

Aristotle's Rhetoric and the Cognition of Being: Human Emotions and the Rational-Irrational Dialectic

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Abstract

Within the second book of his *Rhetoric*, intent upon the art of persuasion, Aristotle sets forth the earliest known methodical explication of human emotions. This placement seems rather peculiar, given the importance of emotional dispositions in both Aristotle's theory of moral virtues and in his moral psychology. One would expect to find a full account of the emotions in his extensive treatment of virtues as it appears in his ethical treatises, or as part of his psychological system in *De Anima*. In none of these places, however, does a systematic treatment of this part of Aristotle's psychology emerge as it does in the *Rhetoric*. Such is a surprising, seemingly unusual phenomenon in consideration of Aristotle's extreme care for and obsession with organization and categorization.

Earnest analysis, however, reveals the intricate ingeniousness of Aristotle's innovative project. Emotion, based upon the interplay between what Aristotle deems to be the 'uniquely human' rational and irrational parts of the human soul, involves Being and Being's cognition of itself, and its dialectical encounter with the faculty of pure reason. Within this encounter is born human emotion.

According to this formula, emotion is a phenomenon that is linked to concrete human existence while at the same time being fundamentally involved with cognition. Emotion bridges the gap between the this-worldliness of the human and his keen logic as a rational being. Such an understanding allows Aristotle to assert that emotional appeal, which often stands at the core of rhetoric, is not necessarily a way of tricking people or avoiding critical response, but can be used to persuade by bringing facts to people's awareness. Through his novel rhetoric of emotion, Aristotle not only sheds light on the human condition, he brings rhetoric itself into the realm of the rational and the valid as a suitable means of human discourse.

It is not an accident that the earliest systematic Interpretation of affects that has come down to us is not treated in the framework of 'psychology.' Aristotle investigates the *pathe* [affects] in the second book of his *Rhetoric*. Contrary to the traditional orientation, this work of Aristotle must be taken as the first systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of Being with one another. Publicness, as the kind of Being which belongs to the 'they' not only has in general its own way of having a mood, but needs moods and 'makes' them for itself. It is into such a mood and out of such a mood that the orator speaks. He must understand the possibilities of moods in order to rouse them and guide them aright. (Heidegger, p. 178.)

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* contains the earliest known systematic account of what the Greeks called *pathe*, that aspect of psychology involving emotions and their

influences upon human judgement. Within this systematic account, Aristotle does not only explicate, compare and contrast various emotions, he also characterizes emotions themselves. “The emotions [*pathe*],” he writes, “are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgements and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites” (1991 p. 121). He goes on to explain in an explicit manner his method of expounding the emotions, stating the need to divide the discussion of each emotion into three headings; these are the *state of mind* of the person experiencing the emotion, against *whom* the emotion is felt, and for what *reasons* an emotion may have arisen. All three of these headings, according to Aristotle, are necessary for the creation in someone of an emotion that might sway judgement. Such is the structure from which Aristotle seeks to complete his theory on the emotions by setting up “a list of propositions [*protaseis*]” (1991, p. 121) concerning each individual emotion.

Aristotle’s systematic framework for the explication of the emotions within the *Rhetoric* provokes a number of questions and thoughts. First of all, it seems rather peculiar, given the importance of emotional dispositions in both Aristotle’s theory of moral virtues and in his moral psychology, that the fullest account of the emotions would present itself in the *Rhetoric*. This is especially the case since, in Aristotle’s schema, “the non-rational part of the soul whose virtues are the virtues of character can be regarded as primarily the seat of the emotions” (Striker, p. 286). As such, one would expect to find a full account of the emotions in Aristotle’s extensive treatment of virtues as it appears in his ethical treatises. In a like manner, as an indispensable element of the non-rational part of the soul, one could anticipate an extensive

explication of the emotions in his work on the soul, *De Anima*. In none of these places however, does a systematic treatment of this part of Aristotle's psychology emerge as it does in the *Rhetoric*. At first glance, this might seem peculiar since the *Rhetoric* is a work that is not primarily concerned with virtue or psychology, but with the proper means of persuasion. Such is a surprising, seemingly unusual phenomenon in consideration of Aristotle's extreme care for and obsession with organization and categorization, and inexorably raises the question as to why Aristotle chose to offer an extensive theory of the emotions within this forum as opposed to any other.

When the detailed elucidation of emotions does appear in the *Rhetoric*, the examples given, with a few exceptions, are not drawn from rhetorical situations. To cite an instance, Aristotle claims that people become angry at those who speak against and deride things which they themselves pride and take seriously. "For example," he writes in the *Rhetoric*, "those taking pride in philosophy if someone speaks against philosophy or taking pride in their appearance if someone attacks their appearance" (p.128) will become angry. Neither the anger associated with pride in philosophy nor the anger associated with pride in appearance relates in any way to a rhetorical situation. As such, Aristotle seems to be deviating from rhetorical discourse. Furthermore, some of Aristotle's examples of emotional states not only derive from non-rhetorical situations, they do not at all even fit a deliberative, judicial, or epideictic audience (1991, p. 122). Concerning anger, for example, Aristotle writes in the *Rhetoric*,

Those who are ill, in need of money, [in the middle of a battle], in love, thirsty — in general those longing for something and not getting it — are irascible and easily stirred to anger, especially against those belittling their present condition; for example, one who is ill [is easily stirred to anger] by things related to his sickness, one who is in need by things related to his poverty, one at war by things related to the war, one in love by things related to his love, and similarly also in the other cases; for each has prepared a path for his own anger because of some underlying emotion (pp. 127-128).

None of the persons mentioned in this example are at all likely to constitute the audience for any type of public address, be it deliberative, judicial, or epideictic; therefore this type of situation should be of no concern to the rhetorician. Aristotle seems to have failed to adopt his examples of emotional states to the art of oratory persuasion. Consequentially, many consider the propositions concerning the emotions that come into view in chapters two through eleven of the *Rhetoric* to be part of a philosophical work that was later added and only partially adapted to the needs of a speaker.

Aristotle's explicit use of the word "propositions" [*protaseis*] concerning the emotions led Grimaldi to propose that the discourse on the emotions was not a later addition of an obscure philosophical passage but rather a carefully construed preparation of premises for enthymemes. Jakob Wisse objects to this view (pp. 20-29), stating that if this indeed were Aristotle's aim, he would have done considerably more to make it clear. Furthermore, he would not have expressly enjoined in book three of the *Rhetoric*, "When you would create pathos, do not speak in enthymemes; for the enthymeme either knocks out the pathos or is spoken in vain (p. 274)." Aristotle holds enthymemes to be too coldly logical to evoke the arousal of emotion and as such, sees them as either overshadowing any such arousal or simply standing

as superfluous to it. As forms of syllogism based on endoxa, enthymemes cannot possibly come into direct contact with emotions, which reside in the part of the soul that Aristotle considers to be essentially a-rational. Thus, Aristotle's primary goal in presenting a systematic account of the emotions in his discourse on *Rhetoric* cannot logically be the foundation for enthymemes or any other purpose of logical persuasion. Rather, Aristotle's discourse on the emotions appears to be for the provision of a speaker with the ability to persuade an audience in a manner entirely different than anything rational, namely, through the arousal of emotions in the inherently a-rational faculty of the soul.

In full accord with his two means of persuasion within the *Rhetoric*, namely, the enthymeme and the arousal of emotion, Aristotle suggests two parts of the human soul that are equally unique to the human composition, namely, a rational capacity and an a-rational element. After going through a distillation process of the uniquely human parts of the soul in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains that "one element in the [human] soul is irrational and one has a rational principle (p. 25)." He holds the rational faculty to be categorically unique to the human condition, whereas he divides the irrational faculty into further components. Of these components of the irrational faculty, one is shared by all forms of life while the other is uniquely human in character. Further along in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he clarifies, "Of the irrational element one division seems to be widely distributed, and vegetative in its nature, I mean that which causes nutrition and growth (p. 25)." This division "has by its nature no share in human excellence" (p. 26), whereas its counterpart is as uniquely human as the rational principle. Here, Aristotle is developing a human psychology that incorporates an irrational yet no less wholly human element into the process of human

growth and understanding. The recognition and explication of a uniquely human irrationality gives Aristotle room to develop his methodological theory of the emotions in the *Rhetoric* as an affect of judgement separate from yet no less powerful than persuasion through logical means.

Before explicating the uniquely human component of the irrational part of the soul which stands as the ground of the emotions, it is of fundamental importance to understand Aristotle's usage of the term 'irrational.' Inasmuch as Aristotle explains the 'irrational' part of the soul to include that part which is vegetative by nature, his use of the term 'irrational' in this context cannot be taken as pejorative. As Bryan Register has pointed out, the word 'irrational' is usually understood to mean "something which, having had the chance to be rational, failed to take the opportunity" (p. 8). Hence, a serial killer is considered to be irrational while an earthquake is not. Nor can a tree, a flower, a dog, or any other living thing without a rational faculty but with a nutritive faculty be considered irrational under the conventional usage of the term. Correspondingly, Aristotle's distinction of the 'irrational,' vegetative part of the human soul involves neither the capability of rationality nor the defective quality of the standard understanding of irrationality that arises from the failure to seize that capability. 'Irrational' in this case cannot be taken to imply something that is illogical or unreasonable, and by association, Aristotle's 'irrational' seat of the emotions within the irrational part of the human soul is no less deprecative than his 'rational' seat of the enthymeme. Consequently, Aristotle's 'irrational' part of the human soul, which contains neither a lack nor a deficiency of rationality, is simply 'a-rational,' i.e., wholly other than anything rational.

Aristotle considers the “rational principle” to be the only thing that is “peculiar to man” (1969 p. 13), and therefore, that part of the irrational component of the soul which is peculiar to man alone would seemingly be unable to be something that is wholly other than anything rational. Indeed, Aristotle asserts that as opposed to the categorically irrational vegetative part of the soul, there exists as peculiar to the human being “another irrational element in the soul – one which in a sense, however, shares in a rational principle” (1969 p. 26). Aristotle seems to have cornered himself into a paradox by insisting that rationality is the only feature unique to humanity while at the same time asserting that there exists a uniquely human component within the irrational part of the soul. How can something that is rational be part of something that is a-rational, and how can something that is a-rational consist of something that is rational? The assertion of such a proposition itself seems to be utterly irrational.

David Ross has tried to resolve this apparent contradiction by focusing on Aristotle’s statement that “the vegetative element (i.e., the one shared by all living creatures) in no way shares in a rational principle, but the appetitive and in general the desiring element (i.e., the one specific to human beings) in a sense shares in it, in so far as it listens to and obeys it” (1969 p. 27). The idea, as stated by Ross in a footnote to his translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is that the uniquely human faculty of desire can be said to “share in a rational principle” insofar as it is obedient to reason; it is in itself not a reasoning function and in no way can originate rationality. In such a manner, this part of the soul is uniquely human in that it participates in the uniquely human trait of rationality and at the same time is wholly a-rational in that it holds nothing intrinsically rational.

Ross sees Aristotle's next sentence as an analogy that seems to support his reading of Aristotle's theory of the rationality of the irrational part of the soul as being rational through the means of obedience alone. In this next sentence of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that the acquiescence of the desiring element of the soul to rationality is "the sense in which we speak of 'taking account' of one's father or one's friends, not that in which we speak of 'accounting' for a mathematical property" (p. 27). "Taking account" of one's father or one's friends advice requires no origination of cognition, but rather a passive acceptance and ordering of something provided by an outside cognitive source. "Accounting for" a mathematical property, on the other hand, requires an original seat of cognition. Likewise, the desiring part of the irrational mind is not in itself rational but allows itself to be ordered by the uniquely human rational part of the soul, thereby taking part in an activity which is uniquely human. Through obedience alone, this irrational part of the human soul can share in rationality while remaining wholly irrational intrinsically.

Ross's reading of Aristotle, as followed by other commentators such as Stephen R. Leighton, does not allow the 'irrational' rationality of Aristotle to take on a form and to stand apart from the purely rational part of the soul. Rather, this reading reduces Aristotle's idea of the uniquely human 'irrational' element that shares in rationality to the perceptual level of something that affects perception, rather than viewing it on the epistemic level of something that affects beliefs and knowledge. According to this view, the desiring part of the irrational mind, along with its associate 'emotion,' as stated by Leighton, "is meant to alter perception through the expectation of emotion and the 'putting together' (*suntithemenon*) of things accordingly" (p. 213). This part of the soul simply receives information and orders it.

Stephen Leighton tries to make sense of the idea that the uniquely human irrational element is a means of perception by referring to Aristotle's distinction in *De Anima* 2.6 of objects of perception *per se* and objects of perception *per accidens*. An object of perception *per se* is an object of perception in itself; an object of perception *per accidens* is an object of perception through the medium of associative ordering. Leighton explains the distinction in the following way:

Suppose that the object of perception that we all are seeing (the object *per se*) is a black, circular, flat thing. If it is a record, a piece of plastic, and something else as well, then according to Aristotle, those latter things are perceived *per accidens*, even though particular perceivers may not perceive it as those things and they may not, therefore, be "their object." Although with my knowledge of records what I perceive it as is a record, and with another's knowledge of the mysteries of Lil, what she or he perceives it as is the sacred God, and so on, still what is perceived *per accidens* is the record and the sacred God. While what is seen *per se* and even *per accidens* remains the same, the object *per accidens* that it is perceived as need not be the same for the devotee in Lil and myself. We can say "our objects" are different (p. 214).

Different people seeing the same thing *per se* may see different things *per accidens*. What is seen *per accidens* depends on purely subjective experience, expectation and associative ordering; any logic that might be involved is not intrinsic but is by the allowance of experience and association alone. Such a framework, which does not necessitate logic, can easily lead to error and misperception based on false associations and mistaken ordering.

Objects of perception *per accidens* act as the cornerstone of the uniquely human irrational element of the soul, which is the seat of the emotions. Thus, the element of the human soul which encompasses the faculty of emotion is, as Leighton puts it,

“supposed to be part of our way of viewing the world. Our way of viewing the world, is the way we put things together, and thus brings about an alteration of perception” (p. 215). As based on objects of perception *per accidens*, this uniquely human irrational element of the soul is highly susceptible to error and is therefore properly deemed to be ‘irrational.’ It can, however, be persuaded by the rational principle through its natural process of association and ordering. In such a manner, it can avoid all error and can lead to an understanding of the truth. Hence Aristotle can claim that this “element in a sense shares in” the rational principle, but only “insofar as it listens to and obeys it” (1969 p. 27). As the only irrational element capable of listening to and obeying rationality, this desiring element can be said to remain wholly irrational in itself while at the same time, to the extent of its obedience, can share in rationality. The capability of listening to and obeying rationality alone, even if it does not do so, makes this desiring element uniquely human.

Ross, furthered by Leighton, presents a very strong and convincing reading of Aristotle’s concept of irrational human desire as a wholly irrational element that shares in rationality only to the extent that it acquiesces to the purely rational element of the human soul. Nevertheless, this reading possesses a flaw, in that in order for an element to be able to accept, and even more so to be able to order principles of rationality, that element must have some intrinsic capacity for rationality. The acceptance and ordering of principles of rationality cannot possibly be purely subjective and arbitrary, especially if the element is to share in the principles of rationality through this acceptance and ordering. In terms of Aristotle’s own analogy, in order to “take account” of the advice of one’s father or one’s friends, one must have some cognition of that advice. One does not blindly absorb advice like a sponge

that absorbs water, but rather must first comprehend the advice and then must use some type of cognition in order to apply it. This is a much different type of cognition than that of the originator of the advice, but it is nevertheless an intrinsically cognitive type of discernment.

Aristotle asserts this intrinsic type of cognition within the uniquely human irrational part of the soul by affirming that the giving of advice involves “reproof and exhortation” (1969 p. 27). Neither reproof nor exhortation would be necessary on the part of the advisor if the advisee were purely passive. Notwithstanding, due to an inherent, albeit different form of rationality on the part of the advisee, the advisor necessitates the use of persuasion. Applying the analogy to the principle being explicated by Aristotle, the irrationally desiring part of the human soul that encompasses the emotions possesses a form of cognition which is much different than that found in the wholly rational part of the soul, but which is nonetheless inherent to it. Without this inherent rationality, it would be impossible for this element to absorb and to order principles of rationality. With this inherent rationality, this irrational element can interact with and be persuaded by that uniquely human element which is pure rationality.

According to Ross, the term used by Aristotle to mean “take account of” and “account for” within his illustrating analogy of advice also means “to have a rational principle” (p. 27). As such, Aristotle’s analogy could also possibly read that the sharing of the irrational element in a rational principle “is the sense in which we speak of ‘having a rational principle’ [in terms] of one’s father or one’s friends [i.e., their advice], not that in which we speak of ‘having a rational principle’ [in terms] of a mathematical

property” (p. 27). Such a reading supports the idea that Aristotle holds rationality to be a complex, uniquely human system that encompasses two separate yet related forms of cognition. One of these is pure, absolute rationality in the sense of the rules of formal logic. The other, which contains the emotional faculty, is fundamentally associated with human existence, or Being in the world, and the human’s awareness thereof. This ‘irrational’ form of rationality does not categorically follow the rules of formal logic, but as an awareness of human ‘Being,’ is fully aware of that uniquely human element of the soul which is rationally commensurate to formal logic. As such, this ‘irrational’ form of rationality stands apart from that pure element of rationality which is formal logic while, at the same time, it can be influenced and persuaded by it through the means of “reproof and exhortation.” It can also share in the rational principle even though it is not itself pure rationality, but only “in so far as it listens to and obeys” this principle.

Included in the fundamentally irrational rational part of the human soul is “the appetitive and in general the desiring element” (Aristotle 1969 pp. 29-31), which is essential to human vitality and development. Inasmuch as it is the desiring part of the soul, this appetitive mental function necessarily involves the sensations of pleasure and pain. As Aristotle writes in his ethical treatises,

Pleasure [and as a corollary, the avoidance of pain, which is antithetical to pleasure] is naturally desirable, because it perfects our energies, that is our life, in the continuance of which all delight. But whether life is desired for the sake of pleasure, or pleasure for the sake of life, needs not at present be examined; since these two seem so intimately combined as not to admit of separation. Pleasure, then, cannot exist without energy; and our energies are strengthened and perfected by the pleasures accompanying them (p. 356).

Appetite involves desire and by extension involves pleasure, since pleasure “is naturally desirable.” All of these involve the strengthening and perfection of energy, and as such are indispensable to human life.

Aristotle seems here to be positing a uniquely human mental function which is similar to, yet distinct from animal appetite. This function’s similarity to animal appetite comes by way of its pursuit of pleasure as a quest intricately related to its life-force. Aristotle allows for a general animalistic desire for pleasure, stating that “Eudoxus thought pleasure the chief good, because he perceived it to be universally desired by all animals, rational and irrational.” Aristotle gives credibility to Eudoxus’s argument of the shared desire for pleasure by humans and animals by asserting that Eudoxus confirmed his argument “by considering pain, which, being the contrary to pleasure, all animals endeavoured to shun and escape.” Humans and animals share the desire for pleasure and the endeavor to shun pain, which makes the distinctively human irrational similar to animal appetite.

The humanly rational-irrational faculty’s distinction from mere animal appetite lies in its awareness of itself through its awareness of its object; this takes place by way of its intricate connection with the ‘premise of the good’ as related to the sensations of pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain, as affiliates of appetite and desire, which are necessary for human nutrition and growth, are fundamentally involved in the human being’s pursuit of goals that are essential for his or her subsistence. Consequently, when Aristotle insists in the *Rhetoric* that emotions involve pleasure and pain in his assertion that “the emotions [*pathe*] are those things ... which are *accompanied by*

pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites” (p. 121), he is linking the emotions to motivation and human functionality.

Pain and pleasure are a part of the concept of any given emotion, and neither can be separated from the emotion. Since pain and pleasure are correlates of appetite and desire, then by logical extension, emotions necessarily involve appetite and desire. “Emotion is a subclass of *orexis*,” writes Martha Craven Nussbaum, commenting upon Aristotle, *orexis* being “a reaching out, or desire,” which supplies the human being with a “premise of the good” (pp. 304, 306). This “premise of the good” comes by way of the uniquely human irrational faculty’s awareness of itself through an awareness of its object of desire. As Nussbaum asserts, “Even the bodily appetites — hunger, thirst, sexual desire — are seen by Aristotle as forms of *intentional awareness*, containing a view of their object” (p. 304). When applied to the emotional faculty, this intentional awareness that contains a view of its object ultimately culminates in a reflexive view of itself as triggered by thoughts of its object. This point can be elucidated in reference to Aristotle’s definition of ‘anger’ as set forth in the second book of the *Rhetoric*.

Aristotle defines anger as a desire for revenge accompanied by pain because of an apparently unjustified slight that was directed to oneself or to those near to one (1991, p. 124). According to this definition, anger necessarily involves an object that has caused the anger and to which the anger is directed. Moreover, according to Fortenbaugh, anger necessarily involves the thought of outrage, “so that such a thought is mentioned in the essential definition of anger” (p. 12). Similarly, fear

involves the necessary thought of a “future destructive or painful evil” (Aristotle 1991, p. 139), and pity necessarily involves the thought “that some evil is actually present of the sort that he [i.e., the one who pities] or one of his own [one of the pitier’s own] might suffer” (p. 152). By definition, emotions involve cognition and reflexive thought as part of their definition. Aristotle casts emotion as a complex phenomenon which necessarily involves not only a painful or a pleasurable stimulus by an outside object, but also reflexive thought as stirred by that stimulus.

Aristotle’s analysis of emotions is an inclusive analysis that places the emotional faculty within the framework of the uniquely human ‘irrational’ element of the soul that “in a sense shares in a rational principle” (1969, p. 27). As a complex phenomenon that makes room for a variety of items within its essential definition, the human irrational element is, in essence, the predication of a uniquely human hermeneutic element that a-rationally starts from human ‘Being’ and this ‘Being’s’ cognition of itself. Such perspicacious insight into human understanding intrinsically links cognitive phenomena to concrete, physical being. Such is not such a stretch for one who was as obsessed with biology and physics as he was with metaphysics, and who saw the soul as almost completely associated with the body. This association gives Aristotle a whole new platform from which to champion emotion as a phenomenon that is linked to concrete human existence while at the same time being fundamentally involved with cognition. This keen acumen allows Aristotle to assert that the emotional appeal, which often stands at the core of rhetoric, is not necessarily a way of tricking people or avoiding critical response, “but can be a way of bringing facts to people’s awareness and providing individuals with rational motivations”

(Register, p. 5). Due to the uniquely human hermeneutic element of the soul which is the conjunction of 'Being' with the 'cognition of Being,' Emotion stands on equal grounds as the enthememe as one validly available means of rhetorical persuasion.

Commenting upon the rhetoric of discourse, Hayden White pronounces that "discourse itself, the verbal operation by which the questioning consciousness situates its own efforts to bring a problematical domain of experience under cognitive control, can be defined as a movement through *all* of the structures of relating self to other which remain implicit as different ways of knowing the fully matured consciousness" (pp. 10-11). For Aristotle, emotion, as well as enthememe, acts as one of these structures of discourse. Under the structure of the enthememe, rhetoric finds itself amenable to the discourse of reason based on popular opinion. Under the structure of human consciousness as a whole, "the rhetorical situations in which we find ourselves are defined by an emotional urgency that calls for a response" (Scult, p. 8). In both cases, rhetoric can be understood as the communication of ideas to the masses and the suasion of the masses into action through the communication of those very ideas. This formulation has allowed Martin Heidegger, commenting upon Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, to state, "Rhetoric [as understood by Aristotle] is nothing other than the interpretation of concrete *Dasein*, the hermeneutic of *Dasein* itself" (quoted in Scult, p. 3). Aristotle's formulation of rhetoric involves an attempt at an understanding of the human's understanding of his or her own concrete situation in the world.

Despite his rigid hierarchies of categories of knowledge and his consistent obsession with paradigms of intellection, Aristotle did accept modes of understanding other than formal logic. This is best evinced in his theory of the emotions as outlined in his

Rhetoric. Prior to Aristotle, emotion was viewed as an entity “naturally opposed to reason and conceived of as something hostile to thoughtful judgement. It was Aristotle’s contribution,” according to Fortenbaugh, “to offer a very different view of emotion, so that emotional appeal would no longer be viewed as an extra-rational enchantment” (p. 18). Aristotle effected such a change in two ways. First of all, he emphasized the cognitive side of emotional response. By construing thought as a necessary condition of emotion, he showed that emotional response is intelligent behaviour based in human cognition; though not following the strict laws of formal logic, thought, as a necessary condition, opens emotion up to reason. Secondly, Aristotle based his theory of the emotions upon the uniquely human irrational part of the soul. As a part of the soul that is aware of its concrete existence, the uniquely human irrational as formulated by Aristotle gave him a platform from which to exposit emotion as a uniquely human complex that is simultaneously linked to the concrete and the cognitive. Aristotle’s project not only brought rhetoric as based on emotion into the realm of the reasonable, it opened up the circle of the reasonable to include an alternative form of perception and consciousness. This provided a model and a strong foundation for subsequent thinkers to reconsider paradigms of both thought and rhetoric in the perpetual quest to reconcile the rational with the concrete.

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