



Journal Review by Kenny Bellew
Rhetorical Theory with Anne Aronson
Master of Science in Technical Communication
Journal 1 of 5: Aristotle
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Part I: Key Ideas of pages 1 – 5 (1354a - 1362b)

Like most works of Aristotle (if not all extant material), Aristotle's Rhetoric was redacted from a collection of his teachings at the Lyceum, the school he founded in Athens in [335 BCE](#). Aristotle explains rhetoric as a systematic method of persuasion. He defines "rhetoric" as "the counterpart of Dialectic. "Aristotle uses the same Greek word for "counterpart" as in Plato's Gorgias, where Socrates tells Polus that rhetoric is the counterpart [*antistrophos*] of cookery (Herrick, p.75). Aristotle is aware that his immediate audience is former and current students of Plato's Academy. Aristotle says, "We must make, as it were, a fresh start, and before going further, define what rhetoric is." [¶ 9] However, he does not completely dismiss Plato's ideas. Aristotle speaks of rhetoric being a branch of dialectic. In doing so, he maintains a hierarchy between the two. Simultaneously, he replaces the idea that rhetoric is a sham art and articulates its value.

Aristotle shows that rhetoric is the art of persuasion, why it is useful and how to use it to win argumentation. To Aristotle, rhetoric produces the best way to persuade in any given case.

[¶ 8]

Aristotle lists four reasons rhetoric is useful: [¶ 7]

1. Rhetoric makes truth easier to detect than a lie
2. It persuades the uneducated to understand complex explanations
3. It reveals both sides of an argument (*dissoi logoi*)
4. It is useful for defending yourself

Aristotle repeatedly refers to three types of rhetoric: [¶ 19]

1. Deliberative
2. Epideictic [*epi-deck-tick*]

3. Forensic

Deliberative concerns policy-making speeches that affect items in the future. Epideictic speeches aim to censure or honor someone or something. Forensic rhetoric defends or prosecutes in legal proceedings. [¶ 20]

All three types of rhetoric benefit from universal methods of persuasion. The core of these methods is connecting with the audience. Aristotle repeatedly admonishes to know the values, beliefs and education of the audience. He connects to his audience using the Enthymeme, which is a form of logic that takes his audience from a commonly held premise toward the conclusion for which he persuades. The Enthymeme is like a syllogism. His audience understands undisputed idea (A); he relates it to his proof (B) and moves the audience to conclusion (C). [¶ 14] Aristotle uses this systematized logic to show what is most probable.

[¶ 15]

Aristotle addresses issues that advance or halt persuasion. He gives three categories:

[¶ 12]

1. Logos (or the proofs of your argument)
2. Ethos (or the perception of your character)
3. Pathos (or the capacity to affect the emotion of your audience)

For a more detailed commentary on the reading, please see my notes at:

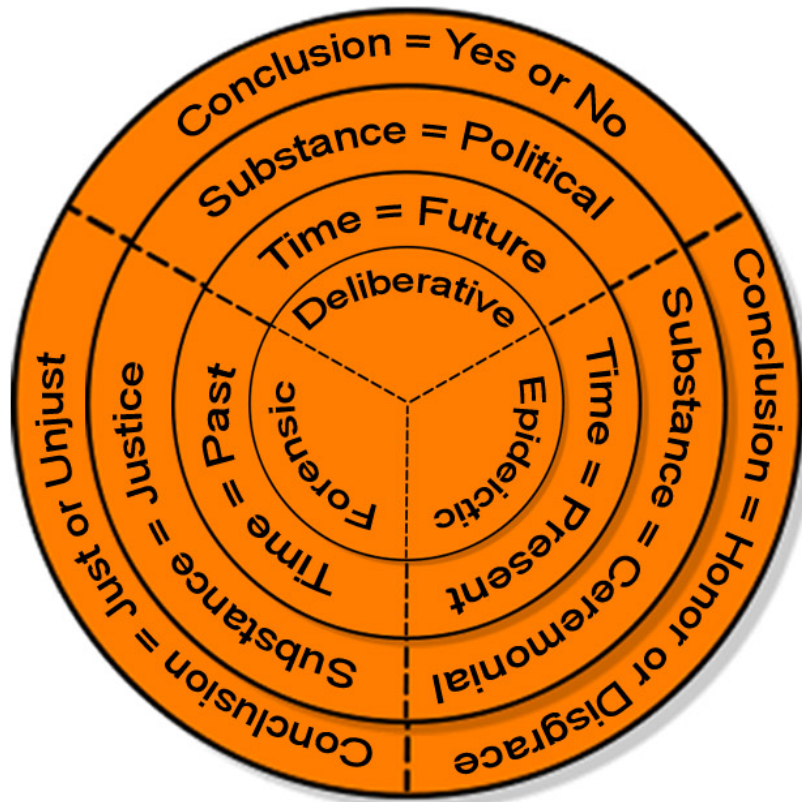
http://www.KennysHomework.com/rhetoric_timeline.htm. Select "Aristotle" in the links at the bottom of the page.

Part II: Selected Passage

Aristotle wove the three types of rhetoric (deliberative, epideictic and forensic) into most of his theories of persuasion. When seen from arm's length, it takes on a three-dimensional quality. The first dimension is substance. The second is time. The third is conclusion. This quality is captured in the following passage. Note the words in bold type. "Since only possible

actions, and not impossible ones, can ever have been done in the **past or the present**, and since things which have not occurred, or will not occur, also cannot have been done or be going to be done, it is necessary for the **political**, the **forensic**, and the **ceremonial** speaker alike to be able to have at their command propositions about the **possible and the impossible**, and about whether a thing has or has not occurred, **will or will not** occur. Further, all men, in giving **praise or blame**, in urging us to **accept or reject** proposals for action, in accusing others or **defending themselves**, attempt not only to prove the points mentioned but also to show that the **good or the harm**, the **honour or disgrace**, the **justice or injustice....**" [¶ 24]

I created the following figure to illustrate the point.



Using the Enthymeme and artistic proofs (logos, ethos and pathos) as vehicle, the audience is transported through the substance from the position in time to the conclusion. This is the art of rhetoric that creates persuasion.

Aristotle elevated the deliberative process above forensic and epideictic. The deliberative process addresses future issues, which have impact on a greater number of people. For example, persuading Corinth to allow Athenian merchants access to a particular trade route would use the deliberative process. The forensic process argues for the innocence or guilt of a single person for events of the past. Similarly, the epideictic process praises or censures people or things in the present.

Part III: Connections with Other Readings or Events

Herrick points out Aristotle's preference for deliberative oratory over forensic or epideictic.

“Aristotle apparently thought that deliberative oratory taking place in legislative assemblies was both more substantial and, because it affected the whole polis, of benefit to a larger number of people. He thus may have found it a better model for all rhetoric...” [Herrick, p. 80]

A local example of deliberative rhetoric is occurring between Prairie St. John's, a Catholic health care organization, and east-metro hospitals. Prairie St. John's wants to build a 144-bed psychiatric hospital in Woodbury, MN. The new hospital will also treat chemical dependency issues. Surrounding community hospitals such as HealthEast Care Systems worry that it will siphon doctors from local hospitals and create competition in an already strained environment.

Prairie St. John's argues that it has no plans to recruit from local hospitals and has an excellent record of locating qualified doctors. East-side health professionals counter that hiring out-of-state doctors is difficult because local policies result in lower reimbursements for health claims.

One of the east-side practitioners claims the new hospital would “attract low-income patients to a city that lacks suitable public transit.” This argument relates to Herrick's explanation of an enthymeme: “Enthymemes are arguments that obligate the rhetor to consider

the beliefs, values, and experiences of the audience. The people themselves cannot be ignored in the practice of rhetoric, and the enthymeme stands as an emblem of this fact.” [Herrick, p.79]

It is interesting how the desire to be politically correct (targeting belief) is balanced with the concern of “an influx of low-income people.” The statement claims to be concerned with public transportation needs, but it adequately carries the fear of “an influx of low-income people” into a middle-class neighborhood.

The ability of Prairie St. John’s to build the hospital requires an exemption from a 1984 moratorium on new hospital beds. The exception will be considered by Sen. Kathy Saltzman, DFL-Woodbury. She will now have to weigh the points. She knows that few want a large influx of low-income people into a neighborhood. She must consider this in contrast to the proposed benefits of the hospital. [<http://www.startribune.com/local/east/13958836.html>] This is a great example of deliberative rhetoric.