

# Communication As Narration

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Could it be that any story, every story, has the power to not only inform but to influence? It seems that every story told touches somebody somewhere at sometime. In fact, it is probably true that every story selected by a storyteller to share is selected for a reason, no matter how innocent? at minimum because that particular story touched him or her in some way when it was heard or read. It was then decided to pass it on to others.

One of the leading scholars on human communication as narration is Walter Fisher. Fisher focused on the concept that all human communication is narrative based. In the beginning was the word or, more accurately the logos. And in the beginning, logos meant story, reason, rationale, conception, discourse, thought, he said in his book *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*. Thus all forms of human communication; from epic to architecture, from biblical narrative to statuary; came within its purview. Professor emeritus at the University of Southern California, Fisher published his work on what he called the Narrative Paradigm in 1995. It focused on the importance of narration as a mode of human reasoning and has led to a fundamental rethinking of how people apprehend knowledge. The Narrative Paradigm is a theory that all meaningful communication is a form of storytelling or to give a report of events and so human beings experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, each with their own conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends. In 1984, Fisher proposed that the way in which people explain and/or justify their behavior, whether past or future, has more to do with telling a credible story than it does with producing evidence or constructing a logical argument.

Fisher referred to humankind as homo narrans and proposed that all forms of human communication need to be seen as stories. He considered individual forms of communication as good reasons, that is, as values for believing or acting in certain ways. These good reasons are a type of narrative logic that all humans have naturally, forming the foundation of all human communication. Fisher said: The narrative paradigm proposes that human beings are inherently storytellers who have a natural capacity to recognize the coherence and fidelity of stories they tell and experience. I suggest that we experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends. The various modes of communication; all forms of symbolic action; then may be seen as stories, interpretations of things in sequences. I propose the narrative paradigm as a philosophy of reason, value, and action. Narrative rationality is its logic. The essential components of this logic are the following. Human communication is tested against principles of probability (coherence) and fidelity (truthfulness and reliability). Probability, whether a story hangs together, is assessed in three ways: by its argumentative or structural coherence; by its material coherence, that is, by comparing and contrasting stories told in other discourse (a story may be internally consistent, but important facts may be omitted, counterarguments ignored, and relevant issues overlooked); and by characterological coherence. Concern for this third type of coherence is one of the key differences between the concept of narrative rationality and traditional logics.

Could it be that story is just part of who we are and that, indeed, human communication IS narration?