

Rhetoric - Ethos, Pathos, & Logos

THE THREE "ARTISTIC PROOFS"

There are three artistic proofs that we can create: the appeals from ethos, pathos, and logos.

Ethos

Persuasion from ethos establishes the speaker's or writer's good character. As you saw in the opening of Plato's *Phaedrus*, the Greeks established a sense of ethos by a family's reputation in the community. Our current culture in many ways denies us the use of family ethos as sons and daughters must move out of the community to find jobs or parents feel they must sell the family home to join a retirement community apart from the community of their lives' works. The appeal from a person's acknowledged life contributions within a community has moved from the stability of the family hearth to the mobility of the shiny car. Without the ethos of the good name and handshake, current forms of cultural ethos often fall to puffed-up resumes and other papers. The use of ethos in the form of earned titles within the community—Coach Albert, Deacon Jones, Professor Miller—are diminishing as "truthful" signifiers while commercial-name signifiers or icons appear on clothing—Ralph Lauren, Louis Vuitton, Tommy Hilfiger—disclosing a person's cultural ethos not in terms of a contributor to the community, but in terms of identity-through purchase. Aristotle warns us away from such decoys, telling us that the appeal from ethos comes not from appearances, but from a person's use of language. In a culture where outward appearances have virtually subsumed or taken over the appeal from inner (moral and intellectual) character, the appeal from ethos becomes both problematic and important. Given our culture's privileges/rights of free speech and personal equality, however, we have enormous possibilities for the appeal from ethos any writer well versed in his or her subject and well spoken about it can gain credibility. This kind of persuasion comes from what a person says and how a person says it, not from any prejudice (pre-judging) of the author.

Aristotle tells us that three things "Inspire confidence in the rhetor's [speaker's/writer's] own character—the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. False statements and bad advice come from the lack of any of these elements. Exhibiting these three aspects of character in your discourse can play a large part in gaining credibility for your ideas. As regards the academic essay, be sure to have your writing appear written by a person of good sense by following the format dictated by the Modern Language Association (M.L.A.) or American Psychological Association (A.P.A.) or whatever your particular academic community wants. Citing a bunch of sources always adds to your credibility (sense of good sense) too. Stylistically in your writing, you can show, if not your good moral character, at least some character identification by sticking some little phrase before using "I" or "we." Like, "As So-in-so's attorney, I suggest . . . Or "As a dental hygienist, I advise . . . Or "As an elderly snowboarder for the past decade, I see no reason why . . . Actually, using "I" or "we" without such identifiers flips the attempt at ethos into a sense of the generic nobody. Many writing teachers, therefore, just say "don't use I." Aristotle implies, use "I" or "we" to your advantage with an

ethos-appeal sort of phrase out there in front, or else forget it. Despite warnings against believing discourse 'just because it appears written by someone of good sense or because the ideas "look good," you should try to create discourse that "looks good." As a reminder from the Plato chapter (now reinforced by the Aristotelian tip that people judge the credibility of your ideas by your writing skills), you should run your academic essay through the spell checker and bother numerous guinea-pig readers for fixing up the organization and Standard English before letting your essay loose on the world to do its work. If, as Aristotle says, people are going to judge your spoken and/or written ideas by virtue of the appearance of good sense, you'd best attend to that quality.

Pathos

Persuasion from pathos involves engaging the readers' or listeners' emotions. Appealing to pathos does not mean that you just emote or "go off" through your writing. Not that simple. Appealing to pathos in your readers (or listeners), you establish in them a state of reception for your ideas. You can attempt to fill your readers with pity for somebody or contempt for some wrong. You can create a sense of envy or of indignation. Naturally, in order for you to establish at will any desired state of emotion in your readers, you will have to know everything you can about psychology. Maybe that's why Aristotle wrote so many books about the philosophy of human nature. In the Rhetoric itself, Aristotle advises writers at length how to create anger toward some ideal circumstance and how also to create a sense of calm in readers. He also explains principles of friendship and enmity as shared pleasure and pain. He discusses how to create in readers a sense of fear and shame and shamelessness and kindness and unkindness and pity and indignation and envy and indignation and emulation. Then he starts all over and shows how to create such feelings toward ideas in various types of human character' of "people" of virtue and vice; those of youth, prime of life, and old age; and those of good fortune and those of bad fortune." Aristotle warns us, however: knowing (as a good willed writer) how to get your readers to receive your ideas by making readers "pleased and friendly" or "pained and hostile" is one thing; playing on readers' emotions in ways that make them mindless of concepts and consequences can corrupt the judgment of both individuals and the community.

Logos

Finally, a writer appeals to readers through the appeal to the readers' sense of logos. This is commonly called the logical appeal, and you can use two different types of logic. You can use inductive logic by giving your readers a bunch of similar examples and then drawing from them a general proposition. This logic is pretty simple given this, that, and the other thing-poof, there you go, a conclusion. Or, you can use the deductive enthymeme by giving your readers a few general propositions and then drawing from them a specific truth. Like, "because such-'n-such is true and such-'n-such is true and such-'n-such is true and everybody agrees on this other thing, then-poof, stands to reason, a new truth.

Since the time that a bunch of guys called "The Royal Society" (Hume, Locke, Bacon, etc.) rejected deduction, our culture has generally favored induction because it's often called the "scientific method" and we like science. Historically, people have

also attributed feminine metaphors to deductive logic and then easily dismissed it or dismissed the general propositions as "not documented" or "old wives tales."

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