

can get replaced by competing views if the existing theory is no longer seen as significant or is deemed trivial.

As students and practitioners being exposed to the field and theories of public relations, continually ask yourselves how certain theoretical frameworks shape the way you approach and study communicative and public relations phenomena. Ask yourselves how another theoretical approach might better explain the topic in question. Ask yourselves how other perspectives might better inform how you could or should approach various scenarios in your work environments.

This text, *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations II*, in its totality is a representation of what the editors believe to be a rich representation of the rhetorical and critical theoretical approaches to public relations today. The histories of these approaches are long and long-lived,¹ and one can hope that this volume and the chapters within highlight the vibrancy of these approaches and further contribute to the literature, theory building, and practice of this field that is public relations.

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I

THE RHETORICAL TRADITION

Wrangle in the Marketplace

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What is public relations? What role does it play in society? What role should it play or how should it serve society? When does it not serve society or when does it discredit itself by doing disservice to society? How are young people inspired to study for entry into the profession? What motivates them to go to work with enthusiasm during their career? Does it rely on supplying information? Does it use persuasion? Does it both inform and persuade? Does it motivate? Does it collaborate, negotiate, and resolve conflict? Does it use misinformation, disinformation, and engage in propaganda? Can it help make society more fully functional? If so, how can it help accomplish that end? Can it make society less functional? If so, how does it accomplish that end? Do activist groups and governmental agencies engage in public relations, or is it only a discipline that is unique to companies, the private sector? How is the social impact of public relations (and the organizations that engage in it) affected by what practitioners do (processes) and by what they say and write (meaning)?

One can imagine that each answer to those questions reflects the way any person defines public relations, sees its role in society as constructive or destructive, and assumes it to be rewarding of their time, ingenuity, talents, ethics, and sense of personal self-worth. If we announce to our parents, friends, or even complete strangers that we are “in public relations,” do we shudder and then shy away from further conversation on the matter?

Plenty of definitions of public relations can be found; the same is true of rhetoric. The discussion of rhetoric is ancient; it was a robust part of educating citizens in ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. Today scholars are attentive to its nature and role in society, as is evident by the extensive coverage of this topic in the *International Encyclopedia of Communication* (Donsbach, 2008), which devotes a section to the topic including an entry on “Rhetorical Theory of Public Relations” (Ihlen, 2008; see also Ihlen, 2002). Rhetoric and public relations take their rationale from efforts humans make to influence one another, and to be influenced—necessary to society. As Gaines and Gronbeck (2008) observed, “The rhetorical impulse may be conceived as the desire to express one’s thoughts in a way that affects the thoughts of others” (p. 4382). Is that also the rationale for public relations? And is the challenge to achieve influence but without managing meaning to the advantage of one entity at the disadvantage of one or more others?

In such matters, the most important challenge to each practitioner is to rely on definitions that satisfy him or her in ways that also reflect a responsible answer to these questions. By responsible, one can mean a definition that could be proudly discussed in public that reflects a balance between many interests, some that may be dramatically at odds with one another. As much as it might startle some, the rhetorical heritage helps us define public relations and set our sails on that matter. Effective, ethical, and responsive public relations depends on knowledge of and support for ethical, reflective, and savvy management as the centerpiece in academic research and public relations practice.

In moving toward a definition that melds public relations and rhetoric, one principle from the rhetorical heritage endures. Ancient Roman teaching of rhetoric brings us to champion this sage advice to a speaker: Be a good person who can therefore speak well (Quintilian, 1951). This definition emphasizes the judgment that the character of the speaker (organization in our times) is a vital part of the likely impact of any message and the role (whether constructive or destructive) the communicator plays in society. As organizations have replaced individuals as key figures in society (Cutlip, 1994; Heath, 2008a), we must analyze what it means to be a good organization communicating well. Here is a definition for consideration:

Public relations is the management function that entails planning, research, publicity, promotion, and collaborative decision making to help any organization's ability to listen to, appreciate, and respond appropriately to those persons and groups whose mutually beneficial relationships the organization needs to foster as it strives to achieve its mission and vision.

(Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 7)

The legendary John W. Hill (1958) (co-founder of Hill & Knowlton) advised us to understand management as the initial step toward appreciating the roles and challenges facing public relations professionals. He cautioned,

It is not the work of public relations—let it always be emphasized—to outsmart the American public in helping management build profits. It is the job of public relations to help management find ways of identifying its own interests with the public interest—ways so clear that the profit earned by the company may be viewed as contributing to the progress of everybody in the American economy. (p. 21)

He added, "Big companies, if they are properly managed, have a keen sense of public responsibility. They guide their policies in keeping with the public interest and make sure that each of their plants is a good neighbor in its respective community" (p. 39). Hill's position squares with the advice offered by Quintilian and captures the richness of the rhetorical tradition as the rationale for the responsible practice of public relations.

Seeing the need for management to learn from the variety of positions being advocated by various voices, Hill (1958) observed, "Good corporate public

relations depend, first, upon sound policies truly in the public interest and second, upon clear and effective communication, explanation, and interpretation of policies and facts to the public" (p. 163). The interests of each private and public sector organization can never be indifferent to the public interest, but must achieve symmetry or harmony with that interest. This logic values a synergism between both interests based on process, ethics, and co-creation of shared meaning. It assumes that relationship development must be mutual for each organization to obtain resources held by its stakeholders. Those resources are required for the organizations to succeed. Both interests can be adjusted to one another by organizations moving closer to the public interest by understanding and appreciating it as well as communicating about the ways in which the organization operates in the public interest. From this position, Hill (1963) reasoned:

Business managements are concerned with the problems of conducting their corporate or industry affairs in ways that they may feel are contributive to public progress. They must arrive at effective policies that go far beyond their economic and operating functions into the complex realms of social, governmental, and political relationships. The large majority pushes forward into these policy areas as a matter of choice. But in terms of the long-range survival of corporate enterprise, there is little choice involved; it is a matter of essentiality. (p. 230)

Rhetoric is often seen as telling lies, distorting, spinning the truth, and manipulating, but the rhetorical heritage believes no communicator or manager can be effective without first being a good listener who wants to know, appreciate, and respect what others believe and think—and why they hold those positions. And such persons want to know why others act as they do based on the information they know and interpret and opinions they believe or reject. In this way, public relations and the rhetorical heritage focus attention not narrowly on the self-interest and opinions of the organization but on the persons whose goodwill is needed for the organization to succeed. In this way, public relations and rhetoric are inherently other oriented.

Set against Hill's perspective on public relations is the view of Edward Bernays (1955) that public relations can help engineer consent. Both grew up professionally in an era when practitioners' skills were honed by engaging in what was called propaganda. This concept guided public communication during World War I and continuing into World War II. Hill and other modern pioneers of the public relations profession realized that propaganda was a term suffering from substantial disrepute as it became associated with manipulation, especially lying and deception. A recent version of the engineering approach was presented by Madden (1997) who reasoned that public relations is like a stealth bomber, capable of influencing opinion because it penetrates minds like a stealth bomber penetrates radar systems undetected and without meeting resistance. Those communication options might win for a while but ultimately fail as does any profession that builds its rationale on them. Propaganda is the essence of asymmetry. Rhetoric is inherently symmetrical,

focusing ultimately on the quality of ideas that result from the process of public statement and counterstatement (Heath, 2001). Any truly ethical public relations practitioner (especially those informed on the principles of rhetoric) realize that each statement must be carefully made and soundly supported because it can and likely will encounter counterstatement. To serve society, and help people make enlightened choices, it must be able to stand in the face of resistance, doubt, and challenge.

With these propositions in mind, we conclude that the nexus between the rhetorical heritage and public relations is squarely this: Both deal with "unsettled matters." Where there is choice, where choice is required by various circumstances, and people are free to make such choice, that is the realm of rhetoric. For that reason, it offers an excellent rationale for understanding the ethical practice of public relations which has the responsibility to serve communities of interest, and not merely one interest, of the organization paying for the professional service. On this basis, we explore the topic of rhetorical foundations for public relations in more detail during this chapter, as throughout this book.

Pillars of Public Relations Theory

Communication, especially in the rhetorical tradition, does not consist of one entity putting ideas and meaning into the minds of others. Meaning is the constitutive and attributive interpretations one person makes of the statements and actions of another. Practitioners are in the *message and meaning business*. For this reason, public relations theory and professional best practices require a solid understanding of messages and the meaning they can create—as well as how they can fail to adequately address rhetorical problems confronted by their employers, clients, and others in society. The rhetorical heritage provides an evolving body of strategic and critical insights to help practitioners be effective and ethical as they participate in the process by which society creates meaning—or meaning is created in society. Rhetorical theory has combined with organizational communication theory to feature the reality that all actions—the enactment of meaning—by organizations is rhetorical. As well as engaging in ethical processes of public relations, practitioners recognize that meaning matters (Heath & Frandsen, 2008).

To flesh out these conclusions, the rest of this section explores the theoretical foundations of various theories to understand and critique their usefulness for creating the theory and supporting the practice of public relations.

Systems theory, as well as its derivative *structural functionalism*, is useful for understanding and improving the processes of public relations, but it fails to help practitioners and scholars understand what messages are strategically and ethically relevant to each of the many adjustments required for information to flow and relationships to be in balance. Heavily focused on process, systems theory does not explain the role of ethics, language, and meaning in the efforts to foster or correct imbalance or achieve balance.

If practitioners and academics are to use discourse to make society more fully functional (Heath, 2006), they must know and share facts, but realize they do not come to us with inherently granted conclusions; although they may have a

scientific origin and meaning, they also are burdened by political implications. Campbell (1996), comparing scientists for whom "the most important concern is the discovery and testing of certain kinds of truths" to "rhetoricians (who study rhetoric and take a rhetorical perspective) would say, 'Truths cannot walk on their own legs. They must be carried by people to other people. They must be explained, defended, and spread through language, argument, and appeal'" (p. 3). From this foundation, Campbell reasoned, rhetoricians take the position "that unacknowledged and unaccepted truths are of no use at all" (p. 3). The rhetorical tradition is founded on facts; since the age of Aristotle, rhetors have been required to assert and demonstrate their propositions by producing fact. Gaudino, Fritsch, and Haynes (1989) and others have indicted the assumption that "if you knew what I know we would agree," as though sharing information is the sole solution to public relations problems and the theory of how those problems can best be solved.

Rhetorical theory features the role information, fact, plays in shaping knowledge and opinions as well as being convincing and motivating actions. It addresses the ways evaluations are debated and confirmed or challenged. It contests the wisdom of various policies, identities, and reputations. As people compete through public and private debate to assert the strength of their ideas framed in propositional discourse, their statements exhibit an invitational quality (Foss & Griffin, 1995). As such, Burke (1969b) defined it as the "use of suasive devices for the transcending of social estrangement" (p. 208).

Rhetoric is inherently dialogic, a contest among multiple voices. Each voice knows that others may disagree—or agree. Assuming that alternative views have merit, they are set before interested parties for consideration. Spirited debate is the essence of the rhetorical heritage that believes in the right and ability of people to obtain and judge messages and make enlightened decisions accordingly.

Rhetoric instantiates the democratic process because it presumes that any position voiced in public must be sufficiently compelling to withstand vigorous critiques by other rhetors who believe their competing ideas have merit. For decades, large companies and governmental agencies—as well as various non-profits—have been viewed variously as tyrants and as valued sources of fact, evaluation, recommendation, and relationship through identification. Any view offers the opening of debate, public scrutiny.

A rhetorical perspective realizes that people interpret information by advocating contestable propositions regarding its accuracy, sufficiency, and relevance. As advocates for various interpretations of the data, participants in symmetrical communication seek to advance their views as being accurate and supportable and in mutual interest. They defend and attack conclusions and recommendations based on the data and premises available. Their discourse is often a clash of perspectives. Data are meaningless until interpreted; interpretation requires advocacy. Advocacy invokes propositional language and counter persuasion, in contrast to what we might call propaganda. This rhetorical perspective offers an epistemic, advisory, and invitational rationale for public relations.

Critical studies, such as those that have been primarily inspired by European thinkers, complete the triad of the pillars for public relations. Some lines of critical investigation grow from the rhetorical heritage. Other approaches to criticism

draw heavily on social, sociopolitical theory to investigate and critique the roles large organizations play in the quality of the discourse of society, and in the quality of society itself. Critical studies both constitute an application of rhetoric to advocate qualitatively superior options and to judge the quality of the processes and procedures of discourse. While not indifferent to process, critical theory explores the deficits of systems theory and rhetoric by invoking ethical standards, ideological underpinnings, through discourse analysis steeped in the ethics of social democracy (see Cheney & Christensen, 2001).

Rhetoric to the Rescue

Because of profound misunderstanding of the rhetorical heritage, founding public relations theory and practice on rhetorical theory can be as risky in our times as it was to use propaganda as the rationale for public relations nearly 100 years ago (Fearn-Banks, 2005; Heath, 2005; Lubbers 2005a, 2005b). What we need is a way to address the current mistaken and politicized view of rhetoric as "mere," "hollow words," or something that can and should be "turned down," a stance often taken to discredit or even mute opponents. Out of the 1960s era of social protest, the cynical "rhetorical position" called others' expression on any matter "mere rhetoric." We hear, especially in political debate or in reaction to critics, the request to "turn down the rhetoric." That view of rhetoric suggests that if we make heartfelt and sincere statements with sharp words and pointed facts then we somehow distort the way that debate, advocacy, and dialogue should occur. In fact, that assumption flies in the face of the rhetorical heritage which since the golden age of Greece has focused on one central theme: How can statements be given more impact to make points that are worthy of consideration in and reconciliation by society.

Let's frame rhetoric a bit more before discussing various perspectives on rhetoric, key strategies and contexts, and ethics. Central to the heritage of rhetoric is a keen interest in how discourse can make society more fully functioning (Heath, 2006). The role of rhetoric enters where there is difference of opinion, doubt, uncertainty, and even firmly held opinions which may be wrong. Words and other kinds of symbolic discourse that work against an end of supporting sound choice are not "mere rhetoric," but are inappropriate rhetoric. Support for this line of reasoning came from Cutilip (1994) who observed, "only through the expertise of public relations can causes, industries, individuals, and institutions make their voice heard in the public forum where thousands of shrill, competing voices daily re-create the Tower of Babel" (p. ix). Through dialogue, individuals and groups co-create and negotiate identity, interest, and socially relevant meaning (Mead, 1934). Rhetoric enters the human experience because people have different views, different opinions, and prefer different actions. To the extent that collective and coordinated behavior is useful and even necessary, difference needs to be reconciled. We assume that better ideas can defeat inferior ones.

Rhetoric is the rationale for effective discourse. It consists of a well-established body of critical principles and strategic guidelines regarding how messages need to be proved, structured, framed, and worded. It is interested in how each message needs to be designed to be informative and persuasive. Because rhetorical theory

arises out of disputes and differences of opinion, it offers guidelines on how people can negotiate differences and work together in collaborative decision making. It informs, creates divisions, and bridges divisions. It advocates, convinces, and motivates. It motivates people to make one choice in preference to another. If people everywhere shared the same information, opinion, and motives, there would be no need for rhetoric.

At its best, it is founded on the substance of good reasons (Wallace, 1963) to make society better for all. At its worst, it can engage in deception, manipulation, slander, character assassination, distortion, misinformation, and disinformation. Such motives tend to lead to some interests being privileged at the expense of others.

Champions of the rhetorical heritage believe that free and open discourse is the best answer to the misuse of the art. Some see rhetoric as competing voices (see Burke, 1969a; Brummett, 1995; L'Etang, 1996), each of which can enrich the search for truth and sound judgment. The best corrective for deception is public debate. In that format, one side of a controversy can be demonstrated to be false, manipulative, or deceptive. Public discourse, the forum of rhetoric, allows for combatants to challenge, correct, and elevate the discourse of society. Defending that view, Lentz (1996) reasoned: "Truth should prevail in a market-like struggle where superior ideas vanquish their inferiors and achieve audience acceptance" (p. 1). Rhetoric is ethical because it empowers participants to engage in dialogue, private or public. It confronts choice between having ideas, opinions, and actions "engineered" through propaganda or having them forged through the collective contest of ideas.

A rhetorical rationale of public relations views it as constructive dialogue, a wrangle in the marketplace of ideas, preferences, choices, and influence. Rhetoric is relevant to any context in which humans are compelled to make enlightened choice (Nichols, 1963). It is the rationale of suasive discourse which can and should lead to enlightened choices. That theme sets a firm, ethical, and socially responsible view of rhetoric and public relations. As Wallace (1963) advised, our discourse should prepare us to think back on important decisions; "statements that are evoked by the need to make choices in order that we may act or get ready to act or to appraise our acts after their doing" (p. 241). With that in mind we ask practitioners, in what way, each day, do you help others and yourself (and clients) to make enlightened choices? These themes will be systematically examined in the remainder of this chapter.

Rhetorical Tradition: Wrangle in the Marketplace

Rhetoric is employed when matters of various kinds are to be decided, when they are unsettled, when differences of opinion prevail, and when people are uncertain as to which of several decisions is best. It assists managements as they decide what strategies are available to promote and publicize a product or service, and even to shape an organization's image. It guides how they engage in issue debate, manage risks, and respond during crises. The rationale for rhetorical theory is that it helps us understand the process of decision making, collective efforts, and the give and

take of conversation, debate, advocacy, accommodation, negotiation, and collaborative decision making.

Rhetoric's role in unsettled matters, Burke (1969b) noted, rests on the fact that society is a marketplace of ideas, facts, values, and policies: "the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Marketplace, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counter pressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the War of Nerves, the War" (p. 23). For this reason, Burke (1973a) concluded that democracy institutionalizes "the dialectic process, by setting up a political structure that gives full opportunity for the use of competition to a cooperative end" (p. 444).

In each battle waged to achieve some collective outcome, each statement is not independent of others but gains its meaning and importance by how it agrees, disagrees, or otherwise responds to other statements. "Rhetoric is thus made from fragments of dialectic" (Burke, 1969b, p. 207). Dialectic, the cooperative use of competition, progresses from division through merger to identification. "A rhetorician, I take it, is like one voice in a dialogue. Put several such voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in cooperative competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed can lead to views transcending the limitations of each" (Burke, 1951, p. 203). Each moment's work in public relations, by this rationale, competes for time and space with many others. Discourse analysis predicts how and why some statements will succeed and others will fail, as well as which are responsible, ethical, and in the public interest. The theory and ethics that drive rhetoric center on the rationale for suasive discourse, the art of influence and being influenced.

Given its 2500-year Western heritage since the golden age of Greece, some consider rhetoric to be the queen (lady or grand dame, see Brummert, 1995; L'Erang, 1996) of communication studies. Campbell (1996) championed rhetoric as "the study of what is persuasive. Issues it examines are social truths, addressed to others, justified by reasons that reflect cultural values. It is a humanistic study that examines all the symbolic means by which influence occurs" (p. 8). Connecting the heritage of rhetoric to the spirit of democracy in Ancient Greece, Kennedy (1963) framed the discipline this way: "In its origin and intention rhetoric was natural and good: it produced clarity, vigor, and beauty, and it rose logically from the conditions and qualities of the classical mind" (p. 3).

Burke (1965) cautioned, "Let the system of cooperation become impaired, and the communicative equipment is correspondingly impaired, while this impairment of the communicative medium in turn threatens the structure of rationality itself" (p. 163). The dialectic goes like this. Environmentalists argue that green is good, including green products, to create that identification. Extending that logic, manufacturers of consumer products appeal for identification based on claims that their products are green and environmentally sound.

This dialectic progression demands "a third term that will serve as the ground or medium of communication between opposing terms. And whatever logical problems such a third term may give rise to, we are being logical in feeling the need for it" (Burke 1969a, p. 405). Rhetoric, linguistic transformation, grows through act and counteract. More specifically, the process moves from act, through counteract,

to the lesson learned. In public relations, an organization or spokesperson suffers opposition based on what it does or says: "the dialectical (agonistic) approach to knowledge is through the act of assertion, whereby one 'suffers' the kind of knowledge that is the reciprocal of this act" (Burke, 1969a, pp. 39-40).

Which choice is best, most correct, wisest, and preferable? Aristotle believed that the communicator is obliged to prove such advice as he or she asserts. Proofs of several kinds are the substance of rhetoric. These proofs are made useful through the presentation of fact and reasoning. They feature values and reveal the character of the speaker. In this way, an audience could assess the credibility of all rhetors (spokespersons in this context) by considering the values on which they base their life and build their messages. The end to which all discourse should be aimed is the public interest, identifications that are mutually beneficial. Values and good reasons are classic ingredients of rhetorical discourse, along with a scrupulous interest in the soundness of arguments based on fact and flawless reasoning as the soundness of each perspective asserted for others to adopt.

Rhetoric as Function and Strategy

Concerns about sham presentation, lying, and manipulation have forced considered critical commentary on the topic of rhetoric. These comments help us discuss how public relations can and should foster dialogue, contribute to that dialogue, and serve many interests, not merely that of the spokesperson. Debate over the factors that make ethical and effective discourse reach back at least 2500 years to the time of Plato.

Plato: A Critic of Rhetoric

As do critics today, Plato conceived of rhetoric as cookery, what we might today call "public relations spin," where truth is not as important as its appearance. He scorned the use of deceit rather than means for discovering truth, improving knowledge, or forming enlightened policy. He feared that it was employed for evil ends and consisted of trickery aimed at achieving an outcome one party desired indifferent and even purposefully harmful to the interest of others. He doubted that rhetoric could avoid making false accusations and using contrived evidence for unethical ends. In its place, Plato preferred dialectic to disclose truth through focused interrogation of one person by another. He assumed one party in each exchange is more knowledgeable and therefore able to lead the other party to a predetermined truth.

Despite Kennedy's (1963) sense of ancient Greeks' love for public discourse logically crafted and eloquently presented, Plato (1952) caustically cautioned that "rhetoric is not an art at all, but the habit of a bold and ready wit, which knows how to manage mankind: this habit I sum up under the word 'flattery'" (p. 262). By such criticism, Plato forced generations of communicators to be mindful of ethics, but his narrowing distortion of the sociopolitical role of the rhetorical tradition denied people access to means by which to engage democratically in public discourse to share information, propose opinions, and seek mutually beneficial

solutions to collective problems. Plato's cynical assessment of rhetoric, which is voiced even today, extends to public relations if it is vacuous, manipulative spin doctoring. To support socially responsible ends, public relations must put into play the best information evaluated by the most ethical observations in support of mutually beneficial choices that can help society to function better. Most, also, would prefer public debate to having decisions made by management elites along the lines of Plato's philosopher king.

Aristotle: Blending Rhetoric, Politics and Ethics

Aristotle, a pupil of Plato, enriched the rhetorical tradition by focusing on the ethics of the process and substance of public discourse as contributing to the good of society and supported by an articulated ethics. As did others, he featured the role of rhetoric in the training of citizens and the virtue of discourse in society.

He determined that rhetoric was strategically functional; it was designed to solve problems and achieve outcomes with audiences whose opinions might differ and which might respond to different appeals. He found three prevailing contexts: Deliberative (political communication, including legislative debate), judicial (what we would call litigation), and epideictic (occasional or special situation communication). Each context was defined by its unique purpose and desired outcome. Deliberative rhetoric demonstrates the expedience of some policy, what it is best to do under the circumstances. Forensic rhetoric deals with guilt and innocence. Epideictic rhetoric is concerned with matters of praise and blame. This last context has recently been wisely used to examine crisis communication (see Huxman, 2004, for instance; for an application of principles of deliberative rhetoric to crisis, see Johnson & Sellnow, 1995).

Aristotle observed three major kinds of proof: Logos (typically featured as the logic of fact and reasoning about facts), pathos (conceptualized as the emotionally relevant value judgments related to a case), and ethos (roughly thought of as credibility but more wisely conceived as character). As such, the rhetor mounting a case is expected to focus on some problem and to recognize how different audiences may perceive and address that problem as well as respond differently to various proofs.

The rhetorical canon featured five elements of each presentation: Invention, structure, substance, delivery, and mastery. How the case was built depended on the rhetor's skills at invention, knowing what could and must be said to draw the appropriate conclusion. Ideas are not presented randomly, but need to follow one of several well-defined structures. The invention of a specific perspective requires knowledge of the relevant substance. All of this material needs to be effectively delivered (verbally and nonverbally), and with confidence that comes from mastery of the case. Some might call this mastery *gravitas*: Communicating with authority drawn from character.

These functional outcomes, forms of proof, and strategic elements needed a sound theoretical glue to hold them together and give them a laudable role in society. To produce such glue, Aristotle set two high ethical standards for those who engage in rhetoric. One is the need to demonstrate through evidence the

factual basis for any claims advocated. As Aristotle (1952c) viewed the relationship between the discovery and exposition of ideas, he concluded that rhetoric is "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (p. 595). The essence of persuasion is demonstration "since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated" (p. 594). Truth as it can best be known emerges through proof and reasoning presented for others to consider. The second standard is to demonstrate through the values espoused that the communicator is a good person speaking for a good cause—the demonstration of character. The highest good is the effort to make society better, more fully functional. His inquiry led to the conclusion that persons who engage in rhetoric must have a profound understanding of the role of discourse in a society, preferably one more disposed to democratic dispute rather than royal proclamation.

Aristotle believed that the character or *ethos* of public speakers—the predominant form of communication in the golden age of Greece—was vital to their success or failure as well as the wholesomeness of their social participation. Persons with more credibility are more believable and trustworthy because they associate their lives, arguments, and purposes with higher order values: Truth, morality and virtue. What distinguishes a speaker's character? Aristotle (1952c) answered: "good sense, good moral character, and goodwill" (p. 623). Standards of each "good" are basic to rhetoric which "exists to affect the giving of decisions" by listeners (readers or viewers) who then decide among the positions presented to them (p. 622).

He thought openness of public discourse motivated communicators to seek the best—strongest and most ethical points of view—because ideas are contested in public where they receive penetrating analysis. Aristotle believed the process entailed the seeking of truth through the process of public advocacy rather than leaving truth to be known (in the Platonic sense) by the singular analytic efforts of a "philosopher king." Thus, Aristotle took a stand 2500 years ago that was comfortable with the contemporary preference for two-way symmetrical communication. As Aristotle would argue, neither side in some controversy is inherently correct or morally right, but the process of exchange can reveal the interests of both sides so they can achieve a win-win, integrative outcome based on collaborative decision making.

With rhetoric, people collectively make decisions and form policy for the public good. In the opinion of Aristotle (1952b), "if all communities aim at some good," the best are those which aspire to "the highest good" (p. 445). Thus, rhetoric is judged by the quality of the process and its outcomes: "A man [or woman] can confer the greatest of benefits by a right use of these [techniques], and inflict the greatest of injuries by using them wrongly" (p. 594). "Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view of some good; for mankind always acts in order to obtain that which they think 'good'" (p. 445). Good can either be prescribed by one philosopher king (elitism) or decided by the populace (democracy).

What according to Aristotle (1952c) is the source of persuasiveness? "A statement is persuasive and credible either because it is directly self-evident or because it appears to be proved from other statements that are so" (p. 596). Aristotle believed that "Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech

is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men [and women] more fully and more readily than others" (p. 595). In this way, he believed that rhetoric should foster enlightened choice. For Aristotle (1952c), rhetoric serves to give counsel "on matters about which people deliberate; matters, namely, that ultimately depend on ourselves, and which we have it in our power to set going" (p. 599). Aristotle thought bad judgment and unsound character undo persuasion:

Men [or women] either form a false opinion through want of good sense; or they form a true opinion, but because of their moral badness do not say what they really think; or finally, they are both sensible and upright, but not well disposed to their hearers, and may fail in consequence to recommend what they know to be the best course. (p. 623)

When a rhetor recommends a conclusion or action, he or she does so "on the ground that it will do good; if he [or she] urges its rejection, he [or she] does so on the ground that it will do harm" (Aristotle, 1952c, p. 598). People and societies are evaluated by the ends to which they aspire (Aristotle, 1952c, p. 608). Rhetoric is used to explore ways of achieving happiness by making choices that will do good and prevent or at least minimize harm. He observed, "When we know a thing, and have decided about it, there is no further use in speaking about it" (p. 639). This logic, crafted centuries ago, supports the rationale for public relations in our day. It can guide promotion and publicity as well as the dispute over issues, the resolution of crisis, and the ethical management of risk.

Centering attention on the connection between communication and ethics, Aristotle (1952a) began his *Nicomachean Ethics* by noting that, "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim" (p. 339). "Therefore, virtue is a kind of mean, since, as we have seen, it aims at what is intermediate" (p. 352). For him, the higher ethical position was one that struck an appropriate balance between ethical extremes; some see this position as a fatal flaw in his ethics. Yet he reasoned that ethics must recognize "that moral virtue is a mean, then, and in what sense it is so, and that it is a mean between two vices, the one involving excess and the other deficiency, and that is such because its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and in actions" (p. 354). He firmly believed that some actions and morals were bad in and of themselves: "But not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder" (p. 352).

For Aristotle (1952a), "it is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle" (p. 376). For him ethics is a balance between excess and deficit, something that is learned through thoughts and actions that pit extremes against one another. The search is for the middle between the extremes, a win-win midpoint. He was interested in the search for justice: "We see that all men [and women] mean by justice that kind of state of character which makes people disposed to do what is just and makes them act justly and wish for what is just; and

similarly by injustice that state which makes them act unjustly and wish for what is unjust" (p. 376). Thus, the tug of ethics is the process of knowing a state and its contrary state. Thus, the state of lying and not telling the truth is known as a contrast to the state of telling the truth.

Aristotle's (1952b) *Politics* frames his thoughts on rhetoric as he began his treatise: "Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in the greater degree than any others, and at the highest good" (p. 445). "Virtue, then is a state of character concerned with choice" (Aristotle, 1952a, p. 352).

In his *Rhetoric* (1952c), he argued that "Rhetoric is useful (1) because things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to the speakers themselves, and they must be blamed accordingly" (p. 594). In this statement, Aristotle blended advocacy and symmetry. However narrow or incorrect one instance of advocacy might be, it is a statement that is likely to suffer counterstatement in search for the truth. Aristotle's view, similar to symmetrical public relations, assumes that each voice deserves to be heard and judged for the merits of what is said. The voice of a big business, an activist group, a non-profit or government agency is not inherently superior to others. One voice should not drown out others.

No other of the arts draws opposite conclusions: dialectic and rhetoric alone do this. Both these arts draw opposite conclusions impartially. Nevertheless, the underlying facts do not lend themselves equally well to the contrary views. No: things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in. (p. 594)

Thus, for Aristotle, the strength of the case was not its deceit but its demonstration. Through demonstration, the targets of messages determine which is best. "Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated" (p. 594). Great good can be done by using rhetoric ethically. The opposite can lead to harm. The same is true of public relations. Thus, "rhetoric is an offshoot of dialectic and also of ethical studies" (Aristotle, 1952c, p. 595).

In these ways, Aristotle offered two important lines of analysis that help us understand and appreciate the connection between rhetoric and public relations. Each communicator puts his or her character on the line by the content of what is said, the manner in which it is presented, the interests that are advanced or harmed by a case, and the way it serves or harms society. Persons must prove their claims and aspire to the highest values in all that they do and say. To those who claim that rhetoric is hollow statements, Aristotle would say, such can be the case, but that is not the best rhetoric, nor the reason that it is vital to society. As we are wise to be, Aristotle would shun sham, spin, and the presentation of falsehood. Likewise,

we are asked in matters of public relations to demonstrate our case, to be of sound character, seek the public interest, and examine the statement of others as we expect them to examine the quality of our presentations.

This standard is amplified by others in the rhetorical tradition such as Isocrates and Quintilian. And, we explore their ideas to see reasoning that can support our theory and practice of public relations. In contrast to the golden age of Greece, our modern world sees organizations speaking, even though they speak through individuals. Here is the ethical and practical peril of public relations. Can ancient theory keep us on the right path?

Isocrates: Rhetorical Training Depends on Social Responsibility

As did Aristotle's, Isocrates' opinions on rhetoric underscored how citizens need to prepare themselves to serve society. For this reason, his ideas must be considered by modern students and practitioners of public relations. He recognized the need for civic education, since each generation hands on to each following generation the reins of governance. How men and women are educated will shape how they govern. If they are educated to understand the power of persuasion and appreciate its responsible role for collective decision making in the public interest, they will act accordingly when it is their turn to lead society.

Isocrates (1929) observed that the first requirement of the effective communicator is "a mind which is capable of finding out and learning the truth and of working hard and remembering what it learns" (p. 293). Communication is not an art where a facile mind and a quick wit should be the rule; rather, a thinker devoted to truth can best serve society.

As did Aristotle, Isocrates (1929) observed that rhetoric is a responsibility of each citizen and an essential element of an effective and ethical society. To this end, he reasoned:

because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear to each other whatever we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish. For this it is which has laid down laws concerning things just and unjust, and things honourable and base; and if it were not for these ordinances we should not be able to live with one another. It is by this also that we confute the bad and extol the good. Through this we educate the ignorant and appraise the wise; for the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding, and discourse which is true and lawful and just is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding, and discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul. (p. 327)

The key to discourse is not its nature alone, but its role in the service to society. Sham and deceit may occur in the substance and strategies used by rhetors, but

time will reveal those devices and their deficiencies (Isocrates, 1929). These are principles sound enough to guide the practice of public relations as a responsible profession serving many interests and making society more fully functional.

In Isocrates' view, society is the benefactor of the person trained to be an effective and ethical communicator. Each citizen—today, even corporate citizens—must learn and apply the principles of strategic and ethical communication. That end must not narrowly serve some participant's self-interest, but the collective interest of all. Through robust dialogue, as Isocrates argued, a better, more ethical society can be crafted. "With this faculty we both contend against others on matters which are open to dispute and seek light for ourselves on things which are unknown; for the same arguments which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our own thoughts" (Isocrates, 1929, p. 327).

Isocrates reasoned that no one can know with certainty what is the best path to achieve the most desirable outcomes. Reasoning, knowledge, and the ability to communicate were, in his opinion, essential tools to that end: "I hold that man [or woman] to be wise who is able by his [or her] powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course" (p. 335). Education in communication theory and skills is essential to be a worthy citizen: "when anyone elects to speak or write discourses which are worthy of praise and honour, it is not conceivable that he will support causes which are unjust or petty or devoted to private quarrels, and not rather those which are great and honourable, devoted to the welfare of man and our common good; for if he fails to find causes of this character, he (or she) will accomplish nothing to the purpose" (pp. 337–339). Not only the ends, but also the means of communication rest on sound ethical purpose. In the matter of means, character counts:

the man [or woman] who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character; no, on the contrary, he will apply himself above all to establish a most honourable name among his fellow-citizens; for who does not know that words carry greater conviction when spoken by men [or women] of good repute than when spoken by men [or women] who live under a cloud, and that the argument which is made by a man's [or woman's] life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words. (p. 339)

The ethical challenge, one can assume Isocrates would argue, has not changed over the past two thousand years: "Therefore, the stronger a man's [or woman's] desire to persuade his hearers, the more zealously will he [or she] strive to be honourable and to have the esteem of his fellow-citizens" (p. 339).

Citizens, Isocrates advised those of his age, need to serve the interests of others by being effective communicators. Concern for others should motivate and precede the development of expertise instead of the development of expertise and looking for interests to serve. One can argue the same is true today, including the ethical role of corporate citizens. Ours is an age of organizational rhetors, instead of individuals themselves speaking or writing for public evaluation. It is a citizenship responsibility to participate in responsible and responsive dialogue.

Quintilian: Teacher of Ethical Rhetoric and Ethical Speakers

Greek philosophers realized two basic facts. People must demonstrate good character and be effective communicators to be excellent citizens, enjoying the privilege of engaging in discourse and knowing how to meet the burden of responsible and reflective communication. Greeks offered this legacy to the Romans who followed.

Picking up this tradition, Marcus Fabius Quintilian took a perspective that supports the paradigm for public relations as the good organization communicating well. Each organization should strive to be moral and communicate well to satisfy the interests of its markets, audiences, and publics. Only propositions that are justifiable and ethical can sustain themselves against the scrutiny of counter rhetoric. Today's trend for large organizations to not only achieve higher standards of corporate responsibility but to report their success fits the trend to be good, do good, and communicate well.

On this point, Quintilian (1951) was firm: "My ideal orator, then, is the true philosopher, sound in morals and with full knowledge of speaking, always striving for the highest" (p. 20). Quintilian's mission was clear and relevant to public relations' ethical standards: "My aim is to educate the true orator, who must be a good man [or woman] and must include philosophy in his studies in order to shape his character as a citizen and to equip himself to speak on ethical subjects, his special role" (p. 20). This theme is central to the mission of *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations II*. It is dedicated to drawing upon thoughtful and well-reasoned advice to set high standards for professional development and best practices based on the rhetorical heritage.

Toward a definition of rhetoric, Quintilian reviewed the ideas of his predecessors. Among them was Plato, who disparaged rhetoric when it is used for base outcomes and developed through false reasoning. Plato, Quintilian believed, "regarded rhetoric in itself as a honorable thing to be used by a just man in securing what is just" (p. 98).

Quintilian (1951) considered social values to be an explicit or at least implicit part of each statement: "If a case is based on injustice, neither a good man [or woman] nor rhetoric has any place in it" (p. 106). The quality of discourse is inseparable from the character of the person who chooses the side of an issue as well as the language, form, and substance with which to address it. For the ancients, rhetoric took vitality not from what could be said to cleverly win some point of view, but how public dialogue could advance society by assisting people to make sound choices. As Grunig (1992) and others (see for instance, Berger & Reber, 2006) have argued, the excellent organization not only becomes so through communication but also communicates in ways that foster and demonstrate its excellence because of its character, its adherence to higher rather than narrow and self-interested standards and values.

These choices could be the purchase of products of services or on the choice of which candidate to vote for or which public policy to champion. Enlightened choices come down to which non-profit to support for the cause that it serves, as well as support each government agency and policy for the good it does to society.

Which company has the best reputation, demonstrates the best character? And, can an organization communicate well over time if it does not have sound character? Can an organization recover from a crisis if it cannot explain why the crisis occurred and what will be done to reduce the likelihood of that risk from manifesting itself again? These questions continue to arise in the practice of public relations. Each student of that science and art is welcome and wise to ask: To what extent can my professional development be made more solid by understanding the rhetorical tradition? The following sections address specific components of that challenge.

Rhetoric and Enlightened Choice: Addressing Rhetorical Problems

Senior practitioners often say that they are expected to solve problems. To meet that challenge, one can imagine that they are called on to address **rhetorical problems**. One of the most important advances in rhetorical theory in the twentieth century was the conclusion that each statement addresses or should address a rhetorical problem. And the quality of the rhetorical statement is connected to how well it addresses this problem (Bitzer, 1968).

Perhaps the problem could be marketing-driven. As such the rhetor should address this question from a customer's point of view: Why should I buy a specific product or service? Once a decision is formed to make such a purchase, the customer is confronted with making an enlightened choice by addressing this additional question: Why buy X instead of Y?

Character, that essential challenge of the rhetorical tradition, is reflected at the start of each moment of discourse—from the recognition that a problem exists and that it must be addressed in a particular way. Any individual or organization expresses its character through the principles and values revealed by the causes it champions and opposes, by what it does and says—the total enactment of the organization. All of what an individual or organization does can have meaning, and therefore be part of its rhetorical strategy. By how it addresses the rhetorical problem it can demonstrate its worth to participate in some matter's discussion and offer advice that can lead to a truly enlightened choice.

Character comes through in marketing recommendations, issues debates, risk communication, as well as crisis prevention and response. Character is reflected by whether the persons who craft and make a statement do so for their (or their organization's) self-interest or for mutual interest, focusing on the quality of their respect for the buyer's interest, for instance.

Bitzer (1968) reasoned that each rhetorical problem demands that a position should be taken—and idea asserted, and a choice recommended. Such problems can come to us by circumstances of nature. A rhetorical problem is an exigency, a constraint on why something must be said, how it must be said, by whom it must be said, to whom it must be said, and to what end it must be said. Such exigencies occur for many reasons: Natural disaster, concerns voiced by others about a public policy or the character of some organization, recognition of a problem that needs to be addressed, a choice such as that of a product or service, a matter of character, a matter of sound policy, or sufficient willingness and ability

to be responsive to a crisis. These are a few of the very broad kinds of rhetorical problems likely to confront a public relations practitioner. One way to conceive of a rhetorical problem is to think of various questions that demand attention or are raised in ways that draw attention to them on the part of individuals who want to form a useful opinion on these matters or want some other entry, such as the organization itself, to form a mutually beneficial attitude embracing multiple interests.

Natural disaster: After Katrina, many people asked whether the city, state, and nation were properly prepared to prevent a catastrophe of that kind. Were the emergency response actions the best that could be expected? Since Katrina, we might ask whether the recovery is moving at a rate and in service to the original residents of New Orleans in a way that is truly and effectively responsive to their interests. Were the levees well designed and properly maintained? Are the new ones properly designed? Will they be well maintained? Are all of the needed efforts being made to put neighborhoods back in order for residents whose lives were turned upside down by the storm?

Concerns voiced by others: Is the climate changing? If so, and it appears that at least some changes are occurring, are they natural or created by or exacerbated by humans? What can be done to abate climate change and its consequences, if it is occurring? Will such actions be effective? What will happen if we do not respond quickly and ably? We can imagine that both a spokesperson for a major energy company and for an environmental group would recognize this rhetorical problem; they might analyze it differently and respond differently—at least at the outset of their discourse. It is likely, at least at the outset, that each would and probably should respond to the rhetorical problem differently. Over time, can the dialogue bring society to a better understanding of the problem and the formulation of reasonable solutions—and mutually beneficial relationships?

Recognition of a problem that needs to be addressed: Products and services are often touted as solutions to problems. Thus, marketing communication is often formulated with a problem-solution rationale. Non-profits, such as Habitat for Humanity, recognize problems and address them as rhetorical problems, thereby posing rhetorical problems for others. They ask donors and volunteers: Are you willing and able to help build houses for deserving citizens either by contributing money or labor—or both? Are you willing to contribute to cancer research, to support local theater, or to advance the quality of the environment, even to recycle or help save a species by protecting habitat? The rhetorical problem is to provide information and evaluation that helps volunteers, for instance, to make an enlightened choice on these matters.

Choices, such as products or services (or contributions to non-profits or support for taxes to be spent): If I have an ache or pain, should I take a remedy? Should I diet? Which diet is most healthy and effective? Should I buy brand X instead of another brand? Should I see the latest movie—or

rent the DVD? Should I buy a group's CD or go to its concert? Should I contribute (or volunteer) to the symphony, public radio, the Audubon Society, or American Diabetes Association? The rhetorical problems of this kind are myriad. They drive the promotion and publicity industry. They raise funds to solve problems.

A matter of sound character: If prices, such as a gallon of gasoline, are increasing, is that due to market forces or price gouging? If a war is not going well, should we withdraw, thereby forcing the responsibility of responding on others, or should we maintain our military stance indefinitely? Once military personnel have suffered a physical or mental injury, what is the sufficient level of care for these young men and women? If a terrorist attack occurs, how should a society respond? If we are at a high level of corporate responsibility, what is an appropriate amount of compensation (wages, salary, and bonus) for our service? To what extent does compensation depend on the financial and social performance of the organization? If a company is engaged in bad business practices, how obligated is each employee to remain silent or speak out—blow the whistle? If we agree that organizations exhibit character, it is a short leap of intellectual faith to conclude that their character defines their persona. Who or what the persona of an organization is becomes part of the messages and is also a product of that message and the actions by the organization.

A matter of sound policy: Should government regulate the content of prime time television programming to make it “more family friendly”? Should women have access to safe birth control, including abortion? What limits, if any, should be placed on these choices by government? How severely should drunk drivers be punished? Should people be allowed to smoke in public? Can privatization provide better services than is typically provided by governmental agencies? What regulation should be placed on gun ownership and the use of handguns? Can food ingredient labeling be designed to be useful to persons who truly want to understand the health consequences of certain foods?

Crisis response: How should the target organization respond to demonstrate its willingness and ability to exert appropriate control and be responsive to others' interests? If a chemical manufacturing facility discharges a toxic chemical, what must its executives and spokespersons say and do? If a young school child is not properly attended to during a school day, what must be said and done and by whom? If a company hides debt so it is worth far less than it appears to be and says it is, what must be said and done, and by whom? If a student buys guns and kills fellow students on campus, what should be said and done, and by whom and for what interests?

Each rhetorical statement is a strategic response to a rhetorical problem. A rhetorical problem is an exigency that must be addressed because it raises or exhibits doubt on some matter relevant to the actions and choices made by an organization and those who are affected by the problem and who can affect the interests of the organization. This problem sets the conditions for an appropriate response. A

crisis, for instance, might constitute a rhetorical problem. This problem is different depending on the cause of the crisis. If an organization needs good will, and they all do, how can it communicate in ways that advance and earn this good will?

Encouraging enlightened choice (Nichols, 1963): *Appeal to agree with one point of view, make one choice in preference to another—the rationale for rhetoric.*

The communicator is obligated to offer facts, reasoning, and evaluation that can help individuals to make an enlightened choice, one that reflects the best facts, reasoning, and evaluations. To solve this rhetorical problem, one should ask, what must and can be said to help various publics make enlightened choices?

As practitioners offer details and opinions that publics can use to make enlightened choices, the practitioners should guard against the paradox of the positive (Waymer & Heath, 2007) or its opposite the paradox of the negative. Public relations practitioners like other professional communicators (advertising professionals, for instance) tend to operate out of a “sell through positive statement” or “damn through insult, ad hominem attack, and innuendo” mentality. In featuring the positive aspects of a product, service, or policy (even organizational image) their presentation can be biased to ignore and even deny important negative details that truly should be considered for an enlightened choice. The same can be for the paradox of the negative, which is especially a problem with political attack communication. Such caution does not and should not lead us away from featuring positive or negative aspects of some matter that truly needs to be considered, but we should be wary of distorting the presentation so that it actually leads to an unenlightened choice.

Such analysis is also highly relevant to efforts to create, mend, and reaffirm an organization’s image. As Aristotle reasoned, demonstration of the factuality of claims is essential to rhetoric. Baudrillard (1988) reasoned that image can be established at four levels based on the degree to which the alleged image corresponds to reality based fact: A reflection of reality, a mask or perversion of a basic reality, a mask for the absence of a basic reality, or the condition by which image bears no sense of reality. As the organization reestablishes or (re)presents (Cheney, 1992) its image, it can drift away from facts that define that image (the best for advising enlightened choice) to a complete absence, avoidance, or manufacturing of image devoid of fact and a sense of reality. Such rhetorical positioning can either foster enlightened choice or completely frustrate it.

Adjusting organizations to people and people to organizations: *Appeal to individuals outside of an organization to adjust their thinking to it or advocate inside the organization that management should adapt to or accommodate to the needs, expectations, and preferences of key publics* (Heath, 2007).

The rationale of rhetoric, according to Bryant (1953) required solving the rhetorical problem of how to get people to adjust to ideas and how to adjust ideas to them. Herein lies one of the major challenges of rhetoric and a rationale for collaborative decision making and relationship building.

Organizations may adapt to and serve people’s interests. Individuals may be asked to adapt to organizations; as for instance, they are required to pay school

taxes or invited to vote for a school bond. What must the school district say to demonstrate the need for the taxes or the bonds? Rhetoric entails appeals to people to make adjustments to one another and to ideas that can foster consensus, concurrence, and coordination (Bryant, 1953). Skilled communicators adapt ideas to people. They know that if ideas are too foreign to the interests and vocabulary of some public, they will be rejected. Ideas change slowly. A non-profit organization might, for this reason, ask that donors adapt to the ideals and mission of the organization by giving modest amounts of money to support its charity. The nature of its charity has to be adapted to the people, by demonstrating that it fits with their values and preferences. Rhetoric also invites people to adjust to ideas. They might not at first accept the rationale for giving, but over time they can be convinced that this charity makes the community a better place to live. But this approach focuses as well on the reality that an organization cannot maintain or build effective relationships if it is unwilling or unable to adapt to the publics to which it appeals and which may exert pressures on it.

Building a case based on good reasons: *Appeal to virtue, fact, and sound reasoning that offers positive solutions to personal and collective problems.*

Rhetorical scholars have argued that the substance of rhetoric is good reasons (Wallace, 1963) which promote the search for a higher vision of ourselves (Weaver, 1953, 1970). Wallace concluded, “when we justify, we praise or blame; we use terms like right and wrong, good and bad; in general we *appraise*” (p. 243). As was emphasized in the discussion of the rhetorical heritage, rhetoric serves the people of society by recommending choices that are enlightened by shedding light on which are the best because they do the most good, serve interests best without bringing unduly negative consequences. If we champion the notion that public relations must work to help make society more fully functioning, we will expect practitioners to give us good reasons for adopting some product or service, supporting a non-profit, encouraging a policy, or liking an organization because it does good. To be good requires practitioners to demonstrate reasons that endure over time and bring praise for what they add to the quality of life.

Two lines of analysis support this conclusion. One reasons that rhetorical discourse must search for ideas that truly reflect the interests of people in society, that which is good for them. Second, this search for good is never independent of ethics. The character of each speaker, that person’s credibility, depends largely on the quality of the values that drive the person’s life choices as well as underpin the reasons for or against any proposed action. This kind of statement responds to the rhetorical problem: What is the best advice we can bring to bear on each choice people are asked or want to make? Do the choices made and the actions taken achieve mutually beneficial outcomes?

Inviting people by using rhetoric as courtship: Invitation and identification: *Appeal based on the assumption that individuals identify with key terms, important points of view, products/services, organizations, causes, and policies.*

Burke (1969b) argued that rhetoric is a form of courtship—or courtship is a form of rhetoric. Either way, it is easy to see publicity and promotion especially

as being organizational forms of courtship based on appeals to identification. Rhetoric "involves the use of verbal symbols for purposes of appeal" (Burke, 1969b, p. 271). Through naming and the identifications that result from it, "persuasion ranges from the bluntest quest of advantage, as a sales promotion or propaganda, through courtship, social etiquette, education, and the sermon" (p. xiv). It is in this sense "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (p. 43). Cooperation results from merger and identification. Rhetoric deals with "the ways in which the symbols of appeal are stolen back and forth by rival camps" (Burke, 1937, p. 365).

Desire for identification, transcendence, and perfection, according to Burke, are universal motives for the sort of choices rhetoric addresses and the problems it solves. Through rhetoric, ideas clash. "The role of opposition is by no means negligible in the shaping of society. The victory of one 'principle' in history is usually not the vanquishing, but the partial incorporation, of another" (Burke, 1968, p. 71). Harmony is possible because words allow us to reconcile opposites, which when viewed from "another point of view . . . cease to be opposites" (Burke, 1961, p. 336). Burke (1966) reasoned: "A character cannot 'be himself' [or herself] unless many others among the dramatic personae contribute to this end, so that the very essence of a character's nature is in a large measure defined, or determined, by the other characters who variously assist or oppose him [or her]" (p. 84).

Pursuing this theme, Burke (1969b) stressed the power words, especially idioms, have to create identification which he believed was one of the major outcomes of rhetorical discourse. For him, "Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division" (p. 208). Identification is possible because people use terms to define and name themselves. Identification, shared views of reality and identity, result from the human tendency to engage in merger and division. Identification focuses on the notion that although we are unique, each a separate organism, we nevertheless are in varying kinds of collective arrangements. Social order and coordination become the essence of how society is organized, rewards are dispersed, and relationships are maintained.

In its best sense, rhetoric is invitational, asking people to consider alternative points of view (Foss & Griffin, 1995). Foss and Griffin contrasted two approaches to persuasion. One assumes that the source's ideas are superior to those of the target audience. This view can be extended to assume that the source's ideas are imposed on the audience through skilled argument and even propaganda. In contrast, an invitational rhetoric offers reason for an alternative point of view and invites its consideration. This is a more symmetrical and democratic approach.

Where there is agreement and no problems require solution, rhetoric is not needed, a point demonstrated by the absence of any discussion of rhetoric by Sir Thomas More (1965) in his *Utopia*. The rationale for rhetoric, and public relations, comes from uncertainty, doubt, difference of motive, and difference of opinion. In ancient Greece and Rome, individuals spoke in public to advocate one point of view in contest with competing views. Today, in an increasingly global society,

organizations tend to speak or otherwise communicate instead of people. Even when individual voices stand out, they do so because they speak for an institution, an organization, and even a nation. The newsworthiness of their case is not only where they agree with others, but also where they disagree. This is as true for the promotion of products as it is for the advocacy of going to war or seeking peace. The voice might be a publicist for a small company advocating the virtues of its product or the president of a mighty nation seeking support for some policy or course of action.

Rhetoric can emphasize difference, even carrying it to an absurd extreme. Public relations practitioners may communicate to differentiate one product or service from another. Activists offer publics a choice between one vision of the future versus another. Politicians focus on their opponents' unfitness and doubtful character. Zealots advocate one perspective that even calls for the destruction of advocates of different views.

In this sense, rhetoric is eternally coupled with the need for community, and the rationale on which each community operates (Leeper, 2001; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988; Starck & Kruckeberg, 2001; Brummett 1990; Buber 1965). Society cannot function without rhetoric. McKerrow (1989) cautioned that discourse often is about power "as it serves in the first case to maintain the privilege of the elite" and "to maintain social relations across a broad spectrum of human activities" (p. 91). When it is working at its best, it serves society to foster enlightened choice. Its vitality originates from the reality that facts require interpretation, some values are better than others when making specific decisions, and policies always require contingency and expedience. People seek to identify with one another as part of their incentive to achieve a collectivity, which serves for the effective management of risk. They do so through shared idioms, perspectives, defining terms, and a sense of perfection.

Building identifications by shared perspectives, social construction of meaning, and connecting zones of meaning: *Appeal to share one point of view or perspective as opposed to another.*

A theme that runs throughout rhetoric, and by extension public relations, is that it rests on the ability to influence what people think and why they act as they do. Relevant to this theme are academic discussions that focus on concepts such as intersubjectivity and shared sense-making (Dervin & Frenette, 2001), and social construction of meaning. The assumption is that those who act in harmony with one another do so because of a shared sense of the world and the appropriateness and inappropriateness of various choices and related action. Disharmony is, by extension, predicated at least in part on the assumption that it results because people see the world differently and therefore have different expectations for the enactment of the life narrative (Heath, 1994) as an undirected play (Pearce & Cronen, 1980).

Rhetoric depends on shared meaning, which in turn centers on definitions of meaning. Perhaps no singular statement is more profound than that by Burke (1968) whose views applied the principles of linguistic relativity. By this logic, he concluded that words serve as terministic screens. That means, as they experience

and react to some matter people draw on their interpretations of that experience. Burke developed his concept of terministic screens by viewing pictures at an art show that were of the same subject but "looked" different because they were photographed through different colored lenses. Each lens was like a different "tribal vocabulary." It inspired a different view of the same scientific facts, the reality itself. He concluded:

We *must* use terministic screens, since we can't say anything without the use of terms; whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another.

(Burke, 1973, p. 50)

Each terministic screen is a perspective. Each perspective, subject to various rhetorical influences, constitutes its unique way of thinking and acting. Thus, rhetoric, and public relations by that connection, works to create, change, abandon, and enact various perspectives, the shared terministic screens that allow for cooperation and competition as well as the forming and enacting of choices.

People identify with one another as they share perspectives. Thus, perspectives become the basis of rhetorical appeals. Advocates reason that one perspective is superior to its competitors. They court others to agree, to see the world in a particular way, and to prefer some actions instead of others. Public relations uses identification through publicity. It informs, evaluates, and recommends. For instance, practitioners might publicize a baseball team, an amusement park, or a brand of exercise equipment. What must and can be said to help various publics make enlightened choices?

For these reasons, people are inspired to champion sports teams, buy products, purchase services, support and oppose political candidates, and live their lives in all of the ways that can be and are influenced by words. Words stand between people and their physical realm. They influence people's judgment. One can imagine, for instance, that we respond to "our team," "our candidate," "our car," "our clothes," and "our causes." Knowing these terms, and responding to them as propositions, we know the actions that are appropriate, prescribed by the shared meaning of the terms. We live these narratives, these undirected plays.

Through co-authored, socially constructed narratives, each public achieves collective opinions, judgments, and actions that govern its preferences and behaviors. Organizations can adopt or seek to influence the narratives of society, by what they say and do. Co-created meaning leads to a sense of community through shared narratives which supply people with knowable and collective ways to act toward organizations and one another. Narratives voice expectations regarding how organizations should act toward one another and the people of society.

A rhetorical enactment view of public relations acknowledges that all of what each organization does and says becomes meaningful because of the shared interpretations and expectations people place on those actions and statements (Heath, 2001, 2008b). Markets can be influenced, as well as publics by what each organization does and says—and by what it does not do or does not say.

Publics offer competing perspectives through their rhetorical efforts that challenge the views and actions of organizations. For instance, activists in a community might be concerned about soot emitted from a manufacturing facility. They may call for higher standards of environmental aesthetics as well as public health and safety. These calls might include letters to opinion leaders, speeches and rallies, and lobbying efforts with appropriate regulators. Disgruntled customers vote with their feet, and credit cards. They support one business by making a purchase from it. At the same time, this choice makes a statement of a lack of support for competitors.

This analysis builds on Mead's (1934) view of the dialectic of mind, self, and society:

Our society is built up out of our social interests. Our social relations go to constitute the self. But when the immediate interests come in conflict with others we had not recognized, we tend to ignore the others and take into account only those which are immediate. The difficulty is to make ourselves recognize the other and wider interests, and then to bring them into some sort of rational relationship with the more immediate ones. (pp. 388–389)

A society—people and organizations—learns from mistakes. As a profession, public relations can serve society by solving these mistakes, understanding problems, and offering solutions that invite thoughtfulness and willingness to overcome restraints to corrective actions. Public relations can serve organizations by making them good as a prerequisite for their being articulate. Thus, public relations can assist organizations' narrative enactments (Heath, 1994; Weick, 1987).

Fisher (1987) reasoned that humans live life as narrative—an ongoing story. What Fisher (1985, 1987, 1989) called the narrative paradigm assumes that "there is no genre, including technical communication, that is not an episode in the story of life (a part of the 'conversation') and is not itself constituted by logos and mythos" (Fisher, 1985, p. 347). Seeing people as storytellers—co-authors, Fisher (1987) reasoned, "A narrative perspective focuses on existing institutions as providing 'plots' that are always in the process of re-creation rather than existing as settled scripts" (p. 18). For this reason, "all forms of human communication need to be seen fundamentally as stories—symbolic interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character" (p. xi). Fisher (1987) concluded that knowledge "is ultimately configured narratively, as a component in a larger story implying the being of a certain kind of person, a person with a particular worldview, with a specific self-concept, and with characteristic ways of relating to others" (p. 17). Narrative is not devoid of rational or ethical content. The substance of narrative is good reasons, "values or value-laden warrants for believing or acting in certain ways" (Fisher, 1987, p. xi).

Rhetorical statements create narratives that give meaning, direction, and coordination to persons' lives. We can imagine that narrative is one of the most characteristic forms of rhetorical statement. From childhood, we are taught that

stories begin with "once upon a time" and may end "happily ever after." They might also have tragic endings. Narrative gives form and substance to rhetorical statements. Reporters use the form and substance in news reports. If the report is a crisis, then responding organizations engage in the narrative so that society eventually learns the "story" to account for what happened, why it happened, and what will be done to prevent its recurrence. Events, a standard public relations tool, are designed to have narrative form and content. Practitioners want audiences to pay attention to see who is doing what, why, how, when, and where. One of the major publicity events each year in the United States is the Academy Awards ceremony. Prior to the big night—and following it—stories are told about actors and other artists to attract audiences to see who won, why they won, what they wore, how they reacted to victory or defeat, and where the movie will be playing next.

Large organizations and activists often engage in advocacy and counter-advocacy regarding narratives of the future. The focal question is whether certain products or services as well as operations and even lifestyles will lead to a tragic end or a "happily ever after" outcome. This competition asks listeners, readers, and viewers to adopt one narrative, vision of the future, and make choices based on that preference. Activists often compare a picture of a dire future to one that is better; they advocate changes to avoid the dire future and achieve the better one.

Rhetorical theory champions the spirit and principles of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The right to speak is testimony to the positive role that public discourse plays in society. Rhetoric is a body of principles and strategies that strengthens the voice and enlivens the ideas of competing points of view. As it informs the way individuals communicate for themselves, it also is relevant for the practice of public relations. It offers strategies and challenges, but ultimately rests on the principle that to be effective each individual or organization needs first to be ethical, good, and to be responsibly knowledgeable. The next section examines the heritage of the connection between rhetoric and advocacy.

Managing through advocacy: Facts and judgments: *Appeal created by bringing facts and evaluations to bear.*

A current view is that rhetoric is hollow words, words that do not have factual content; similarly, we hear complaints that public relations is sham and spin, nothing of substance to be trusted. That view is quite at odds with the rhetorical tradition. Nevertheless, that tradition wrestles with the reality that facts themselves are produced by empirical observations, made more accurate through careful scientific investigation. But once they are reported, the facts receive interpretation. Therein lies the possibility of bias and distortion. That fact does not discredit rhetoric. In fact it gives it more credence and relevance because the devil is not only in the detail, but also in the interpretation of the detail. Thus, we have the rhetorical problem of knowing the fact, interpreting the fact, and using it to make enlightened choices.

Advancing a line of discussion that includes consideration of the rhetoric of science, Scott (1976) reasoned that rhetoric is epistemic because it gives us a view of reality and can lead to a shared view based on empirical validity. That view is based on the rhetorical responsibility for fair, candid, and honest representation of each

fact: A scientific foundation for rhetoric. Advocacy, internal as well as external to an organization, requires scrupulous attention to fact, getting the facts right and interpreting them fairly. One can imagine that such is more likely to be the case through advocacy where statements are set against one another for careful scrutiny rather than if one side presents its case as definition and imposes it through its will and rule. That debate is rhetoric, an observation that supports the claim that the scientific method is rhetorical.

Writers such as Cherwitz and Hikins (1986) have argued that rhetoric is valuable to the search for knowledge because it is by this means that people assert and challenge the claims about the nature of events, things, experiences, and all matters (including products and services). They believed that rhetoric is "the art of describing reality through language" (p. 62). Although the outcome of discourse is important, Cherwitz and Hikins advised that "the process of striving for knowledge systematically is more important than the attainment of knowledge itself" (p. 166). In keeping with this logic, Scott reasoned (1976) that rhetoric can be thought of as "a way of knowing not the way" (p. 259). And, since "reality is socially constructed" (Scott, 1976, p. 261), there can be a tendency and even incentive to conclude that no view is better than another. However satisfying that relativism is intellectually it can be a frustration to those seeking to make an enlightened choice.

In answer to some rhetorical problems, the communicator, the good person seeking to communicate well, asks what needs to be known and considered to make an enlightened choice. That approach presumes that each person targeted with the information is invited to consider the information and opinion as steps toward making a choice that is better than its alternatives. That strategic approach contrasts with the asymmetrical approach whereby the source pronounces a conclusion based on a fact or opinion that otherwise goes unexamined and refined. The excellence of rhetoric is not in the making of a statement but in sustaining statements as they suffer counterstatements. As Wallace (1963) reasoned, "the basic materials of discourse are (1) ethical and moral values and (2) information relevant to these" (p. 240).

Critical Judgment of Rhetorical and Public Relations

Throughout the chapter, we have suggested and implied that rhetoric, and public relations, can, must, and will be held accountable. It must meet certain standards, conform to carefully considered principles. Criticism is an art that requires knowing standards, realizing the sorts of strategic choices that can and must be made, and determining the strategic and ethical quality of the responses made in the face of those choices.

This chapter has tried to explain the rationale for rhetoric and set forth key standards in that rationale that allow critics and public relations practitioners to make ethical choices in what they do, how they do it, and for which ends. Rhetoric stands in judgment for how well it serves multiple interests, not just one interest. Making such choices is not easy. It carries a lot of responsibility. But, for that reason, it offers a solid rationale for the profession of public relations.