

## Hum 110/Leibman

### Aristotle & Persuasion

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguishes three means of persuasion which can be produced by the rhetorician's art

- 1) argument (the "proper task" of rhetoric--see other side of handout on logic)
- 2) the character of the speaker
- 3) the disposition created in the hearer

**The latter two types of persuasion are achieved by the following means:**

1. Pathos (Emotion)

Definition: "Creating a certain disposition in the audience" (*Rhetoric* 1356a, 1377b). An emotional appeal that secures the goodwill of the hearer

Types:

- A. lay claim to qualities that the audience will respect
- B. stress disadvantages of speaker's situation as a claim to pity
- C. arouse hostility against opponent
- D. generate prejudice against the opponent through tangential or irrelevant information.
- E. incite fear
- F. plea for pity

2. Ethos (Moral Character)

Definition: Use of claims about speaker's moral character to gain trust of audience. The province of ethos is wisdom, virtue, and goodwill.

Types:

- A. appeal to age & experience
- B. reverence for civic virtue
- C. patriotism and public-spiritedness
- D. displays of piety
- E. follow rules of decorum (e.g. avoid delicate subjects)
- F. model restraint

### **Bibliography**

Carey, Christopher, "Rhetorical Means of Persuasion," *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*, ed. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 1994: 26-45.

### **Study Questions:**

1. Choose a passage and analyze how Aristotle persuades us. How does this compare to Plato's means of persuasion? Which appeals to you more?
2. The mean: do you agree that virtue involves finding the mean? Postulate a hypothetical situation that supports or disproves Aristotle's argument. (Try filling in the chart below with "Yes" or "No" in each box. Where do you belong? Where would you like to belong? What would you have to do to get where you want to be?)
3. Do you agree with Aristotle's emphasis on volition in determining moral responsibility?
4. What sort of virtue does a Reed education aim to instill in us? What habits does it use to instill this virtue? Is this in line with the virtues (and habits) valued by a democracy? Does Reed "corrupt the youth"?

	Emotion in a Mean?	Action in a Mean?	Choice in a Mean?
Virtuous Person			
Self-Controlled Person			
Weak-Willed Person			
Licentious Person			