



Wearing a Mask Taught Me How to Speak
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1. Often attributed to George Bernard Shaw (<https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/08/31/illusion/>)
The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

2. William H. Whyte, *The Illusion of Communication*, Fortune (1950)

The great enemy of communication, we find, is the illusion of it. We have talked enough; but we have not listened. And by not listening we have failed to concede the immense complexity of our society—and thus the great gaps between ourselves and those with whom we seek understanding.

What is Speech?

3. Zohar, Mishpatim 100b

אפילו הבל דפומא אתר ודוכתא אית ליה וקב"ה עביד מינה מה דעביד, ואפילו מלה דבר נש ואפילו קלא לא הוי בריקנייא ואתר ודוכתא אית להו לכלא
Even the breath of the mouth has a place and position, and Gd does with it what He does. Even a person's word, even a person's voice is not for nothing; all have a place and position.

4. Zohar, Metzora 55a

כל מלה ומלה דצלותא דאפיק בר נש מפומיה סלקא לעילא ובקעא רקיעין ועאלת לאתר דעאלת ותמן אתבחנת ההיא מלה אי היא מלה דכשרא אי לא,
אי איהי מלה דכשרא עאלין לה קמי מלכא קדישא למעבד רעותה, ואי לאו סאטין לה לבר...

Every word of prayer that a person produces from his mouth ascends upward and pierces heavens and enters the place above. There it is evaluated as to whether it is good or not; if it is good then it ascends before the Holy King to do its will. If not, it is moved outside...

5. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (18th-19th century Lithuania), *Nefesh haChaim* 2:16

ידוע שנפש האדם בכללה היא כלולה מג' בחי' פרטים והם נר"ן, שהם עצמם הג' בחי' מעשה דבור ומחשבה, שזה כל האדם. וגם בכל תיבה יש ג' בחי': מעש' דבור מחשב', נר"ן, והם אותיו' ונקודו' וטעמי' שבה. כמ"ש בהקדמת התקונים ז' ע"ב טעמי אינון נשמתין, ונקודין רוהין, ואתוין נפשיין. וכ"א שם בריש תס"ז ע"ש.

It is known that the collective human soul is composed of three specific aspects: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*. These themselves are the three aspects, deed, speech and thought, which are there entirety of the person. And each word also has three aspects: Speech, Thought and Deed, *nefesh*, *ruach* and *neshamah*, which are the letters, vowels and *t'amim* of the word. As the introduction to the Tikkunei Zohar (pg. 7b) states, 'The *t'amim* are the *neshamah*, the vowels are the *ruach*, and the letters are the *nefesh*.' It is also there at the start of 467.

6. Midrash HaGadol

To what was Amos referring, when he said (4:13), 'The Former of mountains and Creator of the wind, who tells a person his speech?' This was, specifically, a reference to Gd's praise and might. When Gd decides to create a person, He decrees how many conversations that person will have, and how many things he will say, as David said, 'For there is no word on my tongue; Gd, You know all of it.'

7. Kohelet 10:5

לֹשׁ רָעָה רְאִיתִי תַחַת פְּשָׁמֶשׁ פִּשְׁגָּה שִׁיָּצָא מִלְּפָנֵי הַשְּׁלִיט:

I have seen evil beneath the sun, like the mistake that emerges from before the ruler.

8. Commentary of Onkelos to Bereishit 2:7

ונפח באפוהי נשמתא דחיי והות באדם לרוח ממללא:

And He breathed in his nostrils the *neshamah* of life, and it was in Man for a speaking spirit.

1: Going On Mute

9. Talmud, Arachin 15b

אמר ר' יוחנן משום ר' יוסי בן זימרא מאי דכתיב "מה יתן לך ומה יוסיף לך לשון רמיה?" אמר לו הקב"ה ללשון: כל אבריו של אדם זקופים ואתה מוטל, כל אבריו של אדם מבחוץ ואתה מבפנים, ולא עוד אלא שהקפתו לך שתי חומות אחת של עצם ואחת של בשר, מה יתן לך ומה יוסיף לך לשון רמיה?

Rabbi Yochanan cited Rabbi Yosi ben Zimra: What is the meaning of Tehillim 120:3, "What can it give you, what can it add for you, a deceitful tongue?" Gd said to the tongue: All of a person's *eivarim* are upright, and you lie flat. All of a person's *eivarim* are external, and you are internal. And I even surrounded you with two walls, one of bone and one of flesh. What could one give you, what could one add for you, deceitful tongue?

10. Talmud Yerushalmi, Shabbat 15:3

לא ניתנו שבתות וימים טובים אלא לעסוק בהן בדברי תורה... א"ר אבהו "שבת לד" - שבות כד'. מה הקב"ה שבת ממאמר, אף את שבות ממאמר... אמר רבי חנינא מדוחק התירו לשאול שלום בשבת.

Shabbat and Yom Tov were given only to involve oneself in Torah... Rabbi Avahu said: "Shabbat for Gd" – halt as Gd did it. Just as Gd did not speak, so you should not speak... Rabbi Chanina said: It was only with difficulty that they permitted greeting on Shabbat.

11. Kohelet 5:1

אל תבהל על פיהך ולבך אל ימהר להוציא דבר לפני האלקים כי האלקים בשמים ואתה על הארץ על כן יהי דבריך מעטים:
Do not rush your mouth, and let your heart hasten to produce words before Gd, for Gd is in the heavens and you are on earth; therefore, let your words be few.

2: Responsive Listening

12. Mishlei 12:25, per two views in Yoma 75a

דאגה בלב איש ישקנה ודבר טוב ישקנה:

1: When worry is in a person's heart, he should remove it. A good word will gladden it.

2: When worry is in a person's heart, he should speak of it. A good word will gladden it.

13. Alan Alda, *If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face*, pg. 10 (italics in the original)

There's a body of scientific literature on responsive listening, but I came to understand it in a personal way through my work. In acting, this kind of relating is fundamental. You don't say your next line simply because it's in the script. You say it because the other person has behaved in a way that *makes* you say it. Relating to them allows them to have an effect on you – to change you, in [a] way. And *that's* why you respond the way you do.

14. Steven Spielberg, *Inside the Actors Studio*

I was taught by my mom and dad that in Judaism, the most important prayer is Shema Israel, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord Our Gd, The Lord is One!", and it was taught to me - from childhood - that the most important thing I could do, as a Jew, was to listen... So listening, carefully, is what I was taught all my life. I'm just saying that when people don't listen, it's not that they don't learn, they just deny themselves tremendous opportunities and glorious choices.

3: Intentional Communication

15. Positive and Negative

Prayer, encouragement, peace, Torah study

Harmful speech, slander, gossip, verbal abuse, deceit

16. Nick Morgan, *How To Communicate Intentionally*, Forbes (2015)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorgan/2015/04/21/how-to-communicate-intentionally/>

But I appealed to the self-interest of Harvard students, as I do to all audiences on this subject. Wouldn't it be better to come across as focused, clear, and charismatic in your communications rather than having your words and your actions say two different things? The effect of aligned, fully present, emotionally focused communication is often profound, and always optimal. You may not carry the day, but you will be sure to get a hearing, and people will know where you stand. The alternative is to tell two different stories with your content and body language, making yourself your worst enemy and almost guaranteeing that you won't succeed.