



Inarticulate Society: Eloquence and Culture in America

Tom Shachtman

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Eloquence is vanishing from society, so claims Thomas Shachtman. Today's new commentators employ a lexicon of 5000 words, down from 10,000 in 1963, sound bites have taken the place of speeches, crudeness has replaced wit, and movie heroes shoot first and ask questions later. But the crisis of articulate expression is much deeper than we realise, for we have also lost our ability to respond to other points of view - to argue - without coming swiftly to blows. In this work, the author attempts to identify the causes of this decline - from the increasing presence of technology in our lives and the proliferation of jargon-spouting "specialists" to political and corporate double-speak - and he proposes a concrete, multi-faceted programme for rehabilitating eloquence through the constructive use of media together with political and educational reform. Although current trends towards an ever greater flow of information are unlikely to reverse themselves, Shachtman argues that we must use available technology to facilitate - rather than short circuit - debate about important public issues.

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