



Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application

Fourth Edition

**Richard West
Lynn H. Turner**

Dramatism

Chapter Overview

- Dramatism at a Glance
- Introduction
- Assumptions of Dramatism
- Dramatism as New Rhetoric
- Burke's Pentad
- Integration and Critique

Dramatism at a Glance

- Life is like a play
- Analyze a speaker's motives by examining elements of a play
- Guilt is the ultimate motive for speakers
- Actors succeed when they provide audiences a way to purge their guilt

Introduction

- Dramatism implies that life is a drama
- Focus is on the acts performed by various players
- Like in drama, the acts are central to revealing human motives
- Burke was self-taught

Introduction

- Drama is a useful metaphor because
 - Drama indicates a grand sweep, like Burke's goal to theorize about the whole human experience
 - Drama's recognizable genres are similar to how the structure and use of language relates to human drama
 - Drama is addressed to an audience and so is rhetoric

Assumptions of Dramatism

- Brummett (1993) implies the following assumptions:
- Humans are animals who use symbols
 - Language is the most important symbol

Assumptions of Dramatism

- Language and symbols form a critically important system for humans
 - Consistent with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
 - Words, thoughts, and actions are closely connected
 - Language exerts a deterministic influence
- Humans are choice makers
 - Agency

Dramatism as New Rhetoric

- Burke's "new" rhetoric supplements the traditional approach
- "Old" rhetoric focuses on persuasion
- "New" rhetoric focuses on identification

Dramatism as New Rhetoric

- Identification and substance
 - All things have substance
 - Overlap of substance leads to identification
 - Rhetoric is needed to bridge divisions
 - Consubstantiality

Dramatism as New Rhetoric

- The process of guilt and redemption
 - Symbolizing
 - Guilt is a central motive for all symbolic activities
 - Broad definition of guilt

Dramatism as New Rhetoric

- The process of guilt and redemption

Burke's cycle

- Order or hierarchy
 - Language
 - Feelings of guilt
- The negative

Dramatism as New Rhetoric

- The process of guilt and redemption

Burke's cycle:

- Victimage (scapegoat or mortification)
 - Mortification
 - Scapegoating
- Redemption

Dramatism as New Rhetoric

- The Pentad
 - Burke's method for applying dramatism
 - The pentad consists of five points for analyzing a symbolic text like a speech
 - Twenty years later Burke added "attitude"
 - Dramatistic ratios

Burke's Pentad

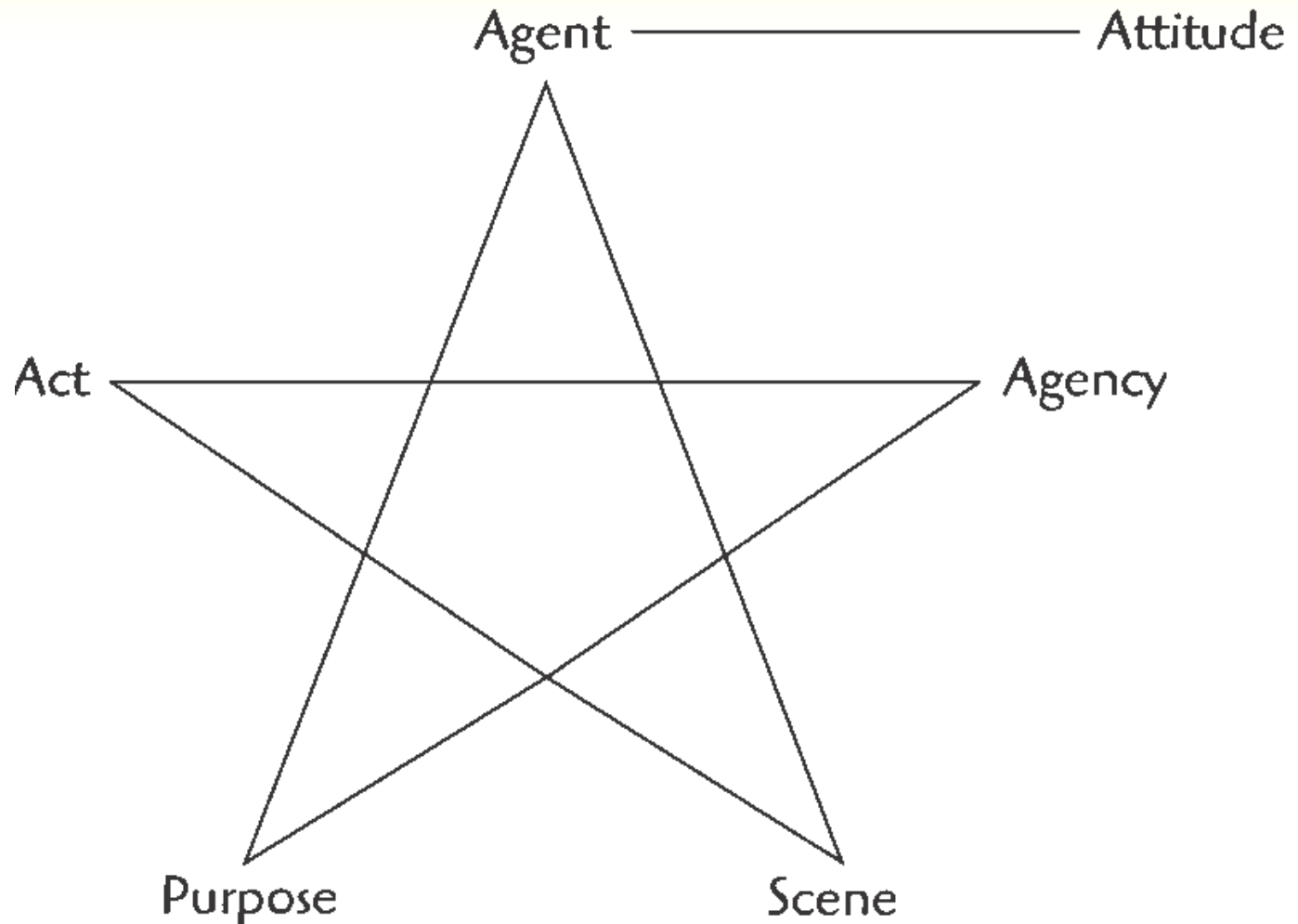


Figure 19.1: Burke's Pentad

Integration

- Communication tradition
 - Rhetorical
- Communication context
 - Public/rhetorical
- Approaches to knowing
 - Interpretive/hermeneutic
 - Critical

Evaluating Dramatism

- Scope
 - Too broad to be meaningful
- Parsimony
 - Overly complex and confusing
- Utility
 - Gender and culture should be addressed
- Heurism
 - Widely used for analyses
 - Frequently cited