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RHETORIC PROOF IN THE PATHOS SPHERE IN THE GREAT PRE-ELECTION TV DEBATES

For every speech is composed of three parts: the speaker, the subject of which he treats, and the person to whom it is addressed, I mean the hearer, to whom the end or object of the speech refers. Now the hearer must necessarily be either a mere spectator or a judge, and a judge either of things past or of things to come. For instance, a member of the general assembly is a judge of things to come; the dicast, of things past; the mere spectator, of the ability of the speaker.

(Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 1358b)

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to consider the location and role of a particular type of argument involving emotions and attention of large audiences in the discourse of the great television election debates.¹ The analysis is based on three cycles of debates: American,² British³ and Polish ones.⁴ The focus is put on how politicians behave in a situation of the pre-election dispute where the aim is to win the debate and get closer to winning the election (the primary goal). The article is not going to focus on the full range of argumentative means. It is going to analyse only the elements that affect the movement of the audience in the debate (the *movere* function). The

¹ The adjective “great”, which plays here a role of subdistinction, requires an additional explanation. The concept of the “great debate” is accepted on the basis of the nomenclature used by the researchers to isolate the final American debates finishing the election campaign of the major candidates one of whom is to be elected President.

² Barack Obama versus John McCain, the presidential election in 2008 (a cycle of three debates).

³ Gordon Brown versus David Cameron versus Nick Clegg, parliamentary elections, 2010 (a cycle of three debates).

⁴ Jarosław Kaczyński versus Bronisław Komorowski, presidential elections, 2010 (a cycle of two debates).

Aristotelian tridivision of proof – ethos, logos and pathos – is going to be accepted. The author of this paper is interested in the level of differentiation of emotional arguments and the factors affecting it.

For Aristotle, pathos is one of the types of proof, in addition to ethos and logos, which a speaker uses in the process of persuasion.

Now the proofs furnished by the speech are of three kinds. The first depends upon the moral character of the speaker, the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind, the third upon the speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove.⁵

In the ethos sphere he distinguishes three qualities associated with the nature of the speaker: good sense (phronesis), virtue (arete), and goodwill (eunoia) addressed to the audience. The latter property refers to the problem of moving the audience and raising their kindness, which remains in the sphere of pathos.⁶ Aristotle considers the problem of emotions as a motive for judgement.⁷ Under the influence of affect people seem to give a different judgment than they do normally, depending on whether they feel pleasure or pain. The speaker, in turn, in order to arouse the feelings that motivate the audience to arrive at a desired judgment, should be able to recognize three aspects: first, human nature driven by affection; second, to whom the speech is addressed; and lastly, for what reasons it is given.⁸ The knowledge of affects (Aristotle distinguishes sixteen affects grouped in opposite pairs) and the ability to recognize them in social situations allow a speaker to build a suitable topos support for proof in every case. The relationship between proof in the pathos and ethos spheres in Aristotle's concept includes the role of the speaker and the appropriateness of his nature that allows him to win the favor of the audience. Constructing his ethos in the speech, the speaker bases it on the knowledge of the affects that he potentially identifies in the audience. These two types of proof are interwoven in this aspect, that is in the identification of the two parties of rhetorical communication.⁹ The speaker seeks for the audience to identify with him and the issue which is

⁵ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* 1356a (1–4).

⁶ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* (1378a18).

⁷ G. A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric & Its Christian & Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1999, p. 82.

⁸ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* Rhet. 1378a.

⁹ K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969, p. 20–29, 55–59.

the subject of persuasion. The audience will be likely to identify with the problem if the speaker creates the kind of ethos that is attractive for the audience by arousing affects.

However, Cicero looks at the relations between ethos and pathos in a different way. According to him, persuasion is differentiated as the one which exposes soft emotions (ethos) and strong emotions (pathos). These two dimensions make a speech attractive:

One of which is, that which the Greeks call ῥηθικόν, adapted to men's natures, and manners, and to all their habits of life; the other is, that which they call παθητικόν, by which men's minds are agitated and excited, which is the especial province of oratory. The former one is courteous, agreeable, suited to conciliate good-will; the latter is violent, energetic, impetuous, by which causes are snatched out of the fire, and when it is hurried on rapidly it cannot by any means be withstood. (*Orator* XXXVII, 128)

He does not attribute them to a specific place in the structure of speech. He states that ethos and pathos penetrate speech as blood penetrates the body. The Ciceronian analogy perfectly illustrates the structure of proof in a pre-election debate which comprises penetration of ethos elements into other structures of proof. Regardless compositional aspects and format conditioning, each pre-election debate is based on the same construction which fundamentally shapes the typology of proof. The construction axis of a pre-election TV debate is a comparative question: Who (X or Y) is going to be prime minister or president? Each media event (a single TV debate) is subordinated to this primary comparison issue. If a topic range of the debate is specified, eg foreign affairs, or state security, a problematic issue (or the issue the debate is to settle) will be:¹⁰ Which candidate (X or Y) offers a better program in the field of foreign politics? Different thematic sequences that are determined by the person asking the question in the debate will be specific issues: who (X or Y) has a better idea to fix taxes/health care? (This is the argumentative path according to which debates are conducted in the U.S.A). Finally, specific issues uttered by a moderator/journalist/participant audience make important part of the debate. At this stage comparative issues are rare but frequent are questions such as: Is it necessary to raise taxes? Is it beneficial to privatize the health care system? Is the current course of foreign politics to be continued?

¹⁰ Rhetoric is called problematology. See M. Meyer, M. M. Carrilho, B. Timmermans, *Historia retoryki od Greków do dziś*, ed. M. Meyer, transl. Z. Baran, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, p. 293–332.

A pre-election debate situation considered in terms of the proof division into logos, ethos and pathos can be relatively easy to partition into topos areas. Logos includes problematic issues related to politics and election program. The topos map will therefore cover matters of economics, taxes, foreign policy, or social issues that are relevant to specific groups of voters. Its domain will therefore be based on the questions regarding the program proposals of politicians. Voters' replies will deal with issues whose program is better or whose solution is more favorable to the interests of voters. Proof in the ethos sphere will be related to image issues.¹¹ Questions to be answered by the voters judging the debate will relate to the issue of politicians' personalities: which of them is capable of convincing me, which one would be a better leader (Prime Minister/President/Chancellor)? The range of topos will relate to three properties of the speaker: good sense, virtue, and good will and their adaptation to the audience' expectations. And here a range of topos related to the addressees' likes and feelings appears, that is pathos. Not only can an efficient speaker adapt his persuasion to the nature of audience, but he can also inspire and evoke emotions affecting the judgment of the audience in a controversial case. The speaker must be aware of different attitudes and values of the public and use it as a basis for his arguments.¹²

Ethos will be the main argumentative platform in a pre-election debate.¹³ This is connected with the construction of the issue organizing the debate based on the question: Which candidate (X or Y) is to win the election? Within this area there appear specific questions and a set of micro-disputes forming the skeleton of the compositional debate. Since the primary issue relies on the settlement of the dispute "who is the best", a clash of ethos, in each micro-dispute resulting from a question asked by a moderator/journalist/viewer and leading towards the evaluation of the politician will appear. Each thematic sequence (logos) will carry an evaluative supposition in the sphere of ethos. Tackling both the political (logos) and image (ethos) issues takes place in front of the audience and because of the audience in order to win as much as possible at the cost of dimin-

¹¹ Friedenberg R. V. 1997, *Patterns and Trends in National Political Debates: 1960–1996*, in: *Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates – – 1996*, ed. Robert V. Friedenberg, Praeger, Westport, CT, p. 61–91.

¹² D. Walton, *Appeal to Popular Opinion*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA, 1999, p. 190.

¹³ A. Budzyńska-Daca, R. Botwina, *Ethos, pathos and logos in pre-electoral TV debates*, a conference paper, "Ethos/Pathos/Logos. The Sense and Place of Persuasiveness in Linguistic, Literary and Philosophical Discourse (18–20 October 2012).

ishing the number of the opponent's supporters. Therefore, two types of arguments whose function is to refer to the audience are going to be considered now.

Ad populum and ad auditores

Both ways of arguing, *ad populum* and *ad auditores*, are based on a separate group of topoi. The first type covers an area of people's preference, stereotypes, sympathy, and universal desires that a politician is going to tackle during the debate to win the audience over. The *ad populum* argumentation in its major aspects overlaps with the *ad passiones* argumentation. Some researchers agree that these types of argumentation should be treated as similar.¹⁴ Walton points out 11 subtypes of the *ad populum* arguments. His division is based on the distinction in the premises sphere. Gaining the favour of the audience depends on moving the public and referring to the common points adequate in the given place and audience: values (the moral-justification *ad populum*, the snob-appeal *ad populum*), authorities (the position-to-know *ad populum*), the expert-opinion *ad populum*, the deliberation *ad populum*, emotions (the mob-appeal *ad populum*), the common-folks *ad populum* needs (the rhetoric-of-belonging *ad populum*, the appeal-to-vanity *ad populum*).¹⁵ *Ad populum* understood in this way also comprises different types of arguments and annexes them as secondary. Thus, in this argumentative sphere there will appear flattering persuasion, simplified valuation, and enhancing ethos based on the audience's needs as well as devaluation of the opponent's ethos.

Ad auditores argumentation, which seems to be popularized along with Schopenhauer's catalogue of eristic ways, is similar to *ad populum* in many aspects. In *Eristische Dialektik* Schopenhauer characterizes it in the following way:

This is chiefly practicable in a dispute between scholars in the presence of the unlearned. If you have no argument *ad rem*, and none either *ad hominem*, you can make one *ad auditores*; that is to say, you can start some invalid objection, which, however, only an expert sees to be invalid. Now your opponent is an expert, but those who form your audience are not, and accordingly in their eyes he is defeated; particularly if the objection which you make places him

¹⁴ D. Walton, *ibidem*, p. 68.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 195–227.

in any ridiculous light. People are ready to laugh, and you have the laughers on your side. To show that your objection is an idle one, would require a long explanation on the part of your opponent, and a reference to the principles of the branch of knowledge in question, or to the elements of the matter which you are discussing; and people are not disposed to listen to it.¹⁶

Schopenhauer adopts the Aristotelian proof division into ethos, pathos and logos in the field of eristic dialectics. However, he locates it in the situation of dispute, conflict, and rivalry between the parties in their attempt to get the audience's favour. *Ad auditores* is a technical procedure which ignores the complexity of the case and the burden of proof in a dispute with the counterparty and refers to the judgment of the audience, giving them an appropriately simplified explication. A vast new area for the application of different subtypes of the *ad populum* argumentation opens up. In my opinion, the scheme indicated by Schopenhauer does not fully surrender to the multiple *ad populum* argumentation. Both types aim at gaining the favor of the audience. But the latter has a specific feature. It refers to the situation when the parties of the dispute are listened to by the audience, who are a judge in the matters determining their future,¹⁷ a situation in which the debate is conducted. A speaker dealing with a controversial issue refers to the audience waiting for their approval and exerting pressure on his rival instead of referring to his opponent and moving to the logos sphere. *Ad auditores* has a special eristic feature – defeating an opponent, overtaking him in the fight for shortening the distance¹⁸ towards the audience in the substance and image matters. Meanwhile, *ad populum* can also be used in non-conflict situations in different types of the rhetorical discourse, where the audience can be a critical witness¹⁹ rather than a judge.

The scheme presented below illustrates the dependency between the above mentioned types of arguments. A distinctive feature is a primary aim of the ways to present proof. *Ad populum* comprises a multitude of ways to influence the audience in order to identify with the speaker and/or speech problems; on the other hand, *ad auditores* (according to Schopenhauer) is a movement against one's opponent to get his supporters who have already

¹⁶ A. Schopenhauer, *The Art of Controversy*, Translated by T. Bailey Saunders, M.A., eBooks@Adelaide, 2009, XXVIII.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* 1358b.

¹⁸ See M. Meyer, M. M. Carrilho, B. Timmermans, *Historia retoryki...* Rhetoric is defined as a negotiation of distance between individuals in a given issue, p. 297.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*.

chosen the opposite side – the ones the opponent relies on. It is therefore a strategy resulting from a dispute situation which is typical for the adversarial discourse.



A common topos dimension being the source of premises is comprised by the area of the audience's preferences and emotional potential which can be used. However, there are different primary aims: building one's ethos (*ad populum*) and destructing the opponent's ethos (*ad auditores*).

Here are some examples of **the *ad auditores* arguments**.

Example one: a politician puts the competitor under the audience's judgement

I just think it is disgraceful to try and frighten people in an election campaign, as Gordon Brown has just done, and as the Labour Party are doing up and down the country. I would like to take this opportunity to say very clearly to any pensioner in the audience, anyone listening at home, that we will keep the free television license, we will keep the pension credit, we'll keep the winter fuel allowance, we'll keep the free bus pass. Those leaflets you have been getting from Labour, the letters you have been getting from Labour are pure and simple lies. A politician shouldn't say lies very often, I say it because I have seen the leaflets and they make me really very, very angry. You should not be frightening people in an election campaign, it is just not right. (David Cameron, *Second debate*)

Example two: a politician refers to a competitor asking him not to mislead the audience. In fact, such a statement diminishes the opponent's ethos.

I really urge you not to benefit from the fact that perhaps some of those who are watching us today simply do not know the reality, they have no precise information about how much Greece and Poland are indebted. (Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the first debate)

Example three: firstly, a politician refers to his competitor, and later to the audience suggesting how to judge the actions of his rival:

Here I would like to ask you (I know you're going to the UK) not to commit the error mentioned by the Polish Press Agency that you announce the resignation of direct payments per hectare in the name of the dream of the European army. Ladies and gentlemen, this is the superpowership. (Bronislaw Komorowski, the first debate)

Example four: a politician addresses the audience ascribing them some attributes of power:

It's the voters to decide. You're the boss, it's your decisions that will count. You have the votes to make a difference. (Gordon Brown, *Second debate*)

In the above mentioned *ad auditores* statements politicians redefine the status of the audience from the position of the recipients (viewers watching a television media event in a passive way) to the position of judges (active voters) subjecting them to judge the devalued ethos of the opponent.

***Ad populum* arguments**

For example, a politician stirs positive emotions praising the audience:

The point is -- the point is that we can fix our economy. Americans' workers are the best in the world. They're the fundamental aspect of America's economy. They're the most innovative. They're the best -- they're most -- have best -- we're the best exporters. We're the best importers. They're most effective. They are the best workers in the world.

And we've got to give them a chance. They've got -- we've got to give them a chance to do their best again. And they are the innocent bystanders here in what is the biggest financial crisis and challenge of our time. We can do it. (McCain, *Second debate*)

In this statement a politician by referring to the the audience's affirmation (eunoia) develops his own ethos (arete). Flattering voters evokes emotions which create a positive attitude towards the politician as the leader.

Figures in the pathos sphere

The exact analysis of the debate text with regard to common rhetorical figures would be extremely difficult. From the point of view of the observation of persuasion trends occurring in the political discourse, the analysis

of single figures contained in the text seems to be very useful, both when it comes to the dimension of propositional and declarative knowledge. In this approach there appears a distinction between the rhetoric analysis of a literary text with the dominant aesthetic features and a rhetoric study of the text with a persuasive function which is located in the public discourse. We study the texts of public debates not for their beauty, but to show the individualized (the language of politicians) or institutionalized (language policy in the species and forms of public transport) mechanisms of the persuasive process of public communication.

Analysing the discourse of pre-election television debates it is necessary to point out those solutions that seem essential for the creation of beliefs on the part of the recipients (here voters) or those which are frequently used. A figure of contact belongs to such a rhetoric trick in the *elocutio* sphere. This type of figures supports or just accompanies the *ad auditores* and *ad populum* argumentation.²⁰ The figures indicate interaction returns or imitate the expansion of interaction at the speaker-speaker level towards the speaker-listeners-speaker level. Therefore, it is possible to specify two types of interaction in the debate: the real one and the apparent one.

The actual interaction takes place in the debate microsituation between the parties (a politician – a moderator, a politician – a person from the audience, a politician – a journalist, a politician – a politician). Its manifestation is the existence of conversational exchanges within the thematic sequence when partners affect each other's actions and remain in the immediate physical presence.²¹ An apparent (figurative) interaction exists between politicians (broadly speaking, participants of the microsituation when journalists asking questions as well as a moderator may direct their statements to the audience) and the audience in the macrosituation. This interaction is initiated both by figures of turn (*obserctratio*, *licentia*, *apostrophe*) and figures of questions (*interrogatio*, *subiectio*, *dubitatio*, *communicatio*).²² The sidedness of figurative interaction manifests itself in the fact that the speaker leading it does not expect a reply at the same time and place. However, he expects that this reply will take the form of approval towards his standpoint which, in case of elections, would be expressed by the declaration to vote, or to support.

²⁰ A. Budzyńska-Daca, J. Kwosek, *Erystyka czyli o sztuce prowadzenia sporów. Komentarze do Schopenhauera*, Warszawa 2009.

²¹ M. Kita, *Wywiad prasowy. Język – gatunek – interakcja*, Wydawnictwo UŚ, Katowice 1998, p. 45.

²² H. Lausberg, *Retoryka literacka. Podstawy wiedzy o literaturze*, trans. And introduction by A. Gorzkowski, Bydgoszcz 2002; J. Ziomek, *Retoryka opisowa*, Wrocław 1990.

The analysis of the three cycles of debate shows that most of the turn figures appeared in the British debate, the Polish debates used them to a small extent. The statistics could be explained by organizational conditioning. The town hall meeting format allowed for a bigger contact between politicians and the voters who asked questions in the course of the debate. Politicians took a chance to express praise, approval and enthusiasm for the person inquiring and the problem that was raised. A similar situation occurred in one of the American debates which was held according to the same format. The press conference format, adopted in a series of Polish debates, introduced constraints for politicians to interact with voters through the figure of contact due to the presence of journalists who were the third party to the dispute in the adopted format of the debate. This resulted in a proof reduction in the area of pathos with the use of figures of contact.

The group of phenomena from the elocutio sphere includes emotive figures which greatly move the attention and audience: *exclamatio*, *evidentia*, *sermocinatio*, *fictio personae*, *expolitio*, *similitudo*, *aversio*.²³ *Sermocinatio* and *evidentia* deserve a special attention due to their ability to build narration in the debate discourse.

Sermocinatio is a fabrication of statements, interviews, or reflection (not expressed loudly) of the persons (historical or fictional), who are the subject of speech, to give them a better characterization²⁴

Quintilianus characterizes the status of this figure in this way:

By this means we display the inner thoughts of our adversaries as though they were talking with themselves (but we shall only carry conviction if we represent them as uttering what they may reasonably be supposed to have had in their minds); or without sacrifice of credibility we may introduce conversations between ourselves and others, or of others among themselves, and put words of advice, reproach, complaint, praise or pity into the mouths of appropriate persons.

Nay, we are even allowed in this form of speech to bring down the gods from heaven and raise the dead, while cities also and peoples may find a voice. There are some authorities who restrict the term *impepersonation* to cases where

²³ Also *adhortatio* (admonition, precept, promise, call) *deesis*, *adynaton* (expressing the inability to express something), *aganactesis* (expression of deep resentment), *aposiopesis* (sudden silence), *cataplexis* (threat, a prophetic expression), *epiPLEXIS* (asking questions to devaluate and express application), *epimone* (persistent repetition of the same accusation using the same words) H. Lausberg, *ibidem*, p. 441–464.

²⁴ Lausberg, pp. 450.

both persons and words are fictitious, and prefer to call imaginary conversations between men by the Greek name of dialogue, which some1 translate [p. 393] by the Latin *sermocinatio*.²⁵

We have traced the frequency of *sermocinatio* and *evidentia* figures usage in particular debates. The reference to the persons acting in the statements of politicians can be associated only with the characteristics of these characters which is more or less extensive (in this case we are talking about *evidentia* figures) or quoting their statements (*sermocinatio*):

I met X; I talked to X; X did (*evidentia*) or X said (*sermocinatio*):

The referred figures support the process of identifying with the audience (*pathos*), and with the problem (*logos*) and the speaker (*ethos*). The speaker characterizes himself indirectly through the characters he refers to. Within the collection of characters there are two orders: firstly, there are the so-called **sample characters** who are anonymous (a nurse, teacher, emigrant, firefighter, war veteran, etc.); secondly, there are famous characters who can be recognized by the audience – **public figures**. These, in turn, are divided into **authorities** whom the speaker appreciates, recalls their opinions, views, statements and those who are portrayed as **supporters of the candidate** (here politicians’ family members also appear). Often a figure in the debate appears in two roles: authority (here, the *ad reverentiam* argument is sometimes used) and a supporter of the candidate. Then the argumentative force of this submission is frequently much higher.

The table shows how many times each politician referred to an active person (famous or unknown) during the debate.

Debates	Politician	Debate	Unknown persons	Famous persons
A cycle of pre-election debates (2008)	McCain	I	1	13
		II	0	6
		III	1	8
	Obama	I	1	8
		II	0	6
		III	2	4

²⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* IX, 2, 30.

Debates	Politician	Debate	Unknown persons	Famous persons
A cycle of pre-election debates in Great Britain (2010)	Brown	I	2	0
		II	1	0
		III	2	2
	Cameron	I	8	1
		II	2	2
		III	1	1
	Clegg	I	4	0
		II	2	3
		III	2	2
A cycle of pre-election debates in Poland (2010)	Kaczyński	I	0	1
		II	0	4
	Komorowski	I	0	0
		II	0	3

The juxtaposition was worked out by the author.

The analysis of three cycles of debate shows the differences in the frequency of referring to characters in the debate (unknown, the so-called sample, and well-known characters: authorities, supporters, opponents, family members), as well as trends differentiating the political discourse. In the American debates politicians frequently mentioned, quoted, and exemplified issues referring to the characters familiar to the audience (especially McCain). British politicians often used the examples in the form of unknown persons (especially Cameron in the first debate), invoked their statements, or presented situations in which they live. Polish debates are characterized by the absence of exemplifying characters. However, rare references to public figures were made.

The above mentioned differences result certainly from different cultural factors that shape political discourses (a greater degree of approximation to the voters, manifesting itself in addressive forms), the differences in the way the election campaign itself was designed (the so-called politicians' exterior visits which result in the gathering useful experience for further stages of the election campaign), and also differences in the formats (the town hall meeting format, characteristic for major British debates and one American debate) allowed politicians to gain a greater identification with the audience; the press conference format in the Polish debate made such identification difficult.

The indication of these few aspects of the rhetorical proof from the pathos sphere is not exhaustive either in the argumentation range or figurative specifics of the debates. Selected elements that build relationships between the speakers and the audience skillfully create a positive climate (from the politicians' point of view) for electoral decisions. Complex factors in the pathos sphere help to build the image of the leader (ethos), which in case of pre-election debates is the most important pillar of proof. A politician does not only argue that his election program (logos) is better, but that he, as a person and as a political leader, is more reliable than his opponent for he understands the needs and preferences of the voters. The presented analysis shows which factors specifically facilitate this process of identification.

S U M M A R Y

This article analyses rhetorical means of proof according to Aristotle's distinction into ethos, logos and pathos in pre-election television debates. The author focuses mainly on the study of the level of emotional argumentation differentiation and factors that influence it, that is persuasion in the pathos sphere. Two types of argumentation that move the audience's will, imagination and emotions – *ad auditores* and *ad populum* – have been discussed. The article elaborates on their importance in the debate, as well as differences in their functioning in this type of political discourse. Typical rhetorical figures shaping the argument of the movere function have been presented and analysed.

