thousand, often unruly men would listen.²⁰ Such protocols sought to constrain the ill effects of deceptive speech in the hands of a self-interested speaker who might pander to the *demos*.²¹ Yet these protocols were insufficient for controlling democratic speech and a set of virtues emerged from the context of democratic suspicion. These virtues were meant to reflect good character, and good character was expected to secure good speech practices (speech that was wise, thoughtful, and so on).

In general, these virtues reflected the prevailing value afforded to conditions of immediacy: virtuous speakers had a close connection to their audience, cared for their audience, and presented their true selves to their audience. These virtues implied that speaking subjects were endowed with the agency to speak, access to their unmediated thoughts and feelings, and morally compelled them to speak the truth despite any danger posed.²² Sincere expression, in the form of frank speech (*parrhesia*) thusly became the hallmark virtue of democratic speech.

Attendant to the right to speak (*isegoria*) was the duty to speak boldly. It was common for orators to defend harsh advice because flattery would be a disservice to their role as advisor to the *demos*.²³ According to political theorist Susan Monoson, “to speak with *parrhesia* was to confront, oppose, or find fault with another individual or a popular view in

²⁰ Ibid., 58-59.

²¹ Ibid., 59.

²² Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 15.

²³ Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements*, 53. In the world of theatre, *parrhesia* was more common in comedy than drama, where characters would insult real, elite figures as well as Athenian society.

a spirit of concern for illuminating what is right and best.”²⁴ It described speech that was not reserved, overly ornate, or designed for personal gain.²⁵ *Parrhesia* implied a relationship of sincerity between the speaker and the utterance because, among other things, the speaker was not expressing only selected thoughts.²⁶ As Michel Foucault explains, the *parrhesiastes* (frank speaker) claims to use the most direct expression possible to communicate, eschewing any technical device, such as rhetoric, that might help to gain assent:

The speaker [avoids] any kind of rhetorical form which would veil what he thinks. Instead, the *parrhesiastes* uses the most direct words and forms of expression he can find. Whereas rhetoric provides the speaker with technical devices to help him prevail upon the minds of his audience (*regardless* of the rhetoricians own opinion concerning what he says), in *parrhesia*, the *parrhesiastes* acts on other people's minds by showing them as directly as possible what he actually believes.²⁷

As Foucault’s explanation of *parrhesia* illustrates, *parrhesia* is highly compatible with a rhetoric of non-rhetoric because it purports to demonstrate opinion without rhetorical form. In the anti-technological contrast of rhetoric’s “technical” status, *parrhesia* promises a direct, immediate connection.

Writing and Logography

Before it became widespread, writing was mostly restricted to dedications inscribed on monuments and religious artifacts.²⁸ Even as its use became more widespread in the fourth century, large sections of the populace had little reason to learn to read or write; oral

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Markovits, *The Politics of Sincerity*, 65.

²⁶ Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements*, 53.

²⁷ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 12.

²⁸ Yunis, “Introduction,” 4. It is no wonder, then, that one of the first uses of written speech was commemorative speeches. The permanence of writing, it seems, was almost immediately appealing.

communication still allowed them to be aware of public matters, written texts were often performed aloud, and key rituals were oral.²⁹ Citizens who could read usually performed aloud, allowing anyone in earshot to share in the experience.³⁰ Only about one-third of citizens could read and write.³¹ The literate class included both elites and slaves, so, at one time, writing was specialized but not exclusively elite.³² During this period of expansion, oral communication persisted in a stable form while the complexity of written texts increased rapidly.³³

Parrhesia in classical Athens was a dividing line between good and bad speech, rather than indicating a quality of writing. The crisis of *parrhesia* for writing does not arrive until logography, as the confluence of the new technology of writing and the old practice of public speaking. The term “logography” originates with early efforts to record history in

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

³⁰ Rosalind Thomas, “Literacy,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³¹ Ibid. Athenian democracy is thought to be a high water mark of literacy in the classic Western world.

³² See Yunis, “Introduction: Why Written Texts?,” 6. Slaves often worked as scribes and accountants while elite citizens wrote, read, and shared texts regarding politics, art, science, and philosophy. This was elite in that writing was not just about functionality, but the ability to reflect on writings and distribute copies.

³³ See *ibid.* By the late sixth century BCE, inscriptions on stone regarding laws, honors, and memorials were more common. In addition, documents were recorded on easier-to-transport papyrus so that Athens proud culture could be communicated abroad. Literary documents were collected in a new institution: libraries. Technical treaties were printed on various topics, such as medicine, music, and rhetoric, but they were circulated more to demonstrate the skill of the teacher than to train a student. Letters both public and personal became more popular. New media specialists known as scribes were used to write contracts in order to hold people to their inscribed word. Still, Greek communities mostly relied upon face-to-face, public settings for the transmission of oral discourse such as the theatre, the agora, and the assembly. *Ibid.*, 4.

written form and denotes the use of a writing instrument. Even at its inception, logography was met with suspicion. Historical logographers used prose style, but kept certain poetic devices, such as the use of myth and legend, leading some to claim that the focus was on beauty instead of accuracy. Writers gained a reputation of sacrificing “historical accuracy” for the pleasing effects of style.³⁴ Not everyone found the Ionian historical logographers to be manipulative, however. Writing in the first century BCE, Dionysius of Halicarnassus referred to their style as lucid, clear, pure, concise, and “not revealing any elaborate art in composition.”³⁵ This effort to depict early logography as unaffected historical accounts is the subject of extensive debate and reveals a chief strategy for defending artifice: the use of sincerity.³⁶ As an extension of the aforementioned rhetoric of anti-rhetoric, this effort was a strategy for elevating some historical accounts as sincere in contrast to those designed for effect by an author. In this way sincerity gets deployed to discipline the exercise of rhetorical art in the context of human invention. By claiming that the Ionian style is unaffected, Dionysius asserts that there is no gap between what is observed and what is recorded, writing that their historical accounts are delivered “just as they [are] received... without adding thereto or subtracting therefrom.”³⁷

The suspicion of early historical logography carried on to the later use of writing for political speeches. The specialized training required to master the new technology of writing resonates with the general tendency of new media technologies to bring with them a

³⁴ Enos, *Greek Rhetoric*, 25.

³⁵ Ibid.; Dionysius, *On Thucydides*, trans. W. Kendrick Pritchett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

³⁶ See Pritchett, “Commentary,” 54n20.

³⁷ Dionysius, *On Thucydides*, 331; Enos, *Greek Rhetoric*, 25.

suspicion or unease with technical experts.³⁸ The new generation of politicians were hiring logographers or learning how to write speeches in order to fulfill their own political ambitions.³⁹ When written speeches became prominent around 430 BCE, attention to the techniques being employed increased.⁴⁰ Speakers were taught to mix ordinary language with complex phrases so as not to seem overly prepared. The written speech also exacerbated this problem of appearance through false expertise wherein people could read about a topic and feign having experience. In addition to the problem of fake knowledge through written craft, logography also highlighted the problem of insincere relationships between speakers or authors and their audiences. The use of writing for speech, it was feared, allowed a speaker to feign immediacy with the audience. The appearance of friendship could be strategically cultivated, but a true friend says what is needed, not what is pleasant to hear. A speaker could pose as a friend, flatter the audience, and make them feel close enough to trust.

The denigration of logography occurs in tandem with the denigration of rhetoric and the sophists. While “rhetor” had referred broadly to someone who spoke in public, by the late fourth century, the notion that rhetoricians were a suspect class was common, and they were associated with written speeches. By then, it was a common tactic to charge that an opponent was reading a speech that had been practiced beforehand.⁴¹ It was at this time that sophists became a suspect class, and they were associated with the practice of logography. Logography was so completely associated with rhetoric and the sophists that Isocrates, never

³⁸ Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New*.

³⁹ Yun Lee Too, *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates: Text, Power, Pedagogy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). 90, 115.

⁴⁰ Schloemann, “Entertainment And Democratic Distrust,” 137.

⁴¹ Hesk, *Deception And Democracy*, 210n26.

calling himself a rhetor, distanced himself from the sophists while defending the practice of writing.

The suspicion of oratorical practice and the power of its persuasive effects produced a “rhetoric of anti-rhetoric,” wherein speakers lambast rhetoric in order to achieve a persuasive effect of their own.⁴² This practice of concealment worked to draw attention away from the speaker’s craft and reveal the craft of an opponent. Jon Hesk argues that this rhetoric of anti-rhetoric helped to discipline what counted as proper communication and to reward the concealment of elite speech training in favor of the image of the ordinary citizen (*idiotai*).⁴³

Concealing elite training in rhetoric might help a speaker display character habits more consistent with the *intellectual* virtue of an ordinary person’s common sense wisdom and intuition, but it does more than this. By drawing attention away from one’s own craft, such rhetorical maneuvers tend to naturalize speech and suggest a constellation of *moral* virtues associated with good speech. The courage to speak one’s mind, the altruistic spirit of an individual who cares about public issues, the valor of a citizen willing to voice an unpopular idea—these virtues associated with public speech are rendered more visible under a condition of suspicion regarding the true motive of speakers.

Plato and Immediacy

In this section, I will first describe the epistemological commitments that led Plato to disdain logography, and then I will explain how this leads him to invent a rhetoric of non-rhetoric, concealing his artifice by embracing *parrhesia*. Plato’s approach to philosophy entails a suspicion of mediation and a desire for immediacy. He likens philosophy, at its best,

⁴² Ibid., 5.

⁴³ Ibid.

to the stripping away of appearances, which conceal the true nature of reality. This leads to a valuation of immediate modes of speech because mediation, for Plato, is fundamentally an artificial construction of appearance. In particular, his concern was that *mimesis* (imitation) would persuade audiences through the appearance of truth rather than the actuality of truth.⁴⁴ The central distinction that Plato draws is between true knowledge (*epistēmē*) and mere opinion (*doxa*). For Plato, audiences are susceptible to the appearance of truth because *doxa*, as a low form of knowledge, is fallible. This perspective is found in the *Republic* in his allegory of the cave.⁴⁵ In order to understand more about the role of the problem of knowledge for Plato's case against rhetoric, I will explain this allegory as it reveals his views on knowledge and its appearance.

In *Republic*, Socrates describes a group of slaves who are chained to a wall so deep inside of a cave that there is no sunlight. Their chains allow them to see only a wall upon which a fire casts a shadow. Hidden from view, people are using various objects like shadow puppets so that strange shadows dance across the cave wall. Socrates notes that the slaves will assume the shadows they see are the real objects themselves, and that any echoes they hear from the puppeteer's distorted voices will be real sounds that those shadow objects are making. As philosopher Kenneth Dorter distinguishes, these slaves have access only to the lowest form of *doxa*: *eikasia*, which are expectations based on images and past associations.⁴⁶ Facing the shadows, they are trapped in the realm of appearance—they are

⁴⁴ Jeffrey Anthony Mitscherling, *The Image of a Second Sun: Plato on Poetry, Rhetoric, and the Technē of Mimesis* (Amherst, CA: Humanity Books, 2009).

⁴⁵ Plato, *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004). 514a-20a.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Dorter, "Three Disappearing Ladders in Plato," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 29, no. 3 (1996): 285.

only able to notice the effect, and are unaware of the cause. As a result, *doxa* is fallible and susceptible to appearance. Though still fallible, a higher form of *doxa*, *pistis*, is represented by a slave who is released from bondage and is able to see the objects that are casting shadows on the wall.⁴⁷ While this slave is able to notice the fire that causes the shadow, the slave's perspective is still limited to the inside of the cave. Next, Socrates reflects on a slave who is taken out of the cave entirely and is able to see the sun. The slave will not be able to see the sun right away, and will be angry at being forced to take the difficult journey out of the cave.⁴⁸ Eventually, this slave discovers true knowledge (*epistēmē*) because he is aware of the entire cause and effect system. Unfortunately, access to *epistēmē* will not secure social comfort or standing. If the slave returns to the cave, Socrates suggests, the others will doubt his true account and try to kill the slave.⁴⁹ Thus, we notice in this story that Plato views *parrhesia* as noble because speaking the truth is often met with danger; the realm of appearance intoxicates humans and leads them to reject truth when it is unflattering or conflicts with what appears to be true. He views his moral imperative as a philosopher to, first, know the truth, then be willing to tell the truth to others.

Plato's disdain for sophists emanates from his understanding of the relation between truth (*aletheia*) and knowledge (in particular, the highest form of knowledge, *epistēmē*): to know the truth is to unconceal it. Plato denigrates rhetoric not only for being unconcerned with *aletheia* but for actively promoting its concealment. For example, in *Euthydemus*, Plato directly attacks Isocrates, claiming that rhetoric is an inauthentic pursuit of wisdom that

⁴⁷ Plato notes that the slave will suffer pain when released and will think that the shadows were more real than the objects now seen. *Ibid.*, 286; Plato, *Republic*: 515c.

⁴⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 515e-16a.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 517a.

provides a false portrayal of itself as philosophy. While orators seem to be wise, divine, and lofty, this is, for Plato, just their power of enchantment.⁵⁰ For Plato, sophists use images and beliefs (*doxa*) to create the appearance of *aletheia*, but it is the philosopher's use of dialectic that is able to discover *epistēmē* by uncovering *aletheia*. In allegorical terms, the slave who exits the cave and sees the sun has escaped the realm of appearance and is no longer limited to *doxa*. Rather than persuaded that the shadows within the cave were an illusion, this slave discovered this epistemic knowledge once the concealment of appearance was lifted.

These epistemological problems are manifest in Plato's understanding of writing. He laments that writing cannot be fully custom-fit to the soul of its audience. Writing only claims to address its reader in particular.⁵¹ The written speech is like a ventriloquist's puppet: it "speaks" but cannot defend itself and requires its master's support.⁵² For Plato, the speaker might be physically present but unable to respond to questions because either they did not write the speech or because they are too caught up in reading their speech to listen for a question.⁵³ This ability to be responsive signals the immediacy of presence indicative of interaction. The exchange of question and answer is an immediate speech practice because the appropriateness of a response depends, in part, upon a connection between dialogue

⁵⁰ Plato, "Euthydemus," in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Huntington Cairns and Edith Hamilton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 289e.

⁵¹ John Durham Peters notes that Plato's Socrates lambasts writing on the grounds that it "parodies live presence... it is inhuman [and] lacks interiority," and I would like to highlight, Socrates also lambasts the writing of speech, according to Peters, for destroying "authentic dialogue" Peters, *Speaking Into the Air*, 46.

⁵² Ibid.; Plato, "Phaedrus."

⁵³ Plato, "Phaedrus," 275e3-5. In *Meno*, Socrates notes Gorgias's habit of giving elaborate answers to any question, and in *Gorgias*, Socrates chides Gorgias for having long-winded answers Plato, "Meno," 70c; Plato, "Gorgias," 449C.

participants. In addition, the response allows for interlocutors to advance through an argument carefully rather than by simply exchanging individual opinions.⁵⁴ There was already an awareness that some speakers responded as if reciting from a written book rather than responding to the immediate context of the question and issue at hand.⁵⁵

In contrast, Plato finds virtue in speaking without the benefit of technological aid. This notion is demonstrated most clearly in the sequence of the three speeches in Plato's *Phaedrus* (the first is Phaedrus and the next two are Socrates). In this dialogue, Socrates meets Phaedrus, an Athenian aristocrat on a road outside of the city. They walk through the pastoral landscape, and eventually sit under a shade tree while they discuss the definition of love. Phaedrus has just heard Lysias speak about the subject, and conceals a script of Lysias' speech underneath his cloak. After hearing Phaedrus read it, Socrates states that Lysias repeats himself too much, and that "there is something welling up within my breast, which makes me feel that I could find something different, and something better, to say."⁵⁶ Phaedrus goads him into speaking, and after calling the "clear-voiced Muses" to help him, Socrates delivers his first speech extemporaneously.⁵⁷ While there is no physically present script to signal mediation, he speaks with his face veiled, a visible technology that presages his lack of immediacy.

Something crucial occurs after Socrates' first speech that reflects on the moral duty of sincere speech and the notion of divine inspiration as the source of true knowledge. As

⁵⁴ Plato, "Gorgias," 453c.

⁵⁵ Plato, "Protagoras," 329a.

⁵⁶ Plato, "Phaedrus," 235c.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 237a.

Socrates is starting to walk back to Athens, he encounters a divine sign and hears a voice telling him to atone for the sin he has just committed.⁵⁸ This was his *daimôn* (divine spirit), and its intervention is a theme in Plato's dialogues. In *Apology*, Socrates says that his *daimonion* frequently warned him against making mistakes, but never told him what to do.⁵⁹ After he is warned from letting his speech remain, Socrates admits to Phaedrus that he had "felt disturbed some while ago as I was delivering that speech" but sinned by continuing to speak what he did not actually believe.⁶⁰ Socrates then prepares to give a speech inspired by his natural surroundings that will spring forth naturally from his soul.⁶¹ He was compelled by his virtuous character to speak once more, this time from the heart.

These three speeches, ostensibly about love, form a metaphor regarding mediated speech that privileges unscripted speaking in three different performances of the speaker's relation to a script. In the first example, Phaedrus reads the written speech script that is physically present, though its author is not.⁶² In the second speech, Socrates speaks without a script, but he does not provide an immediate connection to his soul, for he does not truly believe what he says. The final speech is the best, Plato implies, in part because its author is more immediate than in the other two speeches.

One crucial element of *Phaedrus* is the relationship of memory and knowledge that Socrates believes is corrupted by writing. Socrates tells Phaedrus of the Egyptian god Thoth

⁵⁸ Ibid., 242c.

⁵⁹ Plato, "Socrates' Defense (Apology)," 31d.

⁶⁰ Plato, "Phaedrus," 242d.

⁶¹ Ibid., 244a.

⁶² Ibid., 230e.

who offered King Thamus several inventions.⁶³ Thoth believed that the greatest was writing, which can serve as a remedy (*pharmakon*) for people's memory. Socrates recalls,

When it came to writing, Thoth said, "This discipline, King, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories: my invention is a recipe for both memory and wisdom." But the King said, "... The fact is that this invention will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it. They will not need to exercise their memories, being able to rely on what is written, calling things to mind no longer from within themselves by their own unaided powers, but under the stimulus of external marks that are alien to themselves. So it's not a recipe for memory, but for reminding, that you have discovered. And as for wisdom, you're equipping your pupils with only a semblance of it, not with truth. Thanks to you and your invention, your pupils will be widely read without benefit of a teacher's instruction; in consequence, they'll entertain the delusion that they have wide knowledge, while they are, in fact, for the most part incapable of real judgment. They will also be difficult to get on with since they will have become wise merely in their own conceit, not genuinely so." (275b-c)

In discussing *Phaedrus*, Derrida begins from the conceptual ambiguity of the term *pharmakon* and notes that it can also mean a drug, recipe, charm, spell, paint, or poison.⁶⁴

King Thamus declines to allow writing because of its normative ambiguity; rather than a remedy for memory, he believes it could also serve as a poison that would destroy memory and lead to forgetfulness. For Derrida, the normative ambiguity of "*pharmakon*" illustrates the reception of writing more generally.⁶⁵ "The 'essence' of the *pharmakon* lies in the way in which, having no stable essence, no 'proper' characteristics, it is not, in any sense (metaphysical, physical, chemical, alchemical) of the word, a substance...It is rather the prior medium in which differentiation in general is produced."⁶⁶

⁶³ In ancient Egyptian mythology, Thoth (a.k.a. Theuth) was a god associated with invention and technology, including writing and was frequently depicted as a scribe. He invented mathematics, engineering, astronomy and botany.

⁶⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 99.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 125-6.

This sort of ambiguity in the normative status of writing, and rhetoric more broadly, was deeply unsettling for Plato. As Robert Hariman writes, “rhetoric’s marginal placement transforms it from a comprehensible practice to the condition of disorientation that must be corrected by the authorized practice of philosophy.”⁶⁷ Writing, as mediation, introduced an interface that stood as a threshold between authors and readers. This threshold was necessarily normatively ambiguous; an author could not control who read his writing or how they interpreted it, and from the other side of the threshold, despite shibboleth and wax seals, no reader could be certain that a text was written by the author as signed or that the only readers are those formally addressed. Plato rejects writing as *pharmakon* because mediation is disorienting by introducing a normative ambiguity inconsistent with transcendent Truth.

Plato, Parrhesia, and Non-Rhetoric

The emphasis on the virtue of non-scripted speech produced a discursive space in Athenian democracy that was thought to be beyond the reach of the rhetorical. This rhetoric of non-rhetoric originates with the aforementioned notion of inspired speech, wherein some speech was thought to be beyond reproach because the speaker was merely a medium for the gods. We can see its rhetorical deployment in antiquity in the tendency for speakers to claim inexperience in speaking and to deny careful training in rhetoric in order to sidestep the prevailing anti-rhetorical sentiment.⁶⁸ This rhetorical strategy exploits the status of rhetoric as artifice. Rhetoric is artifice insofar as it reflects human designs upon the world. By carving a space for discourse that is beyond the reach of rhetoric, the rhetoric of non-rhetoric arrests

⁶⁷ Hariman, “Status,” 46.

⁶⁸ Hesk, *Deception And Democracy*, 216.

critique by displacing agency altogether. If speech is not artificial, then it does not bear the mark of design; it is pure expression.

A central component of Plato's rhetoric of non-rhetoric is *parrhesia*. His character, Socrates, explains it this way: the three ingredients for a serious study of the good life are knowledge, goodwill, and *parrhesia*.⁶⁹ In this formulation, knowledge and goodwill are necessary but insufficient to securing the good life because they lack a critical public voice. As Foucault explains, *parrhesia* implies more than the private attainment of truth; "it has the function of *criticism*: criticism of the interlocutor or of the speaker himself."⁷⁰ This disposition reflected a willingness to reveal one's thoughts as opposed to a desire to conceal them for competitive advantage.⁷¹ *Parrhesia* as a concept has changed since antiquity, yet Plato's distinction between philosophy as revealing truth and rhetoric as concealing artifice has endured.⁷² For example, political theorist Arlene Saxonhouse writes that *parrhesia* is "a practice of opening and revealing one's true beliefs, not hiding them or abandoning them" while the "sophists... used speech to hide through the art of rhetoric."⁷³ The central assumption that underwrites Plato's condemnation of speechwriting, echoed by Saxonhouse's description of sophists, is sincerity; it is presumed that a written text has a meaning that originated in the interior of the author, and that, absent the author's presence, we are unable to get at such interior truth. In *Symposium*, Socrates notes how eloquent the

⁶⁹ Plato, "Gorgias," 487a.

⁷⁰ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 17.

⁷¹ Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements*, 162.

⁷² Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 20-24.

⁷³ Arlene W. Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 88.

speaker before him was, and that he misunderstood the point of the symposium. He states that he had come prepared to speak the frank truth about love, while others had planned to flatter the god of love.⁷⁴ In *Apology*, Socrates begins by noting that his prosecutors spoke so persuasively they almost convinced him, were it not for the facts of the case. He says that he will not use “flowery language... decked out with fine words and phrases,” and will only speak the truth, “I have not the slightest skill as a speaker—unless, of course, by a skillful speaker they mean one who speaks the truth.”⁷⁵ In these examples, Plato’s Socrates points toward the artifice of other speakers and mentions that he, conversely, simply speaks from the heart.

Plato condemns speechwriting for the absence and nonresponsiveness of the author but never appeared as a character in his dialogues.⁷⁶ There is an irony, then, in Plato’s determination to hide himself as the author, thereby obscuring his own absence from his writing. He does not appear as a character, he includes no overt or subtle gestures to the differences he might have with Socrates.⁷⁷ As classicist Harvey Yunis indicates, Plato mastered the art of concealment by securing and then obscuring his own absence as author.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Plato, “Symposium,” 198b-e.

⁷⁵ Plato, “Socrates' Defense (Apology),” 17a-c.

⁷⁶ Plato, “Phaedrus,” 275d.

⁷⁷ The only time Plato surfaces in his Socratic dialogues is in *Phaedo* as a present absence, when Phaedo is recounting those present at Socrates’ death, recalling that Plato was absent because he was ill. Plato, “Phaedo,” 59b.

⁷⁸ Harvey Yunis, “Writing for Reading: Thucydides, Plato, and the Emergence of the Critical Reader,” in *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece*, ed. Harvey Yunis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 210. Still, Yunis asserts that Plato’s writing is necessarily different from the “merely enchanting experience offered by poetry or rhetoric.” Ibid. He argues that Plato’s dialogue’s drama creates requires the reader to follow along in the dialectic. By following along, one cannot help but think critically, so they will

For Yunis, Plato solved “the problem of the absent author” through his writing style. The question at stake is, how does a writer guide the reader’s interpretation?⁷⁹ One approach that is taken is to lessen the burden of interpretive work by making the message obvious through a plain style. Yunis suggests that it is possible for messages to be so immediate so as to require little interpretation—it may be “simply understood when it is read.”⁸⁰

Isocrates and Rhetoric

Son of an artisan flute maker, Isocrates was educated by some of the brightest minds of his day, possibly including Gorgias, Tisias, and even Socrates.⁸¹ While he distinguished himself from the sophists—characterizing Gorgias, for example, as a glib nihilist unconcerned with ethics, he did value writing and the craft of what others would call rhetoric.⁸² In fact, Isocrates was one of the first intellectuals to place writing at the center of good thinking. In Isocrates’ school, logography was a central discipline, and rhetoric was an esteemed component of law, history, and civic life, forming the core of Isocratean pedagogy.⁸³ If Plato dealt with the problems of bad rhetoric, such as flattery, by denying the

not understand the progression of the dialogue and cannot be invested in the dramatic tension without thinking critically. I think this assumes far too much about the practice of reading. First of all he assumes that poetry and rhetoric are merely enchanting experiences. Second he assumes that the dramatic tension that we would experience necessarily has to be the one that Plato envisioned and intended, the one that would follow along in the process of the dialectic. Contrary to his view, I argue that people read without and against the intended grain of an author.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 189.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Enos, *Greek Rhetoric*, 67, 113.

⁸² Ibid., 73., Isocrates, *Isocrates I*, 15.268-69; *ibid.*

⁸³ Enos, *Greek Rhetoric*, 113, 16.

conditions of the artifice of his own rhetorical strategies, then Isocrates dealt with the problems of bad rhetoric by advocating for citizens to become wise producers and consumers of texts and speeches. In this section, I will describe Isocrates' epistemological approach to rhetoric, and then I will explain his case for rhetorical literacy.

Isocrates' approach to knowledge was akin to neither Plato's nor the sophists'. Isocrates thought that Plato was too transcendent and that the sophists were too formulaic. He faulted both, for different reasons, for missing the central character of civic life.⁸⁴ He lambasts philosophers such as Plato for abandoning public life for more theoretical matters.⁸⁵ Isocrates wants philosophy to get away from "hairsplitting" and "educate their students about the affairs in which we act as citizens.... It is much better to conjecture reasonably about useful things than to have precise knowledge of what is useless."⁸⁶ Isocrates counseled his students to offer novel advice on pressing public issues.⁸⁷

Because he considered important matters for Athenian society to be complex, his approach to education was broad-based, leading many to name Isocrates as an early pioneer of liberal arts education. "Just as we see the bee settling on all the plants, taking the best from each one," Isocrates wrote, "in this way those who desire an education must also leave nothing untried but must collect advice from everywhere. For through this discipline one may slowly overcome the failings of nature."⁸⁸ This broad based approach to education ran

⁸⁴ Too, *Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates*, 181.

⁸⁵ Isocrates, *Isocrates I*, 10.4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.4-5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.12.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.51.

counter to Plato's pedagogy because he viewed individuals as destined for particular trades and offices in life. Plato lamented the rhetor's practice of speaking on any subject because to have true knowledge of a subject was to be an expert in that profession.⁸⁹ But for Isocrates, well-rounded leaders would make the best decisions, especially if the flowers they pollinated gave them the ability to convince the people of the moral and prudent course of action.

Isocrates' critique of the sophists lies in the poor quality of the advice that they offered the public. He also claims that they were insufficiently philosophical; their speeches promised too much, and "they write speeches that are worse than private citizens might improvise."⁹⁰ In addition, Isocrates finds that sophistic teaching is too formulaic, treating speechwriting like spelling words using the alphabet. "While the function of letters is unchanging," Isocrates explains, "the function of words is entirely opposite." What one person says is not useful in a similar way for the next speaker.⁹¹

Isocrates believed that the height of human wisdom is the intellectual virtue of prudence or practical knowledge (*phronēsis*). "Take concern for everything in life," he wrote, "but train your practical wisdom especially, for a good mind in a human body is something very great in something very insignificant."⁹² While Plato tends to transcend the scene of Athens, Isocrates embraces it, defending speech by noting the ways Athenian rhetorical leaders have benefitted their community.⁹³ According to classicist Yun Lee Too, Isocrates

⁸⁹ Plato, "Gorgias," 449e.

⁹⁰ Isocrates, *Isocrates I*, 13.9.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.12.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1.40.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 15.231.

marks out a different notion of philosophy in this embrace of *phronēsis*. Classicist Yun Lee Too notes that Isocrates figures philosophy as “skill at using language in a public context such that an individual can function for the good of his society.”⁹⁴

Isocrates even dispenses with Plato’s cherished epistemological distinction that elevated *epistēmē* above *doxa*, insisting, “Those who follow their own opinions (*doxai*) live more harmoniously and are more successful than those who claim to have knowledge (*epistēmē*).” Isocrates celebrated humans’ application of agency and creative intelligence to form judgments. That position represents a substantial confrontation with Plato’s devaluation of *doxa*, and underwrites Isocrates’ interest in teaching rhetoric. Rhetorical literacy is essential when *phronēsis* and *doxa* are privileged instead of *epistēmē* because citizens must make contextually-bounded judgments without the certainty and stability of *epistēmē*. In contrast, rhetorical literacy is not essential to civic life if *epistēmē* is privileged above *phronēsis* and *doxa* because the enlightened philosopher-king will make the best decisions and leave it to rhetoricians to craft stories that encourage virtue.⁹⁵ For Isocrates, rhetoric was neither a necessary evil nor a secondary function but a key precursor to political life because political decisions regarding important matters could not be based on certainty.

While both Plato and Isocrates believed that an individual’s potential was limited by natural endowments, Isocrates saw a wider set of offices that an ambitious student could come to fill.⁹⁶ While Isocrates thought that the most important factor in the education of

⁹⁴ Yun Lee Too, “Introduction,” 23.

⁹⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 378d7-e3.

⁹⁶ Isocrates, *Isocrates I*, 15.185; Plato, “Phaedrus,” 246a-54e. Plato viewed human nature as static, believing that the quality of each human’s soul was determined before birth. Their disagreement centers on the ability to teach *arête*, which is frequently translated as “virtue.” However, Kathleen Welch argues that this is nothing like contemporary understanding of

speaking is natural endowment, he believed strongly in rhetorical training. For Isocrates, it takes ability and exercise. The ideal student of rhetoric must have “a mind capable of inventing, learning, working hard and memorizing; a voice and clarity of speech that has the capacity to persuade audiences not only by what he says but also by his harmonious diction; and furthermore, courage that does not signify shamelessness but pairs the soul with moderation that it has as much confidence in addressing all the citizens as when deliberating with himself.”⁹⁷ There was a different notion of memory at work in antiquity such that memory played a central role for Isocrates’ in augmenting a student’s nature through the study of mnemonic devices such as lists of maxims.⁹⁸ These gnomic texts (*gnomoi*) sharpen the pupil’s memory, not as a source of information storage but as a source of ethical invention when encountering contingent situations and wanting a prudent and ethical response.⁹⁹

Isocrates placed special value on training in the arts of language (*logos*) for self-improvement and a healthy civil society. “Since we have the ability to persuade one another and to make clear to ourselves what we want, not only do we avoid living like animals, we have come together, built cities, made laws, and invented arts (*technē*).”¹⁰⁰ For Isocrates, humans can civilize themselves through the study of language and he laments the popular

virtue. Instead, *arête* is the characteristic of something being fully realized. *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of Ancient Discourse* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1990), 17. On Plato’s views regarding teaching virtue, see Plato, “Meno.”

⁹⁷ Isocrates, *Isocrates I*, 15.189.

⁹⁸ Daniel John Fitzmier, “The Role of Maxims and Memory in Isocrates’ Pedagogy.” PhD diss., (Northwestern University, 2005), 185-200.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁰⁰ Isocrates, *Isocrates I*, 15.254.

slander of such a project of self-improvement. “You have led the most promising of them to spend their youth in drink, social gatherings, amusements, and games, while neglecting the serious business of self-improvement, and those with baser natures to pass the day in the sort of undisciplined behavior that no honest slave would have previously dared.”¹⁰¹ Rather than accepting one’s lot as a static entity, Isocrates viewed the soul like the body of a gymnast. Teaching philosophy improved the soul in the same way that teaching athletics improved the body. Since the soul is greater than the body, being excellent in philosophy is greater than being excellent in gymnastics.

Isocrates’ Defense of Rhetorical Literacy

A curious biographical fact about Isocrates reverberates throughout his writings and might provide a motivating force for his insistence on the use of written speech: Isocrates was born with a weak voice; he was unable to speak to large audiences. It is the use of writing, then, that allows Isocrates to participate in Athenian civil society. But in order for this new form of participation to be fully intelligible, a new kind of literacy is required. In this next section, I expand upon Isocrates’ defense of rhetoric, attempting to identify the ways that his corpus offers an argument for rhetorical literacy.

Isocrates argued that education in rhetorical invention was a method for perfecting individual and social virtues. Through instruction in public speech, he reasoned, citizens would know how to act properly by practicing praising the good actions and condemning the poor actions of others.¹⁰² Isocrates defends public speaking by noting that it is odd for anyone to complain about public speaking because some speakers lie. The same people who

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 15.286.

¹⁰² Fitzmier, 205-07.

complain about public speaking do not complain about wealth, strength, or courage, even though those virtues get abused too.¹⁰³ Describing a principle of rhetorical literacy, Isocrates says that we should “blame individuals who use good things badly and try to harm their fellow citizens using means that could benefit them instead.”¹⁰⁴ Isocrates sought to inculcate virtue through rhetorical instruction.

According to Isocrates, learning the general forms of speaking is easy, but the execution is difficult. He argues that instruction in rhetoric is necessary because natural talent must be cultivated by education in order to be effective:

It is not all that difficult to gain a knowledge of the forms (*ideai*) that we use in speaking and composing all speeches... But to choose from these the necessary forms for each subject, to mix them with each other and arrange them suitably, and then, not to mistake the circumstances (*kairoi*) but to embellish the entire speech properly with consideration (*enthymēmata*) and to speak the words rhythmically and musically, these things require much study and are the work of a brave and imaginative soul.¹⁰⁵

He expected his students to synthesize and apply *phronēsis* so that it was clear they had a secure understanding of what they were learning and how to adapt *doxa* to the right situations at the right moments. More than just careful study, this takes practice because what makes an opportune moment (*kairos*) can elude exact knowledge in terms of *epistēmē*.¹⁰⁶

Isocrates argued that good leadership—indeed all pursuits of wisdom—required rhetorical education. However, he was clear that there was a normative valence to rhetorical training and that only good rhetoric could ameliorate society. The point of rhetorical education is to judge orators not by their ability to achieve ends but by their ability to see the

¹⁰³ Isocrates, *Isocrates I*, 3.4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.17.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.183-84.

ends as tied to the greater social good.¹⁰⁷ Isocrates argues for rhetorical literacy because he acknowledges the danger that speech can play, but this danger is due to people not recognizing the craft of what is being said. Because speech can be so useful, and in fact is necessary for society, Isocrates wants us to be able to recognize bad speech so that we may fully celebrate good speech.

In the *Antidosis*, Isocrates presents a dramatized courtroom defense of his profession as a logographer. That he wrote a defense of his profession indicates a low opinion of rhetors, specifically logographic rhetors, prevailing in Isocrates' Athens.¹⁰⁸ The character Isocrates asks the clerk of the court to read from several of his speeches that have given him his great reputation. In the case, he stands charged with corrupting the youth that he has taught. He presents his character, activities, and entire life as a charitable offering for the public. In this fictional case, Isocrates stakes his life on the importance of teaching speech.

Antidosis offers its Athenian audience lessons in Isocrates' approach to philosophy. In his self-defense, Isocrates wants Athens to give credit to the culture of speech, which is made possible by the important role that rhetorical education plays in Athens' vibrant political culture. While the common practice in Athens at the time was for the richest, wealthiest citizens to provide funds for the public good, Isocrates claims that his life teaching the citizens of Athens was an application of his wealth toward the good of the public. Teaching rhetorical literacy makes his students better citizens.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Takis Poulakos, *Speaking for the Polis: Isocrates' Rhetorical Education* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997). ix.

¹⁰⁸ Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). 31.

¹⁰⁹ Too, "Introduction," 3.

Isocrates also justifies logography in terms of the power of well-crafted speech to guide public memory. Writing at the end of his career, he regards his speech as something to leave behind as a memorial, “much finer than bronze statues.”¹¹⁰ In *To Nicocles*, Isocrates explains why good speeches are better memorials than statues. Not only can a speech travel far and wide, but also they are able to demonstrate more than a great physique. “Statues of bodies are fine memorials, but ... images of deeds and of character are worth much more, and one can observe these only in skillfully produced speeches.”¹¹¹ He notes that no one can make his body resemble that of the statue, but that he can take steps to practice the virtues that we hear about in speeches.¹¹² Elsewhere, Isocrates asks his jury to consider how many of their ancestors are forgotten because they did not have poets and speechwriters to sing their praises. He asks them not to despise speechwriters, but to trust them in order to secure their own good reputation.¹¹³

While Plato laments the realm of appearance and the power of *mimesis*, Isocrates values writing for helping to manage positive appearances. He is keenly aware of the performativity of public life, and trains his students not only to act morally, but also to be seen as such. “Those who wish to engage in public life and be well-liked must choose the best and most useful deeds, and the truest and most just words; in addition however, they must consider carefully how they can be seen by others to say and do everything graciously and benevolently, for those who give little thought to these matters appear to their fellow

¹¹⁰ Isocrates, *Isocrates I*, 15.7.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.73.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 9.74-75.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 15.136-37.

citizens to be rather difficult and intolerable.”¹¹⁴ He says that things such as plausibility and other forms of proof only work for the part of speech in which they appear, but that reputation applies to the entire speech; if the audience thinks that one is a gentleman, then his speech will be more persuasive, and the actions of the gentleman are thought to be more honorable. “Intelligent men must covet this more than anything else,” Isocrates advises.¹¹⁵ Isocrates argues that it is important to gratify people so that they judge everything that one does in a positive light. In this way an audience may overlook mistakes because of one’s goodwill.¹¹⁶

Another reason why rhetorical literacy was critical for Isocrates was that citizens needed the ability to appreciate good speech and to spot flattery. In *To Demonicus*, Isocrates gives advice to a wealthy young lord interested in pursuing a position of political leadership. His introduction distinguishes between flattering words of encouragement and the nobler task of philosophy, which is to give tough advice to assist “in the constitution of their character.”¹¹⁷ According to Isocrates, we should “hate flatterers as much as deceivers, for if trusted both do injustice to those who trust them. If you accept into friendship those who gratify for the worst reasons, your life will lack friends who will risk animosity for the best reasons.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 15.132.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 1.4, 15.280.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 15.133-34.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 1.4.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 1.30.

Isocrates promotes his school as a place where people will learn to speak about important civic matters. These speeches of “general import” take many forms, involve many situations, and are more difficult to learn than speeches about simple or frivolous topics. “The greatest indication of this,” Isocrates writes, “is that no one wanting to praise bumblebees and salt has ever been at a loss for words, but those who have attempted to discuss subjects that are commonly agreed to be good or noble or excellent in *arête* (achievement) have all fallen short of the possibilities when they have spoken.”¹¹⁹ Clearly, Isocrates takes ideas and speech very seriously—important enough to carefully craft with writing. “It is rare to discover something that no one has said before about well-known subjects, but about base and insignificant matters, whatever one happens to say is entirely his own.”¹²⁰ Speaking without the use of writing, for Isocrates, decreases the likelihood that the orator is addressing significant matters in complex or novel ways, and Isocrates perceived this to be the moral duty of any citizen speaking to the *polis*.

Rhetorical literacy allows a speaker to become aware of his performance and its reception. Isocrates was keenly aware that the effect of a speech was tied not only to its inventional content but also to the audience’s appraisal. Accordingly, some of the advice that Isocrates gives concerns how one should act, not only for the sake of virtue, but for the good favor accrued from the appearance of virtue. For example, he writes, “imitate the manners of kings and follow their habits, for you will be thought to approve and emulate them and will thus achieve more distinction in the eyes of the multitude and more reliable goodwill from

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 10.12.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 10.13.

kings.”¹²¹ Elsewhere, Isocrates calls for measured speech, warning speakers against the perception of being senseless by engaging in “uncontrolled laughter.”¹²²

Isocrates sought a high moral standard for all oratory—indeed, he was of the mind that all oratory should have a clear moral purpose and should contain either praise or blame (*epideictic*). It would be irresponsible to speak without thoughtfully preparing speech to direct moral attention. Thus, historians in his school were taught to try for historical accuracy, but not at the expense of a well-crafted moral lesson. His contribution to the art of logography was to tailor speech to the tastes of the public and morally modify the public’s tastes in the same breath.

Conclusion

Both Plato and Isocrates pursued a program in rhetoric. Plato’s lived in the discursive space he carved out and marked “non-rhetorical.” As the epitome of “speaking from the heart,” this space is the distinction between the inner landscape of the soul and the outer appearance of *doxa*.¹²³ It offers a persuasive system built upon the denial of persuasion. Guided by *epistēmē*, the soul that knows *aletheia* releases it for discovery when barriers to sincere expression are lifted. The space that Isocrates carves out is a stage upon which the citizen speaks. These rhetorical performances of citizenship are performative because the trained speaker is aware of their relationship to the audience, and respond as such. For Plato, there is a stable, transcendent self, which, in turn, may be presented to others. Isocrates, in contrast, uses the technology of rhetorical writing to self-reflexively project a public identity.

¹²¹ Ibid., 1.36.

¹²² Ibid., 1.15.

¹²³ Poulakos and Depew, *Isocrates and Civic Education*, 11.

In so doing, he encourages attention to the performativity of rhetoric and an embrace of the constructedness of public speech. There are several implications of the differing approaches that Plato and Isocrates take for the larger project of understanding the effect of favoring speech that we consider immediate. In particular, this paired set of examples provides three crucial insights for the contours of a critical mode of civic engagement funded by rhetorical literacy: the association of immediacy with the virtues of democratic speech, the importance of decentering rhetorical agency in a democratic context, and the demand to conceal one's rhetorical mediation.

It is clear from the example of rhetoric in antiquity that the immediacy of unscripted speech is closely associated with virtue. Plato rejected the mediation of rhetoric because he considered this to be a veil of appearance that would prevent the discovery of true knowledge, which for Plato was akin to virtue. Rather than human invention, Plato sought divine inspiration for the search of absolute Truth. Democracy was an insufficient method for arriving at truth because it was prone to rhetoric. It was a democratic court, after all, that put his beloved mentor, Socrates, to death. Decisions should be made based on knowledge, and Plato believed that democracy rewards only the appearance of knowledge. Isocrates' example sharply contrasts with this pursuit of unmediated expression that purports to bring a speaker's true self closer to the audience. He offers a method that questions the assumption that less mediation is necessary for ethical communication. Instead, Isocrates presented a case for the virtue of rhetorical mediation because he saw carefully crafted moral pleas to be a central demand for a healthy civic sphere. In this way, Isocrates' case for writing was a case for democratic participation. He believed that rhetoric could help citizens voice their concerns and interests and shape their *polis*.

In addition, Plato and Isocrates offered opposing treatments of the agency of the virtuous speaker. Speech that was authorized by divine inspiration, such as Socrates' last speech in *Phaedrus*, staged its persuasive appeal upon the displacement of the agency of the speaker by the agency of its divine source. With the arrival of the mediation of rhetoric, *parrhesia* came to stand in for the claim to authority based on immediate communication. The expectation of direct access to the soul of the speaker assumes that the speaker has this access to give, and we are left with a highly romantic notion of the ideal speaker as one who has rhetorical agency and the courage to use it.

Like Plato, Isocrates employs the trope of *parrhesia*, but rather than authorizing this moral plea based on a lack of mediation, Isocrates authorizes it as a moral technique for the formation of community. Isocrates' embrace of technique locates the agency and authority of rhetoric in the social space between citizens. While Plato denies his use of rhetorical technique, Isocrates embraces it, and in so doing, opens up space for virtuous speech to be more than the disclosure of inner truth. "Technique" is not the willful dissemination of knowledge so much as an internalized and naturalized practice that only appears spontaneous after enough training. In this formulation, agency is distributed across the social field because the speaker is not the sole author of the technique being practiced, and the moral weight of speech is determined not by its correspondence to inner thoughts but its social effect because it is grounded in social learning processes. This underscores the importance of memory for Isocrates as a method for applying social intelligence to an individual's deliberation.¹²⁴

A final lesson that this pairing offers is that immediacy, understood as sincere expression, is a judgment produced through rhetorical concealment. As I have discussed,

¹²⁴ Ekaterina V. Haskins, *Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004). 46.

Plato concealed the rhetorical mediation of his philosophy by using *parrhesia*. He staged his approach to philosophy upon the project of revealing false appearances, and portrayed the Socratic dialectical method as a way to penetrate the concealment of oratory and leverage the immediacy of responsive interaction. I have argued that his was the highest form of concealment because, by producing the appearance of immediacy, he erased the conditions for rhetorical invention. The demand to conceal the work of rhetoric continues in the contemporary moment, and the case for rhetorical literacy that Isocrates made is as relevant as ever. The demand to conceal rhetorical artifice has only increased even as the technological and social conditions have made it more difficult. Literacy in the art of rhetoric, both as speaker and audience member, can help instantiate a critical attitude regarding the appearance of immediacy and the markers of virtuous democratic speech.

CHAPTER 3: THE TELEPROMPTER AND THE BULLHORN

Robert Rossen's "All the King's Men" (1949) tells the story of Willie Stark, a frank-speaking politician who takes on a corrupt political establishment. When Stark takes the stage to address a political rally for his gubernatorial run, his powerful political party bosses, standing behind him, expect that he will deliver the written speech he carries in his hand. "My friends. I have a speech here. It's a speech about what this state needs," Stark begins. A turning point occurs as he looks out at the crowd and tells them, "there's no need in my telling you what this state needs. ...No, I'm not gonna read you any speech."¹ Much to the chagrin of the party bosses seated behind him, Stark casts his speech aside and begins to tell the story of how those bosses tried to corrupt him.² "They fooled you a thousand times, just like they fooled me. But this time, I'm gonna fool somebody. I'm gonna stay in this race. I'm on my own and I'm out for blood."³

Let us consider how Stark assumes the posture of an idyllic speaker who, despite the danger of frank speech, refuses to deceive his audience with carefully prepared rhetorical artifice. This rehearsal of the cinematic cliché, found elsewhere in Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, provides entry into a constellation of issues related to modern anxieties

¹ Robert Rossen, "Willie Stark speech – 'All the Kings Men,'" *All the King's Men* (Columbia Pictures, 1949), YouTube video, 4:22, posted by "SeverEnergia," May 22, 2008, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgJC4Pu_tbo

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

in U.S. political culture concerning political speech and corresponding notions of the ideal democratic speaker.⁴ The cliché reveals a strand of the populist discourse of democratic speech—the notion that ordinary people are exploited by the rhetorical *technê* of elite politicians. It provides an image of the ideal political candidate as a renegade who bucks the party bosses who fool and mislead ordinary people. He is a candidate for the people rather than a member of the elite who flatters voters. As an ideal speaker, Stark forsakes the carefully crafted script that was to control his speech; we notice the significance of this as the camera cuts to a female audience member, who, unsure of what to make of things, says, “hey, what’s he up to?”⁵ If we imagine the fear of public speaking as stemming from feeling exposed before an audience, Willie stands stark naked without the cover of his speech script. In the imaginary of our political mythology, throwing the script away allows him to forge a direct connection with his audience through the speech that wells forth from his soul.

Two items are notable in this example. First, throwing the speech away has an effect on Stark’s *ēthos* by changing how his discourse may be particularly inviting and moving for his audience.⁶ When speech is thought to emerge unmediated from a speaker’s soul the

⁴ Jimmy Stewart’s character (Jefferson Smith) in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) demonstrates a similar articulation of unscripted speech and civic virtuousness. After Smith, a Boy’s Club leader with no desire for political leadership, discovers political corruption and graft, he accuses himself of wrongdoing. The populist hero demonstrates his virtue of sincerity most clearly in an unscripted, twenty-three hour filibuster speech that is halting and anything but eloquent. Smith’s character is driven by the desire to do right by being true to himself. He sticks out in Washington exactly because he does not try to fit in; there is no gap between who he is and who he seems to be.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hyde, “Introduction.” xiii. Later in this chapter I discuss the need for such a broad account of *ēthos*. The effect of throwing a script away is not captured in accounts of political communication and public deliberation that focus too closely on “the text” wherein meaning is reduced to content. Content analysis necessarily forgoes the powerful effect of speech

speaker comes to foreground an *ēthos* that is very different from a speaker who reads a formal speech written by bureaucrats. Returning to the metaphor of adulterated wine, the public speaker must invent an *ēthos* sufficient to persuade a sober audience. Second, the written script that Stark throws away is part of an assemblage of technologies that enable public address. Part of the effect of his throwing the script away is that it changes his relation to rhetorical artifice as a technology. “Throwing the script away” functions as an allegory that draws our attention to the materiality of technology and the dream of the sincere speaker. Attending to the materiality of rhetorical practices is an established facet of contemporary rhetorical theory and criticism, and points toward the effects of mediation.⁷ As Blair, Dickinson, and Ott explain, “the materiality of the signifier itself” is a “mode of mediation.”⁸ Such mediation, rhetorician Barry Brummett argues, “conveys the content or information in a message” while also referring to “a technology of communication plus the ways the technology is habitually used.”⁹ What I want to accomplish in this chapter is to understand more fully the processes of mediation in political speech: how is an ambivalent relationship to technology performed, and to what end?

performance, and this is particularly pronounced in the *ēthos* of a speaker who an audience regards as too scripted or as being unscripted.

⁷ As Carole Blair notes, part of the difficulty in theorizing the materiality of rhetoric is that “we lack an idiom for referencing talk, writing, or even inscribed stone as material.” “Contemporary U S Memorial Sites as Exemplars,” in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Sharon Crowley and Jack Selzer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 17. In this chapter, for example, I borrow from the idioms of design, medium theory, and technology studies in order to refer to the material effects of artifice and technological mediation.

⁸ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, “Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place,” 3.

⁹ Barry Brummett, *Reading Rhetorical Theory* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College, 2000), 8-9.

The material presence and the present absence of speech technologies affect judgments about a speaker's character because they influence a speaker's ability to forge immediacy, which is the perception of a close connection and is often taken to indicate a lack of mediating distance. Rather than subtracting mediation, effective speakers conceal their mediation (which may include avoiding certain forms of mediation). In order to render this rhetorical concealment more visible, and thus more amenable to critique, we need an account of persuasion that incorporates the *ēthos* forming effects of communication technologies. The total effect of rhetorical invention includes the material effect of a given rhetorical medium. In order to consider the paradox of rhetorical artifice (how can a speaker construct a message while concealing her craft?) we must understand the message, and its effects, beyond textual content. In rhetorical studies, this central thesis of medium theory is the canon of *elocutio* (style).¹⁰ If we reject this radical distinction between content and style, as Jasinski remarks, "we must learn how to look at, rather than through, the style or texture of a text so as to discover how it works and what it might be doing."¹¹ Our understanding of the *ēthos* that emerges from a speaker's message, to bring Marshal McLuhan's well-worn phrase into rhetorical theory, must reckon with the medium-as-message.¹² In particular, let us consider how a performed relation to technology is also a message.

While the trope of the sincere speaker is prevalent in contemporary U.S. public discourse, the clichéd act of throwing the script aside is rarely seen. Instead, speakers adopt

¹⁰ For a sound contemporary study of style, see Robert Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹¹ James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001), 537.

¹² Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 23.

other means of distancing themselves from the technology of the script. For example, President Barack Obama has been derided for his extensive use of a teleprompter to project his script beyond view and appear to be without a written script, while opponents have flaunted their non-use of the device, even showing off handwritten notes as proof of their low-tech credibility.¹³ While these examples suggest a negative view of how media technologies augment the possibility and promise of the presence of the speaking subject, it is not simply that any technology signals insincerity. Some technologies fail to trigger such suspicion or undercut the virtue of the user. Americans have developed a sophisticated lexicon of mediation in which some technologies appear to *block* immediacy in the relationship of the political speaker to the public while others seem to *facilitate* immediacy. The central distinction, I argue, is the attention to artifice. For example, one of President George W. Bush's finest rhetorical moments came on the rubble of Ground Zero, as he used a bullhorn to amplify his extemporaneous speech to rescue workers.¹⁴ One of the reasons for this positive reception, I will argue, is that "voice" draws attention to hiddenness. The bullhorn focuses audience attention on the amplification of the speaker's voice, unlike the teleprompter that draws attention to the presence of a written script. It is the interplay of the teleprompter and the bullhorn through their differential form and cultural reception that I use to organize this chapter. In what follows, I take political campaigns focusing on the U.S. presidency as a context of public deliberation. I argue that the effects of contemporary U.S.

¹³ Not all mention of Obama's speech technology are technological slurs—his device made headlines in India because it was the first time such an instrument was used in the Central Hall of India's Parliament. "Teleprompter to Make its Debut in Parliament When Obama Speaks," *DNA India*, October 22, 2010.

¹⁴ As a style of delivery, "extemporaneous" speeches may or may not include written notes.

political speech acts are governed, in part, by the way that audiences makes sense of the technological mediation of speech.

I will first discuss the crisis of *ēthos* for political speech arguing that effective speech must conceal its artifice while balancing several stylistic demands. I propose that attention to technological artifice is a productive way to analyze the differential reception of politicians' speeches. To illustrate what I term "high-tech style," I turn to the 2012 presidential election. Criticism of Governor Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama often attended to the artifice of their speech. I use discourse concerning Obama's teleprompter to indicate a broader denigration of technological mediation and the dream of unmediated communication. Finally, I illustrate low-tech style in speeches in which there is little or no attention to artifice. I focus on President George W. Bush's speeches and the myth of unmediated speech in the use of the bullhorn as an allegorical tool to indicate the tendency for some technologies to more successfully allow a speaker to conceal her or his rhetorical craft.

Technological Styles and Techniques of Concealment

Part of the cultural milieu of contemporary public deliberation is the suspicion of speech that repeats the Greeks' problem with artifice. In the context of the 2012 presidential election, conservatives poked fun at Barack Obama's use of the teleprompter, while liberals lambasted Governor Mitt Romney for being out of touch and robotic. Each of these speakers exhibits a unique style with differential effects, but the common thread that underwrites the aforementioned critiques is that judgments of speakers are based, in part, on attention to artifice. This may take the form of disquiet regarding the hidden or visible written script as indicating artifice and its concealment. In that case, the material technology refers to mediation as a subset of artifice. In other cases, it is not the materiality of a device but the

failure of a technique to remain concealed that reminds an audience that the speaker is working to persuade them. Here rhetorical technique and communication technology are brought together as technological artifice. We might consider technique and technology to be the software and hardware of persuasion, to borrow a way of conceptualizing the relation of technique and technology from philosopher of technology Val Dusek.¹⁵ Considering rhetorical artifice as technology, we can perceive a performed relation to technological hardware given the traditional conception of technology as mechanical device.¹⁶ Technique as “software” follows Jacques Ellul’s conceptualization of technology as patterns of rule-following behavior.¹⁷ I combine these notions in order to draw attention to rhetoric as a means for understanding the relation of technology and technique in communication. A particular communication technology, such as the teleprompter or the bullhorn, is of little use without technique, and technique cannot be fully understood outside of the technological form by which it functions.

In such an approach, both software and hardware—technique as practice and technology as material tool—are artifice that speakers work to conceal. In place of suspicious persuasion, effective political campaigns substitute immediacy as a promise of sincerity. In this way, immediacy is not a natural disposition but a political strategy. There is a constellation of terms used when attention is paid to how a speaker’s delivery indicates a lack of immediacy and disquiet regarding his or her character: plastic, wooden, robotic, and so on. It is noteworthy that these terms draw attention to artifice, either in the machinery of the

¹⁵ Val Dusek, *Philosophy of Technology* (Malden, MA: Oxford Blackwell, 2006), 31-32.

¹⁶ Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963).

¹⁷ Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Knopf, 1964).

robot or in the sense that plastic and wood are materials that one uses to construct objects. In contrast to a natural human essence, these terms highlight candidates' failed attempts at constructing their appearance: unlike the ordinary person who speaks with words that naturally spring from their soul, this person bears the marks of design. Rather than an unmediated or direct connection between the speaker and the audience, as in the way that the speech errors of President Bush were taken to reveal a speaker who offered audiences immediacy, these figures reveal a speaker who is unnatural and relies upon technology to mediate their speech.

The demand to conceal rhetorical technique is perhaps best seen at the point of failure—when artifice is the center of the audience's attention. The political stakes of failing to appear ordinary are illustrated by a widely panned 2009 speech by Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal. Providing the Republican response to Obama's budget speech, Jindal represented a rising star in the Republican Party.¹⁸ The morning after his speech, conservative commentators joined mainstream accounts of the speech as “wooden” and “animatronic.”¹⁹ Writing in the *Washington Post*, Kathleen Parker locates the problem of delivery in terms of dissonance between the speaker and his speech, “Jindal did not write his own speech Tuesday, and he's wearing a choke collar... Jindal seems to be handicapped by handlers.”²⁰ Commenting on Jindal's failed artifice, acting coach Howard Fine observed, “In trying to sound human, he sounds fake. In attempting to convey everydayness, he comes across as an

¹⁸ David Usborne, “The Right Stuff?,” *The Independent (London)*, February 28, 2009.

¹⁹ Ibid.; “Meme of the Week: Kenneth the Page,” *Toronto Star*, February 28, 2009; Andrew Ward, “Republicans' Rising Star Fails to Shine,” *Financial Times*, February 25, 2009; Shaila Dewan, “Governor Jindal, Rising G.O.P. Star, Plummets After Speech,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2009.

²⁰ Kathleen Parker, “A Better Bobby Jindal,” *Washington Post*, March 1, 2009.

extraterrestrial.”²¹ These commentaries suggest that oratory fails when an audience notices the effort put into constructing an appearance. Jindal failed in this speech because he failed to conceal his technology of speech.

In contrast, President Bill Clinton provides an excellent example of how the concealment of rhetorical techniques is associated with virtues of speech. Clinton has a reputation as a skillful speaker both in face-to-face settings and with scripted speeches when he uses a teleprompter.²² Before conservatives used the teleprompter as a synecdoche for more general claims against Obama's character, the electronic device was rarely the subject of news, staying literally and figuratively out of view, with the exception of the most famous example of a snafu with a teleprompter. President Clinton already had a reputation as a skilled orator when he took the stage for his 1993 address to the joint session of Congress to promote his health care reform bill. Unbeknownst to the president, the wrong speech had been loaded into the teleprompter. While the correct tape was loaded, he spoke extemporaneously for several minutes.²³ He was so familiar with his speech and skilled at

²¹ Ibid. Acting coach Howard Fine, founder of the Howard Fine Acting Studio, explained what caused Jindal's speech to be such a disaster. Regardless of who writes a particular speech, he notes that Obama connects what he is saying to his real emotions while he surmises that Jindal was focused on coming across a particular way rather than connecting what he was saying to his emotions. His resulting delivery was too homogeneous—the epitome of “robotic.” Howard Fine, “What Caused Bobby Jindal's Speech to Be a Disaster?,” *Huffington Post* (blog), February 26, 2009.

²² Nathaniel Stein, “Conversations With a Teleprompter,” *New Yorker Online*, September 7, 2012.

²³ Clinton was very familiar with his remarks because, as was often the case, he was closely involved in several drafts of the speech. see Paul Begala, “Flying Solo,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/clinton/anecdotes/#5>; Stein, “Conversations With a Teleprompter.”

speaking without a script that no one in his audience knew that the wrong speech was being projected.

Even when the correct speech is loaded into his teleprompter, Clinton displays great extemporaneous skill. He gave a celebrated speech at the 2012 Democratic National Convention that made frequent deviations from the projected script. As Nathaniel Stein suggested in the *New Yorker*, the drastic difference between Clinton's prepared script and delivered remarks suggests that he injects spontaneous or extemporaneous remarks into his prepared remarks. Clinton adds many colloquial expressions such as “wait a minute” and “let's just think about it,” and these phrases give a spontaneous feel to a prepared speech.²⁴

However, what passes as natural is the result of training in specific techniques. In the case of Clinton, the transformation is startling. People often forget that Bill Clinton is thought to have delivered “one of the worst speeches of all time” at the Democratic convention in 1988.²⁵ His speech went far overtime, and his delivery was not very engaging. At the end, when he said, “in closing,” the crowd cheered.²⁶ He went on *The Tonight Show with Johnny*

²⁴ As Stein points out, Clinton took lists provided by the teleprompter and inserted parallel structure. Knowing that the list was coming, he simplified that syntax to “it will” three times. He has a tendency to rephrase the script because he is comfortable that he will get the message across. When the teleprompter read, “The Republicans call it 'Obamacare' and say it's a government takeover of health care that they'll repeal,” Clinton knows the general ideas he needs to get across, and says, “The Republicans call it, derisively, “Obamacare.” They say it's a government takeover of health care, a disaster, and that if we'll just elect them they'll repeal it.” Stein, “Conversations With a Teleprompter.”

²⁵ Usborne, “The Right Stuff?.” Clinton spoke far longer than expected, and the crowd was very restless. It is possible they were booing him, though it is also possible that they were chanting “Duke,” which was Michael Dukakis's nickname, since he was to speak next.

²⁶ Bill Clinton, “Governor Bill Clinton Endorsing Mike Dukakis at the 1988 DNC,” YouTube video, 33:37, posted by “skcin7,” September 5, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvTRvTII40o>

Carson to play the saxophone, laugh off the event, and recover his image.²⁷ Between his 1988 debacle and his rise to the presidency in 1992, Clinton worked hard to train in the skills of public speaking. In large part this work was with Michael Sheehan, a well-known media trainer, who has worked with the Clintons, Biden, and Obama, to name a few of his most prominent clients.²⁸ Beyond his help with the use of the teleprompter, Sheehan teaches speaking techniques for extemporaneous style. For example, he uses the “Arthur Murray pattern.”²⁹ This technique for debate answers is three-fold: describe the situation, explain how it will be worse under your opponent’s tenure, and then describe how it will be better under your tenure. Sheehan worked extensively with Clinton, and became a very trusted member of his inner circle.³⁰ In this way, Clinton exemplifies how natural speech talent can be the result of effectively concealing rhetorical artifice. He succeeds because we do not notice his training in the techniques of oratory.

Crisis of *Ēthos*

The widespread suspicion of political speech poses a crisis of *ēthos* for orators in the contemporary mass-mediated age where campaigns must balance message clarity with the

²⁷ Barak Goodman, “Clinton’s Carson Appearance,” in *Clinton* (2012).

²⁸ John Heilemann, “Geithner’s Guru: The Turnaround Artist Who Made the Treasury Secretary Telegenic,” *New Yorker*, April 5, 2009; Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003). He is known to have a room in the basement of the Democratic Convention hall where he helps polish speakers before they go on. He is said to have helped Obama before his high profile national debut at the 2004 convention.

²⁹ John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, *Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the Race of a Lifetime* (New York: Harper, 2010).

³⁰ Clinton speechwriter Michael Waldman writes that on the day of his 1994 State of the Union address, “Clinton wanted to rehearse quietly with Michael Sheehan and me.” Michael Waldman, *POTUS Speaks: Finding the Words that Defined the Clinton Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

diversity of audience interests and perspectives. In the context of such suspicion, *logos* and *pathos*, as modes of persuasion, are preempted by suspicion regarding the speaker, their motivations, and their ethical commitments. *Ēthos* is a problem for political campaigns because it requires rhetorical artifice, but this artifice must be concealed in order to be effective. In addition, the construction of *ēthos* must not only appeal to voters; it must also resonate with candidates, their reputations, and what they are able to perform while seeming authentic (which is to say seeming not to be performing). Finally, *ēthos* poses a challenge of timeliness (*kairos*) because the kind of *ēthos* demanded changes as social and cultural conditions change. In terms of the *ēthos* of technology, different media technologies are read differently at different times and in different situations. Crafting an effective appeal requires constructing a suitable *ēthos* that translates to several culturally specific stylistic demands placed on orators. In this section, I will delineate the contemporary demands to appear ordinary and unscripted.

In the case of political campaign communication scholarship, functional analysis of message content is predominant, and fails to capture the full persuasive effect because “message” is flattened to content.³¹ A consequence is that the rhetorical style and

³¹ A functional approach to political oratory understands the effect of messages as stemming from content that is strategically designed to address electoral exigencies via target audiences. Benoit's functional theory assumes that political messages are either about policy issues or character image. As a result, messages pertain to “governmental action (past, current, or future) and problems amenable to governmental action” and “characteristics, traits, abilities, or attributes of the candidates.” *Communication in Political Campaigns* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 44. This is in contrast to the limited effects model that downplays the effect of messages assuming that current events, party identification, and money are far more significant influences on voter behavior. See *ibid.*, 3-18. Both of these accounts rely on too narrow an understanding of rhetorical effectivity.

According to Benoit, political party affiliation, policy positions, and the perceived character of a candidate are all important factors in crafting voter beliefs, but they receive this information, in large part, through campaign messages. *Ibid.*, 27-31. Benoit details how

technological mediation that help to enable concealment are rendered as external supplements to meaning.³² When media are considered in political communication literature, accounts tend to have a narrow focus on the function of technological devices and the effect of channel on message reception. For example, William Benoit's functional theory of campaign discourse considers the role of the medium, but his attention is primarily focused on how media, as channels, provide different information to voters.³³ Similarly, Judith Trent and Robert Friedenberg claim that technology has provided an "obvious transformation in political campaigns," but they also focus on different technologies as channels, such as radio, television, or twitter, that make certain messages possible and other messages impossible.³⁴ For example, when they consider the Internet, it is primarily through a content analysis of campaign websites.³⁵ In addition to the role of technology as channel, we should consider the message of the media itself as critical to persuasive effect. In the examples of the

campaign messages are not directly received and are frequently filtered through other voters and through mass mediated channels. As a result, he believes that the best account of political campaign discourse accounts for the instrumental role of communication. He argues that distinguishing oneself from one's opponents is a critical component of campaigning because elections are comparative decisions. A speaker is able to establish herself as the preferable choice by acclaiming herself, attacking an opponent, or defending herself. Ibid., 36. But I return to the example of a speaker who is thought to be off-script. How are we to account for this effect? If "message" is to refer comprehensively to the information that affects voter decisions, then it should not be reduced to the content of an utterance. If we insist on mediation as a critical element of persuasive effect, then the *ēthos* of the speaker produced in tandem with the materiality of the technology being employed is a crucial facet for understanding how voters make sense of a message.

³² There is a tendency to think that meaning resides in a text and that form or style is ornamentation external to meaning. Lanham, *Analyzing Prose*.

³³ Benoit, *Communication in Political Campaigns*, 64.

³⁴ Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg, *Political Campaign Communication* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). 13.

³⁵ Ibid., 399-408.

teleprompter and the bullhorn mentioned above, part of the effect relates to how each technology draws or deflects attention to the artifice of speech. While the teleprompter draws attention to its mediation of the script, the bullhorn signifies the speaker's voice rather than its own form. This contributes to the *ethos* of a speaker because we have been habituated to associate moral virtue with the display of voice. In this way, technology has a persuasive effect not only because of what messages it enables but also because of how it guides audience attention to the entire media environment.

When speech is thought to emerge unmediated from a speaker's soul the speaker comes to inhabit a discursive space very different from a speaker who reads a formal speech written by bureaucrats. Even if Willie Stark proceeds with a memorized speech using a microphone to project his voice, perceptions of his relation to the audience have changed once he throws his script aside. The content of the message that follows might in fact be the same as what was written, but the boundary between speaker and audience is understood differently and influences the persuasive effect of speech.

All too often, the *ethos* of the speaker is considered to extend solely from the content of speech not taking into account the effects of the mediation of speech for an audience. This second sense of *ethos* helps to explain how the materiality of media technologies effects persuasion in public deliberation. The materiality of media is part of the dwelling place that a speaker inhabits. Specifically, audience attention to the artifice of speech—the staging, scripting, and so on—influences the rhetorical style enacted. From this perspective, technologies and speakers are part of a complex pattern of communication from which *ethos* emerges. As such, the contribution of technology to the *ethos* associated with the speaker is both formal and symbolic: there is persuasive effect from the formal qualities of the

technology itself and from what the technology signifies in a given cultural formation. For example, the distinction between the *ethos* of the teleprompter and the bullhorn extends both from the devices themselves as well as their cultural significations.

An account of rhetorical style can aid in understanding the relation of *ethos* and technology. Let us return to the earliest typology of rhetorical style in which classical rhetorical treatises regularly distinguish levels of style: plain, middle, and grand. These distinctions concern diction, linguistic form, and word choice.³⁶ I argue that this “levels” aspect of style reflects audience attention to artifice corresponding to a quantity: low, medium, and high. As recurring patterns of communication, high-tech and low-tech styles are particular alignments of signs and situations, texts and acts, behaviors and places, and their effect depends upon both rhetorical invention and audiences’ aesthetic reactions.³⁷ Each style reflects audience attention to mediation as artifice (as presence or as present absence) and as styles; contextual rules and cultural conventions govern what practices are considered appropriate.

Ordinary Ethos

The prevailing *ethos* demand for politicians today reflects a populist celebration of ordinary people and their attendant use of ordinary language. By ordinary person, I mean to evoke the agent of Americana, the political *mythos* of the middle class folk hero of the

³⁶ This distinction is originally seen in the work of Aristotle’s pupil, Theophrastus. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, “Anonymous,” 241. See also *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ed. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4.8; Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); George Alexander Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition From Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

³⁷ My definition of style follows Hariman and is intended to be expansive. *Political Style*, 187.

American Dream who employs virtuous behavior even while elite forces exploit her or him (usually him). One means of identifying the virtuous ordinary person is through the use of ordinary language (literal as opposed to figural).³⁸ Insofar as a person is thought to be ordinary because of his or her use of ordinary language, he or she has been endowed through public judgment with the virtue of literal speech; she is sincere: she says exactly what she means as opposed to using figural speech designed not “simply” to convey her thoughts but to have a particular effect. But all speech is figural, so the virtue of ordinary speech functions as an invisibility cloak for the rhetoric of ordinariness. Concerted audience attention to the presence of artifice defines the ordinary; ordinary language is that which conceals the turn from literal to figural. Aristotle suggested that democratic settings called for a blending of ordinary and lofty words so the speaker could impress the audience while still not sounding artificial.³⁹

Ordinary speech requires the concealment of rhetorical mediation, not its absence. Perhaps one of the best examples of a president leveraging the *ethos* of ordinary speech practices is the Fireside Chats of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Designed to renew consumer confidence in the banking system, these talks focused on ordinary, nontechnical language and avoided stylistic ornamentation. FDR fostered a sense of intimacy because he was successful at speaking in a personal style to his public audience as they sat in their living

³⁸ In formal literary theories, ordinary language is understood to contrast with poetic language because it is literal. Contemporary thought has more commonly rejected this distinction and found all language to be figural. Stanley Fish, “How Ordinary Is Ordinary Language?,” *New Literary History* 5, no. 1 (1973); Lundberg, *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric*.

³⁹ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 3.1-4.

rooms.⁴⁰ Despite the fact that they were mediated through radio waves, the Fireside Chats were thought of as direct. FDR may be credited with the virtue of direct address and thought of as “chatting,” but the speeches were certainly not unscripted. As Daniel Boorstin explains,

FDR was a man of great warmth, natural spontaneity, and simple eloquence, and his public utterances reached the citizen with a new intimacy. Yet, paradoxically, it was under his administrations that statements by the president attained a new subtlety and a new calculatedness. On his production team, in addition to newspapermen, there were poets, playwrights, and a regular corps of speech writers. Far from detracting from his effectiveness, this collaborative system for producing the impression of personal frankness and spontaneity provided an additional subject of news worthy interest.⁴¹

It was at this time that journalists began reflecting on joint authorship in presidential speeches, wondering who was behind a particular phrase, and conjecturing about how much the president contributed to the speech. Even using the high-tech radio, FDR achieved a low-tech *ethos* because his audiences’ attention was not at the level of artifice.

Roosevelt was so successful at creating the perception of immediacy with the American people that the Fireside Chat became a trope signifying directness between president and the people. Shortly after taking office, President Jimmy Carter delivered what he called a “Fireside Chat” in order to “keep in close touch with the people of our country.”⁴² And when President Obama, early in his first term, sat down with Jay Leno on “The Tonight

⁴⁰ Amos Kiewe, *FDR's First Fireside Chat: Public Confidence and the Banking Crisis* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 93.

⁴¹ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 21.

⁴² Jimmy Carter, “Report To the American People - Remarks From the White House Library,” (The American Presidency Project, February 2, 1977), para. 1; Edward Walsh, “1st Carter Fireside Chat Scheduled for Wednesday,” *Washington Post*, January 28, 1977.

Show,” the *New York Times* referred to it as “just a couple of average Joes” having a “fireside chat for the flat-screen age.”⁴³

Staging the Unscripted

FDR may have achieved the mantle of ordinary speech through a series of scripted addresses. However, as I suggested at the outset of this section, the contemporary crisis of *ethos* is a demand of unmediated speech, and ordinary speech today is articulated with the present absence of scripted control. While audiences are uncomfortable with speech that is too controlled by the communication technology of the script, speech that is thought to be unscripted is often treated as a keystone for judging the virtue of a speaker. In the face of political polarization and suspicion regarding the motivations of political leaders, “unscripted speech” is figured as an escape route from self-interested rhetorical agents. As the previous chapter demonstrates, the notion that some speech provides a window to the soul of the speaker is nothing new.

While unscripted speech can benefit orators by lending them the virtue of frank speech (*parrhesia*), it can also be dangerous. In the realm of politics, consider the example of the well-worn category of speech captured by the “hot” microphone. This is speech recorded when speakers do not know that the microphone is functioning. Similar to speech errors, these moments are thought to be windows into the candidate. By speech errors I mean flubs, *faux pas*, elisions, mispronunciations, Freudian slips, stumbles, and so on. In short, speech errors in campaigns are off-message; they are messages that go against the desired issue and image framing of a campaign.

⁴³ Alessandra Stanley, “Just a Couple of Average Joes Having a Fireside Chat,” *New York Times*, March 21, 2011.

Unscripted speech poses a tension that campaigns must manage; it is both high risk and high reward. Without the control of a script to keep a candidate “on” message, the careful work of planning a persuasive campaign can be ruined. Within the 2012 Republican nomination contest, the Mitt Romney campaign used a perceived lack of control to undercut the *ethos* of former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich. Romney surrogates, Former Missouri Senator Jim Talent and New Hampshire Governor John Sununu, questioned whether Gingrich could be trusted as Commander-in-Chief. Sununu stressed that Gingrich's tendency to make “off-the-cuff” remarks is reflective of his “off-the-cuff thinking.”⁴⁴ However, being perceived as too scripted can be a negative message itself. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, known for his unscripted, frank speech style, argues that such moments are crucial for the successful politician, “if you avoid those unscripted moments, I don’t think the American people will trust their instincts about whether you would make a good president or not.”⁴⁵ While the danger of failure is high, the demand for unscripted moments cannot be ignored. Contemporary U.S. audiences of political discourse flock to political debates for the possibility of unscripted moments and drool over politicians' flubs and gaffes for what they might reveal about the speaker. Errors of speech provide an especially powerful persuasive effect because they are unscripted speech that is also thought to evade concealment—they escape control and promise to reveal the true intentions of the

⁴⁴ “Romney Surrogates: Gingrich Not Fit To Be Commander-in-Chief,” *TPM Livewire* (blog), Talkingpoints Memo, December 8, 2011, <http://livewire.talkingpointsmemo.com/entry/romney-surrogates-gingrich-not-fit-to-be-commander>.

⁴⁵ Gabriella Schwarz, “Christie: I Was Not Criticizing Palin,” *Political Ticker* (blog), CNN.com, January 16, 2011, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/01/16/christie-i-was-not-criticizing-palin/>

speaker. In the case of the “hot mic” (private comments recorded and made public), the lack of control concerns who receives the message, and in the case of speech flubs, the lack of control refers to what is said.

The traditional interpretation of the role that flubs play in politics is distraction. Some work has extended this to reading attention to flubs as indicative of a broader ritual wherein audiences watch for signs of humility as a politician recovers from a mistake.⁴⁶ In addition to this role, I argue that flubs point audience attention to the materiality or immateriality of the script. I take President George W. Bush as exemplar of how the flub can function as an organizing symbol for a speaker’s *ethos*. Before and during his presidency, liberals loved to mock him and draw attention to his poor speech. Yet, rather than showing the presence of artifice, his speech errors often suggested a present absence of strategic control, and a large portion of Americans reported that Bush’s verbal blunders lent an authenticity to his speech lacking in other politicians.⁴⁷ Bush’s rhetorical reputation came to reflect a characterological duality; he was seen as earnest but lacking intelligence. Bush’s *ethos* carved out a persuasive space precisely because it did not seem to carve out persuasive space for itself.

⁴⁶ W. Lance Bennett argues that more than a distraction from policy deliberation, attention to flubs indicates a degradation ritual that is central to American politics. As degradation ritual, flubs and how they are responded to signal how an individual’s public persona fits into an existing social system and, if there is a problem, shows how the person is able to repair the breach indicating a mastery of their social role. “Assessing Presidential Character: Degradation Rituals In Political Campaigns,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 67, no. 3 (1981): 313, 310. Bennett understands gaffes to function in two ways. First, a gaffe is a campaign issue when it can be defined in terms of general norms of leadership and democracy. Second, a gaffe may evolve and the event will reflect on practical judgments of the candidate. *Ibid.*, 312. He argues that the argument against using flubs to better understand candidates tends to romance the electoral process imagining that without such base fixations, candidates would be freer to espouse policy positions for public deliberation. *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Michael Erard, *Um—Slips, Stumbles, and Verbal Blunders, and What They Mean* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 12.

Thus, while speech mistakes refer audiences to a speaker's character, some flubs matter much less or are taken to refer to positive traits such as a speaker who is willing to employ frank speech (*parrhesia*) via uncontrolled speech. In such a case, communication technology is thought to be materially absent. However, it is possible for a flub to point an audience to the material presence of a script. In the realm of theatre, it is the difference between a flub taken to be accidental and the stammering characters made famous by playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Samuel Beckett, and Edward Albee. If it is taken to be an accident, the flub refers an audience to the materiality of a script; if it is taken to be the natural speech practice of the character, it can provide verisimilitude to the performance.⁴⁸ The stammering of King George VI in *The King's Speech* was consistent with the character's persona, but cinematic blooper reels provide sufficient examples of flubs that are dissonant with a character and cause a scene to break down.⁴⁹

The priority placed on unscripted speech is known to campaigns, as is the need for control. As a result, they stage elaborately planned events that are designed to appear spontaneous.⁵⁰ In his 1961 book *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, Daniel Boorstin writes about the use of staging in politics. He refers to pseudo-events as "the new kind of synthetic novelty which has flooded our experience."⁵¹ One of the central characteristics of a pseudo-event is that it is *not* spontaneous, "but comes about because

⁴⁸ This is the epitome of the realist movement in twentieth century theatre, especially in the work of Russian Constantin Stanislavski. Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: His Life and Art*, 1999.

⁴⁹ Tom Hooper, *The King's Speech* (2010).

⁵⁰ Schill, *Stagecraft and Statecraft*.

⁵¹ Boorstin, *The Image*, 9.

someone has planned, planted, or incited.”⁵² In his book, *Stagecraft and Statecraft*, Dan Schill writes that seemingly spontaneous events are “scripted to look unplanned and spur-of-the-moment.”⁵³ This was a strategy deployed by Richard Nixon whose advance men were reminded to always have spontaneous stops planned along the motorcade route.⁵⁴

The pretense of spontaneity offers carefully crafted visual demonstrations of a candidate’s ability to relate to ordinary people. These events are designed around the central focus of portraying the candidate as comfortable with unmediated communication. The candidate hopping off the campaign bus and ducking into a local pizza shop, making an unplanned visit to a local diner, and chatting with locals during a campaign commercial are events staged to appear spontaneous and unscripted. A recurring example of this kind of event is the established practice of political campaigns to bring along members of the traveling press corps for the candidate’s happy hour excursions. The “pub” as public house is home to spontaneous conversation and awful pickup lines. As a campaign setting, candidates use the pub to claim an ability to perform in an ordinary context of immediacy.⁵⁵ The “beer test” asks one to imagine having an informal conversation with a given politician. This is a question of immediacy because it tests the comfort of closeness and the pleasure of

⁵² Ibid., 11.

⁵³ Schill, *Stagecraft and Statecraft*, 22.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Scott Horsley, “Obama Polishes His 'Regular Guy' Image With Beer,” *All Things Considered*, NPR, <http://www.npr.org/2012/09/15/161200943/obama-polishes-his-regular-guy-image-with-beer>. Pictures showing the candidate drinking beer (responsibly) are captioned with the politician’s tap choice—domestic to be sure. Hillary Clinton took this one step further during the end of the 2008 Democratic primary when she ordered her beer with a shot of Jack Daniels. As with most of the machinations of campaign communication, these maneuvers are not totally invisible as indicated by the above NPR headline.

conversation.⁵⁶ Richard Nixon recognized George H. W. Bush's difficulty in this regard and told a biographer, "it's not that he doesn't like people; it's just that he's not very comfortable out there on the stump trying to connect with them. He tries too hard to be one of them, eating pork rinds and the rest, but he is not one of them, and it comes across. He's better off just being himself."⁵⁷

The Script and High-Tech Speech

What I term a "high-tech *ethos*" is principally characterized by audience attention to the artifice of political speech. Like the rafters and support beams of a building, *ethos* serves an architectural function for rhetoric and makes such a metaphor especially fitting. This is not the same as any appearance of cutting-edge technology in a campaign. Such new technologies do not always focus attention on the artifice of a campaign and may work to assist in the formation of an effective *ethos* (e.g., when new technologies help to make a campaign seem fresh and contemporary).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Sam Kass, The White House Blog, September 01, 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/09/01/ale-chief-white-house-beer-recipe>. In part, "raising a lot of frosty mugs on the campaign trail" helped Obama draw a contrast to Mitt Romney, who, as an observant Mormon, did not drink any alcoholic beverages. The Obama campaign went a step further than the usual photo-op and handed out samples of homebrew beer made in the Obama White House, and released the recipe on the White House website. This is a far cry from dabbling in the art of winemaking. The class distinction of beer and wine is well established; to have happy hour at a wine bar would insinuate the candidate into the elite.

⁵⁷ Monica Crowley, *Nixon Off the Record* (New York: Random House, 1996), 46.

⁵⁸ As Trent and Friedenberg document, there is a long history to this in U.S. presidential campaigns. Ronald Reagan used vinyl records in 1968 to bring his voice into voter's living rooms. Jimmy Carter had a leg up on Gerald Ford in 1980 when he used the rather new technology of telephone conferencing to allow voters in Iowa and New Hampshire to speak with him. Ronald Reagan used satellite transmissions in 1984, and in 1988 many candidates used videotape recordings to deliver messages to voters. *Political Campaign Communication*, 12.

As I have argued, audience attention to artifice in the realm of political speech can be debilitating to an orator. The example of Mitt Romney will help illustrate the limit case of the overly controlled, robotic speaker wherein unwanted attention to the artifice of speech undercuts *ethos*. Writing in the *Atlantic*, Brian Fung explains Romney's style problem in technological terms. "Mitt Romney is the storybook presidential candidate," Fung observes, "he's successful, good-looking and a family man, to boot. Yet one of this political season's enduring puzzles has been the former governor's consistent inability to bond with voters."⁵⁹ The explanation Fung provides for this puzzle is Romney's robotic persona; just as "people are repulsed and disturbed by automatons that mimic humans closely but imperfectly, Romney turns voters off despite looking" the part.⁶⁰ In the field of robotics, this unsettling effect is known as the "uncanny valley" and is observed when people respond negatively to an object that has close-but-not-quite human properties such as a prosthetic limb or a humanoid robot.⁶¹ Writer Alex Pareene draws on a set of related mechanical tropes when describing Romney's not-quite-human style,

He seems incapable of natural conversation and frequently uncomfortable in his own skin. He's simultaneously dorkily earnest and ingratiatingly insincere. He suggests a brilliantly designed politician android with an operating system still clearly in beta.... All video of him attempting to interact with normal humans is cringe-inducing, as a cursory YouTube search quickly demonstrates.⁶²

⁵⁹ Brian Fung, "The Uncanny Valley: What Robot Theory Tells Us About Mitt Romney," *The Atlantic*, January 31, 2012.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 1.

⁶¹ Dolar situates a similar sense of the uncanny in terms of technologies of voice. *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 7.

⁶² Alex Pareene, *The Rude Guide To Mitt*, e-book (Salon Media Group, 2012).

Indeed, examples of Romney being cited as awkward, inauthentic, weird, and so on abound.⁶³ Highlighting Romney's "weirdness factor" was an early strategy of the Obama campaign,⁶⁴ but they backed away from overtly forwarding this strategy after it was suggested that "weird" was a dog whistle for Romney's Mormon faith. However, Romney's unnatural style was a persistent theme that dogged him. Humorous websites such as "Romney Is A Robot" (<http://mittromneyisarobot.tumblr.com>) and "Awkward Romney" (<http://awkwardmittromney.tumblr.com>) helped to ensure the near-constant and instant production of new memes when he said anything odd or unusual.⁶⁵ *Washington Post* columnist Dana Milbank notes Romney's struggle to perform, "in casual moments, such as Tuesday morning's retail politics in New Hampshire, his weirdness comes through—equal parts 'Leave It to Beaver' corniness and social awkwardness."⁶⁶

Paying attention to Romney on the campaign trail is uncanny because what first appears as an ideal form of politician melts away into a technologically dystopic horror. Akin to the partially melted face of the Terminator, Romney is a juxtaposition of the nonhuman and the human; being robotic is a terminal case of an unordinary dependence on technology concretized as an epithet against Governor Mitt Romney. Romney's problem is that rather

⁶³ See Meghan Neal, "Mitt Romney's Awkward Exchanges With Humans," *HuffPolitics* (blog), Huffingtonpost.com, November 23, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/23/mitt-romneys-awkward-exch_n_1028663.html.

⁶⁴ "Weirdness factor" was a term used by an unnamed Obama campaign advisor. Ben Smith and Jonathan Martin, "Obama Plan: Destroy Romney," *2012 LIVE* (Blog), Politico.com, August 9, 2011, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0811/60921.html>.

⁶⁵ These were paid for by the anti-Republican Party group, Political Action Committee American Bridge 21st Century.

⁶⁶ Dana Milbank, "A Day Of Awkwardness With Mitt Romney," *Washington Post*, June 14, 2011.

than embrace his artificialness he tries to blend in but fails; and thus sticks out all the more. His behavior and language seem artificial in his attempt to seem natural. In the next section, I will focus on the teleprompter to illustrate how certain technological devices can exacerbate this effect.

Technological Form

Akin to the artificial speech of a robot, the battle to conceal and reveal artifice is staged beneath the slender stand of the teleprompter's screen. In order to draw attention to the device, someone even went so far as to create a blog written from the perspective of the Teleprompter of the United States (<http://baracksteleprompter.blogspot.com>). Writing in Fort Wayne's *News Sentinel*, columnist Will Clark pays similar attention to the device lamenting Obama's use of the technology during his 2011 State of the Union Address: "What I long for is a president who speaks to us, like we were in the room with him. FDR did it in his fireside chats. But that was radio."⁶⁷ Clark wonders what would happen if the U.S. President addressed the world "with just his speech in front of him, or maybe just his notes, so the words would come straight from his heart, not via the teleprompter?"⁶⁸ By invoking the example of FDR, Clark envisions a president who forges an immediate connection with the audience. As I have already illustrated, Clark's technical critique is not an isolated response to Obama—who critics renamed the "Teleprompter-in-Chief."⁶⁹ These comments concern the rhetorical dwelling place of Obama's speech suggesting that his comments should be

⁶⁷ Will Clark, "Speech Not As Effective As it Might Have Been Without Teleprompter," *News Sentinel*, February 3, 2011.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ This term is a derogatory meme that emerged during Obama's first presidential race.

materialized differently. In order to understand how the teleprompter technologically affects *ethos*, we will consider its form and cultural signification in turn.

As a technological form, the teleprompter is a display device that projects a visual copy of a manuscript in view of a speaker. The device was originally invented for actors as they transitioned from radio to television but quickly found its way into the realm of political speech. However, it was not immediately adopted in a widespread fashion.⁷⁰ Because it works through visual display, the teleprompter is a mnemonic device that uses the script itself to cue the speaker. Another person follows along off stage, scrolling the projected script in pace and rhythm with the speaker. A good prompter breathes along with the speaker and can help control a novice speaker's pace.⁷¹ As Republican strategist and former aide to George W. Bush, Bradley Blakeman explains, teleprompters are usually employed for televised events because in a “‘tight shot’ it looks like you are talking without the use of notes and gives a much better appearance. That, of course, is true until the camera pulls back

⁷⁰ An electrical engineer, an actor, and a producer teamed up to make the device for a 1950 soap opera, *The First Hundred*. The transition from radio to television meant that actors needed to memorize their lines as they would on the stage. The actor, Fred Barton, recognized that the rise of television, especially serial dramas such as the soap operas he was cast in, put actors under enormous pressure to memorize their lines in short spans of time. Because of the costs of time and money for extraneous retakes due to flubbed lines Barton worked with Hubert Schlafly Jr., an engineer with 20th Century Fox, to design a scrolling screen that would allow actors to maintain eye contact with the camera while seeing their script. The teleprompter's successful adoption in 1950s shows such as *I Love Lucy* ensured its continued use. Cory Franklin, “Uh, Uh, Oh Jeez: Let's Go To The Teleprompter,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 15, 2012.

⁷¹ Michael Schulman, “Rolling Rhetoric,” *The New Yorker*, September 3, 2012. Schulman tells the story of Steve Carofalo, who, as general manager of QTV, regularly controls the teleprompters of major politicians. According to Carofalo, there is an intimate relationship between the teleprompter operator and the speaker. He tells the story of Sarah Palin forming a bond with her own private prompter who, to his chagrin, prompted her speech during the 2008 convention. The prompter advanced the speech too quickly and Palin lost her place several times with a few awkward pauses.

and the audience can see the prompter ‘paddles’ on either side of the podium.”⁷² In the case of televised speeches, the speaker is able to look into the camera because the teleprompter’s display can be reflected in front of the camera’s lens. The device keeps a speaker’s face from being buried in a podium while reading, but its use still prevents the higher level of eye contact possible in less scripted modes of speech.

A major formal function of the teleprompter is that it allows a campaign to control a speaker and keep them “on” message. Joking about Vice President Joe Biden’s propensity to deviate from talking points, Obama pledged at the 2009 White House Correspondents Association dinner that “During the second hundred days [of our term], I will learn to go off the prompter and Joe Biden will learn to stay on the prompter.”⁷³ The conservative fascination with Obama’s teleprompter is, in part, a reference to the fact that by controlling his speech, the teleprompter prevents him from making mistakes. And because these mistakes are thought to give a window into the speaker’s true intentions, the teleprompter prevents audiences from knowing what Obama is “really” up to. In this way, conservatives use Obama’s occasional mistakes to point out the technological form that controls him; rather

⁷² Bradley A. Blakeman, “Is President Obama Tripping Over 'Idiot Boards'?,” *The Arena* (blog), Politico.com, Oct. 5, 2010, <http://www.politico.com/arena/archive/a-minimum-wage-trap.html>.

⁷³ Barack Obama, President Obama at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, (Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C.: C-SPAN, May 9, 2009). Obama used humor to dispense with critiques of his use of the teleprompter (and birth certificate, college transcripts, etc.) Addressing the annual White House Correspondents Dinner, Obama began by saying, “I had an entire speech prepared for this wonderful occasion, but now that I’m here I think I’m going to try something a little different. Tonight I want to speak from the heart. I’m going to speak off the cuff.” As he said this, teleprompters began to rise to laughter and applause from the audience. The president continued, “Good evening. Pause for laughter.”

than a naturally virtuous President, the control of the teleprompter is argued to be responsible for Obama's *ethos*.

Conservative attacks on Obama's use of the device echo criticism of Romney's artificiality in that they both call into question the true thoughts of the speaker. In the case of Obama, the fact that the teleprompter keeps him on message fuels a panic regarding his true intentions. For example, during the 2012 general election, Obama made an unscripted ad lib remark about business owners who forget about the government assistance that has made their success possible. Referring to the material they rely upon, Obama said, "you didn't build that."⁷⁴ A large part of the discussion after this event revolved around whether the comment indicated that Obama relied upon his teleprompter to avoid saying unpopular things while conservatives argued that this slip revealed his hostility to small businesses. Conservatives goaded the Obama campaign by speculating whether he would use his teleprompter more after that event.

The total effect of the teleprompter form is unusual because the audience watches the speaker as the speaker watches the script. If the orator is skilled at using the device, the television audience may not be able to tell that the speaker is looking at the script while looking at the camera. Yet, as Bradley Blakeman explains, the desired "tight shot" is not the only angle that is provided to the television audience, and political opponents are quick to refer to the staging of speech events such as the "paddles" of the prompter.⁷⁵ Clark's lament

⁷⁴ Charlie Spiering, "Back on the trail, Obama clings to the teleprompter," *Washington Examiner* (blog), August 2, 2012, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/back-on-the-trail-obama-clings-to-the-teleprompter/article/2503841#.UBrqPa6aQws.email>.; Amie Parnes, "'You Didn't Build That' Remarks Won't Change Obama's Strategy on the Stump," *The Hill* (blog), July 27, 2012, <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/240663-you-didnt-build-that-remarks-wont-change-obamas-plans-on-stump#ixzz2MxVmSUAy>.

⁷⁵ "Tripping Over 'Idiot Boards.'"

of Obama's speech recalls the uncanny experience of watching ventriloquists throw their voice.⁷⁶ Because Clark's attention is devoted to Obama's paddles, Clark's concern is that Obama only appears "as if" he is looking at his audience while he actually is looking at the text of his speech. If one longs for sincere expression and expects it to be found in the avowal of unscripted speech, as Obama's teleprompter critics imply, then the moment a speaker looks away from the script (or tosses it aside) and into the audience becomes pregnant with the possibility of sincerity. Such are the symbolic stakes, implicating the virtue of the speaker, that are rooted in the form of the teleprompter.

Cultural Significance

Beyond what the teleprompter enables and constrains as a result of its formal material attributes, it also produces meaning via cultural signification. While the teleprompter is ubiquitous in the American presidency, recent articulations of the technology have led to its use being derided. For example, running for president, Congresswoman Michele Bachmann claimed that she would never use the device, "I promise you there won't be any teleprompters in the Bachmann White House."⁷⁷ In this section, I describe three contemporary significations that make such comments possible: dependency, authorship, and intelligence.

Dependency. Rory Cooper, of the conservative Heritage Foundation, frames the issue of dependence this way: while the device has been used for formal speeches by every president since it was invented, "the crutch needs to be dropped for more informal occasions, rallies and speeches where the passion and conviction of the president should be able to

⁷⁶ As I will discuss in the next section, this invokes the problematics of voice. For a discussion of ventriloquism and voice, see Dolar, *Voice*, 70.

⁷⁷ Philip Rucker, "Republicans Mock Obama's Teleprompter Use," *Washington Post*, October 18, 2011.

guide him through remarks.”⁷⁸ For Cooper, Obama relies upon the device because the courage of his conviction is not enough. It is true that Obama uses the teleprompter more than previous presidents and incorporates the device into his daily routine of short and minor speeches, but the critique of his use is not only about frequency—it’s also about dependency.

As Bradley Blakeman puts it, Obama is “addicted” to the device and “needs to drop ‘cold turkey’ the use of teleprompters and connect with his audiences,” because “you cannot connect with ordinary people if you talk past them.”⁷⁹ Blakeman claims that Obama’s dependence is put into highest relief when he answers unscripted questions, because “his speech is very halted and you can see him take a lot of time to think about what he’s going to say.”⁸⁰

Being reliant on the teleprompter figures technology as a wedge that separates what a speaker avows from what would otherwise spring forth from her soul. As the humorous anti-Obama blog written from the device’s perspective puts it, the teleprompter is “the hard drive of the machine that enables the voice of the Leader of the Free World.”⁸¹ In this formulation, the audience is separated from Obama’s authentic voice. The conservative, conspiracy-peddling website CNS News made hay out of one such supposed mistake. “In two campaign speeches over the last two days, President Barack Obama has twice mistakenly mentioned ‘my sons,’” Terence Jeffrey writes, “Obama, as noted, does not have sons. Nor was he born in Kenya. Nor is he a Muslim. But it is a fact, as the White House itself reported in its

⁷⁸ “Is President Obama Tripping Over 'Idiot Boards'?” *The Arena* (blog), Politico.com, Oct. 5, 2010, <http://www.politico.com/arena/archive/a-minimum-wage-trap.html>.

⁷⁹ “Tripping Over 'Idiot Boards.’”

⁸⁰ “Tripping Over 'Idiot Boards.’”

⁸¹ “Barack Obama's Teleprompter's Blog.”

transcripts of his speeches, that on four occasions this year President Obama has rhetorically slipped up and mistakenly talked about ‘my sons’—nonexistent though they are.”⁸² In the full context, it is very plausible that it was not a mistake but a hypothetical statement. The point that Jeffrey makes, and the reason that this story would have any traction as news, is that he made this “mistake” several times, and the implication is that he will say whatever is on the screen even if it is wildly incorrect.

Intelligence. Stemming from dependence is the teleprompter’s cultural association with intelligence. There is a wealth of examples in which dependence on the device for artful communication implies a lack of intelligence. Walter Mondale used the term “idiot board” in dispensing advice to President Obama during his first term. “He uses these idiot boards to read speeches on television and I think he loses the connection.”⁸³ Obama’s dependence on the Teleprompter, as constructed by conservatives, is made to indicate not only that he will reveal himself without it but also that his dependence on the script means he is actually far less intelligent than he appears. Drawing attention to Obama’s use of the teleprompter is a means to offset what is often considered his strongest advantage: deft oratorical skill.⁸⁴ Rucker explains the GOP’s argument: “If Obama can’t give a two-minute speech without a screen telling him what to say, the critique goes, it’s a sign that he doesn’t know what he’s

⁸² Terence P. Jeffrey, “Obama Twice Mistakenly Mentions ‘My Sons,’ While Defending Contraception Mandate,” *CNS News* (blog), May 25, 2012, <http://cnsnews.com/blog/terence-p-jeffrey/obama-twice-mistakenly-mentions-my-sons-while-defending-contraception-mandate>.

⁸³ “Mondale to Obama: Ditch the ‘Idiot Boards,’” *Political Ticker* (blog), CNN.com, October 4, 2010, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/10/04/mondale-to-obama-ditch-the-idiot-boards/>.

⁸⁴ As Philip Rucker writes in the *Washington Post*, “Republican presidential candidates are trying to use President Obama’s reliance on teleprompters to deflate one of his biggest strengths—his oratorical skill.” “Republicans Mock Obama’s Teleprompter Use.”

talking about and can't be trusted to do his job.”⁸⁵ In contrast to Bush’s false appearance of ignorance, Obama, they contend, only appears to be intelligent with the help of his assistive technology.

Crisis of Authorship. The teleprompter poses a crisis of authorship because it has come to signify the presence of speechwriters and political advisors.⁸⁶ Rory Cooper uses this presence to discredit Obama’s oratorical skill, “as a candidate, Obama was praised by the media for his speaking abilities, but the more he uses the teleprompter, the more people connect a speechwriter to those skills, and distrust Obama himself.”⁸⁷ Rick Santorum went so far as to say that use of the teleprompter should be outlawed on the campaign trail. “I always believed that when you run for president of the United States, it should be illegal to read off a teleprompter,” Santorum said, “because all you're doing is reading someone else's words to people.”⁸⁸ Santorum denounced the practice of using focus groups to refine one's message and preferred that the candidate design the words rather than “pollsters and speechwriters.”⁸⁹ Making the connection to immediacy explicit, Santorum went on, “it's important for you to

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Speechwriters have long been reviled as Plato’s case against logography in Chapter Two indicates. In the context of American presidential politics, since the machine age speechwriters have been associated with the mechanical as well. William Brigrance quotes a critic of Andrew Jackson describing one of his speechwriters as “the President’s thinking machine, and his writing machine, ay, and his lying machine.” William Norwood Brigrance, “Ghostwriting Before Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Radio,” *Today's Speech* 4, no. 11 (1956): 11.

⁸⁷ “Tripping Over 'Idiot Boards’”

⁸⁸ Chris Welch, “Santorum's War on Teleprompters,” *Political Ticker* (blog), CNN.com, March 11, 2012, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/11/santorums-war-on-teleprompters/>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

understand who that person is in their own words, see them, look them in the eye... hear what's [in his or her] heart.”⁹⁰

The teleprompter points toward the industry of campaign consultants and advisors and the role they may play in giving the candidate poll-tested talking points to say for effect rather than sincerely-held beliefs. Fred Davis, who advised both Senator John McCain and former ambassador Jon Huntsman Jr. during their presidential campaigns, notes that using a teleprompter has been associated with inauthenticity. “It's a sign that you can't speak on your own two feet. It's a sign that you have handlers behind you telling you what to say.”⁹¹ For Republican pollster and wordsmith Frank Luntz, the problem with Obama using the teleprompter more than other presidents is that the words are not his own, “they're somebody else's ... [voters] want you to look them straight in the eye and say what you mean and mean what you say. It's the most important attribute.”⁹²

The crisis of authorship posed by the teleprompter is so acute that Obama's advisors have made a concerted effort to conceal his artifice by asserting his authorship. By the time Obama took office, there was already reticence in talking about his use of the device. Unlike Bush's press secretaries, Obama's did not refer to his teleprompter practice before major speeches. In a press conference before his 2010 State of the Union address, Press Secretary Robert Gibbs was asked about Obama's speech preparation practices. “Is he sitting down today, tomorrow with speechwriters? How much does he write? Does he practice with the

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Rucker, “Republicans Mock Obama's Teleprompter Use.”

⁹² John Stossel, “Stossel,” Fox News, February 9, 2012.

Teleprompter?”⁹³ Gibbs responded by saying only, “they spent time over the weekend working on it.”⁹⁴ When asked for more details, Gibbs clarified that “they” were “the president and the speechwriters” and that the next day the president would do “some of the practicing that you talk about, as well as continuing to write and work through different sections of the speech.”⁹⁵ Gibbs never used the word “teleprompter” and pivoted from the president practicing the speech to the president writing and working through the speech.

In the lead up to his address to a Joint Session of Congress regarding healthcare reform, Obama advisor Valerie Jarrett was asked if there was a backup tape in case there was a problem with the teleprompter. Recalling the Clinton snafu, MSNBC Correspondent Andrea Mitchell asked, “Valerie, about 16 years ago, President Clinton gave a similar speech to a joint session and the teleprompter broke. Do you have backup tonight?”⁹⁶ Jarrett’s response firmly indicates the strategy of using sincerity to deny the artifice of speech. “Well, you know what, I’m very confident the president knows exactly what he wants to say, that if something goes wrong, he’ll speak directly from the heart and the American people will hear his message. This is really all about the American people. And I’m not worried about whether he needs a teleprompter or the text.”⁹⁷

⁹³ Robert Gibbs, “Briefing by White House Press Secretary,” Office of the Press Secretary (Whitehouse.gov, January 25, 2010).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Valerie Jarrett, interview by Andrea Mitchell, MSNBC, September 9, 2009, LexisNexis Academic.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Obama's advisors also were careful to depict his participation in writing the speeches that he delivered. For example, just before Obama's 2012 State of the Union address, the White House released photos and a behind the scenes video of the process of preparing the speech. Photographic stills show him holding the speech script and portray him as instructing the speechwriter. One of the opening images features his own handwriting on a draft of the speech and an advisor mentioning how involved he is with the writing of the speech.⁹⁸ His speechwriter mentions that Obama made "a lot of edits," and then in the Oval Office, a video shows the President remarking, "the bad news is that it is not there yet."⁹⁹ Then his advisor David Plouff adds that Obama's participation is not just an exercise in editing. Rather, "he is involved from conception through kind of the development process and then you know he writes a lot of the speech himself." The still images are of the President discussing a printed script or seated with his advisors standing. The speechwriters are described as weaving the speech together according to the President's direction. "But then he takes it and makes it his."¹⁰⁰

Low-Tech Style: The Bullhorn and the Myth of Unmediated Speech

In the realm of political campaign communication, we might imagine a stiff, even robotic candidate attempting to blend into a pastoral landscape. If the teleprompter reveals the struggle of technological style at the point when artifice is visually apparent, we might also observe the struggle over technological style in failed attempts to dispense with it. This

⁹⁸ "Behind the Scenes: Writing the 2012 State of the Union Address," Whitehouse.gov, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2012/01/24/behind-scenes-writing-2012-state-union-address>.

⁹⁹ The video is 4:18 seconds long, and within the first 19 seconds of the video, there is mention of his input in writing the speech backed up with a photo of his edits. Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 2:48.

attention to efforts at augmenting a candidate's technological style sheds new light on the example of Mitt Romney and allows us to ascertain what seemed like odd moments on a usually mundane campaign trail. Having suffered in 2008 from appearing too polished and plastic, the Romney of 2012 rarely wore a tie. He made a point of occasionally avoiding the use of a teleprompter, but it did not seem to work. In the face of a damaging high tech *ethos*, the Romney campaign worked to construct a low-tech *ethos*. They went to great lengths, not only to highlight his non-use of the teleprompter, but also to emphasize his use of low-tech, low-production value devices as in his use of a whiteboard during a press conference. After announcing Representative Paul Ryan as his running mate, funding for Medicare became a central issue. Ryan had previously proposed a budget that privatized some Medicare benefits, and the Romney campaign worked to distinguish their plan from Obama's. Rather than a detailed policy speech, Romney called a rather odd press conference that was held outdoors and featured a whiteboard. He spoke extemporaneously and used the board to display a simple graph that compared "Obama" and "Romney" on "Seniors" and "Next Gen."¹⁰¹ This graph was in Romney's own handwriting and felt less like a political speech and more like a boardroom sales pitch. The deviation from political genre was noticed; Brett LoGiurato of *Business Insider* called it "one of the weirder moments on the campaign trail."¹⁰²

In another example, Mitt Romney made a rather heavy-handed attempt to de-technologize his *ēthos*. At a press conference explaining his new 59-point economic plan, he

¹⁰¹ "Romney Uses Whiteboard to Explain Medicare Plan," ABCNews.com, August 16, 2012, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/video/romney-whiteboard-explain-medicare-plan-17020243>.

¹⁰² Brett LoGiurato, "Let's Recap Mitt Romney's Whiteboard Lecture, One of the Most Bizarre Moments of the Campaign," *Business Insider Politics* (blog), Aug. 17, 2012, <http://www.businessinsider.com/mitt-romney-whiteboard-medicare-obama-paul-ryan-budget-2012-8>.

displayed a one-page hand-written note proudly proclaiming, “I don't have a teleprompter here.”¹⁰³ Later, seeking to distinguish his jobs plan from Obama’s, Romney took to a podium at a hastily called news conference, “Now, this is going to be a conversation today. I don't have a text written. You can actually see here what I've got. I've got notes. All right? I've got some notes of some things I want to tell you. I'm not going to be reading and I don't have a teleprompter here. Nothing wrong with that. I use it from time-to-time. I just want to talk to you...”¹⁰⁴

It is not enough to merely avoid the high-tech markings of Romney’s robotics and Obama’s projected speech script. While being too polished or controlled can be a downfall of the high-tech, artifice can also become apparent with too little control. As I will demonstrate in this section, it is not sufficient to eradicate scripted control. Even the enactment of a low-tech style requires technique. While the teleprompter is a high-tech display device that enables attention to rhetorical artifice, other methods of technological control via script that do not operate via display can fail by drawing unwanted attention to the script. For example, the talking point is a technique for extemporaneous speech that works via memory instead of display. While the script is not physically present, it can still become apparent as artifice when blundered. When a talking point is apprehended as itself, it loses some of its persuasive force. Rather than a deeply held belief, it can seem like a poll tested sound byte designed for effect rather than expressed via sincere correspondence to internal thought.

¹⁰³ Philip Rucker, “Mitt Romney Relying on Teleprompters to Deliver His Closing Speech,” *Washington Post*, November 4, 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Mitt Romney, “Mitt Romney Speaks about the Economy,” September 6, 2011, CNN Live, CNN, <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1109/06/se.01.html>.

For example, Texas Governor Rick Perry had a memory lapse during a November 2011 GOP presidential debate in Michigan.¹⁰⁵ Perry was struggling in the polls, and his debate performances were already under scrutiny. In what became known as his “oops moment” and quickly thought by many pundits to be the death knell of his candidacy, he began listing the three federal agencies that he would eliminate upon taking office. He listed the first two but then stalled, unable to name the third. He fumbled, looked around, tried to laugh it off, and then said that he could not remember the third one. “Sorry. Oops.”¹⁰⁶ In a campaign commercial released after the debate, Perry joked about his flub as his campaign attempted some ritual atonement. The advertisement shows Perry watching a video of his memory lapse, and then correctly finishing the list he flubbed. “You know, we’ve all lost our train of thought before, but not many have done it on national TV. Now if you want a slick debater, I’m obviously not your guy. But if want to clean house in Washington... I’m your man. I’m Rick Perry a—what’s that line again? I’m Rick Perry and I approve this message.”¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately for Perry, his attempt to play off the flub failed. The narrative that emerged was that his memory lapse was the “53 seconds that sunk his campaign.”

¹⁰⁵ While Perry’s flub received more attention, it was minor compared to the five minute long tortuous answer that Herman Cain gave in an interview with the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. When asked how he would respond to the Libyan uprising, he seemed unable to recall what talking point applied to Libya. He asked the journalists, “President Obama supported the uprising, correct?” While fumbling around with a water bottle, he continued, “I do not agree with the way he handled it for the following reason... No, that’s a different one,” he said to himself. He concluded by saying, “I’ve got to go back to—got all this stuff twirling around in my head.” Richard A Oppel Jr., “Cain Stumbles in Assessing Foreign Policy,” *New York Times*, November 14, 2011.

¹⁰⁶ Rick Perry, “Rick Perry: OOPS,” YouTube video, 2:24, posted by “bizbuzz2000,” November 9, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GSmDsAET7I>

¹⁰⁷ Rick Perry, “Leno Ad,” YouTube video, :30, posted by “RPerry2012,” December 1, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiCRW5zGSG4>.

The conventional reading of this flub was one of negative image: people already wondered if he was stupid, and this moment would work to reinforce that image. I believe a better explanation of the effect of this and other similar flubs requires that one understand the talking point as a technique of speech. His response had to be in accord with the ritualized expectations of American politics.¹⁰⁸ But more importantly, his flub was consequential to begin with because it drew attention to the presence of a talking point as a strategic construction rather than a deeply held moral belief. Because he was not able to remember the name of a federal department he wanted to eviscerate, audiences called into question the veracity of his belief that such a department was overregulating the energy industry and preventing America from being energy independent.¹⁰⁹ Without the moral imperative, calling for such cuts sounds less like frank speech and more like political calculation. Perry's *ēthos* diminished as the audience saw the actor practicing his lines. Seeing brushstrokes on a canvas draws attention to the technique of painting; this type of speech error—the belabored talking point—draws our attention to the artifice of speech and leads us to question if the policy position originates in the speaker's soul or the advisor's strategy.¹¹⁰

Bush's Low Style

At the time when President George W. Bush was stumbling through official remarks, liberals loved to mock his intelligence (or lack thereof), and draw attention to his uncontrolled speech. Yet these flubs did more to bolster his character than undercut it. While

¹⁰⁸ Bennett, "Assessing Presidential Character."

¹⁰⁹ Rick Perry, "Rick Perry: Eliminate the Department of Energy," YouTube video, :47, posted by "nhprimary2012," October 1, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhhARgSmA0o> (2011).

¹¹⁰ See note 107 regarding the even more egregious talking point bobble of Herman Cain.

the example of Perry's flub shows that a speaker's character can be undercut by errors, Bush's demonstrate the ambivalence of flubs because it is possible that, rather than showing the presence of artifice, speech errors can suggest a present absence of strategic control.¹¹¹ Corresponding to low and plain is the realist style that Robert Hariman writes about in *Political Style*.¹¹² This *technê* persuades audiences of the artlessness of Bush's speech. Hariman quotes Machiavelli in a particularly realist moment, "I have not sought to adorn my work with long phrases or high-sounding words or any of those superficial attractions and ornaments."¹¹³ Much to the chagrin of liberals that lampooned it during the 2000 and 2004 elections, Bush's plain style was more asset than liability; a large portion of Americans reported that Bush's verbal blunders lent an authenticity to his speech lacking in other politicians.¹¹⁴

Early in George W. Bush's presidency, there was a joke circulating on the Internet. Al Gore and Bush were having breakfast after the election, and the waitress asked for their order. Gore said he would have oatmeal and applesauce, and Bush asked her for a quickie. She stalked off, and Gore whispered to the new president, "that's *quiche*." What this joke relies upon for its humor is the juxtaposition of the oafish but endearing ignorance of Bush and the tightly wound sophisticated intelligence of Gore.¹¹⁵ The 2000 election epitomized

¹¹¹ Speech, and voice as self-presence of the speaking subject, has long been caught in this ambivalence of being privileged and scorned. Dolar, *Voice*, 42-43.

¹¹² Hariman, *Political Style*, 5.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹⁴ Erard, 12.

¹¹⁵ Michael Silverstein, *Talking Politics: The Substance of Style From Abe to "W"* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003), 75-76.

this ambivalence of the medium of the script: Bush was a lovable stumbler while his opponent, Vice President Al Gore, was a scripted robot unable to connect with voters. Bush's rhetorical reputation for verbal blunders came to reflect a characterological duality; he was seen as stupid but sincere, or put mildly, as earnest but lacking intelligence. Mark Miller argues that the Bush campaign, while not inventing the anti-intellectual strategy, represented its first full press; Bush's first presidential campaign attempted to frame him as the second Andrew Jackson working against the elite "Prince Albert."¹ His thick tongue was a sign of unpretentiousness similar to the language of someone working long hours on a dock or in a field. Whether it was campaign strategy or individual accident (or both), Bush's *ethos* was effective because it was taken to display habits of moral virtues (even if it also indicated intellectual vices). His child-like sincerity functioned to mute other character-based critiques even from his critics. Linguist and anthropologist Michael Silverstein does not hide his disdain for Bush's "verbal slapstick," but he simultaneously identifies an earnestness that, on balance, does more to recover Bush than his mistakes do to hurt him. Bush's style,

ranges hilariously over the whole gag kitbag. Doubletalk, malapropisms, the worst hack bromides, and yet it is very appealing in its own way, is it not? ... It has been consistently delivered with a manly tone of conviction, even aggressiveness; with a firm-jawed, non-sissy Texas style of pronunciations that Poppy never really mastered; and with a facial and whole bodily posture of earnestness that has got to make our hearts go out to the guy: he's really, really attempting to grasp things—whatever they are—with his whole being.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 70-71. Silverstein has documented the different kinds of speech errors by George W. Bush. The most common include "incoherence by locution." This is a sentence that begins with one syntactic form but veers off into incoherence with a conflicting construction or odd word choice. Silverstein suggests that perhaps these are examples of when Bush is "speaking from a subliminal font of truth!" Ibid., 98. A second type of speech error is "verbose redundancies/incoherence." This is the classic form of double-talk. Near synonyms are combined that only add verbiage and not denotation. In addition, there are different forms of broken grammar. An utterance might begin with one construction type and then continue with a different construction type. This is generally a case of stop-and-start correction. There are other examples in which the wrong word or word form is used without any attempt to correct. There is also the classic malapropism. Ibid., 111-12.

Despite winning the popular vote, Vice President Al Gore suffered in the comparison to Bush's earnestness. According to Silverstein, Gore's speeches, "written and delivered like policy memoranda," failed to convince enough people he had the "fire-in-the-belly" that indicates a morally directed drive.¹¹⁷ Perhaps Gore's campaign picked up on this construction of their candidate and, akin to Obama's effort to assert his authorship, motivated one of Gore's speechwriters to go to great pains before the Vice President's 2000 party nomination acceptance speech to note that Gore was "literally, truly and unquestionably" the author of the acceptance speech."¹¹⁸

While President George W. Bush was not superb at large-scale oration, he excelled at face-to-face encounters. He was not particularly good at using the teleprompter, though he did improve with practice.¹¹⁹ Bush was best when he was using plain language and interacting with people in less formal settings. This communication practice formed a strong element of his rhetorical reputation and affected the ways his speech acts were made sense of. For example, Pamela Geller, of the conservative website Atlas Shrugs, spoke on Sean Hannity's television show about President Barack Obama, "He took 25 teleprompters with

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 72.

¹¹⁸ Bernard Weinraub and Elisabeth Bumiller, "Gore's Speech? By Gore, A Very-Insider Insists," *New York Times*, August 16, 2000.

¹¹⁹ Bob Schieffer noted, after Bush's first inaugural speech, "I think another thing to add, in this world of modern politics, a modern politician, if he can not speak extemporaneously, and few do anymore, has to be able to read off a Teleprompter in a convincing way. Now, Dan, you and I know that being able to read the Teleprompter does not necessarily equate with intelligence or competence in any way, and you and I know several people we could use as examples for that, being in the business of reading Teleprompters. But George Bush has gotten better at reading Teleprompters. There's no question about it. He was very awkward at it in—through the campaign and even right up until the election, but I think he's been practicing, and I think the practice paid off." Eric Engberg, "CBS News Special Report: Presidential Inauguration," CBS, January 20, 2001.

him to Europe. Twenty-five. Did you ever see Bush with a teleprompter ever? He was a plainspoken man.” Hannity then responded, “He did use it when—during the State of the Union. But he didn't carry it everywhere. He used his notes, like Reagan used his notes and Clinton.”¹²⁰ Packed into this example are several aspects that point toward the ambivalence of scripted speech. Geller implies that we can glean something about Obama’s character based on the number of teleprompters he traveled with, and that Bush, in contrast, demonstrated the virtue of being “plainspoken” by not using the device. For Geller, plainspoken is a device-free condition. Hannity’s response compounded this by implying that Bush only used the device for the State of the Union address, and otherwise simply used “notes.” In this final turn we see a hierarchy between devices, with “notes” as the tool of the virtuously plainspoken man. Bush’s reputation and rhetorical practice amplified his style as a pattern of low-tech communication. This style had clear effects on his reception as a frank speaker.

The height of Bush’s presidential rhetoric is a moment when his voice is taken to have arisen from his soul without the mediation of political strategy. When journalist Howard Kurtz stages the scene in his writing, he imagines that Bush “grabbed the bullhorn,” as if it lay on the ground, and he was inspired to speak with it. This prototypical rhetorical performance is a speech he gave when he visited Ground Zero.¹²¹ Only three days after 9/11, the World Trade Center towers lay smoldering as rescue workers searched in vain for survivors. Using a bullhorn seemingly taken from the fire chief he stood next to, Bush

¹²⁰ Sean Hannity, “Double Standard for Obama's Gaffes?,” 2009.

¹²¹ George W. Bush, “George W. Bush - 9/11 Bullhorn Speech,” YouTube video, 2:02, posted by “AmericanRhetoricOrig,” April 3, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7OCgMPX2mE>.

addressed those gathered. He began speaking, using no script but moving between familiar expressions, “I want you to know that America today... America today is on bended knee...” As he spoke, it became clear that, even with the bullhorn, his audience was having trouble hearing him. The President continued and seemed to rush through his thoughts as he paid respect to those affected by 9/11. As a chorus of complaints swelled from the out-of-earshot, Bush raised his voice and retorted, “I can hear you” to cheers and applause. Responding to the audience’s enthusiasm, he continued, “I can hear you, the rest of the world hears you, and the people... and the people that knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.”¹²² What might, in even a slightly different situation, pass into the dustbin of history’s unscripted, spontaneous moments in public speech has instead come to symbolize the epitome of authenticity—what Jeff Zeleny referred to as “one of the most iconic moments of his presidency.”¹²³ As Kurtz summarizes, “George W. Bush had a breakthrough moment when he grabbed the bullhorn amid the rubble of ground zero.”¹²⁴

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Jeff Zeleny, “Obama to Visit Ground Zero on Thursday,” *The Caucus* (blog), *New York Times*, May 2, 2011, <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/obama-to-visit-ground-zero-on-thursday/>. Journalist Jonathan Capehart, writing in 2011 about Obama’s speech after the Tucson shootings, mentioned the Bullhorn speech as a prime example of the fact that the most poignant words are sometimes the unscripted ones. “Obama’s powerful Tucson omission,” *Postpartisan* (blog), *Washington Post*, January 13, 2011, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/postpartisan/2011/01/obamas_powerful_tucson_omissio.html.

¹²⁴ Howard Kurtz, “Obama’s Next Impossible Speech,” *Daily Beast* (blog), January 13, 2011, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/01/13/obamas-next-act-will-arizona-speech-momentum-help-on-capitol-hill.html>. David Frum, speechwriter for George W. Bush, recognized the powerful and transformative nature of this moment. He used the image of Bush speaking with the bullhorn on the rubble of Ground Zero as the image for his book, David Frum, *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Random House, 2003).

Low-Tech Form and Significance

Earlier I remarked that Americans have developed a lexicon of mediation such that some technologies appear to *facilitate* immediacy. Let us consider what such low-tech speech would entail in terms of technological form and cultural significance. Voice is central to the cultural imaginary of the bullhorn because it is a technology for amplifying the human voice. There has been, since the birth of public speaking, interest in amplification. The earliest forms involve the manipulation of physical space such as the creation of an amphitheater or the manipulation of acoustic space in the creation of a conical megaphone still used today by male cheerleaders in sporting events.

Mladen Dolar identifies a salient story that illustrates key themes of voice and technological form. Austrian inventor Wolfgang von Kempelen toured Europe in the 1780s with two devices: a thinking machine and a speaking machine. The thinking machine was presented as a champion chess-playing automaton (but the large interworkings of the machine most likely hid a very skilled dwarf). The visible design was of a Turkish puppet holding a hookah and sitting before a chessboard. The speaking machine was a complex system for mechanically replicating human speech. Similar to a bagpipe, it included a wooden box, bellows, and a complex series of valves. Dolar observes a crucial distinction between Kempelen's devices that parallels the teleprompter and the bullhorn: one attempts to conceal what the other reveals.¹²⁵ The difference between the chess automaton and the speaking machine is that the automaton was “constructed in such a way as to appear as

¹²⁵ Dolar, *Voice*, 9.

human-like as possible... while the speaking machine was as mechanical as possible: he did not try to hide its mechanical nature; on the contrary, it exhibited it conspicuously.”¹²⁶

This story illustrates several features of voice germane to this chapter. As a communication medium, voice focuses attention on the speaking subject. Dolar notes that voice is a medium of expression that “implies a subjectivity which expresses itself.”¹²⁷ As a result, a persistent theme for voice is origin. Where is this voice coming from? Is it legitimate? Is it as it appears? Additionally, voice situates the subject firmly in the interior of a body, and voice tends to imply the authenticity of the body (e.g., when a person *finds* his or her true voice.)¹²⁸ Thus, the bullhorn draws attention to the speaking subject and his or her agency.¹²⁹

Having introduced Dolar’s distinction regarding voice, we can better understand the drive to distance Bush from the teleprompter and the reason his supporters would instead align him technologically with notecards. That his preferred mnemonic device would matter

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹²⁸ Eric King Watts, “‘Voice’ and ‘Voicelessness’ in Rhetorical Studies,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87, no. 2 (2001): 182. See also Dolar, *Voice*, 71. The body is a more common object of study in contemporary rhetorical theory since the consideration of materiality requires that we understand embodiment as a form of mediation. See Carole Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places,” *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001): 272; *Rhetorical Bodies* 1999.

¹²⁹ See Anne McKay, “Speaking Up: Voice Amplification and Women’s Struggle for Public Expression,” in *Technology and Women’s Voices: Keeping in Touch*, ed. Cheris Kramarae (New York: Routledge, 1988). In terms of “her” agency, Anne McKay notes that vocal amplification via megaphone has been a central technology involved in women’s voice where voice is analogous to the ethical weight of self-expression. Devices for artificial voice amplification were used for public address and for radio in the 1920s. Communication technology has long played a role in expanding public participation. The example of Isocrates from Chapter Two shows how someone born with a weak voice could participate in public life through speechwriting.

signals voice-based assumptions about how notecards as a communication technology would reflect virtue by mediating his speech differently from that of a teleprompter. Ari Fleischer, former White House press secretary to President George W. Bush, while discussing his view that President Obama uses the teleprompter too often, admitted that Bush used one on occasion but usually only for especially important speeches and that his “standard style” was “little 5-by-8 cards.”¹³⁰ The notecard is a decidedly lower technology, and the aesthetic of low-tech speech maintains the audience attention not on the artifice of speech, but the voice of speech. As Dolar reminds us, voice invokes notions of intentionality.¹³¹ Bush’s quips with his bullhorn and notecard-aided speeches “mean something” because the bullhorn and notecard signify his intentional vocalization—his intention to say something that originates in his interior.

Yet the bullhorn and notecard, as low-tech mediators of voice, escape a critique of their materiality. As Dolar explains, voice is a “vanishing mediator,” wherein “the voice is the material support of bringing about meaning, yet it does not contribute to it itself.”¹³² Bush’s notecards work like the bullhorn; both technologies are understood not as mediators but as intermediaries. They are naturalized to the extent that it is assumed they do not influence the message but carry it like empty conduits.¹³³

¹³⁰ Rucker, “Republicans Mock.”

¹³¹ Dolar, *Voice*, 14.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³³ Here, I draw from the notions of conduits and black boxes in Actor Network Theory. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Clarendon lectures in management studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

One effect of low-tech style's vocal symbolism is the embrace of anti-intellectualism. The very notion that Bush was stupid while Gore was smart perpetuates an overly-simplistic ideology of eloquence wherein ordinary speech is associated with conservative speakers and high style is associated with intellectually elite liberals. If Bush was thought to be ignorant, Gore was thought to be intellectually elitist. Bush's reputation was so widespread that a cottage industry of books about "Bushisms" sprang up.¹³⁴ Bush's many errors of speech were generally taken to indicate one of two character traits depending on one's impression of the man: either he lacked thoughtfulness and was terribly stupid, or he possessed sincerity and was willing to speak without careful control. What unifies these interpretations of Bush's flubs is that they reveal what is true about him.

¹³⁴ Paul Begala, *Is Our Children Learning: The Case Against George W. Bush* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Molly Ivins, *Shrub: The Short but Happy Political Life of George W. Bush* (New York: Random House, 2000); Molly Ivins, *Bushwhacked: Life in George W. Bush's America* (New York: Random House, 2003); Kevin Guilfoile, *Modern Humorist Presents My First Presidency: A Scrapbook by George W. Bush* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001); Michael K. Smith, *The Madness of King George: The Ingenious Insanity of Our Most "Misunderestimated" President* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2004); Jacob Weisberg, *The Ultimate George W. Bushisms: Bush at War (With the English Language)* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007); *George W. Bushisms V: New Ways to Harm Our Country* (New York: Fireside, 2005); *More George W. Bushisms: More of Slate's Accidental Wit and Wisdom of Our Forty-Third President*, e-book (New York: Fireside, 2002); *George W. Bushisms: The Slate Book of the Accidental Wit and Wisdom of Our Forty-Third President* (New York: Fireside, 2001).

There were even attempts to appropriate Bush's speech errors by his supporters. For example, Bill Sammon appropriates Bush's original word "mis-underestimate" in order to claim that, while his critics were distracted by his errors of speech, Bush was accomplishing great things for the country. *Misunderestimated: The President Battles Terrorism, John Kerry, and the Bush Haters* (New York: Regan Books, 2004). In addition, in response to all of this negative and humorous work regarding Bush's speech errors, Bill Adler, who also published books of children's letters to the President and a book about Barbara Bush, put out a book designed to focus not on the malaprops and verbal stumbles of the president but rather on the comments that reveal his ideals and philosophy, and leadership agenda. *The Quotable George W. Bush: A Portrait in His Own Words* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel, 2004).

The low-tech style also contains an anti-high tech discourse. Speakers are celebrated for the signification of being free from technological control. This is an echo of the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric described in Chapter Two. While use of a teleprompter draws conservative ire, not using a teleprompter is cited as reason to celebrate a speaker. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, for example, has a reputation for an unscripted speaking style. Steve Ayscue pondered how Christie would negotiate using the device and his frank style at the 2012 GOP Convention, “Don’t be shocked if [Christie] picks up the TelePrompter and crashes it to the stage like a Townsend guitar at a Who concert.” Outlets such as the right-wing Daily Caller made a point of mentioning that Condoleezza Rice did not use the device when she addressed the Convention, instead using notes and speaking extemporaneously. They cited her as “the only speaker of the convention thus far to take the podium without the assistance of a teleprompter.”¹³⁵ Conservatives emphasized her “barn-burner speech”.¹³⁶ A number of accounts from the convention, conservative and not, highlighted Rice’s non-use of the prompting device.¹³⁷ This absence of a prompting device indicates that the anti-high tech impulse lends credibility to speakers who are taken to be free from the control of a script.

It is in light of what the low-tech style offers that we can return to the context of the 2012 presidential election and the GOP candidates’ near-fascination with Obama’s

¹³⁵ Caroline May, “Without Teleprompter, Condoleezza Rice Brings GOP Faithful to Their Feet,” *Daily Caller* (blog), August 30, 2012, <http://dailycaller.com/2012/08/30/without-teleprompter-condoleezza-rice-brings-gop-faithful-to-their-feet/#ixzz2N3qPPTcV>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ “RNC Recap: Standing Os, Loudest Applause and Who Didn’t Use a Teleprompter on Day 3,” *FOX News Insider* (blog), Fox News, August 29, 2012, <http://foxnewsinsider.com/2012/08/29/condoleezza-rice-did-not-use-a-teleprompter/>; Amanda Paulson and David Grant, “GOP Convention Winners and Losers, From Condoleezza Rice to Clint Eastwood,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 31, 2012.

teleprompter. Seeking to unseat Obama, candidates in the 2012 GOP primary went out of their way to distance themselves from the teleprompter. As mentioned earlier, Santorum argued that the device should be illegal, while Perry explained away his many gaffes by saying that he was not a teleprompter candidate. Herman Cain used a straight talking cowboy in a commercial to lambast Obama as the teleprompter-reliant slick-talker, and one of the most recurrent attacks came from Newt Gingrich whose stump speech included a joke about Obama's mechanical dependence. Gingrich, in contrasting their styles of speech, embraced the debate form and challenged Obama to seven Lincoln-Douglas style debates, "if he wants to use a teleprompter, then it would be fine with me. It has to be fair."¹³⁸

These examples illustrate a central effect of embracing immediacy as an anti-technological style in political discourse. The persuasiveness of the low-tech style emanates from the notion that the technology of a written script separates the audience from the voice of the speaker. Parlaying voice as central to a technological style has the effect of discouraging ideological critique. Ironically, it is the misplaced desire to recover voice from the script that stifles the politics of public speech. Preoccupied with the ethical force of sincerity, we are unable to notice when "voice" is mobilized as an ideological strategy. Setting aside the question of its ontological location, the case of the bullhorn illustrates how prevailing treatments of political speech in U.S. public culture mobilize a particular notion of voice as sincere expression that staves off the radical potential of acknowledging the ethical

¹³⁸ "Newt Gingrich To Obama: Let's Debate, You Can Use Your Teleprompter," *Real Clear Politics* (blog), November 27, 2011, http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2011/11/27/newt_to_obama_lets_debate_you_can_use_a_teleprompter.html.

and affective implications of voice. The ideology of unscripted speech and its attendant notion of political agency function to evacuate the politics of voice.

Conclusions

The teleprompter and the bullhorn provide a way to think about how artifice is concealed in contemporary presidential rhetoric and the effects of failing to conceal the art of rhetoric. In the high-tech cases of Romneybot and teleprompter, attention to artifice undercuts the naturalized *ēthos* of the ordinary speaker. Discourse critiquing Romney and Obama borrow from the register of the uncanny and describe their speech in ways akin to ventriloquism wherein the origin of voice is uncertain. While it is difficult to quantify how much each critique “worked” against the respective candidate, it appears that the technological critique was more debilitating to Romney. Assuming that it is the case, rhetorical technique can explain the difference. Despite what one might say about Obama’s use of the teleprompter and what his use signifies about his character, the fact remains that he is quite good at using the device. As Dolar reminds us, voice is not universally embraced; it can also pose a danger in controlled settings.¹³⁹ The ambivalence of flubs illustrates this well and with some, such as Perry’s “oops moment,” shows how apprehending voice can still undercut the *ēthos* of a speaker.

As a paired heuristic, the teleprompter and the bullhorn examples suggest several implications for this dissertation’s goal of understanding the effect of favoring speech that we consider immediate. In particular, this chapter provides three crucial insights for understanding public deliberation and political campaigns. We notice the role of

¹³⁹ Dolar, *Voice*, 42-43.

intentionality for our understanding of agency, the relation of anti-intellectualism and the rhetoric of non-rhetoric, and the changing conditions of publicity.

First, this chapter has demonstrated that a central element of concealment is intentionality. The question of intention for the critic is, how do we judge orators if they did not intend to express themselves a particular way? Here the flub of speech can decrease the culpability of a speaker. The notion that leads to the valorization of unscripted speech is that, because it was not scripted, it was more natural. In the example of the teleprompter, it is thought that the presence of a script ironically signals a rejection of the intention to signify. Because the speech has been written beforehand, the speaker avoids expressing what would naturally be voiced and signals instead the intention to manipulate the audience with their persuasive wiles. The bullhorn, in contrast, evokes the ethical dimensions of voice and, like the chess-playing automaton, displays a technical object only to demonstrate the power of its interiority.

This notion of intention relates to agency. A simple observation helps to relate the fetish of unscripted speech and a fantasy of rhetorical agency to U.S. public culture: speakers who conceal their artifice are celebrated as agents of political life. The appearance of *technê* reminds audiences in contemporary U.S. public culture of the artifice of public speech when it disrupts the widely held fantasy of communication agency: that ideal rhetorical agents are willing and able to express themselves without filter. Lundberg and Gunn outline the fantasy of rhetorical agency as being seated securely in the rhetorical agent who possesses the potential for transcendent communication.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ They offer the metaphor of the Ouija board as a productive ambivalence regarding the relation of agency and agent. The board functions as a technology that mediates communication between the spirit world and the natural world. Christian Lundberg and Joshua Gunn, “‘Ouija Board, Are There Any Communications?’ Agency, Ontotheology, and

The question of strategy and technique forces us to think more broadly about the category of intention. *Technê* is not only intentionally applied techniques. The question of intention is necessary but insufficient for rhetorical critique. When we acknowledge the performativity of rhetoric, we are better able to appreciate the ways in which speech incorporates highly intentional, strategic acts with unconscious disclosure. We need not pick one or the other but must understand for rhetorical literacy that constructedness does not denote only intentional content.

Second, both technologies of speech examined in this chapter cause us to reflect on the relation of intellectual virtue and moral virtue. Specifically, how the anti-intellectualism that works in tandem with anti- and non-rhetorics reflects the collapsing together of intellectual and moral virtue. In the teleprompter example, we see the way that intelligence, rather than a positive character trait, can have a negative effect on a speaker's *êthos* by undercutting the moral virtue of ordinariness. In a lose-lose scenario, Obama is appraised as intellectually elite and incapable of speaking in ordinary terms or as intellectually inferior and incapable of speaking in ordinary terms. In the bullhorn example, we see the strategic deployment of stupid sincerity. The priority of populism in U.S. political culture lies at the root of both technological figurations. The conservative movement has been effective at articulating intellectualism with the elite side of the populist struggle. Addressing the Value Voters Summit in 2012, for example, former Senator and darling of the conservative movement Rick Santorum told his conservative audience that they will "never have the elite,

the Death of the Humanist Subject, or, Continuing the ARS Conversation," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 84.

smart people on our side.”¹⁴¹ The glee with which he and others cede intelligence to the opponent illustrates the power of the populist articulation. Conservative discourse has named and condemned the sin of sounding smart. Speech craft, even eloquence itself, has been rendered the dark mark of the intellectually elitist liberal.

The treatment of Bush as an unmediated truth teller allows for this strategy of concealment. While George W. Bush went to very prestigious schools, including Phillips Academy, Yale University, and Harvard Business School, his friends knew that he was “rigorously anti-intellectual, deeply suspicious of gratuitous intellectualism, which opponents sometimes misread as a lack of intelligence.”¹⁴² His ascent to the presidency illustrates at the very least a proficiency in a certain kind of social intelligence and honed skills at immediacy. As Bush remarks of his school days, “I wasn't exactly an Ivy League scholar,” he once told a reporter, “what I was good at was getting to know people.”¹⁴³ His rhetorical corpus, far from a low point of presidential oratory, is akin to Plato’s skill at

¹⁴¹ Rosie Gray, “Rick Santorum: Conservatives Will Never Have ‘Smart People On Our Side,’” *BuzzFeed* (blog), September 15, 2012, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/rosiegray/rick-santorum-says-smart-people-will-never-be-on>.

¹⁴² James Moore, *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential* (Hoboken, NJ: J. Wiley, 2003), 159.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 160. Karl Rove did take some steps to undercut the notion that Bush was not smart. James Moore and Wayne Slater present evidence that Karl Rove sent the conservative newspaper the *National Review* a story about Bush and “his prodigious reading habits,” including naming James Q. Wilson's *The Moral Sense* and *On Character*, Gertrude Himmelfarb's *The Demoralization of Society*, and Marvin Olasky's *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. During the 2000 presidential election, Gov. Bush would walk through the cabin of the campaign plane, in view of reporters, carrying a large volume of history about the Civil War or a biography of a Founding Father. While Bush always maintained an anti-intellectual flair, he also always maintained a visible interest in learning about American history, particularly aspects steeped in patriotic nostalgia, *Ibid.*, 136.

concealing his rhetorical craft. Underneath his many Bushisms is a savvy politician who promulgated an original and indelible domestic and foreign policy.

Finally this chapter allows us to think about what is new in the contemporary moment. One difference between now and antiquity is a condition of publicity that is illustrated by the example of the hot mic. An exemplar of this, complete with video to accompany the microphone, is the “47%” video captured at a Romney campaign fundraiser in 2012.¹⁴⁴ In Chapter One, I explained that the sincerity demand compels speakers to appear sincere through techniques of speech. Speakers face the challenge in light of this demand of how to balance the appearance of sincerity with audience adaptation. For Plato such adaptation was necessary for ethical communication. However, part of the anxiety about hot mic moments is the difference between public and private face that tests the central demand for sincerity. After video of Romney’s unflattering comments regarding 47% of Americans, the Obama campaign quickly labeled it a “leaked,” “secret” video, “from a closed door fundraiser,” that was telling because, “so rarely over the course of this campaign have we gotten to hear Mitt Romney say what he believes in such a revealing, unfiltered manner.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ In September of 2012, Mother Jones released 49 minutes of video that was secretly recorded during a Romney closed-door \$50,000-a-plate fundraising dinner. The camera is consistent with that found on most cellular phones and is perched between vases in the back of the room. This video was especially damaging because it resonated with the *ēthos* being constructed by the Obama campaign that Romney did not care about ordinary people. Romney went into detail about people who do not pay taxes and take responsibility for themselves. Perhaps it would have been less damaging as a public policy speech unhidden from view. As it was, Romney did not know it was being recorded suggesting that he was speaking without the broader public audience in mind. As is often the response, damage control by the campaign was to locate the comment outside of his control as a mistake—a gaffe. David Corn, “Full Secret Video of Private Romney Fundraiser,” *Mother Jones* September 18, 2012.

¹⁴⁵ Obama himself brought the video up in one of the debates, making sure to mention that Romney’s comments here “behind closed doors,” Luke Johnson, “Obama Attacks Mitt Romney’s ‘47 Percent’ Comments In Presidential Debate,” *HuffPolitics* (blog),

“I can't speak to Governor Romney's motivations,” Obama mentioned in an interview, “what I can say is that he has signed up for positions, extreme positions... And *whether he actually believes in those or not*, I have no doubt that he would carry forward some of the things that he's talked about.”¹⁴⁶ Saying one thing to a room of investors and another on the stump illustrates that public speech is crafted for effect rather than welling forth from the soul. Campaigns tend to respond to these moments by claiming that the comments were errors of speech that do not reflect what the candidate believes. This response frames the speech as out of the speaker's control and distances the speaker from some of the ethical backlash.

Huffingtonpost.com, October 16, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/16/obama-47-percent-debate_n_1972349.html.

¹⁴⁶ Ryan Reilly, “Obama: Romney Locked Into 'Extreme Positions' Even If He Doesn't Believe Them,” *Talking Points Memo* (blog), August 25, 2012, <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/livewire/obama-romney-locked-into-extreme-positions-even-if-he-doesn-t-believe-them>.

CHAPTER 4: DIALOGUE, DELIBERATION, AND THE DENIAL OF TECHNIQUE

In a June 14, 1997 speech to the graduating class of the University of California, San Diego, President Bill Clinton argued that in order to get beyond the problems of race, the nation needed to have a conversation.¹ He announced a plan titled, “One America in the 21st Century: The President's Initiative on Race” (PIR) in order to foster public discussions about race.² As an example of what practitioners would variously call dialogue or deliberation, Clinton’s vision was to facilitate communicative encounters across the nation that would stimulate Americans to think deeply and talk together about a public issue of common concern. Despite the fact that it sparked discussion about issues of race, many held Clinton's gesture toward dialogue to be only a political platitude. Accounts of the public dialogue in major media outlets focused on the role of artifice: were predetermined policy decisions being concealed by the appearance of dialogue?³ Was Clinton trying to distract the voters

¹ President Clinton's “One America Initiative” came at a time when race was by no means a sleeping giant. Quite to the contrary, 1990's U.S. culture was rife with racial struggle. The L.A. riots, Black church bombings, the O.J. Simpson trial, and the dragging death of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas are just a few examples.

² “Toward One America: A National Conversation on Race,” *U.S. Society & Values* 2, no. 3 (1997), U.S. Information Agency, <http://www.4uth.gov.ua/usa/english/society/ijse0897/ijse0897.pdf>. Clinton appointed an advisory board headed by famed historian John Hope Franklin to guide the various aspects of the Initiative and prepare a report within the year.

³ Several mainstream media accounts drew attention to the PIR’s artifice. Howard Kurtz lamented that one event was “billed as an effort to engage the country in a frank dialogue on race relations” but took the form of a “closed-door meeting with only blacks invited.” “Cabinet Secretary Hosts Blacks-Only Event,” *Washington Post*, December 7, 1997. Steven Holmes cited unnamed critics that “say the board's desultory beginning even raises the

from the unfolding Monica Lewinski scandal?⁴ That scandal only highlighted the critiques of artifice already at play because it suggested an unsavory motive for the Clinton administration to focus on an important domestic issue. Attention was paid to who was selected to be on the initiative's board and what their political predilections were. Clinton's attempt at a national dialogue on race failed, in large part, because he failed to conceal the artifice of his rhetorical labor. I will demonstrate in this chapter that all public deliberation relies upon the concealment of rhetorical *technê* to be effective.

Clinton's call for public discussion echoes a more general tendency toward dialogue and conversation as alternatives to bargaining, antagonism, or outright fighting. For example, William Keith has documented the twentieth-century shift toward discussion in the United States.⁵ It has become an American commonplace to condemn vitriolic, polemic, and otherwise divisive communication as having a negative effect on the public's ability to deliberate (even as those kinds of communication persist). An exemplar of this commonplace is the often-used admonishment to "disagree without being disagreeable."⁶

In the realm of political theory, "deliberative democracy" marks a normative model of communication processes to underwrite democracy. For political theorists such as Benjamin Barber, the quality of deliberation in a given society distinguishes the quality of its

question of whether the White House is using the panel to duck, rather than confront, the country's thorny racial issues." "Critics Say Clinton Panel About Race Lacks Focus," *New York Times*, October 12, 1997.

⁴ Presidential scandals were one reason that Carcasson and Rice cite for the PIR's failure. Carcasson and Rice, "Promise and Failure."

⁵ Keith, *Democracy as Discussion*.

⁶ For example, see "Obama Defends Choice of Rev. Warren at Inauguration: 'We Can Disagree Without Being Disagreeable,'" *Think Progress* (blog), December 18, 2008, <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2008/12/18/33898/obama-defend-warren/>.

democracy.⁷ Amy Guttmann and Dennis Thompson characterize deliberative democracy as a focus on the justification of decisions. As a form of government, “free and equal citizens (and their representatives) justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future.”⁸

The deliberative model of democracy is an alternative to the aggregate, interest-based model of democracy. The aggregate model assumed that in the context of pluralism and social complexity, social unity and shared meaning was not possible. Instead, the closest approximation of public opinion and a general preference by the public was the extent to which the public could influence governance. By maintaining a descriptive posture and muting any normative evaluation of democratic practices, the aggregate model of democracy avoided the difficult theoretical problem of justifying the evaluation of culturally specific practices through the seemingly innocuous proposition that public opinion overcame the challenges of plurality by providing an average of voters’ preferences.

Deliberation is an alternative to aggregate models that harnesses communication practices to legitimize democracy through the meaningful participation of citizens. But more than legitimizing democratic society, deliberation appears to promise to ameliorate democracy. Advocates of deliberation advance it as a means of reducing or refiguring

⁷ For Barber, “talk” sets apart strong and weak forms of democracy; it fills the role that Aristotle noted of logos as separating the work of humans from that of animals. *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 174.

⁸ *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

conflict stemming from inequality, cultural or ideological difference, and complexity.⁹ In democratic theory, “deliberative democracy” describes normative procedures consisting of strategies for fostering ethical communication that, more than better decisions, result in better relationships thought to be more immediate because the procedures foster connectedness among participants.

The terms “dialogue” and “deliberation” are used in a variety of ways by practitioners. Practitioners, such as those represented by the National Coalition of Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD), tend to imply that dialogue and deliberation are modes of communication that are distinguished primarily by purpose.¹⁰ Some exemplar methods of dialogue and deliberation include World Café, Open Space Technology, Victim-Offender Mediation, Compassionate Listening, Citizens Jury, Consensus Conferences, Study Circles, and Appreciative Inquiry. NCDD categorizes methods of facilitation according to four central purposes: exploration, conflict transformation, decision-making, and collaborative

⁹ James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 2; Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 4, 8, 14, 20. A central force that enables deliberation to amend democracy is the public sphere. As a deliberative space, it stabilizes democratic society by reducing conflict through the fair evaluation of competing claims, irrespective of social status. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 132-33. Habermas lauds the stabilizing effect of a general will that is shared by citizens because he holds that it will reduce conflict that would otherwise stem from individuals in pursuit of their own strategic interest. *Ibid.*, 131. Accordingly, deliberation is an alternative to bargaining, in which individuals work to secure their individual interest rather than a shared interest. Deliberative theory tends to view bargaining as a limited, short-term solution that fails to provide the stability of a collective will. *Between Facts and Norms*, 140, 65-70, 76-83. Similarly, Benjamin Barber laments the reduction of democratic talk to the “hedonistic speech of bargaining,” preferring the broader scope of conversation. *Strong Democracy*, 174.

¹⁰ The NCDD functions as a clearinghouse and network for practitioners who employ over twenty discrete methods to foster immediacy in groups large and small, in order to explore issues, transform conflict, make decisions, and work together.

action.¹¹ The primary difference between dialogue and deliberation is that dialogue is exploratory while deliberation is more formal and seeks some form of closure, such as a decision.¹² In the context of small groups, deliberation is an inclusive process of people reasoning together in order to solve a problem.¹³ The core purpose of dialogue and deliberation in the context of U.S. public culture is to think deeply and communicate interactively about important matters of common interest. In general, proponents of dialogue and deliberation frame their practices as correctives for real or perceived distance among citizens and between citizens and their government.

While both dialogue and deliberation have different meanings for the advocates of various facilitation methods, one common principle is the practice of distinguishing dialogue and allied forms of deliberation from more adversarial modes of communication.¹⁴ In

¹¹ National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, "Engagement Streams Framework," (2010), 2. In the exploration category, people are encouraged to learn about themselves, their community, or a particular issue at hand. They are encouraged to suspend assumptions and to create a special form of conversation that focuses on openness and listening. In the conflict transformation category, the emphasis is on resolution of conflicts and improved relationships. The focus is on trust that creates a healthy space. In the decision-making category, the goal is to produce decisions that reflect widespread assent. The focus is on fair representation of the issue, and knowledgeable, thoughtful consideration of options. Finally, the collaborative action category seeks to empower groups to solve problems and to work together to find appropriate solutions. The focus is on generating new ideas and planning the implementation of action together. *Ibid.*, 3.

¹² For example, see Rick Ross, "Skillful Discussion," in *Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communication*, ed. John Stewart (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 624.

¹³ Stephanie Burkhalter, John Gastil, and Todd Kelshaw, "A Conceptual Definition and Theoretical Model of Public Deliberation in Small Face-to-Face Groups," *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (2002).

¹⁴ A fault with this distinction is that deliberation can and often does have an adversarial component and adversarial modes of communication, such as debate, can also have deliberative components. See Douglas Ehninger, "Debating as Critical Deliberation," *Southern Speech Journal* 24 (1958).

particular, debate is almost universally used as an antipode for proponents of dialogue and deliberation.¹⁵ Akin to the broader moral privilege of communication that is purportedly *not* mediated, dialogue and deliberation are constituted through the work of negation: whatever their differences, modes of dialogue and deliberation are *not* debate.¹⁶ As the prototypical foil for good deliberative practice, debate is accused of sacrificing connection and understanding for victory through the forced choice provided by a limited adversarial frame whereas dialogue and deliberation are described as natural alternatives to debate. According to this argument, participants in dialogue and deliberation seek out the methods that turn away from the desires for conquest characteristic of debate. Dialogue and deliberation are constituted as negations of debate while debate is figured as bad artifice that only appears to provide the deliberation necessary for democracy. As a result, dialogue and deliberation are, by implication, either good artifice or non-artificial and more capable of ameliorating democracy. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, though, facilitated dialogue is not the negative of debate; all public deliberation is exactly as artificial and dependent upon technical skill.

The primary difference between debate and dialogue, in terms of technique and the appearance of artifice, is that debate often involves an explicit demonstration of skill because the formal parameters are foregrounded. Most basic definitions of debate characterize it

¹⁵ For example, see Ross, 624. For Ross, on one end of the spectrum is “raw debate” and on the other is “dialogue.”

¹⁶ Given that debate foregrounds artifice, it is no surprise that it suffers this similar fate to rhetoric. As Robert Hariman observes, discourses are often ranked by demonstrating they are not mere rhetoric. “Status,” 40.

fundamentally as a *formal* argumentation practice.¹⁷ Debates generally feature two or more sides that all share a central proposition. Each side advocates a distinct position. While positions might not be mutually exclusive, participants in a debate play distinct roles, such as the “affirmative” and the “negative.” Intercollegiate policy debate, a highly formalized version of debate practice, involves massive amounts of research once transported in stacks of plastic tubs, carried from room to room of a college campus during a tournament (portable computers have made the plastic tubs obsolete). As debate theorist and coach Gordon Mitchell explains, such contests resemble a “movie-length Federal Express commercial or an auctioneering competition gone bad.”¹⁸ This particular iteration of debate only emphasizes the artifice that is common to debate: explicit rules, special vocabulary, and often an attention to timing and the format of turn-taking.

The negative attributes that proponents of dialogue and deliberation position themselves against culminate in a case against debate. For Louise Diamond of The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, dialogue “means we sit and talk with each other... talking together all too often means debating, discussing with a view to convincing the other, arguing for our point of view, examining pro’s and con’s. In dialogue, the intention is not to advocate but to inquire; not to argue but to explore; not to convince but to discover.”¹⁹ The NCDD defines dialogue as “a process that allows people, usually in small groups, to share their

¹⁷ “Debate.” Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 13 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/debate>>. “debate, n.1”. *OED Online*. September 2013. <http://www.oed.com/>

¹⁸ Gordon R. Mitchell, *Strategic Deception: Rhetoric, Science and Politics in Missile Defense Advocacy* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), p. xvi.

¹⁹ “What is Dialogue? Definitions from Leaders in the Field,” National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, <http://ncdd.org/rc/item/1501>.

perspectives and experiences with one another about difficult issues we tend to just debate about or avoid entirely.”²⁰ Returning to President Bill Clinton’s attempt to foster racial dialogue, a number of dialogue groups advised the PIR and produced a dialogue guide that claims debate is oppositional while dialogue is cooperative; debate has winning as a goal while dialogue seeks to find common ground; debate “involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person” while dialogue “involves a real concern for the other person and does not seek to alienate or offend.”²¹ Finally, Kim Pearce claims that “dialogue is an alternative pattern of communication to: argument, criticism, debate, name calling, and influence peddling.”²²

The last chapter explored the demand placed upon speakers to conceal the artifice of their speech. This chapter will address efforts to use communication to achieve democracy. In the field of dialogue and deliberation, *seemingly* natural deliberation that is facilitated (as opposed to that which occurs without intervention) requires active concealment and denial of technique. Deliberation that seems natural refers to behavior that, instead of appearing artificial and technical, is innate, untutored, and essential. To invoke a natural category of deliberation imagines behavior that would proceed if people had not been socialized to behave otherwise. The pursuit of natural deliberation thrusts a dilemma onto facilitated deliberation: how can the intervention of facilitation proceed without introducing mediation through technique? Good deliberation must appear to provide close connection between participants without artifice. This demand on communication for the concealment of artifice

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Toward One America.”

²² Kim Pearce, *Making Better Social Worlds: Engaging in and Facilitating Dialogic Communication* (Redwood City, CA: Pearce Associates, 2002), 17.

produces the idea of unmediated speech. As a result, we will see the denial of technique and the assertion of methods that claim to be natural and without rhetorical artifice. In contrast to the foregrounding of form in debate, dialogue features less explicit metacommunication and the parameters of a discussion are more often implicit; one's techniques are more likely to be subtle and to appear natural or even seem invisible.²³

The pursuit of natural deliberation is used in this chapter to describe the process by which dialogue is privileged in contrast to other forms of deliberation. While not all practices of dialogue erase technique, this chapter will focus on those that position dialogic communication as a natural form of human interaction that promises to allow participants to escape (or at least evade) ideology, status, and other barriers to ethical and effective deliberation. Seeking impossibly unmediated deliberation romances immediacy, embraces a fantastical notion of communication agency that amounts to a dream of perfect communication. Perfect communication is not possible because deliberation always relies on skill and technique.

After a description of dialogue as a site of the pursuit of natural deliberation, this chapter presents two examples of facilitation in order to illustrate how facilitators describe the practice of their craft. From the outset, the methods examined in this chapter are quite different, each emanating from a different end of the dialogue and deliberation continuum (Open Space Technology (OST) is less formal while National Issues Forums (NIF) is more formal and decision-oriented). OST begins without any written agenda while NIF structures

²³ A diverse set of traditions use various terms to refer to techniques that are not apparent. Zen practice (as we will see echoed in Open Space Technology) is full of references to the art of doing nothing, and the Italian Court was obsessed with the aforementioned performance of nonchalance (*sprezzatura*). On the Zen technique of non-technique, see Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Pantheon, 1957).

interaction with prefigured topics and questions. Although these methods represent two ends of the facilitation spectrum and reflect different types of deliberation, they share some common aspects. First, they are both forms of deliberation as opposed to exploratory forms of dialogue. As such, they promise a final product: a decision, a new design, a shared vision, etc. Second, they both rely upon the concealment of their artifice. OST conceals technique through the themes of simplicity, voluntary action, and ordinariness while NIF uses questioning, naming, and framing to conceal its work.

When appeals for dialogue and deliberation are heeded, the results can be profound—transforming individuals and communities and improving decisions.²⁴ One of the primary benefits of dialogue is that it encourages encounters with difference. Leslie Baxter explains that a dialogic perspective places difference at the center of human experience.²⁵ The dialogic perspective provides a beneficial theorization of difference because, rather than conflict in need of reconciliation or assimilation, difference can also involve positively valenced functions such as individual growth, autonomy, stimulation, and strength.²⁶ However, when the communication techniques of dialogue succeed, it is not by eschewing artifice and forging primordial connections between people. Rather, dialogue and dialogic forms of

²⁴ For anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of dialogue and deliberation, see “Case Studies & Stories...,” National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, <http://ncdd.org/rc/item/category/case-studies-stories>.

²⁵ Leslie A. Baxter, “Communication as Dialogue,” in *Communication as—: Perspectives on Theory*, ed. Gregory Shepherd, Jeffrey. St. John, and Theodore G. Striphas (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 102.

²⁶ L. A. Baxter and L. West, “Couple Perceptions of Their Similarities and Differences: A Dialectical Analysis,” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 20 (2003); J. T. Wood et al., “Dialectic of Difference: A Thematic Analysis of Intimates' Meanings for Differences,” in *Interpretive Approaches to Interpersonal Communication*, ed. K. Carter and M. Prisnell (New York: SUNY Press, 1994).

deliberation function through the concealment of rhetorical artifice. As a practice of civic engagement, public deliberation of all kinds relies on technical skills and rhetorical techniques. According to Bill Keith, one *topos* of democratic deliberation has been how to best teach deliberation as a *technê* of civic life.²⁷ We need to understand the mediating effects of deliberation for democracy in order to understand the production of the values that today are articulated to democracy. Both in terms of what is valued and how it is affiliated with democracy, and how it comes to be the crux of what we do when we are being democratic citizens.

Dialogue, Deliberation, and Debate for Democracy

Democratic deliberation is most closely associated with the proceduralist account of Jürgen Habermas.²⁸ Habermas seeks a noncoercive method for engaging from radically different value-orientations yet culminating in consensus, which he considers a necessary precondition for rational democratic life. A major component of the deliberative model is the requirement that an audience accept the task of determining the reasons required to support a given claim (needless to say, not every claim is challenged to provide such support).²⁹ When a speech act fails to gain tacit assent, discourse is the process by which competing claims are adjudicated through a deliberative process. Hence, public deliberation carries the persistent

²⁷ Keith, *Democracy as Discussion*, 5.

²⁸ *Structural Transformation; Theory of Communicative Action; Between Facts and Norms*. Habermas's work is significant here because it is an exemplar of the proceduralist account of deliberation. This is most frequently the type that is critiqued in political theory. Such an approach seeks the conditions necessary for an ideal procedure of democracy and then defends why those will produce good decisions. Bohman, *Public Deliberation*, 16-17.

²⁹ This is communicative action as opposed to strategic action. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 96-97; *ibid.*, 94-101; Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24.

threat of being called to give a public account of the supporting reasons for a given claim.

Public deliberation is a transformative process because accepting this public orientation modifies the claims that are made. For example, claims might be couched in personal experience that is unimpeachable whereas a more universal claim would be more subject to challenge.

According to Chantal Mouffe, the deliberative approach to democracy assumes that if our procedures are deliberative, we can reach forms of agreement that are rational and democratically legitimate.³⁰ People are allowed to disagree, agree on a decision, or agree that a decision is good enough to provisionally accept at the time, so the agreement on a course of action does not imply unanimity; deliberation can “work” and still maintain divisions. Proponents of purportedly natural deliberation, however, suggest that deliberation fails to ameliorate democracy when it fails to foster immediacy and instead introduces or exacerbates unnatural distance between citizens. Proponents of dialogue and deliberation often invoke examples of artifice in order to contrast them with the sincerity of dialogue. In general, these examples suggest the appearance of technique, demonstrate artifice, or indicate humanity's less than full potential. Richard Johannesen describes the counterpart of dialogue—monologue—in an explicitly negative and seemingly unredeemable light:

In monologue the attitude of senders toward receivers is marked by such qualities as deception, superiority, exploitation, dogmatism, domination, insincerity, pretense, personal display, self-aggrandizement, coercion, distrust, self-defensiveness, and viewing the Other as an object to be manipulated.... Audience feedback is used only to further the speaker's purpose; an honest response from receivers is not wanted or is precluded. Often choices are narrowed and consequences obscured.³¹

³⁰ Chantal Mouffe, “Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?,” *Social Research* 66, no. 3 (1999).

³¹ Richard L. Johannesen, “Attitude of Speaker Toward Audience: A Significant Concept for Contemporary Rhetorical Theory and Criticism,” *Central States Speech Journal* 25, no. 2 (1974): 96.

Dialogue asks much of participants. The inventory of attitudes associated with ideal dialogue form an impressive array—and they correspond seamlessly with the demands of democratic deliberation. For Johannesen, dialogue is marked by “honesty, concern for the welfare of the Other, trust, genuineness, open-mindedness, equality, mutual respect, empathy, directness, lack of pretense, non-manipulative intent, encouragement of free expression, and acceptance of the Other as a unique individual regardless of differences over belief or behavior.”³²

Reading this list, one is struck by how perfectly it responds to the problems of deliberation. Honesty addresses the problem of deceit, encouragement of free expression addresses the problem of stifled speech, acceptance regardless of differences addresses the problem of pluralism, and so on—at every turn, one recognizes a solution to a shortcoming of deliberation.

Debate, envisioned as the Dark Side of deliberation, is insufficient to the task of facilitating democracy primarily because of artifice. Debate may, at times, appear to provide reasoned deliberative thinking. However here, debate is to deliberation what rhetoric is to truth for Plato; the appearance is a chimera of the real thing. In *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*, Deborah Tannen argues against the culture of argument. “When you're having an argument with someone,” Tannen writes, “your goal is not to listen and understand. Instead, you use every tactic you can think of—including distorting what your opponent just said—in order to win the argument.”³³ Beyond the attitude of participants,

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 5. This pejorative conception of argument ignores the wealth of argumentation theory that demonstrates more than competitive ends. At the heart of argumentation is reason-giving. Reducing argumentation to the competition of claims ignores the role of full and free public debate that helps constitute civil society and public culture. Beyond victory by gaining audience assent, argumentation sharpens the critical thinking and communicative

Tannen takes issue with the form that debate takes—the adversarial frame. She claims that it encourages artificial positions, lies, distortion, and flattery—all in the trajectory of trying to win instead of losing.

The Pursuit of Natural Deliberation in Facilitated Dialogue

This section focuses on dialogue as a mode of deliberative practice and site of the pursuit of natural deliberation. I will begin by describing the prescriptive approach to theorizing dialogue and then I will discuss three common themes from the diverse body of dialogue theory that are implicated in the work of concealment: dialogue is envisioned as spontaneous, immediate, and responsive. Finally, I will pose the problem of facilitation as a practice that simultaneously denies and enacts concealment in dialogue.

Dialogue is a notoriously slippery term and is, not surprisingly, unevenly theorized.³⁴ In the field of communication studies, the shift toward dialogue involves two distinct approaches: descriptive and prescriptive. It is the prescriptive approach to theorizing, practicing, and facilitating dialogue that tends to pursue unmediated forms of deliberation.³⁵ It is prescriptive because it privileges dialogue above forms of communication taken to be

skills of participants. Colbert and Biggers, “Why Should We Support Debate.”; Keefe, Harte, and Norton, *Introduction to Debate*; William Semlak and Donald Shields, “The Effect of Debate Training on Students Participation in the Bicentennial Youth Debates,” *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 13 (1977); Alfred Snider, “Speech Communication Must be Emphasized in American High Schools: A Survey of Empirical Findings,” *The Rostrum* (January 1993).

³⁴ See Ronald C. Arnett, “Situating a Dialogic Ethics: A Dialogic Confession,” in *The Handbook of Communication Ethics*, ed. George Cheney, Steve May, and Debashish Munshi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 50.

³⁵ On the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive approaches to dialogue, see John Stewart and Karen Zediker, “Dialogue as Tensional, Ethical Practice,” *Southern Communication Journal* 65, no. 2-3 (2000): 225-27. In the field of communication studies, the descriptive work tends to follow that of Mikhail Bakhtin and the prescriptive work of Martin Buber.

monological. For example, the implication of Floyd Matson and Ashley Montagu's characterization of dialogue as a revolution in the study of communication privileges dialogue in intellectual and ethical terms. In contrast to the earlier technological revolution, which was "predominantly a practical and mechanical matter," the revolution of dialogue provides a more "humane" theory of communication.³⁶ Matson and Montagu argue that dialogue departs from earlier approaches to communication by focusing less on means and more on ends such as self-discovery, communion with others, the formation of community, and so on.³⁷ These ends are almost exclusively viewed in positive, ethical terms while monological communication is seen as unethical. Krippendorff, for example, describes dialogue as the "most noble form of human interaction."³⁸ For Matson and Montagu, dialogue is an alternative to monological, linear communication directed at strategy and control.³⁹ Johannesen suggests, "Dialogue is held to be more fully human, humane, and facilitative of personal self-fulfillment than is monologue."⁴⁰ Finally, as Kim Pearce formulates it, sincerity as a way of being is part of the spirit of dialogue.⁴¹ Participants in dialogue, instead, seek understanding, connection, and make themselves present to each other.

³⁶ Floyd W. Matson and Ashley Montagu, eds., *The Human Dialogue: Perspectives on Communication* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 2, 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁸ Klaus Krippendorff, "On the Ethics of Constructing Communication," in *Rethinking Communication*, ed. Brenda Dervin, et al. (Newbury Park: Sage, 1989), 94.

³⁹ Matson and Montagu, *The Human Dialogue: Perspectives on Communication*.

⁴⁰ Johannesen, "Attitude of Speaker Toward Audience," 96.

⁴¹ Pearce, *Making Better Social Worlds*, 14.

In communication theory of dialogue, the work that seeks to naturalize deliberation is often inspired by Martin Buber's prescriptive approach in contrast to the more descriptive approach of Mikhail Bakhtin.⁴² For Buber, dialogue is an ethical posture that one assumes when one "really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular beings and

⁴² See *Dialogue* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004); Baxter, "Communication as Dialogue."; Ronald C. Arnett, *Communication and Community: Implications of Martin Buber's Dialogue* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986); Kenneth N. Cissna and Rob Anderson, "Communication and the Ground of Dialogue," in *The Reach of Dialogue*; Maurice S. Friedman, *The Confirmation of Otherness, in Family, Community, and Society* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983); Ronald C. Arnett, "A Dialogic Ethic 'Between' Buber and Levinas: A Responsive Ethical 'I'," in *Dialogue*; Kenneth N. Cissna and Rob Anderson, "Public Dialogue and Intellectual History: Hearing Multiple Voices," in *Dialogue*; Richard L. Johannesen, "The Emerging Concept of Communication as Dialogue," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 57, no. 4 (1971).

In addition to Martin Buber, Carl Rogers features prominently in notions of genuineness and authenticity found in contemporary conceptions of dialogue. Rogers was an important figure in the development of psychotherapy and his writings form a major basis for work on dialogue in communication studies. Rogers is very much a common source for people like Ken Cissna and Rob Anderson. For example, in their edited collection Rogers is included. One of the main commonalities or principles that Rogers observes in positive therapeutic change is the genuineness of the therapist. This is a revealing stipulation. Rogers writes, "the therapist should be, within the confines of this relationship, a congruent, genuine, integrated person. It means that within the relationship he is freely and deeply himself, with his actual experience accurately represented by his awareness of himself. It is the opposite of presenting a façade, either knowingly or unknowingly." Carl R. Rogers, "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change," in *The Reach of Dialogue*, 130. Of note is that Rogers' most important work is his 1951 book, *Client-Centered Therapy*. Rogers illustrates how being genuine entails presenting their real self as opposed to a façade. This means that the therapist is not employing artifice but simply presenting their true self.

In contrast, Mikhail Bakhtin provides the basis for much of the descriptive work on dialogue. His emphasis was on the study of language. Rather than something to achieve, dialogue was a condition of human discourse. While he acknowledged everyday examples of dialogue, he also used the term to refer to less immediate encounters, such as written exchanges among academics, which might span vast distances of time and space. What makes these dialogues is a condition of address. "The utterance is addressed not only to its own object but also to others' speech about it. ... Even the slightest allusion to another's utterance gives the speech a dialogic turn." *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 94. For a general account of Bakhtinian dialogue for communication studies, see Baxter, "Communication as Dialogue."

turns to them.”⁴³ A central component of Buber’s work is the objectifying shift found in his modes of human relation: I-Thou and I-It. For Buber, dialogue marks a distinction between these two primordial human orientations. “The basic word I-Thou can only be spoken with one’s whole being. The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one’s whole being.”⁴⁴ This distinction in orientation strikes down to the core of presence. For Ken Cissna and Rob Anderson, the move toward I-Thou brings the “sincere caring” of dialogue, “rather than a primary focus on just winning or losing.”⁴⁵ This concern for the Other, as opposed to the competitive drive, is enabled by the shift away from the objectifying “I-It” relation. Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett indicate this when they write, “dialogue... keeps communicators more focused on mutuality and relationship than on self-interest, more concerned with discovering than with disclosing, more interested in access than in domination.”⁴⁶

The prescriptive account of dialogue is part of a more general naturalization of deliberation as a means to ameliorate democracy. There is an effort to insinuate dialogue as communication that is so direct as to lack mediation altogether. Representing this effort through the work of Buber is Abraham Kaplan in “The Life of Dialogue.” Kaplan explains, “there is a certain kind of communication which we all know... let me call it ‘communion’ instead of communication.”⁴⁷ He argues that in communion, there is a direct relationship

⁴³ Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. Roland Gregor Smith (London: Routledge, 1954), 19.

⁴⁴ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, ed. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Scribner, 1970), 1.

⁴⁵ Cissna and Anderson, “Communication and the Ground of Dialogue,” 14.

⁴⁶ “Introduction,” 2.

⁴⁷ Abraham Kaplan, “The Life of Dialogue,” in *The Reach of Dialogue*, 38.

between human beings that is unmediated, “it is as though the human beings are put directly into contact with one another.”⁴⁸ Kaplan concedes, “although in a strict sense there are, of course, many mediating processes, somehow they do not have the significance in communion which they have in communication.”⁴⁹ Kaplan uses the examples of a friend hugging you when you are grieving and eye contact that quickly assumes romantic meaning. He notes that no words are exchanged in these moments, but “two human beings, for those brief moments, have become just one.”⁵⁰

What this valuation of presence misses is that presence is tied to *ēthos* as it is derived from rhetorical persona. We never have direct access that enables us to judge, with certainty, if someone is paying attention to us; we can only infer it from external signs. Abraham Kaplan uses the well-worn distinction between talking *with* and talking *at* someone.⁵¹ But what does this distinction reveal? It does not signal a direct, unmediated connection; it indicates different modes of mediating “presence,” judged by an audience based on available information. When Kaplan exemplifies communion with the idiom, “keep in touch with me,” he fails to apprehend that such a trope is used to recover the dream of communion, not to reflect its achievement.

First, spontaneous dialogue is conceptualized as an emergent practice; it is creative and spontaneous without being fully intentionally directed. Resembling the improvisational quality of a jazz pianist, dialogue is imagined to be interactional and ephemeral—depending

⁴⁸ Unlike transmission, wherein “the human beings appear only at the termini.” Ibid., 39.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

on a particular moment at the intersection of numerous causal forces.⁵² As such, dialogue represents the creation of something new. Situated “between” persons, the dialogic encounter is not fully controlled by any agent.⁵³ The constitutive spontaneity of dialogue requires that facilitation conceal its work; if the work of facilitation is not concealed, then the dialogue will not appear spontaneous as the facilitator fumbles with notecards and reads questions that force the discussion as opposed to appearing to naturally emerge from the interaction. As Anderson asks, “How do we deal theoretically with the essentially unplanned nature of meaningful moments of connection that may be accidental, serendipitous, ineffable, even ephemeral, but nevertheless relationally crucial?”⁵⁴ The answer has come in the proliferation of dialogue practitioners who attempt to facilitate moments that are otherwise unplanned and serendipitous.

In addition, dialogue tends to be associated with a quality of immediacy wherein the self is made present to the other. This requires what Henry Johnstone termed “self-risk” because if one is open-minded enough to be present to another, then one is open to being changed as a result.⁵⁵ This characteristic is thought to be qualitatively different from other

⁵² According to Cissna and Anderson, dialogue assumes that speech is present and that participants in dialogue “create communication that is, to a large extent, unscripted and unrehearsed.” Cissna and Anderson, “Communication and the Ground of Dialogue,” 14.

⁵³ For Bohm, dialogue is the creation of something new through interaction. The problem of communication is made productive because the gap between the self and other that generates a gap in response makes something new and then is responded to itself. This unpredictability produces unanticipated consequences. David Bohm, *On dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁴ Rob Anderson and Kenneth N. Cissna, “Fresh Perspectives in Dialogue Theory,” *Communication Theory* 18, no. 1 (2008): 3.

⁵⁵ Henry W. Johnstone, *Validity and Rhetoric in Philosophical Argument* (University Park, PA: Dialogue Press of Man & World, 1978); Keith, 180.

forms of communication, even dyadic “conversation” in which individuals might exchange statements yet never achieve much presence. Each is speaking and hearing, but there is little of the listening described in dialogue theory. More than temporal and spatial immediacy, dialogue is aligned with a spiritual or metaphysical something-more presence of immediacy. As Cissna and Anderson explain, one central characteristic of dialogue is an immediacy of presence that is antithetical to strategic planning.⁵⁶ Cissna determines that participants in dialogue are “available” and “relatively uninterested in orchestrating specific outcomes or consequences.”⁵⁷ Kaplan describes this aspect of dialogue: “If I am really talking with you, I have nothing to say; what I say arises as you and I genuinely relate to one another. I do not know beforehand who I will be, because I am open to you just as you are open to me.... self and other are now so intertwined that we need new conceptual frameworks, new categories to describe what is happening.”⁵⁸

Finally, dialogue is presumed to be responsive. Central to the process of dialogue is responsiveness via questioning that is understood to be distinct from statements, which are the usual response in debate. Walter Ong, in *The Presence of the Word*, argues that it is response that allows dialogue to produce new and undetermined knowledge, “it moves from determined points of departure toward an undetermined goal, for in dialogue the utterance of each individual is decided not merely by the individual himself but by the preceding remark of the interlocutor to whom his remark is a reply.”⁵⁹ Questions, as generative of response, are

⁵⁶ Cissna and Anderson, “Communication and the Ground of Dialogue,” 14.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁸ Kaplan, “The Life of Dialogue,” 40.

⁵⁹ Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 300-01.

central to numerous methods of facilitation.⁶⁰ As Harrison Owen explains, “questions create space as opposed to statements, which make for closure.”⁶¹ Carol Hwoschinsky regards questions as central to the practice of Compassionate Listening, “Strategic questions can be helpful to steer the person to the subject we have come to hear: namely, their personal experience of the situation they are in.”⁶² As Kim Pearce suggests when a participant is telling a story, a facilitator should *ask questions* when parts are underdeveloped in order to “help” them tell a better story.⁶³ Rather than telling them their story is incomplete, the facilitator asks questions until she or he is satisfied with the story being told.

Facilitation

The degree to which dialogue relies on concealment is heightened in the context of facilitation. Facilitated public dialogues are held in order to contribute to better deliberation on a matter of shared interest. It is often hoped that innovative solutions will emerge from a public dialogue. Facilitation is a problem for those who associate a lack of mediation with naturalism in deliberation because it threatens to undermine the spontaneity, immediacy, and responsiveness of dialogue.⁶⁴ Because this chapter will demonstrate that dialogue, like debate or any other form of public communication, relies upon concealment of artifice to produce its

⁶⁰ Christopher July Phillips, *Socrates Café: A Fresh Taste of Philosophy* (New York: Norton, 2001), 1-35; Andrea Cohen, *Practicing the Art of Compassionate Listening* (Indianola, WA: The Compassionate Listening Project, 2011), 46-52.

⁶¹ Harrison Owen, *The Power of Spirit: How Organizations Transform* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2000), 74.

⁶² Carol Hwoschinsky, *Listening With the Heart: A Guide For Compassionate Listening* (The Compassionate Listening Project, 2001), 75.

⁶³ Pearce, *Making Better Social Worlds*, 44.

⁶⁴ Arnett, “Situating a Dialogic Ethics: A Dialogic Confession,” 51.

persuasive effects, facilitation is a useful domain to examine. It is in facilitation, rather than in unplanned dialogic encounters, that we should expect to notice the work of concealment in highest relief. This section will describe the problem of facilitation for dialogue and turn to two seemingly divergent methods of facilitating dialogic deliberation: Open Space Technology (OST) and National Issues Forums (NIF).

The National Issues Forum (NIF), focused on decision-making, is usually formatted as a single, two-hour meeting. In coordination with the Kettering Foundation, NIF focus on how public issues are identified and rhetorically invented for forum audiences. NIF have a rigorous process of “naming and framing” issues as discrete choices to be discussed using formal written guides and trained facilitators. In contrast, Open Space Technology (OST) is an application of self-organizing principles of organizational transformation usually held over several days. Participants, guided by a shared purpose, explore and collaborate in self-guided teams. In terms of the NCDD's Engagement Streams Framework, NIF and OST are different approaches, but both forms of public deliberation attempt to leverage the power of dialogue through the concealment of artifice.

Open Space Technology

That Harrison Owen prefers the title “discoverer” to “inventor” of OST is a revealing bit of minutia. He maintains that this method of group discussion has always existed in social life because it is part of human nature.⁶⁵ In terms of the NCDD's Engagement Streams Framework, OST is focused on exploration and collaborative action. OST requires that there is a necessary, urgent, and complex issue in the balance and that there must be passion,

⁶⁵ Owen describes the aspects of Open Space, such as the bulletin Board and the marketplace, as universal and natural phenomena that link humans (Harrison Owen, “Expanding Our Now: The Story of Open Space Technology,” Berrett-Koehler Publishers, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10315436>.)

conflict, and diversity in people and points of view.⁶⁶ As its name suggests, a central figure of OST meetings is an open space—in the middle of a circle of chairs facing each other. When participants arrive at a meeting place, such as the company’s warehouse, it has been reconfigured to feature this open space. In the middle of the circle of chairs there is only a blank flip chart. Participants will also notice a nearly blank wall to the side with a few Post-It notes. They are asked to suggest topics for discussion and work together to schedule and combine sessions.

Upon this apparently austere setting is staged a deliberative practice that works to conceal its staging. Open Space is, for Owen, akin to a natural state that we must retrain ourselves to practice. Owen states that the driving force of OST is “the primal power of self-organization.”⁶⁷ Open Space does not include attention to training people how to deliberate. Rather, OST attempts to untrain how people have come to insert structure and control in deliberation. Owen is very clear that there ought not be any limits on discussion; facilitation in OST is a practice of actively working to appear as if little is being done.⁶⁸ As Owen describes, “Come to a circle, take a deep breath, create the bulletin board, open the marketplace, and go to work. It really is that simple.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Harrison Owen, *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008), 16.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁶⁸ Most of what the facilitator does occurs before the meeting, such as helping to design the invitation, meeting with hosts, selecting the purpose, and so on. Immediately before the meeting, Owen likes to perform a deep meditation that enables him to be fully present at the opening of the meeting. During the breakout sessions, he reads and takes naps. *Ibid.*, 62-63.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

Since Open Space Technology began in the 1980s, there have been thousands of meetings in at least 124 countries involving millions of people. Groups range in size from 5 to 2000. They are used to help design products, create strategic visions, organize communities, renew organizations, and so on.⁷⁰ There has been an annual conference, an Open Space on Open Space (OSonOS), every year since 1992. Open Space appears to be well liked by participants; there is an abundance of positive anecdotes shared by OST facilitators and reported in Owen's books.⁷¹ Some results are minor, but influential, and reflect the effect of practicing a different technique of deliberation.⁷²

Each Open Space features an invitation that participants respond to by coming to the meeting. The invitation is a crucial aspect of OST, and facilitators write entire guidebooks on how to design an invitation that, without mandating attendance, will gain the highest voluntary turnout possible.⁷³ In keeping with the general "less is more" approach, Owen and other OST facilitators suggest that the invitation should be very simple, say very little about the method of OST, and emphasize that only those who wish will come together for a stated purpose. For example:

⁷⁰ Ibid., 6-7.

⁷¹ For example, Owen tells the story of a gathering for the National Education Association in which the evaluation, scale of 1 to 10, averaged a 9.3. What is more generally claimed is that participants in open space feel that the experience was positive. Ibid., 7.

⁷² For example, Owen tells the story of Bank Of Montreal (BOM) executives who, after an Open Space event, decided that even regular meetings should be held in a circle without a table. Owen, "Expanding Our Now," 57.

⁷³ Michael Herman, "Open Space Technology: An Inviting Guide," (2006, http://www.michaelherman.com/publications/inviting_guide.pdf).

What Good Can We Make of 9/11?

You are invited...

...to dream and work, to scheme and strategize, with others.

Please come to this get-together of people who want to make 9/11 count for something good in the world.

This is a meeting of kids and elders, from all backgrounds, religions and traditions, the wider the viewpoints the broader the range of practical plans we'll devise!

There are no speakers, no predetermined outcomes: you will meet others on-on-one and in small groups to find each other's wisdom, to design a better future. It's about celebrating life!

There will be someone there with whom you need to talk.

What will the result be? We cannot know. We will all create the outcomes together. We are hoping we change the future...and us.

Where: xxx

When: Wednesday, September 11, 2002, from 3:00pm to 7:00pm. Why then? Because we are looking for people with enough commitment to this higher work to take off early from their jobs.

Cost: You may attend this event for free.

Come and see what people together can do.

An invitation from facilitator Douglas D. Germann, Sr. Available at www.openingspace.net

While there is no training for participants, there is what Owen describes as the “Four Principles and One Law,” although as Harrison Owen says, it is “never to be taken with total seriousness.”⁷⁴ Owen suggests that facilitators post the Four Principles on a wall in the meeting room:

- Whoever comes is the right people
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
- Whenever it starts is the right time
- When it's over, it's over⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Finally, The Law of Two Feet is written onto a sign and posted in the meeting room as well: “If, during our time together, you find yourself in any situation where you are neither learning nor contributing, use your two feet and go to some more productive place.”⁷⁶ This law is intended to keep people actively participating and encourages people to think of their presence as voluntary.

Owen naturalizes his technique by turning to an African culture that he considers to be outside of the modern lessons that we must unlearn.⁷⁷ In the 1960’s Owen travelled to a small West African village (in present day Liberia) where he noticed a group holding a multi-day festival with little overt or obvious planning. As Owen writes, “I do not claim to have the whole answer to the mystery of the Balamah but at least part of their secret lay in the fact that the village (like all West African villages) was laid out in a circle, with an open space in the middle.”⁷⁸ This experience led Owen to wonder how this manner of being together might be adapted to other groups. The Open Space method that he subsequently developed mirrors the aforementioned aspects central to dialogue; it is characterized by the appearance of spontaneity, immediacy, and responsiveness.

A Spontaneous Breath

While observing the Balamah tribe, Owen noticed that their celebration tended to have a breath-like rhythm. “The circle came alive with ceremony, speeches, and above all

⁷⁶ Owen, *User's Guide*, 95.

⁷⁷ There is a wealth of scholarship available to support a strong critique of the notion that Owen’s observations in Africa demonstrate a primitive, natural, non-technological, pre-modern way of life. Suffice to say that Owen relies upon his colonial gaze in order to see the Balamah as being without technique. See Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology & the Colonial Encounter* (London: Ithaca Press, 1973); Renaat Devisch and Francis B. Nyamnjoh, eds., *Postcolonial Turn: Re-Imagining Anthropology and Africa* (Netherlands: Langaa, 2011).

⁷⁸ *User's*, 5; See *Expanding*, 23-5.

dance,” he writes. “Intensity rose to a peak, and then peaked again, until at last it ebbed as villagers flowed outward to their homes.... and just as no planning committee is required for respiration, none was needed in Balamah either.”⁷⁹ Owen argues that this exemplifies the “magic” of self-organization, wherein “structure is constantly in the process of formation, adjusting to the changing environment, and control is exercised from the most appropriate point.”⁸⁰ Owen's theory of self-organization assumes that artifice can be removed and that modern humans can be returned to a natural state of organic chaos.⁸¹ This account ignores the communicative work that enables organization, including self-organization. Owen claims, “community is not something you have to work on, train for, or design. It just happens as a natural phenomenon.”⁸² His assumption is that humans' natural state is communal, and divisions are our creation and tend to dominate.⁸³

While Owen rejects artifice in favor of seemingly natural processes, he is aware of the need to create a certain appearance while performing as a facilitator. While Open Space is articulated with spontaneity, this is paradoxically achieved through a careful plan. In the context of a method of facilitating dialogue that promises to emerge organically, the presence of the Four Principles, written beforehand and governing the interaction to emerge, might seem counterintuitive. Owen claims that they are descriptive and not prescriptive. Displaying his keen awareness of creating an effective appearance of unrehearsedness, he assumes an

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Owen, *The Power of Spirit*, 122.

⁸¹ Ibid., 18.

⁸² Ibid., 122.

⁸³ Ibid., 123.

unscripted performative posture when he tells participants about these principles. “As nearly as possible,” he writes “without seeming trite or cute, I present the principles in an offhanded way, as something that people might find helpful to keep in mind.”⁸⁴

Immediate Presence

His experience in Africa also prompted Owen to reflect on how the circle shape allowed the Balamah to be present to each other. Owen writes, “My experience tells me that the circle is the fundamental geometry of open human communication. A circle has no head or foot, no high or low, no sides to take; in a circle, people can simply be with each other—face-to-face. After all we do not have a *square* of friends, and on a cold winter's night it is nice to be part of the *family circle*.... genuine, open, free communication tends to occur only at a minimum. Circles create communication.”⁸⁵

Presence is a key aspect of facilitating Open Space.⁸⁶ As Owen explains, “it turns out to be less a question of *doing* than of *being*.”⁸⁷ The ideal form of the facilitator is, for Owen, “totally present and absolutely invisible.”⁸⁸ The facilitator must “[be] the truth” by “reflecting an essential, powerful, and good humanity in the way one is.”⁸⁹ This concept of

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Owen, *User's Guide*, 5. The circle is a common theme found in facilitated dialogue. Charles Garfield, Cindy Spring, and Sedonia Cahill, *Wisdom Circles: A Guide to Self-Discovery and Community Building in Small Groups* (New York: Hyperion, 1998); The “study circle” was a significant part of the Chautauqua Movement in the United States. Keith, 218-23.

⁸⁶ Owen refers to the Four-Fold Way of Angeles Arrien when he describes what is necessary to be authentically present while facilitating and Open Space.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Owen, *User's Guide*, 61.

truth telling echoes the appearance of sincerity in dialogue more generally as Owen describes, “when human beings are in the presence of one who tells the truth, they feel no separation between saying and doing.... To stand in the presence of the truth is to understand, in very immediate terms, one's strengths and weaknesses. Not a word of external judgment need be spoken.”⁹⁰

Responsive

Finally, Owen noticed two other mechanisms in the life of the Balamah that were used to organize their affairs and exchanges among each other: the community bulletin board and the village marketplace. “Both mechanisms are so ancient and ingrained in the human experience that explaining the rules is unnecessary. Of course if the village marketplace has not been a part of your experience, a shopping mall will do.”⁹¹ It is the magic of self-organization that Owen lauds—structure that emerges from the group as a task is performed. The structure, as a result, is thought to be responsive to the group, their needs, and abilities. “That structure may be hierarchical, a network, circular, some other shape, or hardly any shape at all, but its sole justification for existence is that it works. And when it doesn’t work, let it go and allow another structure to appear in its place. Under the conditions of self-organization, structure happens all by itself, every time.”⁹²

The notion that Open Space is self-organizing and, as a result, built upon being responsive to participants leads Owen and practitioners to eschew the notion of technique. In this way Open Space is an anti-technique technique of group communication. While it is

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 6.

⁹² Owen, *The Power of Spirit*, 124.

known as a technology, the term is jocular to some degree. He admits that it is a technê in some respects, but is unwilling to fully embrace the notion of technology and technique. Owen explicitly states, “this is not a ‘cookbook technology.’”⁹³ Nevertheless, Owen delineates a plethora of preparatory and facilitative actions. He even goes so far as to provide verbatim transcripts of what to say but notes “this is not about learning your lines. Take what I have to offer and make it your own with whatever modifications suit your own personal style.”⁹⁴

The OST Technique

Despite attempts to conceal its artifice and deny the application of technique, OST employs specific techniques for effective deliberation. These techniques produce the positive effects of deliberation while producing the appearance of ordinary, non-technique. In this section, I describe how OST style is organized around simplicity, agency, and ordinariness.

First, OST is designed to be simple by doing as little as possible.⁹⁵ Owen describes the style as, simply, to “be.”⁹⁶ “The more done, the less accomplished. It is necessary to be physically on hand, be fully present, be the truth, and then get out of the way. As the world would see it, the ultimate facilitator will do nothing and remain invisible.”⁹⁷ The goal of

⁹³ Owen, *User’s Guide*, 55.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ OST is not the only method of Dialogue and Deliberation facilitation that employs such a “less is more” approach. For example, Future Search employs a “hands-off intervention” indicated by the slogan, “Don’t Just Do Something, Stand There.” Marvin Ross Weisbord, *Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2000), 155.

⁹⁶ Owen, *The Power of Spirit*, 106.

⁹⁷ Owen, *User’s Guide*, 62.

creating time and space for the group requires that the facilitator conceal the work they do in order to appear invisible. The process is described in very simple terms. There is a sort of spectacle of what is considered simple. “When the people arrived, it was clear that this was not business as usual. To begin with, there was no advance agenda. People knew only when the meeting would start, when it would end, and that somehow (as yet undefined) they would accomplish the task before them.... What they found were two large concentric circles of chairs, with nothing in the middle and a blank space of wall behind.”⁹⁸ Open Space seems very simple, and it is designed to appear this way.⁹⁹ The invitation says very little, and stimulates people's imagination and leverages the persuasive power of the enthymeme. “OST, for those unfamiliar with the approach, is simplicity itself. Groups of people sharing a common concern for a complex issue are invited to sit in a circle, identify the relevant sub-issues by posting them on a bulletin board, work out the time and space arrangements for their discussions in a market place setting – and then go to work. There is no prior training, or ‘warm-up activities,’ little obvious facilitation, and for all pretenses and purposes, the whole thing runs all by itself.”¹⁰⁰

Second, from the Law of Two Feet implying the simplicity and effectiveness of individual action to the emphasis on voluntary attendance, OST romances agency. The Law of Two Feet is a mechanism for emphasizing the presumption of agency. “All too often we sit politely, getting angrier and angrier, as our time is being wasted....How much better it

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Owen, *User's Guide*, 29.

¹⁰⁰ Harrison Owen, “Introduction: Wave Rider,” <http://www.openspaceworld.com/waveriders.htm>.

would be simply to go on our way and do something useful.”¹⁰¹ The assumption is that when people are provided freedom and there is a crisis, their voluntary assertion of agency will allow their voice to be manifest and heard. There is the appearance of voluntary self-selection.¹⁰²

In the world of Open Space, where passion and responsibility are the essential ingredients, a command from a superior does not go very far. There is a more important word: *volunteer*. Voluntary self-selection for people who care is the only useful ticket of admission to an Open Space. Being a volunteer is the prime prerequisite for the full expression of passion and responsibility, and only fools volunteer for something they neither understand nor care about.¹⁰³

The focus on voluntarism allows coercive participation to remain concealed. Owen writes of an Open Space held at a new cellular phone company in Venezuela. TELCEL was experiencing such rapid growth that there was rampant confusion and frustration. Every employee was invited to come to the Open Space, but no additional compensation was offered. Of the 263 employees, 252 attended.¹⁰⁴ Owen views this number as proof that voluntary self-selection can yield high participation. It is also plausible that workers felt compelled to come even without being paid. It is difficult to attribute cause in such cases, particularly if the absence of monetary compensation is the only distinction between coercive and voluntary attendance.

Finally, there is an effort to draw attention away from the artifice of Open Space by displacing attention onto ordinariness. Owen recognizes that if there is too much attention paid to the process of Open Space, suspicion can be aroused. He notices, for example, that

¹⁰¹ Owen, *User's Guide*, 95.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Owen, *User's Guide*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 10.

there is suspicion when a consultant tells a wary client to “trust the process.” Instead, he advises OST practitioners and clients to “trust the people.”¹⁰⁵ He reports that there is less suspicion with this turn of phrase. In accordance with this effort to place attention on the voice of the people in his guide to Open Space, Owen spends several pages discussing where to place the computers. He suggests not hiding the computers because this could create suspicion. Instead, they should be placed in plain sight so that everyone could see who is writing what and how the proceedings are constructed.¹⁰⁶ Rather than the proceedings being produced outside of view, where no one can see them, Owen recommends showing the computers where people are typing and recording the meeting.

Similarly, Owen tends to use handwritten signs. The “Four Principles and One Law” is written by hand on the wall, and Owen likes to write, “prepared to be surprised” and post it as well. Although the signs are not replaced frequently (or at all), Owen uses the low-tech technique of handwriting in order to make the signs appear more ordinary. He notes that this procedure reinforces the notion that “this occasion is a working situation—no-frills, just people with a common concern gathering to get something done.”¹⁰⁷ In addition, Owen claims that the handwritten signs function to render Open Space the purview of ordinary people. The handwritten signage helps to “build the case that anybody with a good head and good heart can do it. Open space is not something that takes a large budget, an army of support staff, and weeks of advance preparation. Anybody can do it, any time they want to, even if they are small in number with little time available. By the conclusion of the gathering

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 69.

it should be obvious to all that open space is, in fact, the people's technology.”¹⁰⁸ The signs play another role in the concealment of artifice by functioning as a hidden teleprompter of sorts for the facilitator.¹⁰⁹ Owen advises new facilitators to place the signs on highly visible walls in the order of the Open Space's progression thereby assisting the facilitator if they forget what to say or do next; all they need to do is look up at the wall, off into the distance, and they will see what is next in the process.

National Issues Forums

The National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) promotes a method of deliberation that uses guided public forum discussions. National Issues Forums (NIF) is a nonpartisan network of civic, educational, and professional organizations and individuals that seek to promote public deliberation.¹¹⁰ In terms of the NCDD's Engagement Streams Framework, NIF is focused on decision-making. NIF states that it is motivated by “the simple notion that people need to come together to reason and talk—to deliberate about common problems.”¹¹¹ Forums are organized around a shared text known as an issue book that includes questionnaires that are sent back to NIF for a nation-wide report on the outcomes of the forums. The Kettering Foundation, a partner organization created by NIFI, assists in producing these books, corresponding moderator guides, and short videos intended to initiate the discussion. Before

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 82.

¹¹⁰ National Issues Forums Institute, “NIF: An Overview,” para. 1. The National Issues Forums is a network supported by a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization--the National Issues Forums Institute, which was chartered in 1989. For a concise institutional history of NIF, see Libby Kingseed, “For More than 25 Years,” National Issues Forums Institute, <http://www.nifi.org/about/history.aspx>.

¹¹¹ National Issues Forums Institute, “NIF: An Overview,” para. 1.

the forum, NIF forum hosts distribute issue books that describe a public issue and the major choices for addressing it. Forums range in size from several people to hundreds speaking face to face about the issue and the (usually three) designated options.¹¹² As of 2008, about 4000 organizations were using NIF materials, and close to one million issue books had been sold or distributed.¹¹³ In addition, as of 2008, organizations in 32 countries were putting the NIF approach into practice for their own local and national issues.¹¹⁴

Every year, NIFI and Kettering identify major issues of public concern. Issue books are generated that give an overview of the problem and identify about three general approaches. When a local group, such as a school, civic group, or other community organization wishes to host a forum, it selects from NIFI and Kettering produced materials, including the aforementioned issue books as well as short videos and signage for the event. After each forum, participants are asked to complete a questionnaire that is sent back to the NIF national office. Results are compiled into an annual report summarizing the outcomes of the deliberations.¹¹⁵

The issue books are intended to structure the deliberation that will occur at subsequent forums by providing a “broad range of choices” for citizens to consider.¹¹⁶ This

¹¹² Ibid., para. 4.

¹¹³ Presumably many more have been distributed through photocopy.

¹¹⁴ Kettering Foundation, “We Have to Choose: Democracy and Deliberative Politics,” 42.

¹¹⁵ The questionnaire is a central component for NIF. There is both a pre-and post-forum questionnaire. They are designed to help “participants direct their thinking to the complexities of the issue, to take an assessment of the views they will bring to the discussion. Its structure focuses on what is at stake in the issue and what trade-offs might be involved.” Kettering Foundation, “Moderator Guide: Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?,” 4.

¹¹⁶ National Issues Forums Institute, “NIF: An Overview,” para. 2; National Issues Forums Institute, “About Us,” <http://www.nifi.org/about/index.aspx>.

notion of a broad range is meant to traverse the partisan and ideological spectrum. Citizens are then able to consider the “pros and cons” of each choice in what the NIF refers to as a “public dialogue.” Each issue book describes a specific issue and provides several choices or approaches that can be taken on this national public policy. Each choice is designed by NIF to reflect widely held concerns and underlying principles. The NIF issue books purposefully do not identify individuals or organizations with partisan labels.¹¹⁷ Experts on the issue review issue books for accuracy and balance.¹¹⁸

Public deliberation that follows their framework, according to Kettering, produces better decisions. First, by providing a structure for policymakers and officeholders to hear the public’s voice(s), NIF forums help policy reflect the will of the people, and may even provide policymakers with solutions that they did not consider before.¹¹⁹ “As participants take in the experiences of others,” the “Naming and Framing” report suggests, “they tend to redefine the problems that confront them. Their understanding of the problems broadens, becoming more comprehensive and nuanced. And this enhanced understanding leads people to identify political actors and resources that haven’t been recognized before. New, innovative ways of solving a problem can emerge.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Kettering Foundation, “Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?,” inside front cover.

¹¹⁸ For example, the 2002 issue book on terrorism was reviewed by Edwin Dorn, Jean Johnson, Mark Juergensmeyer, Dennis Reimer, and Brad Whitzel. *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁹ “Citizens’ views often differ from those of officeholders. Deliberation may reveal new possibilities for action that neither citizens nor officeholders saw before.” National Issues Forums Institute, “NIF: An Overview,” para. 5.

¹²⁰ Kettering Foundation, “Naming and Framing Difficult Issues to Make Sound Decisions,” 12.

In addition, deliberative forums such as the ones offered by NIF are thought to improve the quality of participants' thinking. The idea is that while participants might "hold sharply different opinions and beliefs," in this deliberative form, "they discuss their attitudes, concerns, and convictions about each issue and, as a group, seek to resolve their conflicting priorities and principles. In this way, participants move from making individual choices to making choices as members of the community."¹²¹ By understanding different points of view, participants better understand their own beliefs and what it will require to solve a complex problem. Ultimately, it is hoped that this type of forum will help individuals appreciate different points of view and move toward consensus decisions.

Kettering acknowledges that practicing deliberation helps one be more effective, yet deliberation is thought of as, "a natural act, not a skill only possessed by experts. In fact, people around the world have made difficult decisions together since the dawn of recorded history."¹²² The NIF-style deliberation is conceived of as an everyday practice, what people do "over work breaks, at the grocery store, and at the lunch counter."¹²³

Kettering acknowledges that this sets up a double bind between natural practices and skillful techniques. Kettering understands deliberation as a natural skill but recognizes that without what they call "naming and framing," deliberation is not as fruitful. Aware of the problem of appearing too technical, Kettering designs the issue books to strike a balance in terms of the amount of information regarding how to deliberate: "Too much information can discourage people from conducting forums. Deliberation seems like neurosurgery or

¹²¹ Kettering Foundation, "Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?," 45.

¹²² Kettering Foundation, "Working Through Difficult Decisions," 2.

¹²³ Ibid., 1-2.

something only an outsider can do.”¹²⁴ Nevertheless, Kettering wants to avoid “suggesting that collective decision-making is easy or that practice can’t help people become more proficient at it.”¹²⁵ They can get out of this double bind by understanding deliberation as a technê of democracy. It is both everyday and special.

The NIF Technique

If an NIF forum moderator requests a starter kit, they are provided with a glossy, pre-printed poster with the forum guidelines that can be displayed for all to see:

Everyone is encouraged to participate.
No one or two individuals dominate.
The discussion will focus on the choices.
All the major choices or positions on the issue are considered.
An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of the alternatives is maintained.
We listen to each other.¹²⁶

A central aspect of the NIF technique is an attempted naturalization. The technique produces the appearance of ordinary, technique-free discourse. In terms of the aforementioned distinction between debate and dialogue in terms of metacommunication, the NIF technique actively suppresses questions about process. In this section, I describe how this NIF technique is organized around choices and questions. Kettering positions its “choicework” in contrast to superficial debate that is conceived of as bad artifice that conceals while good

¹²⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Kettering Foundation, “Terror Moderator Guide,” 4.; similar ground rules are found Kettering Foundation, “A Guide to Forums: Coping with the Cost of Health Care: How Do We Pay for What We Need?,” 4; Kettering Foundation, “A Guide to Forums: Immigration in America: How Do We Fix a System in Crisis?,” 4; Kettering Foundation, “A Guide to Forums: Social Security: How Can We Afford It?,”; Kettering Foundation, “Guide to Organizing and Moderating Forums: Too Many Children Left Behind: How Can We Close the Achievement Gap?”

deliberation reveals.¹²⁷ “People may try to make decisions by debating facts alone. Facts are essential, yet they are often used as surrogates for the less tangible things we value. People battle over facts when their differences are over what should be. Consequently, they never deal with the real source of their disagreements; these remain in the background, only to reemerge later.”¹²⁸ When the ground rules of NIF forums are discussed, facilitators are encouraged to distinguish the forum from a debate. The 2002 forum guide regarding terrorism reads, in capital letters, “Make clear that the Forum is not a debate.”¹²⁹ Later, the process is described using the rhetoric of non-rhetoric. “The forum process helps people to see issues from different points of view; participants use discussion to discover, not persuade or advocate.”¹³⁰ The hope, it seems, is that when presented with an issue in the framework provided by Kettering, participants will engage each other outside of the partisan framing that they might be more accustomed to.

As a method of facilitation, NIF relies upon the moderator to execute its technique.

Consider the role of the moderator as described in moderator guides:

- Give an overview of the process and why choice work is needed.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Kettering President David Mathews coined the term “choicework” as process, central to good deliberation, of grappling with values. See Daniel Yankelovich, *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991). The issue books enable choicework by stipulating basic facts in order to allow discussion to focus on values.

¹²⁸ Kettering Foundation, “Working Through Difficult Decisions,” 5.

¹²⁹ Kettering Foundation, “Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?,” 8.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³¹ Kettering Foundation, “Terror Moderator Guide,” 3; Kettering Foundation, “Health Moderator Guide,” 6; Kettering Foundation, “Immigration Moderator Guide,” 7; Kettering Foundation, “Social Security Moderator Guide.”; Kettering Foundation, “Education Moderator Guide.”

- Ask probing questions to reveal stakes of issues and choices.¹³²
- Encourage participants to direct q/a at each other.¹³³
- Remain neutral.¹³⁴

Unlike OST's self-description, NIF explicitly claims that the moderator is critical to the success of the forum. The "Working Through" pamphlet claims that, based on the culmination of thousands of NIF forums over 25 years, there are three typical obstacles that prevent a successful forum, and they all relate to a failure by the forum's facilitator.¹³⁵ The first is when a facilitator does not maintain neutrality and attempts to influence a decision. The second is when the facilitator is too permissive and loses focus on the task. Third, and the most common, is when the facilitator or a few participants dominate the conversation and "disrupt the person-to-person exchange of stories and opinions that make public deliberation work."¹³⁶ Problems can also arise if there is too much effort at covering all options with equal time and when there is a lack of rich interpersonal interaction that keeps the forum

¹³² Kettering Foundation, "Terror Moderator Guide," 3; "Health Moderator Guide," 6; "Immigration Moderator Guide," 7; "Social Security Moderator Guide."; "Education Moderator Guide."

¹³³ Kettering Foundation, "Terror Moderator Guide," 3; "Health Moderator Guide," 6; "Immigration Moderator Guide," 7; "Social Security Moderator Guide."; "Education Moderator Guide."

¹³⁴ Kettering Foundation, "Terror Moderator Guide," 3; "Health Moderator Guide," 6; "Immigration Moderator Guide," 7; "Social Security Moderator Guide."; "Education Moderator Guide."

¹³⁵ Kettering Foundation, "Working Through Difficult Decisions," 4.

¹³⁶ Ibid. This is based on the research of thousands of NIF forums over 25 years.

spontaneous.¹³⁷ The foundation suggests that a machine-like review of options is not deliberation.¹³⁸

One of the central aspects of the NIF approach is the use of questions to guide the deliberation. Moderator guides suggest the use of “natural curiosity” and an interest in understanding diverse viewpoints to “ask questions that probe the underlying motivations of each choice, the trade-offs that might require, and the willingness of the participants to recognize them.”¹³⁹ Before the forum, moderators should prepare questions to ask and possible issues that might be raised. In the moderator guide for terrorism, it is noted, “words and phrases about war, terrorism, Islamic religious organizations, and law enforcement procedures may have different meanings and elicit various responses in different people.... To keep the deliberations on track, most moderators find it helpful to consider ahead of time the basic, broad questions about each approach that need to be addressed.”¹⁴⁰ The moderator books suggest questions to ask regarding each approach.¹⁴¹ While the guidebooks note that other questions will emerge based on what participants say, it is interesting to note that at least some of the questions a moderator would ask have been scripted ahead of time.

Kettering and NIFI describe the NIF process around the concepts of naming and framing. Several books and other publications distributed by the Kettering Foundation

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 4-5.

¹³⁹ Kettering Foundation, “Terror Moderator Guide,” 2; “Health Moderator Guide,” 3; “Immigration Moderator Guide,” 3; “Social Security Moderator Guide.”

¹⁴⁰ Kettering Foundation, “Terror Moderator Guide,” 5.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.; Kettering Foundation, “Health Moderator Guide,” 5; “Education Moderator Guide,” 5; “Social Security Moderator Guide,” 5; “Immigration Moderator Guide,” 5.

describe this process, most notably, “Naming and Framing Difficult Issues to Make Sound Decisions.”¹⁴² A large part of the focus in naming is avoiding partisanship. The options found in NIF Issue Books are Kettering's attempt to place a given issue within a nonpartisan framework. Rather than one option or two predictable partisan options (e.g., a Democratic Party option and a Republican Party option), Kettering attempts to provide the “full range of options” for citizens to consider.¹⁴³ NIF pays close attention to protecting its nonpartisan status and explicitly distances itself from advocacy in its promotional materials.¹⁴⁴ Words that are not articulated to political parties or movements are used. “By intention, issue books do not identify individuals or organizations by partisan labels, such as Democrat, Republican, conservative, or liberal,” the 2002 issue guide on terrorism explains, “the goal is to present ideas in a fresh way that encourages readers to judge them on their merit.”¹⁴⁵

Kettering uses what they view as primal motives that unite us socially in order to name a problem. They explicitly appeal to a less mediated form of communication, appearing to have the process of naming and framing allow them to transcend ideology. “Naming a problem in terms meaningful to citizens isn't simply describing it in everyday language.”¹⁴⁶ Kettering compares these needs to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.¹⁴⁷ As the “We

¹⁴² Kettering Foundation, “Naming and Framing.”

¹⁴³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴⁴ National Issues Forums Institute, “About Us”. When describing their legal status, NIFI adds the modifier “nonpartisan” before 501(c)(3), even though there is no special category for such organizations.

¹⁴⁵ Kettering Foundation, “Coping with the Cost of Health Care,” inside back cover.

¹⁴⁶ Kettering Foundation, “Naming and Framing,” 5.

¹⁴⁷ Developmental psychologist Abraham Maslow argued in the 1940s that people grow toward a fully human, self-actualized state only after lower-order needs, such as safety and

Have to Choose” pamphlet explains in more detail, the names that people give problems reflect concerns that are valuable to almost everyone. “We all want to be free from danger, secure from economic privatization, free to pursue our own interests, and treated fairly by others—to mention a few of our basic motives.”¹⁴⁸ These core needs are assumed to be more fundamental than ideological, interest-based positions.

In addition, Kettering reflects awareness that using “professional descriptions” may lead citizens to be less active because the problem is then associated with a type of intellectualism or professionalism.¹⁴⁹ For example, “people tend to think of drug abuse in terms of what they see happening to families and how it influences young people, not in terms of police interdiction of the drug trade.”¹⁵⁰ Here, public policy regarding police action must be couched within terms that are relevant to the citizens who will deliberate.

In rhetorical terms, this process of naming is a process of invention that also relies on concealment. However, Kettering couches the process within and with appeal to a natural and primordial humanism. Appeals to Maslow and his hierarchy of needs means that they seek to name the problem in a manner that transcends ideology and, more fundamentally, rhetoric, and instead exploits an implied ontological stream of meaning and value.¹⁵¹

security, are met. Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1999).

¹⁴⁸ Kettering Foundation, “Naming and Framing,” 5.

¹⁴⁹ Kettering Foundation, “We Have to Choose,” 23.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 24. To extend the metaphor from Star Wars, if debate is the Dark Side of the Force, then this is the Jedi’s virtuous appeal to the Force.

Finally, the NIF and Kettering technique of naming and framing involves the denial of technique. From the outset of the report on naming and framing, for example, Kettering directly states: “These are not special techniques.”¹⁵² Instead, it describes a natural developmental process of moving from naming to framing.¹⁵³ As people discuss a problem, they become more comfortable with how it is being named and tend to move toward thinking about what solutions can be applied:

The ways of presenting issues that are described here are not specially designed processes. In fact, what the foundation is reporting reflects what can occur in everyday life. Take the matter of describing a problem that needs attention. People do that in conversations while waiting for a bus or sitting in a restaurant. These conversations revolve around ordinary questions: what's bothering you? Why do you care? How are you going to be affected? When people respond to these questions, they are identifying what is valuable to them.¹⁵⁴

In the Kettering report, “We Have to Choose: Democracy and Deliberative Politics,” the distinction is made between deliberation as a special technique and a natural act. The report refers to the challenge of “the perception that NIF-type deliberation is a special technique or methodology and that it requires special skills.”¹⁵⁵ Unlike other forms of democratic deliberation that require “skilled moderators to get the desired results,” the report explains, “NIF-type deliberation is different; it is designed to replicate the naturally occurring deliberation that was going on when the Mayflower Compact was being made. It is best suited to stimulating organic deliberative practice and culture.”¹⁵⁶ In the 2006 Kettering

¹⁵² Kettering Foundation, “Naming and Framing,” 4.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Kettering Foundation, “We Have to Choose,” 6.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

report, “Engaging Citizens: Meeting the Challenges of Community Life,” deliberation is again depicted as a natural phenomena. “Deliberation doesn't require any special skill; it is a natural act. Citizens deliberate on personal matters all the time with family and friends. And people are attracted to deliberative decision making because their experiences and concerns count as much as professional expertise and data.”¹⁵⁷

In addition to concealing by portraying deliberation as natural, Kettering works to conceal how complex deliberative processes can be. The “We Have to Choose” report reveals how the tension of technique vs. natural act implicates pedagogy:

The distinctive qualities of deliberation and the ease with which it is confused with other forms of political discourse suggest the need for a formal curriculum on the nature of choice work and the skills that moderators should have.... Yet creating such a curriculum can give the impression that deliberation is an elite skill or technique. On the other hand, if deliberation is presented as a natural act, the immediate question is why it needs to be explained at all.¹⁵⁸

Similarly, the “Engaging Citizens” report suggests a struggle to avoid the “impression that deliberation is a special process requiring highly trained and skilled moderators, which is obviously the opposite of a public practice.”¹⁵⁹ In this way, it becomes clear that part of the “public” in public deliberation, according to Kettering, is a rejection of skill and specialized training.

The denial of technique is staged upon the distinction of “practices” and “techniques.” The “We Have to Choose” report refers to a distinction made between practices and techniques. Echoing Alasdair McIntyre, the report claims that the distinction

¹⁵⁷ Kettering Foundation, “Engaging Citizens: Meeting the Challenges of Community Life,” 21.

¹⁵⁸ Kettering Foundation, “We Have to Choose,” 7.

¹⁵⁹ Kettering Foundation, “Engaging Citizens,” 21.

involves the intrinsic value of a practice while a technique is employed for utilitarian reasons.¹⁶⁰ This differentiation is then used to position democratic deliberation in a favorable light since, according to the report, “democratic practices are genuine practices.”¹⁶¹ The distinction between practices and techniques is raised and featured prominently in a 2011 Kettering report by Derek Barker and associates. They claim that a deliberative forum is part of larger community practices rather than a technique for a particular public issue.¹⁶² According to Barker et al., regarding deliberation as a technique—“a specific methodology for the purposes of discrete events”—restricts the study of deliberation by focusing too much attention on moderators and conveners as the critical actors of deliberation.¹⁶³ Barker et al. provide an example, when making the case that some conceptualize deliberation as technique, from Gastil and Levine who write, “good deliberation is not self-generating. ...In practice, a small group of self-selected leaders must actually organize any process.”¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, Barker, and indeed Kettering more generally, wants to insinuate the work of NIF into the less formal, more organic deliberative practices of everyday life. What is curious about this assertion is that the notion of the everydayness and non-technique of NIF persists into the description of their practices as not special techniques when the process of putting together an issue book is obviously a highly specialized technique. The manner in which

¹⁶⁰ Kettering Foundation, “We Have to Choose,” 22; Hariman, “Status,” 188-92.

¹⁶¹ Kettering Foundation, “We Have to Choose,” 22.

¹⁶² Derek W. M. Barker et al., “Research on Civic Capacity: An Analysis of Kettering Literature and Related Scholarship,” (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation, 2011), 15.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁶⁴ John Gastil and Peter Levine, eds., *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 274-75.

Kettering identifies deliberation as practice or technique seems to explicitly locate the NIF's deliberation as technique. However, NIF and Kettering seem to want to secure the benefits of NIF as a community practice that is focused on citizens as opposed to trained moderators and one that is local as opposed to dealing with mainstream national issues.¹⁶⁵

Conclusions

Examining OST and NIF allows for an understanding of how the naturalization of deliberation requires that artifice be concealed. In the example of Open Space, discouraging attention to the method of facilitation diminishes attention to artifice. Under the cloaks of simplicity, voluntarism, and ordinariness, discourse about how to facilitate an Open Space meeting encourages practitioners to imagine that discourse emerges naturally from the meeting as opposed to emerging partly because of the techniques they have employed. In the case of NIF, the denial of technique is more explicit. With elaborate discussion materials, NIF must explicitly distance the work they do from specialized technique in order to gain the mantle of natural deliberation. Both methods seem to generate useful deliberative encounters that may help groups examine issues and generate good decisions even as they apply techniques of rhetorical artifice.

Taken together, this divergent set of facilitation methods poses several implications for this dissertation's goal of understanding the effect of favoring speech thought to be immediate. In particular, this chapter provides three crucial insights for understanding how public deliberation aids in the production of the values that are articulated to democracy today. We notice the technique of denying technique, the depoliticizing effect of naturalizing deliberation, and the ethical problem of vaunting authenticity.

¹⁶⁵ Barker et al., "Research on Civic Capacity," 24.

First, this chapter demonstrates how the denial of technique is itself a technique of facilitated deliberation. It is crucial that we recognize deliberation, including facilitated dialogue, as a technical skill that benefits from training. This training is required for ethical and effective results. For example, Owen claims that OST runs on individuals' passion and responsibility, but there is no instruction regarding how this responsibility should be practiced.¹⁶⁶ In the absence of a new ethical framework for responsible communication, it should be expected that participants would fall back onto the same communicative habits that might have necessitated the Open Space in the first place.

The drive to render communication that is unmediated requires that all signs of artifice be erased or sufficiently concealed. This leads to a figuration of communication that is anti-rhetorical or at least non-rhetorical. For example, John Stewart claims that the turn toward dialogue is located in the turn away from "rhetorical sensitivity."¹⁶⁷ Jeanine Czubaroff, in observing that dialogue has not taken off within rhetorical studies, claims that rhetoricians are "quick to point out real-world realities of power, rights, and interests that encourage unilateral, strategic modes of communication in which genuine dialogue is seldom evident."¹⁶⁸ Both of these statements suggest that dialogue is an alternative to a technical application of strategy and that such work epitomizes rhetoric. The problem is that dialogue

¹⁶⁶ Owen, *User's Guide*, 23.

¹⁶⁷ John Stewart, "Foreword," in *The Reach of Dialogue*, viii.

¹⁶⁸ Jeanine Czubaroff, "Dialogue and the Prospect of Rhetoric," *Review of Communication* 12, no. 1 (2012): 46. Because rhetoric is associated with the strategic, and dialogue is without or beyond strategy, rhetoricians are otherwise occupied. It is less clear how she views dialogue as relating to what she refers to as the real-world realities of power, rights, and interests.

traffics in the “real-world realities of power” and any suggestion otherwise is produced by the concealment the power circulating through dialogue.

Even more than the denial of rhetoric, the pursuit of unmediated communication requires a broader rejection and denial of technique itself. Technique, in the frame of such denial, appears as a trace of artifice to be rid from the communicative process. One reason for this is that some view the application of a technical method as a contradiction with dialogue’s status as spontaneous and open-ended.¹⁶⁹ Richard Johannesen explicitly states that dialogue is a communication attitude or orientation more than it is a specific method or technique.¹⁷⁰ Barrett suggests that applying a technique is a less reflective practice than dialogue, which is sincere. And take, for example, the way that Cissna and Anderson locate the role of genuineness and authenticity in dialogue, “participants assume that the other is speaking from experienced—not hypothetical, self-consciously strategic, fantasized, or deceptive—positions.”¹⁷¹ They assume that speaking from experience stands in opposition to fantasy, strategy, and deception.

Second, there is a depoliticizing effect when deliberation is naturalized. In the case of Open Space, Owen claims that his method creates equality because everyone, no matter her or his position in the group, is on the same level. As feminist and other critics of public

¹⁶⁹ Nola J. Heidlebaugh, “Invention and Public Dialogue: Lessons from Rhetorical Theories,” *Communication Theory* 18, no. 1 (2008): 36.; Stewart and Zediker, “Dialogue as Tensional, Ethical Practice,” 229. Hammond et al., 2003: 139.

¹⁷⁰ Johannesen, “Attitude of Speaker Toward Audience,” 96.

¹⁷¹ Cissna and Anderson, “Communication and the Ground of Dialogue,” 15.

sphere theory have successfully argued, this procedural norm does not remove status, it hides it, making it more difficult to address.¹⁷²

Beyond the concealment of status, there is a related problem inherent in the denigration of debate. The adversarial frame of competing ideas foregrounds conflict while facilitated dialogue—at least implicitly—discourages it. This may give rise to a communicative condition wherein decorum leads participants to use particular idioms and styles that conceal claims as questions and persuasion as invitation. In this state, an unspoken standard of communication literacy would reward those participants able to represent their views and interests in the appropriately invitational style. In the example of NIF, there is an explicit attempt to transcend the partisan politics of the moment in order to translate public issues into timeless, human issues like security and freedom. The issue guides, if timely, pertain to hotly contested issues without reference to the partisan arguments circulating in public culture and certainly in the minds of citizens who chose to attend the forum. As a result this naturalizes certain frames for issues as timeless and apolitical. According to field reports from forum meetings, participants follow the ascribed decorum and say very little about the partisan politics of an issue. While NIF and Kettering interpret this as transcending partisanship and successfully processing an issue in more fundamental terms, it may also be evidence of silenced arguments and claims that have been translated into questions.

Finally, there is an ethical problem when authenticity is vaunted. Personal stories and rhetorical questions help to evade the ethics of publicity. Public deliberation is constituted, in part, through the possibility that one will be called to account for the validity of claims being

¹⁷² Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 118-21.

made using reasoning that are *publicly* accessible. Recourse to personal experience and the seemingly open-endedness of questions would allow subjects to evade the demand to account for the validity of one's claims. One way that both OST and NIF facilitation guides seek to produce persuasive effects while keeping rhetorical labor concealed is by mobilizing what Charles Taylor refers to as the ethics of authenticity.¹⁷³ Deference to sincerely held beliefs—what Owen calls “passion”—and personal values and needs that NIF seeks to elicit often silences critique. A sincere argument is valued above a sound one. The widely held idea that everyone is entitled to their own opinion means that without an adversarial frame, participants in a communication encounter are less disposed to rigorously engage a given claim. Kettering's brochure on difficult decisions explains, “NIF forums have seldom, if ever, been plagued by disruptive behavior.... Many in the NIF deliberations have said that they welcomed opportunities to talk about hot topics frankly because they could exchange opinions without being personally attacked. Forum participants have given high marks to meetings where they could express strong views without others contesting their right to their beliefs.”¹⁷⁴ There is no doubt that National Issues Forums benefit participants. At the very least they encounter other individuals and learn about a given issue. This may be, however, at the expense of developing skills for testing and ultimately rejecting claims.

¹⁷³ Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 14.

¹⁷⁴ Kettering Foundation, “Working Through Difficult Decisions,” 5-6.

CHAPTER 5: POSTSCRIPT

As an alternative to the “problem” reponse to the artifice of democratic speech, I have suggested a conception of artifice as a necessary precondition of public communication. Thought of this way, advocates can begin the work of making good artifice—ideally as Isocrates might call for: both moral and effective. This investment that Isocrates demonstrated in crafting better communication was an alternative to the Platonic conception of perfect communication that came to dominate Western philosophy. It echoes in John Dewey’s pragmatism that was its own critical alternative to philosophy that had become too divorced from the prudence demanded by the problems of the public. Throughout his long career, John Dewey remained faithful to the ideal of democratic speech. On the occasion of his 80th birthday, Dewey reflected on the public role of creative intelligence,

What is the faith of democracy in the role of consultation, of conference, of persuasion, of discussion, in formation of public opinion, which in the long run is self-corrective, except faith in the capacity of the intelligence of the common man to respond with commonsense to the free play of facts and ideas which are secured by effective guarantees of free inquiry, free assembly and free communication?¹

I share Dewey's and Isocrates’ investment in creative intelligence to improve social conditions through public speech forms. American Democracy’s original slogan represents the free movement of individuals toward some sort of unity: *E Pluribus Unum*. The *demos*, as a modern public, emerges through multiple forms of address. No single form of speech is capable of bringing together diverse opinions and perspectives. This “bringing together”

¹ John Dewey, “Creative Democracy,” in *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 227.

occurs through cooperative discussion and appreciative listening, but it also occurs through dissonance and dissent, through debate and bargaining, through raised voices and silenced polemics. Democratic speech is not reducible to unmediated discourse or an ethic of transparency between citizens as they communicate; it relies on a number of different forms of mediation.

As I have shown, despite the rich history of its citizens crafting rhetorical artifice, American democracy is simultaneously a history of the demand for speech that is unmediated by artifice. This demand limits the democratic potential of public communication. In fact, intentional resistance to a claim to unmediated speech has animated the rhetorical tradition from its earliest manifestations. This is what drove Isocrates to champion writing as a means for the careful balancing of the prudently possible and the morally desirable; he recognized that, when doing more than praising bumblebees and salt, eloquence requires the mediation of rhetorical form and design.²

More recent examples bear out the wisdom of Isocrates' approach. As I have shown in the preceding chapters, even a claim to the primacy of unmediated speech both produces and conceals a wide range of artificial means of mediation. In the example of contemporary U.S. political campaigns, the fixation on unscripted speech leads to elaborately staged events that are designed to appear spontaneous. The pretense of spontaneity offers visual demonstrations of a candidate's attempt to relate to ordinary people by ducking into a local diner and grabbing a beer with a few locals (and a gaggle of advisors and international media). Though these demonstrations represent one possibility for democratic deliberation the fact that they conceal the conditions of their artifice reflects a lack of Dewey's "faith in

² On bumblebees and salt, see chap. 2, n. 119.

the capacity of the intelligence of the common man.”³ Likewise, without naming it as such, contemporary deliberative technologies like Open Space and NIF proffer a variety of techniques to elicit forms of communication that allow participants to think more deeply about an issue and to share perspectives, but not to rigorously engage and challenge each other’s views and statements. As Harrison Owen describes, the free exchange of ideas, insofar as it puts participants in the presence of the truth, is rigorous enough, “not a word of external judgment need be spoken.”⁴

A better response to rhetorical artifice would begin with the idea that all forms of public communication are artificial. That is, all public speech is constituted through rhetorical artifice. Thus, rejecting rhetoric is impossible in contexts of democratic speech. Even in the most concealed exercises of trope and the least visible applications of form lies the performed relation of a rhetor and an audience. The rhetoric of non-rhetoric is a deft strategy for displacing the suspicion of speech. Such a rhetoric conceals artifice so thoroughly as to deny the possibility of craft altogether. It is witnessed in the posture of informative speaking, the trust of spontaneity, and the cult of sincerity. As such, the demand for sincere speech perpetuates the dream of the non-rhetorical by rewarding rhetors that conceal their craft. Together, the rhetoric of non-rhetoric and the sincerity demand help to accomplish persuasive effects under the banner of non-persuasive discourse. A rhetor may offer an alternative to the artificialness of rhetoric, however this still manages to enter into the rhetorical economy of *ēthos* by exchanging the claim of sincerity for the currency of moral virtue.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Owen, *User’s*, 61.

Of course, the dual strategies of concealment entailed in the rhetoric of non-rhetoric and a claim to sincerity are not new. We first witnessed this in the case of classical Athens (ca. 508 – 322 BCE). Plato and Isocrates took divergent approaches to reconciling the artifice of speech, the latter embracing artifice and celebrating rhetoric. Plato denigrated rhetoric, yet used the rhetoric of non-rhetoric to achieve persuasive effects when imagining Socrates defending himself at trial by assuring his jury that he would speak without ornamentation and would merely speak the truth.⁵ In a more contemporary case, we witness this strategy insinuated into anxieties over material technologies as Mitt Romney begins a news conference by proclaiming, “I don't have a text written. ... I don't have a teleprompter here. ... I just want to talk to you...”⁶ In the case of facilitated dialogue, the demand for naturalness forced facilitators to invent eloquent techniques for denying technique. In each preceding chapter, whenever speech was being valued for being more direct, we witnessed the rhetoric of non-rhetoric at work.

The artifice that conceals technique allows speakers to appear less mediated. Technique, in the frame of such denial, appears as a trace of artifice to be expunged from the communicative process. This is seen in the progression of the three speeches of Plato's *Phaedrus*. Plato implies that it is not until rhetorical *technê* is stripped away that Socrates is able to give the finest speech through sincerity. A similar strategy manifests in present-day proponents of dialogue who view technical methods as contradictory to open-ended and spontaneous dialogue. The problem with a technical treatise, Cissna and Anderson imply, is when so-called “answer merchants” and “instant experts” want to improve any human

⁵ Plato, “Socrates' Defense (Apology),” 17a-c.

⁶ Mitt Romney, “Speaks about the Economy.”

relation by “just practicing a few simple techniques.”⁷ This is a limited view of technique as a standard method that is applied formulaically. Returning to the Greek origin, *technê*, recovers more than intentionally applied methods in technique. As practical knowledge oriented toward craft production, this sense of technique is human action that incorporates individual intention and cultural tradition; it is passed down even as it is reinvented in successive iterations. This resonates with Isocrates’ defense of rhetoric exactly because it was a craft that, when properly honed, could be applied in new ways to respond to contingent situations. To reject rhetoric because it is steeped in technique is to conflate *craftiness* with *craft-ness*. Affirming technique as *technê* orients the critic away from intention or avowal to the actual performance of speech.⁸

Beyond the concealment of technique, there is also a claim to technique and a feigning of technology that works to conceal a broader condition of mediation. Rejecting the appearance of artifice in the name of technique leads to a figuration of communication that aspires to the non-rhetorical and makes it more difficult to fully engage democratic speech. In the differential reception of the teleprompter and the bullhorn, the aspiration for the non-rhetorical is seen in the privilege of the low-tech *ēthos* even as a speaker is surrounded by technological devices (e.g., a bullhorn) and overt processes of mediation (e.g., set pieces and news crews). In the case of facilitated deliberation, dialogue is figured as a turn away from rhetoric’s technical application of strategy for instrumental ends even as “technique” and “technology” are occasionally featured. For example, the National Coalition for Dialogue &

⁷ Rob Anderson, Kenneth N. Cissna, and Ronald C. Arnett, “The Self Region: Voices at the Boundary,” in *The Reach of Dialogue*, 179.

⁸ See Sterne, “Communication as Techné,” 93.

Deliberation (NCDD) describes the various “techniques” of dialogue and deliberation.⁹ And Owen’s practice is, after all, termed “Open Space *Technology*.” The term “technology” was not part of the original conception. He concedes that a strict definition makes the term appropriate, “there is a *techne* (technique) involved in order to produce an intended result. But that is stretching to say the least.”¹⁰ Owen claims that calling Open Space a “technology” is “playful” and “not to be taken too seriously.”¹¹ The fact that this term is used with a wry jocularity illustrates the lived tension of facilitators and the technical basis of their practice. Owen, echoing Cissna and Anderson above, explicitly states, “this is not a ‘cookbook technology.’”¹² What these cases reveal are different facets of the same rhetorical problem: the strategies used to conceal rhetorical artifice allow for gains in terms of *ēthos* and the demand for direct forms of communication at the expense of a critical rhetoric sufficient for democratic life. I will now briefly consider these gains and losses in turn.

The concealment of artifice serves specific rhetorical ends. Some of the examples of the preceding pages illustrate the use of eloquent rhetoric to flatter an audience into assent. However, more importantly, they also illustrate strategies by which a rhetoric that appears non-rhetorical creates numerous possibilities for democratic speech. Some of these

⁹ “Engagement Streams,” 1. The NCDD framework is based largely on the “social technologies” of Patricia Wilson. “Deep Democracy: The Inner Practice of Civic Engagement.” *Fieldnotes: A Newsletter of the Shambhala Institute* 2 (2004). Wilson’s work, in turn, draws from practitioners such as Allan Kaplan, who describes his work as rejecting “the conventional instrumental or technicist way in favour of a methodology which embraces the full complexity and ambiguity of social transformation.” Development Practitioners and Social Process - Artists of the Invisible, Community Development Resource Association, <http://www.cdra.org.za>

¹⁰ *Expanding*, 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹² Owen, *User’s Guide*, 55.

possibilities are related to the forging of necessary social fictions. Proceeding in the subjective form “as if” our public peers are the persons that their personas suggest helps to advance the broader interest of democratic conversation by encouraging a charitable reading of public speech and preventing an unending cycle of critique that fails to advance an affirmative alternative. It is easy to notice artifice but harder to proceed and engage the public question at hand.

There is an *ēthos* effect that is made possible by concealment. In antiquity, this was most clearly represented by the virtue of *parrhesia* because it avoided flattery and spoke truth despite the danger. This *ēthos* effect is seen in the rhetorical metamorphosis of Bill Clinton as he learned to “feel your pain.” There is also a paradoxical *ēthos* effect wherein artifice is rendered less visible by making parts of it more visible. This is seen in efforts to draw attention away from the artifice of Open Space by displacing that attention onto ordinariness. Owen suggests that facilitators not hide the computers that will be used to record the proceedings and to use low-tech handwriting in order to make the signs appear more ordinary. Similarly, while the bullhorn is a visible symbol of technological mediation and impersonal communication, it focuses audience attention on the amplification of the speaker’s voice, unlike the teleprompter that draws attention to the presence of a written script. When attention is drawn to ordinariness or the speaker’s voice, the consequence for *ēthos* recalls Plato’s fear: the distinction between actual and apparent virtue is less visible insofar as there is not the perception that the speaker is manipulating the audience for persuasive effect. The distinction between persona and person has disappeared.

While *technê* of concealment serve certain rhetorical and democratic ends, there is a cost. The status quo response to the problem of artifice also entails certain drawbacks

common to each of the sites under investigation in this study. First, ethical critique is displaced by the embrace of purportedly unmediated communication because concealment of artifice functions in tandem with a the erasure of communicative agency. When communication is regarded as emerging without artifice, the *ēthos* effect is that artistic proofs are transposed into an inartistic ones. Rather than attending to the choices that a speaker made in public address, choices are erased and the ethics of voice are made paramount. With a sole focus on “public address” as opposed to “discourse which addresses publics,” Raymie McKerrow reminds us, there is a danger that analysis will center on the agent as opposed to the symbol.¹³ The requisite agency to speak is the focal point under conditions of concealment and so we encounter highly romantic discourses of brave speakers and earnest citizens. It is the heroic posture of Socrates returning for one final, climactic speech. It is the cinematic cliché wherein the character tears up the script and speaks from the heart. It is the expectation in Open Space, that good participants will exercise the Law of Two Feet to find their voice elsewhere.

When we presume the artifice of speech, we are more attenuated to the creative choices made in constructing a given appeal. For Isocrates, attending to the political implications of speech was essential. While Plato attempts to transcend the scene of Athens, Isocrates embraces it. Training in rhetoric was important for Isocratean education because citizens must make contextually bounded judgments without the certainty and stability of *epistēmē*. This attention to the construction of public messages is lacking in the low-tech *ēthos* of the bullhorn. In that example, we notice how the presumption of voice reduced attention to ideology and foregrounded the sincerity of the speaker. This is akin to the

¹³ McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 101.

technique of NIF. In that approach to facilitating deliberation, the work of crafting issue books is not taken to be relevant to the discussion of the ensuing issue. There is an explicit attempt to translate public issues into non-partisan terminologies to avoid partisan political debate.

Plato rejected writing, in part, because it was public. In his radically anti-democratic impulse, Plato shunned the stranger sociality of speaking as if any member of the public is listening; he preferred to tailor his address to individuals in personal, intimate communicative exchanges. The affiliated binaries of natural/artificial and personal/public have persisted since Plato and weaken the critical potential for public moral argument.¹⁴ Audiences demur when confronted with a rhetor who “speaks from the heart.” Thus, when NIF solicits “personal values” as opposed to “public values” it is shifting the deliberation away from publicly available reasons to the terrain of sincere individualism. The move from public, often partisan, values and reasons to personal ones is caught up in the sincerity demand and the mistaken notion that the interior self is natural and that the virtuous subject confesses their personal truth.¹⁵ Even though the personal is as artificial as the public as a source of moral argument, because they are naturalized, personal values tend to face less critical scrutiny. When public arguments are cloaked by the deadening effect of sincerity, the public becomes persons and everyone is entitled to their own, personal opinion. This loss is felt as participants are less disposed to critically engage a given argument.¹⁶ This fact is not lost on

¹⁴ G. Thomas Goodnight, “The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry Into the Art of Public Deliberation,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 48, no. 4 (2012): 205.

¹⁵ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 59-60.

¹⁶ This can provide a subversive inventional resource, as in the example of Cindy Sheehan, a mother and anti-war activist who leveraged her personal grief for public moral argument.

political campaign strategists. G. Thomas Goodnight notes, “as arguments grounded in personal experience (disclosed by average opinion) seem to have greatest currency, political speakers present not opinions but personalities.”¹⁷

Because all public speech is rhetorical, even at the height of concealment, speech is amenable to rhetorical criticism. We should question the assumption that certain kinds of speech are more immediate than other forms of communication, and that less mediation is necessary for ethical communication. Instead, communication research and teaching should consider what communicative resources are provided by different appearances of mediation. Further study of artifice in deliberation would encourage conceptions of dialogue and debate as something other than polar opposites: as differing modes of speaking together. By pluralizing the modes of communication available to theories of democratic speech, we are better able to consider public problems. As John Dewey argues in *The Public and Its Problems*, the central problem of the public is poor “methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion.”¹⁸ Dewey remained faithful in the ideal of democratic deliberation, but always maintained that the right conditions were required in order to generate good decisions.¹⁹ Almost a century later, we are faced with a demand for sincere speech and a rhetoric of non-rhetoric that threatens to narrow the practice of democratic speech.

Yet, as Billie Murray illustrates, the personalization of Sheehan’s advocacy also enabled critics to separate it from public engagement. “For What Noble Cause: Cindy Sheehan and the Politics of Grief in Public Spheres of Argument.” *Argumentation & Advocacy* 49, no. 1 (2012): 8.

¹⁷ “The Personal, Technical, and Public,” 206.

¹⁸ 208.

¹⁹ John Dewey, *Later Works* 14, 227.

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