Chironomia

Chironomia is the art of using gesticulations or hand gestures to good effect in traditional rhetoric or oratory. Effective use of the hands, with or without the use of the voice, is a practice of great antiquity, which was developed and systematized by the Greeks and the Romans. Various gestures had conventionalized meanings which were commonly understood, either within certain class or professional groups, or broadly among dramatic and oratorical audiences.

Gilbert Austin was a well-known author on chironomia. The article about him contains a summary of theories in chironomia.

References

- John Bulwer, Chirologia; Or the Natural Language of the Hand. Chironomia or the Art of Manual Rhetoric (1644). (Landmarks in rhetoric and public address).
Gilbert Austin

Gilbert Austin (1753–1837) was an Irish educator, clergyman, and author. Austin is best known for his 1806 book on chironomia, *Chironomia, or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery*. Heavily influenced by classical writers, Austin stressed the importance of voice and gesture to a successful oration.

Biographical information

Gilbert Austin was born in 1753 in County Louth, Ireland. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, Austin received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1774 and his Master of Arts degree in 1780. After graduating, Austin established a private school in Dublin where he taught the sons of Ireland’s elite, including Augustus Frederick FitzGerald, later Third Duke of Leinster (Robb and Thonssen 1966:xv-xvi). Austin inscribed his best-known work, *Chironomia, or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery*, to another of his former pupils, Francis William Caulfeild, Earl of Charlemont.

An active member of the Royal Irish Academy, Austin wrote several scientific papers describing his inventions. In 1789, Austin edited and published a collection of poems by Irish writer Thomas Dermody. Austin also published a number of his sermons, including the collection *Sermons on Practical Subjects*. Austin began work on his most famous book, *Chironomia*, in the 1770s but it was not published until 1806.

Austin held several clerical appointments in the Church of Ireland. In 1798, Austin became a minor canon of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin. From 1816 until his death in 1837, Austin was Vicar of Laraghbryan (or Maynooth), a living to which he was presented by his former pupil, the Duke of Leinster. Austin also held the prebendary of Blackrath from 1821 to 1835 (Robb and Thonssen 1966:xvi).

Works

Scientific articles

Between 1790 and 1803, Austin published three articles in the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*. Philippa Spoel (1998) writes, "these articles, which describe the construction and application of chemical apparatus invented by Austin, demonstrate his involvement...with the flourishing field of chemistry" (7). The inventions Austin described include a portable barometer, a mechanism for filling water with carbon dioxide, and an apparatus for collecting gasses over water and mercury. In 1813, Austin published "On a New Construction of a Condenser and Air-Pump" in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*.

Sermons and other writing

In 1789, Austin edited and published Thomas Dermody’s first collection of poetry, *Poems*. In 1794, Austin published *A Sermon on a Future State: Combating the Opinion that “Death is Eternal Sleep.”* American author Edgar Allan Poe (1844) described Austin’s sermon as "nearly, if not quite the best 'Essay on a Future State' " (584). Austin published *Sermons on Practical Subjects* in 1795 and *A Sermon for the Support of Mercer’s Hospital* in 1796.

*Chironomia, or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery*

In the preface to *Chironomia*, Austin writes

…it is a fact, that we do not possess from the ancients, nor yet from the labours of our own countrymen, any sufficiently detailed and precise precepts for the fifth division of the art of rhetoric, namely rhetorical delivery, called by the ancients actio and pronuntiatio. (ix)

Austin observed that British orators were skilled in the first four divisions of rhetoric: inventio, dispositio, elocutio, and memoria. However, the fifth division, pronuntiatio or delivery, was all but ignored. Delivery, which is often
improperly referred to as elocution (elocutio), concerns the use of voice and gesture in an oration. Rather than study the art of delivery, orators trusted to the inspiration of the moment to guide their voices and gestures. Austin describes this as a reliance on "gestures imperfectly conceived...which will consequently be imperfectly executed" (5).

*Chironomia* is a treatise on the importance of good delivery. Good delivery, Austin notes, can "conceal in some degree the blemishes of the composition, or the matter delivered, and...add lustre to its beauties" (187). In the first part of the book, Austin traces the study of the art of delivery from the classical world to the eighteenth century. The second part of the book is devoted to a description of the notation system Austin designed to teach students of rhetoric the management of gesture and voice. The system of notation is accompanied by a series of illustrations depicting positions of the feet, body, and hands.

Throughout *Chironomia*, Austin instructs speakers to avoid the appearance of vulgarity or rusticity. Austin first developed the system of notation described in *Chironomia* at his school for privileged young men. Austin's goal was to prepare his students for a life in the church or politics by training them to become better orators. Although Austin's system was eventually dismissed as too rigidly prescriptive, *Chironomia* was a highly influential book during the nineteenth century.

**Influences**

Discussing the need for a treatise on delivery, Austin writes "during my examination of modern writers, it has appeared to me, that, with little exception, they have neglected to pay due attention to the precepts and authority of the great and ancient masters" (v). Austin remedies this oversight by compiling a collection of classical sources on the art of delivery. Austin was heavily influenced by Cicero and Quintilian. Cicero refers to action as the "language of the body" and the art of delivery as "corporeal eloquence" (Austin [1806] 1966:1). Austin attributes to Quintilian the use of the word *chironomia* to refer to the art of gesture (2). In *Chironomia*, Austin quotes extensively from Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*.

Austin also cites Ludovicus Cressolius's 1620 book *Vacationes Autumales sive de perfecta Oratoris, Actione, et Pronuntiatione* and the work of Caussinus as influences. Despite their use of the term elocution for the art Austin calls delivery, Austin refers to Thomas Sheridan's *Lectures on Elocution* (1762) and John Walker's *Elements of Elocution* (1781) in his discussion of voice and countenance.

Austin's work would appear to be a direct descendent of John Bulwer's book *Chirologia, or, The natural language of the hand* which, when it was published in 1644, also included Bulwer's work *Chironomia; or, The art of manual rhetoricke*. However, Austin does not mention Bulwer anywhere in his *Chironomia*. Robb and Thonssen (1966) suggest this is because Austin was unfamiliar with Bulwer's book (xi).

**Voice and countenance**

Austin was concerned with both the quality and management of the voice; he considered the former a gift of nature and the latter a matter of art (29). Austin developed rules for the management of articulation, pronunciation, and emphasis. On articulation, Austin writes

> [words] are to be delivered out from the lips, as beautiful coins newly issued from the mint, deeply and accurately impressed, perfectly finished, neatly struck by the proper organs, distinct, sharp, in due succession, and of due weight. (38)

Austin agreed with Sheridan's advice that good articulation consisted of pronouncing each syllable distinctly and with proper emphasis (37). Austin's rules for pronunciation address the issue of the provincial accent, something Austin labels "a stain of rusticity" (47). Austin encouraged his students to rid themselves of their provincial accent in favour of a courtly accent.

In addition to his rules for the management of the voice, Austin also addresses issues of vocal quality including pitch, volume, and variety. Austin was also concerned with the management of facial expression. Austin stresses the
importance of using appropriate tones of voice, facial expressions, and gestures to convey sincerity.

**Gesture**

Austin describes gesture as the "action and position of all the parts of the body" (133) and attributes to gesture the power to convey meaning. During the eighteenth century, speakers preferred the natural style of gesture but Austin warns against this style saying that speakers who rely on nature run the risk of displaying "the untutored extravagance and uncouth motions of the vulgar" (138). By following Austin's guidelines, speakers could improve their delivery by matching their gestures to their words. Austin advises his students, however, that gesture should be used with restraint and only when appropriate (137).

**System of notation**

Austin's system of notation begins with the placement of the body in an imaginary sphere (see Plate 2, Fig. 18). The speaker then moves his or her body, feet, or hands toward one of the points on the sphere. Each movement is assigned a notation that specifies the direction and manner in which the speaker should move. The speaker should include these notations in the text of his or her speech so that he or she knows when and how to move. Notation regarding the hands is written above the sentence; notation regarding the feet is written below. For instance, the notation Bcl. e f sh. above a word indicates that the speaker should clasp both hands and extend them forward at shoulder height in a shaking motion (see Plate 8, Fig. 75). The notation L 1 x under a word indicates that the speaker should advance the left foot and bend the right knee. Austin also provides a notation system for the voice. Notation marks are placed at the beginning of a passage and then throughout the text whenever the speaker is to change the tone or rapidity of his or her vocal delivery.

**Illustrations**

The text of *Chironomia* is accompanied by 12 engraved plates depicting various positions of the feet, arms, and body. Austin credits George Chinnery as the original artist but claims that he could not afford to pay Chinnery to complete the engravings. An anonymous young man was employed to alter and complete the plates (Austin [1806] 1966:viii).

**Influence and criticism**

Robb and Thonsen (1966) write, "until the teaching of [François] Delsarte...Austin was the authority on teaching gesture" (xvii). With the publication of *Chironomia*, Austin's influence extended beyond his own school to classrooms throughout Britain and America. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, *Chironomia* had fallen from favour. Austin's method was considered too mechanical for modern tastes. G. P. Mohrmann (1968) claims the misperception of *Chironomia* as rigidly prescriptive is due to a lack of critical analysis of Austin's method (18). Spoel (1998) describes *Chironomia* as "a unique socially and historically situated representation of bodily discipline" (5). *Chironomia* remains of interest to scholars not only for its insight into late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century rhetorical practices but also for its collection of classical writings on delivery.
"The human figure being supposed to be so placed within this sphere, that the centre of the breast shall coincide with its centre, and that the diameter of the horizontal circle perpendicular to a radius drawn to the projecting point, shall pass through the shoulders, the positions and motions of the arms are referred to and determined by these circles and their intersections" (Chironomia Plate 2, Figure 18.)

Further reading

- Austin, Gilbert. "Description of an Apparatus for Impregnating Water and Other Substances Strongly with Carbonic Acid Gas." Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy 1799. 131-34.
- ---. "Description of an Apparatus for Transferring Gasses Over Water or Mercury." Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy 1803. 3-9.
- ---. "Description of a Portable Barometer." Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy 1790. 99-105.

Resources

- Robb, Mary Margaret, and Lester Thonssen. "Editor’s Introduction." Austin, Chironomia ix-xxi.

External links

- Animated graphic based on illustrations from Chironomia [2]

References

Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan (30 October 1751 – 7 July 1816) was an Irish-born playwright and poet and long-term owner of the London Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. For thirty-two years he was also a Whig Member of the British House of Commons for Stafford (1780–1806), Westminster (1806–1807) and Ilchester (1807–1812). Such was the esteem he was held in by his contemporaries when he died that he was buried at Poets’ Corner in Westminster Abbey. He is known for his plays such as The Rivals, The School for Scandal and A Trip to Scarborough.
**Life**

R. B. Sheridan was born in 1751 in Dublin, Ireland, where his family had a house on then-fashionable Dorset Street. While in Dublin Sheridan attended the English Grammar School in Grafton Street. The family moved permanently to England in 1758 when he was age seven.[1] He was a pupil at Harrow School outside London from 1762 to 1768. His mother, Frances Sheridan, was a playwright and novelist. She had two plays produced in London in the early 1760s, though she is best known for her novel *The Memoirs of Sidney Biddulph* (1761). His father, Thomas Sheridan, was for a while an actor-manager at the Smock Alley Theatre but, following his move to England in 1758, he gave up acting and wrote a number of books concerning education and, especially, the standardisation of the English language in education.

In 1772 Richard Sheridan fought a famous duel against Captain Thomas Mathews. Mathews had written a newspaper article defaming the character of Elizabeth Linley, the woman Sheridan intended to marry, and honour dictated that a duel must be fought. A first duel was fought in London where they agreed to fight in Hyde Park, but finding it too crowded they went to the Castle Tavern in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. Far from its romantic image, the duel was short and bloodless. Mathews lost his sword and, according to Sheridan, was forced to ‘beg for his life’ and sign a retraction of the article. The apology was made public and Mathews, infuriated by the publicity the duel had received, refused to accept his defeat as final and challenged Sheridan to another duel. Sheridan was not obliged to accept this challenge, but would have become a social pariah if he had not. The second duel, fought in August 1772 at Kingsdown near Bath, was a much more ferocious affair. This time both men broke their swords but carried on fighting in a ‘desperate struggle for life and honour’. Both were wounded, Sheridan dangerously, being ‘borne from the field with a portion of his antagonist’s weapon sticking through an ear, his breast-bone touched, his whole body covered with wounds and blood, and his face nearly beaten to jelly with the hilt of Mathews’ sword’. Fortunately his remarkable constitution pulled him through, and eight days after this bloody affair the Bath Chronicle was able to announce that he was out of danger. Mathews escaped in a post chaise.

**Playwright**

In 1772, Richard Sheridan, at the age of 21, eloped with and subsequently married Elizabeth Ann Linley and set up house in London on a lavish scale with little money and no immediate prospects of any — other than his wife's dowry. The young couple entered the fashionable world and apparently held up their end in entertaining.

When Sheridan settled in London, he began writing for the stage. Less than two years later, in 1775, his first play, *The Rivals*, was produced at London's Covent Garden Theatre. It was a failure on its first night. Sheridan cast a more capable actor for the role of the comic Irishman for its second performance, and it was a smash which immediately established the young playwright's reputation and the favour of fashionable London. It has gone on to become a standard of English literature.

Shortly after the success of *The Rivals*, Sheridan and his father-in-law Thomas Linley the Elder, a successful composer, produced the opera, *The Duenna*. This piece was accorded such a warm reception that it played for seventy-five performances.

In 1776, Sheridan, his father-in-law, and one other partner, bought a half interest in the Drury Lane theatre and, two years later, bought out the other half. Sheridan was the manager of the theatre for many years, and later became sole owner with no managerial role.
His most famous play The School for Scandal (Drury Lane, 8 May 1777) is considered one of the greatest comedies of manners in English. It was followed by The Critic (1779), an updating of the satirical Restoration play The Rehearsal, which received a memorable revival (performed with Oedipus Rex in a single evening) starring Laurence Olivier as Mr Puff, opening at the New Theatre on 18 October 1945 as part of an Old Vic Theatre Company season. Having quickly made his name and fortune, in 1776 Sheridan bought David Garrick's share in the Drury Lane patent, and in 1778 the remaining share. His later plays were all produced there.[2] In 1778 Sheridan wrote The Camp which commented on the ongoing threat of a French invasion of Britain. The same year Sheridan's brother-in-law Thomas Linley, a young composer who worked with him at Drury Lane Theatre, died in a boating accident. Sheridan had a rivalry with his fellow playwright Richard Cumberland and included a parody of Cumberland in his play The Critic. On 24 February 1809 (despite the much vaunted fire safety precautions of 1794) the theatre burned down. On being encountered drinking a glass of wine in the street while watching the fire, Sheridan was famously reported to have said: "A man may surely be allowed to take a glass of wine by his own fireside."[3]

Member of Parliament

In 1780, Sheridan entered Parliament as the ally of Charles James Fox on the side of the American Colonials in the political debate of that year. He is said to have paid the burgesses of Stafford five guineas a piece for the honour of representing them. As a consequence, his first speech in Parliament had to be a defence against the charge of bribery.

In 1787 Sheridan demanded the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India. His speech in the House of Commons was described by Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox and William Pitt as the greatest ever delivered in ancient or modern times.[4] In 1793 during the debates on the Aliens Act designed to prevent French Revolutionary spies and saboteurs from flooding into the country, Edmund Burke made a speech in which he claimed there were thousands of French agents in Britain ready to use weapons against the authorities. To dramatically emphasise his point he threw down a knife onto the floor of the House of Commons. Sheridan is said to have shouted out "Where's the fork?", which led to much of the house collapsing in laughter.[5]

During the invasion scare of 1803 Sheridan penned an Address to the People:

THEY, by a strange Frenzy driven, fight for Power, for Plunder, and extended Rule—WE, for our Country, our Altars, and our Homes.—THEY follow an ADVENTURER, whom they fear—and obey a Power which they hate—WE serve a Monarch whom we love—a God whom we adore...They call on us to barter all of Good we have inherited and proved, for the desperate Chance of Something better which they promise.—Be our plain Answer this: The Throne WE honour is the PEOPLE'S CHOICE—the Laws we reverence are our
brave Fathers' Legacy—the Faith we follow teaches us to live in bonds of Charity with all Mankind, and die with Hope of Bliss beyond the Grave. Tell your *Invaders* this; and tell them too, we seek no Change; and, least of all, such Change as they would bring us.\[6\]

He held the posts of Receiver-General of the Duchy of Cornwall (1804–1807) and Treasurer of the Navy (1806–1807).

When he failed to be re-elected to Parliament in 1812, after 32 years, his creditors closed in on him and his last years were harassed by debt and disappointment. On hearing of his debts, the American Congress offered Sheridan £20,000 in recognition of his efforts to prevent the American War of Independence. The offer was refused.

In December 1815 he became ill, largely confined to bed. Sheridan died in poverty, and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey; his funeral was attended by dukes, earls, lords, viscounts, the Lord Mayor of London, and other notables.

In 1825 the Irish writer Thomas Moore published a two-volume sympathetic biography *Memoirs of the Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* which became a major influence on subsequent perceptions of him. A Royal Society of Arts blue plaque was unveiled in 1881 to commemorate Sheridan at 14 Savile Row in Mayfair.\[7\]

**Family life**

He was twice married. He and his first wife had two children:

- Thomas Sheridan, who married Caroline Henrietta Callander, daughter of Col. Sir James Campbell Callander, of Craigforth, Stirling, and Ardkinglas [Argyll], and was the father of Helen Blackwood, Baroness Dufferin and Clanefoye, Caroline Norton and Georgiana Seymour, Duchess of Somerset
- Edith Marcia Caroline Sheridan (d. 9 April 1876), m. 30 June 1864 to John Francis Thynne, of Haynes Park (17 June 1830 – 30 January 1910, Justice of Peace, of the Marquesses of Bath, and had issue. In 1795, Richard B. Sheridan married Hester Jane Ogle (1776–1817), daughter of the Dean of Winchester. They had at least one child: Charles Brinsley Sheridan (1796–1843)

At one time Sheridan owned Downe House, Richmond Hill in London.
Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Works

- *The Rivals* (first acted 17 January 1775)
- *St Patrick's Day* (first acted 2 May 1775)
- *The Duenna* (first acted 21 November 1775)
- *A Trip to Scarborough* (first acted 24 February 1777)
- *The School for Scandal* (first acted 8 May 1777)
- *The Camp* (first acted 15 October 1778)
- *The Critic* (first acted 30 October 1779)
- *The Glorious First of June* (first acted 2 July 1794)
- *Pizarro* (first acted 24 May 1799; with incidental music by Jan Ladislav Dussek)

He also wrote a selection of poems, and political speeches for his time in parliament.

Adaptations and Cultural References

- In *The Duchess* (2008) film, a biography of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, Sheridan is played by Aidan McArdle and *The School for Scandal* is performed in the movie. Sheridan is played by Barry Stanton in the *Madness of King George* (1994)
- In the *Yes, Prime Minister* episode 'The Patron of the Arts', two of Sheridan's plays are named as ones the prime minister could not see: 'The Rivals', "there were too many cabinet ministers after his job", and 'The School for Scandal', "well, not after the education secretary had been found in bed with a married primary school headmistress". Later, the same prime minister being asked to name a famous English playwright other than Shakespeare says "Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw" and is told, "they were all Irish"
- In the *Blackadder III* episode 'Amy and Amiability', Blackadder, dressed in a black mask and cape, is asked if he intends to become a highwayman and replies sarcastically "No, I'm auditioning for the part of Arnold the Bat in Sheridan's new comedy."
- The very first sentence of Jules Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days" is "Mr. Phileas Fogg lived, in 1872, at No. 7, Saville Row, Burlington Gardens, the house in which Sheridan died in 1816." which includes two factual mistakes: Sheridan actually lived in No. 14[8] and died in 1816. Evidently, Verne assumed as a matter of course that a French readership more than half a century later would know who Sheridan was and would need no further explanation.
- Chris Humphreys has used the character of Jack Absolute from *The Rivals* as a basis for his books *The Blooding of Jack Absolute, Absolute Honour and Jack Absolute*. These are published under the name C. C. Humphreys.

Notes

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

References


External links

- Information about Sheridan's life and works, with a comprehensive bibliography, at rbsheridan.co.uk (http://www.rbsheridan.co.uk).
- Works by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (http://www.gutenberg.org/author/Richard+Brinsley+Sheridan) at Project Gutenberg

Thomas Sheridan (actor)

Thomas Sheridan (1719 – 14 August 1788) was an Irish stage actor, an educator, and a major proponent of the elocution movement. He received his M.A. in 1743 from Trinity College in Dublin, and was the godson of Jonathan Swift. He also published a "respelled" dictionary of the English language (1780). He was married (1747) to Frances Chamberlaine. His son is the more famous Richard Brinsley Sheridan, while his daughter Alice also wrote numerous works. His work is very noticeable in the writings of Hugh Blair.

Life

Thomas Sheridan was the third son of Dr Thomas Sheridan, an Anglican divine.[1] He attended Westminster School in 1732-1733 but, because of his father's financial problems, he had to finish his initial education in Dublin. In 1739, he earned his BA from Trinity College, Dublin and he went on to earn his MA from Trinity in the early 1740s. He had his début in acting when he played the title role in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* in Dublin. Soon after, he was noted as the most popular actor in Ireland, being compared often with David Garrick. Not only an actor, he also wrote *The Brave Irishman or Captain O'Blunder* which premièred in 1738. He became the manager of the Dublin theatre sometime in the 1740s.
Sheridan left his acting career, although he continued to manage theatre companies and occasionally play bit parts, and moved permanently to England with his family in 1758. There, his time was spent as a teacher and an educator offering a very successful lecture course. In 1762 Sheridan published *Lectures on Elocution*. Following that work, he published *A Plan of Education* (1769), *Lectures on the Art of Reading* (1775), and *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780). Each of these works was based on some form of an argument taken in an earlier work *British Education: Or, The source of the Disorders of Great Britain. Being an Essay towards proving, that the Immorality, Ignorance, and false Taste, which so generally prevail, are the natural and necessary Consequences of the present to defective System of Education. With an attempt to shew, that a revival of the Art of Speaking, and the Study of Our Own Language, might contribute, in a great measure, to the Cure of those Evils* (1756).

He lived in London for a number of years before moving to Bath where he founded an academy for the regular instruction of Young Gentlemen in the art of reading and reciting and grammatical knowledge of the English tongue. This venture apparently proving to be unsuccessful, he returned to Dublin and the theatre in 1771. Thomas’s son Richard became a partial owner of the Theatre Royal in London in 1776. Two years later Thomas was appointed manager of the theatre, a position he held until 1781.

**Beliefs**

Sheridan attempted to supply the willing student with a guide to public speaking that was correct, appropriate, and successful. What he actually wanted was a total reform of the British education system, as he saw it disregarding elocution and/or rhetorical delivery. In his work *British Education*, Sheridan revealed that poor preaching was negatively affecting religion itself.

Sheridan's belief in the valuable effects of strong and correct public speaking was so strong that he was sure studying elocution would help ensure perfection in all of the arts. In *British Education*, Sheridan writes that preaching from the pulpit "must either effectually support religion against all opposition, or be the principal means of its destruction."

Convinced that English preaching was not done as well as it should be, Sheridan focused on delivery as the principal avenue toward delivering effective messages to an audience: "Before you can persuade a man into any opinion, he must first be convinced that you believe it yourself. This he can never be, unless the tones of voice in which you speak come from the heart, accompanied by corresponding looks, and gestures, which naturally result from a man who speaks in earnest." Sheridan believed that elocution was not restricted to the voice, but embodied the entire person with facial expressions, gestures, posture, and movement.

**A Course of Lectures on Elocution**

Published in 1762, this work is considered by many to be Sheridan's most well-known. He established a niche for his insights through decrying the current state of public speaking, as he often did: "so low is the state of elocution amongst us, that a man who is master even of these rudiments of rhetoric, is comparatively considered, as one of excellent delivery." Besides establishing the points previously mentioned, the quote also offers a more narrow definition of rhetoric that seems to be influenced by Peter Ramus.

Central to Sheridan's work was his emphasis on the importance of tones to eloquence. These tones, which correlated with the expressive effects one can give to their speaking, were something Sheridan considered an important part of persuasion. He stated, "The tones expressive of sorrow, lamentation, mirth, joy, hatred, anger, love, &c. are the same in all nations, and consequently can excite emotions in us analogous to those passions, when accompanying words which we do not understand: nay the very tones themselves, independent of words, will produce the same effects."

For Sheridan, how a message was communicated was apparently as important as the message itself. He uses the example of someone saying in a calm demeanor, "My rage is rouzed to a pitch of frenzy, I can not command it: Avoid me, be gone this moment, or I shall tear you to pieces" to show the importance of tones to a message.
Because of this, Sheridan set out to address what he thought John Locke had left out in his treatment of language:
"(t)he nobler branch of language, which consists of the signs of internal emotions, was untouched by him as foreign to his purpose."

Selected plays
- Captain O'Blunder

References
[1] Charles Partington (1838), "Sheridan, Thomas" (http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=cLkTAAAQAAJ&pg=PA946), The British Cyclopaedia of Biography,

Bibliography

External links
- Encyclopaedia Britannica (http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9067315/Thomas-Sheridan)

Elocution

Elocution is the study of formal speaking in pronunciation, grammar, style, and tone.

History
In Western classical rhetoric, elocution was one of the five core disciplines of pronunciation, which was the art of delivering speeches. Orators were trained not only on proper diction, but on the proper use of gestures, stance, and dress. (Another area of rhetoric, elocutio, was unrelated to elocution and, instead, concerned the style of writing proper to discourse.)

Elocution emerged as a formal discipline during the eighteenth century. One of its important figures was Thomas Sheridan, actor and father of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Thomas Sheridan's lectures on elocution, collected in Lectures on Elocution (1762) and his Lectures on Reading (1775), provided directions for marking and reading aloud passages from literature. Another actor, John Walker, published his two-volume Elements of Elocution in 1781, which provided detailed instruction on voice control, gestures, pronunciation, and emphasis.

With the publication of these works and similar ones, elocution gained wider public interest. While training on proper speaking had been an important part of private education for many centuries, the rise in the nineteenth century of a middle class in Western countries (and the corresponding rise of public education) led to great interest in the teaching of elocution, and it became a staple of the school curriculum. American students of elocution drew selections from what were popularly deemed "Speakers." By the end of the century, several Speaker texts circulated throughout the United States, including McGuffey's New Juvenile Speaker, the Manual of Elocution and Reading, the Star Speaker, and the popular Delsarte Speaker. Some of these texts even included pictorial depictions of body
movements and gestures to augment written descriptions.

**Sample curriculum**

An example of this can be seen in the Table of Contents of McGuffey's *New Sixth Eclectic Reader* of 1857:

- **I. Articulation**
- **II. Inflections**
- **III. Accent and Emphasis**
- **IV. Instructions for Reading Verse**
- **V. The Voice**
- **VI. Gesture**

*New Sixth Reader*. Exercises in Articulation

- Exercise I. — *The Grotto of Antiparos*
- Exercise II. — *The Thunder Storm*
- Exercise III. — *Description of a Storm*
- IV. *Hymn to the Night-Wind*
- V. — *The Cataract of Lodore*

On Inflection

- VI. — *Industry Necessary for the Orator*
- VII. — *The Old House Clock [etc.]*

**References**


**Further reading**


**External links**

- Digital library of old American textbooks [1]
- An article on oratory in 19th century education [2]
- Digital facsimile of A.A. Griffith's *Lessons in Elocution*, 1865 [3]
Elocution

Part of a series of articles on Rhetoric

The five canons:
- Inventio
- Dispositio
- Elocutio
- Memoria
- Pronuntiatio

Elocutio is the term for the mastery of stylistic elements in Western classical rhetoric and comes from the Latin loqui, "to speak". Although today we associate the word elocation more with eloquent speaking, for the classical rhetorician it connoted "style".

It is the third of the five canons of classical rhetoric (the others being inventio, dispositio, memoria, and pronuntiatio) that concern the crafting and delivery of speeches and writing. Beginning in the Renaissance, writers increasingly emphasized the stylistic aspects of rhetoric over the other divisions of rhetoric.

An orator or writer had a number of things to decide in developing a style for a particular discourse. First, there was the level of style; plain (attenuata or subtile), middle (mediocris or robusta), or high (florida or gravis). Writers were instructed to match the basic style to their subject matter and their audience. For instance, Quintilian in his Institutio Oratoria deemed the plain style suitable for instruction, the middle for moving oration, and the high for charming discourse. Today, we associate elocution and rhetoric with the last of these styles, but for rhetoricians, each style was useful in rhetoric.

The ancient authors agreed that the four ingredients necessary in order to achieve good style included correctness, clearness, appropriateness, and ornament.

Sometimes translated as "purity", correctness meant that rhetors should use words that were current and should adhere to the grammatical rules of whatever language they wrote. Correctness rules are standards of grammar and usage drawn from traditional grammar. In regard to clarity, most ancient teachers felt that clarity meant that rhetors should use words in their ordinary or everyday senses. The object of clarity was to allow meaning to "shine through", like light through a window.

Appropriateness probably derives from the Greek rhetorical notion to prepon, meaning to say or do whatever is fitting in a given situation. Ancient teachers taught that close attention to kairos will help to determine the appropriate style.

The last and most important of the excellences of style is ornament, which is defined as extraordinary or unusual use of language. Ornamentation was divided into three broad categories: figures of speech, figures of thought, and tropes. Figures of speech are any artful patterning or arrangement of language. Figures of thought are artful presentations of ideas, feelings, concepts; figures of thought that depart from the ordinary patterns of argument. Tropes are any artful substitution of one term for another.
A great amount of attention was paid to figures of speech, which were classified into various types and sub-types. One Renaissance writer, Henry Peacham, enumerated 184 different figures of speech, although it could be argued that this was a manifestation of the increasing over-emphasis on style that began in the Renaissance.

Also important to elocutio were subjects we would generally regard as grammatical: the proper use of punctuation and conjunctions; the desirable order of words in a sentence (unlike English, many languages are not as dependent on word order to establish relationships between words, and so choices of word order may revolve more around form than function); and the length of sentences.

**Pronuntiatio**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of a series of articles on Rhetoric</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The five canons:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Inventio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dispositio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Elocutio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Memoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pronuntiatio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pronuntiatio was the discipline of delivering speeches in Western classical rhetoric. It is the one of five canons of classical rhetoric (the others being inventio, dispositio, elocutio, and memoria) that concern the crafting and delivery of speeches. In literature the equivalent of ancient pronuntiatio is the recitation of epics (Aris. Po. 26.2.).[1]

As with memoria, the canon that dealt with the memorization of speeches, pronuntiatio was not extensively written about in Classical texts on rhetoric. Its importance declined even more, once the written word became the focus of rhetoric, although after the eighteenth century it again saw more interest in the works of men such as Gilbert Austin. In public speaking today, it may be somewhat over-emphasized, but that is probably more because other parts of rhetoric are downplayed.

Rhetoricians laid down guidelines on the use of the voice and gestures (actio) in the delivery of oratory. There were instructions on the proper modulation of the voice (volume and pitch), as well as the phrasing, pace, and emphasis of speech. Also covered were the physical aspects of oration: stance, gestures, posture, and facial expressions. There was also the concept of exercitatio (or practice exercises) that enabled speakers to both memorize their speeches and to practice their delivery.

This excerpt from Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* provides an example of the types of advice provided by rhetoricians:

"The head, being the chief member of the body, has a corresponding importance in delivery, serving not merely to produce graceful effect, but to illustrate our meaning as well. To secure grace it is essential that the head should be carried naturally and erect. For a droop suggests humility, while if it be thrown back it seems to express arrogance, if inclined to one side it gives an impression of languor, while if it is held too stiffly and rigidly it appears to indicate a rude and savage temper." (*Institutio oratoria*, XI iii 68-69, translated by H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library, 1922)

While the content, structure, and style of oration were (and continue to be) the most important elements of oratory, there is no doubt that effective delivery enhances its persuasive power, and that poor delivery detracts greatly from its intended effect.

Delivery is based on the technology of the times. During Cicero's time, delivery was predominantly speaking. Written delivery developed because of the written language, and now delivery is both spoken and written.
Technology has taken away the distinctions between written and oral delivery. Written discourse did not become important until reading became more common. Because the ancients did not use punctuation, their writing consisted of one long stream of words called scriptio continua. During the editing process, modern rhetors must go through three stages: correctness rule, formatting, and presentation. Writers face more problems than speakers because they must be conscious of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Punctuation is useful in written discourse because it marks the end of a thought and allows the reader to pause and process the information. Visual rhetoric focuses on images and how words function as images. The delivery of ocular demonstration is the use of words to produce mental images in the audience. Textual presentation allows the writer to grab the reader's attention before actually reading the text based on the appearance of the text. The invention of word processors has allowed writers to enhance the appearance of their text and use effects to put emphasis on certain words or thoughts. Delivery refers not only to written or spoken language, but also refers to photographs, paintings, or movies. From Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students by Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee, 3rd edition, Pearson Longman, 2004.

References

Gesture

A gesture is a form of non-verbal communication in which visible bodily actions communicate particular messages, either in place of speech or together and in parallel with words. Gestures include movement of the hands, face, or other parts of the body. Gestures differ from physical non-verbal communication that does not communicate specific messages, such as purely expressive displays, proxemics, or displays of joint attention.[1] Gestures allow individuals to communicate a variety of feelings and thoughts, from contempt and hostility to approval and affection, often together with body language in addition to words when they speak.

Gesture processing takes place in areas of the brain such as Broca's and Wernicke's areas, which are used by speech and sign language.[2]

Studies of gesture

Gestures have been studied throughout the centuries from different viewpoints.[3] During the Roman Empire, Quintilian studied in his Institution Oratoria how gesture may be used in rhetorical discourse. Another broad study of gesture was published by John Bulwer in 1644. Bulwer analyzed dozens of gestures and provided a guide on how to use gestures to increase eloquence and clarity for public speaking.[4] Andrea De Jorio published an extensive account of gestural expression in 1832.[5]
**Categories of gestures**

Although the study of gesture is still in its infancy, some broad categories of gestures have been identified by researchers. The most familiar are the so-called emblems or quotable gestures. These are conventional, culture-specific gestures that can be used as replacement for words, such as the handwave used in the US for "hello" and "goodbye". A single emblematic gesture can have very different significance in different cultural contexts, ranging from complimentary to highly offensive. The page List of gestures discusses emblematic gestures made with one hand, two hands, hand and other body parts, and body and facial gestures.

Another broad category of gestures comprises those gestures used spontaneously when we speak. These gestures are closely coordinated with speech. The so-called beat gestures are used in conjunction with speech and keep time with the rhythm of speech to emphasize certain words or phrases. These types of gestures are integrally connected to speech and thought processes. Other spontaneous gestures used when we speak are more contentful and may echo or elaborate the meaning of the co-occurring speech. For example, a gesture that depicts the act of throwing may be synchronous with the utterance, "He threw the ball right into the window."

Gestural languages such as American Sign Language and its regional siblings operate as complete natural languages that are gestural in modality. They should not be confused with finger spelling, in which a set of emblematic gestures are used to represent a written alphabet.
Social significance

Many animals, including humans, use gestures to initiate a mating ritual. This may include elaborate dances and other movements. Gestures play a major role in many aspects of human life. Gesturing is probably universal; there has been no report of a community that does not gesture. Gestures are a crucial part of everyday conversation such as chatting, describing a route, negotiating prices on a market; they are ubiquitous. Gestures have been documented in the arts such as in Greek vase paintings, Indian Miniatures or European paintings.

Gestures play a central role in religious or spiritual rituals such as the Christian sign of the cross. In Hinduism and Buddhism, a *mudra* (Sanskrit, literally "seal") is a symbolic gesture made with the hand or fingers. Each mudra has a specific meaning, playing a central role in Hindu and Buddhist iconography. An example is the Vitarka mudra, the gesture of discussion and transmission of Buddhist teaching. It is done by joining the tips of the thumb and the index together, while keeping the other fingers straight.

Neurology

Gestures are processed in the same areas of the brain as speech and sign language such as the left inferior frontal gyrus (Broca's area) and the posterior middle temporal gyrus, posterior superior temporal sulcus and superior temporal gyrus (Wernicke's area).[2] It has been suggested that these parts of the brain originally supporting the pairing of gesture and meaning and then were adapted in human evolution "for the comparable pairing of sound and meaning as voluntary control over the vocal apparatus was established and spoken language evolved".[2] As a result, it underlies both symbolic gesture and spoken language in the present human brain. Their common neurological basis also supports the idea that symbolic gesture and spoken language are two parts of a single fundamental semiotic system that underlies human discourse.[7]

Electronic interface

The movement of gestures can be used to interact with technology like computers, using touch or multi-touch popularised by the iPhone, physical movement detection and visual motion capture, used in video game consoles.

References

Further reading

• Bulwer, J (1644). *Chirologia: or the Naturall Language of the Hand*.


External links

• International Society for Gesture Studies (http://www.gesturestudies.com) devoted to the study of human gesture
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