

# *The Means of Persuasion*

*Art of Rhetoric* [I. ii]

Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever. This is the function of no other of the arts, each of which is able to instruct and persuade in its own special subject; thus, medicine deals with health and sickness, geometry with the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic with number, and similarly with all the other arts and sciences. But Rhetoric, so to say, appears to be able to discover the means of persuasion in reference to any given subject. That is why we say that as an art its rules are not applied to any particular definite class of things.

As for proofs, some are inartificial, others artificial. By the former I understand all those which have not been furnished by ourselves but were already in existence, such as witnesses, tortures, contracts, and the like; by the latter, all that can be constructed by system and by our own efforts. Thus we have only to make use of the former, whereas we must invent the latter.

Now the proofs furnished by the speech are of three kinds. The first depends upon the moral character of the speaker, the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind, the third upon the speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove.

The orator persuades by moral character when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of confidence; for we feel confidence in a greater degree and more readily in persons of worth in regard to everything in general, but where there is no certainty and there is room for doubt, our confidence is absolute. But this confidence must be due to the speech itself, not to any preconceived idea of the speaker's character; for it is not the case, as some writers

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

1. *What do you usually do when trying to persuade others? Did you fail sometimes?*
2. *Ethos, pathos, logos: these are the common means of persuasion by which writers and public speakers appeal to their audience. What is your understanding of them after reading this passage?*
3. *Aristotle believes that the function of Rhetoric "is not so much to persuade, as to find out in each case the existing means of persuasion". Select a speech that once impressed you and try to analyze the rhetorical appeals in it based on the knowledge you have gained from this passage.*

of rhetorical treatises lay down in their "Art," that the worth of the orator in no way contributes to his powers of persuasion; on the contrary, moral character, so to say, constitutes the most effective means of proof.

The orator persuades by means of his hearers, when they are roused to emotion by his speech; for the judgements we deliver are not the same when we are influenced by joy or sorrow, love or hate; and it is to this alone that, as we have said, the present-day writers of treatises endeavour to devote their attention.

Lastly, persuasion is produced by the speech itself, when we establish the true or apparently true from the means of persuasion applicable to each individual subject.

Now, since proofs are effected by these means, it is evident that, to be able to grasp them, a man must be capable of logical reasoning, of studying characters and the virtues, and thirdly the emotions — the nature and character of each, its origin, and the manner in which it is produced. Thus it appears that Rhetoric is as it were an offshoot of Dialectic and of the science of Ethics, which may be reasonably called Politics.

# Logos

*Art of Rhetoric [I. ii]*

All orators produce belief by employing as proofs either examples or enthymemes and nothing else. The difference between them is that the proof from a number of particular cases that such is the rule, is called in Dialectic induction, in Rhetoric example; but when, certain things being posited, something different results by reason of them, alongside of them, from their being true, either universally or in most cases, such a conclusion in Dialectic is called a syllogism, in Rhetoric an enthymeme.

Rhetorical speeches are sometimes characterized by examples and sometimes by enthymemes, and orators themselves may be similarly distinguished by their fondness for one or the other. Arguments that depend on examples are not less calculated to persuade, but those which depend upon enthymemes meet with greater approval.

That which is persuasive is persuasive in reference to some one, and is persuasive and convincing either at once and in and by itself, or because it appears to be proved by propositions that are convincing. However, no art has the particular in view, medicine for instance not considering what is good for Socrates or Callias, but what is good for this or that class of persons (for the particular is infinite and cannot be the subject of a true science). Similarly, therefore, Rhetoric will not consider what seems probable in each individual case, for instance to Socrates or Hippias, but that which seems probable to this or that class of persons.

The enthymeme and the example are concerned with things which may, generally speaking, be other than they are and deduced from few premises, often from fewer than the regular syllogism; for if any one

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

1. *What do you usually do when trying to prove your statement of a claim? Take the following statement as an example: "Two years after COVID-19 first hit, life has changed, perhaps forever". How would you prove it to your audience? What will you do in order to enhance the logic in your proofs?*
2. *Select a speech that once impressed you and analyze how the speaker brings the logic of his or her proofs to the audience, referring to what Aristotle describes here.*

of these is well known, there is no need to mention it, and the hearer can add it himself. For instance, to prove that Dorieus was the victor in a contest at which the prize was a crown, it is enough to say that he won a victory at the Olympic games; there is no need to add that the prize at the Olympic games is a crown, for everybody knows it.

Since few of the propositions of the rhetorical syllogism are necessary (for most of the things which we judge and examine can be other than they are), human actions, which are the subject of our deliberation and examination, being all of such a character and, generally speaking, none of them necessary. Since, further, facts which only generally happen or are merely possible can only be demonstrated by other facts of the same kind, and necessary facts by necessary propositions, it is evident that the materials from which enthymemes are derived will be sometimes necessary, but for the most part only generally true.

We have said that example is a kind of induction and with what kind of material it deals by way of induction. It is neither the relation of part to whole, nor of whole to part, nor of one whole to another whole, but of part to part, of like to like, when both come under the same genus, but one of them is better known than the other.

#### FURTHER READING

*Common Topics* Introduction [II. xviii]; the possible and the impossible, whether a thing has happened or not, whether a thing will happen or not, greatness or smallness [II. xix].

*Common Modes of Argument: Examples* Statements of things that have actually happened and comparisons or fables invented by the speaker [II. xx]

*Common Modes of Argument: Enthymemes* Maxims [II. xxi]; enthymemes in general [II. xxii]; topics of demonstrative and refutative enthymemes [II. xxiii]; topics of apparent enthymemes [II. xxiv]; ways of refutation [II. xxv]; amplification and depreciation [II. xxvi].

# *Ethos and Pathos*

*Art of Rhetoric* [II. i, xii]

Since the object of Rhetoric is judgement (for judgements are pronounced in deliberative rhetoric and judicial proceedings are a judgement), it is not only necessary to consider how to make the speech itself demonstrative and convincing, but also that the speaker should show himself to be of a certain character and should know how to put the judge into a certain frame of mind.

It makes a great difference with regard to producing conviction, especially in demonstrative, and, next to this, in forensic oratory, that the speaker should show himself to be possessed of certain qualities and that his hearers should think that he is disposed in a certain way towards them, and further, that they themselves should be disposed in a certain way towards him. For opinions vary, depending on whether men love or hate, are wrathful or mild, and things appear either altogether different, or different in degree. When a man is favourably disposed towards one on whom he is passing judgement, he either thinks that the accused has committed no wrong at all or that his offence is trifling; but if he hates him, the reverse is the case. And if a man desires anything and has good hopes of getting it, if what is to come is pleasant, he thinks that it is sure to come to pass and will be good; but if a man is unemotional or not hopeful, it is quite the reverse.

For the orator to produce conviction three qualities are necessary, because, independent of demonstrations, the things which induce belief are three in number. These qualities are good sense, virtue, and goodwill. Speakers are wrong both in what they say and in the advice they give, because they lack either all three or one of them. For either through want of sense they form incorrect opinions; or, if their

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

1. *Good sense, virtue, and goodwill, these are the three dimensions of ethos highlighted by Aristotle. Could they help you better understand a public speaker who established his or her credibility and convinced the hearers by presenting the three qualities in the speech?*
2. *Aristotle defines pathos in terms of a public speaker putting the audience "into a certain frame of mind" by appealing to their emotions. Take yourself as a sample and learn to analyze the emotions and characters of people, whom your future audience is composed of.*

opinions are correct, through viciousness they do not say what they think; or, if they are sensible and good, they lack goodwill, wherefore it may happen that they do not give the best advice, although they know what it is.

The emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain. Such are anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries, and each of them must be divided under three heads. For instance, in regard to anger, the disposition of mind which makes men angry, the persons with whom they are usually angry, and the occasions which give rise to anger. If we knew one or even two of these heads, but not all three, it would be impossible to arouse that emotion. The same applies to the rest.

Further, the nature of the characters of men can be described according to their emotions, habits, ages, and fortunes. By the emotions I mean anger, desire, and the like, of which we have already spoken; by habits virtues and vices, of which also we have previously spoken, as well as the kind of things men individually and deliberately choose and practise. The ages are youth, the prime of life, and old age. By fortune I mean noble birth, wealth, power, and their contraries, and, in general, good or bad fortune.

#### FURTHER READING

*Emotions* Anger and slight [II. ii]; mildness [II. iii]; love and friendship [II. iv]; fear [II. v]; shame [II. vi]; favour [II. vii]; pity [II. viii]; indignation [II. ix]; envy [II. x]; emulation [II. xi].

*Characters* Youth [II. xii]; old age [II. xiii]; prime [II. xiv]; birth [II. xv]; wealth [II. xvi]; power [II. xvii].