



University of Navarra

Crédit Andorrà Chair of Markets,
Organizations and Humanism

Occasional Paper

OP-154

July, 2008

RETHORIC AND PERSUASION IN MANAGEMENT

Brian Legget

Josep M. Rosanas

IESE Occasional Papers seek to present topics of general interest to a wide audience.

IESE Business School – University of Navarra

Av. Pearson, 21 – 08034 Barcelona, Spain. Phone: (+34) 93 253 42 00 Fax: (+34) 93 253 43 43

Camino del Cerro del Águila, 3 (Ctra. de Castilla, km 5,180) – 28023 Madrid, Spain. Phone: (+34) 91 357 08 09 Fax: (+34) 91 357 29 13

Copyright © 2008 IESE Business School.

RHETORIC AND PERSUASION IN MANAGEMENT

Brian Legget¹

Josep M. Rosanas²

Abstract

The paper first looks at the economics-based models that have come to dominate much of management literature and shows how they are incompatible with the idea of persuasion. Next, it examines how, in contrast, one of the management classics (Chester Barnard) considered persuasion one of the key elements for an effective organization. Then, it goes on to look at our uncertain environment and offers a way of dealing with uncertainty. It connects this uncertainty with our need to be persuasive and, finally, offers a practical orientation on how to be persuasive

¹ Professor, Managing People in Organizations, IESE.

² Professor, Accounting and Control, IESE

Keywords: persuasion, incentives, organization, economic models, management theory.

RETHORIC AND PERSUASION IN MANAGEMENT

The ability to communicate persuasively is an essential skill in companies today. Gone are the days of dependency, when information was delivered top-down and there was little need to win over subordinates and colleagues with our ideas and opinions. We now live and work in a flatter, more interdependent society. It is still a world of uncertainty, though, in which most of us need to persuade others to cooperate with us in order to get our jobs done. If certainty existed, we would not need persuasion, as all would be clear. In today's environment, uncertainty is part of our lives and we need to sell our ideas, points of view, products, services, policies and, in a strange way, our own talents and reputations. Indeed, persuasion could be said to be a pervasive feature of all our lives, both inside and outside organizations.

This paper first looks at the economics-based models that have come to dominate much of management literature and examines what some of the management classics have to say. It goes on to look at our uncertain environment and offers a way of dealing with uncertainty. It connects this uncertainty with our need to be persuasive and, finally, offers us practical guidance on how to be persuasive.

Economics-based models of the firm and persuasion

In the last few years, economics-based models have come to dominate management thought (Ghoshal & Moran, 1996; Ghoshal, 2005; Ferraro, Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). This is unfortunate because although the economic aspects of management decisions are important, they are only one aspect and not always the most important one.

As long ago as 1938, Chester I. Barnard, one of the management classics, wrote:

“Next to the question of authority as a cause for confusion concerning organization, I would place the course of the development of economic thought in the last century and a half and the exaggeration of the economic phases of human behavior which the early formulation of economic theory made far too convenient. (...) Adam Smith and his successors depressed the interest in the specific social processes within which economic factors are merely one phase, and greatly overemphasized economic interests (...) All of this meant, and still means in the current thought of many, that man is an “economic man” carrying a few non-economic appendages. (...)”

“At least this I can assert: though I early found out how to behave effectively in organizations, not until I had much later relegated economic theory and economic

interests to a secondary - though indispensable - place did I begin to understand organizations or human behavior in them. I do not mean merely that non-economic organizations - such as the political, the educational, the religious - are also to be found and are of primary importance. I mean specifically with reference to business organizations that non-economic motives, interests and processes, as well as the economic, are fundamental in behavior from the boards of directors to the last man.” (Barnard, 1938, pp. xxx-xxxi)

The influence of economic thought, though often unacknowledged, has pervaded the teachings of management schools in recent decades; and in economic thought there is no place for persuasion. In fact, the basic assumptions of the economic model of “rational actors” are:

- All economic agents are self-interested and care only about their own consumption as consumers and their own wages and (perhaps) effort as producers.
- They enjoy unbounded rationality and therefore know their preferences perfectly and are able to anticipate the consequences of their actions. Uncertainty does not matter too much because the economic agents’ preferences are perfectly consistent with their attitudes to risk, so they can make their choices without prejudice or bias.¹
- In firms, therefore, incentives (essentially, monetary incentives) are the basic (perhaps the only!) tool for motivating employees to perform well. Cooperation can be obtained through compensation. Hence, there is no need to persuade anybody of anything.

Interestingly, long before economics started to have any influence in management thought, the classical economist and Nobel Prize winner Friedrich von Hayek saw the importance of willingness to cooperate:

“... (there exists a) knowledge of particular circumstances of time and place. It is with respect to this that practically every individual (in the economy) possesses unique information of which beneficial use might be made, but of which use can be made only if *the decisions on it are left to him or are made with his active cooperation.*” (Hayek, 1945, our emphasis)

It should be quite obvious that *active* cooperation (as opposed to merely “following the rules”) cannot be achieved through incentives and control alone and, therefore, that persuasion has a crucial role to play.

Management Classics on Persuasion: Chester I. Barnard

According to Barnard, one of the fundamental non-economic processes referred to in the text cited previously is persuasion. Unfortunately, persuasion and rhetoric are often overlooked in

¹ One small technical comment is in order here. We said and will argue later on that uncertainty is at the basis of persuasion. This might seem to contradict our claim that under perfect, unbounded rationality, uncertainty does not matter for the perfect functioning of the economic model. In reality, there is no contradiction. That uncertainty does not matter for the economic decision-making model is true only if all agents share the same beliefs with respect to uncertain prospects, i.e., if they have homogeneous beliefs. To the extent that agents differ in their expectations of future states of nature, there is room for persuasion: one agent may attempt to persuade another that her own assessment of the likelihood of future states of nature is “better” than anyone else’s.

management literature nowadays. In most introductory management textbooks these two words do not even appear in the index.²

Barnard is one of the very few management writers that have considered persuasion an important matter. He saw organizations as cooperative systems designed to achieve a common purpose and therefore considered cooperation essential. According to Barnard, in choosing to belong to an organization individuals somehow weigh the “inducements” they get out of the organization against the “contributions” (e.g., effort) they are expected to put into it. If the inducements outweigh the contributions, an individual will choose to belong to the organization; if they do not, she will look for a different organization in which they do. Clearly, therefore, organizations can secure people’s cooperation by either decreasing the contributions or increasing the inducements (Barnard, ¹⁹³⁸ Ch. 11).

Organizations can thus eliminate (material or non-material) negative incentives or burdens to make themselves more attractive to individuals. They can make things easier for employees by automating certain tasks, for instance.

Alternatively, they can increase the inducements. This second option is more interesting for our purposes. There are two kinds of inducements: objective and subjective. Objective inducements are material incentives, ranging from financial rewards to office space and prestige or secretarial help. Subjective inducements have to do with changing a person’s state of mind, attitudes or motives.

Barnard thought it very improbable that an organization that did not use both methods in combination would be able to survive. The power of objective incentives is limited, however:

“Notwithstanding the great emphasis upon material incentives in modern times and especially in current affairs, there is no doubt in my mind that, unaided by other motives, they constitute weak incentives beyond the level of the bare physiological necessities. (...)

...most men neither work harder for more material things, nor can be induced thereby to devote more than a fraction of their possible contribution to organized effort. It is likewise a matter of both present experience and past history that many of the most effective and powerful organizations are built up on incentives in which the materialistic elements, above mere subsistence, are either relatively lacking or absolutely absent. Military organizations have been relatively lacking in material incentives. The greater part of the work of political organizations is without material incentive. Religious organizations are characterized on the whole by material sacrifice. It seems to me to be definitely a general fact that even in purely commercial organizations material incentives are so weak to be almost negligible except when reinforced by other incentives, and then only because of wholesale general persuasion in the form of salesmanship and advertising.” (Barnard, 1938, pp. 143-4)

We are thus led to persuasion as the most effective way to increase contributions. According to Barnard, this can be done in three different ways: (a) by creating coercive conditions; (b) by rationalization of opportunity; and (c) by inculcation of motives. However, it is difficult to see how the first alternative (creating coercive conditions, as in slavery, concentration camps or any extreme situation) can be considered “persuasion”. The type of actions one might take to

² See, for instance, Robbins, S. & Coulter, M., 2004.

create “coercive conditions” are much more “objective” than “subjective” and so would fall into the category mentioned previously.

“Rationalization of opportunity” means showing employees the opportunity to obtain extrinsic rewards that have nothing to do with the goal of the firm itself.

“Inculcation of motives” may sound like brainwashing and may elicit a negative response from the reader (like persuasion itself, as we will see below). That is not what Barnard had in mind, however. He simply meant that it might be a good thing to show employees: (a) that what the firm is doing is worth doing (e.g., a builder might try to show its employees that the bridge they are building will benefit the community, or a manufacturer of alkaline batteries might try to convince its employees that alkaline batteries are crucial to modern life and that making them to a high standard is important for customers); and (b) that by doing her job properly an employee may achieve personal goals that are worth pursuing (e.g., the kind of learning that goes with the job, or working with other people). The inculcation of motives thus typically appeals to intrinsic motives, showing a person that what she has to do is worth doing because of the impact it has on herself and others (mainly customers and employees).

“The form of persuasion that is most important is the inculcation of motives. In its formal aspects it is a process of deliberate education of the young, and propaganda for adults (...) Associated with this formal processes are those which are informal and indirect. Precept, example, suggestion, imitation and emulation, habitual attitudes, chiefly conditions the motives and the emotional response of individuals to incentives.” (Barnard, 1938, p. 152)

Often, we think of it as a problem of “communication”, as if the only problem were to make employees understand what they have to do. All management has to do is say the right words and the problem is solved. In fact, “communication” comes from the Latin word *communicare*, which simply means to “make common”. “Making things common” between management and employees is surely the basis for the “active cooperation” of employees that is really needed. Our problem is how to *create a common understanding on the basis of a common perception*.

Dealing With Our Uncertain Environment

In Europe, were the last couple of centuries as certain as we now say they were? Or was society just evolving in a way that gives a semblance of certainty? Was this semblance of certainty partly due to our high level of dependency and our over-reliance on rationality as a panacea? It could be argued that our growing reliance on a rational approach to management theory has resulted in the gradual triumph of rationality over our humanistic tradition.

Stephen Toulmin calls on us to reverse this development and return to a healthier balance between rationality and reason in our efforts to understand the world we live in (Toulmin, 2001, p. 20). In his view,

“Before Galileo, Descartes, and Hobbes, human adaptability and mathematical rigor were regarded as twin aspects of human reason. From the 1620s on, this balance was upset, as the prestige of mathematical proofs led philosophers to disown non-formal kinds of human argument.” (Toulmin, 2001, p.23)

Toulmin argues that the quest for mathematical certainty, though entirely understandable in areas such as physics and technology, has led us to slavishly ape the rationalism of Cartesian

thinking in other areas of life, too. He highlights areas such as human behavior, economics and religion, where reasonableness has an important role to play alongside rationality.

Toulmin's basic thesis is that in all matters outside the natural sciences we should regain a sense of "reasonableness" in our attitudes, opinions and behavior, as in pre-Galilean days. He defines "reasonableness" simply as: "Warm hearts with cool heads seeking a middle way between the extremes of abstract theory and personal impulses" (Toulmin, 2001, p. 23). In other words, we must be practical thinkers in areas such as organizational behavior, human resource management and other areas that fall under the social sciences and reject the strict rationalistic approach in these unpredictable areas. We must become practical thinkers and see matters such as management theory through the eyes of "reasonableness" rather than through strict rationality alone.

In the area of finance, for example, there is a well-structured theory formulated in mathematical language. We can be fairly certain about some of the formulas, as they have been tested time and time again. We can therefore say, with a fairly high degree of probability, that this area is one of charted and reliable waters. But can we say the same in the area of human behavior, where management theory lies? This is where Toulmin's "reasonableness" should be applied, within the uncertainties of the environment that people find themselves in. If an issue is certain, there is no problem. It is only because of uncertainty that we must turn to persuasion to motivate people to help us get our jobs done.

The Art of Persuasion

All of us in our organizations have our own individual goals and perceptions of the world. It is little wonder that our goals are often at cross-purposes with those of others within the organization. It is also little wonder that our perceptions of events, facts and people do not always match. Persuasion is our only means of making others see things our way or at least securing their cooperation to accomplish our corporate goals.

Persuasion is like a contract in common law, where both sides need to gain something, although not necessarily in equal proportions. The experts tell us, and probably our own experience will confirm, that we usually respond positively to persuasive acts that promise to satisfy some of our needs or desires. According to Jowett and O'Donnell, "persuasion is interactive and attempts to satisfy the needs of both parties" (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1990, p.24).

These authors argue that the persuader uses reason, credibility and emotional appeal to guide the persuadee toward adopting some belief, value, attitude or behavior often already subconsciously preferred by the persuadee. It is a two-way process (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1990, p.25).

Kathleen Reardon, in her book *Persuasion in Practice*, describes it this way:

"Persuasion fulfills some need or desire of both of the parties; it is a two way process. The goal of persuasion can be said to be twofold: to further those of the persuader's own ends which are not at the expense of the persuadee's interests, such as interfering with the persuadee's freedom to choose; and to simply improve the persuadee's own interests, irrespective of the ends of the persuader." (Reardon, 1991)

This definition precludes any form of manipulation, coercion or deceit. The persuadee must always be free to say no. Persuasion takes into account the persuadee's own interest, which normally avoids the negative consequences of the persuadee's having to say no (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1990, p.24).

People Need to Know What They Have to Do

Not surprisingly, recruiters in the Wall Street-Harris Interactive Survey³ ranking of critical business skills put communication and interpersonal skills in top place and the ability to work well in a team in second place. These two skills came ahead even of analysis and problem solving. Today, good oral communication skills are not the prerogative of the political or business elite; they are everybody's business, simply because in today's society, as hierarchies flatten out, we depend on our interactive skills more than in previous generations. This calls for a more persuasive way of communicating.

Persuasive communication depends on first creating a common understanding with our audience, and then using some variation of our model to persuade them. It is worth reminding ourselves, however, that our audience must always be free to decide. According to Reardon, "[Persuasion] does not create a state of dependency because it does not limit the freedom of either party" (Reardon, 1991, pp. 1-5). Persuasion is not something one does *to* another person but *with* another person. We must be careful, as there are people who draw no distinction between persuasion and manipulation.

Attacks on Persuasion

Karl Popper's view of the attack by philosophy against persuasion (rhetoric) was that the attack was not completely honest. Plato, who first led the attack against the Sophists, portrayed persuasion as a form of manipulation (Popper, 1966 p.260). Plato referred to them as notorious for "making the worse appear the better cause".⁴ Yet Plato has little compunction about making full use of his rhetorical skills in his own writings, as his dialogues show. Throughout his work, for example, Plato uses his extensive rhetorical skills to oppose the "open" society that many Sophists advocated. Persuasion, according to Popper, is part of the bedrock of a democratic, open society (Vickers, 1988 p. 141).

The extent of the prejudice against persuasion is apparent in the forced closure of the "rhetoric schools" immediately after the Roman Empire suppressed the Republic, following the assassination of Julius Caesar. According to William Pierce, the suppression started much earlier: "In 161 BC the Roman Senate ordered all of these Greek schools of rhetoric closed and their teachers expelled from Rome".⁵ Later, in 92 BC, the rest of the rhetoric schools (those run by Romans) were also shut down. The suppression continued through the Middle Ages. In many quarters it continues to the present day, based on the suspicion that persuasion is a way of pursuing ulterior motives, a form of manipulation. Many people still see it as somewhat unethical. They associate persuasion with slick speakers and writers with flowery language who exert huge influence over people.

³ *Wall Street Journal*, 2003 Survey

⁴ <http://www.natvan.com/free-speech/fs993d.html>

⁵ <http://www.natvan.com/free-speech/fs993d.html>

The leading figure here was Petrus Ramus (1515-1572).⁶ Ramus separated the *logos* from Aristotle's rhetorical triad of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* (we shall discuss these terms later), leaving rhetoric as a flowery, emotional manner of writing and speaking. More recently, persuasion has often been associated with "spin" and political "doublespeak", which automatically makes people who are not aware of the background rather cynical about it. A good example is the way information was communicated to the general public in the post-war period of the Iraqi affair (especially information relating to the U.S. prison scandals). Government spokesmen subtly mix truth and fiction in their propaganda wars and there are endless examples of half-truths in business and public life in every country. We may well feel we have good reason to be suspicious. And yet this is not persuasion.

Persuasion is not the "hard sell", either, because the "hard sell" usually satisfies only one party's needs. In many circumstances, it can nevertheless be effective in the short term. Conger calls it the "John Wayne School of Persuasion", which he describes in the following amusing way:

"You stride into the meeting, strongly state your position at the outset and then shoot off as many arguments as possible. Everybody cheers and they make you sheriff." (Conger, pp. 31-32)

All you need here is logic, persistence and personal enthusiasm. You make your position irresistible, irrespective of your audience's needs. The winner takes all, but the victory is short-lived. The second time around, it will not work without the element of intimidation. This type of behavior can easily induce people to see persuasion as a form of manipulation, which in this case it would be.

What Can Persuasion Achieve?

Let's look at the following three situations in which persuasion skills are critical in organizations (Leggett, 2006, p. 16).

Changing people's attitudes, opinions and behavior

If people are dissatisfied with a situation, then guiding them to a new framework is straightforward enough. Here, we are satisfying their conscious or unconscious desire for something new. Yet if they are comfortable with their beliefs and the way they are doing things, they will resist this appeal because they will feel there is no real need to change. Why should they change? This is a complex issue, as persuasion seeks only voluntary change (without any misleading promises, force or deceit).

Reinforcing beliefs, attitudes and behavior

When people already have a positive attitude toward our message, we just need to reinforce it. We, as speakers, remind our audience of their freely adopted attitude and their desire to strengthen it. A clergyman at a Sunday service, for example, usually preaches to the converted or near converted. People come to have their beliefs reinforced; there is little controversy about the basics. These types of audiences need reassuring and motivating.

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrus_Ramus

Establishing attitudes and opinions

The best example here is the teacher-pupil relationship. The teacher tries to shape the pupils' response in a positive way. Normally, teachers who have personal credibility and subject knowledge have little trouble in establishing new attitudes and opinions.

In none of these three “response” categories do we limit our audience's ability to choose (as we do in propaganda, for example). We do not mentally force or threaten our audience in any way. Last of all, we do not limit their options by deceit (not even in a good cause).

Aristotle's Three-Dimensional Framework

Aristotle gives us a three-dimensional framework to put the persuasive process into practice. He emphasizes that the process depends on the proper use of a “combination” of the three dimensions or proofs: credibility (*ethos*), the right emotional environment (*pathos*) and argument (*logos*).⁷ It is not necessary that each proof carry equal weight, but it *is* necessary that all three exist and constitute a combination of proofs, although the first (*ethos*) will predominate (Vickers, 1988, p.20).

Vickers, the author of *In Defence of Rhetoric*, wrote that Aristotle distinguished three modes of persuasion: “the first depends on the personal character of the speaker (*ethos*); the second on putting the audience into a fit state of mind (*pathos*); the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself” (Vickers, 1988, p.22). Consequently, all three elements of *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* are integrated and essential to the persuasive (or rhetorical) method.

Building on This Basic Persuasive Framework

The art of communicating persuasively therefore centers around the following classical persuasive triad: (1) communicating the right level of credibility, or *ethos*; (2) creating the right emotional environment, or *pathos*; and (3) inventing the right argumentation, or *logos*.

1. Credibility

Credibility, or “Ethos” in the Greek terminology, is arguably the most critical element in persuasive communication. Audiences that have no previous knowledge of us are more likely to accept our message if they find us trustworthy. This isn't just communicating confidence. It is far more. It is communicating a credible character and a credible degree of expertise in the subject matter. The success of our communication efforts will ultimately depend on our personal and professional credibility. David Cunningham writes that “(it) is closely connected to how the audience evaluates the person who offers that argument. As the audience judges the speaker's character to be more or less worthy of confidence, the speaker's arguments are accordingly considered more or less authoritative” (Cunningham, 1991, Chapter 4).

⁷ Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, translated by W. Rhys Roberts, <http://classics.mit.edu/aristotle/rhetoric.html>

2. Emotional Environment

The second element concerns the effective employment of audience psychology. “Pathos”, as the Greeks called it, can be seen as the bringing of an audience to the right state of emotion in order to receive the message. It is about connecting up emotionally with your audience. It is when our audience has reached this state that they will usually become open to our message. Because of this need to link up emotionally, speakers often give priority to eloquence over argumentation. Unfortunately, they often go too far, making eloquence and other such persuasive techniques the focus of their speech, at the expense of clear arguments and even honesty. Misuse of emotional appeals can cause an audience to reject the message.

3. Argumentation

“Logos”, the third element, is based on our sensible use of rationality, data and facts. This, of course, includes our use of deductive and inductive logic or argumentation. In logos, we are inventing our arguments in order to gain the assent of our audience and prove our case. A simple example would be when we make two statements that are quite acceptable to our audience because they are based on known facts. From these two statements, we deduce a third statement, which, if fairly construed, will be accepted. We can also employ statistics and other factual evidence to support our statement. Logos-dominated speeches are essentially presentations. They follow an orderly, logical framework, which is supported by argumentation and evidence within a given emotional environment and our personal and professional credibility.

Persuasion involves identifying what matters to people and the common ground among us, finding this common ground, building our argumentation and putting our message across in the right emotional environment. This depends on our ability to empathize, but empathy does not always come easily. We first have to find out what matters to people and where their interests lie. To achieve this, we must be imaginative.

Different Modes of Speaking

Although speech should always contain the three rhetorical dimensions of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*, one dimension will predominate. How do we know which dimension will predominate? This will depend on the particular person. Some people are forensic speakers, while others tend to be more persuasive. Both can be charismatic in their own way. Margaret Thatcher, for example, is a forensic speaker and for many she possessed a certain charisma (Young, Chapter 1). For others, John Kennedy or Barack Obama are charismatic. Mrs Thatcher’s charisma is limited, as she is rational and argumentative, and appeals to the intellect, while Obama’s charisma is more open and appeals to the heart. The focus of any act of persuasion, therefore, is a mix of credibility, rationality and emotion.

Leibniz thought that “logos” could be enough: a generalized mathematics, called “characteristica universalis” would replace arguments by mere calculation:

“If we had it, we should be able to reason in metaphysics and morals in much the same way as in geometry and analysis. (...) If controversies were to arise, there would be no

more need for disputation between two philosophers than between two accountants. For it would suffice to take their pencils and to say to each other: Let's compute!"⁸

Modern logic and behavioral science have shown this to be an impossible dream. First, Gödel's well-known incompleteness theorem establishes that formalized languages cannot be both consistent and complete. Therefore, since consistency is absolutely necessary if anything is to be considered true, we have to settle for incomplete systems, in which reason cannot derive all truths. In the second place, there are irreducible uncertainties that make it impossible to reach the end of any line of reasoning. Finally, behavioral science has shown that human beings have severe cognitive limitations (bounded rationality), so that even if Leibniz's speculation were possible theoretically, it would not be possible on a practical level.

We normally reserve a *pathos*-driven manner of speaking for crisis situations and special occasions, where the aim is to raise emotions. Insecurity, anger and other emotions can be used to bring an audience around to our point of view, for example. Employers and trade union leaders often employ pathos-type speeches when tensions are high. Politicians usually use pathos to good effect. If we read the speeches of George Bush and Tony Blair during the Afghanistan war (and later in the Iraq war), we can see this. Both leaders went out of their way to arouse patriotic feelings in order to drum up domestic support for their campaigns.⁹

They appealed to our sense of honor, duty and patriotism and to our survival instinct. However, pathos-based speeches can easily backfire and have a very limited life: how long you can go on without producing hard evidence will depend on your credibility.

By contrast, *logos*-driven speeches appeal to facts and data. They follow a deductive approach, where the data is laid out clearly and logically. They usually suit certain kinds of organizational changes; changes that are planned to take place over a long period of time rather than in the immediate future.

Finally, in *ethos*-based speech and discussion the emphasis is on our credibility as speakers. Visionary or inspirational speeches are based on the personal credibility of the speaker. A visionary speech is like articulating a dream or mission. It is like asking people to buy into something that does not yet exist. Jack Welch of General Electric in his post-"Neutron Jack" days is perhaps one of our best examples in the business area. It is like selling our vision based on our ideals and our reputation. If our reputation has not been established, then ethos-based speeches will lack this credibility, unless we are powerful enough to establish it during the speech itself. The following diagram can help see at a glance how Aristotle's three dimensions can be applied in practice (Leggett, 2006, p.11).

Message	Persuasive Dimension
1. Visionary	→ <i>Ethos-based</i>
2. Crisis or Special Occasion	→ <i>Pathos-based</i>
3. Business or factual	→ <i>Logos-based</i>

⁸ Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings*, G. H. R. Parkinson (ed.), M. Morris and G. Parkinson (trans.), London: Dent & Sons, 1973.

⁹ For Blair's speeches see www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page5.asp and for Bush's speeches see www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/20050628-7.html

Conclusion

Rhetoric is the art of persuasive communication. Its theoretical roots are to be found in the writings of the Sophists and philosophers of ancient Greece, yet it is still a crucial discipline in management today. It is based on three main pillars:

Logos - a sound knowledge of argumentation;

Pathos - the ability to create the right emotional environment; and

Ethos - the communication of expertise and character credibility.

By supporting our statements with the right arguments, creating the right emotional environment and cultivating credibility, we will greatly improve our ability to communicate persuasively the reasonableness of our message in today's uncertain environment. Toulmin suggests that in order to achieve this "reasonableness", we must retrieve our 16th century humanistic tradition. This means putting the human being first, before any theoretical model. It demands a certain exploration of oneself, along with an external search for communion with the society we live in. Today we need to revive this tradition and perhaps in the management world more than anywhere else. If we succeed, we will have both "rationality" and "reasonableness" to guide us, each in its particular ways. Or, as we suggested at the beginning, we can allow "our warm hearts and our cool heads to guide us through the maze of decision-making". Finally, to help us in our efforts to follow this path, the following may be of some avail:

"Aristotle held that human beings

naturally argue about their actions

and that this leads to a degree of uncertainty.

It is also true to say that each of us perceives the world

and its events differently, so a persuasive mode of communication

is essential if we need the free

co-operation of others."¹⁰

¹⁰ This quote is taken from Cunningham and based on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, 1356a

References

- Aristotle, 1992. *The Art of Rhetoric*, London: Penguin Classics. Also at www.classics.mit.edu/aristotle/rhetoric.html.
- Barnard, Chester I., 1938. *The Functions of the Executive*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Conger, Jay, 1998. *Winning 'em Over: A New Model for Managing in the Age of Persuasion*, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Cunningham, David, 1991. *Faithful Persuasion*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Ferraro, F., Pfeffer, J. and Sutton, R., 2005. Economics Language and Assumptions: How Theories May Become self-Fulfilling. *Academy of Management Review*, 30 (1), 8-24.
- Ghoshal, S., 2005. Bad Management Theories are Destroying Good Management Practices. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4 (1) 75-91.
- Ghoshal, S. & Moran, P., 1996. Bad for Practice: A Critique of Transaction Cost Theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 21 (1): 13-47.
- Hayek, F. A., 1945. The Use of Knowledge in Society. *American Economic Review*, vol. 35(4), pp. 519-530.
- Legget, B. O'C., 2006. *Developing your Persuasive Edge*, Pamplona: EUNSA.
- Jowett, G. & O'Donnell, V., 1990. *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Popper, Karl, 1966. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Reardon, Kathleen, 1991. *Persuasion in Practice*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Robbins, S. & Coulter, M., 2004. *Management*, 8th edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Toulmin, Stephen, 2001. *Return to Reason*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Toulmin, Stephen, 1990. *Cosmopolis*, New York, NY: Free Press.
- Vickers, Brian, 1988. *In Defence of Rhetoric*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Young, Hugo, 1989. *One of us: a biography of Margaret Thatcher*, London: Macmillan, Pan Book.