

Catharsis as Persuasion—An Enthymematic Approach to the Aristotelian Tragedy

Jen-chieh Tsai*

Abstract

Although critics such as Jeffery Walker and Thomas Cole have elaborated on the correspondence between rhetoric and poetics by way of Aristotle, studies devoted to the Aristotelian tragedy have been inattentive to the interrelatedness between rhetorical persuasion and tragic catharsis. Therefore, this paper purposes to argue that catharsis is a concept integral to how Aristotle conceives of rhetoric by way of dialectic. In other words, with all its emotive connotations, catharsis is profoundly a logical notion: ideally, playwrights of tragedy arouse and purge pity and fear under the aegis of reason. Of particular concern is the role of the rhetorical enthymeme (an informal syllogism) in achieving cathartic effect. Aristotle's endeavor to solemnize poetic creations thus crystallizes. This paper then clarifies the status of poetics in the Greek rhetorical tradition, expounds the relation of the Aristotelian tragedy to logic, and specifically explores the enthymematic reasoning that underlies catharsis. Such a rhetorical approach may contextualize Aristotle's catharsis in a historicized framework and supplement related studies that have long been confined to elusive interpretations such as purgation, purification, and clarification.

Keywords: rhetoric, poetics, epideictic, catharsis, enthymeme, emotion

* Assistant Professor, Department of Applied English, Ming Chuan University.
Received December 20, 2011; accepted March 12, 2012; last revised March 12, 2012.

「淨化」作為「說服」——以修辭推論 探究亞里斯多德的悲劇論

蔡仁傑*

摘要

雖然批評家如沃克(Jeffrey Walker)及柯爾(Thomas Cole)等人，已就亞里斯多德(Aristotle)的思想推敲修辭(rhetoric)與詩學(poetics)之間呼應之處，對其悲劇論的討論，卻未曾留意到修辭說服(persuasion)與悲劇淨化(catharsis)的互聯性。因此，本文旨在申論，淨化的概念與亞氏藉由辯證(dialectic)理解修辭的思考路徑，原為一致。即便此概念涉及情意相關的外延，在根本上仍為一邏輯體：理想上，劇作家須能在理性的庇護下，勾起並排除悲憫及恐懼的情緒。當中，特別需要注意的是在此淨化效應下修辭推論(enthymeme，即不完整的三段式論證法)的角色。亞式企圖莊嚴化文藝創作的嘗試因而極為明顯。準之，本文將先論及在希臘修辭傳統裡詩學的狀況，再闡明亞氏悲劇論的邏輯面向，並明確探討淨化作用所蘊含的修辭推論運作。這樣的修辭取徑可在一具歷史縱深的框架中，脈絡化亞式的淨化說，以及增補傳統上對淨化較為難以捉摸的種種詮釋。

關鍵字：修辭、詩學、禮節修辭、淨化、修辭推論、情緒

* 銘傳大學應用英語系助理教授。

到稿日期：2011年12月20日；接受刊登：2012年3月12日；最後修訂日期：2012年3月12日。

With a view to reframing the correlation between rhetoric and poetics (in the Classical period) in terms of logical reasoning, this paper challenges the long-standing supposition concerning the benchmark of imitation used to differentiate the two subjects. This benchmark is not altogether unfitting in itself, but it belies the consanguinity of the two discourses. To illustrate such kindred, this paper first argues that poetics serves fundamentally as the subsystem of rhetoric. Moreover, Aristotle's idea of enthymemes in rhetorical persuasion is applied to poetics, for the sake of revealing that poetics is inherently enthymematic. One comes to observe that tragic catharsis points to the work of logic and that the accompanying emotions are not sheer affect but symptomatic of enthymematic regulation.

Between Rhetoric and Poetics: A Continuum

To enquire into what a thing is and dismiss that which is not, as in Socrates' dialectical proceeding, is to construct a form of knowledge whose center inevitably gives way to the Derridean notion of differences. This inquiry meets more rub when the object to be explored originates at the inception of civilization—to give it a conceptual form also, unfortunately, deprives it of its primordial coherence with other coexisting objects. Moreover, to call it an object at all is daring enough, hardly objective, with this or that preexisting framework already confining one to self-reflexive visions. Such obstacles to a reliable episteme are exemplified in the conventional attempt to understand the polemic between poetics and rhetoric in the Classical Greece. Take Paul Ricoeur for instance. For him,

Poetry is not oratory. Persuasion is not its aim; rather it purges the feelings of pity and fear. Thus, poetry and rhetoric mark out two distinct universes of discourse. (12)

Thus, as he continues, “the triad of *poiesis-mimesis-catharsis*” cannot possibly be confused with “the triad of *rhetoric-proof-persuasion*” (13). It is obvious that Ricoeur follows here the distinction between the non-mimetic and the mimetic in Aristotle's expositions of rhetoric and poetics. The “two separate approaches to the realities of human life” (Howell 57), viz. storytelling and argumentation, therefore determine the way the two subjects have come to be grasped in the tradition of literary criticism.

Such conceptualization is undoubtedly Aristotelian and makes sense in its own way. The distinction must work, because either rhetoric or poetics displays its own identifiable features in terms of context and expression. Rhetoric could be seen in courts, public assemblies, or ceremonies so as to render the three types of rhetoric (forensic, deliberative, and epideictic) presented by Aristotle. On the other hand, if not for entertainment's sake, poetics appears on religious occasions as in the presentation of tragedies for Dionysus. At the level of expression, the two also differ in that rhetoric

reasons and argues while poetics narrates and shows. However, in claiming that rhetoric is like this and poetics is like that, one fails to note that both subjects do not assume their disciplinary forms until Aristotle's first systematic approaches to them. In particular, the term "rhetoric" (*rhetorike*) makes its debut in Plato's *Gorgias* (449A) (Cole 2; Walker 34; McComiskey 6). The Platonic and Aristotelian probe into rhetoric and poetics, that is, means a discursive exploration into something that just comes into existence by dint of this very discourse. That is why G. B. Kerferd contends that "...the theory of literature and the rhetorical art was largely the creation of the sophistic period" (78). Hence, to make the two subjects *appear what they are* might have limited the multifarious proto-rhetoric and proto-poetics especially in point of contexts larger than the mere contrast (arbitrated, perhaps) between Aristotle's treatises on them.

To begin with, proto-poetics is primarily a method of enculturation and indoctrination. In E. A. Havelock's words, it forms "a sort of encyclopedia of ethics, politics, history and technology which the effective citizen was required to learn as the core of his educational equipment" (27). It is only later that rhetors undertake the task of teaching with a more self-conscious pedagogy for the inculcation of ideas. As Thomas Cole puts it, rhetoric then represents "the will attempting to do the work of the imagination" (1). One quite heuristic exemplar is *Illiad* 9.443, where Phoenix tutors Achilles to both do well and speak well. This shows a societal concern for an ideal citizen in an oral culture: not only does he have to commit honorable actions but also he has to master the art of speaking. This concern is nevertheless narrated in a fictitious context without explicit theorization of the citizen's duties. Conversely, rhetors make accessible specific ways of speaking to persuade and items of knowledge for appropriation. Thus proto-poetics serves as the means to knowledge on which the pre-sophistic period relies just as rhetoric does ever since that time.

However, poetics and rhetoric may be far closer to each other than one could imagine. In his subtle analysis of the three types of rhetoric formulated by Aristotle, Jeffrey Walker notes that the epideictic is more "amorphous" and "inclusive" in content than the deliberative and the forensic and that it tends to comprise, among others, what is regarded as literature (7). He cites the example of the sophist Isocrates' *Antidosis*, in which the panegyric discourse is portrayed as "akin" to poetics, an Isocratean perspective that seems to have dominated later antiquity regarding the kinship between rhetoric and poetics (7). Therefore, feasible as it is to follow the imitation criterion, one could have been unaware of the fact that rhetoric in the Classical period includes poetics in its various forms. What role does poetics play in the art of speaking?—One continues to ask. Walker then draws one's attention to the nature of hearers in rhetorical events: it often escapes scholars that the recipients for deliberative and forensic rhetoric differ from those for the epideictic in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. While their identity in the former case is one who makes a judgment or a decision (*krites*), in the latter's case it is one who watches

and makes observations (*theoros*) (*R* 1.3.2-3). This watching is no simple viewing; it points to the power of the epideictic, which “shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a society lives” (Walker 9). In turn, the values and beliefs derived “will underlie and ultimately determine decision and debate in particular pragmatic [deliberative and forensic] forums” (Walker 9). Such an approach to the epideictic fundamentally revises the traditional view of the historical tendency of rhetoric to move from “primary” rhetoric to “secondary” rhetoric (from uses of rhetoric in persuasion to its literary applications) (Kennedy 5-6). It is the epideictic, so to speak, that makes possible the actualization of the so-called “primary” rhetoric. Literature comes to be not only integral to the rhetorical system but also conducive to the robustness of the *inventio* for the pragmatic rhetoric.

The kinship between poetics and rhetoric even occurs in Aristotle’s accounts of the two subjects. As Cole points out, there is obviously “a rhetorical approach” running throughout the *Poetics* (17). He enumerates a series of correlations between poetics and rhetoric, the most pronounced tie being the correspondence between the plot in the *Poetics* and the argument in the *Rhetoric*. That is, the formation of both plot and argument rests on “plausible constructions” (Cole 16), which do not stand for truths themselves but make believe through the marshalling of probabilities. In this sense, one can discern Aristotle’s continual focus on the logical stringency of ideas—so much so that there is a parallel account of proper means to persuasion and catharsis in the *Poetics* and in the *Rhetoric*. In both treatises, Aristotle distinguishes between rational and irrational means: for rhetoric, arguments that persuade are supposed to derive from “artificial” proofs, instead of “inartificial” ones (see discussion below); for poetics, plots that affect should be designed “in terms of probability or necessity,” attending to what is within human comprehension (*P* 15). In sum, the *Poetics* aligns itself with the *Rhetoric* in point of its inherent stress on well-reasoned thoughts as presented to recipients.

From the above, one can observe that the conventional distinction between rhetoric and poetics as in Ricoeur’s differential triads is too simple and reductive an interpretation. Given the kinship between rhetoric and poetics, this paper wishes to go on with the interrelatedness between them and attempts an argument hardly elaborated before. Namely, Aristotle’s differentiation between rhetoric and poetics does not actually sever one from the other; in fact, reduced to the core, both subjects put forward ideas through the employment of enthymematic reasoning. This argument leads one, as of necessity, to view tragic catharsis as a form of persuasion and it implies, at the same time, that catharsis signifies an intellectual movement¹ informed by inferential activities.² However,

¹ Elsewhere in his Ph.D. dissertation, Jen-chieh Tsai has also explored the logical aspect of catharsis. However, while his concern in it consists in the demonstration of “dialectic” (in the Platonic context) in the Oedipus tragedy (Tsai 95-9), the present paper studies Aristotle’s *Poetics* with the logical structure of enthymeme (rhetorical syllogism) being the point of departure. The two approaches, though

this is not to negate the utility of emotions. As will be argued later, emotions for Aristotle are not pure affect but inclusive of cognitive processes both in the *Rhetoric* and in the *Poetics*. Moreover, they result necessarily from the subjectification of arguments in the enthymematic mechanism.

Enthymematic Reasoning in the *Poetics*

Given the fact that rhetoric and poetics combine into a rhetorical system and the correlation between the two in point of the rationality of both plot and argument, one may explore how poetry persuades (culminating in catharsis) in face of spectators (*theoros*) by dint of enthymemes, which, as Aristotle contends, serve as the main of “proof” (*pistis*) for orators (*R* 1.1.3). This is, firstly, to claim that plot-making is inherently enthymematic, reliant on probabilities and intersubjective agglutination, and, secondly, to argue that mimesis forms the dynamics for the actualization of enthymematic reasoning. The latter also indicates that mimesis may well be the faculty fundamental to the art of persuasion.

Enthymemes, to begin with, refer to the proofs used by orators to effect decisions and actions. They reason syllogistically but not complete in form as required in syllogistic thought (*R* 1.2.13). The following exemplifies the form embodied by a syllogism:

Argument A: (a) Men are mortal.
(b) Socrates is human.
→ (c) He is fated to die.

In it, (a) and (b) constitute the premises leading to the conclusion (c). When it comes to an enthymeme, the three-step reasoning becomes simplified as below:

Argument B: (d) Men are mortal.
(b)
→ (e) Socrates is fated to die.

or,

Argument C: (f) Men are mortal.
(g) Socrates is human.

contextualized quite differently, could combine into a general view that the Aristotelian tragedy refers unmistakably over and again to the philosophical traditions, Platonic or Aristotelian. By its very nature, the *Poetics* is hardly emotive or imaginative.

² Adnan K. Abdulla has done a thorough research on the long history of discussions regarding the term “catharsis”—the best, so far. In his study of related views ranging from anthropologists, aestheticians, psychologists, psychoanalysts, to Formalists, and many others, he sums up two core concepts that constitute the understanding of a cathartic process: “emotional excitation” and “intellectual understanding” (9). If they are the x- and y-coordinates dividing a plane, then any interpretation he finds falls within one of the four quadrants, roughly resulting in three possibilities brought about by catharsis: purgation, purification, and clarification (3). Yet, Abdulla has missed one historically pertinent approach; that is, a rhetorical perspective is also possible, and even probable, as discussed above, in the reading of catharsis. Moreover, this perspective will eventually contribute to the qualification of what is meant by “intellectual understanding”: to explore the Aristotelian tragedy via the administering of enthymemes.

(→ (c))

The logical integrity of B and C is hardly compatible with A, both missing a linking proposition that connects the other two. Such enthymemes remain feasible, however, because the desired integrity lies not so much in formal exposition as in the implicit understanding achieved in recipients of B or C. Thomas B. Farrell specifies this understanding as based on “tacit reference” (98)—that the attainability of enthymemes depends on recipients’ “social knowledge,” that is, “the mosaic of commonplaces, traditions, and provisional interests” (99). Thus, as Aristotle puts it, “the hearer can add it himself” (*R* 1.2.13): while (b) is understood in B, (c) in C. Actually, this addition by recipients points out a further distinction between syllogisms and enthymemes. The integrity for the former resides in the coherence and consistency between propositions,³ but that for the latter relies largely on the rapport between propositions and recipients.

Materials for enthymemes are variegated propositions, ranging from probabilities and signs (*R* 1.2.14), examples (*R* 2.20.3), maxims (*R* 2.20.2), to proverbs (*R* 2.21.13). One thing to note among these is the kind of sign called “necessary sign” (*tekmerion*) (*R* 1.2.18). It features an inferential process on which syllogisms can be constructed (*R* 1.2.17), as in the instance below:

(h) If there is fire, there is smoke.

(h) is necessary in the sense that the protasis leads naturally to the apodosis, unlike the case in (i):

(i) If there is smoke, there is fire.

This is merely an ordinary sign (*semeion*) whose coherence between propositions is not always sustained. Yet, even if the necessary sign tends to affiliate with syllogisms, one has to be aware that its application in rhetoric is well circumscribed by the contingent. Oratory, as Aristotle explains, means “the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject matter” (*R* 1.2.1). Namely, as long as a proposition is found conducive to effect decisions or actions offhand, it can be employed for that purpose, albeit a necessary sign. It is thus clear that enthymemes operate in the mode of probability, with a view to making recipients arrive at decisions using whatever is available at the instant, instead of focusing on the coherence and consistency between propositions alone. Pivotal to the enthymematic reasoning is that a proposition has to be judged, confirmed or refuted, in the randomness of circumstances. This is what M. F. Burnyeat concludes regarding the nature of enthymeme: it points to an argument “in a context where certainty and conclusive proof are not to be had...yet a judgment must be made” (13). Accordingly, persuasion via enthymemes aims at the synchronicity of interlocutors’ consciousness.

As one proceeds to the *Poetics*, it is striking to observe that Aristotle’s “plot” takes

³ See Aristotle’s *Topica* 155b10.

on the virtue of an argument. In *P* 7, Aristotle avers that the plot should be “a whole,” with a beginning, a middle, and an end:

A beginning is that which does not itself follow necessarily from something else, but after which a further event or process naturally occurs. An end, by contrast, is that which naturally occurs, whether necessarily or usually, after a preceding event, but need not be followed by something else. A middle is that which both follows a preceding event and has further consequences. Well-constructed plots, therefore should neither begin nor end at an arbitrary point.

Note first that the plot is supposedly a whole, meaning that the events embedded in it follow the same line of ideation, and, in this account, plot-making seems to square with the three-step reasoning in a syllogism. This is not the case, though. Firstly, the plot itself cannot be a complete argument because its ideation still requires recipients’ judgment. Secondly, this requirement has been actually implied. For Aristotle, the events in the plot may recall things that have happened, but the poet should not make it the case. Instead, the poet undertakes to relate “the *kinds* of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity” (*P* 9). In other words, in stringing together the beginning, the middle, and the end, he appeals to the “social knowledge” of recipients, who may in turn synchronize themselves with the plot-argument, giving rise to the completion of an enthymeme. Hence, the logical integrity of poetry depends on whether the poet could present something “universal”—“the kind of things which it suits a certain kind of person to say or do” (*P* 9) and whether recipients could authenticate their meaning structure in relation to the poetic universal. It is this realigning of poetics with rhetoric in point of enthymematic reasoning that arguably makes sense Aristotle’s statement that “poetry is more philosophical” than history (*P* 9).⁴

Enthymemes are therefore quite emphatic of a dialogic context in which the second person acts as the interpreting agent. The agent is interpreting in the sense that what both poetic plot and rhetorical argument propound needs to consider their recipients to be the

⁴ To be specific, the idea that poetry could be philosophical lies in that “...poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars” (*P* 9). Tsai has attempted to analyze pity and fear based on such a general-particular dialectic in his Ph.D. dissertation and his analysis in it may corroborate my argument about the domestication of emotions in the next section. Here is a sample of his exploration:

There is initially in the tragedy a particular instance that invites pity and fear, and such emotions are in turn projected into the audience themselves. This transference is immediately a transaction between the particular and the general, the latter being represented by the audience. By contrast, as Aristotle specifies, anger is the kind of emotion that “has always an individual as its object” instead of classes (*AoR* II.4.31). So, from the very outset, it is barely thinkable that anger should be able to reach the audience because it fails to be a universalized emotion. In terms of *pathos*, persuasion via tragedy is therefore constitutive of two phases. The first one is to identify the situation to be pitied or feared and the second one is that, when pity and fear are accordingly aroused, it remains for the spectators to universalize those emotions. And, this transition from particular to universal complies significantly with the idea of *catharsis*, whereby the audience is successfully persuaded. (Tsai 93-4)

ones that arbitrate the nature and form of *episteme*. Besides, such consideration also takes care of the time and the place specific to the agent, whose *episteme*, bound by *kairos*,⁵ varies its form each moment. This is because rhetoric deals with things that could “be other than they are” (*R* 1.2.13) and, as regards human actions, “none of them [are] necessary” (*R* 1.2.14). Thus, the attention of rhetoric paid to “the immediacy of the present” (Hyde and Smith 81) cannot but prioritize subjective consciousness. Conversely, syllogisms are confined to propositional integrity, the coherence and consistency between propositions alone, irregardless of subjective desires and interests.

That said, the enthymematic reasoning intrinsic to plot and argument needs two more qualifications—though possibly in conflict with each other. For one thing, plot and argument operate to the exclusion of irrationality. In rhetoric, proofs derived from enthymemes are “artificial” ones, constructed from *logos*, to be distinguished from “inartificial” ones such as witnesses, tortures, contracts, laws, and oaths (*R* 1.15.1). For Aristotle, only the former constitute the substance of rhetoric: orators could also resort to emotions and their own moral character for credibility but these means must be conveyed through *logos*. Likewise, in *P* 6, Aristotle points out that spectacle, though one of the six elements of tragedy and as “emotionally potent” as the plot, “falls quite outside the art.” It is “outside the art,” that is, impertinent to poetics—whose *sine qua non* is exactly the plot, the argument structure that appeals to enthymematic reasoning.⁶ Thus, in both rhetoric and poetics, Aristotle maps out a “hypotaxis” by which enthymemes reign over elements unrelated to *logos*; they are at the same time readily dispensable.

The other thing is that the logical integrity invested in plot and argument, though placing the second person at the center of interpretation and suppressing irrationality, implies a devaluation of recipients’ intellectual capacity. The art of persuasion, as Aristotle argues, is suitable when instruction is impossible for the “multitude” (*R* 1.1.12). This group of people features not only “vulgarity” (*R* 2.21.15) but also the inability “to take a general view of many stages, or to follow a lengthy chain of argument” (*R* 1.2.12). Furthermore, enthymemes work well if they partake of propositions (generally put) “which they [recipients] have already specially formed” (*R* 2.21.15). In a word, the judgment to be made by recipients seems to have been contrived and anticipated. Yet, the rhetorical art, if genuine at all, needs not agonize over depravity and manipulation. As Aristotle expounds, “one who acts in accordance with sound argument, and one who acts in accordance with moral purpose, are both called rhetoricians” (*R* 1.1.14). It appears that rhetoric is on the whole a subject informed by ethical concerns.

One special thing to note is: to regard plot-making as catalytic to enthymematic

⁵ *Kairos* means timeliness and is a concept central to rhetorical operation since orators have to be aware of each moment’s specificity and then produce relevant arguments. By it, Isocrates sets up a “formal system of rhetorical *paideia*” that influences the following two millennia (Sipiora 7).

⁶ For more discussions about the role of emotion in relation to *logos* in rhetoric and poetics, please refer to the next section.

reasoning indicates simultaneously that mimesis is a mode of knowing through inferences. In Aristotle's famous definition of tragedy, it is said tragedy is "mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude" (*P* 6). Critics have hardly explored what is meant by the phrase "an action," but it actually provides a key clue to the understanding of the rhetorical nature of poetics. The action to be imitated, as embodied in the making of a plot, implies the establishment of a meaning unit by the deployment of events. It is obviously the plot-argument discussed above. In light of this, when mimetic artists represent "people in action" (*P* 2), they try to model the plot-argument on the kind of probability-generated actions that could engage its recipients. Mimesis is consequently enthymematic, seeking the correlation between plot and recipients and culminating in "psychological assimilation" (Duggan and Grainger 68). Subjective consciousness still bespeaks the pivotal concern here.

Mimesis as an inferential activity is also explained by Aristotle himself, who proclaims in *P* 4 that

...everyone enjoys mimetic objects. A common occurrence indicates this: we enjoy contemplating the most precise images of things whose actual sight is painful to us, such as the forms of the vilest animals and of corpses. The explanation of this too is that understanding gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but likewise to others too, though the latter have a smaller share in it.

A cognitive aspect is accordingly implied in mimesis: to approach imitation means to understand it empathically (Belfiore 252), to know the meaning structure conferred on the objects imitated. To a greater extent, such empathy calls for subjective participation. That, when achieved, creates an enthymematic framework among subjects and ends up with catharsis—now better understood as "intellectual illumination" (Haskins 53). Finally, following Aristotle's understanding of mimesis also as "an instinct of human beings" (*P* 4), one can claim that this imitative act functions as the primordial agency that actualizes enthymematic reasoning and that this logical activity in rhetoric is fundamentally mimetic of the other, the so-called "psychological assimilation" above.

Facilitation of Enthymemes by Emotions

In the formation of the Aristotelian plot or argument, one could hardly fail to note that emotions play a conspicuous role in enthymematic reasoning. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle proposes that proofs are of three kinds: *logos*, speech that aims at acceptable reasoning; *ethos*, orators' moral character that invites confidence; *pathos*, emotion that prepares recipients for certain arguments (1.2.4-6). In *P* 6, the definition of tragedy goes that it imitates a heightened action and arrives at "catharsis" of pity and fear by arousing them. Thus, it appears that enthymemes bring arguments into effect to the concomitant of

emotions. This section then purposes to look into the correlation between enthymeme and emotion, to see how affect partakes in enthymematic operation. It is found that emotions originate with the modalization of arguments due to intersubjective agglutination and remain confined to rationality. Also, pity and fear are discussed for their immanence in and correspondence to enthymematic reasoning.

The inclusion of emotion in the Aristotelian rationality is obviously antithetical to the Platonic unalloyed truth. Nevertheless, in the former, proofs for persuasion other than *logos* must be displayed through this very *logos*. As Aristotle writes, confidence in orators “must be due to the speech itself [*dia ton logon*], not to any preconceived idea of the speaker’s character” (*R* 1.2.4), and, as to *pathos*, hearers are again “roused to it by his speech [*upo tou logou*]” (*R* 1.2.5). A hierarchy appears distinct in which *ethos* and *pathos* are subordinate to *logos*: this latter serves as the interpreting system of the former two proofs. One can thus say that, conspicuous as the role of emotion is for Aristotle, its status remains peripheral, and, in a sense, domesticated. In this vein, one also observes that “artificial” proofs for him refer to evidence mediated by *logos*, speech that reeks with rationality, being enthymematic in the rhetorical context.

It is likewise illuminating to see that Aristotle’s exposition of emotions in *R* 2 exhibits a drive over and over again to assimilate *pathos* with logical integrity. Firstly, one notes that Aristotle adopts a structural-cognitive framework for the cognizance of emotions. Before he moves on to accounts of *pathos*, he clarifies that each emotion is going to be approached in terms of frames, objects, and occasions (*R* 2.1.9). That is, for example, anger will be understood based on what kind of mindset that could be led to anger, what kind of things that could excite anger, and in what context anger could be roused. Implied in this approach is a strong desire to confer causality on emotional expressions. There must be a cause that prompts an emotion. Hence, Aristotle’s move regarding emotions is aptly a cause-effect analysis: in actuality, they are not detached from the world of reason. Owing to this, Alexander Nehamas explains that “a value judgment is inherently involved in every emotional reaction” in Aristotle’s rhetoric (264). In Ellen Quandahl’s words, emotion is, composed of “judgment” and “affect,” “not a simple phenomenon of the individual body, but a complex phenomenon of attention, body, belief, and the judgment that can both contribute to argument and deliberation and be influenced by them” (17). The difference between Aristotle and Plato therefore lies not so much in the in/exclusion of emotion as in whether to domesticate it or not.

One more thing to note about Aristotle’s treatment of *pathos* in the *Rhetoric* is that the “judgment” accompanying each emotion is a recognized one, no contingent nor random ideation. According to John M. Cooper, when Aristotle offers possibilities of causing or preventing certain emotion in recipients in *R* 2, “dialectic” is practiced to assemble “established” and “reputable” opinions about various facets of emotions (408). This dialectic means that orators should not rely solely on *doxa*, simple and ordinary

opinions, but they should resort to *endoxa*, opinions that are popularly endorsed. Applied to enthymematic reasoning, the recognized opinions indicate that subjective consciousness remains subject to the structuring and patterning tendency of thought. Once beyond the confine of this tendency (signified by *logos*), *pathos* would become “inartificial.”

The domestication of emotions is also evident in the *Poetics*. As mentioned previously, tragedy’s plot can generate the utmost “emotional effect” (*P* 6). Spectacle can function similarly in exciting recipients, but, evading the subsumption of enthymemes, it “falls quite outside the art [poetics].” Stephen Halliwell explains the potency of plot quite precisely: there is no pure affect; “the tragic emotions are related, on Aristotle’s own theory, to the understanding of a total pattern of action” (133). Hence, if emotions in tragedy arise in response to plot, this response is due to an engagement with its enthymematic capacity in the logical progression from beginning, middle, to end.

Judging from the above, enthymeme and emotion are vigorously correlated. Such correlation arises largely because of the intersubjective agglutination called for in enthymematic reasoning—when subjective consciousness necessarily entails personal desires and interests, in contradistinction to the desubjectification of syllogisms in dialectic. It is in light of this that one can argue that emotion is fundamentally symptomatic of enthymematic processes. Namely, as arguments become *modalized* through subjects (who make judgments via possibility, probability, or necessity *kairitically*⁷), emotions are the natural indications of enthymematic reasoning. Simultaneously, they are conformably bound by *endoxa*. Thus, the Aristotelian *pathos* is never pure affect but cognitive-structural, carefully inscribed in a rational scheme.

Correspondingly, the two emotions specific to the Aristotelian tragedy appear to tally with the offshoot of such modalization. If one peruses the account of *pathos* in *R* 2, it is found that pity and fear are the only two emotions characteristic of the enthymematic dynamics—the primeval mimesis—inclined to the other. Let’s review their definitions first:

Let fear be defined as a painful or troubled feeling caused by the impression of an imminent evil that causes destruction or pain; for men do not fear all evils...but only such as involve great pain or destruction, and only if they appear not far off but near at hand and threatening.... (*R* 2.5.1)

and

Let pity then be a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it; an evil which one might expect to come upon himself or one of his friends, and when it seems near. (*R* 2.8.2)

In both, what strikes one as impressive is that, in contrast to the other emotions, pity and

⁷ “Kairitically” is derived from “kairos” to mean opportunely. Please refer to the fifth footnote.

fear are specified for creating proximity of evils to recipients: they make evils seem near. At work here is an appeal to intersubjective agglutination for affecting recipients through probability-driven reasoning. Therefore, pity and fear, symptomatic of the beliefs and opinions that provoke them, appear quite effective in negotiating between subjects and bringing about transaction of ideas.

Actually, the *Rhetoric* also offers a very important clue to the understanding of tragic emotions. In the exposition of pity, one may find that causes of this emotion are virtually similar to those of fear. However, at *R* 2.8.13, Aristotle indicates that pity depends on fear and that threatening evils cannot be so close as to dispel pity, which would be “terror” in this case. Applied to the Aristotelian tragedy, this indication signifies. That is, recipients of the tragic plot experiences fear first and then pity, but, as one finds that causes of both emotions are virtually the same, it appears that fear transforms into pity, the final affect proper to recipients. If evils are shown to be too close, such transformation would be impossible. Accordingly, pity plays a distinct and paramount role in the enthymematic reasoning leading to catharsis. The study of pity by Elizabeth S. Belfiore is quite pertinent here. She concludes that pity is an action-oriented emotion for

In Greek thought generally, pity (*eleos*, *oiktos*) has the physical manifestations of weeping and groaning. *Eleein* in Homer, unlike the English “to pity,” is primarily to do an action rather than to feel a certain way. For example, to pity a friend in war is to seek revenge. In later times also, the orator has a very special aim in awakening the pity of the judges. (Belfiore 186)

Thus, to feel pity is to take a specific action. To receive the epideictic and form proper opinions and beliefs is as dynamic as persuasion in pragmatic rhetoric. Recipients of tragedy are then expected to implement an ethical action in the future: terror would only confine one to present affect without expediting prospective goodness. Eventually, as Belfiore continues, pity entails “more complex judgments” than fear and “an understanding of universals” (189). In the final analysis, this emotion symbolizes Aristotle’s rationalization of the tragic and the potential of tragedy in facilitating ethical actions via enthymematic reasoning.

Redefining Catharsis

Repositioned in the rhetorical framework, catharsis signifies the moment of persuasion. Moreover, such persuasion carries two implications. For one thing, it points to the cultivation of recognized opinions and beliefs in recipients, as appropriate to the gist of the epideictic. The other thing is that it is achieved through enthymematic reasoning that seeks intersubjective correspondence. This not only results in a form of logical integrity dissimilar to syllogistic inference but also engenders a *logos* reeking with

emotional expressions. However, these expressions arise fundamentally out of the modalization of arguments between subjects so that they remain subordinate to *logos*. In sum, catharsis ultimately suggests “intellectual understanding” while “emotional excitation” is simply symptomatic of such a cognitive process due to the nature of enthymematic work.

Works Cited

- Abdulla, Adnan K. *Catharsis in Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. Stephen Halliwell. LCL 199. London: Harvard UP, 1995.
- . *Art of Rhetoric*. Trans. John Henry Freese. LCL 193. London: Harvard UP, 1994.
- . *Topica*. Trans. E. S. Forster. LCL 391. London: Harvard UP, 1997.
- Belfiore, Elizabeth S. *Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1992.
- Burnyeat, M. F. “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Logic of Persuasion.” *Aristotle’s Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*. Eds. David J. Furley and Alexander Nehamas. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1994. 3-55.
- Cole, Thomas. *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1991.
- Cooper, John M. *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1999.
- Duggan, Mary, and Grainger, Roger. *Imagination, Identification and Catharsis in Theatre and Therapy*. London and Bristol, Pennsylvania: Jessica Kinsley Publishers, 1997.
- Farrell, Thomas B. “Aristotle’s Enthymeme as Tacit Reference.” *Reading Aristotle’s Rhetoric*. Eds. Alan G. Gross & Arthur E. Walzer. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 2000. 93-106.
- Halliwell, Stephen. “Plato and Aristotle on the Denial of Tragedy.” *Ancient Literary Criticism*. Ed. Andrew Laird. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. 114-41.
- Haskins, Ekaterina V. *Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle*. Columbia, SC: U of South Carolina P, 2004.
- Havelock, E. A. *Preface to Plato*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1963.
- Homer. *Illiad*. Trans. A. T. Murrays. 2 Vols. LCL 170-71. London: Harvard UP, 1999.
- Howell, Wilbur Samuel. *Poetics, Rhetoric, and Logic: Studies in the Basic Disciplines of Criticism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1975.
- Hyde, Michael J., and Smith, Craig R. “Aristotle and Heidegger on Emotion and Rhetoric: Questions of Time and Space.” *The Critical Turn: Rhetoric and Philosophy in Postmodern Discourse*. Eds. Ian Angus and Lenore Langsdorf. Carbondale and

- Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1993. 68-99.
- Kennedy, George A. *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*. London: Croom Helm, 1980.
- Kerferd, G. B. *The Sophistic Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- McComiskey, Bruce. *Gorgias and the New Sophistic Rhetoric*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002.
- Nehamas, Alexander. "Pity and Fear in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*." *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*. Eds. David J. Furley and Alexander Nehamas. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1994. 257-82.
- Plato. *Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*. Trans. W. R. M. Lamb. LCL 166. London: Harvard UP, 1996.
- Quandahl, Ellen. "A Feeling for Aristotle: Emotion in the Sphere of Ethics." *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion & Composition Studies*. Eds. Dale Jacobs and Laura R. Micciche. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2003. 11-22.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*. Trans. Robert Czerny et al. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Sipiora, Phillip. Introduction: The Ancient Concept of *Kairos*. *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2002. 1-22.
- Tsai, Jen-chieh. *Dialectic and Rhetoric in Classical Textual Representations*. Ph.D. Dissertation. National Taiwan University: Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, 2007.
- Walker, Jeffrey. *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.

