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**Emotions in Rhetoric.**  
**From Technical to Generalized *Pathos***

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**Abstract:** Parting from the rationalist tendency to confine emotions to the instrumentality of strategic or technical interpretations of *pathos*, this article explores a more comprehensive range of emotions involved in rhetorical negotiations as well as in the intricate interrelation between emotion and reason. Drawing on insights from philosophical psychology, we discuss Aristotle’s understanding of *diathesis*, the mental predisposition of the rhetorical audience, in the light of Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotelian *pathos* as *Befindlichkeit*. We propose a distinction between two forms of *pathos*: a technical and instrumental form, which limits the emotional effects of rhetoric to the mental state of mind of the audience, and a generalized form of *pathos*, which includes emotional phenomena outside of technical *pathos*.

**Keywords:** *pathos*, emotions, phenomenology, Aristotle, Heidegger.

**Preliminaries: emotions outside *pathos***

*Pathos*, the rhetorical concept most often associated with emotion, is normally defined as a state of mind *induced* in the audience by rhetorical language. [1] Or, as proposed by Celeste Condit (2013), as “the deliberate art for the *construction* of shared public emotion” [emphasis added] [2]. Apparently, both definitions consider *pathos* to be a rhetorical *strategy* and thus favor the prevalent interpretations of Aristotelian rhetoric in technical terms. As useful as they may be, both definitions tend to focus our attention on the speaker’s activity as one directed outward, toward the audience, thus leaving us with the general impression of the audience as a passive, malleable mass, a receptacle for the induction of

emotions. However, such interpretations do not allow for a more comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the complex dynamics between speaker and audience in rhetorical negotiations of the emotions at play in specific situations. Moreover, the instrumentality of technical or strategic interpretations of *pathos* limits our understanding and appreciation of the full range of emotions involved in rhetorical negotiations and of the intricate interrelation between emotion and reason.

In the traditional interpretations of *pathos*, one recurring problem is the tendency to accept preconceived notions of the *place* of *pathos*, and, consequently, of the speaker's technical capacity for making use of *pathos* to directly influence what takes place in the state of mind of the audience, which we must presume consists of autonomous individuals. This problem regarding placement becomes clear when we scrutinize efforts to translate the Greek concept of *pathos* into notions that interpret it as a strictly intrinsic phenomenon, i.e., as a movement initiated by the speaker and realized *inside* the recipient, *in* the state of mind of the audience. Such an understanding of *pathos* as a phenomenon induced by the rhetorical activity *in* a more or less passive audience, be it transported from the outside *into* the audience or stirred up as an arousal *inside* an audience already disposed for the emotion in question, depends on a mechanistic causality that describes the movement of *pathos* quite insufficiently.

Etymologically, emotion has to do with that which sets one outside oneself—an affective movement that momentarily changes our relation to the world, our perception of the ambience, and the quality of our experiences. Emotion is literally a movement *out* and *away* from the constraints of any particular state, e.g., the relative stability of a subject or the crowd of an audience. This movement, however, is not restricted to the mind but, as we shall see, first and foremost takes place in the body, displacing the body by changing it, before it can be said to occupy the mind. In order to increase our comprehension of how emotions function and play out in rhetorical situations, we must therefore take into consideration the *locality* of emotions. Instead of asking *what* emotions are, or *what* they can be construed to be within the technical and strategical confinements attributed to the Aristotelian tradition, our contention is that the question of *where* emotions are at play involves an expansion of the emotional horizon of rhetorical situations beyond the traditional interpretations of *pathos*. [3]

This, of course, does not mean that we can ignore ontological or psychological questions about the nature of emotions in rhetorical contexts, nor that we merely need to observe how affect experienced by an audience plays out and effectively changes its cognition or reasoning and potentially its opinions and de-

cisions on an issue. Without being able to pursue such issues in sufficient detail, we hope at least to be able to demonstrate the importance of the question of the intricate relation between emotion and reason in the study of rhetoric. However, without having any pretensions to settle basic ontological questions about the nature of emotions, or any aspirations to do so, we will attempt to state our findings in pragmatic and phenomenological terms that eventually could make them applicable to further analyses, interpretations, and evaluations of rhetoric.

In order to do so, we draw on insights from Jamesian psychology, Aristotle's concept of *diathesis*, understood as the mental predisposition of the rhetorical audience, and Martin Heidegger's interpretation of *pathos* as *Befindlichkeit*, attunement. [4] We propose to distinguish between two forms of *pathos*: a technical and instrumental form, which limits the emotional effects of rhetoric to the mental state of mind of the audience, and a generalized form of *pathos*, which allows for emotional phenomena outside of technical *pathos*. After a brief discussion of Edwin Black's and Celeste M. Condit's rhetorical critical studies of rhetoric's potentiality for ideological impact through emotional appeals, we explore three aspects of emotions that for different reasons cannot be placed within the technical category of *pathos*. Firstly, the speaker's unintentional display of emotions, secondly, the argument of basic feelings, and thirdly, the emotions involved in the presence of the oratorical situation. Finally, the article sums up its findings in a reading of the highly emotional speech by Frans Timmermans, the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered in the Security Council of the United Nations in 2014.

### **The primacy of emotion: attunement of audience and speaker**

At odds with traditional rhetorical interpretations of emotion as a state of mind induced in the audience, the first important notion on the relation between emotion and cognition or reason, taken at face value, has been formulated by the well-known James-Lange theory. In terms of this psychological theory, most rhetorical interpretations of emotion fall within the category of what William James labels "the natural way of thinking":

"Our natural way of thinking about these standard emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My thesis on the contrary is *that the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion*" (James 1884). [5]

Contrary to the ordinary inclination to think of emotional reactions in terms

of a straightforward causality, this sequential ordering of the relation between perception, corporeal affect, and emotional reaction displaces the emotion to the body itself. According to James, the emotion unfolds in the motion of the body and does not follow as a reaction to a perception, as “one mental state [...] immediately induced by the other” (James 1884). [6]

The bodily change, and with that the emotion, precedes any mental or cognitive perception of the excitement that brings it about, as if we physiologically are predisposed for the emotion that we intellectually recognize and *post factum* interpret as caused by perception. Furthermore, “without the bodily states following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth” (James 1884). [7]

It is corporeal and emotional feelings that provoke perceptions. We feel sadness *because* we cry, not the other way around. For the same reason, we will argue that an audience is moved and becomes emotionally affected by a speaker’s words, not because she has convinced them cognitively to perceive of an issue differently, but because she provokes a physiological arousal that colors their perception of the issue in question. This insight is crucial because it indicates that emotions are not merely passive reactions to stimuli from the outside; they entail an *active* component that transforms our perception of things. [8]

As will become evident, this insight extends to a generalized and less technical understanding of *pathos* in rhetoric, restoring to emotions a pre-reflective immediacy with a powerful potential that differs greatly from the mediation of emotions through perceptual and cognitive processes. Of course, this does not mean that emotions are entirely divorced from cognition and reason in rhetorical situations, quite the contrary, but it does give primacy to emotions neglected by the dominant rationalistic interpretations of Aristotle, and it acknowledges a non-cognitive element of emotions outside of technical *pathos*, yet still highly relevant in rhetoric. Perhaps such negligence stems from a restriction of Aristotle’s understanding of emotions to the instrumentality of the technical proofs (*pisteis*)—*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*—of which only the two first, and mainly the second, are thought to be concerned with emotions. However, our contention is that within the framework of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, all three proofs, including appeals to reason through “speech itself [*autō tō logo*]” (Aristotle 1926). [9], the rationality of statements, and the enthymematic arguments, are deeply rooted in emotions. Understanding the fact that *logos* is constituted by *pathos* is necessary in order to part with a naïve rendering of *logos* as simply logic statements or arguments and to appreciate the full significance of *logos*, what is said on an issue, as a manifestation of emotions.

In fact, when first introducing the technical proofs particular to rhetoric (*entechnoi*), Aristotle does not merely enumerate *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* in random order. Before more explicitly explaining each technical proof, following the logical order from emotional, and hence ethical, composure in the speaker as perceived by the audience, to emotional activity in the audience, to the speaker's spoken words, Aristotle presents the question of emotions (*pathē*) as subordinate to a much larger question concerning *diathesis*, the mental predisposition or frame of mind of the audience:

“Now the proofs furnished by the speech are of three kinds. The first depends upon the moral character [*ēthei*] of the speaker, the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind [*diatheinai*], the third upon the speech [*logo*] itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove” (Aristotle 1926). [10]

With reference to the verb used, *diatheinai*, the question of *pathos* must be understood as subordinate to the more comprehensive term, *diathesis*, and more elaborate questions on the disposition of the listener, not just in terms of emotion, but also in terms of morality, doxological or ideological stance, idiosyncrasies, cognitive aptitude, experience, etc.

In her *Homeric Speech and the Origins of Rhetoric*, Rachel Ahern Knudsen consistently chooses to substitute the term *pathos* with *diathesis* when discussing Aristotle's second proof. She does so for several reasons, among those a higher degree of “faithfulness to Aristotle's text and choice of vocabulary” and a sensitivity to “the full scope of Aristotle's description,” which she believes have been misrepresented by the traditional enumeration of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. [11] Although she does not pursue the issue any further, a close reading of *Rhetoric* 2.1-11 supports Knudsen's choice, since we find several different terms corresponding with *diathesis*. The two most important ones are *diakeimenoī* (1377b13, 1378a24) [12], translated as “disposed in a certain way” and “the disposition of mind,” and, most frequently, various forms of *ēxontes* (e.g., 1379a9, 1379a28, 1380a1, 1380a3) [13], translated as “disposition,” “frame of mind,” or “state of mind.” Aristotle uses the latter term repeatedly throughout *Rhetoric* 2.1-11 in his definitions of the various emotions.

Apparently unaware of Heidegger's interpretation of *Rhetoric* in his 1924 lectures published as *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Knudsen does not delve deeper into this important observation concerning Aristotelian *pathos*. Heidegger himself, however, meticulously elucidates this ‘rhetorical’ concept in relation to a number of Aristotelian concepts from a wider range of works, including *Physics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *De Anima*, and *Metaphysics*. This broader context enables him to demonstrate why *pathē*—in the context of *Rhetoric*—

should not be mistaken for mental states but rather interpreted as referring to “a disposition [Befindlichkeit] of living things in their world.” [14] The *pathē*, in his view, are fundamental expressions of human beings’ existential structure, or “in an entirely general way, are characteristic of a disposition [Befindlichkeit] of human beings, a how of being-in-the-world” (120). In this context, Heidegger also uses *Befindlichkeit* to render the Greek *diathesis*, which, according to him, primarily has to do with place and situation: “to find that one is in a place,” “to be present, situated, located, etc.,” “where you are at.”

The interpretation of *pathē* as a particular, existential expression within the broader context of *diathesis* allows Heidegger to expand the emotional horizon of rhetoric beyond the technical interpretation of *pathos*. In the broader context of *diathesis*, or *Befindlichkeit*, attunement, Heidegger also includes mood (*Stimmung*, *Gestimmtheit*). The question of attunement and being set in a certain mood has to do with phenomena we normally would consider vaguer forms of emotion, but to Heidegger moods manifest another fundamental expression of our being-in-the-world. Like *pathē*, moods are not mental states or personal feelings located in a subject; this sort of attunement is ambient and capable of disposing us for a particular mood, just like we, according to Aristotle, are disposed for experiencing certain emotions; however, a mood is neither located in a subject nor an object. In itself, a mood is impersonal, which we recognize in our everyday life whenever we get a sentiment of a situation, i.e., when we enter a room, be it empty or full of people, in which we sense a certain mood. Needless to say, this emotional phenomenon is of great importance to any speaker who, just like any other performer before meeting her audience, tries to get a sense of the mood, the atmosphere, or the ambience in a situation or a room.

In reference to the specific attunement of a rhetorical audience, we propose to distinguish between two forms of *pathos*. One is *technical pathos*, which has been the focus of rationalistic and instrumental interpretations of Aristotle, and which limits the emotional effects of rhetoric to the mental state of mind of the audience. The other is a *generalized pathos*, which includes emotional phenomena outside of technical *pathos* and does not merely attune the audience and the speaker, but defines the atmosphere of the rhetorical situation, permeates all aspects of the situation. Generalized *pathos* originates neither from the audience nor from the speaker or her words, but functions as a common background to which the speaker, the audience, the issue, and the situation are attuned. For instance, if the atmosphere in a given situation seems tense, the speaker may become nervous and at first unable to address the issue appropriately. Consequently, the audience may feel disoriented, and the tenseness of the rhetorical situation

could risk being the only answer to the issue. However, an accomplished speaker may be able to exploit the potentialities of such generalized *pathos* with the use of technical means of rhetoric, including technical *pathos*, and create a different attunement, in which the tenseness dissolves and gives way to a lighter mood. A joke can be all it takes to change the mood, whereas even the best of speakers finding herself before of a lynch mob may be unable to change the generalized *pathos* of the situation.

### **Pathos, cognition, and ideology**

Expanding on the above, we suggest an interpretation of emotions in rhetoric that parts from the rationalistic tendency to confine, on technical grounds, both ethotic and pathetic emotions to the passive state of mind of the individuals in an audience, which, consonant with traditional interpretations of technical *pathos*, are thought submissively to undergo the affections imposed upon them. [15] To illustrate the traditional interpretation of the emotional stratum involved in persuasion, the following description by John M. Cooper is exemplary:

“The orator needs to know how to represent himself to the audience as being moved by such emotions as will help to establish him as a good person in general, and well-intentioned toward the audience in particular; and he needs to know how to engender in them the emotions that will cause them to judge as he wishes them to” (Cooper 1996). [16]

Although emotions are both displayed through the speaker’s character (*ethos*) and stirred up in the audience as specific emotional responses (*pathē*) to the issue in question, e.g., in the form of anger, pity, or fear, this interpretation sees them as *induced* in the state of mind of the individuals in the audience. The understanding seems to be that *ethos* as well as *logos*—the speaker’s way of conducting herself, her character as perceived by the audience, and her language—persuade the audience into experiencing certain emotions that, as seen from the strategic point of view of the speaker, are suitable for changing their opinion on an issue. In doing so, the speaker should be able to influence her audience to pass judgement on the issue in question in accordance with her own advocacy.

Keeping to this interpretation of *pathos*, with the emphasis on the cognitive components of *pathē*, the speaker’s task is also to shape the audience’s emotions in respect to specific sets of opinions and beliefs (*doxa*), to influence or change their way of thinking and the values they associate with a topic or an object. In other words, the technical employment of *pathos* also has a clear ideological purpose, since emotions unfold, at least partially, in an ideologically charged realm.

The logic to this, following Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, is that our value-based opinions on an issue determine our emotions concerning the issue in question, and the change of our opinions on an issue will also change our emotional response to it. In this sense, the cognitive components of opinions seem to be a necessary structural condition for and, as such, a constitutive part of emotions.

Of course, it does not follow from this interpretation that rhetorical audiences have no free will, as if the induction of emotions through a change of its opinions would simply goad a given audience into a specific ideological stance on an issue. If this were the case, rhetorical reasoning would indeed be able to compellingly manipulate or regulate emotions; it would place emotions directly under the reign of pure rationality and ideology and, subsequently, the concept of *pathos* would simply indicate the intension of rationality's sovereign control over emotions. However, the interpretation does emphasize the importance of doxastic cognition in emotions. When the goal is to change an audience's emotions on an issue, as a means to sway it toward accepting a line of argument, the speaker has to change the way the audience views the issue, the *doxa* that colors their perception of the issue. Cooper seems to stick to the traditional interpretation of Aristotle entailing that by changing *doxa* on an issue, you also change the emotions associated with the issue, which eventually should lead to a change of decision. Yet, this cognitive attitude to emotions does not seem satisfactory as an account for how rhetoric structures emotions, since it fails to take into account the fact that emotions—as a precondition for technical *pathos*—also structure rhetoric. It certainly does not account for the surplus of emotions, the generalized *pathos*, which unsuspectedly and unintentionally may disturb the rationale of rhetoric in a given situation. In all rhetorical situations, it is always possible to register an emotional residue that does not comply with cognition or ideologically informed opinions—a remainder that nevertheless plays an essential role in rhetoric. Generalized *pathos*, which does not directly relate to *doxa*, cognition, or ideology, exerts a determinable effect, not only on the rhetorical situation but also on the audience as imagined by the speaker, and even on the rhetorical critic.

In her reading of Edwin Black's critical essay "The Second Persona," Celeste M. Condit makes a similar point in reference to the emotions of the audience as imagined by the rhetorical critic, arguing that emotions are not necessarily subordinate to or coherent with an overall ideology. In her examination of Robert Welch's *Blue Book*, Black's principal example, she discovers that the force of the communism-as-cancer metaphor lies not in its ideological appeal to fear, as Black would have it, but in its potential to arouse emotions in the audience. [17] Particularly pertinent in the *Blue Book* are feelings of moral outrage, a spe-

cies of anger, and a certain pleasure among those constituted as the members of a morally enlightened elite. The power of affiliation is not merely one among a list of potential affective tasks of political rhetoric. Rather, Condit finds “[...] that the intensity of the feelings about affiliations that people experience carry an enormous potential power, a power that may supersede ideology and constrain all other elements of response to a discourse” (Condit 2013). [18] In other words, Condit appears to place effects of *pathos* elsewhere, beyond the rationalistic limitations of the traditional technical approach, and closer to a generalized form of *pathos*.

Furthermore, Condit unveils how Black inscribes in his own readers the pleasure of being among the chosen few. While the second persona of “The Second Persona” is a rhetorical scholar who, based on rational-critical analysis, is able to create order in history and pass moral judgments, she is offered the additional reward of positive identification with peers and a strong sense of belonging to an intellectually and morally superior community of rhetorical critics. Or, put more simply, the rational rhetorical critic is also guided by emotions and, consequently, confronted with the task of sorting out her own emotions from those at play in the rhetorical situation under scrutiny. She has to account not only for emotions used as technical *pathos* with the strategic purpose of influencing the audience’s opinion *and* for emotions falling outside of this category, but also for her own emotions as influenced by technical and generalized *pathos*.

The potential to persuade an audience through emotional appeals, independently of logical arguments or other forms of cognition, is of course no novelty. From Plato to propaganda, the capacity to seduce the masses, apparently against reason and will, is exactly what has fueled criticism against rhetoric. Thus, despite efforts in the Aristotelian tradition to develop compliance between *pathos* and *ethos* on the one hand and *logos* on the other, emotions in rhetoric still seem to be a persuasive force largely untamed by rhetorical critics. Instead of subordinating, ignoring, or condemning feelings, we believe it is important to explore the power of feelings in rhetoric that are not primarily associated with the rationalistic interpretations of *pathos*.

### **The speaker’s unintentional display of emotions**

Outside of traditional rhetorical conceptualizations of emotions as either *pathos* or *ethos*, technically considered, which seem to fall short of absorbing all emotive rhetorical phenomena at play in generalized *pathos*, we will confine ourselves to three rather different aspects, albeit the residue undoubtedly is much larger. The first relates to the speaker’s uncontrolled display of emotions such

as anger, fear, nervousness, or self-pity—emotions that are clearly observable but not primarily intended to affect the audience. While the speaker’s display of emotions may function as *pathos*, understood as strategically induced collective emotion, we reserve for the category of generalized *pathos* emotions that overwhelm the speaker in a manner that unintentionally controls or negatively affects her delivery. Such emotions could very well harm the speaker’s *ethos*, since the audience may perceive them as showing weakness of character in respect to cardinal virtues such as temperance and courage, in some cases even damaging the prudence and justice of the reasoned arguments. In these instances, the audience may indeed be influenced emotionally, but the emotions in question do not transfer to the audience in a productive way; the emotions invoked are very likely to be rhetorically unfortunate, inappropriate, or even counter-intentional. Thus, to a certain extent the emotions will appear disparate from the ideas and argument in the speech. For instance, a speaker consumed by anger may give cause to resentment in the audience; a speaker scared of the podium may stir up sympathy or pity in the audience; a speaker pleased with herself may provoke displeasure. Moreover, bodily signs of the speaker’s state of mind would fit into this category. Nervousness could manifest itself in a trembling voice or profusely sweating, while indignation may find its physical expression in a hand mechanically beating on the side of the rostrum. Whether or not the speaker is unaware or painfully aware of her corporeal display of such emotions, they do not form a deliberate part of the rhetorical message, and they are not directed towards the audience. Still, according to the merciless logic of ‘check against delivery,’ even unintended delivery, beyond the control of *actio* and *pronuntiatio*, communicates and becomes part of the rhetorical message.

Aristotle is attentive to the emotional impact of nonverbal, paraverbal, and circumstantial phenomena that can exert an (uncontrolled) influence on the speaker’s delivery, but he only deals with them briefly. Furthermore, “owing to the corruption of the hearer” (Aristotle 2009) [19], he treats such phenomena with some ambivalence, although he acknowledges that delivery (*hypokrisis*) “is of the greatest importance, but has not yet been treated of by any one” (345, 1403b22-23). [20] As the first to address this issue, he notes in passing that, “no treatise [*technē*] has yet been composed on delivery” (345, 1403b35-36). [21] On the one hand, he apparently acknowledges the need to control such emotional phenomena not addressed by the technical proofs of *ethos* and *pathos*, making rhetorical delivery the object of study and technical training similar to that of actors. On the other hand, he sees calculated delivery as an excessive manipulation of the audience’s emotions. Evaluating Aristotle’s brief comments on the issue,

Dorota Dutsch notes that, as a response to “the increase of interest in delivery with the fashion for poetic texts (both epic and dramatic) to be recited by people other than their authors, Aristotle seems to be contrasting the performers’ studied delivery with the authors’ presumably spontaneous rendition of their own work. Delivery, he implies, is an essentially mimetic art that originally developed as a skill of actors imitating emotions that they did not experience. As such, delivery risks skewing public debates, offering an unfair advantage to speakers willing and able to manipulate their audience’s emotions” (Dutch 2013). [22]

However, if an otherwise eloquent speaker suffers a momentary loss of emotional control, or simply does not possess the necessary means for controlling her (unintentional) emotions, they are prone to have unpredicted and perhaps even damaging effects on the character of the speaker and the desired outcome of the rhetorical situation. As such, they must be considered *atechnoi* irrelevant to the art of rhetoric and not part of the process of preparing the delivery of the speech. An illustrative example of this takes place in the climactic court room scene of the movie *A Few Good Men* (1992) [23], when Col. Nathan R. Jessup (Jack Nicholson) finds himself fiercely angered by the aggressive and, as seen from Jessup’s point of view, disrespectful questioning by Lieut. Daniel Kaffee (Tom Cruise). The emotional tension in the room is heated, and the rhetorical situation intensively charged with anger. Pressed by Kaffee’s insistent and unforgiving tone of voice, Jessup, seemingly overcome by an almost palpable attunement for anger, finally caves in and erupts in an involuntary confession to his crime. It is as if Jessup is driven by the intensity of the emotional situation itself into reacting with uncontrolled anger, prompting the unintentional rhetoric of the words, “you can’t handle the truth,” followed by the full disclosure of the truth, which turns out to a criminal offense. Up until that point, Jessup has been a man of composure, obviously with a sense of entitlement and superiority, an eloquent man who is very much in rhetorical control of his words. However, the attunement of the situation functions as pure affectivity beyond his control, a pre-individual intensity that takes hold of his body, causing an embodiment of emotions that directs his words.

Clearly, such an unintentional display of emotions belongs to a generalized concept of *pathos* and unfolds outside the control of technical *pathos*. Had Jessup been slightly more controlled in his delivery, the emotional outburst could have been contained sufficiently to prevent the fatal disclosure of the truth. Even if the displayed emotions may not have functioned as a technical component of *pathos*, a more fitting display of emotions could have functioned as a technical

component of the delivery, recapturing, or absorbing, emotions outside of technical *pathos* within the framework of rhetoric.

### **Arguments of basic feelings**

The second category of emotions in rhetoric that are not identical with technical *pathos* is what we label *arguments of basic feelings*, the sort of instincts that also are colloquially known as ‘gut feelings.’ The crux of this *topos* is that emotions in the form of personal, basic feelings belong to a privileged domain, and that arguments based on such emotions do not have to live up to the standards of rational critical argumentation such as being warranted and generalizable. Arguments of basic feelings are subjective (“I vote left because I follow my heart”); yet, simultaneously they assert having the potential to overrule all other arguments (“It doesn’t matter what good grounds you present to me; my feelings tell me otherwise.”) As such, this line of argument is a construction of authenticity; one professes to have a hotline to a deeper, personal truth, hidden even from oneself and therefore not possible to support with a reasoned explanation. Such an emotive assertion of deeply rooted personal conviction corresponds to what Sartre has said about emotion being “intuition of the absolute.” [24]

In a study of the visceral, Jenell Johnson points out the irony of feelings being defined as an absence of reason, yet believed to reveal a primal truth outside of language, culture, or history. Therefore, “[...] collective visceral feelings of vulnerability and fear often serve as inarguable, self-evident rationales for policy [...]”. [25] Visceral feelings are arguments of basic feelings that position the body and its reactions as an authentic, personal truth that is the basis of conviction. They often appear as strong feelings verbalized in corporeal metaphors: when a debater argues that her opponent makes her sick, when decision makers rely on a gut feeling, or when a political candidate the day before the election assures the public that she is sleeping well.

While arguments of basic feelings may neither be compelling to a universal audience nor valid according to most contemporary deliberative ideals, nonetheless, perhaps unsurprisingly, they possess a pertinence in social, political, and judicial practices. After all, according to Aristotle, rhetorical argumentation, in contrast to dialectical and demonstrative argumentation, is coordinated and constituted by emotions in such a way that what, in rhetorical situations and on the surface of things, appears to be reasonable and rational is actually regulated by publicly shared emotions, a generalized form of *pathos*. The logic to this is that the premises of enthymemes, “the body of proof” (Aristotle 1926) [26], are drawn from generally accepted opinions (*endoxa*) and from shared emotions of the au-

dience that *precede* the logical rationale of enthymemic statements. As Green puts it in reference to the many conflicting interpretations of Aristotle’s definition of enthymematic argumentation, “the competing understandings all acknowledge to some degree that *pathos* both coordinates with the enthymeme and is constituent of it” (Green 2001). [27]

Following this emphasis on *pathos* as the ground for the cognitive reasoning of enthymemes—or, in effect, the ground for *logos*—the possibility for a completely new appreciation of the importance of emotions in rhetoric is emerging. The focus of rhetoric, in this perspective, must be how to negotiate the emotions of the audience in order to achieve the most sensible, or the best and most advantageous, way of feeling for the issue in question. In this way, rhetoric assumes a formative and even educational role in respect to public emotions. The argument of basic feelings, then, is merely the immediate and embodied expression of the emotive ground under any more or less reasonable observation and, ultimately, any decision about an issue being negotiated. This is yet another important consequence regarding the role of emotions in our everyday negotiations with one another, our ‘being-with-one-another,’ following from Heidegger’s ontological interpretation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*:

“On the basis of a more precise understanding of what is meant by *hexis*, we will understand the analysis of the *pathē* seeing *how what is designated as pathos defines being-in-the-world in a fundamental sense*, and how it comes into consideration as such a basic determination of being-in-the-world with the cultivation of *krisis*, of “taking-a-position,” of “deciding” a critical question. By showing this fundamental role of *pathē* in *krinein* itself, we will also gain the possibility of seeing the basis of *logos* [den Boden des *logos*] itself more concretely.” [28]

In this interpretation, our talking to one another, listening to each other, trying to make sense to the other and of one another, even making critical decisions and resolving what to do, are all based on the attunement of generalized *pathos*, the emotional and corporeal ground from which any speech originates. Such an interpretation makes it possible to appreciate how references to basic feelings, though in many cases dismissed as unreliable and irrelevant, have a specific function in rhetorical situations and help construct the authenticity of a speaker.

Both in public apology and private excuses, an argument of basic feelings functions as a differentiation strategy (“He was at the mercy of his feelings”). For instance, it is a social norm that people in love are in a state of insanity and that love can be used to explain irrational behavior. Thus, the *topos* “romantic love” in many argumentative situations outweighs classical (or Stoic) *topoi* of responsible, stable, and economically sensible living. [29] The same can be said

of other emotions, such as sadness, anger, or anxiety, which are common and, to a certain degree, valid explanations for socially unacceptable behavior. The social recognition that unintended actions may be caused by strong emotions is even incorporated in the legal systems of some countries, where affect is considered a mitigating circumstance that may validate a sentencing discount. When a person accused of manslaughter on a spouse or lover pleads that it was a crime of passion, she hopes to influence the jury by eliminating the element of premeditation. Similarly, part of Gorgias' defense in *Encomium of Helen* is based on arguments of basic feelings: Helen was not responsible for the carnage of the Trojan War because she was seduced by Paris's words or captured by love.

When evaluating emotions in rhetoric, critics will have to acknowledge the argument of such feelings. Even if we, from a rational critical perspective, find it weak or invalid, the argument of basic feelings is a cultural commonplace, a *doxa* that has social currency in everyday deliberation, because our being with one another in the world is determined by the emotions we experience and share. We agree with Jenell Johnson that appreciating the role of feeling in rhetorical practices "does not mean that we ought to embrace feeling uncritically, but neither does it mean that we necessarily ought to combat its "irrational" force on public deliberation" (Johnson 2016). [30] We do suggest, however, that critical scrutiny and evaluation operate along a continuum where assertions of the sanctity of emotions put forward on a purely subjective basis are comparatively less compelling than arguments of shared emotions that resonate in a larger community. Within this critical frame, rhetorical critics are able to observe and analyze how basic feelings are used as arguments in order to understand their role in rhetoric and make an informed assessment of their deliberative value.

### **The presence of the oratorical situation**

Our third and final category of emotions in rhetoric not subsumable under standard conceptualizations of *pathos* or *ethos*, which we will touch upon only briefly, relates to the emotionally charged *presence* in public speaking. The oratorical situation is definable by temporal and spatial closeness between auditors and speaker, by immediacy, and by cooperation between several senses: as a minimum, the speaker's oral language must reach the ears of the listening crowd in a relatively clear and distinct form. While we do not argue that oral language conveys a metaphysical presence that makes the message true or lets it ring true to the auditors, we do argue that the situational presence may arouse a sense of communality. In addition, while we do not claim that individuals in a crowd necessarily consider themselves a collective when the speaker utters a "you" or a

“we,” we do suggest that the situational presence *may* be a persuasive factor.

Whether at the workplace, at a private event, or on a public or official occasion, a number of constraints define the situation when a speaker addresses a crowd. The audience’s experience of the tonal qualities and specific usage of the speaker’s voice contributes to a sense of presence that is amplified the more the speaker is able to interpret and respond to *kairos*, i.e., to being present, to the mood or attunement in the situation. The experience of situational presence can be enhanced by adapting to the situation, if the speaker for example lowers her voice when speaking to a small crowd or when using a microphone. Similarly, situational presence is emphasized when the speaker explicitly reflects upon the instantaneousness of the moment, for instance, by giving an immediate reply to comments from the audience. Likewise, by addressing physical factors, such as the temperature in the room, the time of day, the weather, etc., which in the situation presents themselves as experiences shared by speaker and audience, the speaker is adjusting her speech and acclimatizing to the attunement of a generalized *pathos*.

Yet another situational constraint to oral address is the presence of hierarchical structures that call for clearly defined roles. An example of this is when the speaker is situated on a podium raised above the audience and, perhaps through an introduction, has been given the floor. The audience is situated *below* the speaker; their primary role is to listen, not to speak. The speaker is a single individual while the audience is a collective physical unity. Contrary to everyday conversation, the audience has no obligation to respond to the speech; however, rhetorical figures such as rhetorical questions, antithesis, allusions, puns, and repetitions will invite an audience to react as a group in unison, responding jointly with applause, laughter, cheering, or other physical forms of approval or rejection. [31]

As a parallel to what takes place on an emotional level in the oratorical situation, which is in fact much more complicated than indicated by this brief outline, one could compare that situation to contemporary scientific findings about how choral singing affects the brain. In recent years, social neuroscience has shown how the neuropeptide oxytocin, often referred to as a ‘social hormone’ or ‘love hormone,’ has an effect on social bonding, trust, cooperation, group conformity, empathy, and emotion recognition. [32] In cooperation with neuroscientists, musicologists have demonstrated how oxytocin affects social interaction by facilitating interpersonal synchronization. Such interpersonal synchronization, which has been studied in musical situations where people devote their attention to choral singing or performing in musical ensembles, is defined as alignment of periodic behavior with another person. The study finds that these situations

promote pro-social behavior such as helpfulness, liking, cooperation, and trust. Similarly, in a rhetorical setting, the co-presence of other members of an audience that respond simultaneously to the words and delivery of a speech may very well promote feelings of communality. Emotional interaction between members of the audience may even be the singular most powerful emotional element of the oratorical situation. The speaker, then, by adjusting to the generalized *pathos* of the situation, primarily functions as a facilitator of a sense of togetherness between members of the audience.

### **Emotional communality**

In 2014, Frans Timmermans, the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered a speech in the Security Council of the United Nations. He addressed a plane crash that caused the death of 298 people—many of whom were Dutch citizens—only four days earlier. The plane was shot down in Ukrainian airspace, where pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian army were fighting. At the time of the speech, there was uncertainty about what was going to happen with the passengers' remains. Timmermans argued for a swift repatriation and proposed that the Dutch lead the investigation into who caused the crash.

On YouTube, the most viewed version of the speech (1.327.700 views as we write) bears the title “Emotional UN Speech on Ukrainian Plane Crash.” [33] The speech is indeed very emotional; it contains strong emotional appeals to the audience, and at the same time, the speaker himself appears to be quite moved. Many observations regarding emotions in the speech fall immediately into the category of technical *pathos*, where a speaker through different means of persuasion seeks to induce emotions in the audience in order to persuade them. Timmermans' speech has different aims, notably convincing the members of the Security Council that the victims' remains should be brought home and that the Netherlands should lead the investigation into the incident. Other exigencies of the speech are mourning the dead and gaining the moral support of the council members and the public in his condemnation of the responsible. To these ends, Timmermans visualizes scenes from the tragedy and dwells on the moment when the passengers took leave of their families and life itself, thereby giving presence to the inner lives of the victims and to the audience's full identification with them.

In language and delivery, Timmermans demonstrates how moved by the tragedy he himself is: “Since Thursday, I've been thinking: How horrible must have been the final moments of their lives, when they knew the plane was going down. Did they lock hands with their loved ones, did they hold their children close to their hearts, did they look each other in the eyes, one final time, in a

wordless goodbye? We will never know.” Evidently, his display of emotions is a construction of *ethos*, as not only a sympathetic and caring politician but also a morally engaged and prudent one. Thus, his indignation and sense of justice are the basis on which he is able to criticize the failure to secure the site: “To my dying day I will not understand that it took so much time for the rescue workers to be allowed to do their difficult jobs and that human remains should be used in a political game.” Especially in the beginning of the delivery, Timmermans displays how moved he is. Speaking quite slowly and pausing, he allows himself and his audience to sense and absorb the *pathos* of the words he is uttering.

Similarly, the careful employment of rhetorical figures in statements that need special emphasis and attention from the audience divulge how thoroughly prepared the speech is. In the following section, an *incrementum* inscribes an escalation in public emotion from national “grief” to “anger” and “despair”: “The demise of almost 200 of my compatriots has left a hole in the heart of the Dutch nation, has caused grief, anger and despair. Grief for the loss of loved ones, anger for the outrage of the downing of a civilian airplane and despair after witnessing the excruciatingly slow process of securing the crash site and recovering the remains of the victims.” The *incrementum* and subsequent unpacking of the increasingly strong emotions construct a succession from the comparatively passive emotion *grief* to the more active and aggressive emotions *anger*, *outrage*, and *despair*; thus paving the way for arguments of retaliation and political action. The implied strategic argument is that political action is a consequence of the emotions shared by the audience.

However, some aspects of emotions in Timmermans’ speech fall outside the category of technical *pathos* and call for a more generalized form of *pathos* as interpretative frame. Particularly interesting in this respect are some of Timmermans’ deviations from the written manuscript. They appear as *kairotic* markers of the presence of the oratorical situation—as instantiations of the emotionally dense atmosphere and the rhetorical opportunities it brings when the Timmermans lifts his eyes from the manuscript and spontaneously speaks to his audience in his own words. Compared to the written manuscript [34], the delivery available on YouTube demonstrates that the improvised passages are more personal and closer to everyday conversation:

“Since Thursday, I’ve been thinking: How horrible must have been the final moments of their lives, when they knew the plane was going down. Did they lock hands with their loved ones, did they hold their children close to their hearts, did they look each other in the eyes, one final time, in wordless goodbye? We will never know.” [35]

In a longer passage, Timmermans addresses his immediate audience directly, makes eye contact, and explicitly appeals to them as private individuals. In this moment, there is a felt presence, unfurling in an emotionally charged meeting of minds and hearts:

“Just one minute—not addressing you as representatives of your countries, but as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, just imagine that you first get the news that your husband was killed and then, within two or three days, you see images of some thug removing the wedding band from the hands. Just imagine this could be your spouse. To my dying day I will not understand that it took so much time for the rescue workers to be allowed to do their difficult jobs and that human remains should be used in a political game. If somebody here around this table talks about a political game—this is the political game that has been played with human remains, and it is despicable! I hope the world will not have to witness this again, any time in the future.” [36]

In Timmermans’ delivery, the general observations made in the scripted speech is presented as direct appeals to personal identification. In his delivery, the righteous indignation in the manuscript is presented as addressed criticism to the representatives sitting next to Timmermans. Thus, the co-presence of speaker and audience in the oratorical situation works as an intensifier of emotions. While the general impression of Timmermans’ emotive performance is that he is restrained and remains in control, this last passage shows signs of slips. In the last addition in the passage quoted above (“If somebody here around this table talks about a political game—this is the political game that has been played with human remains, and it is despicable!”) [37], his anger and resentment seem to go beyond what is rhetorically purposeful. Instead, they become markers of what we have described as the speaker’s unintentional display of emotion. Similarly, certain gesticulations, such as his hand beating on the table, his pointed finger, and his wiping his nose with a handkerchief, seem to be unintentional displays of emotion.

### **Conclusion / Discussion**

Intended or not, the audience may sense and respond favorably to the situational emotions of the speaker—and perhaps even more so when they appear spontaneous, un-strategic, genuine. Sensing the responsiveness of the audience, Timmermans, on his side, risks making emotive appeals that are much stronger than he intended in the preparation of the manuscript. Thus, the atmosphere in the oratorical situation proves to be a creative and inventive source.

When assessing the speech and its emotive implications, the argument of

basic feelings seems to be the most pertinent to discuss. Both in his construction of himself as a politician driven by moral righteousness and in the construction of a unison Dutch emotive response through *incrementum*, emotions are used to argumentative ends. In both instances, Timmermans is careful to establish the emotions as reasonable and shared by the audience. However, while Timmermans' open use of emotions may be perfectly acceptable as the immediate expression of the emotive ground under any more or less reasonable observation, emotions do not allow for a privileged position. Critics may therefore legitimately question the appropriateness of heavy use of emotional appeals—especially in a forum where peace keeping and economic and military sanctions against states are the common agenda.

### References and Notes

- [1] Lawrence Green: “In Greek rhetoric, the term referred variously to the state or condition of the human soul, usually as a result of what the soul has experienced, and by extension to the kind of language that can *induce* [emphasis added] such states” (Green 2001, 574). Cp. Joseph Colavito: “In addition to defining the various emotions and applying them to specific audiences and rhetorical purposes, Aristotle also suggests that the rhetor consider such additional factors as the mental state of the audience *induced* [emphasis added] by each emotion, the focus of the emotion as the audience projects the emotion (for example, “with whom they are wont to be angry”), and what external factors serve to elicit the various emotions (*Rhetoric* 2.1) when appealing via pathos” (Colavito 2010, 493).
- [2] Condit, C. M. (2013). Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-As-Cancer Metaphor. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (1): 3.
- [3] In his *Philosophy of Argument and Audience Reception*, Christopher W. Tindale advocates a similar approach: “the larger question of interest is not so much *what* the emotions are, but *where* they are” (157). The same question has been raised in the context of phenomenology, to which we will return below.
- [4] The word *Befindlichkeit*, which in *Being and Time* plays an important role in the ontological-existential structure of *Dasein*, the being-there of the human being, involves three different levels of meaning concerning the reflexivity of finding oneself, feeling, and being in a situation or place. Different translations have rendered this word as *state of mind*, *affectivity*, and *disposedness*, but we follow Joan Stambaugh's translation *attunement*, cp. Heidegger: *Being and Time*. For the rich connotations of Heidegger's use of this word, cp. Inwood's commentary in “Mood and the State One Is in” (Inwood 1999, 130-133).
- [5] James, W. (1884). What Is an Emotion? *Mind*, 9 (34): 189-190.
- [6] James, W. (1884). What Is an Emotion? *Mind*, 9 (34): 190.
- [7] James, W. (1884). What Is an Emotion? *Mind*, 9 (34): 190.
- [8] In fact, the James-Lange theory provides us with a definition of emotion as an activity that in certain respects is comparable to Aristotle's general concept of emotion as the

- activity of a passive power. According to Aristotle, acting and feeling are both modes of activity regulated by the moral dispositions of virtues (cp. Kosman 1980).
- [9] Aristotle (1926). *The "Art" of Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 17, 1356a4.
- [10] Aristotle (1926). *The "Art" of Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 17, 1356a1-4.
- [11] "While he later speaks at length of arousing the emotions (*pathê*) in connection with the idea of disposing the listener in some way (*Rhetoric* 2.1–11), Aristotle clearly intends *diathesis* to include any strategy that is calculated to create sympathy in the listener, whether by appealing to emotions or by knowing the particular listener and adapting one's argumentative strategy according to what will best effect his acquiescence. The term *diathesis* conveys this broader notion of sensitivity to audience psychology, I believe, more accurately than does the term *pathos*. Indeed, it is a rhetorical category that can be seen to encompass not only *pathos*, but in some cases *êthos* and *logos* as well: an appeal to the character of the speaker, like an appeal to the emotions, falls under the notion of disposing the audience favorably to the speaker" (Knudsen 2005, 39).
- [12] Aristotle (1926). *The "Art" of Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1377b13, 1378a24.
- [13] Aristotle (1926). *The "Art" of Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1379a9, 1379a28, 1380a1, 1380a3.
- [14] "These *pathê*, "affects," are not states pertaining to ensouled things, but are concerned with a disposition of living things in their world, in the mode of being positioned toward something, allowing a matter to matter to it. The affects play a fundamental role in the determination of being-in-the-world, of being-with-and-toward-others" (Heidegger 2009, 83).
- [15] *Pathos* is a derivative of the Greek verb *paskhein*, or *paschein*, to undergo, experience, to suffer, to be in a certain state, to be affected, etc. But rather than accepting the limitation of *pathos* within the duality of *praxis-pathos*, *action-passion*, or, more generally, *poiein-paschein* (doing and being done), which Kosman avoids by pointing to the activity and passive power of *pathos* (Kosman 1980, 104-105), *pathos* more precisely should be taken as an intermediary between active and passive. *Pathos* speaks through the middle voice, the *diathesis* between active and passive voices, since the affected subject is neither simply agent nor patient in respect to the emotions unfolding in her. For an emotion at all to unfold, the subject must be disposed for it, and in itself, this attunement is neither active nor passive. Since English has no verb form for the middle voice, an example of the appropriate expression for the experience of being angry (with somebody) could be "I feel myself in anger," rather than "I am angry (at X)" or "I am angered (by X)."
- [16] Cooper, J. M. (1996). An Aristotelian Theory of Emotions. *Essays in Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. A.O. Rorty, 238-257. Berkeley: University of California Press, 239.
- [17] Condit, C. M. (2013). Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-As-Cancer Metaphor. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (1): 1-26.
- [18] Condit, C. M. (2013). Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-As-Cancer

- Metaphor. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (1): 7.
- [19] Aristotle (1926). *The “Art” of Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 347, 1404a7-8.
- [20] Aristotle (1926). *The “Art” of Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 345, 1403b22-23.
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- [22] Dutch, D. (2013). “The Body in Rhetorical Delivery and in Theater: An Overview of Classical Works.” In *Body – Language – Communication. An International Handbook on Multimodality in Human Interaction*, eds. C. Müller, et al., Vol. 1, 329-342. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 332-333.
- [23] *A Few Good Men* (1992).
- [24] In “Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion,” Martha C. Nussbaum discusses the rationality of cognitive modifications of emotions in this respect (cp. in particular Nussbaum 1996, 304-312). The first more comprehensive study of the element of cognition in *pathos* is W.W. Fortenbaugh’s *Aristotle on Emotion*.
- [25] Sartre 1993, 81. Although differing from the James-Lange theory on emotions in several respects, Sartre, like James, views emotions as an activity.
- [26] Aristotle (1926). *The “Art” of Rhetoric*. Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1926, 5, 1354a15.
- [27] Green, L. (2001). *Pathos. Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*. (ed. Th. Sloane), 574-588. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 576.
- [28] Johnson, J. (2016). “A man’s mouth is his castle”: The midcentury fluoridation controversy and the visceral public.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 102 (1): We also here follow Johnson’s use of “feeling” as an intentionally imprecise term with a vernacular quality (cp. 3).
- [29] Heidegger (2009). 114. Cp. section “IV. The Priority of Pathos” in Daniel M. Gross’ “Introduction: Being-Moved: The Pathos of Heidegger’s Rhetorical Ontology” (Gross 2005, 27-39). Cp. also Smith 1998, 21-28.
- [30] Johnson, J. (2016). “A man’s mouth is his castle”: The midcentury fluoridation controversy and the visceral public.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 102 (1): 14.
- [31] Perelman, C. & Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1971). *The New Rhetoric. A Treatise on Argumentation*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. Cp. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971, 95ff.
- [32] Kjeldsen, J. E., Kiewe, A., Lund, M. & Hansen, J. B. (2019). *Speechwriting in Theory and Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Cp. Kjeldsen, Kiewe, Lund, and Hansen 2019, 14 ff.
- [33] Timmermans, F. (2014a). “Emotional UN Speech on Ukrainian Plane Crash.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcGCBHNcKyI>. Retrieved on 10.02.2021.
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