

The Three Appeals of Argument

Aristotle postulated three argumentative appeals: logical, ethical, and emotional. Strong arguments have a balance of all of three, though logical (logos) is essential for a strong, valid argument. Appeals, however, can also be misused, creating arguments that are not credible.

Logical Appeal (logos)

Logical appeal is the strategic use of logic, claims, and evidence to convince an audience of a certain point.

When used correctly, logical appeal contains the following elements...

- Strong, clear claims
- Reasonable qualifiers for claims
- Warrants that are valid
- Clear reasons for claims
- Strong evidence (facts, statistics, personal experience, expert authority, interviews, observations, anecdotes)
- **Acknowledgement of the opposition**

When used poorly, logical appeals may include..

- Over-generalized claims
- Reasons that are not fully explained or supported
- Logical fallacies
- Evidence misused or ignored
- No recognition of opposing views

Ethical Appeal (*ethos*)

Ethical appeal is used to establish the writer as fair, open-minded, honest, and knowledgeable about the subject matter. The writer creates a sense of him or herself as trustworthy and credible.

When used correctly, the writer is seen as...

- Well-informed about the topic
- Confident in his or her position
- Sincere and honest
- Understanding of the reader's concerns and possible objections
- Humane and considerate

When used incorrectly, the writer can be viewed as...

- Unfair or dishonest
- Distorting or misrepresenting information (biased)
- Insulting or dismissive of other viewpoints
- Advocating intolerant ideas

Emotional Appeal (*pathos*)

Not surprisingly, emotional appeals target the emotions of the reader to create some kind of connection with the writer. Since humans are in many ways emotional creatures, pathos can be a very powerful strategy in argument. For this same reason, however, emotional appeal is often misused...sometimes to intentionally mislead readers or to hide an argument that is weak in logical appeal. A lot of **visual appeal** is emotional in nature (think of advertisements, with their powerful imagery, colors, fonts, and symbols).

When done well, emotional appeals...

- Reinforce logical arguments
- Use diction and imagery to create a bond with the reader in a human way
- Appeal to idealism, beauty, humor, nostalgia, or pity (or other emotions) in a balanced way
- Are presented in a fair manner

When used improperly, emotional appeals...

- Become a substitute for logic and reason (TV and magazine advertising often relies heavily on emotional rather than logical appeal)
- Uses stereotypes to pit one group of people against another (propaganda and some political advertising does this)
- Offers a simple, unthinking reaction to a complex problem
- Takes advantage of emotions to manipulate (through fear, hate, pity, prejudice, embarrassment, lust, or other feelings) rather than convince credibly

Examples of Logos, Ethos and Pathos

Logos (Logical)

Let us begin with a simple proposition: What democracy requires is public debate, not information. Of course it needs information too, but the kind of information it needs can be generated only by vigorous popular debate. We do not know what we need to know until we ask the right questions, and we can identify the right questions only by subjecting our ideas about the world to the test of public controversy. Information, usually seen as the precondition of debate, is better understood as its by product. When we get into arguments that focus and fully engage our attention, we become avid seekers of relevant information. Otherwise, we take in information passively--if we take it in at all.

Christopher Lasch, "The Lost Art of Political Argument"

Ethos (Ethical)

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely."...Since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable in terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in."...I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus sayeth the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Pathos (Emotional)

For me, commentary on war zones at home and abroad begins and ends with personal reflections. A few years ago, while watching the news in Chicago, a local news story made a personal connection with me. The report concerned a teenager who had been shot because he had angered a group of his male peers. This act of violence caused me to recapture a memory from my own adolescence because of an instructive parallel in my own life with this boy who had been shot. When I was a teenager some thirty-five years ago in the New York metropolitan area, I wrote a regular column for my high school newspaper. One week, I wrote a column in which I made fun of the fraternities in my high school. As a result, I elicited the anger of some of the most aggressive teenagers in my high school. A couple of nights later, a car pulled up in front of my house, and the angry teenagers in the car dumped garbage on the lawn of my house as an act of revenge and intimidation.

James Garbarino "Children in a Violent World: A Metaphysical Perspective"

Effectiveness vs. Credibility

Credible (credibility) means an argument is logically sound and well-supported with strong evidence and reasoning.

Effective (effectiveness) means an argument works in convincing or persuading its audience. Many arguments that are effective are also credible. . . but there are also many that aren't.

Rhetoric in its simplest form is the art of *persuasive speech or writing*. For thousands of years, politicians and orators have been known for their use of rhetoric to influence and persuade an audience to their side or way of thinking. One of the most famous speeches in literature is Atticus's speech in Chapter 20. Atticus is able to make a great argument on Tom Robinson's behalf—enough to make the jury (and the reader) think hard about the injustices that have transpired.

There are different ways a speaker or writer can appeal to his or her audience: 1) logic or reason (logos), 2) emotion (pathos), and/or 3) ethics and morals (ethos).

- **logos**: by appealing to an audience's sense of reason and logic, the speaker or writer intends to

make the audience think clearly about the sensible and/or obvious answer to a problem

- **pathos**: by appealing to the audience's emotions, the speaker or writer can make the audience

feel sorrow, shame, sympathy, embarrassment, anger, excitement, and/or fear

- **ethos**: the overall appeal of the speaker or writer himself or herself; it is important that this

person have impressive credentials, a notable knowledge of the subject, and/or appear to be a

likeable and moral person

It is not only important what a speaker or writer has to say, but *how* he or she actually says or

presents it. There are literally hundreds of rhetorical devices, dating back to the famous orators

Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Besides using devices you may already be familiar with, such as

figures of speech (metaphor, simile, personification) and sound devices (alliteration, assonance,

consonance), writers and speakers use many other rhetorical devices to communicate their message. Below and on the next page is a very short list of rhetorical devices, their definitions, and

a brief example of the device in use.

- **anaphora**: repetition of a word or phrase at the *beginning* of successive phrases, clauses or

lines, ex. "Mad world! Mad kings! Mad composition!" (*King John*, II, i)

- **antithesis**: opposition or juxtaposition of ideas or words in a balanced or parallel construction,

ex. "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more." (*Julius Caesar*, III, ii)

- **aporia**: questioning oneself (or rhetorically asking the audience), often pretending to be in

doubt, ex. "The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men?" (Matthew 21:25)

- **apostrophe**: a sudden turn from the general audience to address a specific group or person,

either absent or present, real or imagined, ex. "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where

is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55)

- **asyndeton**: the absence of conjunctions between coordinate phrases, clauses, or words, ex.

"Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, / Shrunk to this little measure?" (*Julius Caesar*, III, i)

- **euphemism:** a substitution of a more pleasant expression for one whose meaning may come across as rude or offensive, ex. "He passed away," rather than "He died."
- **hyperbole:** exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect, ex. "I died laughing."
- **irony:** (verbal) expression in which words mean something contrary to what is actually said, ex.
Looking into your wallet full of nothing but a few pennies, and exclaiming, "Lunch is on me, guys— I am rich!"
- **metonymy:** a reference to an object or person by naming only a part of the object or person, ex.
"She stood in the driveway watching as the bears moved her furniture into her new house."
- **paralipsis:** pretending to omit something by drawing attention to it, ex. A politician saying: "I will not even mention the fact that my opponent was a poor student."
- **parallelism:** repetition of a key word over successive phrases or clauses, "We will have difficult times. We've had difficult times in the past. And we will have difficult times in the future."
Robert F. Kennedy's Eulogy for Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968)
- **synecdoche:** a part or quality of something which is used in substitution of the larger whole, or vice versa, ex. "The hospital worked for hours to revive him," (referring to the doctors and nurses inside the hospital) OR "She took us outside to look at her new set of wheels," (referring to her new car)
- **rhetorical question:** a question that is posed for emphasis, not requiring an answer, ex. "Art thou mad? Is not the truth the truth?" (*Henry IV, Part 1, II, iv*)
- **understatement:** deliberately de-emphasizing something in order to downplay its importance, ex. "The Internet has contributed somewhat to improving communication," is an understatement.