On Rhetoric

Summary Notes: Ethos, Pathos, Logos, and Topoi

Sources (Proofs/Modes/Means) of Persuasion--pistis/pisteis

Aristotle first divides "sources" into artistic and nonartistic. Some call these technical/nontechnical or intrinsic/extrinsic (borrowing from the definition that they ~~either~~ evolve from within the ideas of the topic rather than from outside of the ideas generated (see Bk. I, Ch. 15 for the latter).

Artistic proofs are divided into three types based on their relationship with aspects of the communications triangle: ethos or ethical proofs reside in the character of the speaker, pathos involves "disposing the listener in some way," and logos involves "showing [demonstrating] or seeming to show something" (p.37-39). Interestingly, as the Kinneavy handout was meant to show, "ethos" and "pathos" repeat this interest in the communications triangle within their own parts (see discussion below on each part).

As an interesting sidenote, Edward P.J. Corbett in his translation has Aristotle calling these three elements the "true constituents of the art." Compare this point with Aristotle's text itself on pp. 38-39.

One can see both the systematic and integrative nature of Aristotle's mind/work in the history of these three elements as well. In his discussion of each he combines grand ideas from past thinkers and provides each a role in his overall theory based on "invention" and "dialectic." However, this systematizing often dilutes the power of the ideas taken from the theories that preceded Aristotle. Illustrations of this point follow.

> ETHOS--the history of the ethical proof includes such rhetoricians as Tisias, Corax, and Isocrates, each of whom argue that one's character made one believable. Aristotle, however, limits, ethos to what "results from the speech," not to what opinion one might bring to the speech (p. 38). It is quite a challenge to think about how a speech can increase the positive sense a listener might have of the speaker's character, but Aristotle calls ethos "almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuasion" (p.38).
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> Aristotle divides ethos into three parts: "phronosis," "arete," and "eunoia" (p.121). Each of these terms have a distinguished history in Greek intellectual thought.
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> "Phronosis" can be translated as "wisdom" or "prudence" but probably, borrowing from Isocrates, "good sense" is best. For Isocrates "practical wisdom" formed THE basis for mature judgment, effective education, and civic behaviour. There is for Aristotle a distinct sense of "decisiveness" about phronosis (see Bk. VI in his Nicomachean Ethics where he discussed the cumulative effect of good deliberation, good understanding, and good judgment), decisiveness that allows humans to judge the mean between "excess" and "defect" (again see his Nich. Ethics). In the Rhet., Aristotle notes at least

three times the "practical" nature of rhetoric (see pp. 53, 67, 97) and the sense of appropriate judgment that ensues.

"Arete" as a Greek virtue would include all of the classic literature known to Aristotle. H.D.F. Kitto says that the word ought to be translated not as virtue but as "excellence." As such it is close in etymology to the "arestoi" or "aristocracy." In this sense, "excellence" is what lifts one above day-to-day expectations. Aristotle would have carried some of this notion to his sense of the "hero" in his Poetics.

"Eunoia" is another key term Aristotle probably borrowed from Isocrates. For Isocrates, eunoia, or "good will," formed the basis not only for how the Greeks ought to relate to one another, but also how they should relate to their cousin Greeks in other city-states, particularly those with whom they had alliances. This sense of good will which would be similar in some ways to what Aristotle discusses also as "friendship" in Bk. II, Ch. 4, was later embraced by Alexander the Great as he carried Hellenistic ideas throughout the known world, creating an empire in the process.

Good "sense" about content

"Good will" sense of Audience.

Ethos

For Aristotle, then, the challenge was for a speaker to create through words the impression that he/she had good sense, good will toward the audience, and was pursing the excellence that would set him/her--and his/her argument--apart from others'.

Throughout Bks. I and II Aristotle interconnects ethos with both pathos and logos to show how powerful it can be (remember the previous point about its being almost the "controlling" factor in persuasion). Some examples follow:

- --proof from signs (part of logos) expresses character when appropriate to age, gender, geographic background, and ethics (p.235)
- --character is connected to one's political class/beliefs(p.77)
- --maxims (part of logos) are more suited to the ethos of the older speaker (p.184); even maxims that are contrary to popular wisdom can be used if ethos would be enhanced (p.185); maxims appeal to more uncultivated minds because their popular nature make it seem as if the speaker and the listener share common ideas/values(p.186)
- --examples are appropriate for deliberative speeches, enthymemes for judicial (p.274)
- --"If one has logical arguments, one should speak both ethically and logically; if you do not have enthymemes, speak 'ethically' (p.276)

Now, of course, ethos, in all its parts, is connected to style and organization (Bk. III) because one creates one's sense of ethos in a text through those choices in style and structure (p.186). The selected examples below connect ethos, and at times pathos and logos, to style and arrangement:

--"word choice" is appropriate if it expresses emotion, character and is proportional to the subject matter (p.235)
--proper word choice enhances the credibility of an idea (p.235)
--organization when made clear to the reader, and a good introduction, enhances ethos because we associate good choices with phronosis (p.271)

PATHOS--Aristotle, building on the role emotion plays in such previous rhetoricians as Plato and Gorgias, organizes his treatment of pathos by discussing first emotions (Bk. II, Ch. 2-12) and then issues of character (Bk. II Ch. 12-17). For each of the emotions he organizes his discussion around the communication triangle (p.121), discussing the state of mind of those who express that emotion, against whom that emotion emerges, and what kinds of reasons might cause it to occur. This treatment is the most extensive and systematic of classical times, but it should not be confused with the dialectic and disciplinary treatment of many of these same issues--as well as many others--in Aristotle's ethical studies (e.g., Nichomachean Ethics). The handout I gave you which outlines his formal treatment in his Nich. Ethics and which illustrates how few of these topics he really discusses in On Rhetoric shows this point. His treatment in On Rhetoric uses more popular definitions. Today we might criticize this section for neglecting contemporary emotions that are used by modern advertisers (e.g., sex, religion) or that are used in a modern democracy (e.g., patriotism, industriousness), but such criticism should not detract from this rhetorical achievement.

LOGOS--Aristotle builds many of his ideas on logos around such earlier rhetoricians and philosophers as Tisias, Corax, Protagoras, Zeno, Plato, and Isocrates (i.e., his interest in subject matter). One should note, though, how Aristotle takes the grand notion of logos as a unified concept (word+thought) and reduces it to "logical appeal." Here is another illustration of how he systematizes and integrates many other ideas within his own view of rhetoric. Aristotle's logos builds off of the very detailed work he also did on dialectic and formal logic. So, when he says that rhetoric is "an antistrophos to dialectic" he is able to provide many parallels between rhetoric and dialectic because of his extensive work with both. Though we will look at logos in more detail in our next class meeting, the basic parallels are as follows (p.40):

enthymeme

DIALECTIC<----------->RHETORIC
Deduction (Syllogism)<----------->Enthymeme/Maxim
Induction<----------->Example
True
Made-Up
(p.179)

Etymologically, "enthymeme" means "to keep in mind."

It should be no surprise, given Aristotle's interest in dialectic, and maybe even his loyalty to many of Plato's concepts, that he closely ties the power of logos to the power of a scientific demonstration (p.33), calling the enthyememe, "generally speaking, the strongest of the pisteis" (p.33) and "the 'body' of persuasion (p.30).

Topoi--literally topoi means "place." Topoi would be then "places" in the mind that one might go to invent ideas for a speech. Another way to look at them would be to call them "lines of argument." Thus, if one were familiar with enough topoi, one would always have "places" to go for ways to invent ideas, even if on the spur of the moment.

The definition of rhetoric--"Let rhetoric be defined as an ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion (pp.36-37)--especially applies to the three types of topoi that Aristotle covers in his text.

Because Aristotle sees topoi as ranging from those that are more disciplinary bound and thus relevant more to dialectic than to rhetoric, even his rhetorical topoi will vary in their relationship to various subject matter, though they all must stay broad enough to remain within the boundaries of the rhetorical art. The three types he does cover in On Rhetoric are as follows:

- --Special topics (idia--Bk. I, Ch. 4-14): are drawn from the three types of speeches. The deliberative will draw topics from the political arena, the forensic from the legal area, and the epideictic from the area of ethics (see especially some relevant comments on pp. 46, 51, 52, 87)
- --General topics (koina--Bk. II, Ch. 18-19): are drawn from the three types of speeches as well, but in less of a content sense. Earlier in the text, Aristotle relates past, present, and future fact to the types of speeches and here he relates these four topoi to speech types as well (see especially pp. 173-174)
- --Common topics (topoi--Bk. II, Ch. 23): are the broadest covered and seem to be able to be used in all situations

It is a bit confusing that topoi is used both in a broad sense to discuss all three types and in a narrow sense to discuss just the third type. Kennedy notes this distinction on p. 45.

In Latin, topoi would be translated as "locus," or places, from which we would later get the term "commonplaces." That term would take on negative connotations with which we are familiar today.

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DIALECTIC

SCIENTIFIC SYLLOGISM		ENTHYMEME
All humans are mortal	--major premise--	(A sensible man should want his children to be busy and well-liked.)
Socrates is human	--minor premise--	(For) apart from the other idleness they have, they incur hostile jealousy from fellow citizens.
Therefore, Socrates is mortal	--conclusion--	(Thus,) it is never right for a man who is shrewd to have his children taught to be too wise. (*On Rhetoric*, 182-3, fn143)

COMMENTS ON THE "ENTHYMEME" HAVE BEEN COLLECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING PAGES OF ON RHETORIC—32-33, 42-43, 212-213

Enthymemes can be based on probabilities
examples
signs
fallible
infallible

Enthymemes are often mistakingly said to be drawn from premises that are only probable; or that are truncated syllogisms (see p. 42)

Signs "affect to be . . . a demonstrative proposition, necessary or probable, . . . : for anything that accompanies an existing thing or fact, or precedes or follows anything that happens or comes into being, is a sign either of its existence or of its having happened." (from Cope, after *Rhet. Ad Alex*, ch 13; *Prior Analytics*, II.27)