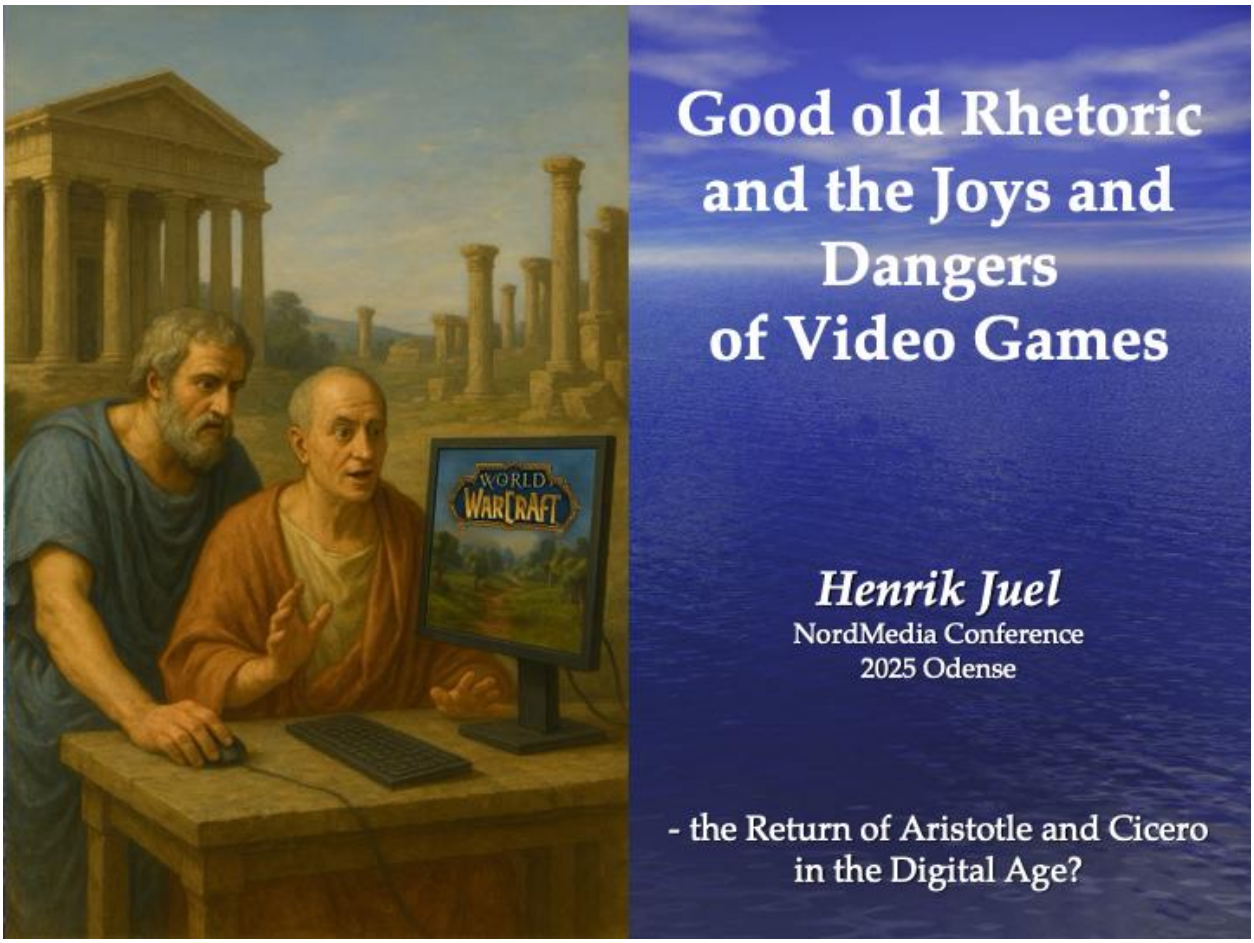

(Illustration from Chat GPT, prompted by the author, August 2025)

ABSTRACT:

Good old Rhetoric and the Joys and Dangers of Video Games

- the Return of Aristotle and Cicero in the Digital Age?

By Henrik Juel

New media and communication platforms seem to evolve so rapidly in the digital age that scholars interested in analyzing what is going on probably feel the urge to quickly present new theories, concepts, and models trying to grasp the modern media reality. In this context, it may seem odd that I want to revisit ancient theories about rhetoric, and even more odd to suggest that certain concepts from Aristotle and Cicero hold keys – or at least some timely inspiration - to an academic understanding of the dynamics of modern media.

Though Aristotle and Cicero were concerned with analyzing oral rhetoric only - and for obvious reasons did not directly address film, television, social media, video games, virtual reality, and the like - many of their analytical concepts about the immediacy, the situational or contextual nature of public speaking (e.g. the concept of *kairos*) seem surprisingly fresh and relevant today.

Furthermore, a relatively new phenomenological approach to Aristotle's concept of *pathos* (one of the well-known three forms of appeal: *logos – ethos – pathos*) goes beyond the traditional and trivial interpretations of this as just "an appeal to emotions". The use of *pathos* can be interpreted as making an audience see new things by *moving them* (their imagination and attention) to new times and places. And this is exactly what modern audio-visual media like film, television, and not least video games and virtual reality are very good at: when looking and listening to these media you feel immediately transported to a new world - you are immersed in it, participating and perhaps even interacting with it.

Following Aristotle rather closely (though a few hundred years later) Cicero in Rome also writes about *pathos* as trying to (almost literally) *move* the audience (he uses the Latin verb: *movere*). Cicero insists that a good speech cannot be defined independently of the actual *situation*, *audience*, *rhetor*, and *topic*. The persuasive power of a speech depends on its propriety or suitability – *quid aptum sit* – with respect to the actual and specific here-and-now of these four aspects. This insight from Cicero has sometimes been popularized, drawn up and mis-represented as a five-point model, called Cicero's Pentagon or Pentagram. However, a closer look at Cicero's original latin text (*De Oratore III*, 210-212) reveals a much more intelligible "communication model" operating with four aspects only.

My point is that the dynamics, immediacy, audio-visuality, liveliness and participatory nature of modern media bear a phenomenological resemblance to the highly situated live performance and attention of the classic speaker– adapting and communicating. Rapidly refreshed social media posts and the ping-pong of chats seem to resemble live speaking face-to-face more than traditional written communication by means of books and journals. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to revisit the old rhetoricians and ask for their assistance in analyzing and evaluating the possible joys and dangers of media communication in the digital age.

Keywords: *rhetoric, digital media, pathos, dynamics, immersion, attention.*

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In this paper I want to show that certain concepts from classical rhetoric can be very useful when we try to understand phenomena like immersion, agency and flow in modern digital media. But we must be a little careful when trying to understand the young media in terms of older media.

I think we are all acquainted with popular worries about how modern video games might render the eager players (especially the young ones, we always worry the most about them) addicted, emotionally crippled, unaware of what is going on in real life around them and ultimately leave them in poor mental and physical health.

The Little Engine that Could: Chanted motto: "I think I can",
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAfsOnzQCb4&t=1143s
A Booker Animation Production, VHS, UK, 1991, based on an American folktale early 20th century, known by the book by Watty Piper, 1930.

In a way it was much the same some 30 years ago when the new hot media was video tapes (VHS), that kids and teenagers could play over and over again. I recall I was sitting at my desk and reading a newspaper article (it was on paper in those days, the mid 1990-ties) about how video viewing could affect kids and youngsters in a very harmful way, as this sort of media assumption was passive – unlike the reading of good books, where the readers used their own imagination in order to picture the scenery and actions. Video viewing was not stimulating in the same way, so I read, but left the kids passive, fat, pale, and pimpled.

I turned my head and looked over at my little son and his friend, they were about 4 years old. They were watching a video for the 17th time or so, something about a birthday train bringing gifts to children, and the little locomotive in the cartoon had a hard time trying to make it over a steep mountain. And there: the two boys were jumping up and down together in the sofa, and old one with solid springs, eagerly chanting "I think, I can - I think, I can - I think, I can" swinging their arms to imitate the movements of the trains coupling rods. Hmm, to me they did not seem very passive, nor did they seem to lack fantasy or to be isolated from friends.

Now in passing, I just want to mention that literature can be deemed dangerous too for the young and vulnerable. I prompted an AI source (Google's standard) if it wasn't true that even Jane Austen at one time was considered rather dangerous. And the short AI-reply was:

> Yes, literature focusing on love and passion, particularly works like Jane Austen's, was indeed considered potentially dangerous for young women in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. There was a concern that such narratives, especially the sentimental and dramatic ones, could influence young women's actions and choices regarding courtship and marriage. (Google Crome, AI, June 2025)

So, I have become a bit skeptical about condemning new media too quickly, perhaps it would be wise to consider if one's own standpoint within one media culture might block one's view for what new media really have to offer. And the often-heard argument why reading books is better (for kids, and - so it is implied – for everybody
than watching film, video and television, namely that when reading you have to use your own imagination to picture things – well, this argument can easily be turned around: perhaps the good thing about audio-visual media is that here you are served some pictures and sounds, but you have to use your own intellectual skills to come up with the concepts, to figure out the meaning, narrative, and moral. In a book it can spell out "he was angry". In a film it shows that he stops smiling and clinches his fists. Is it the reader or the spectator that is the most passive - or active? Or should we not go beyond the quick condemnation of other than our own preferred media and start looking at the

very different phenomena, the different ways in which we experience and make sense and sentiment out of written, audio-visual, and interactive media?

Going back to classical rhetoric I want to mention, that Aristotle's predecessor Plato, who was no friend of the Sophists, nevertheless pays tribute to the old oral culture by telling in *Phaedrus* (section 275a) the story about Toth, the alleged inventor of writing, who goes to the king of Egypt and proudly presents this new art, that he believes will help people to remember. But the king says that on the contrary, writing will make people stop exercising their memory, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls. And Plato goes further and complains that once words have left their "farther", the author, they will drift about in the world like orphans without guidance: they are open for (mis-) interpretation in a way not seen in oral face-to-face communication where you, so to speak, stand by your word (I could go even further and suggest that in ancient times it was consider part of being a noble and elite citizen to know the myths and poems by hart – reading and writing was ok, but rather tedious work - you should leave that to slaves).

Of course, it is a bit ironical that Plato puts this in writing – but after all he can be said to have honored the oral culture by writing his philosophy in the form of dialogues.

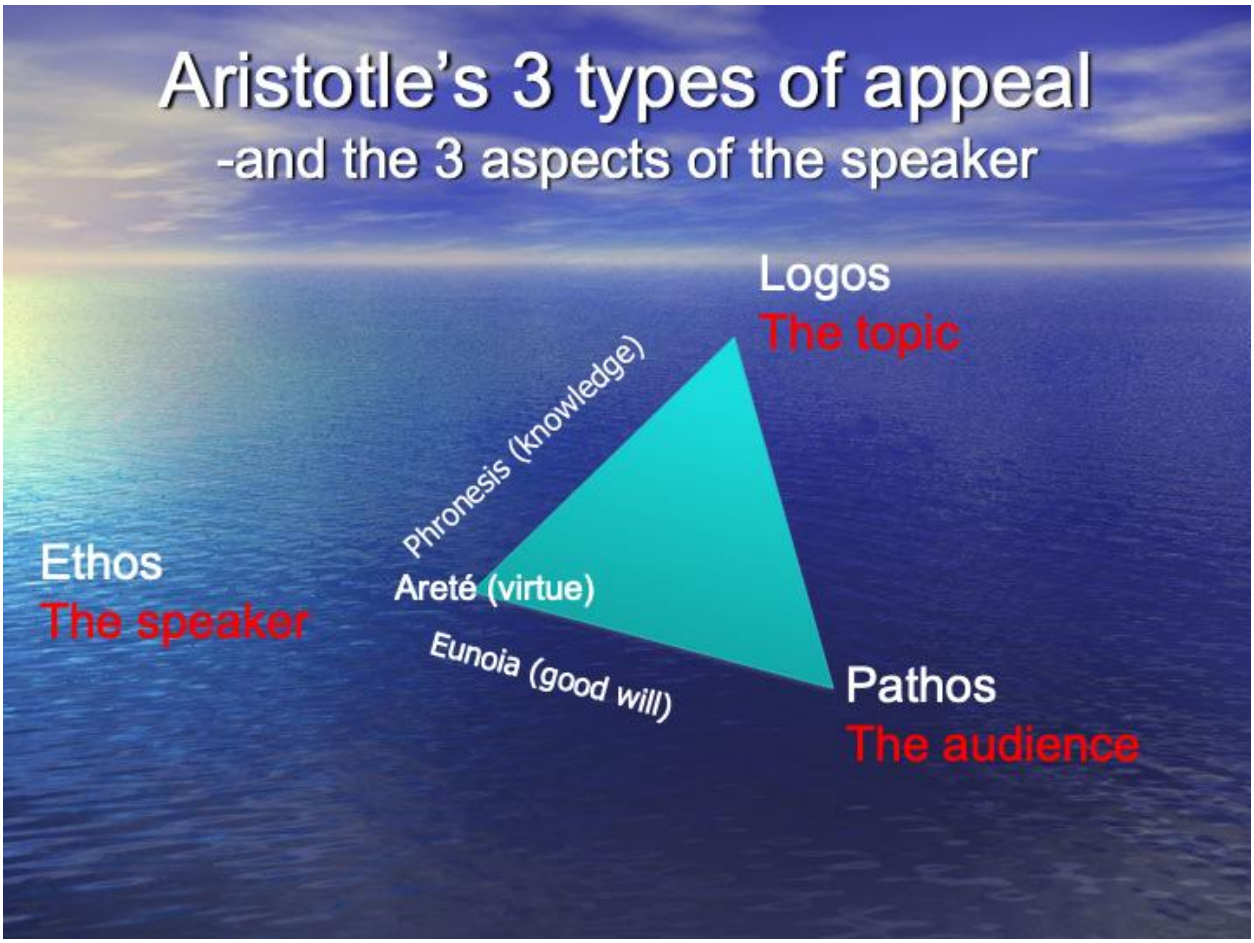
While Plato was rather skeptical about the business of the sophists (professional teachers and speakers), and in general about rhetoric and other arts that, according to him, did not seek to present the truth like genuine philosophy should, Aristotle on the other hand tried to define and understand rhetoric as the skill (*dynamis* - faculty or capacity) to observe (or consider) in every given case the persuasive things (or the possible means of persuasion). Translations can vary, but what I want to stress in this context, is that Aristotle in this famous passage seems to observe and describe rhetoric from the point of view of an active and skilled rhetor and not just from the point of view of the audience (or reader). And this is where *kairos* comes in, a concept that later came to encapsulate much of the essence of what is special about rhetoric and being a good speaker: the ability to capture the right moment, balancing things, and setting in, just when and where you can have the greatest (persuasive) impact. It highlights the contextual and situational nature of the speech medium.

Perhaps this rings a bell for those who are enthusiastic about video games and aspire to play well, even in games that are very challenging and hard for newcomers: you must develop your skills and be very attentive in order to know when and where to go, to jump, dodge, attack, grind, cooperate with other players, etc. But having developed this *dynamis* and being able to work with *kairos*, you can in lucky moments feel you are in a state of *flow* and completely absorbed in the game's universe. The concept of *flow*

comes from a more general theory of psychology (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990) but is often used in game studies today.

Aristotle is well known for the 3 types of appeal that should be considered and balanced in a good speech, namely *ethos – logos – pathos* (Aristotle *Rhetoric,* A, 1 356a). It is also well known that he in another place distinguishes 3 aspects that make a speaker trustworthy, namely *phronesis* (knowledge) – *areté* (virtue, excellence of character) – *eunoia* (good will) (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, B, 1 378a). It is not controversial to foreground these concepts, but I have combined them into a single model (see below) that I think illustrates well the interwovenness of these concepts and the dynamic and situational nature of a rhetorical performance.

We should avoid popular simplifications of these concepts. Despite the etymological connections, that seem easy to detect, meanings have significantly changed: *Ethos* has little to do with ethics, *logos* has little to do with logic, and *pathos* is noway near the same as when we call someone "pathetic" today. Aristotle says that the function of *pathos* is about "putting the audience into a certain frame of mind" (W. Rhys Roberts´ translation) or "putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind" (J.H. Freese's translation). I shall try to show how a careful interpretation of *pathos* makes it relevant for understanding the experience (or phenomenology, one could say) of modern media.



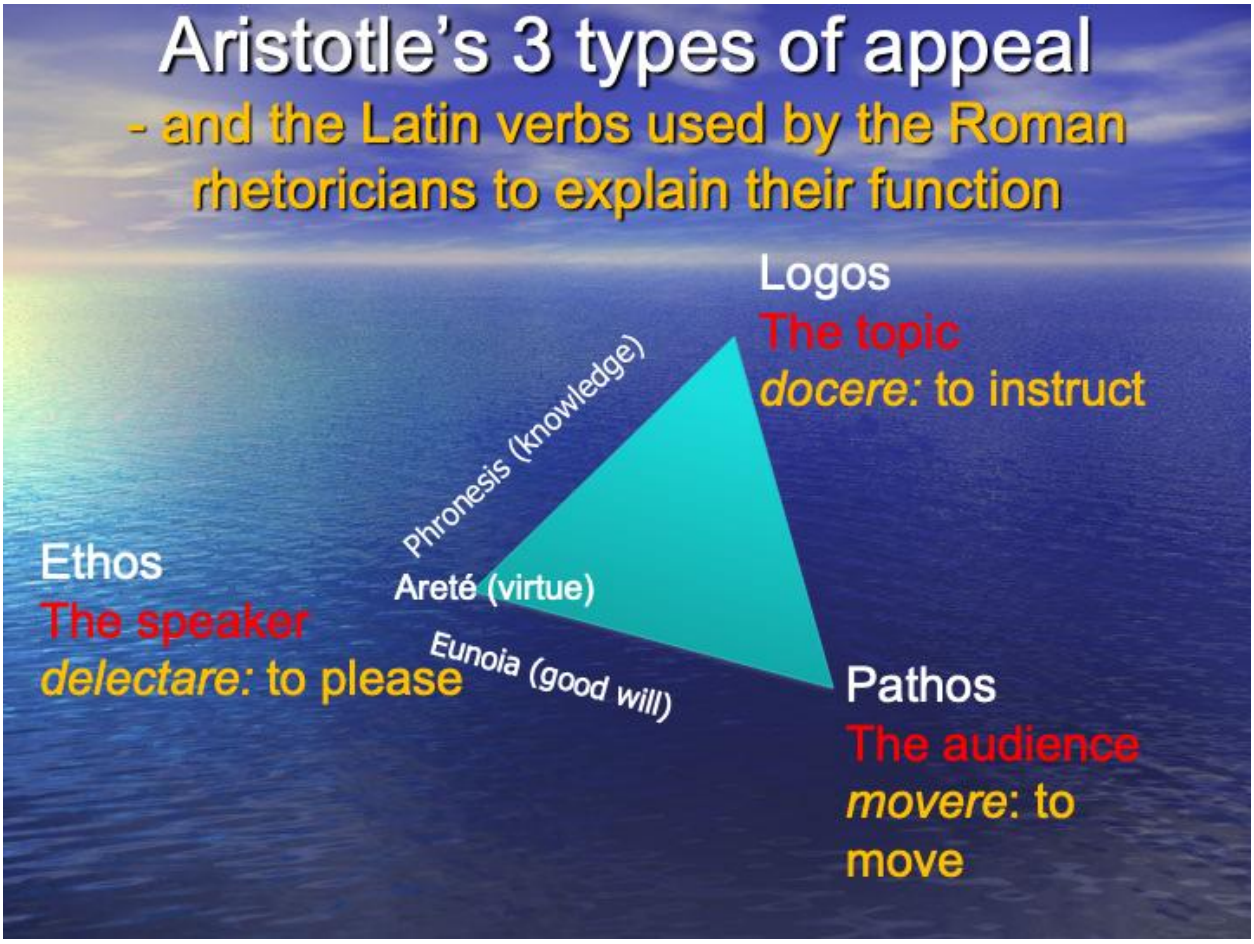
Original illustration by Henrik Juel combining Aristotle's three types of appeal with the three aspects of the speaker.

I have arranged the concepts around a triangle showing how the speaker can demonstrate trustworthiness or persuasiveness not just by appearing as a nice character or virtuous personality (*areté*), but also by demonstrating competence or knowledge (*phronesis*) about the topic or case in question (*logos*). And furthermore, the speaker should demonstrate good will (*eunoia*) towards the audience.

To give a modern example, if I meet a new GP doctor, I am likely to trust her, not just if she seems like a nice person herself, but also if she demonstrates professional knowledge about diseases and medicine, and even more so, if she also seems to care about me, she is seeing me, tuning in on me, and she wants to do the best for me – she shows good will. As seen in the illustration, the *eunoia* is pointing towards *pathos* and the audience, whereas *phronesis* is pointing towards the *logos* or topic in question (in the example with the doctor: my health issue).

Cicero followed Aristotle rather closely in emphasizing the importance of understanding and adapting to the audience and situation. He believed that a skilled orator should not only know the subject matter but also the nature of the audience, including their background, biases, and emotional state. He also highlighted the significance of the context, location, and even the time of day. In essence, Cicero's approach to oratory was not simply about delivering a well-crafted speech. It was about understanding the dynamics between the speaker, the audience, the topic in question, and the situation, and thus adapting the message and delivery to maximize the impact.

In the following illustration I have in yellow writing put in the Latin verbs that the Roman rhetoricians generally agreed upon conveyed the meaning or purpose of the *ethos-logos-pathos* triad that they took over from Aristotle.



Combining Aristotle and Cicero, illustration by Henrik Juel.

The main function of *ethos* was *delectare,* which means to please or to entertain (Cicero also uses the verb *conciliare*: to please or winn over (*De Oratore*, II, XXVII 115). It is

perhaps a bit surprising that the Romans did not say the main purpose was to guarantee or demonstrate trustworthiness – but then again: the speaker first of all has to have the attention of the audience, the audience should find the speaker worth listening to – and just insisting in so many words that you are a trustworthy speaker does not do the trick: trust is more indirectly or non-verbally earned (e.g. your appearance and gestures, background, family). Besides, not all speeches are of the deliberative or judicial genre, another main genre was (and is) the *epideictic*, also known as demonstrative or ceremonial oratory, that is characterized by its focus on the present (celebrating a person or common virtues). It is a rhetorical approach designed to evoke or build upon emotions and establish a shared understanding of values and togetherness, rather than directly urge for action or decision.

As for the concept of *epideictic* and modern audio-visual media today: when we find a fiction film or a video game nice and entertaining, we do not directly see the filmmaker or programmer, unlike when someone stands up and gives a festive speech. But we should feel we are somehow in good hands, we go willingly into this (imagined) universe and let the creators of the film or game guide us along. Certainly, the story in a film can take a surprising turn, the narrative can be a bit confusing at first, but we should trust that the filmmaker is not just trying to confuse us or leave us in the dark but wants to give us a good experience. And similarly, the challenges in a video game can be hard at times, but we should sense, that it is after all fair and well balanced, and that it will offer us a feeling of progressing competence and mastery – it should not just be a game that continues to punish the player with permadeath, or make us suspect a so-called Dark Design Pattern urging us perhaps to invest with real world money in new gear and upgrades in order to manage the challenges.

The *logos* aspect is described by the Romans as *docere*, which might have a negative connotation today for a Danish speaking person who might translate it as being overly pedantic ("doserende") – but in Roman rhetoric it more straightforwardly meant teaching or instructing, informing about the question at hand (not necessarily in the form of what we call today a "logical argument". *Logos* in Greek had a variety of meanings like "word", "speech", "reason", "discourse", "principle", and even more).

To describe the function of *pathos* the Roman rhetoricians put in the verb *movere* which means to move – we recognize it in modern terms like "motion", "locomotive" and so on, it seems to be about "transport". So, at first sight, it does not seem to be about "feelings" or "sentiment" or "emotions" (though of course we recognize the verb "movere" as part of the latter noun). The idea, of course, is to be able to "move" the audience. To "move" - that must be in a metaphorical sense, must it not? It is rare that a speaker literally *moves* an audience, though of course it has been seen that students

leave when a professor gives a lecture, but that is usually not when it is a good one, but when it is bad. Normally the audience will stay in the same place physically, but at the same time, if it is a good speech that reach them and touches them and grasps them, then their mind and attention might in some sense be "moved" to a different place and scenery.

So, perhaps it is worth to consider if it is a metaphor, and just a metaphor, when we speak about being "moved" by a speech, a film, a video game, or experiencing some other digital media? It is not just in English there is this curious use of "transport" words for being emotionally affected: In German "bewegt werden"; in French "être accroché, être emu" (s'émouvoir); in Danish: "blive bevæget".

I owe my curiosity about the meaning of *pathos* to Martin Heidegger. It should be well known that in his *Sein und Zeit*, 1927, he suggests the concepts of *Stimmung* (roughly: attunement) and *Befindlickeit (*roughly: disposedness) as fundamental features of how we as humans are present in this world: we are always already somehow in a specific mood or attunement, and we do not have trouble first overcoming a subject-object division in order to discover things around us: we are already open and in the midst of things and projects.

The connection to Aristotle's *pathos* may seem far-fetched here, but in 2002 Heidegger's till then rather unknow and unpublished preparations for *Seit und Zein* was published. They stem from his 1924 summer lecture course held in Marburg entitled *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie.* This is where Heidegger really tries to go in depth with the Aristotelian concept of *pathos* drawing on bold interpretations of possible meanings in Greek.

In short, I could perhaps say that Heidegger does not see *pathos* simply as passing disturbances or mis-colorings of an otherwise neutral and rational subject, but as a fundamental human way of being present, being aware, and experiencing the world and others. And it is worth mentioning that Aristotle nowhere denounces *pathos* as something "irrational" or "subjective", nor is he seen to instrumentalize *pathos* as a superficial "play on emotions" inferior to a more "logical" argumentation - as some might say today. Similarly, Cicero warns the speaker against pretending emotions only without feeling them yourself:

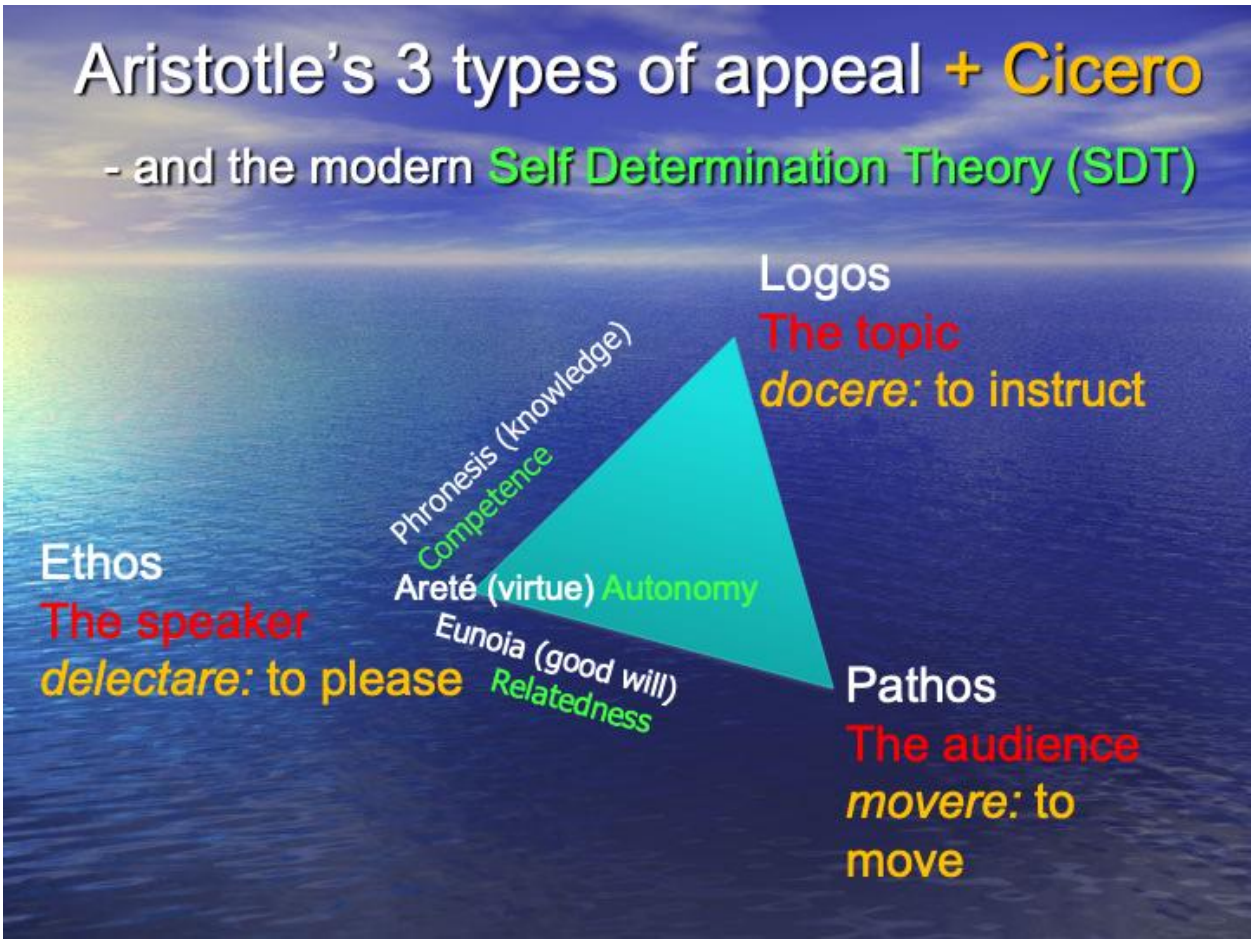
> "…all those sensations which the orator would awaken in the judge shall appear to be deeply felt and experienced by the orator himself" (Cicero, De Oratore, II, 45, 189).

It is debatable if Heidegger's reading makes it easier to see what Aristotle really meant (if there is such a thing to a hermeneutic mind), but I think it does help to see what Heidegger is aiming at, and this in turn might be useful in understanding how we experience different media. In his critical article, Marjolein Oele (2012) makes a resumé saying:

> "…Heidegger once again pulls pathos squarely into the
> center of the living human being. Similar to his assessment of pathos as 'way of our being,' his assessment of pathos as being-disposed locates pathos in the core of our being, and thereby circumvents the understanding of pathos as a merely temporary phenomenon. In addition, Heidegger views pathos as given with life as such, and does not place pathos in the narrow framework of cause and effect." (Oele, 2012)

As for the medium of speech, a good speaker "transports" you to see what he or she wants you to see (e.g. from a new point of view, perhaps you are "put in the shoes" of another person in another situation and location) – and your reaction to what you experience arise from "being there" – not from an injection of a dose of passion.

Likewise in film and video games, and certainly in virtual reality devices that work well: you are immersed, you feel (bodily) present, you connect to what you meet, and you feel able (most explicitly in games and virtual reality) to act and react. In modern studies of video games and play the so-called Self Determination Theory (SDT)((Deci & Ryan, 2000), which is a broader psychological theory, is often used to explain why and how video games come to be enjoyable, namely by making players feel engaged and fulfilled because they can act and be present in the game world allowing three basic psychological needs to be satisfied: *autonomy* (you decide what to do), *competence* (you feel you can manage, your acts have an effect), and *relatedness* (the game satisfies a social need, you feel related to other players within or around the game, or you have a parasocial connection with NPCs (Non-Player Characters) within the game.



Original illustration by Henrik Juel connecting classical rhetoric with modern Self Determination Theory.

In his book *In-Game: from Immersion to Incorporation*, Gordon Calleja (2011) examines what it is that makes digital games so uniquely involving and he offers a game-specific formulation of this, often referred to as the Player Involvement Model. Calleja proposes six dimensions of player involvement: kinesthetic involvement, spatial involvement, shared involvement, narrative involvement, affective involvement, and ludic involvement. A blend of these dimensions can culminate in *incorporation*—a concept that he proposes as an alternative to the often-used term of immersion. Incorporation, he argues, is a more accurate term, that could provide a robust foundation for future research and design. That might be right, and I think these ideas seem well in line with some of the classical rhetorical concepts.

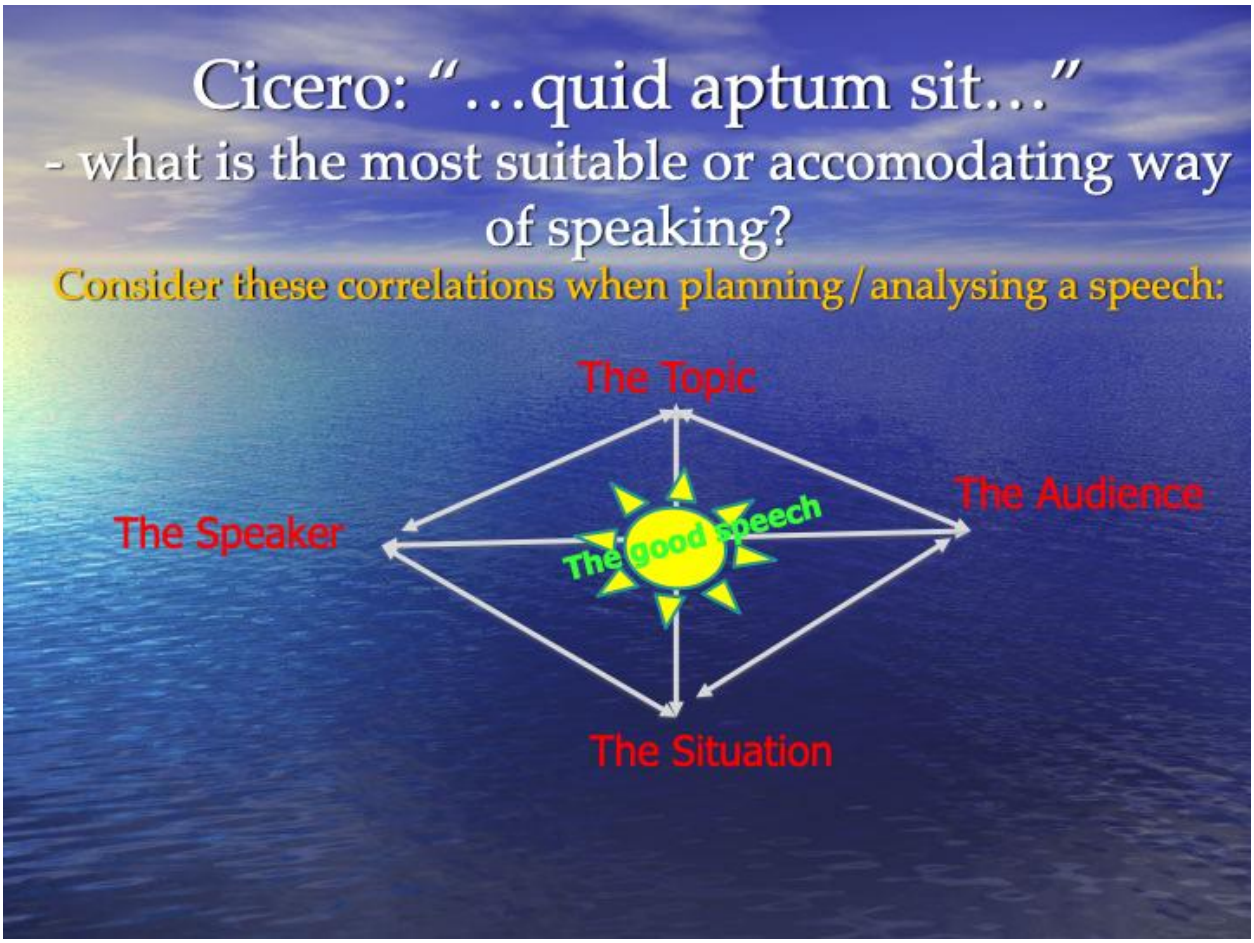
As said, Cicero follows Aristotle rather closely and highlights the importance of *kairos*, the situational nature of rhetoric, to him it is all about finding the right means and the

right moment, that which is suitable or apt (*quid aptum sit*: that, which will be suitable). In Cicero's *De Oratore* the renowned speaker (a literary figure standing in for Cicero himself, no doubt) is being pushed by the others in the recorded intellectual conversation to explain to them what makes a good speech good. They would like to have some sort of rule or recipe, a sure method for creating a good speech. But Cicero refuses to say that there should be anything like a one-rule-fits-all. He also says that good rhetoric is not the result of following rules or certain tricks, but that rules/good practice might be inferred (afterwards) form seeing succesful speeches (this is my interpretation of "*sic esse non eloquentiam ex artificio, sed artificium ex eloquentia natum*" (Cicero, *De Oratore*, Book I, XXXII, 146)).

Cicero quite clearly writes that it is about finding what is apt, fitting, the right style, or becoming, and you do that by considering four elements: the actual speaker, the topic, the audience, and the situation. This is of course very much like Aristotle's triad of speaker, topic, and audience, that correlates with *ethos-logos-pathos*, as seen in my previous illustrations, but Cicero expands a little on this by also inserting the situation or occasion for the speech.

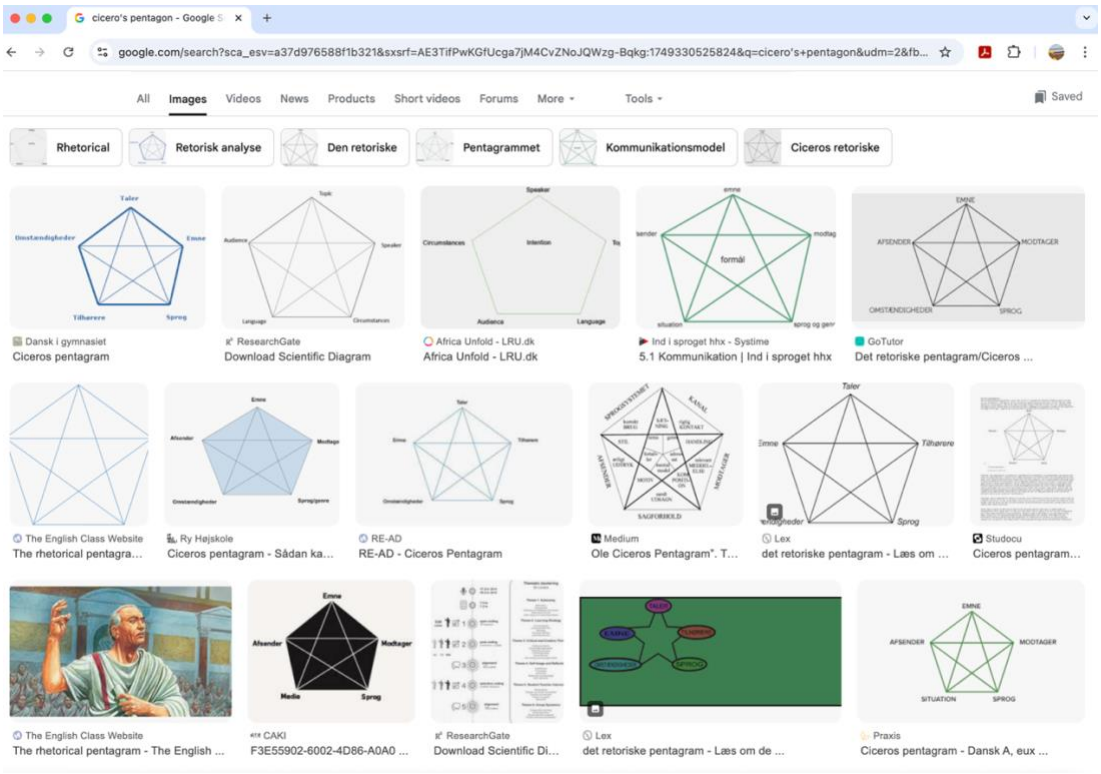
Aristotle indeed, has many remarks about different types of situations and circumstances, but his focus seems to be exclusively on the oral performance here and now. For the Romans, and perhaps especially for Cicero, literary culture seems to gain importance, a speech could now be seen not only as a passing event at the town square or in a court session, but also as preserved in a written document that could be read or repeated elsewere and later, i.e. in a different situation and under different circumstances. As Plato had predicted, as a written text the words could leave the speaker/author and drift about in the world without parential guidance.

Maybe this foregrounding of the situation is also reflecting that rhetoric for Cicero himself was no longer just an intellectual pastime for elite citizens, but it was now in Rome a rather dangerous business of going to court and risking your wealth, health and life in political controversies. Cicero had to be careful when and where to say what – and be able to maneuver in the flow of the moment. In that way Cicero's idea of the art of speaking *live* resembles much that of going into the battle or into the world of a video game to explore and try your best – not following rules laid out before, but adapting and adding to the specific skills and competences required to win!



Original illustration by Henrik Juel of Cicero's text in *De Oratore* III. 210- 212.
Note that it is not at pentagon!

I want to underline that I am not forgetting something in this illustration of the 4 aspects Cicero advises us to consider. There are only *four* (4) in the original text, though many recently (perhaps especially in popular textbooks and resumés in the Nordic countries) have talked about a 5-point model and called it a pentagon or pentagram. Just a quick search on Google for images of "Cicero's pentagon" reveals a lot, below is the first loaded window:



Google search for "Cicero's Pentagon" – images, June 7th, 2025, first window.

There is here some confusion about how to name the elements – especially the 5th that's not in Cicero's text, so that is quite understandable! I think the problem in part arises from a preoccupation with the concept of "style", so dear to many, that it twists the translation of ***genus*** and the main point about making a speech apt and accomodated (e.g. Cicero's clear statement in XXXI 138 *"...primum oratoris officium esse, dicere ad persuadendum accomodate"* is translated by E.W Sutton as *"First, that the duty of an orator is to speak in a style fitted to convince"* which may sound nice, but it would be be better (closer to the actual words and grammatical construction) to render it "*the first duty of the speaker is to speak suited for persuasion*" – we do not need to insert nor even less to hypostatize the concept of "style".

So, I want to make clear that what Cicero is talking about here is how to invent or create the ***right*** style, that which will make the speech "apt" or "suitable". "**Style**" is not - though many seem to have believed so - a pre-existing or independent element/aspect, but it is to be understood as the result of the proper adjustment of the speech to the 4 elements or aspects. As this is perhaps a controversial claim, I will list below the original latin text from Cicero, after that a standard translation by E.W. Sutton, and finally my own translation from the latin original to Danish. I have marked with colors, first yellow then blue, the 4 elements that appear twice in the text (first rather generically, then

more exemplifying). With red and bold I have marked the principle of *aptum* and the **style of speaking**, that we are trying to establish.

Cicero:

> [210] "...nunc quid aptum sit, hoc est, quid maxime deceat in oratione, videamus. Quamquam id quidem perspicuum est, non omni causae nec auditori neque personae neque tempori congruere orationis unum **genus**;[211] nam et causae capitis alium quendam verborum sonum requirunt, alium rerum privatarum atque parvarum; et aliud dicendi genus deliberationes, aliud laudationes, aliud iudicia, aliud sermones, aliud consolatio, aliud obiurgatio, aliud disputatio, aliud historia desiderat. Refert etiam qui audiant, senatus an populus an iudices: frequentes an pauci an singuli, et quales: ipsique oratores qua sint aetate, honore, auctoritate, debet videri; tempus, pacis an belli, festinationis an oti." [212].
> (Cicero: De Oratore - III (Cicero 2003).

Sutton:

> [210] "...let us now consider what is meant by propriety, that is, what is most becoming, in oratory. It is, however, clear that no single kind of **style** can be adapted to every cause, or every audience, or every person, or every occasion. [211] For capital causes require one style of speaking, private and inferior causes another; deliberations require one kind of oratory, panegyric another, judicial proceedings another, common conversation another, consolation another, reproof another, disputation another, historical narrative another. It is of consequence also to consider who form the audience, whether the senate, or the people, or the judges; whether it is a large or a small assembly, or a single person, and of what character; it ought to be taken into account, too, who the speakers themselves are, of what age, rank, and authority; and the time also, whether it be one of peace or war, of hurry or leisure."[212]
> (E.W. Sutton, parallel translation in the above edition).

Juel:

> [210] "...så lad os nu se lidt nærmere på begrebet 'det behørige', d.v.s. spørgsmålet om hvad der passer bedst i en tale. Det er jo på forhånd klart, at der ikke findes én og kun én **tale-stil**, som passer til enhver sag eller ethvert publikum, eller klæder enhver taler ved enhver lejlighed. En stor kriminalsag kræver en anden tone end private søgsmål om de rene bagataller, og den politiske tale, lovtalen og retstalen har hver sit stilbehov, ligesom foredraget, trøstetalen, irettesættelsen, den teoretiske fremstilling og den historiske fortælling har deres. Det spiller også en rolle, hvem der tales til: senatet, folket eller domstolene, om der er mange eller få eller kun en enkelt, og hvordan de så er. Talerne må også selv tage deres alder, stilling og anseelse i betragtning, for ikke at tale om situationen: om det er i krigstid eller fredstid, om det er presserende eller der er god tid." [212]
> (Original translation from latin by Henrik Juel)

In essence, Cicero's approach to oratory was not simply about delivering a well-crafted speech following some fixed rules. It was about understanding the dynamics between the speaker, the audience, the situation, and the topic to adapt the style of delivery to maximize the persuasive power of the adress. To me it is his insistence on this dynamic interplay that makes his rhetorical concepts – though conceived in a different aera and with the medium of speech in mind only - relevant for theories about how modern media affect us, become entertaining, enjoyable, and perhaps also sometimes dangerous.

I am not blind nor deaf to the possible dangers (for both kids and adults) to become too absorbed or addicted to video, television, social media chats, video games or even virtual reality – but like Aristotle, when he talks about theater and tragedy: maybe there is something good to gain from this *mimesis,* from attending to imagined stories and myths: we may experience both pity and fear, but that is deeply human – all good citizens aught to attend, and then maybee what they will find is not addiction to an unreal fantasy world, but they will obtain *katharsis*, a cleaning or purification of emotions of this sort. It can be a good thing to exercise and educate your *pathos*.

Looking again at the film with *The Little Engine that Could* and recalling the two 4-year-old boys on my sofa jumping up and down and chanting together while watching it: I would say that they were rather passionate (*pathos*) viewers. They were evidently drawn into the cartoon's world and identifying body and soul with the little train and its hard challenge of climbing the mountains in order to deliver the birthday gifts on time. They reenacted or co-acted the events; they had an also bodily experience in viewing.

A few years later the boys were engaged in social media and playing video games, often with much of the same (sometimes rather loud) *pathos* and enthusiasm, immersion or incorporation, but I was never too worried about their mental or physical health. Concepts from Aristotle and Cicero have made me cautious not to rush to conclusions when trying to analyze, understand, and evaluate modern media phenomena.

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