

Transcript of Logos, episode 11, Authoring Culture Podcast

BRENDAN:

This is the Authoring Culture Podcast, an exploration of key concepts in writing, created to accompany the open educational resource, Authoring Culture: Foundations of 21st Century writing.

I'm Brendan Riley.

In this chapter, I explore the concept of Logos, and Karl El Sokhn discusses it with two of his students.

Logos describes the logic and reason used to present an argument. It involves making appeals to the rational side of someone's mind. We deploy facts and figures in a conscious strategic manner when we use logos.

Here we go.

[Intro music]

BRENDAN:

Welcome to the authoring culture podcast. Chapter 11 Logos.

When you buy designer clothing, or buy top-brand commercial goods, often there's an emblem on that clothing that tells people you have great taste and lots of money to spend. It shows you're the real deal.

These icons are called logos. Wait a... shoot.

[intro music stops]

Chapter 11 Logos.

Logos is one of the three modes of argumentation from classical rhetoric. We've already heard about ethos, the presentation of yourself, as a mode of argumentation, and later we're going to hear about pathos, the presentation of emotion as argumentation.

Logos is perhaps the mode of presentation most germane to written material.

As we talked about in alphabetic text, writing has a way of allowing people to ruminate. It allows people to go back and look at what was said and examine it carefully. If you have presented something that does not stand scrutiny, the comment section will get you.

Logos is the use of logic and reason in your argumentation. If you're deploying statistics, you're using logos. If you're using logic, you're using logos.

Obviously, logic and logos come from the same root.

The modern use of logos involves making these sound arguments and setting them up in a way that they're going to stand up to critique from people trying to deploy other arguments against them.

Understanding logos helps us understand things like logical fallacies. Being able to identify when you yourself are making a badly been logic, but also being able to call out your rhetorical opponents for doing the same.

As you develop as a writer, it's really important to study and explore logos because in a lot of writing situations, we are trying to make a case. We're making an argument. We're asking people to change their mind or think a certain way about a certain thing.

And often the tool that we have most available to us to get them to be on our side is logic and reason, and the rhetorical strategy to deploy logic and reason is logos.

And now let's listen to my colleague, Karl El Sokhn, and his students as they discuss this concept and how it affects their creativity as they work on their own projects.

[Transition Music]

[Transcription note - throughout the following conversation, all three participants often uttered verbal agreement by saying "yeah" or "yes" or similar statements. For clarity, those statements, as well as some verbal stutters, have been excluded.]

CRIS:
I'm Chris Montero, I'm an acting major.

AVERY:
I'm Avery Petersen, I'm an audio arts major.

KARL:
So logos, something you might have probably heard before being introduced to the key concepts. I know that this is discussed in school, right?

Have any of you or had any of you heard of this concept before?

AVERY:
In my AP language class in high school junior year, I learned all three of them. Ethos, pathos, logos as a form of writing argumentation.

KARL:
We just talked about ethos a couple chapters ago. So how did all three of these link and can you describe these things with an emphasis on what logos is?

AVERY:
Right. Well, there are always whenever you make an argument all three of them are going to be present.

There's ethos. The way my teacher described it to me was more leaning into ethics and like societal ethics on that frame.

But logos, logic, heavy, it's an immense logic or the structure of an argument. Very statistics heavy like if you see an argument with statistics or with facts, that's logos.

And then pathos is going to be more emotion driven, philosophical, leaning into the more abstract and your feelings, your emotions.

KARL:

Why do we prop those up against each other? Why is reason and the motion always at odds?

CRIS:

Yeah, I think in a lot of ways, sometimes there are a lot of harsh truths, I guess you could say.

And sometimes bringing up a certain data point or fact can really contradict what somebody wants and what they're feeling.

Sometimes things where after are not as logical as we might want them to be, we're not very, I don't think we're purely logical beings. We have a lot of feelings, especially being in us being arts majors, a lot of the things that we do are directed, I think from how we feel.

So finding a balance between having something to back up what you're doing and then also doing what feels right to you, sometimes that can be tricky to find a middle ground there.

KARL:

I like the fact that you said that a number or a statistic can be emotional.

AVERY:

How do we elaborate on that, Avery? I know you mentioned something that could take us into that avenue.

AVERY:

Yeah. I mean, facts that we have in society, we place meaning into those facts.

KARL:

Yes, absolutely.

AVERY:

So, you know, morals, like with back in 2020 when COVID hit, big and United States, and there was this huge uproar when there was COVID vaccination requirements in certain states and whether or not that was ethical or moral or right.

So there was the heavy side driven by the government and the CDC that was, "these are our numbers. These are the people that are hurt and sick and dying."

KARL:
Which is logos?

AVERY:
Very heavy logos. But then it's backed up by pathos saying, hey, in our personal feelings and our morals that are driven by pathos mainly, that's wrong.

People shouldn't be sick and dying if we can prevent it in some way or help prevent it in some way.

So that drives the argument of requirements, even if that in some way infringes on personal liberties.

So the logos of it is here are our numbers, people are dying.

But then the pathos of it comes up and it's like, are you willing to forego your own personal liberties? You know, your right to go out, your right to not wear masks, things like that.

Are you willing to forego those for the sake of others and for the sake of yourself?

CRIS:
I think with the COVID thing, the interesting thing is there's different ways people used pathos on either side.

Some people were like, "I haven't seen my friends, I haven't seen my family in a while, like I want to go see them, but I know that I should probably stay indoors right now. It's not safe to do that."

And a lot of other people would say, "no, please do stay indoors because we don't want people dying there."

There's pathos on all sides of it that would tend to clash.

AVERY:
And logos means nothing without pathos, I think, just because we have our numbers and we have our statistics.

But again, like I said, we assign meaning to that moral value to those things. So it's like, "there's the number people are dying," but without any sort of emotion or moral, that number is just a number.

KARL:
Which is a bit scary, right? If you treat any kind of death toll as a number, it is, it's quite frightening.

It seems apathetic, right?

So yeah, it seems that even if it's a force, force majeure, as they say, like this divine act, whatever we can call it, something of nature that we think is not attached to human intervention.

When we see, oh, there's X amount of people who have died from this illness. We feel the certain level of compassion. So you are absolutely right.

The logos is these are the numbers, these are the individuals that died from a purely natural occurrence.

And people end up saying, "wow, that's a lot, that's scary." An emotion arises from that.

I like that you talked about multiple sides, Cris, and that there's pathos on all sides. I know I've mentioned this.

We've had this conversation in class, but I do remember COVID being mainly a politicized issue.

And I think that a lot of times we need a bit more logos. Do we need more logos, more pathos in the politics?

CRIS:

We need balance.

I think in a lot of cases too, some people will use what they think is logos, but it's really just lies.

And they'll say, like, well, logically or statistically or there's a fact that proves this. And sometimes you got a question where they're getting that from.

So logos can be kind of deceptive in that way.

KARL:

I agree.

CRIS:

If people are using it to kind of benefit their own sort of agenda, whatever it is that they want to push.

KARL:

It does also apply to what we've discussed previously, ethos.

We tend to also believe arguments from people whose personality and the way they present themselves relates to someone we want to trust.

So two sides can present numbers. One of those numbers is being false, but the person presenting them is someone we sort of relate to more and we have the tendency to maybe trust them a little bit more.

So the idea to go back to the source of where people are getting their information from is very important.

OK. How do you use logos in your artistic pursuit?

EVERY:

I think when you're going to an art school and you're pursuing an artistic career, one of the skills you have to learn is turning your creative artistic passion into a marketable career, being able to turn it into a resume and be like, "these are the things that I know. Hire me. Numbers, statistics. These are my accomplishments."

KARL:

These are the awards that I've won.

AVERY:

Well, I am getting a Bachelor of Arts. So I am an artist. I love what I do. I have a creative passion, but also these are the technical things that I can do and I know and I'm hireable.

So just it's a big skill to be able to turn.

KARL:

How do you feel about that, Chris?

CRIS:

Yeah, I feel like that's definitely the case for a lot of different majors when it comes to being in the arts sort of industry.

I'd agree having to build a resume and for acting, you need to have a real of just different things that you've worked on.

There are a lot of things that people look for before the actual talent and skill of "can you perform this."

They want to see that you have the credentials and the experience to back yourself up and improve that you're professional enough for the job.

Yeah.

AVERY:

And then you're going to have your ethos. That's what I was going to say. I'm going to be able to be in a job interview.

KARL:

Yes. That and also the ethos of other people that you know, like "I've worked on this famous person's project," which means that I have the credentials I found my way into a highly competitive position, which you know, emphasizes that you're capable of doing that.

Cool.

Well, I think that has been a very extensive and amazing conversation about logos. Chapter 11.

Thank you, Cris and Avery.

CRIS and AVERY:

Thank you, Karl.

[Transition Music, which plays throughout the end of the podcast.]

Thank you for listening to the Authoring Culture Podcast.

Authoring culture is hosted by myself, Karl El Sokhn, and my colleague, Brendan Riley, and is recorded at WCRX in Chicago by Max Hatlin, who also edits the show.

This episode featured contributions from Cristian Montero and Avery Petersen.

BRENDAN:

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You can find more about Authoring Culture at libretexts.org.

That's L-I-B-R-E-T-E-X-T-S.org.

Thanks for joining us.

[CLOSING MUSIC]

[Transcription edited by Brendan Riley]