Aristotle’s Rhetoric

Aristotle lists three available means of persuasion within his writing titled *The Rhetoric*. These three means of persuasion are *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. The distinctions identified by Aristotle have their own specific part in the process of persuasion whether the medium is verbal or written. These three distinctions of persuasion are used on a daily basis by people whether knowingly or unknowingly, it just seems to come out naturally. While there still are times when it has to be setup or forced.

*Logos* is the logical proof used in a persuasive argument. Aristotle breaks this section down into two parts: which are *enthymeme* and the *example*. *Enthymeme* is said to be “the strongest of the proofs.” What it does is uses deductive logic to move from a “global principle to a specific truth.” *Example* uses inductive reasoning in which it ‘draws a final conclusion from specific cases.” Logos is used to provide a path for the listener to see the evidence and find your claim.

*Ethos* is the ethical proof used in a persuasive argument. Aristotle finds that there are three major parts to ethical proof which are perceived intelligence, virtuous character, and goodwill. Under perceived intelligence Aristotle claims that “the quality of intelligence has more to do with practical wisdom and shared values.” Virtuous character Aristotle says “has to do with the speaker’s image as a good and honest person.” Then finally, “goodwill is a positive judgment of the speaker’s intention toward the audience,” as written by Aristotle. Ethos is who and what the audience views you as whether it is good or bad.
Pathos is the last part of the triplets in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. There are six different emotions that are explored by Aristotle: which are anger, love, fear, shame, indignation, and admiration. Each one of these six emotions has an opposite that is listed by Aristotle: these are mildness, hatred, confidence, shamelessness, pity, and envy. It is said that Aristotle offered this use of emotion as “a corrective measure that could help a speaker craft emotional appeals that inspire reasoned civic decision making.” This was important in Aristotle’s day especially because men had to serve as congressmen and that meant speaking in front of other folks and trying to use emotion to move men to adopt your point of view.

I have used this form of persuasion before in my CATA 101 course from freshman year and last year in my Persuasion class. It is very important because it covers all the areas of why a person might listen to what you have to say and then believe it. Because it takes a person and they use logical argument to convince you to believe, then you have ethical argument to provide a credibility type trust so that a person would listen to you, and finally the emotional proof in which a person will believe because what you said touched them on a personal level. I have used these forms of persuasion also on an unconscious level as well or at least in an ignorant state. When I was a child I might have used my emotions to get what I wanted. So as you can see this form of persuasion can be used both consciously and unconsciously.

Aristotle’s rhetoric offers five pieces of advice which are invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Each of these pieces of advice helps to provide a good direction for putting together a quality persuasive speech. I have used this advice many a times not knowing that it was a form of rhetoric that was created and perfected in ancient Greece by Aristotle.