The Strategic Turn in Communication Science

On the History and Role of Strategy in Communication Science From Ancient Greece Until the Present Day

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This chapter presents the idea that the communicative turn has been supplemented with a strategic turn in connection with the development of strategic communication as an organizational discipline and practice, which has resulted not only in everything—or almost everything—being regarded as communication, but also in everything—or almost everything—being regarded as strategic communication. The scope of organizational communication has been broadened to include virtually everything an organization says and does, and everyone who is affected by the organization’s existence and activities. The historical background for this strategic turn is outlined in the form of a series of theoretical and philosophical points in the history of Western communications theory: the Athenian or Greek understanding of communication as revealed in Plato and Aristotle, the Roman understanding of communication as seen in Cicero and Quintilian, notions about communication associated with St Augustine in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the seventeenth century, the Age of Enlightenment, the nineteenth century, modern rhetoric, the communicative turn, and finally the strategic turn. These periods are analyzed on the basis of Stanley Deetz’s theory of the dual concern and dual goal of conceptions of communications. From one period to another, perceptions of communication have varied between whether communication is primarily seen as a question of how, through the communicative processes, people acquire an opportunity to contribute to opinion formation and decision-making, or whether communication is primarily perceived as a means to fulfill certain goals and achieve control. The development of the role and status of communication in relation to markets and marketing communication is reviewed briefly in order to show which concern or goal—effectiveness or participation—has dominated in various historical eras. Finally, the chapter discusses whether the difference between effectiveness and participation has been dissolved or challenged in connection with the strategic turn. The question is raised as to whether the broadening of the scope of strategy in communication has led to the colonization of communication or to an increased opportunity for participation in organizational communication, and perhaps even contains an emancipatory potential.

The Dual Nature of Communication

According to Deetz, all communication, regardless of which area of society it derives from, and how it plays out, is—and has always been—suspended between the goals or ideals of participation and
effectiveness (Deetz, 1992). The way in which we have considered these qualities has varied historically. In some eras, communication theory and its development has been preoccupied with effectiveness, and with the associated instrumental and ends/means-oriented orientation. This approach centered on the effect of our communication and how we can use communication to exercise control, resulting in the consequent marginalization of the participative aspect of communication. In other eras, the ideal of participation in the communicative process has been accorded priority, at the expense of effectiveness.1 Deetz defined participation and effectiveness as follows:

Participation deals with who in a society or group has a right to contribute to the formation of meaning and the decisions of the group—which individuals have access to the various systems and structures of communication and can they articulate their own needs and desires within them. Effectiveness concerns the value of communicative acts as a means to accomplish ends—how meaning is transferred and how control through communication is accomplished.

Deetz, 1992, p. 94

Participation and effectiveness are not fixed entities or goals, but normative ideals that enter into and are determinate for every communication process. Both effectiveness and participation are social constructions that arise from the communicative contexts in which people find themselves. Neither effectiveness nor participation ever appear in fully realized forms in the communication. A crucial factor in connection with all communications is the question of which of the two communicative objectives is the predominant normative ideal (p. 164). If we examine the above definition of effectiveness, we find that the concept has a close affinity with the concept of strategy. Strategy may be defined as a plan of action intended to accomplish specific goals (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2006, p. 1712).

Key Moments in the History of Communication in Relation to the Strategic Aspects

The following discussion highlights some key moments and theorists in the history of communication, in order to elucidate how the view and discussion of the essence and role of communication, especially in relation to the strategic aspects, has appeared in various historical eras. Here it is interesting to observe that reflections on communication’s (immanent) strategic potential are as old as communication theory itself. In order to understand the development of communication theory and the nature of communication—or perhaps rather its culture—within Western civilization, we need to return to classical Greece. The story of the birth of communication theory and its “childhood” is also the story of philosophy and rhetoric. This is quite natural, as philosophy, being the mother of all sciences, was at that time a universal science. Reflections and discussions about communication theory took place within philosophy, inter alia under the label of rhetoric. Rhetoric is thereby the West’s oldest science of communication (Kjeldsen, 2001, p. 18).

Almost from its emergence, rhetoric has been the object of suspicion (Fafner, 2000, p. 7). Eloquence has been viewed as the potential refuge of deception. In classical Greece, Plato stood as the prime exponent of this skeptical attitude toward rhetoric.

Plato

An extremely elegant (re)playing of the theme of the role of communication can be found in several of Plato’s dialogues.2 Below I will briefly attempt to show how Plato, in the youth dialogue Apology and the manhood dialogues Gorgias and Phaedrus, discussed rhetoric or the art of speech,3 and what we today would label the strategic aspects of speech. In Apology, rhetoric is presented as a means of
manipulation and a technique of enabling falsehoods to appear true. In *Gorgias*, rhetoric is also rejected as pure demagoguery without connection with the truth, while in *Phaedrus*, rhetoric in an ideal form, characterized by being closely interwoven with philosophy in its recognition of the truth, is again brought back into the fold and made acceptable. The ideal rhetoric, like philosophy, seems to communicate the truth, posing demands on the speaker not only to be eloquent, but also to be in possession of insight (Johansen, 1991, p. 492; Plato, *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, version Plato, 1992b, 1992c).

**The Apology**

In Socrates’s famous speech in his own defense, rhetoric plays an important role. Here Plato allowed Socrates to markedly distance himself from the speech of his accuser, which he said did not contain a grain of truth, but on the contrary was a rhetorically well-formed contribution “duly ornamented with words and phrases” (Plato, *Apology*, version Plato (n.d.). Rhetoric, seen here as a means to manipulate and obtain untruths to appear true, is thereby placed in sharp contrast to the truth (Fafner, 2000, p. 8), which does not need to be dressed up in such a sophisticated disguise. *Apology* begins with Socrates asserting that, due to the prosecutor’s eloquent presentation, he has nearly forgotten who he really is. It is clear that Plato believed that words, if adequately formulated and well-presented, can give someone a mistaken view of the actual nature and context of things, including who one really is. Socrates complains that his accusers, in order to warn the spectators against letting themselves be deceived by him, have asserted that he is an excellent speaker, which he himself finds to be false, “unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth” (*Apology*).

This implies that truth is an intrinsic part of speaking well. The accusers, as such, are in agreement with Socrates regarding the capacity of eloquence to persuade and convince, but believe that it is Socrates, and not themselves, who masters (and perhaps abuses) this skill. In a passage at the beginning of *Apology*, where truth is contrasted with eloquence, rhetoric is made the object of suspicion:

> Well, as I was saying, they have hardly uttered a word, or not more than a word, of truth; but you shall hear from me the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner, in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. No indeed! but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; for I am certain that this is right, and that at my time of life I ought not to be appearing before you, O men of Athens, in the character of a juvenile orator.

*Plato, Apology*

**Gorgias**

In *Gorgias*, too, rhetoric is rejected as demagogy. Socrates is extremely curious to know what the special object of rhetoric is, because all fields use words. Gymnastics and medicine, for example, utilize words to deal with the body and its state of health (449 B–E). The essential thing is that the words concern something, namely that which is the object of science. The words are thus not in themselves the most important object. They function as the medium through which insight is disseminated. In rhetoric, however, the material and the object of attention are the words, in and of themselves (449 B). Pressured by the eager and persistent interrogator, Gorgias concludes that the object of rhetoric is no less than the greatest good (452 B), and the most important and most valuable thing in life (451 B). The more specific and elaborate explanation for what the field of rhetoric consists of—and hereby also the greatest good—which Plato allowed Gorgias to present, is very interesting in that it very clearly communicates a sense of, not only what the real Gorgias could possibly have believed about these matters, but also to a great extent Plato’s view of rhetoric, and the reason why his aversion to it, at the time, was so pronounced.
Gorgias speaks (in 456 A) of the incredible power of rhetoric, and how rhetoric takes “all other forces into its service and makes them submissive” (p. 129). As an example, he says a speaker would be better equipped than a doctor to convince a patient who is hesitant to undergo an unpleasant treatment; and the doctor, if he had to compete in words with the rhetorician in the Assembly for the position of doctor, would fall short, despite his professional skills. Speakers are much more capable than any skilled professionals of speaking persuasively on various topics. Professional knowledge is thus not a requirement for being able to convince people within a given area.

Rhetoric is not the only field that aspires to the goal of persuasion. At several points in the dialogue, it appears teaching something, be it arithmetic or anything else, is for Gorgias also to persuade (453 A–E). Socrates reaches the conclusion—and with the help of his maieutic ingenuity, also involving his conversation partner—that two kinds of persuasion exist: that which imparts insight and knowledge (episteme) to the listeners, and that which communicates opinion, but is devoid of knowledge and insight (doxa) (454 C). The form of persuasion rhetorical masters is the latter.

Here we also see a possible beginning of the recognition of the extent and diversity of persuasion, which was radicalized later on in Aristotle, but also a clear distinction in relation to the lack of faith in knowledge. According to Gorgias, rhetoric is neutral. It can be used to speak about everything, and for and against everyone (456 A). In other words, there is nothing within rhetoric that is immanent, or that compels or encourages the speaker to do or promote the good. The teachers of the art of rhetoric instruct their pupils in eloquence with the intention that they will use their skills in a righteous way. If this is not the case, one cannot blame the teacher (457 B). Asked whether knowledge of right and wrong, the bad and the good, is a prerequisite or initial condition for being able to learn the art of speech at all, or whether it is possible to learn it through teaching in the métier (459 A), Gorgias states that he believes himself able to teach a pupil who is ignorant of right and wrong these things as a supplement to rhetoric.

This incites Socrates to a series of arguments that reveal self-contradictions and inconsistency in Gorgias’s reasoning. He who possesses insight into right and wrong, according to Socrates, is just, and the just man is characterized by acting justly (460 A). Earlier in the dialogue, Gorgias said rhetoric can be used for both good and foul purposes. It is thus very characteristic that for Plato or Socrates, knowledge about and insight into the good, the correct and the just also entails acting in this way. People who act wrongly or commit injustices are thus not truly in possession of insight into the good. In Socrates’s opinion, rhetoric is but a contemptible and unpraiseworthy practical skill, the sole purpose of which is to create pleasure and enjoyment. He categorizes rhetoric under the concept of flattery, together with cookery, personal adornment and sophistry. Rhetoric demands no specialized insight or competencies, but rather slyness and a natural ability to win people over (462 C–464 A). It is clear that Gorgias, in Plato’s probably slightly caricatured rendition, does not see participation and the creation of mutual understanding as the real purpose of communication. Rather, it is the establishment of asymmetrical relations, power and manipulation, which is viewed as the most essential aspect, and to which rhetoric aspires.

Phaedrus

In Phaedrus, the tone towards rhetoric becomes milder. Here it is not a question of completely rejecting rhetoric at any price, but of discovering what a scientific and systematic theory and method of rhetoric would look like. There is a great similarity between medicine and rhetoric; both disciplines concern themselves with the analysis of nature. In the former case, it is the nature of the body, and in the latter, the nature of the soul. While for the doctor the goal is health, the goal for the rhetorician is to give people the desired persuasions and power of action (269 D)—that is, persuasion which the rhetorician desires for the individual. These persuasions are not purely subjective, but, like medicine, dependent on objective scientific expertise which is the result of thorough investigation. In
Phaedrus, a defense plea is made for a kind of target group–determined form of address. Yet again, one is surprised by the contemporary relevance of Plato’s works, despite their being written 2,400 years ago. “The task of speech is to lead souls,” as he so poetically formulates it, and in order to do this, the speaker must be in possession of knowledge about different forms of souls. Some people permit themselves to be persuaded by one form of speech, others by another (271 C). The rhetorician, in order to persuade his audience, must therefore have an intimate knowledge of the nature of the human soul and the effect on it of the various means of communication. This is strategic communication in its essence. But the strategy is not a means which can be used for anything at all. In order to learn to master communication strategically and in a targeted way, an understanding of the soul is required. Knowledge is a precondition for being able to speak well.

Aristotle

All arts and sciences persuade, according to Aristotle, in each of their areas. Rhetoric and the sciences no longer stand opposed to each other as two incompatible qualities, as they did in Plato’s Gorgias and in the Apology. Rhetoric is defined as the teachings of the various possible means of persuasion. These means of persuasion are quite simply the object of rhetoric, and persuasion is viewed as being an inherent part of the scientific practice itself. Thus, it is not only rhetoric that can persuade.

Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. This is not a function of any other art. Every other art can instruct or persuade about its own particular subject-matter; for instance, medicine about what is healthy and unhealthy, geometry about the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic about numbers, and the same is true of the other arts and sciences. But rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us; and that is why we say that, in its technical character, it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects.

Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1, 2 (version Aristotle, n.d.)

In the first book of rhetoric, Aristotle distinguished between ethos, pathos and logos. Ethos is the speaker’s credibility or character, pathos the human emotions that are aroused in the audience and with which the speaker must be familiar in order to provoke them intentionally, and logos is internal cohesion of speech which is directed at reason (see for example Höffe, 1992). In Aristotle we find an extremely extensive persuasio concept which includes all forms of linguistic address, including both informative and referential language use, as well as the conative and directive functions of language, and even effects of a non-linguistic kind. Therefore, the three aforementioned qualities—ethos, pathos and logos—are also considered as different means of persuasion. The human being is basically persuasive: we affect and are affected by others (Fafner, 2000, pp. 32–33, 39). The non-argumentative means and the extra-subjective goals in Aristotle’s rhetoric have led some researchers to believe that there is an inconsistency in the theory, due to the opposition and tension between these and the means which build upon the power of argument (Rapp, 2002).

The reception and dissemination of Aristotle’s ideas reveal a rather uneven history. It has often been ignored that the Athenian or Greek theory and understanding of communication rests upon a democratic foundation, with the citizens’ participation in the public debate playing an essential role. However, it should be added that far from everyone in the Athenian society was found worthy of the title of “citizen”. Slaves and women were excluded (Deetz, 1992). As Deetz wrote, for Aristotle the purpose of rhetoric was not primarily a means of providing someone with an advantage over others. Rhetoric and dialectics were two sides of the same coin. Dialectics was viewed as a social and collective process, through which the individual moved forwards, in conjunction with others, towards insight and truth. When Aristotle speaks of effectiveness, the concept should be seen in the
light of the Athenian concept of democracy. It is not about the effective presentation of the truth, but about making this truth effective. In other words, effectiveness must be placed at the service of truth, not the reverse.

The social problem he addressed was not effective presentation of truth but how to make truth effective. The Athenians were concerned with effectiveness as a means of promoting greater equalization of participation so that the optimal conditions for the emergence of truth would be present.

Deetz, 1992, p. 95

This decontextualized reading of Aristotle has entailed a unilateral focus on the effectiveness aspect of his theory—a view also present in the Roman/Latin understanding of communication.

The Roman/Latin Understanding of Communication

After the Classical period, the primary center for reflections about communication and the development of communication theory became Rome, where among others, Cicero and, later, Quintilian, who lived in the early centuries of our era, made important contributions. Cicero and Quintilian are often mistakenly put in the same category, and Latin or Roman communication theory is discussed as though it were a practically homogenous entity. However, there is a distinct difference in nuance.

Cicero

In De Oratore, Cicero let Crassus express his deep fascination with the enormous power and effectiveness associated with oratory, when he wrote that there is:

[. . .] no more excellent thing than the power, by means of oratory, to get a hold on assemblies of men, win their good will, direct their inclinations wherever the speaker wishes, or divert them from whatever he wishes.

_De Oratore, I, viii, 30_, (Cicero, 1967)

Originally, speech and knowledge were a unity, and the same teachers taught “both right actions and good speech” (Cicero, 2009, III, 57). The goal was to turn the pupil into a “speaker of words and a doer of deeds” (Cicero, 2009, III, 57–58), but to Cicero’s great regret, these two things had become separated. Cicero was concerned with humanitas (humanity) and discussed, through the personae appearing in De Oratore, whether rhetoric is grounded in culture and humanity, or whether it is merely a technique (Johansen 1991, p. 615). Technical skills can enable you to become an “accomplished speaker” but to be in “possession of eloquence” (Cicero, 1967, I, xxi, 94) requires that one possesses a comprehensive knowledge; that one is cultured (Cicero, 1967, I, xv, 67–xvi 72; Cicero, 1967, II, xvi, 66–68). According to Cicero, it was through speech that humanitas was realized. The ideal orator must also be virtuous or moral (Cicero, 1967, I, xv, 67–69; Cicero, 1967, II, xvi, 67–68; Cicero, 2009, III, 55), and the more skilled the rhetorician, the more important it was that this person was also moral.

[T]he greater the power is, the more necessary it is to join it to integrity and the highest measure of good sense. For if we put the full resources of speech at the disposal of those who lack these virtues, we will certainly not make orators of them, but will put weapons into the hands of madmen.

_Cicero, 2009, III, 55_
The requirements toward the eloquent speaker or the ideal orator were so many that few people—if indeed any—were able to live up to them (Cicero, 1967, I, v, 19; Cicero, 1967, I, xvi, 74–xxi, 95), but it was an ideal worth striving for. Ideals, however, are one thing; practice is another. In practice, the rhetoric of the late Republic was often compromised in relation to ethics (Williams, 2009, p. 325) and Cicero himself, in his forensic speeches, such as *Pro Milone* (Cicero, 1891), has been accused of abusing rhetoric in the service of effectiveness—to remain in the terminology of this chapter—and of trying to get a murder to appear to be legitimate self-defense. According to Williams, Plato would have regarded this as an expression of the “pervasive lack of ethical concern for truth and justice” inherent in rhetoric (Williams, 2009, p. 326).

**Quintilian**

In *Institutio oratorio*, Quintilian defined rhetoric as “bene dicendi,” speaking well (Quintilian, *version* 1933, II, xvii, 37, p. 342). *Bene*, like the Aristotelian communication concept, contains a duality and should be understood as both achieving what one wants by using speech in an effective way, and at the same time showing the way toward the good in an ethical sense (Fafner, 2000, p. 17). The only difference between Man and “all other living creatures that are subject to death,” according to Quintilian, is that God gave Man “the gift of speech” (*Institutio oratorio*, II, xvi, 12–13, p. 323). This ability, or gift, is one that we should appreciate. The fact that oratory can be used, not only for good things, but also for bad, should not cause us to reject rhetoric. After all, even necessary things like food and drink, water and fire, can have both good and harmful effects, and even the sun and moon can do damage, but by its nature, this does not mean that we should stop eating and drinking and reject these things (II, xvi, 5–9, pp. 319–321).

Quintilian made use of a further analogy to illustrate that one should not renounce rhetoric as a bad thing in itself, even though it can be used both for good and for evil or inferior purposes: the sword is good in the soldier’s hands, but harmful in the robber’s (II, xvi, 10, p. 323). For Quintilian, then, the question of whether rhetoric leads to a good or bad result depended on whether the practitioner is a good man, with good motives and intentions. As a general rule, the orator will use his skills in the service of truth, but there may be instances in which the “public interest demands that he should defend what is untrue” (II, xvii, 36, p. 341).

That Quintilian—and, we might add, Cicero—necessarily focused on *the good person*, is due to the fact that the relationship between truth and expression known from the Greek concept of communication was breached in the Roman understanding (Deetz, 1992). Hence, the individual is burdened with a decisive responsibility. While for Aristotle the truth derived from communication itself—communication is so to speak pregnant with truth—and truth and expression are therefore two sides of the same coin, in the Roman variant the individual was both the precondition and the goal. The individual could possess the truth, and the truth was given as a pre- and extra-communicative quality. Communication was viewed as a medium through which the individual could promote his own views and interests (Deetz, 1992, pp. 96–98). In the Athenian democracy, participation was the underlying precondition for and therefore also a naturally embedded part of the understanding of communication; communication was the site, the locus, from whence the truth emerged. In Rome, participation and truth were viewed as being extrinsic to the act of communication itself. In judging Quintilian, Deetz is possibly a bit too idealistic in his reading of Aristotle. Deetz fails to notice the significance of the personality for Aristotle. For Aristotle, the speaker’s credibility, or ethos, also played an important role. If one accepts Deetz’s view of the Greek concept of communication, one can say that means and ends were more closely linked in the Greek than in the Roman understanding, in which communication was to a greater extent reduced to the status of a means.
The Middle Ages: Augustine

In the early Middle Ages St. Augustine turned classical rhetoric into a Christian art of speaking and preaching. In *De Doctrina Christiana* (Augustine, version 1958), Augustine attempted to show that the rules of eloquence appear in the Bible and that the Bible also follows these rules. The biblical authors were highlighted as models of true eloquence. At the beginning of the fourth book of *De Doctrina Christiana*, which has been called the first great Christian work of rhetoric (Burke, 1969, p. 49) and the first manual of Christian eloquence (Conley, 1994, p. 77), Augustine explained why the art of rhetoric was important for advocates of Christian doctrine. Rhetoric could be used to promote both truth and falsehood, and “who would dare to say that truth should stand in the person of its defenders unarmed against lying?” (*De Doctrina Christiana*, IV. 2, p. 118). By the truth, Augustine—unlike Plato—meant a religious truth, namely, the Christian faith. For Augustine, rhetoric was thus a means—or a weapon—to be used in the fight against heresy and evil and in the struggle to spread Christianity.

While the faculty of eloquence, which is of great value urging either evil or justice, is in itself indifferent, why should it not be obtained for the uses of the good in the service of truth if the evil usurp it for the winning of perverse and vain causes in defense of iniquity and error?

*De Doctrina Christiana*, IV. 2, pp. 118–119

It has been asserted that Augustine, in connection with his conversion to Christianity in the year 387, broke with his view of rhetoric. Fafner (1995, p. 132), however, argued this could not be the case, as rhetoric is an unavoidable part of human life. Augustine, like Plato earlier, rejected superficial and bad rhetoric. In this way, Augustine broke not only with the Sophists’ formal rhetoric, but also with his own view, as it was precisely this kind of rhetoric that he had practiced and popularized prior to his conversion. Augustine was trained at the school of rhetoric in Carthage, which provided the most superior form of training at the time, and prior to his conversion he worked as a teacher of rhetoric in Carthage and Rome. For Augustine, it was the capacity of communication to effectively disseminate the religious truths in the form of the Christian gospel, which lay at the center of his thinking. The purpose was to create a religious *communitas* and achieve charity (Roer, 2011, p. 48).

The Renaissance

It has been said that in the Renaissance the classical period was reborn, and with it the art of rhetoric. Having been bound to Christianity in the previous period, in which the Church fathers believed language should serve the sacred cause, language in the Renaissance, with its general secularization, became “sacred” in itself (Fafner, 1995, p. 174). Man was moved to the center—a state of affairs labeled “humanism”—and the view of language became anthropocentric (p. 172). As language was viewed as possessing an absolutely critical role for human beings, rhetoric once again became, as in antiquity, a central issue. It is essential to the understanding of rhetoric in the Renaissance that rhetoric must be seen not merely as a superficial teaching of speaking, but as something that joined with philosophy, so that wisdom and eloquence—*sapienta* and *eloquentia*—went hand in hand. The poet Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), by re-discovering or reviving Cicero, can be accorded most of the honor for re-establishing the connection between rhetoric and philosophy. Petrarch’s spiritual descendant, Coluccio Salutati, saw the ideal person as a combination of the philosopher, the rhetorician and the poet (p. 177)—someone who could think, feel and act (p. 54). On the basis of this holistic view, which characterizes thinking about communication during this period, the Renaissance has
been considered a golden age of rhetoric. Several rhetoricians have even asserted that the revival of rhetoric was not only a result of the Renaissance, but an essential precondition for the Renaissance itself (Lindhardt, 1987, p. 39).

**The Seventeenth Century**

In the seventeenth century the view of rhetoric changed. From being considered a dialectical *controversia* discipline (Conley, 1994, p. 162), which concerned itself with seeing things from different sides, rhetoric was now viewed as a method of affecting the emotions of the listeners. The philosophers Francis Bacon, René Descartes and Thomas Hobbes, all of whom were brilliant rhetoricians, had few kind words to say about rhetoric. They either rejected it outright, or viewed it as inferior to philosophy (Roer, 2011, p. 57; Conley, 1994, p. 163). Like most other disciplines, rhetoric too has had its upswings and downturns, and according to Fafner (1995, p. 464), history has clearly shown there is not necessarily a link between the disciplinary upswings and downturns and the degree of respect for rhetoric as a discipline. In the seventeenth century, the extension and popularity of rhetoric was widespread, and the field enjoyed great respect. But the rhetoric that was cultivated was a partial rhetoric, which reduced the field to a doctrine of style and a vehicle for literary scholars (p. 464). Which is to say, this was another period in which the understanding of communication, and the ideal, emphasized the aspect of effectiveness.

**The Enlightenment Understanding of Communication**

With the Enlightenment, the understanding of communication changed. While prior to the Reformation it was primarily the King and the Church who were seen as standing in direct communicative relationship to God, it became possible with the Reformation for the individual to read the Bible and to be in direct, personal contact with God (Deetz, 1992, p. 97). This individualization of the relationship with God, whereby religious communication was no longer mediated or disseminated by higher societal powers, enabled the individual to participate in communication in a new way. One could say people who formerly stood outside the religious communicative act could now step inside communication as central actors. Politically, the changes found expression in the French and American revolutions (p. 17). Here again, the individuals’ participation—in this context in the political process—was the cornerstone. Even though the Enlightenment, the Reformation and the French and American revolutions can be said to have inherited or revived elements of the Athenian understanding of communication, there is a major difference: while for the Greeks it was a case of reaching the truth and knowledge about the nature of the world through communication (by way of dialectics), in this new era, the dynamic was that of ensuring the individual’s rights, and possibility, by using reason, to arrive at a truth (p. 97).

**The Nineteenth Century**

The nineteenth century is sometimes spoken of as “rhetoric’s fight to the death” and “the death of rhetoric” (Fafner, 1995, p. 448). This is despite the fact that the nineteenth century, due to political developments such as the introduction of popular sovereignty and the entry of ideologies, was in many ways an exciting period in terms of rhetoric (Roer, 2011, p. 62). Nevertheless, rhetorical theory did not enjoy much attention from prominent thinkers in this period, and to the extent that it did so, the view expressed was usually negative (Kock, 2011, p. 63). As in the seventeenth century, the focus was on effectiveness and the more instrumental aspects of communication. Several treatises were published on lecturing and the art of reading aloud. During this period, rhetoric was considered to be largely a matter of how opinions could be imposed upon and emotions aroused.
among the listeners. An important element here is that the aesthetic aspects of communication were also discussed, as the control of these aspects was viewed as being of critical importance for the possibility of effectively moving the audience (Fafner, 1995, p. 464). As a concept and as a discipline, rhetoric was at a low point (p. 442; Kock, 2011, p. 63). Rhetoric was considered to be nothing but forms and clichés, while in the university milieu, the ideal of good science was taken from the natural sciences (Roer, 2011, p. 62).

Recent Rhetoric and Communication Theory

Persuasio, according to recent rhetoric and communication theory, is not, as in antiquity, a one-way process in which there is a listener or recipient who passively waits to be persuaded or convinced. Today, both parties are considered to be speakers and listeners, and persuasion is a reversible process (Fafner, 2000, p. 43) through which people jointly arrive at the best answer. In going beyond monologically-oriented rhetoric, the concept of pistis—or what in Latin is called fides—becomes relevant. Pistis means inter alia, trust or faith. Trust is both the prerequisite and the goal of persuasion when persuasion is viewed as having a dialogical nature (p. 43). People must have a basic level of faith and trust in each other to be able to talk together—otherwise communication is, so to speak, meaningless. If the persuasive process is to succeed, there must be pistis. Pistis is the necessary biological, psychological, social and linguistic prerequisite for all rhetorical situations, from informal conversations to negotiations to teaching (p. 43). Burke (1969, p. 55) formulated it as, “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his.” The extent or the degree of pistis has the possibility, through dialogue, of evolving. The opposite can also be the case if the required trust is violated. The fact that the communication has an intentional and strategic character does not, therefore, negate the idea that it also builds upon a foundation of trust. Intentionality, the strategic aspect, need not necessarily be conceptualized as in opposition to sincerity and the desire for mutual understanding.

The Communicative Turn: Everything is Communication

During the twentieth century it became more and more popular to view everything—or nearly everything—as communication. The communicative turn, or the linguistic turn, means the role of language and communication is accorded a privileged status. In the more radical versions of this view, language and communication are elevated to the point of containing everything. A linguistic turn has taken place within many different disciplines, such as philosophy, history, cultural studies, and social sciences. It is, however, important to be aware that what is collectively labeled the linguistic turn in reality covers a multiplicity of turns and perspectives, such that it would be more correct, even within the individual fields, to speak of the linguistic turns (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Bredsdorff, 2003). Within discourse theory, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have for example formulated a radical theory in which the discursive has priority. A general and systems theoretical perspective that everything is communication can be found in the work of Luhmann (1995) and the theorists inspired by him.

In an organizational context, this means that organizations do not merely consist of communication in a metaphorical sense. Organizations literally are communication (Højlund & Knudsen, 2003). Within the branch of organizational research called CCO (Communicative Constitution of Organization) (Putnam and Nicotera, 2009), organizations are considered to be constituted in and through human communication (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen & Clark 2011). From this perspective, communication is not only a variable, on a par with a variety of other variables in or in relation to an organization; communication is “the means by which organizations are established, composed, designed, and sustained” (Cooren et al., p. 1150). The organization is thus not merely a “container” within which or from which one communicates; the organization comes into existence through communication.
The Montreal School is one of the foremost proponents of this line of thinking (Taylor & van Every, 2000; 2011; Cooren, 2000; 2010; Taylor, Cooren, Giroux & Robichaud 1996; Cooren, Taylor & Every, 2006). Under the inspiration of various theoreticians and research fields, such as conversational analysis, systematic functional linguistics, social psychology and ethnomethodology, adherents of the Montreal School speak of organizations emerging from communication. The thesis that everything is communication in one sense or another can be found in many variants and much of the constructionist wave may be said to be indebted to this line of thinking.

The Strategic Turn

In certain respects, what emerges in the strategic turn is a new understanding of communication and organization, with the use of such terms as corporate communication, corporate branding, and integrated communication. The boundary between the organization’s external and internal communication disappears and the traditional organizational boundaries are transcended. Both employees and external stakeholders become targets located within the organization’s communicative universe (Torp, 2009). The scope of organizational communication broadens to include virtually everything an organization says and does, and everyone who is affected by the organization’s existence and activities. In the most ambitious interpretations of this broadened concept of communication, the effort extends from the external integration of visual design to the internal integration of the organization’s culture and “soul” (Torp, 2009). One can say a dual movement has taken place: not only is everything viewed as communication, but also as strategic communication. In other words, a strategic turn has followed the linguistic turn. The strategic turn is not a substitute for the communicative turn, but an additional perspective that transforms all communication into strategic communication. In terms of communication theory, the strategic turn need not necessarily be synonymous with the conviction that all communication is basically strategic. It can also be seen as the expression of the attempt or effort to make all—or much—communication strategic. Strategic communication can be defined as the “purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission” (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Ruler, Vercˇicˇ & Sriramesh, 2007, p. 3). Strategic communication encompasses several different areas, including public relations, advertising and marketing (p. 16), all of which have in common that they deal with influence and persuasion. It is characteristic of strategic communication that it is intentional, and carried out with a specific objective.

Where managers and communication specialists formerly focused on that communication which took place in formal forums and through formal channels, the strategic turn entails that informal communication within and outside the organization is also included. This sphere, which formerly escaped management’s attention, is now considered relevant and important for the organization’s strategy. This change nourishes a far stronger connection and identification on the part of the employees with the organization than was previously the case. In the view of the communication scholars Christensen and Morsing (2005, p. 52), the symbolic and behavioral dimensions of corporate branding imply employees must now be involved. The employees, in their everyday work are now expected to comply with and redeem the promises made by the brand. From a critical perspective, these authors pointed out that identification is an important part of corporate branding since members of the organization are often “expected to align their personal values with the identity of the corporate brand” (Christensen, Morsing, & Cheney, 2008, p. 70). Employees must themselves be incorporated into the organization and hence become walking embodiments of the corporate brand. They are expected not merely to communicate about the brand but to live it (Christensen & Morsing, 2005). And not only on the job but also outside the job. The Danish bank Sparekassen, which in 2007 won an award as Europe’s Best Financial Workplace, and which was twice selected as Denmark’s best workplace12, has as its slogan: “You are Sparekassen even when you are not at work” (Brønserud, 2004). The firm’s strategic focus is thus not limited to the communication which emanates from or takes place within the firm itself.
Strategic communication is also part of the employees’ mindset, behavior and communication during their leisure time. Anders Gronstedt, president of an American consulting firm, described the situation whereby strategic communication has become all-encompassing:

Integrating the work of everyone in the company, not only of communication professionals, is necessary because companies communicate with everything they do. The performance of the products and services, accuracy of the billing, and the treatment of employees, are all communicating powerful messages to the stakeholders.

_Gronstedt, 1996, p. 39f_

Strategic communication has often been depicted as necessarily asymmetrical and top-down (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 14). However, Hallahan and colleagues argued that this need not be the case. The strategies can also emerge from below. Strategic communication does not focus simply on the managers; there is also a focus on the employees and the communication specialists’ intentional activities with regards to the presentation and promotion of organizations (p. 7).

**Marketing Communication**

Strategic communication, as stated above, also includes public relations, advertising, and marketing (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 16). An essential factor in the strategic turn within communication regarding organizations and firms is the effect from marketing and marketing communication. The next section will briefly discuss the history of marketing communication in terms of the aforementioned distinction between the fundamental goals of participation and effectiveness. Within the world of marketing, too, there has been a communicative turn.13 But this turn is a special, often normative, variant. Schultz and Kitchen (2000, p. 55) argued “Communication is becoming the heart and soul of marketing” and in their view it intervenes in the firm’s strategies and organizational culture. Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn (1994) described this form of integrated marketing communications (IMC) thus:

We have turned all forms of marketing into communication and all forms of communication into marketing. We have integrated our messages and our goals. We have built a seamless stream of communication with the customer.

_p. 58_

When Schultz et al. wrote that integrated marketing communication has turned all forms of marketing into communication, it is relatively innocent and in no way especially new in a theoretical sense. Several researchers (e.g., Bouchet, 1991) have asserted that marketing is communication. Jenkins (1990, p. 2) stated “Marketing is in the communication business” and DeLozier (1976) held that all the P’s (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) possess a marketing communication aspect. An essential difference regarding the presentation of marketing as a form of communication, however, is that Schultz et al. (1994) did not view marketing as something which is communication per se. Among the latter, marketing, via IMC, has been turned into communication. And when it is postulated that all forms of communication are marketing, far greater and more serious themes suddenly come into play.14

**Markets Were Once Conversations**

This raises the question of whether one can speak of a strategic turn within marketing communication at all, or whether marketing communication is characterized precisely by being instrumental
and having effectiveness as its primary goal. According to Searls and Weinberger (2001), this has not always been the case. They argued markets are, or once were, nothing more than conversations. This is what markets should be and with the Internet’s conversational nature, they can become so again. Prior to the era of industrialization and mass communication, there were whole millennia during which markets were conversations:

The first markets were markets. Not bulls, bears, or invisible hands. Not battlefields, targets, or arenas. Not demographics, eyeballs, or seats. Most of all, not consumers. The first markets were filled with people, not abstractions or statistical aggregates; they were the places where supply met demand with a firm handshake. Buyers and sellers looked each other in the eye, met, and connected. The first markets were places for exchange, where people came to buy what others had to sell—and to talk. The first markets were filled with talk.

It was not the sale that was the original purpose of the market, but the conversation. The conversation sometimes led to a sale and a purchase; but buyers and sellers were equal, and a transaction was not something preceded by a manipulative act. The final goal of the conversation was not given in advance. It grew or emerged from the encounter between the parties. The interaction was truly social and built upon a commonality of interests, taking place face-to-face, without mediators such as firms, corporations and media. The role of the participants was to a large extent a dual one.

People were often both buyers and sellers at the same time, buying and selling different products. Searls and Weinberger presented a somewhat romantic view of markets, in what French historian Braudel called the market’s “elementary form” (1992, p. 29). Braudel described how these markets, which in German are called Hand-in-hand and Auge-in-Auge (eye-to-eye) and where the exchange is more honest, transparent and direct, have survived throughout history. Braudel explained: “If this elementary market has survived unchanged down the ages, it is surely because in its robust simplicity it is unbeatable” (1992, p. 29). In The Cluetrain Manifesto, the authors (Searls & Weinberger, 2001) subscribed to a simple, linear view of historical development. Braudel, by contrast, saw the various market configurations as historically co-existing.

The market spells liberation, openness, access to another world. It means coming up for air. Men’s activities, the surpluses they exchange, gradually pass through this narrow channel to the other world with as much difficulty at first as the camel of the scriptures passing through the eye of a needle. Then the breaches grow wider and more frequent, as society finally becomes a ‘generalized market society’. Finally, in this context, refers to the passage of time. These breaches never take place at the same date or in the same way in different regions. So there is no simple linear history of the development of markets. In this area, the traditional, the archaic and the modern or ultra-modern exist side by side, even today.

The Conversation is Interrupted: Market(ing) Communication in the Era of Industrialization

With industrialization, the raison d’être of the market changed. It was no longer the conversation and the encounter between equal parties that was decisive. The relationship became asymmetrical. It became a question of having power over the process and its outcome. One party in the relationship was reduced to a means. The customer went from being a subject to being an object, from being a participating subject in the conversation at the market to being an object for (or in) the market. Searls and Weinberger (2001, p. 78) wrote “Power swung so decisively to the supply side that the
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The word ‘market’ became a verb: something you do to customers”. One could perhaps say that marketing went from being the phenomenon in which you lead your animals and take your produce to the market, to becoming something to which someone is subjected. The classical management and production principles are also reflected in this understanding of the market. Just as workers were considered to be replaceable entities, the relation to the consumers also became less personal. The customer was transformed into a passive consumer. Mass production created uniform products, and mass communication created consumers with uniform needs to purchase the goods produced. One could say the conversation and the sale exchanged places. In the conversational market, the conversation was the intrinsic part and the sale extrinsic. Or to soften the argument a bit, one could say the conversation and sale were inseparable processes in the market. In or on the market of industrialization, the sale has become the intrinsic part, while the conversation has been relegated to the extrinsic. The conversation, which contains the participative aspect of communication, was downgraded, and effectiveness was elevated to become the governing and omnipotent principle.

Marketing Communication in the Era of Social Media

With a point of departure in Braudel’s (1992) assumption of the coexistence of different market configurations, we can assert that what the Internet and social media have done, if one follows Searls and Weinberger’s (2001) view of the Internet’s potential and capacity, is not to re-establish the lost conversation but to create the possibility for a transfer and an evolution of the elementary market’s conversational mode to re-emerge in new communication platforms. In other words, the conversation has now been broadened and—for some control-fixated organizations, no matter how undesirable—has found its way even into the large firms. Some of these organizations have desperately sought to limit the degree of freedom provided by the Internet by instituting monitoring systems or by reducing their employees’ use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media (Stanton & Weiss, 2000). Social media and new forms of marketing, such as viral marketing, have altered the conditions for communication and the relationship between the sender and the receiver. Up until now it has been a widespread view that stakeholders, be they employees or customers, were people whom one communicated to or with. Now the effort is to communicate through the stakeholders and turn the recipients into disseminators of, or perhaps even ambassadors for, one’s message. It may well be true that the conversation which Searls and Weinberger celebrate has become a possibility with the Internet and social media, but it is clear the conversation and the ideal about it can be—and has been—used or abused for manipulative and instrumental non-dialogical and non-conversational purposes. Similarly, the ideal of dialogue has been abused within both organizational communication and marketing communication.

Summary and Conclusions

As this chapter shows, reflections about and discussion of the strategic aspects and potential of communication are as old as communication theory itself. Here the point of departure is Deetz’s theory that “all conceptions of communication share with the community a dual concern with participation and with effective presentation” (Deetz, 1992, p. 94). From one historical era to another, communication has primarily been viewed either as a question of how people, through the communicative process, are given an opportunity to contribute to public opinion and decision-making, or as a means of achieving specific goals and acquiring control. Just as one can identify which fundamental communicative goals belong to different eras, and which paradigms have predominated, one can also distinguish at a meta-theoretical level between effectiveness-oriented and participation-oriented communication theorists and practitioners. Participation-oriented communication theorists view the priority placed on effectiveness as a goal in communication as being synonymous with
manipulation. They consider this perspective to be inferior, and even illicit and illegitimate. This attitude may be related to the fact that in the periods when the instrumentalist view of effectiveness has predominated, it has neglected or refused to recognize the significance of communication’s participative aspect and avoided any concern with integrating the actors into the communicative process. Theorists who support a participative communication approach believe the primary and perhaps only goal of the instrumentalist view has been to exert influence over and control these actors. In other words, there has been a partial and reductionist understanding of communication. The effectiveness-oriented communication theorists and practitioners, for their part, find the idea of participation as the primary goal of communication to be uninteresting. Insofar as the effectiveness-oriented theoreticians and practitioners deal with or incorporate the participatory aspects of communication, this is not as a goal in itself, but as a means of exerting influence and control. In other words, participation is merely a tactic placed in the service of effectiveness.

It is important to maintain the view that communication is not only about participation or only about effective presentation. Communication has a persistently dual character and a dual focus. It is important to maintain this duality in strategic communication as organizational discipline and practice, to ensure that the understanding does not become reductionist. In connection with strategic communication as an organizational discipline and practice, it now seems to be possible for goals and communication concepts to interact in a way that is different to that of the past. With the strategic turn, effectiveness and participation have been brought together in a new way in relation to organizational communication. One might even say that in certain cases, there is an effort or attempt to dissolve the difference between the fundamental goals of communication; that attempts are made to create a new hybrid in which participation is used to promote effectiveness, while effectiveness is used to promote participation. Certainly it can be debated whether the two fundamental communication goals are in principle incompatible, and cannot therefore be amalgamated into a new common goal, or whether the effort is illusory and simply has the goal, or certainly the consequence—whether intended or not—of ensnaring people in an illusory concept of genuine participation in combination with effectiveness, while in reality this is simply effectiveness in disguise.

Depending on how one views the strategic turn, it can either be seen as a case of colonization (Habermas, 1984) or as pregnant with entirely new possibilities for participation. This is because the informal aspects of the organization’s life and the informal means of communication have been placed on the agenda and are enjoying increased attention on the part of management. On the basis of the colonization perspective, it may be asserted that the expanding scope of strategy that has taken place in connection with the development of strategic communication has caused effectiveness and strategy to impose themselves on all aspects of human life and all forms of communication. The actors and the recipients become a part of the communication process, but the real goal of the communication is effectiveness, not participation. Participation is thereby apparently reduced to a means or a tactic. Whereas participation in classical Athens was the precondition for achieving insight and knowledge, via the path of dialectics enacted within a community, participation after the strategic turn has become instrumentalized; the community and truth are no longer the final objectives. Participation is now, as in Athens, an intrinsic part of the very act of communication and the communication process, but the character of the act and the participation in it are very different, just as the goal is also different.

If, on the basis of the participation perspective, strategic communication is perceived, conceptualized and practiced as something that is not necessarily one-sided, asymmetrical, managerial and top-down but rather as a process that can also emerge from below, one could claim the development of strategic communication practically corresponds to the view of communication developed during the Reformation, when ordinary people suddenly received the opportunity to take part in communication with God. From standing outside the communication process itself, and merely being its passive targets, individuals now have the potential to become the central actors in the
communication process, due to the possibilities social media accord them and, by extension, *the scope of strategy* to include basically all communication.

**Notes**

1 According to Deetz, communication theories can be typologized and the historical development periodized on the basis of which the two aforementioned objectives or ideals have predominated (1992, p. 94).

2 The Stephanus references are not very precise in the above-mentioned text, as the Stephanus pagination, which was originally from 1578, and which has since been used in many editions of Plato’s works, is not especially detailed in Høeg and Ræder’s edition of Plato’s collected works (Platon, version 1992a, 1992b, 1992c). Nevertheless, in order to preserve the precision, the Stephanus pagination, which is at the top of the page in the Danish edition, has been added.

3 Socrates did not believe that rhetoric could properly be called an art (461 D), and in the dialogue, he accuses one of the dialogue’s other actors, Polis, of having elevated rhetoric into an art (Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*, version 1992a).

4 Allen used the terms “pastry-cooking” and “cosmetics” in his translation of Gorgias (Plato, *Dialogues, version* 1984, pp. 248 ff).

5 Deetz quotes from Paolo Valesio’s Novantiqua–Rhetorics as a Contemporary Theory (1980), in which Valesio shows how dialectics and rhetoric have been viewed in certain eras as standing in diametrical opposition to each other. In the Renaissance, the opposition was used in the anti-rhetorical incantation, later to be expressed in connection with the modern separation of the concept of truth from rhetoric (Deetz, 1992, p. 95).

6 St. Augustine of Hippo.

7 Some researchers have stated that the Renaissance represents a break with medieval thinking, while others have argued for a continuity of development (Roer, 2011, p. 51).

8 Protagoras believed that a case should always be seen from two sides, which in Latin came to be called controversia.

9 The year 1750 is sometimes cited as the symbolic year of the death of rhetoric, as it was then that the scholastic rhetorical tradition was confronted with a serious challenge from, and in certain respects replaced by, aesthetics, with Alexander Baumgarten as the most renowned exponent at that time (Fafner, 2009). However, it was more the beginning of a slow death, or as formulated above, a fight to the death. As we now know, rhetoric did not die. The twentieth century, from the latter half onward, is considered by some to be a golden age of rhetoric.

10 However, it may be argued that this identification and willingness to ‘put oneself in the other’s place’ that Burke outlines here is false, in the sense that one simply feigns empathy, and that in reality the act is an attempt to manipulate in order to obtain what one wants. This would then be a question of the effectiveness of communication in achieving a given goal.

11 Luhmann is in fact critical of the linguistic turn, and because of his autopoetic perspective, he views the communication concept very differently. In the article “Wie ist Bewusstsein an Kommunikation beteiligt?”, in a hidden address to Habermas, Luhmann stated that “In social theory, the primacy of language theory and the concept of intersubjectivity must be abandoned, and in their place enters the concept of the self-referential closed system of social communication” (cited in Harste: Niklas Luhmanns konstruktion af samfundsteori i Autopoiesis) [Niklas Luhmann’s construction of social theory in *Autopoiesis*]. (Jacobsen, 1992; see also Bredsdorff, 2003, p. 20).

12 In 2010, the bank was declared the second-best workplace in Europe for workplaces with up to 500 employees by the Great Place to Work Institute.

13 Unlike some of the aforementioned positions, this idea does not build upon a scientific, theoretical or philosophical basis, but has more the character of a practical viewpoint. It is not asserted that everything is communication.

14 Naturally, there are also many opponents of this trend within the field of marketing. Duncan and Moriarity (1998) do not accept the assumption that all human action is basically governed by communication—or at any rate, as no more than a theoretical idea. They label this assumption “the communication fallacy” (p. 2).

15 “Conversation is a profound act of humanity. So, once, were markets” (Searls & Weinberger, 2001, p. 77).

16 Searls and Weinberger’s presentation does not seem to be simply idealistic-historical, but real-historical, i.e., a description of the actual historical process.

17 The phrase “markets were filled with talk” evokes a container metaphor which harmonizes poorly with the other metaphors used to describe this market’s original form. Nor does it accord with the idea that markets are conversations. If markets can be said to be filled by or with talk, the market pre-exists prior to this.
The choice of the word roles might not please these authors, as they seem to believe that people in the market at that time did not pretend to be other than themselves. Even their names equalled their brands and the products they produced and exchanged (Searls & Weinberger, 2001, p. 77), with, for example, English-language names such as Miller, Baker, Brewer and Hunter.

The control is not necessarily derived from the desire to prevent conversations as such, but may be due to the fact that a part of these conversations is not relevant for the work carried out and therefore draws attention away from the work. Investigations of employees’ use of time spent on personal e-mail correspondence, Facebook, private web-surfing and the like have shown that some employees spend inordinate amounts of time on such activities during a normal working day (Conner, 2012a; 2012b).

For a more detailed and sophisticated classification of the various perspectives within communication, see Craig (1999).

One might even argue that the strategic turn contains an emancipatory potential.

References


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