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USING ETHOS, PATHOS & LOGOS IN TEACHING BUSINESS, ETHICS, AND NEGOTIATION

Melanie Stallings Williams*

ABSTRACT

While using Aristotle's approaches to rhetoric – ethos, pathos, and logos – is common in teaching philosophy and rhetoric, incorporating an analysis of these principles into business education is relatively rare and constitutes a missed opportunity. A discussion of Aristotle's analysis of rhetorical approaches and their application to persuasive communications in the marketplace gives students an engaging and lively opportunity to become more observant, analytic, and effective. Discussions that include an analysis of ethos, pathos and logos are particularly effective when teaching ethics, negotiation, and other business topics where it is important to understand the effect of perception on decision-making. The paper examines the pedagogical value of studying rhetoric as applied to business education, provides lively examples of advertisements and other persuasive messages to help students analyze the type of appeal being made, and includes a class exercise and teaching note.

KEY WORDS: ethics, ethos, pathos, logos, Aristotle, pedagogy, business, negotiation, teaching, corporate responsibility

I. INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's trio of approaches to rhetoric – ethos, pathos, and logos – have been observed, researched, incorporated, and analyzed through the centuries. While their use is common when teaching philosophy or rhetoric,¹ incorporating these principles into business education is relatively rare and constitutes a missed opportunity. A discussion of Aristotle's analysis of rhetorical approaches and their application to persuasive communications in the marketplace gives students an engaging and lively opportunity to become more observant, analytic, and effective. Discussions that include an analysis of ethos, pathos and logos are particularly effective when teaching ethics, negotiation, and other business topics where it is important to understand the effect of perception on decision-making.

"Rhetoric," Aristotle wrote, "may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."² Persuasion is important in communications³ and in negotiation.⁴ Writing persuasively is important in academic activities, academic research and in real-life problem solving.⁵ Studying the various means of persuasion makes it more likely that a student can effectively persuade others in ways that are

* Professor & Chair, Department of Business Law, California State University, Northridge. B.A. University of California, J.D. Boston University. The author thanks Peter Sebastian Havens for his comments and the David Nazarian College of Business and Economics, California State University, Northridge for research support.

¹ JOHN D. RAMAGE, JOHN C. BEAN & JUNE JOHNSON, *WRITING ARGUMENTS* 105 (10th ed. 2016).

² ARISTOTLE, *RHETORIC*, Book I, Part 2 (W. Rhys Roberts trans., Courier Corp. 2004) (350 B.C.E.).

³ CARL IVER HOVLAND, IRVING LESTER JANIS & HAROLD H. KELLEY, *COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASION passim* (1953).

⁴ Ulku D. Demirdogen, *The Roots of Research in (Political) Persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, Logos and the Yale Studies of Persuasive Communications*, 3 INT'L J. OF SOC. INQUIRY 189, 198-99 (2010).

⁵ Nagib Callaos & Bekis Callaos, *Research Ethos*, 12 SYSTEMICS, CYBERNETICS & INFORMATICS 76, 76 (2014).

meaningful⁶ and lasting.⁷ Integrating the lessons learned through Aristotle’s “proofs” is an especially worthwhile activity. The use of Aristotle’s “proofs” presents an opportunity, as well, for students to examine not only the ways of persuading others, but to see what techniques they themselves accept most readily. By seeing what techniques they accept, students build analytic and critical thinking skills.

In using Aristotle’s “proofs”, we begin the classroom presentation by summarizing the three forms of rhetoric, and then asking students (on viewing statements or visuals) to analyze determine which of the forms –ethos, pathos, or logos–the author is employing. We rely heavily on visual examples because they are recognized as a powerful form of persuasion.⁸ We follow with an exercise that allows students to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts.

II. PRESENTATION

An engaging way to explore the topic is through the use of visual phrases and images, inviting students to think about which Aristotelian level appeals to the audience. To begin the presentation, we give students a brief description of the concepts, followed by examples. We then present a series of images without comment and open it up to a class discussion. The question presented to students is, “on what Aristotelian level(s) is the presenter making her argument?” This exercise is most effective when it begins as a general discussion, calling on volunteers and encouraging responses. The subsequent exercise allows all students an opportunity to apply the concepts.

A. Pathos

The concept of pathos is one that appeals to the emotions. “The emotions,” wrote Aristotle, “are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure.”⁹ An appeal to pathos causes the audience not just to respond to the author emotionally, but also to identify with the author’s point of view by engaging their imagination and feelings.¹⁰ The following ad (pg. 47) clearly strikes an emotional response.¹¹

⁶ HARRY R. PHILLIPS & PATRICIA BOSTIAN, *THE PURPOSEFUL ARGUMENT* xvi (Brief 2d ed. 2015).

⁷ Alison Ledgerwood, Shelly Chaiken, Deborah H. Gruenfeld & Charles M. Judd, *Changing Minds: Persuasion in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution*, in *HANDBOOK OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION* 455 (2d ed. 2006).

⁸ RAMAGE ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 113.

⁹ ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 2, at Book II, Part 1.

¹⁰ RAMAGE ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 108.

¹¹ Faculty may be concerned about using proprietary advertisements in class. These would almost certainly fall within the “fair use” exception of copyright law; there is limited use, it is non-commercial, and it furthers an academic exploration of public discourse. For a general discussion of fair use of copyrighted material, see KURT M. SAUNDERS, *INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW*, 407-16 (2016). Even images using trademarks or wordmarks would be protected for this purpose since the academic use would not be deceptive or cause consumer confusion under the Lanham Act. The doctrine of nominative fair use allows a defendant to use a plaintiff’s trademark as long as there is no likelihood of confusion about the product’s source or of the trademark holder’s sponsorship or affiliation. See, e.g., *Tiffany (NJ) Inc. v. eBay Inc.*, 600 F.3d 93,102 (2d Cir. 2010), cert. denied, 131 S. Ct. 647 (2010).



Figure 1: Appeal to Pathos¹²

¹² Lawrence B. Smith, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc205/> (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).

Here is another example:

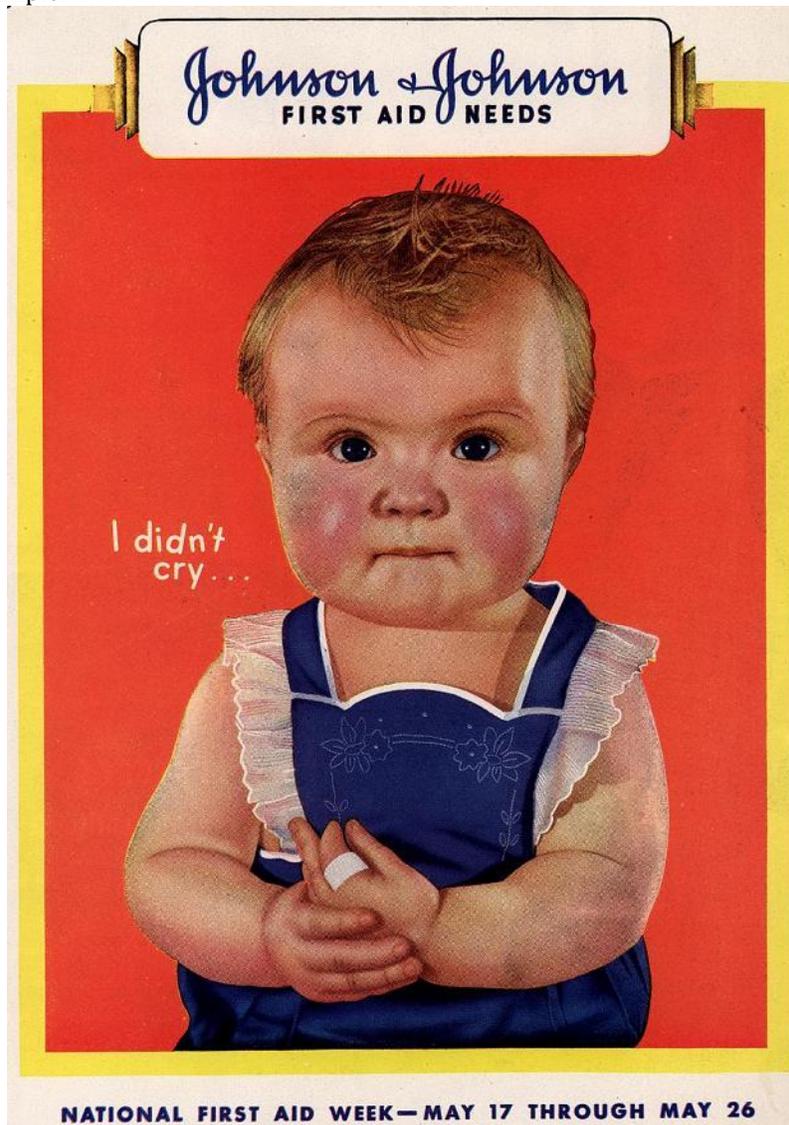


Figure 2: Appealing to the Emotions¹³

What kind of loving parent could buy any other band-aid? This is clearly an appeal to the emotions.

B. Logos

An appeal to logos is one of logic.¹⁴ The speaker is attempting to persuade using a logical argument.¹⁵ Logos focuses on the clarity, consistency and rationality of an argument.¹⁶ It is typically supported by facts and objective observations.¹⁷ Using reason, under this approach, permits you to lead the audience to your

¹³ Johnson & Johnson, <http://www.vintageadbrowser.com/medicine-ads-1940s/7#ad59ihdf7j3zd156> (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).

¹⁴ RAMAGE ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 68.

¹⁵ Joshua N. Weiss, *From Aristotle to Sadat: A Short Strategic Persuasion Framework for Negotiators*, 31 NEGOT. J. 211, 218 (2015).

¹⁶ RAMAGE ET AL. *supra* note 1, at 55.

¹⁷ PHILLIPS & BOSTIAN, *supra* note 6, at 277.

position.¹⁸ The following ad is perfect because it is logical (you can eat all you want and never gain weight, plus they're easy to swallow) and grotesque. It never fails to get an animated response:



Figure 3: Appeal to Logos¹⁹

¹⁸ Weiss, *supra* note 14, at 218 (noting as well the importance of constructing a logical argument from the other party's (rather than one's own) perspective).

¹⁹ <http://i.imgur.com/ghGFo7u.jpg> (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).

Here is another approach to logical argument:

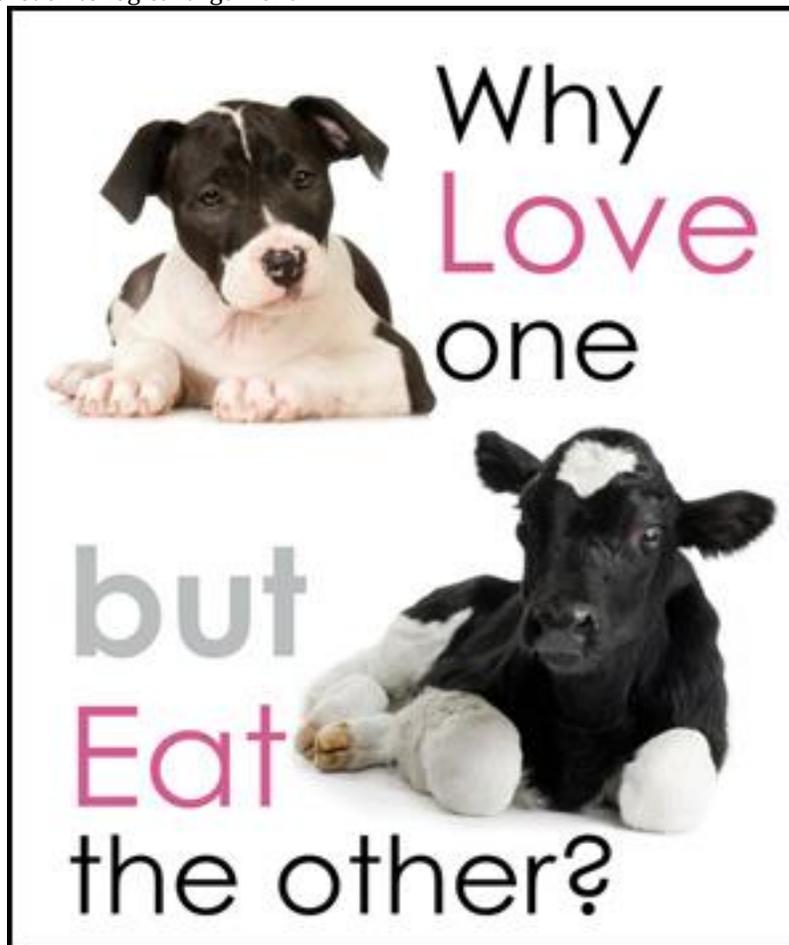


Figure 4: Appeal to a Logical Argument²⁰

Use of these ads can also help students recognize that while an argument may be sound in one area, in this case logos, it does not necessarily follow that you must agree with the message. The pathos and logos visuals and exercises above demonstrate to the student the appeal from an emotional or logical standpoint and are not geared to have the student--agree or disagree with the message.

C. Ethos

Ethos is unique in that it is an appeal on two fronts: first, to urge the listener to place trust in the speaker, based on the content of the speech²¹ and the second based on the nature of the appeal separate from the author's reputation. As to the first front, Aristotle wrote, "It is not true that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses."²² And while Aristotle considered character to be evidenced only by the content of the speech and not by the speaker's reputation,²³ the latter is certainly used

²⁰ iVegan, <http://www.collective-evolution.com/2015/02/14/why-love-one-but-eat-the-other-an-answer-from-a-psychologist/> (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).

²¹ S. Michael Halloran, *Aristotle's Concept of Ethos, or if Not His Somebody Else's*, 1 RHETORIC REV. 58, 60 (1982).

²² ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 2, at Book I, Part 2.

²³ ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 2, at Book I, Part 2.

as an instrument of persuasion.²⁴ Therefore, “both expertise and trustworthiness emerge as basic dimensions of credibility because only when these two aspects exist together can we have reliable communication.”²⁵

Further, while Aristotle noted that ethos depended on the character of the speaker,²⁶ it also related to the tone of the message.²⁷ We consider it an appeal to ethos when we urge the audience to behave in a way that demonstrates goodwill to others.²⁸ Therefore, while the concept of ethos has spread from simply characterizing the content of the message, it has been expanded to include persuasion that rests on one’s trust in a speaker with a reputation of knowledge or integrity²⁹ as well as appeals that urge us to do good.

Here is one example:

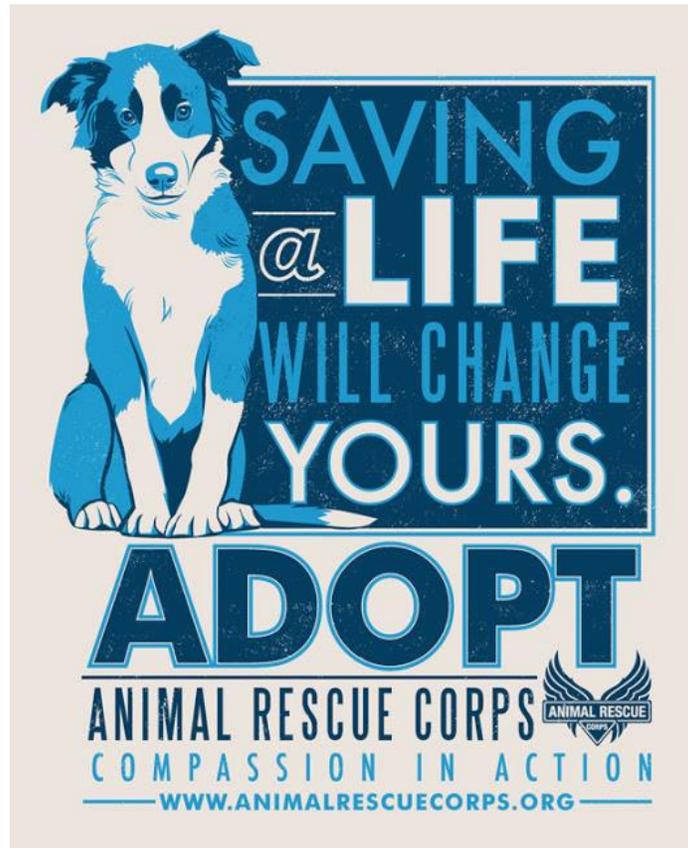


Figure 5: Appeal to Ethos³⁰

²⁴ Ford Shanahan & Peter Seele, *Shorting Ethos: Exploring the Relationship between Aristotle’s Ethos and Reputation*, 18 CORP. REPUTATION REV. 37, 41 (2015).

²⁵ Demirdogen, *supra* note 4, at 194.

²⁶ ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 2, at Book I, Part 2.

²⁷ RAMAGE ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 55.

²⁸ ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 2, at Book II Part 1.

²⁹ Shanahan & Seele, *supra* note 21, at 41.

³⁰ Animal Rescue Corps, <http://animalrescuecorps.org/> (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).

As noted, an appeal to ethos can also be expressed by the way that the presenter displays himself, including his manner, dress and speech. Here is a classic example:



Figure 6: Appeal to Ethos and Logos³¹

While the gist of this message is one of ethos (if a suave actor like Ronald Reagan gives Chesterfields to his friends, that must be a good gift for me to give as well) it also contains another approach. Looking at the smaller print, the ad encourages readers to choose the product because it is mild and has no “unpleasant after-taste.” This latter language is one of logos – that you should choose this product because its attributes make it superior. This can lead to greater development of persuasive discussions: that the most effective means of persuasion are those that are able to combine more than one element of Aristotle’s trio of approaches.³²

³¹ Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co., <https://www.collectorsweekly.com/stories/143903-my-favorite-christmas-ad-of-all-time-ro> (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).

³² Demirdogen, *supra* note 4, at 196.

Here is an example that combines ethos (physicians should know the best cigarette) and logos (it is a superior product because it is less irritating).



Figure 7: An Ethos and Logos Combination³³

Here is a good example combining different forms of persuasion:

“Will Dukakis Turn Gun Owners into Criminals...While Murderers Go Free?”³⁴

Notice that the appeal demonstrates logos (Why should criminals have guns when you can't?) and pathos (There are murderers loose!).

³³ American Tobacco Co. (1930), http://tobacco.stanford.edu/tobacco_main/images.php?token2=fm_st002.php&token1=fm_img0110.php&theme_file=fm_mt001.php&theme_name=Doctors%20Smoking&subtheme_name=20,679%20Physicians (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).

³⁴ STEVEN A. SEIDMAN, POSTERS, PROPAGANDA, AND PERSUASION IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS AROUND THE WORLD AND THROUGH HISTORY 88 (2008).

Here is an appeal that combines approaches:

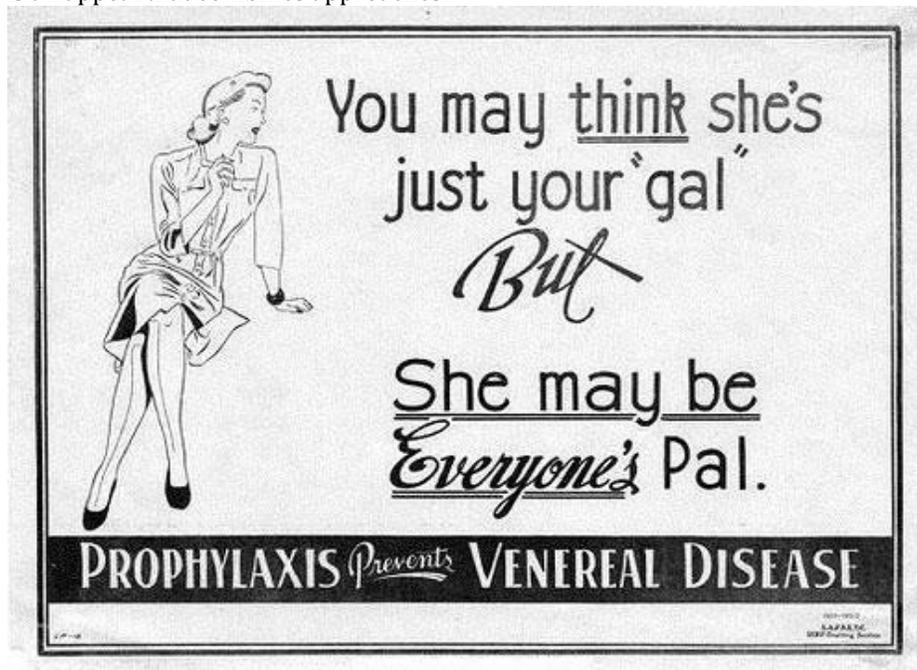


Figure 8: An Appeal to Logos and Pathos³⁵

Note the logical appeal (You may be mistaken about your assumptions and this product can prevent serious diseases) with pathos (How can someone who looks like she just dropped in from a Cary Grant movie be a deadly threat?! She looks so clean, respectable, and, well, safe).

Here is an example that combines all three approaches: ethos (dentists recommend the product), logos (product use reduces the risk of dental decay) and pathos (you could lose your teeth!).

³⁵ Army Air Forces Training Command (1944), <https://www.pinterest.com/source/newmedialab.cuny.edu/> (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).



Figure 9: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos³⁶

Another example:

As your doctor, I caution that if you don't quit smoking, you'll be dead in ten years.

This demonstrates ethos ("As your doctor..."), logos (smoking reduces life expectancy) and pathos (You're going to die! Sooner not later!).

III. WHY THESE RHETORICAL EXAMPLES ARE IMPORTANT FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS

Using rhetorical examples demonstrates to students that different people are persuaded by different approaches, and that an appeal that combines approaches will generally be more successful in persuasion. Particularly when reviewing advertisements, it is also worth noting that in some areas of life (for example, physical attractiveness) even the most logos-driven observer can be susceptible to an appeal to pathos. In using these examples, it also helps to demonstrate that most business and legal writing is logos-driven. Law school, for example, involves three years of training in logos. It is worth telling students that in both law and business, the most successful arguments tend to be logos-driven³⁷ but to point out that with other audiences and in other contexts, other appeals have greater power. It may prove useful in teaching traditional business law classes by way of identifying law's primary tool for analysis: logos.

These exercises help students recognize that they have personal, preferred means of persuasion that they probably assume appeal to others. This self-blindness (what persuades me persuades everyone)³⁸ may impede success in business as well as in life. These exercises also help students to recognize that they are likely to default to the means of persuasion that they themselves most prefer but that to be a successful analyst (or negotiator, or businessperson, or ethicist), they must be conversant in all three approaches. One must, Aristotle noted, "be able (1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in their various forms,

³⁶ Crest (1987), http://www.vintagepaperads.com/1987-Crest-Toothpaste-Ad--Cant-Afford-to-Gamble-With_p_126987.html (last visited Jan. 4, 2018).

³⁷ But see Colin Higgins & Robyn Walker, *Ethos, Logos, Pathos: Strategies of Persuasion in Social/Environmental Reports*, 36 ACCT. F. 194 (2012) (where the authors conclude that selected corporate reports on social and environmental issues used a variety of persuasive approaches).

³⁸ For a discussion of bias, perception and the related topic of naïve realism, see Robert J. Robinson, Dacher Keltner, Andrew Ward & Lee Ross, *Actual Versus Assumed Differences in Construal: "Naïve Realism" in Intergroup Perception and Conflict*, 68 J. OF PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCH. 404, 415 (1995) (in discussing perception in light of political affiliations, the authors note that people are convinced that they perceive "reality objectively and that reality will be similarly perceived by those who share that objectivity").

and (3) to understand the emotions – that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited.”³⁹ One particularly good exercise is to force students to switch gears; to try another approach than the one that they initiate. One way to do this would be a class discussion – to raise one appeal and then ask students to formulate an appeal on the same topic but with some different approach.

IV. CONCLUSION

Learning persuasion from ancient theories by using modern images is a particularly effective way to help students understand and apply age-old concepts, improve the depth of their analysis, become more persuasive, and become more perceptive. This application of old enlivens today’s classrooms. Although requiring little preparation on the part of students, this application of Aristotelian “proofs” appealing to pathos, logos and ethos, enriches students’ education and their lives.

³⁹ ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 2, at Book I, Part 2.

APPENDIX: CLASS EXERCISE: WHO SHOULD GET A KIDNEY?

Lyle Linton finished playing pool at the local bar after a long week of work. Lyle, age 28, was healthy and active. After a few beers, he left for home, jumping on his motorcycle. It wasn't until after midnight that the sheriff called Lyle's fiancée, Tracy, to tell her that Lyle had lost control of the motorcycle and was near death. Lyle was in the hospital, however physicians advised that he had no chance of regaining consciousness. Before they removed life support systems, the physicians wondered, would the family consent to organ donation? Lyle's mother, Pamela Linton, consented.

Only one of Lyle's kidneys could be salvaged. Hospital rules required that organs be donated to recipients based on the length of time they had waited on the donor list. The first person on the list whose tissues matched Lyle's was Robert Robinson, an 85-year-old man. The next potential donee was Albert Asaro, a 22-year-old convicted drug dealer. The surgeon, Dr. Garcia, said, "I'm not putting a perfectly good kidney into an 85-year-old man." Medical research shows that transplanted kidneys can last for decades, extending the life of recipients as old as 70, however there would normally be a longer useful life, of course, in a younger donee. Dr. Amir, assisting at the surgery, disagreed, "I was trained that you treat the patient in front of you." She added, "You follow the rules and you don't play God." Dr. Garcia overruled Dr. Amir and transplanted the kidney into Albert Asaro. "It's a waste of a young kidney to put it in an old man." Dr. Amir demurred, saying "Mr. Robinson's health probably won't withstand continued time in dialysis; he needed the kidney."

Lyle's mother was upset when she found out that the kidney had gone to Albert, asking "Why should a criminal get Lyle's kidney?" Tracy disagreed, "Lyle would have wanted his kidney to go to someone young. Maybe this will help Albert Asaro turn around his life. Albert's mother seems so nice and grateful. I'm glad that the hospital gave Lyle's kidney to Albert."

Three years after the kidney was donated, Mr. Robinson died. When learning of it, Dr. Garcia said, "I was right. It would have been a waste to put the kidney in an old man." By contrast, Dr. Amir said, "I was right. His health couldn't withstand the prolonged dialysis treatment."

Using these facts, make arguments using ethos, pathos and logos in favor of each alternative, i.e. that the kidney should have gone to Mr. Robinson or that implanting the kidney into Mr. Asaro was the right decision.

1. The kidney was correctly donated to Albert Asaro:
 - a. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates ethos.
 - b. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates pathos.
 - c. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates logos.

2. The kidney should have been donated to Robert Robinson:
 - a. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates ethos.
 - b. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates pathos.
 - c. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates logos.

TEACHING NOTE

Learning Goals:

1. To distinguish among and apply the concepts of ethos, logos and pathos to an example case.
2. To argue in the alternative.
3. To identify supporting facts to an argument.
4. To recognize confirmatory biases.

This exercise can be used as an individual or group assignment or as an exam question. Breaking students into teams and assigning sides creates an animated class discussion. Alternatively, requiring each student to be able to articulate each side of the argument helps further students' ability to argue alternative positions. The assignment asks students to identify particular statements that personify each position and each theory. There are several to choose among, however some would include:

1. The kidney was correctly donated to Albert Asaro:
 - a. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates **ethos**.

Example answers: Students may identify Dr. Garcia's knowledge and judgment that the kidney would be best used on a younger recipient. It is important to exercise judgment to promote good and not to follow rules when they lead to unjust results.

- b. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates **pathos**.

Example answer: Students may note that Tracy liked Albert's mother and is glad that the donation made the mother happy and grateful. Additionally, Tracy is glad that Albert has been given an opportunity to have a better life.

- c. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates **logos**.

Example answer: It makes better use of a scarce resource to implant it in someone more likely to get longer use of it.

2. The kidney should have been donated to Robert Robinson:
 - a. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates **ethos**.

Example answers: Dr. Amir's knowledge and experience indicated that the kidney should be used on the older man. In addition, you may get fairer results if rules are followed; it may lead to unjust results if physicians can unilaterally decide the most worthy recipients of medical treatment.

- b. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates **pathos**.

Example answer: Lyle's mother objected to the kidney going to a drug dealer; she wanted the kidney to be used for someone more worthy.

- c. Make this argument citing a fact or statement that supports this statement and demonstrates **logos**.

Example answers: It is important to follow rules; to do otherwise may lead to misuses of power. This may lead to public distrust in the objectivity and fairness of medical care providers. (Students may make this argument with an ethos analysis as well). Additionally, Mr. Robinson objectively did need the kidney and had met the hospital's standard of being the next to receive one.

Confirmatory biases

While not the primary object of the exercise, observe both physicians' confirmatory biases. In each case, they begin with "I was right..." when learning of Mr. Robinson's death.

Tribal biases

Again, while not the primary object of the exercise, it is an unusual undergraduate who sides with Dr. Amir/Mr. Robinson. It's worth spending time on an examination of our own biases in favor of those most like us.