THE ROLE OF NEO-ARISTOTELIAN INVENTION
IN SELECTED SPEECHES OF
RONALD REAGAN

THESIS

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By

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Using the Aristotelian concept of artistic proof, this thesis analyzes nine televised speeches presented by President Reagan from February 1981 through April 1983. Reagan skillfully utilizes only two modes of rhetorical proof—ethos and pathos. However, his lack of logical proof has not lessened his effectiveness.

This study reveals several reasons for Reagan's rhetorical effectiveness and success. For example, Reagan's strong ethical image and personality comfort his audience and encourage their trust. His weaknesses in logical argument are overlooked by his audience because of his high personal appeal. Furthermore, Reagan's use of pathos appeals makes Americans feel good about themselves and their country, helping him to maintain his popularity. Finally, Reagan's skillful use of the television medium has increased his effectiveness.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Ronald Reagan is by far the most persuasive political speaker of our time. He derives remarkable power from his use of language."¹

In January of 1981, the American people witnessed the inauguration of the fortieth president of the United States, Ronald Wilson Reagan. Since 1981, the United States presidency has been in the hands of a man with an interesting ability to communicate. As a former celebrity of film and television, Reagan has long been in the public eye. His experience and skill in public communication have enabled him to accomplish much in his latest role as president. Nicknamed by the press as "The Great Communicator," Reagan has utilized the art of public speaking as a tool to muster support for his presidential policies.

Reagan prides himself on his skills in rhetoric. In his autobiography Where's the Rest of Me?, Reagan says that his greatest tools are, "my thoughts, my speaking abilities

and my reputation as an actor."\(^2\) Reagan's confidence in his abilities is evidenced by his willingness to appear on television and ask support of the American people on a variety of issues. Reagan's biographer Lou Cannon states that Reagan felt sure that his speaking skills alone would be "sufficient to persuade Congress and the country" to do what he wanted.\(^3\)

When compared to past presidents, Reagan stands out as an adept communicator with his own methods of successful persuasion. For example, President Lyndon Johnson never achieved the mass appeal that belongs to Reagan, but was famous for the Johnson "treatment" which consisted of "the overwhelming face-to-face plea, the calling in of debts, the soft, sorrowful aside that could be taken as a threat."\(^4\) Richard Nixon, as president, continually encountered problems with the press media. He preferred to address the American people directly through the use of television. Nixon took great efforts to project and nurture a proper presidential image for the television screen. But despite his attempts at credibility, Nixon


\(^3\)Lou Cannon, Reagan (New York: George Putnam and Son, 1982), 319.

suffered several negative traits which affected his communicative ability, "an aloof nature, a tendency to attribute to his critics the basest motives, a lack of capacity to relax and roll with the punches, physical awkwardness, [and] an inability to engage in small talk."  

President Jimmy Carter's soft-spoken style was welcomed by many American voters, at first. Ironically, however, this same soft style was later criticized for not being more "dynamic" or "uplifting" to Americans. It is the speaking style of Franklin Roosevelt which is compared most often to that of Reagan's. Both Reagan and Roosevelt took their problems, plans, and ideas to the American public. Roosevelt's fireside-chat methodology obviously influenced Reagan in his use of the television media.

David Gergen, director of White House Communications, reports, "Ronald Reagan is clearly to television what Franklin Roosevelt was to radio." Although the two men's policy views are different, their popularity and personality factors are similar:

Like Roosevelt, Reagan has a ready smile and a pleasant personality. People liked Roosevelt, as they


do Reagan, almost without regard to the effects of his policies. FDR was a masterful radio speaker; Reagan is at least equally skilled at working in front of cameras.8

If the medium is the message, then Reagan has chosen well. The medium of television is, in itself, an extremely persuasive tool. In the past few decades American presidents have increasingly used television to explain or sell their programs to the American people. In fact, Reagan has come to rely upon television as a "safety valve" when he experiences opposition from Congress. It is through television that Reagan is at his rhetorical best, but how does Reagan manage to achieve such success with his rhetoric?

Statement of Purpose

This paper analyzes the various persuasive appeals which Reagan has utilized in his televised speeches. Reagan has been successful at achieving public support for his legislative policies by effectively utilizing and relying on only two modes of rhetorical proof--ethos and pathos. It is particularly significant that, while Reagan is adept at using ethical and pathetic proof, his apparent lack of logical proof has not hurt his credibility. The focus of this study is to discover the reasons for Reagan's

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continued effectiveness, popularity and success despite his disregard for the use of logical proof.

A study of this kind is important because Reagan's rhetoric reflects the pertinent issues and concerns present in the 1980's. Erickson explains:

Reagan's orations stand as the clearest expression we have of what he believes and preaches to us and of what a majority of American voters responded to positively from 1980 until at least 1984. Reagan's speeches are artifacts of his public persona, as well as manifestations of the dreams and concerns that Americans felt most deeply in his time.9

Reagan's rhetoric is current and the timeliness of this study should benefit other students of rhetoric. The mastery of language and rhetoric, "requires not only the ability to speak or write, but also the skill of questioning the words we hear."10 This analysis is significant because it critiques certain speeches of President Reagan revealing the strengths and weaknesses in his rhetorical techniques. Knowledge of these techniques will enable the reader to better question the words and rhetoric of Reagan in the future.

It is not within the scope of this study to analyze the decisions or decision-making ability of President Reagan, nor to attempt to debate the correctness of his policies or those of his administration. Furthermore, this

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9Erickson, xiii.
10Ibid., 123.
analysis is limited to the first nine televised speeches delivered by Reagan from February, 1981, through April, 1983, and excludes State of the Nation addresses, untelevised speeches, and press conference texts.

Methodology

This analysis emphasizes the Aristotelian method of rhetorical criticism, but also employs other, more contemporary forms of criticism, which are Aristotelian in nature. While there are many methods of rhetorical criticism, few of these have survived the critics as well as the Aristotelian. Lester Thonssen calls Aristotle's Rhetoric, "... the most important single work in the literature of speechcraft." Furthermore, the criteria which Aristotle sets down in his Rhetoric are still taught in the classroom today. Golden, Berquist, and Coleman write, "So comprehensive and fundamental were Aristotle's views on rhetoric that it is no exaggeration to say that his treatise on the subject is the most important single work on persuasion ever written." Aristotle defined rhetoric as, "the faculty of observing in any given case


the available means of persuasion." He taught that within a body of rhetoric there are two kinds of proofs: artistic and nonartistic. This analysis is limited to artistic proofs, those created by the speaker to support his message. Aristotle described artistic proofs in *Rhetoric*:

> Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself.

The methodology used in this analysis is primarily Aristotelian since "Aristotle's threefold analysis of proof is every bit as appropriate to persuasion today as it was when written twenty-three centuries ago." The genre of speeches selected for analysis consists of the first nine speeches in which Reagan appeals to a television audience to help support or pass his legislation through Congress. The following speeches, delivered from February, 1981, through April, 1983, exhibit Reagan's persuasive influence on the American public as well as a

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.
wide variety of content:

1) State of the Nation's Economy--February 5, 1981
3) Additional Reductions in Federal Spending--September 24, 1981
4) The Budget Problem--April 29, 1982
5) The 1982 Tax Bill--August 16, 1982
6) The Troubled Middle East--September 1, 1982
7) Arms Control--November 22, 1982
9) The Problems in Central America--April 27, 1983

These nine addresses form, as it were, the rhetorical foundation for all subsequent speeches and are, therefore, the focus of this study. Each speech is examined for Reagan's personal ethos, logical arguments, and efforts to persuade the audience through emotional appeals. The source of the printed texts of these speeches is Vital Speeches of the Day, which records the entire speech including Reagan's blunders and slips of the tongue.

The fact that Reagan also employs ghost writers to help write and arrange his speeches has no particular significance on this study of his rhetorical appeal. As president, Reagan represents the embodiment of current political themes, beliefs and practices, and he personifies the leadership directives of the nation. Listeners generally do not distinguish between composers of ideas;
as Erickson explains, "when we hear our President speak to us, the words and messages affect us as if they were purely his, no matter who might have chosen, arranged, and edited them."16

**Review of Literature**

Speech journal indexes and *Thesis Abstracts* catalogues contain no doctoral dissertations, master’s theses, or articles such as the analysis proposed in this thesis. While there has been much material written about Reagan and his popularity, very little research has been done on his rhetorical strategies and techniques.

Journal articles have proved deficient in commentary on Reagan's rhetoric. Although hundreds of articles have been written on Reagan during the past seven years, the vast majority deal strictly with political current-events and other newsworthy materials.

Much of the current information available in books about Reagan also focuses on political issues during Reagan's presidency. Ronnie Duggar has written a policy biography of Reagan's policies in office.17 Richard Reeves explores the aspect of Reaganism as it relates to

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16Erickson, 8-9.

liberal democracy in America. An analysis of Reagan's policies and political decisions during his first two years is the subject of a book by Laurence Barrett.

In other available books about Reagan, it is evident that the information is not only politically based, but also outdated and not useful to this study. One book written by Wayne Valis and other contributing authors, examines Reagan's past political and personal history, then offers theorized projections of Reagan's future political decisions as president. Hedrick Smith and others evaluate Reagan's past accomplishments and offer future expectations under the Reagan presidency in their book written in 1980. Two other books, written even earlier, by Bill Boyarsky and Edmund Brown highlight Reagan's years as governor of California. While the format of these books offers the reader an informative history of Reagan's

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political life, neither of these works furnishes an analytical insight into the rhetorical strategies Reagan uses to persuade his audiences.

A survey of the literature reveals many articles helpful to this study. Daniel Yankelovich in "Reagan and the National Psyche," argues that Reagan's rhetorical success is based on America's state of disequilibrium.24 Sara Fritz, in "The 9-to-5 Presidency" states that Reagan's style and superb salesmanship contribute to his success.25 Representative of the articles which include analytical observations of the president's rhetorical ability is "Mark Crispin Miller on Television," a commentary on Reagan's effective use of television and rhetoric.26 Finally, James N. Miller discusses a topic quite relevant to this study in his article, "Ronald Reagan and the Techniques of Deception."27

Speech journals also contain several works which will be of great help in completing this study. In "Romantic


Democracy, Ronald Reagan and Presidential Heroes," which appears in *The Western Journal of Speech Communication*, Walter Fisher theorizes that Reagan's style and rhetoric have a mythic/romantic quality which is attractive to the American people.  

Communication Monographs also contains an article relevant to this study, "The Rhetoric of the American Western Myth." Rushing argues that Reagan's rhetorical style fits into America's image of the mythical town marshall.

Additional help for this study may be found in various sections of books about Reagan. The autobiography of Reagan should be helpful in tracing the ethos of the president. The Adlers' research on the wit and humor of Reagan will also aid this rhetorical study. Especially helpful to the research of Reagan's pathos appeals is a book by Paul Erickson in which the author exposes various rhetorical devices used by Reagan.

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31 Erickson, *Reagan Speaks*. 
Other books which will be helpful include books which highlight Aristotle and his three modes of rhetorical criticism. Of primary importance, of course, will be the theories of the *Rhetoric* by Aristotle. Although this writer will rely upon translations of this classical work, there are several responsible texts. Thonssen, Baird and Braden offer a detailed format of criticism closely aligned with Aristotle's original work on proofs. Richard McKeon provides an illuminating translation of the works of Aristotle. Helpful definitions and commentary on Aristotle's work will be found in a book written by Golden, Berquist and Coleman. Thus, while there is sufficient literature written on the general subject of Reagan as well as the subject of rhetorical criticism, there is no precedent for applying Aristotelian criteria to the rhetoric of Reagan.

Finally, the chapter outline of this study is as follows: I. Introduction, II. Reagan's Use of Ethos, III. Reagan's Use of Logos, IV. Reagan's Use of Pathos, and V. Conclusion.

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32 Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, *Speech Criticism*.


34 Golden, Berquist, and Coleman, *Western Thought*. 
CHAPTER II

REAGAN'S USE OF ETHOS

"Reagan was not believable because he was the Great Communicator; he was the Great Communicator because he was believable."

President Reagan's image has been a much publicized subject during his stay at the White House. Despite his errors, misstatements or distorted figures, the personable Reagan rose above it all. Patricia Schroeder, a U.S. Representative from Colorado, compared Reagan's unscathed image to a "Teflon" coating on which nothing sticks. One reporter labeled Reagan's buoyant ability as "anti-gravitational popularity." While several factors have contributed to Reagan's popularity, such as the favorable economic climate, of no less importance are Reagan's own personality and character. These affable features aided Reagan's bid for re-election in 1984. One columnist described the victorious Reagan as an

... old fashioned man who has just been given such a vote of confidence by an American public unconcerned about his age, his casual work habits or his lack of grasp of detail or mundane facts. The voters simply like what they see, an uncomplicated guy who has a few

35Cannon, Reagan, 371.

simple ideas and just keeps repeating them over and over.37

Many reasons have been suggested and analyzed to explain Reagan's immense popularity in office. Much of this analytical commentary has been written during Reagan's second term in office, but is applicable to his earlier speeches, as well. Many critics and columnists have revealed traits or patterns which furnish insight into Reagan's appeal during the timespan of the nine selected speeches. For instance, Lance Morrow wrote of Reagan's popularity in 1984: "Reagan's personal authenticity is one of his greatest strengths, one reason why people tend to trust him even if they utterly disagree with his principles."38 Americans appear to like the multi-faceted image which Reagan projects. Some are comforted by the sheer normality of the man. Other members of the voting public see Reagan as a leader of mythic proportions, riding in to save the nation. In this respect Reagan has been compared to an archetypal character of America's beloved Western myth. "Even the assassination attempt," Sarah Hankins explains, "did much to fortify the Reagan legend; walking into the hospital with a bullet in the chest,

Reagan seemed the real-life counterpart to his Western film image.39 Walter Fisher agrees with this Western-hero image of Reagan and adds that Reagan's traditional values of conservatism also fit nicely into the archetypal role: "Like the savior of the West, he [Reagan] exuded honesty, sincerity, innocence, optimism, and certainty."40 Thus one of Reagan's greatest attributes in his political career has been his ethos, in other words, the image he projects, his ethical appeal.

Many studies have been done on Aristotle's rhetorical component of ethos. In the early 1950's, Hovland, Janis, and Kelley's study of ethical credibility produced results quite similar to the teachings of Aristotle. Their studies revealed that source credibility was perceived by the audience to consist of expertise, trustworthiness and positive intentions toward the receiver.41 In the 1960's, a new factor of ethos, dynamism, was suggested by Berlo and Lemert.42 However, later studies proved dynamism to

40Fisher, 302.
be an unstable factor in the variation of a speaker's ethos appeal and was discounted. Another area of study focused on the variations of the effects of persuasion. In 1949, a study was conducted of a speaker's ethos as revealed by his initial introduction. A corollary study showed that the perceived attractiveness of the speaker effects the ethos of the speaker, and Hovland and Weiss discovered that a speaker with high ethical appeal produces a greater opinion shift than a speaker with low ethos.

Other researchers have found that ethos can be varied by factors within the delivery of the speech. Studies conducted by Winthrop prove Aristotle's assertions that a

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good delivery of a speech strongly increases the ethos of the speaker, while several experimental studies by McCrosky indicate that a speaker's use of valid evidence can also increase the ethos of that speaker. Furthermore, Allport and Cantril discover in their experiment that audience members assign certain personality traits to a speaker based on the vocal aspect of the delivery.

The effects of studies such as these point to two aspects of ethos, initial and derived ethos. Initial ethos is the ethos image a speaker brings into a rhetorical situation prior to the delivery of the message. Derived ethos is brought about and instigated during the delivery of the message. To better understand Reagan's use of ethos, both initial and derived ethos must be examined.

The initial ethos exhibited by a speaker is formed before the actual delivery of the message. Thonssen, Baird, and Braden emphasize the necessity of knowing a speaker's personal background when examining the element of ethos:


But to see a speech in its fullest context the critic must also follow a second line of inquiry; he must seek to understand the utterance as an expression of the speaker's personality, as the culmination of his training, practical experience, reading, prior conditioning, aspiration, and goals.50

In order to understand the speeches better, one must understand the speaker and what has influenced his background. In the case of Ronald Reagan, part of his ethos is developed from his public-performer background. As Sarah Hankins concludes in her study, Reagan's ethos and the popular "mythic characterizations" associated with him are apparent even before his presidential election in 1980.51 Thus it is necessary to explore Reagan's personal background and how it relates to his ethos formation.

Born in Tampico, Illinois, on February 6, 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan was the second of two sons born to John and Nelle Reagan. John Reagan, an alcoholic, supported his family as a shoe salesman, while Nelle Reagan taught her sons the finer points of the dramatic arts. Poetry and speech recitations, as well as Sunday School pageants, were experienced by the young Ronald Reagan. Although football was Reagan's favorite activity at Dixon High School in Dixon, Illinois, he also participated in many school plays. Reagan recalls: "All of this commenced to create in me a

50Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, 366.
51Hankins, 33-34.
personality schizo-split between sports and the stage. The fact was, I suppose, that I just liked showing off."

Reagan continued to be very active in both drama and football at Eureka College. During his college years, Reagan supported himself through the help of scholarships, loans, dishwashing jobs, and savings from seven summers of lifeguarding. In 1932, Reagan graduated from Eureka College with a degree in economics.

After graduation from college, Reagan's taste for show business led him to a job as a radio sports announcer for an Iowa radio station. After five years, "Dutch" Reagan the sports announcer became Reagan the actor. Following a single screen test, Reagan was given a seven-year contract with Warner Brothers. During his movie career Reagan, "characteristically played the leading man's best friend." While many of Reagan's films were of the B-grade quality, still, several films were considered A-grade material. His first movie was *Love Is On the Air*, in 1937, followed by more memorable films, such as, *Brother Rat; Knute Rockne, All-American; King's Row*; and *Voice of*

52Reagan and Hubler, 97.


the Turtle. Having made fifty-one movies, Reagan ended his movie career in 1957 with his final film performance in *Hellcats of the Navy*. During his Hollywood stay Reagan served as the outspoken president of the Screen Actor's Guild for five straight terms. His anti-Communist rhetoric while in the Guild won him many friends, but also some enemies. Biographer Lou Cannon says this about Reagan's movie career: "Ronald Reagan spent the best years of his life in Hollywood, that magic land where he learned most of what he knows about acting, trade unions and Communists, and much of what he believes about politics."55

Reagan's crossover from film to television occurred in 1954, when he hosted the General Electric Theater. In the eight years following, Reagan toured 135 General Electric plants and spoke with 250,000 employees. During the plant visits Reagan shook hands, answered questions, signed autographs and gave political speeches, all of which were good experience for the campaign trail. Reagan's popularity had risen to such a degree that, when the G. E. Theater was cancelled in 1962, Reagan was forced to cancel three years of advanced bookings.56 From 1964 to 1966, Reagan hosted the show *Death Valley Days*, an obvious reflection of his Western associations discussed earlier.


56Reagan and Hubler, 304.
It was during this time that Reagan gained his expertise in working with the television media.

Politically, Reagan considered himself a liberal Democrat and voted accordingly until 1948. At this time he became disillusioned with big government and switched his loyalty to the more conservative Republican party. Reagan's G. E. tour speeches had focused on the evils of an encroaching government and the threat of Communism. On this theme Reagan appeared in politics as a right-wing Republican. Campaigning for Barry Goldwater in 1964, Reagan delivered a televised speech which drew a considerable amount of attention for both Goldwater and Reagan:

In a half hour of national television, Ronald Reagan had transformed himself from a fading celebrity into the nation's most important conservative politician. With the wisdom of historical hindsight, we now see that special half hour as both the culmination of a long political evolution and the beginning of a remarkable career which has done much to transform the nature of American government.\(^{57}\)

Although Goldwater lost his bid for the presidency, Reagan's political career began to take off. The response to the Goldwater speech was significant because it "won the fading actor an instant national following that has never abandoned him."\(^{58}\)

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\(^{57}\)Cannon, Reagan, 13.

Three years later Reagan was elected governor of California. As governor, Reagan was popular and successful, and was re-elected to a second term. He made a little-known bid for the presidency in 1968, but he was never an official candidate, and the idea was abandoned. Reagan ended his eight-year reign as governor in 1975, with a hopeful eye on the 1976 presidential nomination. After an unsuccessful and disorganized campaign for the nomination, Reagan tried again four years later. In 1980, Reagan was elected the fortieth president of the United States and won a victory for re-election in 1984.

The colorful background of Reagan has figured prominently in Reagan's formation of ethos and has been a key factor in winning the election. The American public like Reagan's disposition and character; they like his ethos. The image Reagan has acquired for himself is a mixture of nice guy and leader. Just as his movie roles cast him as a nice, likeable friend, Reagan uses this appealing image to aid him in his political life. Goldman explains Reagan's appeal this way: "Reagan had never lost that quality of next-door neighborliness and had never become part of the system, not even when he presided over it. He was still
playing best friend, a citizen cast up among politi-
cians. . . ."59 This friendly, affable image served its
purpose; it enabled Reagan to be more identifiable to the
public. At the same time, Reagan's image and the values he
advocated, were welcome leadership qualities to a troubled
country. The timing was perfect for a leader with such an
image:

His emergence as a political figure was based in large
part on his charm and also on his identification with
a conservative following that laced effective leader-
ship, at a time when the nation seemed somehow to have
strayed from old fashioned virtues. Reagan, for many,
was a personal and ideological symbol of these
virtues.60

Thus, Reagan's role was prepared for him. The script
called for a leader quite different from the Carter image
present at the time. During the 1980 presidential elec-
tions, incumbent Jimmy Carter was having some problems with
his image while his administration was besieged with un-
timely difficulties. Hugh Sidey explains:

... it was about the time when interest rates and
inflation were both hovering near 20%, the Soviets
were machine-gunning their way around Afghanistan and
American hostages were being held in Iran that a lot
of Americans abruptly decided that his blue jeans were

59 Peter Goldman, "Campaign '84: The Inside Story,"
Newsweek, Election Extra special edition, November-December
1984, 38.

60 William Halsey and P. F. Collier, eds. Merit
Student's Encyclopedia (New York: Macmillan Educational
really tacky, his goodness unreal and his amazing ability to absorb facts unproductive.61

Many Americans seemed to resent Carter's helplessness and his attitude that the problems were out of his hands and unsolvable.62

In contrast, Reagan continued to project himself as a leader who could "make America strong again," as he said in his campaign theme. This image of strength and self-confidence was just what America wanted to hear at the time. The Reagan leadership image was offered to the American public as a direct contrast to Carter's image. Joseph Spear explains, "Because Jimmy Carter put so much emphasis on presenting himself as a humble man of the people, looking like a leader was sometimes a difficult task."63 Thus, Reagan's political rise to the presidency was due in part to timing but even more to the ethos which he had formulated and then projected to the American people. Goldman explains the appeal that Reagan's ethos held for the public:

... he was, in the eyes of a commanding majority of his countrymen, a strong, decisive man who embodied the best of the American past, held a clear-eyed vision of the future and was above all else a leader. He had taken office at a time when, as he put it himself, an awful lot of people thought that the good

61Hugh Sidey, "Why the Criticisms Don't Stick," Time, 21 May 1984, 53.
62Goldman, 36.
63Spear, 15.
days were over for America—that the country had reached the limits of its dreams and would never again be what it once had been.64

**Ethical Components**

Reagan utilizes, to some degree, the three Aristotelian proofs which lead to successful rhetoric: ethical proof, logical proof, and pathetic proof. Ethical proof, to be successful, depends upon the favorable image projected by the speaker. According to Aristotle, "There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character—the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill.65 The authors of *Rhetoric of Western Thought* explain this concept:

> Since the image construct in the minds of the members of the audience concerning personality impact of the communicator is a major determinant of message response, it is incumbent on the speaker to reveal those positive traits necessary to create a favorable impression on the hearers.66

Although other forms of ethical criticism exist, the critical standards set down by Thonssen, Baird, and Braden in *Speech Criticism*67 adhere most closely to those formulated by Aristotle and are used in this study.

64Goldman, 36.
65Aristotle, 1380.
66Golden, Berquist, and Coleman, 226.
67Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, *Speech Criticism*. 
The character of a speaker is judged by how closely he associates himself through his message to the following virtuous qualities:

<table>
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<th>Justice</th>
<th>Magnificence</th>
<th>Gentleness</th>
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<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Magnanimity</td>
<td>Prudence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperance</td>
<td>Liberality</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
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By elevating himself or his cause morally above an opponent, a speaker attempts to dispose of any negative impressions about himself and his message.

Sagacity refers to the wisdom or intelligence of the speaker. If a speaker is perceived as having expertise, tact and common sense, his credibility will rise in the minds of an audience. A definite requirement suggested by Aristotle in demonstrating sagacity, is for the speaker to be aware of current events and exhibit intelligence when discussing them.

Good will refers to the speaker's ability to show that he has the audience's best interests at heart. A speaker does this by identifying with his audience and its problems, hopes and aspirations. A speaker wishing to be thought a bearer of good will often presents himself as one "who has done some good service" to the audience.68

Additionally, there is a fourth element of ethos: wit. While wit does not belong within the guidelines of Aristotle's three components, it is nonetheless a major

68Ibid., 459.
part of a speaker's personality and thus a vital element to a speaker's perceived ethos. Any examination of Reagan's ethos would be incomplete without including a section on his use of humor.

In order to determine which of the Aristotelian components Reagan utilizes the most, a component frequency chart was composed by careful examination of each speech for ethos characteristics as outlined by Thonssen, Baird, and Braden (See Appendix, Table 1). Although very elementary in its structure, the frequency chart does help to determine Reagan's primary form of ethical appeal. The chart underscores the fact that Reagan emphasizes his own moral character the most, followed by the extension of good will, and, finally, sagacity, Reagan's weakest area. Examples of Reagan's wit are interspersed throughout.

Character

Reagan most often tries to create or enhance his ethos by focusing on various aspects of his personal character. According to Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, speakers use any of the following methods to enhance or emphasize personal character:

1) Associating himself or his message with what is virtuous and elevated,
2) Linking an opponent or opponent's cause with what is not virtuous,
3) Bestowing praise upon himself or his cause, and
4) Removing unfavorable impressions previously held
 by the audience.69

The method Reagan utilizes most often is to associate himself or his message with several virtuous qualities. In short, Reagan continually points out to his audience how good and moral a person he is. For example, when Reagan wished to link himself to the Aristotelian virtue of justice, his rhetoric included statements such as:

I stated during the campaign and I repeat now, I will not stand by and see those of you who are dependent on Social Security deprived of the benefits you've worked so hard to earn. I make that pledge to you as your President.

(July 27, 1981)

I cannot and will not stand by and see financial hardship imposed on the more than 36 million senior citizens who have worked and served this nation throughout their lives. They deserve better from us.

(September 24, 1981)

Another Aristotelian virtue which Reagan associates himself with is magnanimity. When Reagan emphasized his magnanimous nature, he often explained to the television audience how he gracefully relented on Congressional arguments:

Over the next three years, the increase we had originally planned in the defense budget will be cut by 13 billion. I'll confess, I was reluctant about this. . . .

(September 24, 1981)

And then I swallowed hard and volunteered to split the difference between our $60 and their $35, and settle for $48. And that was rejected.

(April 29, 1982)

69Ibid., 458.
Make no mistake about it--this is a compromise. I had to swallow hard to agree to any revenue increase.  
(August 16, 1982)

Reagan likes to reinforce the "strong America" theme by issuing strong, courageous statements in his speeches. These statements are image-builders focusing on Reagan's demands for bold action. In order to associate himself with the virtue of courage, Reagan has issued such statements as,

When we measure how harshly these years of inflation, lower productivity, and uncontrolled Government growth have affected our lives, we know we must act and act now. We must not be timid.  
(February 5, 1981)

I know you've heard and read on the news a variety of statements attributed to various "authoritative Government sources--who prefer not to have their names used." Well, I think you know my name, and I think I'm an "authoritative source", since I'm right in the middle of what's going on here in Washington.  
(August 16, 1982)

In his television speeches Reagan's "good guy" image dominates. He appears kind and generous, as well as strong and courageous. He projects himself as an unselfish and virtuous man by issuing statements such as,

Those of us in the bipartisan coalition want to give this economy, and the future of this nation, back to the people.  
(July 27, 1981)

... I have become more and more deeply convinced that the human spirit must be capable of rising above dealing with other nations and human beings by threatening their existence.  
(March 23, 1983)
In addition to his focus on his own virtues, Reagan uses a second method to enhance his character, that of denouncing his enemies or opposition. Reagan portrays himself as the protector of the people. By uniting with the audience against the common enemy of government, Reagan promotes an image of being the great defender of American values. In this vein, Reagan does indeed fit Fisher's earlier description of a mythical town marshal. Part of this job, as Reagan sees it, is to expose the unvirtuous characteristics of the enemy. Through careful wording, Reagan successfully makes his opposition appear to be the "bad guys." Some examples of this technique include:

Our opponents in the beginning didn't want a tax bill at all. So what is the purpose behind their change of heart? They've put a tax program together for one reason only, to provide themselves with a political victory.

(July 27, 1981)

There's also a little sleight of hand in that trigger mechanism. You see, their bill, the Committee bill, ensures that the 1983 deficit will be $6 1/2 billion greater than their own trigger requires. As it stands now, the design of their own bill will not meet the trigger they've put in. Therefore, the third year tax cut will automatically never take place.

(July 27, 1981)

There hasn't been too much opportunity in the last 40 years to see what our philosophy can do. But we know what theirs can do. The longest sustained inflation in history, the highest interest rates in a hundred years, eight recessions since World War II and a trillion-dollar debt.

(April 29, 1982)
By putting his opponents in a less than virtuous light, Reagan has served two purposes. On the one hand, by exposing the underhandedness of the enemy, he has lessened their credibility, and on the other Reagan and his policy are viewed as more virtuous and ethical in intent and purpose.

A third method Reagan uses, though less often, is to elevate his moral character by bestowing praise on himself and his cause. The chief purpose of this technique is to increase the speaker's credibility without seeming like a "braggart." Through careful wording Reagan sends subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle hints to the audience that he is a successful leader with successful programs to offer. Reagan's use of personal praise occurs most often in his first five speeches dealing with the budget and the economy. For example:

The rate of inflation is no longer in double-digit figures. The dollar has regained strength in the international money markets and businessmen and investors are making decisions with regard to industrial development, modernization and expansion, all of this based on anticipation of our program being adopted and put into operation.

(July 27, 1981)

Start with interest rates—the basic cause of the recent recession. The prime rate was 21 1/2 percent. Last week it was 14 1/2 percent, and today, three major banks have lowered it to 14 percent. . . . That
double-digit inflation (12.4 percent) has been cut in half for the last six months. ... All of this in 10 months hardly looks like a program failed to me. (August 16, 1982)

In four of the five economic speeches Reagan produces a "before and after" list of statistical accomplishments which bolster his ethical image. By reminding the audience of past situations, Reagan makes it clear to the public that Reaganomics and its instigator are to be thanked for the current favorable situation. He tends to list his accomplishments to the American people, even though they may not be major ones.

Prior to many of Reagan's television speeches, newspapers and magazines printed speculative articles abundant with criticism and commentary of the President's plans, programs and future speech. However, by removing unfavorable audience impressions, a fourth method listed by Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, Reagan successfully handled these criticisms and used them to his advantage in the speeches. When stressing the merits of his plan or bill, Reagan often attempted to remove unfavorable impressions the audience might have held. Some examples include:

Many senior citizens have been led to believe this is a new tax added on top of the present income tax. There is no truth whatsoever to that. (August 16, 1982)

I'm sure you've heard that "we're proposing the largest single tax increase in history." The truth is: We are proposing nothing of the kind. Then there is the one that "our economic recovery program has
failed, so I've abandoned it and turned to increasing taxes instead of trying to reduce Federal spending."

Well, don't you believe that one either.

Yes, there is a tax bill before the Congress tied to a program of further cuts in spending. It is not, however, "the greatest single tax increase in history." Possibly it could be called the greatest tax reform in history. . . .

(August 16, 1982)

Now, before I go any further, let me say to those who invoked the memory of Vietnam: There is no thought of sending American combat troops to Central America. They are not needed--indeed, they have not been requested there. All our neighbors ask of us is assistance in training and arms to protect themselves while they build a better, freer life.

(April 27, 1983)

By removing or minimizing the negative impressions an audience may have of him or his message, Reagan soothes his audience and improves his image as an honest, sincere man.

Thus, Reagan's ethos reflects the element of character extremely well. His speeches reveal a man beyond reproach or doubt.

Good Will

Although Reagan leans heavily on his moral character for an ethical image, he also utilizes the element of good will. This element is second on the frequency chart. Through his identification with the audience and his praise of them, Reagan illustrates his good will. The authors of Speech Criticism explain this Aristotelian concept: "To create good will in his listeners the speaker must know his
audience so that he can present himself as a friend to what they consider good, and enemy to what they consider evil."

Reagan does show that he "knows his audience" by identifying with them and their problems. In several speeches Reagan almost conversationally acknowledges the feelings of his audience:

You won't like it, I didn't like it, but we have to face the truth. . . . (February 5, 1981)

Believe me, if some of you are confused, I can understand. (August 16, 1982)

I know that all of you want peace and so do I. (March 23, 1983)

By pointing out the problems encountered by typical, middle-class Americans and their families, Reagan identifies with his television audience and shows them he is on their side. In his first televised speech dealing with the nation's economy, Reagan emphasizes his understanding of several American problems:

What has happened to the American dream of owning a home? Only 10 years ago a family could buy a home and the monthly payment averaged little more than a quarter--25 cents of every dollar earned. Today it takes 42 cents of every dollar of income. So, fewer than one out of 11 families can afford to buy their first new home.

70 Ibid., 459.
All of you who are working now know that even with cost-of-living pay raises you can't keep up with inflation. . . . Your standard of living is going down.

(Feb. 5, 1981)

In addition to identifying with his audience and their problems, Reagan also illustrates his good will toward the audience by giving them praise. Most often this praise is given to the American people for their past response to his speeches. For example:

In these six months we've done so much and have come so far. It's been the power of millions of people like you who have determined that we will make America great again. You have made the difference up to now. You will make the difference again.

(July 27, 1981)

And you made history with your telegrams, your letters, your phone calls, and yes, personal visits to your elected representatives.

(July 27, 1981)

Time and again, the American people--you--have worked wonders that have astounded the world. We've done it in war and peace, in good times and bad. Because we're a people who care and who know how to pull together--family by family, community by community, coast to coast--to change things for the better.

(April 29, 1982)

It is clear that Reagan has a sense for knowing and "saying what people want to hear." McCroskey's research supports the fact that communicators who "express views similar to our own are more credible than those who express

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contrary views." A speaker can build his ethos by aligning himself with the audience's views first, and then offering his own arguments. In a somewhat cynical observation of Reagan, Mark Miller notes Reagan's successful use of identification:

... he is extraordinarily adept at affecting tones and postures which people trust without thinking. In other words, Reagan is considered "nice," not because he is nice, but in part because his image answers (temporarily) the emotional needs of quite a few Americans, who, tired of feeling cynical about their leaders, will swallow anything. And, like a good TV commercial, Reagan's image goes down easy, calming his audience with sweet inversions of the truth.

While Reagan's skill at using methods of good will may be self-serving or partisan, his ability to sound sincere has inspired immense trust from his audience. This is one of Reagan's chief accomplishments while in office; he has "made Americans feel good," and his attempts at issuing good will are one way he has achieved that end.

Sagacity

The Aristotelian element most lacking in Reagan's rhetorical style is sagacity. Sagacity in a speaker is demonstrated by "intellectual integrity and wisdom."

72McCroskey, Rhetorical Communication, 66.
73Miller, "Virtu Inc.," 28.
74Fotheringham, 76.
75Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, 459.
This is the area for which Reagan is most often criticized. Author Bill Boyarsky describes Reagan as,

... intelligent but not brilliant; quick-witted but without deep intellectual curiosity. ... He talks in long, rambling sentences, and once he has found an answer to a question he will use it over and over again, clinging to familiar words as if they were part of a movie script. The same phrases, and even the same paragraphs, appear in speech after speech.76

Reagan is not an expert in politics, as his background denotes, and is not always viewed as sagacious in the job he holds. However, Reagan's awareness of current events is noteworthy, particularly in the foreign affairs speeches. Two examples in which Reagan illustrates his grasp of current affairs are as follows:

On the small island of Grenada, at the southern end of the Caribbean chain, the Cubans, with Soviet financing and backing, are in the process of building an airfield with a 10,000-foot runway. Grenada doesn't even have an air force. Who is it intended for?
(March 23, 1983)

Tonight in El Salvador--because of ruthless guerrilla attacks--much of the fertile land cannot be cultivated; less than half the rolling stock of the railways remains operational; bridges, water facilities, telephone and electrical systems have been destroyed and damaged. In one 22 month period, there were 5,000 interruptions of electrical power.
(April 27, 1983)

These examples reveal the President to be a well-informed speaker. Reagan's choice of foreign affairs topics tends to illustrate to the public his appearance of sagacity.

because few Americans know enough about the topics to dispute him. Research findings by McCroskey support this approach:

Whether the audience is familiar with the evidence the communicator uses, or with similar evidence, appears to determine whether the communicator may build his ethos by including evidence in his message. If the evidence is unfamiliar to the audience, it has a favorable impact.77

Since the tax and deficit issues strike closer to home than foreign affairs subjects, the viewing public is not as susceptible to the Reagan rhetoric pertaining to these subjects as they are to the the foreign affairs topics.

Other than the inclusion of foreign policy materials, Reagan has no strong instances of sagacity that can be documented for analysis. Although Reagan occasionally appears quite informed and intellectual, his bluff is often called. Several criticisms have been published about Reagan's mistakes, blunders, exaggerated figures, and misquotes. "By usual standards of presidential performance," writes Kurt Andersen, "Reagan might be judged a failure. He regularly loses track of his facts, or gets them wrong, and he follows his ideology no matter where it leads."78

77McCroskey, Rhetorical Communication, 67.

78Kurt Andersen, "The Magic and the Message," Time, 27 August 1984, 10. Many of Reagan's errors have led to illogical reasoning and are examined more closely in Chapter III: "Reagan's Use of Logos."
Several critics have pointed to Reagan's casual, detached style of presidency as a source of his problems. His strong dependence upon index cards and staff members to keep him informed on political issues has critics claiming he is "a figurehead president who may be too aloof to govern effectively, especially in a crisis." One columnist described a disastrous meeting in which Reagan attempted to participate without his crutch of printed information:

We've got to worry about land-based missiles, he [Reagan] said, and not the submarine missiles, because they're not nuclear. In fact, they are, as everyone else in the room knew and no one dared say. A Democratic congressman rolled his eyes. A member of Reagan's own team stared at the ceiling. The secretary of defense appeared to be counting the grain-lines on the table. The silence was leaden, and only when Reagan excused himself a short while later did the talk get back on track.

Although sagacity is Reagan's weakest area of ethos, his credibility has not been damaged by lack of it. How has Reagan maintained such a strong ethical image if he fails to appear an intelligent speaker?

There are three main reasons why Reagan's weakness in sagacity has not lessened his ethical appeal. One is that the American people like and trust him enough to forgive his weak points of intellect. Polls show that during the

79Fritz, 28.
80Goldman, 38.
Reagan presidency his personal popularity was always rated higher than his job performance. Reagan has succeeded in building an image of being on the public's side, one of our teammates in the fight with big government. If Americans criticize this member, they are rejecting their chief spokesman, one of their own. Since Reagan's rhetoric and image so closely reflect the American ideal, it is easy to like him and difficult to criticize him. Bernard Guetta wrote, "Some people may find the President's image too sweet to be true, but the vast majority loves it. . . . America likes President Reagan so much that it forgives him everything." With Reagan there is a tendency to emphasize his strong points and overlook his weak ones.

Even Reagan's worst enemies marvel at his dirt-doesn't-stick "Teflon" presidency. Voters forgive Reagan his verbal gaffes, and even his policy blunders. Many ordinary citizens feel they can say about Reagan, even though he lives in the White House, that "he is one of us." A second reason for Reagan's credibility despite his flaws is the idea that to the American public, Reagan's grasp of details is not as important in his job performance

81 Miller, "Techniques of Deception," 68.


as are other qualities. His ethical appeal is judged more by his personal character than his exhibition of sagacity.

As Alvin Sanoff explains,

Even the President's most loyal backers acknowledge that he does not have the detailed command of issues exhibited by predecessors Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter. Yet analysts view him as perfectly suited for a role that puts a premium on personal appeal and persuasive ability.84

It is obvious that Reagan does put a premium on personal appeal. His treatment of evidence and facts and any other form of logical proof is de-emphasized or ignored all together. Public sentiment leans toward image and presentation. Hugh Sidey stresses the fact that while critics may measure the President against a perfected ideal, the public, judging at a lower standard, must select a "warm body" to govern them.85 Regardless of Reagan's weaknesses or criticisms, Sidey writes that Reagan's job is made up of other requisites:

... weight is also given in the presidency to optimism, good cheer, obvious enjoyment of the job, grace, personal kindness, decisiveness, boldness, individuality and other rather misty elements. They add up to leadership, which is always imperfect but nevertheless creates a national momentum and vitality.86

85Sidey, 53.
86Ibid.
A third reason for Reagan's success despite the problem with sagacity can be traced to his sense of naivété which is prevalent in his speeches. No one believes that Reagan is intentionally lying when he commits his errors. Green and MacColl explain, "Reagan is telling the truth—not our truth, but his truth. He'd pass a polygraph test because, in a triumph of belief over reality, he seems to have persuaded himself that all his contrived anecdotes and funny numbers are accurate." 87 Although the facts and figures may later be proved wrong, they are, however, delivered with sincerity. The errors he commits are ordinary, commonplace mistakes which are typical of the human race. *Newsweek* magazine reported that Reagan's "slips of the tongue" are an "endearing further token of his common manhood." 88 Blumenthal agrees, "He doesn't willfully distort the facts, his mistakes are unintentional and spontaneous. So even if the press catches Reagan on inaccuracies, he's not caught." 89

Reagan's credible, moral image overwhelms the criticisms once again. His projections as a trustworthy leader take precedence over his weakness in sagacity.


Wit

An examination of Reagan's image would be incomplete without discussing his use of humor. Reagan's skill at utilizing humor in his speeches has inspired a book entitled *The Reagan Wit* written by Bill Adler and Bill Adler Jr.90 The authors believe that Reagan has skillfully shown in his speeches that wit is "part of him and his personality."91 Although Aristotle did not include wit as an individual category of ethos, many modern rhetoricians believe it to be an essential tool of persuasion. McCroskey stresses the value of wit when used in a rhetorical setting:

People like to laugh and smile, and a communicator who makes it possible for them to do so will be attended to more closely. Humor does not mean just telling stories. It includes wit, which probably is more compelling. To phrase an idea in a humorous way will tend to call attention to it.92

Joseph Spear also contends that Reagan's sense of humor has helped his image as a "natural nice guy."93 Edwin Corbett also acknowledges that a speaker can effectively use humor to "disarm an audience or to dispose an

90 Adler and Adler, Jr., *The Reagan Wit*.
91 Ibid., 7.
93 Spear, 277.
audience favorably."94 Reagan's witty manner has contributed to his popularity as President:

From the first few moments of his presidency, Reagan's wit illuminated his administration, helping to soften the rough spots that always accompany a new President. Through his humor Reagan soon became known as one of the most amiable Presidents, and certainly among the wittiest. . . . That wit provides a window through which to view our President and how he deals with his office and the world.95

As with the elements of character and good will, Reagan has used wit as a persuasive tool in his speeches. In his desire to put the audience in a favorable frame of mind, Reagan has used puns and anecdotes. This type of humor serves two purposes. One purpose is that it helps Reagan's ethical appeal by illustrating that he is a good-natured man. The second reason is that this kind of humor disarms the audience and ingratiates the speaker to the audience before Reagan issues arguments that might "not readily gain acceptance."96 Some examples include:

If I could paraphrase a well known statement by Will Rogers that he never met a man he didn't like, I'm afraid we have some people around here who never met a tax they didn't hike.

(July 27, 1981)

One such tourist, an elderly, small-town gentleman and his wife, were listening to a tour guide go on about the wonders of the volcano Mt. Etna. He spoke of the


95Adler and Adler Jr., 103.

96Corbett, 326.
great heat it generated, the boiling lava, etc. Finally, the old boy turned to his wife and said, "We got a volunteer fire department at home--put that thing out in 15 minutes."

(September 24, 1981)

In the first example Reagan used a pun to set the stage for various arguments for his tax bill. In the second example, Reagan used a humorous anecdote to supplement his argument for more volunteerism in America and less government intervention.

Reagan's wit is also exemplified through his use of humorous analogies. The analogical examples encourage an audience to look at a problem or issue in story form. Reagan's scenario is complete with characters, plots and themes. This type of analogy is used to illustrate a point perceived by the speaker as negative and in need of change.

For example:

... [Senator Domenici] recalled the words of that great heavyweight champion Joe Louis just before he stepped into the ring against Billy Conn. There had been some speculation that Billy might be able to avoid Joe's lethal right hand. Joe said, "Well, he can run but he can't hide."

Senator Domenici said to me, "That's just what we're facing on runaway Federal Spending. We can try to run from it, but we can't hide."

(September 24, 1981)

As a people we have a proud tradition of generosity. More than a century ago a Frenchman came to America and later wrote a book for his countrymen telling them what he had seen here. He told them that in America when a citizen saw a problem that needed solving, he would cross the street and talk to a neighbor about it and the first thing you know a committee would be formed and before long the problem would be solved.
"And then," he added, "you may not believe this but not a single bureaucrat would ever have been involved."

(September 24, 1981)

In these passages Reagan attempts to satirize the deficit and discredit bureaucracy in an analogical form. Reagan benefits from this humorous form of expression more than if he had just stated the problem or issues at hand. "If we can get an audience laughing at a situation somewhat removed from the point being attacked," suggests Corbett, "we will find it easier to make the audience perceive the absurdity when we make an application of the analogy."97

While Reagan did not utilize these forms of humor in all of his speeches, he is obviously aware of their value and benefits. Although no examples were present in these nine speeches, one of Reagan's favorite forms of humor is the self-deprecating joke. This type of humor is also beneficial to Reagan's ethos in that it makes him seem more human, more "like us," an important characteristic of ethos. The Adlers explain that Reagan's skill at using wit extends to all facets of Reagan's political persona:

Reagan knows how to use his wit, how to defend himself with it, how to mold it into a formidable political weapon, how to poke fun at himself, and how to use it to defend ideas he believes are vital to the nation and the world. But although he is cognizant of

97Ibid.
the usefulness of this important ability, Ronald Reagan's wit flows naturally and freely. 98

Ethical Inferences

The previous sections in this chapter prove that Reagan does use various ethical components in his speeches. Reagan's preference and frequency of appeals are also noted in each section. It has been established that Reagan enjoys a high ethical appeal as a source, despite his weakness in sagacity. How has Reagan's ethical image served him in his role as President? There are three inferences which can be drawn from Reagan's use of ethos. Reagan's ethos has 1) created a malleable presidency, 2) created a favorable press review, and 3) allowed him cost-free years in office.

In the first inference, it should be pointed out that Reagan's image has come to mean all things to all people. According to Peter Goldman, Reagan's 1980 campaign image was molded so that it would be "the clearest possible message that Reagan stands for leadership and control." 99 Richard Wirthlin, Reagan's campaign manager, discovered the need and molded the campaign to fit. In contrast, Reagan has been described as "putty" in the hands of his advisors,

98 Adler and Adler Jr., 7.
99 Goldman, 36.
tending to follow their advice "almost blindly." To others, Reagan's arrival to the Presidency stood for a return to elegance and elan, and offered a tasteful contrast to the Carter image. Another image popular with the public is his western sheriff image discussed earlier. One columnist describes how Reagan plays on this image:

. . . the big old sheriff, protector of the weak, loping toward Air Force One with his little lady at his side. Although this pose demands the obligatory Western gear, it comes through more in Reagan's oratorical style than in his boots and shirts. He speaks quietly, a little hesitantly, with his eyes to the ground, as if not used to public speaking; and he often punctuates his statements with a folksy little waggle of the head and shoulders, so that we won't take his speechifying too seriously. All in all, the style suggests another complex pose of innocence--this President is a pure-hearted cowpoke, respectful to the ladies, wry and self-effacing with the boys.

This type of strong image is very comforting to some members of the public. One magazine editor described her faith in Reagan and his Western image: "Ronald Reagan is a Westerner. . . . I still see Ronald Reagan in that heroic mold of the old West. He is the weathered man who rides in

100 Bakshian, 155.


102 Miller, "Virtu Inc.," 29.
from the desert to set things right—not for the few, but for everyone."  

Regardless of which image Reagan may actually use, his presidency has benefited by his malleability. In his ability to appear to be all things to all people, Reagan has increased his popularity and has become the American ideal of a President. Jay Rosen agrees that Reagan's versatile images have helped Reagan's overall ethos:

In a very real sense he is our most popular President not because most people agree with his programs, but because he has allowed himself to be dissolved into our idea of what a President should be. This turns out to be a composite of father, leader, and regular guy.  

A second inference is that Reagan's positive press coverage has a circular effect on his image. Reagan treats the press well, and they in turn do the same to him. Spear contends that the "amiable, avuncular Reagan is popular with the reporters who cover him, and this kindly sentiment has spilled over into their news stories."  

While some of the coverage has been unfriendly in regards to his idealistic policies and misstatements, Reagan has gotten an extremely fair press during his presidency.  

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105 Spear, 26.
Griffith writes that, "antagonism between the President and the press corps has been at its lowest level in 20 years." Several critics have indeed criticized the press for not being tougher on Reagan. Perhaps Reagan's amiability, has gotten in the way:

Most importantly, the newsmen's general fondness for Reagan explains in part, the respectfulness with which his image was broadcast. . . The press, and TV in particular, elected Ronald Reagan by playing to his strengths, by letting him evince himself in all his "niceness," by politely avoiding any shots or revelations that might have compromised the seeming wholeness of his image.107

Mark Miller insists that television newsmen are Reagan's "biggest boosters." Sam Donaldson, a news correspondent for ABC television, admits, "He's a hard President to cover for most reporters, because he is such an amiable, warm, human being." However, Reagan's staff does its part to protect the Reagan image. In order to limit public exposure of the President, Reagan's staff has limited the number of press conferences and public outings. This step diminishes the number of damaging verbal gaffes Reagan might issue. Media advisers have developed methods of controlling the press exposure:


107Miller, "Virtu Inc.," 30.

108Ibid.

109Quoted in Miller, "Virtu Inc.," 30.
They invented the "engine drown-out" technique, for instance, to discourage reporters from asking questions when Reagan is ready to board the presidential helicopter. As soon as Reagan appears in the White House doorway, the helicopter engines are started. The television cameras capture his smile and his waving hand, but he does not answer any questions because he cannot hear them.110

Political reporter Helen Thomas says that Reagan's aides "overprotect him, even to the point of forming a human shield around him when they don't want questions."111 These shielding techniques have helped Reagan maintain his credible image as well as maintain his pleasant relationship with the press.

Finally, a third inference of Reagan's ethos is that his "nice guy" image has allowed him a cost-free presidency until now. Reagan's affable nature allows the President to distance himself from his errors. Reagan manages to remain popular even when his programs are not. Miller explains that Reagan's image has "the effect of distancing the President from his cruel strokes of policy--you wouldn't think such a nice guy could do such things, as shocked neighbors often put it on the evening news.112

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112 Miller, "Virtu Inc.," 28.
If Reagan were not a popular president, it would be difficult to separate himself from the serious consequences of his political actions. "And yet," writes Lance Morrow of *Time*, "something about Reagan soothes and unites—even though the effects of his programs may repel." A majority of Americans do not fault Reagan for his administration's flaws, but rather, they tend to forgive him out of fondness for the man. Goldman concludes that "people liked and trusted him enough to forgive him all, even the consequences of his own decisions." 

**Ethos and the Use of Television**

Reagan has often said that he believes in taking the "big issues" to the American public for their contemplation. When he does so, he uses one of the most persuasive types of media today—television. A president's instant access to television gives him unrivaled power. Reagan is aware of this fact and often takes the opportunity to enter the living rooms of millions of Americans. Donna Cross writes of this unique presidential advantage in her book *Mediaspeak*:

A modern president's access to the airwaves constitutes a virtual monopoly on the manufacture of public opinion. Alone of all our elected officials,

113Morrow, 14.

114Goldman, 38.
the president can commandeer all the prime-time broadcasting he wants and use it to propagandize his views, his party, his programs. His speeches are broadcast simultaneously on all three major networks, which means that, short of turning off the set, there is no way that viewers can tune him out.  

Reagan's ethos has benefited from the use of television in two ways. First, the medium of television accents Reagan's best skills. This age of instant access demands a skilled performer to communicate effectively or sell a message to an audience. Without these skills, other politicians have not fared as well. For example, Mondale credited his loss of the 1984 presidency, in part, to his inability to use television. "Modern politics today," said Mondale, "requires a mastery of television. I've never really warmed up to television and in fairness to television, it's never warmed up to me." Reagan, on the other hand, does not have this problem. He is the skilled performer that our electronic age demands. Just as Reagan's past experience in show business has helped shape his initial ethos, it has helped him master the art of using television. James Miller contends that Reagan's utilization of the "manipulative techniques of Hollywood," have helped maintain Reagan's image:


the self-deprecating joke, the heartwarming anecdote; the boyish grin; the look of principled determination; even, on occasion, the catch in the voice and the hint of a tear in the eye--he has cast himself in the classic Hollywood role of the embattled Honest Politician.

He has, in short, mesmerized us with that steady gaze.

Reagan's relaxed confidence and his expertise with the teleprompter promote more eye contact and credibility in his delivery. Robert McElvaine says that Reagan's "most effective weapon is to appear sincere. Television is... essential to his technique." Since Reagan relies more on his image than his logical skills, the use of television is necessary to his success.

A second way Reagan's ethos has been aided by television is that it portrays the physical presence of the President on screen. "In this age," writes Mark Miller, "it matters less what people do than what they look like." On the television screen Reagan has a pleasing image, looking considerably younger than he is. The President is also considered to be a physically attractive man, complemented by broad shoulders and tall stature. His physical presence exemplifies a sense of strength and confidence. Far from being a negative factor, Reagan's age

117 Miller, "Techniques of Deception," 68.

118 McElvaine, 557.

119 Miller, "Virtu Inc.," 30.
gives him a grandfatherly image. Guetta observed that, "America likes his combination of wrinkles and muscles; he has aged successfully," and Hedley Donovan comments, Yet such is Reagan's whole style and bearing (physical size matters, too) that any suggestion of wimpishness would be unthinkable. Reagan had perfected the projection of presidential leadership, in four years of being President, and the projection is an important part of the real thing.\textsuperscript{121} Reagan has made television work to his advantage and the result is a popular President with a pleasing image.

\textsuperscript{120}Guetta, "A Teflon Presidency"; quoted in "The Reagan Phenomenon," 35.

\textsuperscript{121}Donovan, Roosevelt to Reagan, 278.
CHAPTER III

REAGAN'S USE OF LOGOS

"His [Reagan's] answers frequently have been too sweeping and simplistic; he has attempted to support his conclusions with evidence that is distorted or does not exist."122

Aristotle taught his students that there were three proofs which make up persuasive rhetoric: ethical proofs, logical proofs and pathetic proofs. Logical proof focuses on the arguments a speaker uses to persuade the audience. In the demonstration of logical argument, Aristotle employed a type of rhetorical syllogism, the enthymeme, in the analysis of deductive reasoning and listed the example as the primary form of inductive reasoning. Both of these types of reasoning focus on argument structure and are explained more fully later in this chapter.

In this chapter, Reagan's use of logos is examined. The evidence which Reagan uses to support his arguments is tested, as well as the argument structures he uses. While Reagan is known for his charming ethical appeal, Reagan's speeches are lacking in logical support. In this

122Spear, 10.
chapter, reasons for Reagan's continued effectiveness despite his disregard for the use of logical proof are discussed.

Logical Evidence

There are several types of evidence a speaker can rely on to prove a point. In most of Reagan's speeches, however, he is not debating a particular point, but a policy which he wants the audience to adopt. Reagan's format in his speeches begins with the identification of a political problem that demands a solution and continues with a basic three-step format. Reagan first gives evidence ("the raw material used to establish proof"\textsuperscript{123}) to present the problem. Second, he persuades through more evidence and explains that his solution to the problem is the best. Third, Reagan takes a final step by urging his audience to persuade Congress to accept his point of view.

An exploration of Reagan's use of evidence is important in understanding his rhetorical effectiveness. As described by Ehninger and Brockriede in Decision by Debate, evidence answers two questions: "How do you know?" and "What have you got to go on?"\textsuperscript{124} Evidence within a speech

\textsuperscript{123}Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, 399.

can be very concrete as found in illustrative examples, statistics, and testimony; or it can be general as found in statements justified by current beliefs. Ehninger and Brockriede define this less concrete form of evidence as "any belief which, when accepted, can lead to the endorsement of another belief or of a policy."

An examination of Reagan's televised speeches during the time parameters previously defined reveals his frequent use of several categories of evidence. These categories, defined by Thonssen, Baird and Braden (See Appendix, Table 2), include 1) charts/statistics, 2) testimony, 3) illustrative examples, and 4) factual statements. Of these four methods, Reagan utilized testimonial evidence the least, only 13 percent of the time. His use of illustrative examples as proof, was only slightly higher, at 16 percent. Reagan's use of charts and/or statistics was his second highest type of evidence usage, but was incorporated only 18 percent of the time. Reagan used generalized statements of fact 53 percent of the time. In fact, he used these statements three times more than any other form of evidence.

It is not surprising that testimonial evidence is less used by Reagan than the other forms because he relies upon his own personal opinion or "testimony" as evidence. The

125Ibid.
logic here is that Reagan wants his audience to accept his statements as factual information. Rarely will Reagan offer any other accompanying evidence to support his generalized statements. One example can be found in Reagan's initial plea for a balanced budget amendment:

The amendment will force the Government to stay within the limits of its revenues. . . . Only a constitutional amendment will do the job. We've tried the carrot and it failed. With the stick of a balanced budget amendment, we can stop the Government's squandering, overtaxing ways and save our economy. (April 29, 1982)

In this example Reagan does not deem it necessary to use any statistics or outside testimony to convince the audience that what he says is really going to happen. He does not offer any experimental studies, or expert witnesses to back up his theory that a single amendment will do all that he promises. Reagan uses this technique again in his speech requesting aid for Central America:

The national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble and the safety of our homeland would be put in jeopardy. (April 27, 1983)

In this particular example, Reagan's statement is very convincing because he combines it with an emotional fear appeal. Although Reagan does touch on several emotions, the passage is used as logical support for his economic aid
request. His list of tragic occurrences is not supported by past examples, outside testimony, or statistics.

Rhetorical criticism requires the evidence not only to be given, but also tested. Testing Reagan's evidence provides insights into the validity of his arguments. Since factual statements comprise 53 percent of Reagan's evidence usage, only these statements are tested in this study.

According to Ehninger and Brockriede, the three main questions used to test the validity of factual statements are as follows:

[1] Is the person expressing the opinion an expert on the matter cited?
[2] Is the person expressing the opinion reasonably unbiased?
[3] Is the person expressing the opinion in a position to examine the relevant facts at first hand?

In response to the first test, it is necessary to note that if an audience is to be logically persuaded, the speaker must have the appearance of being a highly credible source of information. Otis Walter explains the inter-relationship between ethos and logical reasoning: a speaker "can increase the audience acceptance of an idea if he can increase their belief in the authority testifying about the idea." In his speeches Ronald Reagan is the

126Ibid., 62-63.

authority testifying on behalf of his administration's policies. However, Reagan cannot be considered an expert in his field. His position as president does not make him an expert. When Reagan issues factual statements such as the following, he is giving his own political opinion and using it to support his argument: "There is only one way to shrink the size and cost of big government -- that is by eliminating agencies that are not needed and are getting in the way of a solution." Other presidents might not have held this view. Realistically, Reagan has very little prior experience or special training that qualifies him as an expert in governmental economics. Based on this and preceding examples, a conclusion can be drawn: the person expressing these opinions cannot be considered an expert in the matters cited.

Ehninger and Brockriede explain that well-known celebrities may endorse products and persuasively urge the audience to purchase them; however, they cannot be considered experts on them. In such cases the celebrities are spokesmen with products to sell. In a similar way, Reagan fails to meet the test of expertness.

129 Ehninger and Brockriede, 62.
The second question, of whether the person expressing the opinion is reasonably unbiased, is answered with no in the case of Reagan. Issuing expert testimony from a neutral position can be very persuasive to an audience. Such unbiased, expert testimony can give strong support to factual statements used in debate. However, Reagan is neither unbiased nor an expert. The Reagan speeches in this study were televised for purely biased reasons. Although Reagan called for bipartisan support in many of his speeches, the content was purely political. In fact, at the end of Reagan's second year in office, even television stations became increasingly reluctant to carry Reagan's speeches because they were "too transparently partisan." Democratic rebuttals often followed Reagan's speeches to counteract the Republican plea. These actions do not depict Reagan as an unbiased speaker. Thus, Reagan failed the second part of validity testing.

The third question, of whether the person expressing the opinion is in a position to examine the relevant facts at first hand, is also answered with no. The position of the President is strategic in getting the relevant facts for a case, but the information is delivered through Reagan's advisers and aides. Bakshian wrote that "Reagan

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130DeFrank, "An Overused 'Weapon'?" 23.
appears to be led around in blinders by his staff."131 Donovan adds that, "It is not always clear how much he is being manipulated by senior White House staff and the major Cabinet officers, and how much he is the manipulator."132 There is always speculation about how much relevant information is being fed to the President. In short, the President is only as informed as his aides wish him to be.

Having failed all three questions on testing evidence, it appears that Reagan's use of factual statements as evidence is not valid. Although he resides in a strategic position, he is not an expert on his topics, nor is he unbiased in his reasoning. Thus, Reagan's chief form of evidence is invalid and considered unacceptable in a logical argument.

What conclusions can be drawn from Reagan's use of personal statements as facts? There does appear to be an unwritten rule which allows a President to make these types of generalized statements without providing evidence. The sum of the supporting evidence in these cases lies in the ethos of the speaker. Thus Reagan's chief form of evidence is not actually logical in nature, but is dependent on Reagan's credibility or ethos instead. He is not required to cite sources, dates, or publications to support his

131Bakshian, 156.

132Donovan, Roosevelt to Reagan, 280.
statements. This is because a President is expected to be above reproach, and his statements are expected to be just as ethical.

Reagan does seem to be fond of transforming his own personal beliefs into factual statements in his speeches. It is obvious that "Reagan deeply believes most of what he is communicating."\textsuperscript{133} Although Reagan sincerely thinks his beliefs are right, rarely are these beliefs logically supported. Sidney Blumenthal comments on Reagan's use of factual information: "With Reagan, facts don't determine the case. Facts don't make beliefs true, his beliefs give life to facts, which are parables tailored to have a moral. If one fact doesn't serve, another will."\textsuperscript{134}

Logical Reasoning

In addition to evidence, Reagan's use of logical reasoning should be examined. Logical reasoning is commonly classified into two types of strategies, deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning can be defined as "the process of reasoning from a generalization to a specific case."\textsuperscript{135} Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, is "the process of reasoning from specific

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., 252.

\textsuperscript{134}Blumenthal, 12.

\textsuperscript{135}Austin J. Freeley, Argumentation and Debate, 4th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1976), 115.
cases to a generalization." Each of these types will be examined separately.

Deductive reasoning can be broken down even further into its basic units of the syllogism and enthymeme. According to Austin J. Freeley, author of *Argumentation and Debate*, the syllogism and enthymeme, "have been standard tools of reasoning for centuries and are still the basis of much reasoning today." A syllogism consists of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. A classic example is:

- All men are mortal.
- Socrates is a man.
- Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

The argument begins with a generalization and moves to a specific case. Although some arguments are structured this way, rarely are they articulated in this manner. Instead, most deductive reasoning takes place in the form of enthymemes. An enthymeme is a deductive argument in which one of the premises or the conclusion is unstated. Reagan's deductive arguments are really spoken enthymemes. For example:

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136 Ibid.

137 Ibid., 129.
"What we need now is an end to the bickering here in the capital. We need the bipartisan comprehensive package of revenue increases and the spending cuts now before the Congress to be passed."

(August 16, 1982)

major premise: "What we need now is an end to the bickering here in the capital."

minor premise: My proposed tax bill package will end the bickering.

conclusion: "We need the bipartisan comprehensive package of revenue increases and spending cuts now before Congress to be passed."

"We must replace and modernize our forces. And that is why I decided to proceed with the production and deployment of the new ICBM known as the MX."

(November 22, 1982)

major premise: "We must replace and modernize our forces."

minor premise: The MX missile will help replace and modernize our forces.

unstated conclusion: "And that is why I decided to proceed with the production and deployment of the ICBM known as the MX."

While some of Reagan's arguments are structured deductively, several more are inductively reasoned from a specific premise to a general conclusion. This form of
reasoning is broken down into three types of strategies: (1) examples (2) cause-and-effect, and (3) analogical reasoning.

Reasoning by example is a form of inductive reasoning by which a speaker uses specific examples, or cases to support the conclusion. All of the specific examples should ideally lead to the desired conclusion. An example of this type of reasoning occurred in one speech when Reagan wanted to prove the nation's economy was in bad shape. For example:

Examples

(1) "... we face runaway deficits, of almost $80 billion for this budget year. . . ."
(2) "The Federal budget has gone up 528 percent."
(3) Mortgage interest rates have risen to 15.4 percent.
(4) "And finally, there are seven million Americans caught up in . . . unemployment."

Conclusion-

"I regret to say that we are in the worst economic mess since the Great Depression."

(February 5, 1981)

Cause and effect reasoning is a form of inductive reasoning used by a speaker to establish a probable relationship between two factors. This kind of reasoning may be used to link one specific cause to many general effects, or to link an effect to many causes. "In using causal
reasoning," writes Austin Freeley, "the advocate seeks to show why his proposition is valid." Reagan uses this form when he seeks support for a proposed piece of legislation. An example follows:

Cause

There should be a "constitutional amendment to require balanced budgets" because it has these effects:

Effects

"The amendment will force the Government to stay within the limits of its revenues."

Effects

"With the stick of a balanced budget amendment, we can stop the Government's squandering, overtaxing ways and save our economy." (April 29, 1982)

Reasoning by analogy occurs when a speaker attempts to reason that what is true of case A is also true of case B because of the similarities of A and B. A speaker attempts to prove that a variety of factors which are specific to case A may be applied to a generalized case B. In one example, Reagan argues that what took place on a state

138 Ibid., 121.
level, specifically California, can take place on a national level:

Case A

"In California when I was Governor . . ."

Our welfare reform "saved the taxpayers some $2 billion" and also helped the "truly needy by an average of more than 40 percent."

Case B

"I believe progress can also be made at the national level."

Welfare reform can be carried out and "we can be compassionate about human needs without being complacent about budget extravagance."

(September 24, 1981)

Logical Validity

As these examples have shown, Reagan has utilized a variety of argument structures. However, studying the logical appeals used by a speaker involves more than classifying the types of arguments used. It is necessary to test the reasoning a speaker uses for sound structure and validity.

For purposes of unbiased testing of Reagan's arguments, and in all fairness to Reagan, tests of validity are applied to the various arguments presented in one of Reagan's televised speeches. This speech is selected for the high content of factual statements used by Reagan as logical support. Although only one speech was chosen for this analysis, the results are representative of logical statements Reagan uses in his other speeches. While every speech may not yield the same results, this sample speech allows the reader to view the kinds of logical problems
which may be found in Reagan's rhetoric. The selected speech was delivered July 27, 1981. Reagan's proposed legislation at the time is a bipartisan tax bill known as the Conable-Hance bill. Its opposition is known as the Democratic Committee bill.

As discussed earlier, Reagan tends to use both inductive and deductive reasoning, although inductive arguments are more frequently used in Reagan's speeches. The selected speech is examined for Reagan's use of factual statements used as logical proof. Each argument found is then classified as deductive or inductive and subjected to the tests of validity as prescribed by Austin J. Freeley in Argumentation and Debate.139

Deductive arguments are commonly structured as enthymemes rather than as complete syllogisms. Both of Reagan's deductive arguments are enthymemes, where a premise or a conclusion is left unstated.

"Our allies depend on a strong and economically sound America and they're watching events in this country, particularly those surrounding our program for economic recovery, with close attention and great hopes. The day after tomorrow, Wednesday, the House of Representatives will begin debate on two tax bills and once again they need to hear from you."
major premise: If we are to have a strong foreign policy abroad, we must have a strong economy at home.

minor premise: My proposed bill will insure (unstated) a strong economy at home.

conclusion: Therefore, my bill should be passed.

This type of enthymeme is known as a conditional enthymeme. The two sections of the major premise are the antecedent and the consequent. The antecedent "expresses the conditional or hypothetical event under consideration," while the consequent "expresses the event that is maintained as necessarily following the antecedent."\(^{140}\) Although Reagan does not specifically word the "if-then" relationship, it is implied and therefore qualifies as a conditional enthymeme. But does it qualify as a valid argument? Freeley listed the two tests for this type of enthymeme as:

1. The minor premise must affirm the antecedent or deny the consequent.
2. If the minor premise denies the antecedent or affirms the consequent, no valid conclusion can be drawn.\(^{141}\)

\(^{140}\)Ibid., 133.

\(^{141}\)This quote is printed in boldface type in the original source. Ibid., 134.
The minor premise implied by Reagan does not affirm the antecedent or deny the consequent. If anything, it affirms the consequent:

**major premise:** If we are to have a strong foreign policy abroad [antecedent],
then we must have a strong economy at home [consequent].

**minor premise:** My bill will lead to a strong economy at home.

Based on this validity testing, the conclusion which follows is invalid and unacceptable.

A second deductive example is taken from the following text:

"The plain truth is our choice is not between two plans to reduce taxes; it's a 22 percent tax increase over the next three years. The Committee bill offers a 15 percent cut over two years. Our bipartisan bill gives a 25 percent reduction over three years."

**major premise:** You must choose "between a tax cut or a tax increase."

**minor premise:** "Our bipartisan bill gives a 25 percent reduction over three years."

**conclusion:** Therefore, you should vote for our bipartisan bill.

At first glance, Reagan's argument appears so simple. No intelligent taxpayer could possibly choose a tax increase
over a tax cut. This type of deductive argument is a
disjunctive enthymeme, which is characterized by a major
premise containing two mutually exclusive options, in this
case, a tax cut and a tax increase. Reagan's sheer simpli-
city, although persuasive to the public, does not withstand
the three tests of validity for a disjunctive enthymeme
(the same tests used to determine validity of a syllogism
are also applicable when testing enthymemes142):

1. The major premise of the disjunctive syllogism
must include all of the possible alternatives.

2. The alternatives presented in the disjunctive
syllogism must be mutually exclusive.

3. The minor premise must affirm or contradict one of
the alternatives given in the major premise.143

The argument might pass the first test listed, except for
the terminology. Reagan's simplified phrasing is very
misleading. The terminology of a "tax cut" and "tax
increase" cannot be considered mutually exclusive alterna-
tives because neither of the bills is actually a tax
increase. Reagan reasons that the dollar difference be-
tween the 22 percent automatic tax increase (over three
years) and the Committee's proposed 15 percent tax cut
(over two years) is a tax increase. Reagan falsely claims
that the Committee bill is by itself, a tax increase.

142Ibid., 136.

143This quote is printed in boldface type in the
original source. Ibid., 132.
Freeley explains that if "any of these premises is false, then its conclusion is worthless regardless of the formal validity of the construction." Another faulty tool used in the argument is that the 22 percent tax increase (over three years) mentioned by Reagan is only a projected figure. One unsupported, future statistic does not make a good basis for a strong argument.

This argument also faces problems with its construction. Although Reagan argues that his tax cut is greater, the minor premise he uses is not valid because it neither affirms nor contradicts one of the listed alternatives. In the minor premise Reagan attempts to tie his bill in with the tax cut of the major premise. But, this does not affirm a tax cut as being a better alternative over a tax increase. Since this argument failed two out of three tests for validity, it is considered invalid, and thus unacceptable. The argument would be considered valid if structured in the following manner:

**major premise:** You must choose between a tax cut or a tax increase.

**minor premise:** A tax increase is not desirable.

**conclusion:** Therefore, you must choose a tax cut.

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144 Ibid., 138.
Reagan appears to have some problems with valid deductive arguments in this speech.

Inductive samples are also tested in this study. The first type of argument tested for validity is example reasoning. Two cases of this type can be found in the test speech. The text of the speech leads to the arguments below:

Case A

(1) "The rate of inflation is no longer in double-digit figures."

(2) "The dollar has regained strength in the international money markets. . . ."

(3) "... businessmen and investors are making decisions with regard to industrial development, modernization and expansion. . . ."

(4) "A recent poll shows that where a year and a half ago only 24 percent of our people believed things would get better, today 46 percent believe they will."

There is a new "optimism in our land" that signals economic recovery.
Case B

Examples

(1) "We reduce the marriage penalty, that unfair tax has a working husband and wife pay more tax. . . ."

(2) "Most important, we wipe out the tax entirely for a surviving spouse."

(3) "We increase the exemption on the inheritance or estate tax to $600,000 so that farmers and family-owned businesses don't have to sell the farm or store . . . ."

Conclusion-

"Our bill is, in short, the first real tax cut for everyone in almost 20 years."

Each specific example is supporting the generalized conclusion. To test these examples for validity the following questions, as listed by Freeley, are used:

1. Is the example relevant?
2. Are there a reasonable number of examples?
3. Do the examples cover a critical period of time?
4. Are the examples typical?\textsuperscript{145}

In response to the first test, Reagan's examples do appear to be relevant to their conclusions. The examples listed are appropriate and indicative of the conclusions. However, the vague wording of the examples in case A weakens the strength of Reagan's argument. Such collective and general terms as "industrial development," "modernization," and "things would get better" are not concrete

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 116-18.
examples which can be easily checked. Instead, the audience is forced to take the President's word that there is a "new optimism in our land." In case B, Reagan's examples are more detailed and varied and support his broad conclusion.

In the second test of example reasoning there are no strict rules defining how many cases constitute a "reasonable number." This test is subject to the opinions of a speaker and of an audience, but there should be enough cases to convince the audience "that there is a high degree of probability that a conclusion is correct."

In case A, Reagan uses four examples to show the new optimism in the land which is sufficient to establish the conclusion. In case B, Reagan convincingly lists enough examples to illustrate that his tax bill aids a variety of people.

The relative time period of the examples must also be considered when testing for validity. In case A, Reagan makes a six-month comparison of the then-current July economic situation to the economic situation present in January when he became President. The positive signs that Reagan lists here, especially the poll results, do cover a time span adequate to support the "new optimism" claim. While the time span used in the case A examples is only a matter of months, case B's critical time period is the

146Ibid., 117.
"last 20 years." Why Reagan decides to add this phrase to his conclusion is unclear. The examples he uses do not support his conclusion's time span. Unlike the first case, Reagan does not compare the tax cuts of twenty years ago to his tax cuts of 1981. Although the phrase is a minor flaw in the argument, Reagan, nevertheless, forms an invalid argument by using it. It probably sounds quite persuasive but when closely examined, has no validity. Case A easily passed this test of validity. However, case B's conclusion must be refuted since its examples did not support the critical period of time.

The last test applied to case A also tests the example-conclusion relationship. Are the examples typical? Statistics, figures, and a poll are all mentioned in the examples as support. They are typical forms of evidence to indicate change. Reagan begins this speech by reciting the worrisome statistics present in his first televised speech, six months prior. He then seeks to establish a before-and-after reference by listing the positive changes. Reagan's examples, then, can be considered typical of the conclusion.

Thus, of the two samples of example reasoning, only one argument passes all of the test questions and can be considered valid.
The second type of inductive reasoning tested for validity is causal reasoning. Two cases of this type are found in the test speech and are exhibited below:

Case A

Text

"I take no pleasure in saying this, but those who will seek to defeat our Conable-Hance bipartisan bill, as debate begins Wednesday, are the ones who have given us 'five' tax cuts in the last ten years. But, our taxes went up $400 billion in those same ten years."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those who oppose my bill are the same ones who</td>
<td>gave us five tax cuts that sent our taxes up $400 billion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case B

Text

"Because our bipartisan bill is so clearly drawn and broadly based, it provides the kind of predictability and certainty that the financial segments of our society need to make investment decisions that stimulate productivity and make our economy grow."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The clearly drawn and broadly based bipartisan bill</td>
<td>leads to the needed predictability and certainty necessary to make sound investment decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Freeley, causal reasoning can be examined for validity by using the following tests:

1. Is the alleged cause relevant to the effect described?
2. *Is this the sole or distinguishing causal factor?*

3. *Is there reasonable probability that no undesirable effect may result from this particular cause?*

4. *Is there a counteracting cause?*

5. *Is the cause capable of producing the effect?*

6. *Is the cause necessary and sufficient?*

To answer the first test question it is necessary to take a closer look at the alleged cause. In case A the cause is an unlimited number of human beings, all holding a predisposed opinion on Reagan's tax bill. From the context of the speech, this opposition group is embodied by the members of the House, Ways and Means Committee, the committee which presented the alternative plan to Reagan's bill. However, Reagan does not limit the statement to this group alone, but includes anyone else who opposes the bill. The accusation or effect which follows this cause, is weak, but can be considered relevant. There is a possible cause-and-effect relationship. The same is true of case B. A "clearly-drawn and broadly-based tax bill" may cause the economic stability which Reagan mentions. This is only speculation on the President's part, however, since he does not offer any proof that this will come to pass. Thus, both alleged causes are relevant to the effects described.

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147 Ibid., 121-24.
Both of Reagan's arguments fail when applied to the second test for validity. According to Freeley's validity testing, the advocate must be "prepared to demonstrate that the alleged cause is the sole or distinguishing factor producing the effect at issue."148 Reagan does not offer proof for this, nor can he. In case A, it is unreasonable to claim that the opposition to the tax bill can be held solely responsible for the $400 billion increases in taxes. The ineffectiveness of the last five tax cuts does not stem solely from the fact that there is opposition to the bipartisan bill, as Reagan wrongly reasons. In case B, a tax bill is not going to be the only causal factor that instigates economic "predictability and certainty." Neither of the causes is the only factor producing the alleged effect. Since both arguments have failed to pass one of the prescribed tests, they are now no longer valid, and the remainder of the tests need not be applied for the sake of the reader.

The third form of inductive reasoning involves comparisons between two cases as support for a proposed conclusion. Analogies can be classified as literal or figurative. A literal analogy is a comparison between two like cases, or cases in the same genre. A figurative analogy is the type of comparison made between two unlike

148Ibid., 122.
cases, or cases in separate classifications. To test the validity of an analogy the following questions, as suggested by Freeley, can be used:

1. Are there significant points of similarity?
2. Are the points of similarity critical to the comparison?
3. Are the points of difference noncritical?
4. Is the reasoning cumulative?
5. Are only literal analogies used as logical proof?¹⁴⁹

Only one analogy is used in the sample speech. The example occurs toward the end when Reagan compares his bill to the Committee bill:

In a few days the Congress will stand at the fork of two roads. One road is all too familiar to us. It leads ultimately to higher taxes. It merely brings us full circle back to the source of our economic problems, where the government decides that it knows better than you what should be done with your earnings and, in fact, how you should conduct your life. The other road promises to renew the American spirit. It's a road of hope and opportunity. It places the direction of your life back in your hands where it belongs.

Unfortunately, the analogical example is a figurative analogy. While these figurative analogies can be helpful as illustrative example, they are not an acceptable form of reasoning. Freeley comments on the significance of both types of analogies:

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 119-20.
Carefully developed literal analogies may be used to establish a high degree of probability. Figurative analogies, on the other hand, have no value in establishing logical proof. If well chosen, however, they may have considerable value in establishing ethical or emotional proof, in illustrating a point, and in making a vivid impression on the audience.150

Since the example analogy used by Reagan is a figurative analogy, it is an unacceptable form of logical proof and, therefore, does not require validity testing. Only literal analogies need to undergo the prescribed tests.

In concluding this section of validity testing, some interesting results can be noted. Of the seven arguments tested, only one passes all the prescribed tests for validity; whereas both types of deductive arguments are invalid. In addition, inductive arguments by cause-and-effect, as well as by analogy, are invalid here. Only one argument by example is considered valid and acceptable. This is surprising, especially when some of Reagan's strongest arguments were contained in the examples. Reagan's extensive use of factual statements as evidence is also found to be invalid. Based on the rules and standards of logical reasoning, Reagan's arguments fail miserably. If his evidence is invalid and his reasoning is found to be invalid, then how could Reagan be so successful? Why was the viewer response so great to a speech with only one valid argument?

150Ibid., 119.
Criticism and Success

It has become obvious that Reagan's rhetorical strengths do not lie in the logos portion of the Aristotelian mode. In fact, Reagan has been very openly criticized many times for his "misstatements" and "exaggerated" statistics. Time and again columnists and writers have caught Reagan on some invalid statement. Many examples of Reagan's mistakes have been compiled in a book entitled There He Goes Again: Ronald Reagan's Reign of Error. The authors, Mark Green and Gail MacColl, suggest that Reagan is guilty of six kinds of errors in his speeches: "obvious exaggerations, material omissions, contrived anecdotes, voodoo statistics, denials of unpleasant facts, and flat untruths."\(^\text{151}\)

In fact, several mistakes are evident in the speeches used in this study. One example occurs in the following passage:

"The percentage of your earnings the federal government took in taxes in 1960 has almost doubled."  
(February 5, 1981)

The unquoted figure that Reagan suggests is not exactly correct. Actually the percentage of personal earnings going to the government was "10.4% in 1960 and 12.0% in

\(^\text{151}\)Green and MacColl, 8.
1981."152 Reagan has exaggerated the vague figures in order to prove his case against the evils of encroaching government. A second example also proves to be misleading:

"Soviet leaders invest 12-14 percent of their country's GNP in military spending, two to three times the level we invest."

(November 22, 1982)

Once again, his argument and statistics sound very convincing, but are not concise. For instance, the GNP of America is actually twice that of Russia's. "So the 6-7% of our GNP that we invest in military spending," writes Green and MacColl, "is roughly equal to their 12-14%.

Besides, both the Pentagon and the CIA admit that they don't know how much the Soviets spend on defense."153 A third error occurs in the following example:

"Our purpose, in conformity with American and international law, is to prevent the flow of arms to El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica."

(April 27, 1983)

Reagan is incorrect here. The purpose he mentions does not conform to any known law, but rather, "the administration's plan to covertly destabilize the government of Nicaragua constituted a serious violation of both international and domestic law."154

152Ibid., 58.
153Ibid., 40.
154Ibid., 30.
How does Reagan manage to remain successful despite his inability to construct valid arguments? How does Reagan manage to walk away, unscathed, from his mistakes and blunders? The reasons lie in four areas: 1) his ideology, 2) simplistic structure, 3) storytelling techniques, and 4) political tactics.

Several critics have pointed to the fact that Reagan does not deal with details. He focuses on an overall ideology or theme. If some forms of evidence Reagan uses to support an idea are met with skepticism, it does not diminish the magnitude of the idea, or its creator. In his willingness to change the facts of a case to fit his own ideology, Reagan de-emphasizes factual details. In turn, his weakness with factual details is then lessened in comparison to his overall purpose. Victoria O'Donnell and June Welch explain that an audience will be "more likely to perceive reasoning as valid if it agrees with their attitudes even though the reasoning itself may be logically invalid."155 Because Reagan is seen as a basically honest man, any errors or distortions of fact are overlooked.

Alan Wolfe elaborates:

If the figures on Soviet military spending are incorrect, taken out of context or otherwise distorted, it is only to make them even more true. Truth, in short, lies in the intention. Since Reagan's goals

are, to him, honorable, then any statements that help realize them are true and any that hinder this are false.156

Reagan's sincerity of purpose and showmanship prevail over the disputes of details. Biographer Lou Cannon notes that even when Reagan was "exasperatingly wrong or misinformed, he was so thoroughly convincing and self-assured that others believed him."157 The general public does not seem to care about Reagan's mishaps with the details. Blumenthal offers an explanation for this:

Reagan's ideas may be simple, but the pattern of his thought is complex. He has a comprehensive world view that can coherently explain the cosmos. From his ideology, Reagan infers the truth of facts and the need for policies. When facts prove mistaken or policies have unexpected consequences, he can shift ground without making any fundamental change in his beliefs. Perhaps the facts or the policies were the wrong inferences, perhaps they were compromised by his opponents: he can always explain what goes wrong. Criticism of his statements or policies never touches his central beliefs.158

Reagan's simplified explanations contained in his speeches also seem to be a key to his persuasive reasoning. Part of Reagan's logical appeal lies in the fact that he sells his policies based on their simplicity. He never attempts to sell a complex, detailed type of policy.

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156Alan Wolfe, "Ignorance as Public Policy," The Nation, 3 April 1982, 399.


158Blumenthal, 12.
Reagan's proposals appear so simple that, merely by understanding them, his audience is motivated to support them and feels very positive about understanding such an obscure subject. Yankelovich also lends support for this theory:

... when Ronald Reagan gave the American people his interpretation of what was happening—that the government is our number-one villain and that if we get it off our backs and rebuild our military strength, things will be all right again—the electorate absorbed it hungrily, so great was its need for any coherent interpretation. It is impossible to exaggerate how important it is for people to have some interpretive framework—an intelligible "story"—within which to fit the news of the day. ... 159

Reagan hopes to convert this understanding into support for his policies, especially active support. He takes the ideas a step further and urges his audience to act on their beliefs by calling their Congressmen and writing. It is hard to distinguish when Reagan's messages switch from a persuasive speech into an informative speech and back again. Although the two types of speeches are quite different, Reagan successfully incorporates techniques of each into a single speech. James McCroskey explains this concept:

What understanding really is is belief. ... Clearly, then, there is much persuasion within an informative message. The informative communicator must 'persuade' his audience to listen, or to read, his message. He must also 'persuade' his audience to believe that the information he gives is accurate. Understanding, therefore, is based upon belief, and that belief is

159 Yankelovich, 6.
instilled in informative messages in much the same manner as it is in persuasive messages. Although Reagan is often criticized for making his policies appear too simplified, the critics cannot deny that Reagan's method works. His successful chain of reasoning is traced below:

(persuasively)

INFORMS

(instills)

UNDERSTANDING AND BELIEFS

(encourages)

ACTION BASED ON BELIEFS

A third reason why Reagan's rhetoric has remained successful despite his numerous mistakes is because of his extensive use of storytelling techniques. In Chapter II it is pointed out that Reagan's anecdotes and witty stories serve to disarm his audience, as well as aid his personal ethos. These stories also serve as a distraction or a diversion which replaces logic in Reagan's speeches. Erickson explains Reagan's storytelling strategy:

The heroes and villains of Reagan's speeches are far from realistic; they are tools through which the speaker manipulates us by translating our complicated and varied lives into simplified stock characters, two-dimensional dramatis personae embodying virtue and vice.161

160McCroskey, Rhetorical Communication, 181.
161Erickson, 51.
Reagan's use of symbolic, stock characters is one of his "most powerful rhetorical devices."\textsuperscript{162} By using these characters and story lines, Reagan is able to transfer the focus away from his weak points of logical reasoning. James Miller agrees that Reagan's skillful use of digression and anecdotes have been one of the President's best techniques of deception: "Through his mastery of storytelling techniques he has managed to separate his character, in the public mind, from his actions as President."\textsuperscript{163}

While Reagan relies heavily on his speeches for support to pass his policies through Congress, he often uses other tactics too. He uses a variety of persuasive tools to get his legislation passed; his speeches are only one of these tools. More often than not, his televised speeches are a "last-ditch" effort after all other methods have been tried. Even though Reagan is extremely adept at persuading via public television, he uses his own brand of private persuasion also. For example, in one of the more aggressive legislative battles, over a tax increase, Reagan managed a victory over the Congress by using a variety of political tactics. Some are included in this passage:

Nearly 200 members of Congress were summoned to personal chats with the President--two or three times for

\textsuperscript{162}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{163}Miller, "Techniques of Deception," 68.
some—in a three week lobbying blitz... The bill finally passed 52 to 47 in the Senate and 226 to 207 in the House—but only after a televised presidential address, high-powered TV commercials, intensive work by lobbyists, and endorsements... Most persuasive in winning voters for the tax bill was Reagan's personal sales pitch. In more than 60 meetings, luncheons and dinners with lawmakers at the White House... Some were swayed by a letter in which he pledged to veto spending bills.164

But, if the President's various political tactics still are not successful in persuading members of Congress, Reagan turns to the television to get the voter's attention. Time magazine gives this example:

When all else fails the Republican trump card is television as practiced by Ronald Reagan... Although the hot dogs at Camp David did not convert Maryland Democrat Beverly Byron, a thousand calls to her after the speech did. She, like so many others, went the President's way after a nudge from the voters.165

Logical Inferences

Reagan's lack of logical reasoning implies that American audiences have adopted a passive attitude toward Reagan and his logical reasoning. However, when his rhetoric is put to the test, as it was in this chapter, Reagan's arguments falter under the pressure of validity. The President's rhetoric "has appealed to and encouraged one of our worst habits, the desire to believe which goes


Beyond even gullibility." Erickson notes that in our generation there is an increasing susceptibility to image instead of logic: "We believed him [Reagan] because he told us to, and because we wanted to. Our response to Reagan's rhetoric suggests that we are not an especially thoughtful or analytical nation of political readers but people seeking eagerly for answers, rather than for questions."  

The public's willingness to accept Reagan's disregard for sound logical judgment may suggest "intellectual laziness". Presentation is valued over substance. While Reagan invests much time and care on communicating his ideas to the audience, it seems clear that less time is spent on formulating these ideas. This susceptibility to image is one of America's worst habits, and Reagan and his rhetoric thrive on it. In her article on Reagan, "Reality? Just Say No," Gail Sheehy admits that the American electorate is at fault for glossing over Reagan's weaknesses:

Yet if Ronald Reagan came to assume that he was above reality, it was in large measure because we the electorate coddled him into believing it. Voters, followed by Congress and the media, lowered their standards to accommodate this hypnotically happy president. He didn't have to work a full week or keep

166 Erickson, 123.

167 Ibid., 118.

168 Yankelovich, 6.
notes or referee policy disputes among his advisers. No amount of press reports of his misstatements of fact seemed to register. On the contrary, they became part of fond Reagan lore. It was his stock-in-trade to "forget" facts that interfere with his perception of himself as pure in motive and true to his word. . . .

Under Reagan we all developed the habit of denial. Here at last was the president who embodied our fantasy vision of America: a bullet-proof, media-proof, crisis-proof leader--the only man in the country who never seemed to age.169

As listeners, Americans need to be more discerning of today's rhetoric and its appeals. The testing of arguments for validity is one method which can be used to increase the awareness of modern rhetoric. In the words of Erickson, "The task facing us as citizens, as readers of political communication, is the development of a perpetually vigilant skepticism, of new skills in questioning and analyzing, and of doubt and disbelief."170

Logos and the Use of Television

There are two ways in which television has actually helped Reagan survive his problems with logos. Reagan's logical appeals have been aided by television's focus on visual images. Through colored charts and graphed statistics, Reagan's use of props has enabled him to illustrate


170 Erickson, 122.
certain points in his speeches in a more persuasive manner. Even if the figures on the charts and graphs are exaggerated or false, the image will have a strong visual impact, easily remembered by the television audience. This is especially true in the television medium because it is the "most effective communicator of ideas and images, with the greatest potential for influencing public opinions, that political man has yet developed."171

The second way television has actually helped Reagan's poor logos abilities, is that it offers a time advantage that his critics do not have. During his short televised spot, Reagan uses every persuasive tactic he knows. The real objective in Reagan's format is to sell his policies. When critics later point out these problems, it does not matter because Reagan will have already sold his idea to the American public. Green and MacColl comment on this pattern:

So 30 million people hear President Reagan's well-delivered speech, and 10 reporters and op-ed rebutters later pen pieces correcting him. The result: he's way ahead in audience and credibility. "A false remark gets halfway around the world," remarked Mark Twain, "before truth puts on its boots."172


172Green and MacColl, 17.
While television has certainly helped Reagan, he may have overused it and lessened his effectiveness. During his first term in office, Reagan utilized television and the networks "as if they were his personal public address system." Reagan aides urged him to the television screen and capitalized on his "gift for telecommunication," and this practice became the "administration's central public relations ploy." However, during the time span of the nine speeches, Reagan's addresses garnered less and less public support despite his rhetorical strategies and skill. White House correspondent Thomas DeFrank wrote in 1983 of Reagan's lack of response:

What some White House lieutenants still call "the weapon" hasn't proven nearly so lethal in recent months. Last October, for example, Reagan's appeal for legislative support in the congressional lame-duck session was largely ignored by the public. . . . Most recently, Reagan's "Star Wars" speech on defense policy--his 17th nationally televised effort--failed to generate any public groundswell for his embattled defense budget.

Reasons for this slacking of response are many. Critics have accused Reagan of dramatizing some rather ordinary issues of politics by broadcasting them on television. DeFrank explains that Reagan's televised speeches, "for all their technical virtuosity--have been fairly

173DeFrank, 23.
174Ibid.
175Ibid.
routine, diluting their impact with viewers conditioned to expect something more substantial than a plea for help in some legislative scrap." 176 The American audience who began to "catch on" to Reagan's television antics in 1983 have lost interest. The audience has tired of Reagan's method of presenting "matters of undeniably mundane import as sudden crises, thereby giving any issue he chooses the trappings of a tremendous emergency." 177 Columnists David Alpern and Eleanor Clift warned the public and Reagan in 1983 that when political problems develop, "A natural tendency is to compensate by going to the people, but heavy use of television can also lead to overexposure--for a president as for a sitcom--and to trivialization of the presidency." 178 By the time the seventh, eighth, and ninth speeches are broadcast, it is clear that Reagan's speeches are "too transparently partisan." 179 As a result, audiences tuned in less and less. Reagan's television exposure also sharply declines after the ninth speech. Due to his

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176 Ibid.
177 Erickson, xii.
179 DeFrank, 23.
overuse of the television medium Reagan may have "seriously devalued the coinage of the fireside chat. That would be the ultimate irony for the Great Communicator."180

In concluding it is apparent that Reagan's logical reasoning is far less successful than his use of ethos. A third element of rhetoric, pathos, is examined in the next chapter.

180Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

Reagan's Use of Pathos

"Television news is very heavy on feelings. There is always a temptation to reduce the question to sentiment. Reagan's criterion of validity is theatrical rather than empirical." \(^{181}\)

Persuasive rhetoric, as taught by Aristotle, consists of three proofs: ethical proofs, logical proofs, and pathetic proofs. There is an inter-dependency between the three proofs, although each proof can be studied separately. Aristotle acknowledged the interdependency of the constructed proofs when he defined rhetoric as "any available means of persuasion." If a particular proof is not acceptable in a rhetorical situation, one of the other two proofs can be incorporated to help persuade a listening audience.

Perhaps the most closely linked of the proofs are the logical and pathetic proofs. Otis Walter explains that when used together, logic is present in factual evidence, and pathos appeals serve as the psychological strategies. "The two can be used in conjunction with each other," he explains, "so that a unit of discourse that involves them

both may be at once psychologically compelling and logically convincing.\textsuperscript{182} Thonssen, Baird, and Braden also agree that the three proofs cannot be considered entirely exclusive of each other. The authors explain that Aristotle's three modes of proof, "are not treated as sharply separated entities; all apparently unite in greater or lesser measure to induce the end product of persuasion."\textsuperscript{183}

Aristotle, however, saw enough differentiation between the three modes to devote a certain amount of emphasis to each. The interaction taking place between a speaker, a topic, and the audience was of noteworthy concern to Aristotle. He acknowledged the importance of utilizing an audience and their emotions in a rhetorical setting. He wrote that "persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions. Our judgments when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile."\textsuperscript{184} Aristotle discussed the importance of pathetic proof and developed an analysis of several varied emotions based on their exciting cause, nature, and

\textsuperscript{182}Walter, 79.
\textsuperscript{183}Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, 425.
\textsuperscript{184}Aristotle, 1329-30.
objective. The emotions he analyzed include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger / Calmness</th>
<th>Friendship / Enmity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear / Confidence</td>
<td>Shame / Shamelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness / Unkindness</td>
<td>Pity / Indignation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Envy</td>
<td>Emulation</td>
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Edward Corbett contends that this analysis, although primitive, "is one of the earliest attempts at psychology." Since Aristotle justified pathos as a necessary mode of rhetoric, an analytical chapter devoted to pathetic proof is also necessary to this study of Reagan's rhetoric.

It is evident that Reagan utilizes emotional appeal to persuade his audience. In many of his speeches, his use of it is directly linked to the various emotions suggested by Aristotle. For example, Aristotle advised that when anger is used in rhetoric, a speaker should "speak so as to bring his hearers into a frame of mind that will dispose them to anger, and to represent his adversaries as open to such charges and possessed of such qualities as do make people angry." Reagan successfully follows Aristotle's advice in the following passage:

Our opponents in the beginning didn't want a tax bill at all. So what is the purpose behind their change of heart? They've put a tax program together for one reason only, to provide themselves with a political victory. Never mind that it won't solve the economic problems confronting our country. Never mind that it won't get the wheels of industry turning again or

185Corbett, 104.
186Aristotle, 1384.
eliminate the inflation which is eating us alive. This is not the time for political fun and games. (July 27, 1981)

In an effort to evoke the audience's anger, Reagan projects his adversary, the House Ways and Means Committee bill, as being unjust, and self-serving. Through this strategy Reagan intends to gain support for his bipartisan bill by turning an angry audience against the Committee bill.

Other Aristotelian emotions which Reagan incorporates in his rhetoric are fear and its opposite, confidence. Aristotle described fear as "a pain or disturbance due to a mental picture of some destructive or painful evil in the future."187 Confidence, on the other hand, is described as "the expectation associated with a mental picture of the nearness of what keeps us safe in the absence or remoteness of what is terrible."188 Reagan uses both of these emotions in the following example:

The most upsetting letters I receive are from the schoolchildren [sic] who write to me as a class assignment. It's evident they've discussed the most nightmarish aspects of a nuclear holocaust in their classrooms. Their letters are often full of terror. Well, this should not be so. . . . Our children should not grow up frightened. They should not fear the future. We're working to make it peaceful and free. I believe their future can be the brightest, most exciting of any generation. We must reassure them and let them know that their parents and the leaders of this world are seeking, above all else, to keep them safe and at peace. (November 22, 1982)

187Ibid., 1389.

188Ibid., 1391.
While Reagan does not directly address his audience with an appeal to fear, his mention of children and the "nightmarish aspects of a nuclear holocaust," is significant because of the mental picture his adult audience will draw. O'Donnell and Welch explain that, "Fear is associated with mobilizing oneself to avoid or escape danger." Reagan implies that the audience can help their children avoid the terror of nuclear holocaust and calm their fears by supporting his MX missile plan. He also projects the plan as being the key to confidence for children and parents.

Furthermore, Reagan uses the Aristotelian emotion of pity as a rhetorical tool. Pity is defined by Aristotle as a, "feeling of pain caused by the sight of some evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon." Reagan's use of pity can be observed in the following:

The Government of Nicaragua has imposed a new dictatorship; . . . it denied the bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic Church the right to say mass on radio during Holy Week; it insulted and mocked the Pope; it has driven the Miskito Indians from their homelands--burning their villages, destroying their crops, and forcing them into involuntary internment camps far from home; it has moved against the private sector and free labor unions; it condoned mob action

1890'Donnell and Welch, 155.

190Aristotle, 1396.
against Nicaragua's independent human rights commission and drove the director of that commission into exile.

(April 27, 1983)

In this passage Reagan explains specific events which illustrate the loss of freedom experienced by the people of Nicaragua under the new dictatorship. Through these examples Reagan intends to elicit pity for these unfortunate people and thus gain support for his request for financial aid to Central America. Throughout the speech Reagan emphasizes two Aristotelian concepts related to pity. First, he explains that the people of Central America are undeserving of such unfair treatment by the government and that they will be unable to overcome their fate without financial aid from America. Second, he warns that destabilization could "befall" the U.S., in the future, if preventive action is not taken now. The presentation of the possibility of destabilization can also be construed as a fear appeal.

While these appeals can be traced to the classical emotions described by Aristotle, modern speakers frequently appeal to the values held by an audience in order to gain their emotional support. Noted speech professors Edward Steele and Charles Redding have constructed a list of cultural American values which are often shared by audience members. This study consists of "relatively unchanging values shared by most contemporary Americans" and is
believed to be an "underpinning for persuasive, appealing, argument in speeches addressed to a mass audience." 191

The seventeen premises set forth by Steele and Redding are shown below:

Puritan and Pioneer Morality
Value of the Individual
Achievement and Success
Change and Progress
Ethical Equality
Equality of Opportunity
Effort and Optimism
Efficiency, Practicality, and Pragmatism
Rejection of Authority
Science and Secular Rationality
Sociality
Material Comfort
Quantification
External Conformity
Humor
Generosity and Considerateness
Patriotism

Although the element of humor is included in Steele and Redding's listed premises, Chapter II of this thesis explores Reagan's use of humor and shows it to be an integral part of his personal character or ethos. The remaining sixteen premises have been examined in all nine of the televised speeches. Occurrences of pathos appeals in the speeches have been categorized and charted on a constructed checklist based on the premises to determine what types of value appeals Reagan uses to support or aid his arguments

The study reveals that Reagan utilized these five value appeals the most:

1) Puritan and Pioneer Morality,
2) Patriotism,
3) Effort and Optimism,
4) Change and Progress, and
5) Efficiency, Practicality, and Pragmatism.

These appeals are listed in order of the frequency of their use, and each is explored more fully in this chapter.

**Puritan and Pioneer Morality**

In his varied attempts to persuade, Reagan stirs the emotions of his audience by drawing on their core beliefs and values. Reagan's reliance upon the value orientation of Puritan and pioneer morality is constant and is seen in all nine speeches. Steele and Redding offer this description of the premise:

The central themes in this ethic have been derived from the Christian religion and more of the Puritan immigrants, as reinforced in the frontier experience... Like our Puritan ancestors, we still--at least verbally--venerate such virtues as continence, honesty, simplicity, cooperation, self-discipline, courage, orderliness, personal responsibility, and humility... Today the ideal American does not lie, cheat or dissimulate; and he practices what he preaches.192

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192Ibid., 85-86.
The fact that Reagan uses this emotive premise more often than the others is not surprising. His use of it parallels his "heroic" ethos image of a man with a moral, virtuous character. However, Reagan's own moral character is often questioned, and he has been criticized for not practicing what he preaches. Time magazine journalist Lance Morrow writes of Reagan's conflicting personal values and practices:

There has always been a certain legerdemain, if not hypocrisy, in Reagan's professed personal values. He preaches productivity and rugged individualism, but has always been something less than a workaholic. He preaches the sanctity of family, but is the only President to have been divorced. His relations with his children seem to have been distant and somewhat troubled. He allies himself with religious Fundamentalists for political advantage, but rarely goes to church. 193

However, it does not seem to make a difference if Reagan's morality suffers a few dents; his oratory skills outweigh his personal shortcomings. He ironically, but successfully, arms himself with the virtues suggested by Steele and Redding. One example of Reagan's use of Puritan and pioneer morality can be found in the following passage:

He was typical of those Americans who helped build a neighbor's barn when it burned down. They built the West without an area redevelopment plan and cities across the land without Federal planners. I believe the spirit of volunteerism still lives in America. . . . The truth is we've let Government take away many things we once considered were really ours

193 Morrow, 15.
to do voluntarily out of the goodness of our hearts and sense of community pride and neighborliness.

(September 24, 1981)

In this first example Reagan uses his rhetoric to link verbally the people of today to the folk of the Western frontier. Reagan portrays the people of that time as being kind and cooperative, a generous people who were eager to help. All of these qualities are listed in Steele and Redding's morality description. Reagan's point is that the audience members should become more self-reliant, like our forefathers, and expect less of the government, especially since Reagan is asking for reductions in federal spending. Another example of the Puritan and pioneer morality theme follows:

I've always believed this land was set aside in an uncommon way, that a divine plan placed this great continent between the oceans to be found by a people from every corner of the earth who had a special love of faith, freedom and peace.

Let us reaffirm America's destiny of goodness and good will. Let us work for peace; and as we do, let us remember the lines of the famous old hymn "Oh, God of Love, Oh, King of Peace, make wars throughout the world to cease."

Thank you. Good night and God bless you.

(November 22, 1982)

The second example appears to be more of a religious sermon than a political speech. The speech is even concluded like a sermon, with a hymn for inspiration. As in many of his emotional appeals, Reagan strays quite far from the original topic--arms control, in this instance. The theme of America's divine destiny is a popular one with
Reagan. Martin Medhurst studied Reagan's strategies and explains that Reagan's rhetoric contains at least three standard commonplaces which he uses repeatedly: (1) "that this nation was set apart in a special way to be a beacon to the oppressed;" (2) "that the First Amendment was written to guarantee freedom of religion, not freedom from religion;" and (3) "that by realizing our calling we are now experiencing a spiritual revival." These three commonplaces are quite similar to the Puritan and pioneer premises, Reagan's most heavily used appeals category. Medhurst believes that Reagan uses this theme to force "attention on the individual entity, whether person or nation, and to imply a special responsibility to success, a special calling to assert oneself against the elements and to overcome." A third example follows:

We have a vital interest, a moral duty and a solemn responsibility. This is not a partisan issue. It is a question of our meeting our moral responsibility to ourselves, our friends and our posterity. It is a duty that falls to all of us--the President, the Congress and the people. We must perform it together. Who among us would wish to bear responsibility for failing to meet our shared obligation? (April 27, 1983)

In the third example, Reagan manages to transform a political plea for economic aid to Central America into a


195 Ibid., 267.
moral issue. In this appeal Reagan urges the audience to take the personal responsibility for helping Central America. Reagan's final question is a masterful stroke. It is designed to achieve compliance, or else the audience must risk the guilt for not meeting the "shared obligation." The third example, like the others, is structured with a solemn but inspirational tone. Erickson notes a likeness between Reagan's oration and that of a minister: "Just as a minister tells his congregation what to believe about the cosmos, so does Ronald Reagan analogously preach to America his own political gospel. And like the priest who must, above all, instill faith in the hearts of his flock, so does President Reagan seek to inspire us."196

As was mentioned earlier, Reagan's ethos image closely parallels the attributes of Puritan and pioneer morality. But why has Reagan consciously placed so much emphasis on using these types of appeals? Why are Puritan and pioneer morality references used more than the other appeals? Erickson suggests that Reagan uses this type of value orientation because this kind of "homily has enormous appeal in America," and because this religious stance has brought him "millions of votes and campaign dollars and

196Erickson, 1-2.
also the support of highly skilled political action organizations.\textsuperscript{197}

\section*{Patriotism}

Another type of appeal which has won some attention for Reagan is that of patriotism. In 1984, \textit{Time} magazine reported that a "new patriotism" was sweeping America, a new positive mood was spreading throughout the country. While the Olympics and the improved economy helped buoy the spirit, Reagan's rhetoric helped strengthen the feeling:

With his uncanny knack for conveying a sense of some simpler, lovelier, bygone American age, Reagan has encouraged the notion that happy days are here again... The conservative President in particular has always been fluent and profuse with the imagery and language of conventional, Decoration Day patriotism.\textsuperscript{198}

Even before the election year, however, Reagan was including patriotic appeals in this televised speeches. These appeals fit well into the guidelines Steele and Redding devised in their definition of patriotic values:

Loyalty to the tradition and values of America, rather than undifferentiated, egocentric nationalism, has been a persistent pattern. Faith in American ideals means a willingness to be a good citizen, to be proud of the United States, to defend it from external aggression.\textsuperscript{199}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{197}Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{198}Kurt Andersen, "America's Upbeat Mood," \textit{Time}, 24 September 1984, 12.
\textsuperscript{199}Steele and Redding, 90.
\end{flushright}
Some of the patriotic appeals Reagan incorporated in his speeches are listed in the following passage:

Instead, I ask you to trust yourselves. That's what America is all about. Our struggle for nationhood, our unrelenting fight for freedom, our very existence, these have all rested on the assurance that you must be free to shape your life as you are best able to, that no one can stop you from reaching higher or take from you the creativity that has made America the envy of mankind.

(July 27, 1981)

In this example Reagan relates his issue of the hour to a sense of patriotism. Reagan assures voters that a vote for his tax program will continue the American traditions. If only they will lend him their support, the American "spirit" will be renewed, "freedom" will continue, and their "greatness" and "creativity" will reign. Reagan is appealing to several emotional benefits in this passage. Patriotism is also linked to Reagan's current topic in the next example.

Time and again, the American people--you--have worked wonders that have astounded the world. We've done it in war and peace, in good times and bad. Because we're a people who care and who know how to pull together--family by family, community by community, coast to coast--to change things for the better.

The success story of America is neighbor helping neighbor. So tonight, I ask for your help, your voice at this turning point.

(April 29, 1982)

In the second example Reagan is pushing for a future amendment to balance the budget. He asserts that it is an American tradition to rally behind a good cause. Reagan
implies that this amendment proposal is a perfect opportunity for Americans to band together and "help" their "neighbors", thus helping him. Further, he implies that anything less than complete cooperation in passing the amendment would be detrimental to the American cause. Some of these same patriot appeals are used in the third example:

The budget is much more than a long list of numbers, for behind all the numbers lies America's ability to prevent the greatest of human tragedies and preserve our free way of life in a sometimes dangerous world. It is part of a careful, long-term plan to make America strong again after too many years of neglect and mistakes. . . . The budget request that is now before the Congress has been trimmed to the limits of safety. Further deep cuts cannot be made without seriously endangering the security of the nation. (March 23, 1983)

Reagan's defense budget is designed to "make America strong again," and anything less is pictured as dangerous to our national security. What American would willingly want to endanger the U.S.? Reagan's emotional ploy is further heightened by the implied fear tactic present in this passage. The "limits of safety" phrase is a somewhat frightening concept which emotionally catches the attention of the audience. As Steele and Redding point out, one of the patriotic appeals is to defend the U.S. from external aggression. Reagan's use of this appeal is very successful.
Reagan's strong usage of patriotic appeals is seen in all of the tested speeches. His unsuppressed loyalty and faith to American ideals appear to be very real and sincere. Morrow has this to say about Reagan's sense of Americana:

Ronald Reagan has a genius for American occasions. He is a Prospero of American memories, a magician who carries a bright, ideal American like a holograph in his mind and projects its image in the air. Ronald Reagan is a sort of masterpiece of American magic—apparently one of the simplest, most uncomplicated creatures alive, and yet a character of rich meanings, of complexities that connect him with the myths and powers of his country in an unprecedented way.200

**Effort and Optimism**

In the earlier chapter on ethos it was pointed out that a great deal of Reagan's success is due to his charming personal character. Always smiling for the cameras, humorous and cheerful with his audiences, Reagan has innate timing for spurring his listeners on with enthusiasm. In comparison to earlier presidents, Reagan's disposition is among the most positive and cheerful that Americans have witnessed. "Reagan's psychic weather is bright sunshine," writes Morrow, "and so far he has managed to keep the world from bucking him loose."201 Not only does Reagan possess a confident, optimistic outlook, but also he seeks to instill

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200Morrow, 12.
201Ibid., 14.
a sense of optimistic enthusiasm in his audience. His enthusiastic approach follows the guidelines described in Steele and Redding's definition of effort and optimism in rhetoric: "Action, guided by reason and an unshakeable optimism as to results, becomes a moral guiding principle. No problem was too complicated, no obstacle too big for determined, optimistic effort."202

In several instances Reagan attempts to persuade the audience by boosting their confidence. He reasons that whatever solution he offers, whether it be a tax bill or reform package, it is the most optimistic action that can be taken. Reagan's sincere confidence in his own solution is often contagious and helps further his cause by inspiring his audience. One of the examples in which Reagan used effort and optimism follows:

I ask you now to put aside any feelings of frustration or helplessness about our political institutions and join me in this dramatic but responsible plan to reduce the enormous burden of federal taxation on you and your family. . . . The other road promises to renew the American spirit. It's a road of hope and opportunity. It places the direction of your life back in your hands where it belongs.

(July 27, 1981)

In the first example Reagan is urging adoption of the Conable-Hance bipartisan bill as a key feature in his overall economic package. At the time of the speech, Reagan has been in office only a few months and the economy

202 Steele and Redding, 87.
is still in a dismal state. To encourage the audience to follow his "road of hope and opportunity," Reagan carefully words his emotional passages to cheer the discouraged audience. He urges the audience to overcome their helplessness by following his path of optimistic action. Reagan's simplification of the issue into two "roads" helps the audience view the economic situation as a manageable problem which can be controlled. Reagan's use of optimism is also seen in this example:

The present recession is bottoming out without resorting to quick fixes. There will not be a sudden boom or upsurge. But slowly and surely we will have a sound, lasting recovery based on solid values and increased productivity and an end to deficit spending. It may not be easy, but it is the best way—the only way—to real and lasting prosperity for all our people. Think of it: We have only had one balanced budget in the last 20 years. Let's look forward to the day when we begin making payments to reduce the national debt instead of turning it all over to our children.

(August 16, 1982)

Reagan reasons that there are several optimistic advantages in the passage of his tax bill. With an extra pull on the heartstrings, Reagan mentions the future of America's children. His reasoning is that if his bill is passed, children will have a brighter future, and of course, no one would want it otherwise. Reagan implies that support of the bill will help our economic recovery, increase our prosperity and help America's children. Passage of his
bill would be a step toward these optimistic goals. More optimistic wording is present in the third example:

My fellow Americans, tonight we are launching an effort which holds the purpose of changing the course of human history. There will be risks, and results take time. But with your support, I believe we can do it.

(March 23, 1983)

This example also contains the theme of national defense and security. The "effort" which Reagan is "launching" is his famed Strategic Defense Initiative proposal. In his closing passage Reagan acknowledges the efforts and risks which are necessary to the project. However, Reagan sees these as irrelevant in light of the audience's support. This is an example of a project which is neither "too complicated" nor "too big," a project which can be successful with "determined, optimistic effort."

Indeed, Reagan exudes a strong sense of optimism when he expresses confidence in the audience's support.

Reagan's faith in optimistic action has been one of his noted characteristics during his presidency. Morrow explains that Reagan "restored the authority of the American presidency. He has given Americans an optimism, a pride in themselves and in their country that they have not possessed since the death of John Kennedy."

203Closely

203Morrow, 16.
related to the effort and optimism appeals is Reagan's use of change and progress appeals.

**Change and Progress**

The change and progress category also shares an optimistic-future theme, but it has a slightly different reference point as well. While the effort and optimism theme focuses on uplifting the audience's attitudes, the change and progress theme urges acceptance of an issue due to future benefits. Steele and Redding define the change and progress appeal below:

> Even now, to the American, the best is yet to be, and nothing is impossible. Early American experience taught that change was both necessary and beneficial; hence, the present is better than the past, and the future will be better than the present. . . . "Optimism" about the future, and derogation of the "old fashioned," of the "backward," and of the "obsolete," verbalize standardized attitudes. Technological developments have encouraged acceptance of the new as a necessity of modern industrial life.204

When addressing his television audience, Reagan reinforces his pleas for change or progress by supplying beneficial reasons for that change. Robert Cialdini, author of *Influence*, explains that this type of methodology is successful in persuasion: "A well-known principle of human behavior says that when we ask someone to do us a favor we will be more successful if we provide a reason. People

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204Steele and Redding, 86.
simply like to have reasons for what they do." While this technique may border on the logos mode of persuasion, it is used more often to stir the human emotions. McCroskey also attests to the importance of supplying reasons to gain acceptance: "Essential to our understanding of rhetorical thought is an understanding of human nature. Humans are basically self-centered creatures. They normally do things because they think they will benefit from their actions. . . . Self-interest is the primary motivating factor in human life." The following examples of Reagan's change and progress appeals highlight his reasoning methodology:

When we measure how harshly these years of inflation, lower productivity, and uncontrolled Government growth have affected our lives, we know we must act and act now.

We must not be timid.
We will restore the freedom of all men and women to excel and to create. We will unleash the energy and genius of the American people--traits which have never failed us.

(February 5, 1981)

In this example Reagan gives the audience three reasons for change: inflation, lowered productivity, and government expansion. He strongly encourages change by promising progress. By supporting Reagan's course of action, the American people will receive a variety of


206 McCroskey, Rhetorical Criticism, 55.
emotional benefits. Reagan's optimistic view of the future, and his derogation of the past years make this an excellent example of Steele and Redding's change and progress section. Reagan's use of emotion is clear in the following example:

Our deployed nuclear forces were built before the age of micro-units. It is not right to ask our young men and women in uniform to maintain and operate such antiques. Many have already given their lives in missile explosions and aircraft accidents caused by the old age of their equipment. We must replace and modernize our forces.

(November 22, 1982)

In this example Reagan strikes a sympathetic chord when he speaks of those people who "have already given their lives," while operating obsolete equipment. He makes a case for modernization by emphasizing the unsafe conditions of today's equipment. Reagan's word choice of "antiques" also contributes to this theme of derogation. Reagan then urges the audience to support his MX missile proposal as the key to modernization of our forces.

There was a time when we depended on coastal forts and artillery batteries because, with the weaponry of that day, any attack would have had to come by sea. This is a different world and our defenses must be based on recognition and awareness of the weaponry possessed by other nations in the nuclear age.

(March 23, 1983)

Here, Reagan again urges technological change. He points out to the audience that America is in need of more progressive forms of weaponry. He reasons that in order to survive the nuclear age, America has to change its defenses
to compete with the progressive defenses of other nations. By pointing out to the audience that this is a "different world" and that everyone lives in the nuclear age, Reagan stresses the necessity to change with the times—to progress.

In all of these examples, it is easy to see Steele and Redding's guidelines present. Reagan belittles the "old fashioned," the "backward," and the "obsolete" methods. He strongly urges technological advancement and projects it as necessary to America's well being.

**Efficiency, Practicality and Pragmatism**

Projective action is also a main theme of Reagan's next premise of efficiency, practicality and pragmatism. Like the previous categories, positive or optimistic action in response to a problem is emphasized. While Reagan has been praised for his efficient actions on legislation in Congress, others see Reagan as an ideologue who is often criticized as being inefficient and impractical. What is important to this study of pathos, however, is not how Reagan is perceived, but how he appeals to his audience through the values of efficiency, practicality, and pragmatism. Steele and Redding emphasize that this premise...
placed on being a practical man, a man of broad practical experience, a mature and competent man. Solving problems as they arise, getting things done, characterize such a man.  

In his passages of pathos reasoning, Reagan urges acceptance of his proposals for the audience's sake. If the audience wants to consider themselves an efficient, practical, and pragmatic people, then they should follow Reagan's plan of action. Reagan takes the practical approach in the first example:

We asked ourselves two questions--and answered them: "If not us--who? If not now--when?"

... Now in conclusion, let me return to the principal purpose of this message--the budget and the imperative need for all of us to ask less of Government; to help us return to spending no more than we take in; to end the deficits and bring down interest rates that otherwise can destroy what we've been building here for two centuries.

(September 24, 1981)

In this example Reagan is pressing for additional reductions in federal spending. Reagan's theme throughout the speech is more efficiency in federal spending, and he expresses a desire to start now. His practical appeal is "If not now--when?" Reagan argues that if the audience will only ask less of government, then valid, pragmatic results will occur. Certainly no audience member would want to deny support and thus "destroy what we've been building" for the past two hundred years. As in other appeals Reagan uses emotive wording to inflict guilt on the

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207 Steele and Redding, 87-88.
listener who dares to choose an alternate course of action over that of Reagan's. Another example of this category is seen below:

Roughly $48 billion of the $99 billion represents closing off special-interest loopholes, which have resulted in unintended tax advantages for some, not all, taxpayers--some who are financially well able to pay their share. This is also a matter of simple fairness. So more than 80 percent of the tax bill is not new tax at all but better collection and correcting of flaws in the system.

(August 16, 1982)

Here Reagan is once again pressing for an efficient and effective means to an issue. With this example Reagan appeals to the audience's sense of practicality. He points out that the tax bill is only a tool of "simple fairness" and that it is to the taxpayer's advantage to support the bill. Reagan links this tax bill to a desirable end--efficiency in correcting the "flaws of the system." Reagan causes the audience to become involved:

The Lebanon war, tragic as it was, has left us with a new opportunity for Middle East peace. We must seize it now and bring peace to this troubled area so vital to world stability while there is still time. . . . We owe it to ourselves, and to posterity, to move quickly to build upon this achievement.

(September 1, 1982)

Actually, as Reagan speaks, he has already taken action to help the troubled Middle East, but asks for audience support in the matter. He justifies America's involvement in the situation and explains the practicality of his actions. Reagan reasons in this example that direct
U.S. involvement is the most pragmatic solution to world stability, and thus, the audience should share in "this achievement."

In all of these examples, Reagan skillfully structures his reasoning so that the audience will mentally benefit by following his proposals. He argues that his plan of proposal is the most efficient, most practical or the most pragmatic solution to "getting things done."

Pathos Techniques

As seen above, Reagan does resort to a "soft-sell" approach in all of the speeches tested. Fortunately, he does not rely on pathos appeals alone to win his arguments. In most instances Reagan uses pathos and emotive wording as an accessory to his attempt at logical reasoning. Since Reagan's arguments are weak on logical support, he resorts to sentiment to convince his audience. Observation of these speeches and Reagan's techniques reveals a pattern in his usage of pathos. Reagan strategically employs pathos to his advantage as an advertising technique, as a function of his exclusive option policies, and as an audience identification technique.

Reagan's approach to rhetoric is not unlike advertising techniques used in the television, radio and print media. Like the advertisers, Reagan is attempting to sell
a product to his audience with the help of emotion. Bill Abrams, reporter for The Wall Street Journal, notes that the use of emotion in advertising has become a common approach. In his article entitled, "If Logic in Ads Doesn't Sell, Try a Tug on the Heartstrings," Abrams writes:

Many advertisers have turned to sentiment because they've run out of compelling appeals to logic. . . . Other agencies say they're making more emotion-filled ads because consumers are weary of the hard sell. . . . Soft sell is the rule, and a product's purported emotional benefits are stressed over its functional ones.208

Additional research points to the fact that advertisers see increasing benefits when they use advertising which triggers the emotions. A content survey conducted by Richard Pollay in 1983 lends support to this trend. A study of two thousand print ads from 1900-1980 reveals a consistent "move toward viewing the consumer as driven by emotion, not cost-benefit calculation."209 Pollay also notes an increased emphasis on "emotional rather than logical rhetorical strategies" in advertising.210


210 Ibid., 61.
What makes emotional advertising successful? Malcolm MacDougall, president of a Lysol division, explains: "We want the people we're talking to to relate our product to their lives. Emotion is one of the best ways of doing that."211 Reagan seems quite aware of the enormous effect of using this advertising technique and often incorporates it to sell his programs to the television audience. For example, Reagan uses this technique in the following passage:

We increase the exemption on the inheritance or estate tax to $600,000 so that farmers and family owned businesses don't have to sell the farm or store in the event of death just to pay the taxes. Most important, we wipe out the tax entirely for a surviving spouse. No longer, for example, will a widow have to sell the family source of income to pay a tax on her husband's death.

(July 27, 1981)

In advertising his bipartisan tax bill, Reagan lists a series of audience "benefits" to entice the listeners. But Reagan does more than merely list the featured benefits; he relates them to the lives of the listeners. One way Reagan does this is by mentioning the highest rated source of emotional stress—the death of a spouse.212 Along with the logical reasoning in this passage, Reagan also chooses to use examples which will elicit feelings of sympathy and

211Abrams, 28.

compassion. The audience is moved to "buy" Reagan's product--the tax bill package--so other families, farmers and bereaved widows will be helped.

In a second passage, Reagan once again uses a dramatic example to evoke sympathy for his cause:

The Vietnam veterans finally came home once and for all to America's heart. They were welcomed with tears, with pride and with a monument to their great sacrifice. . . .

Seeing those moving scenes, I know mothers of a new generation must have worried about their children and about peace. And that's what I would like to talk to you about tonight--the future of our children in a world where peace is made uneasy by the presence of nuclear weapons.

(November 22, 1982)

In this passage Reagan uses an emotional "attention-getter" to prepare his audience for the sales pitch. Drawing upon emotions related to a past war, Reagan appeals to his present audience with an even stronger emotional appeal--the mother-child relationship then alludes to the possibility of future wars. All of these things combine to create a very touching introduction for Reagan's MX missile product. This is pathos at its best. Thonssen, Baird and Braden write: "Emotional proof . . . is designed to put the listener in a frame of mind to react favorably and conformably to the speaker's purpose."213 Reagan does this perfectly with his emotionally charged introduction.

213 Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, 428.
A second way Reagan commonly uses pathos is as a psychological tool which forces the audience to choose between two exclusive options. Reagan is amazingly adept in his rhetoric at leading the audience "down the path" of his choosing. In several speech conclusions, Reagan's final comments include an "either/or" decision which must be made by the audience. The options he lists are quite narrow and one-sided. The wording in the following passage is a good example:

We can leave our children with an unrepayable massive debt and a shattered economy or we can leave them liberty in a land where every individual has the opportunity to be whatever God intended us to be. (February 5, 1981)

If offered only these two options, the latter, brighter option would of course be the choice. Unfortunately, Reagan has created this dichotomy, and these are not the only options available. Again in this passage, Reagan refers to the mother-child relationship in his pathos appeal to the audience. The "ever-present Reagan paean to the family," is a common theme with Reagan.214 His appeal to all listening parents is that if the audience cares about the future of their children then they should support his tax cut package. What parent would willingly choose the bleaker option of an unrepayable debt? In a second

214Erickson, 34.
example, Reagan again verbally builds a scenario, leading the audience to only one of two options:

Do we tell these Americans to give up hope, that their Ship of State lies dead in the water because those entrusted with managing that ship can't agree on which sail to raise? We are within sight of the safe port of economic recovery. Do we make port or go aground on the shoals of selfishness, partisanship and just plain bullheadedness?

The measure that Congress is about to vote on, while not perfect in the eyes of any one of us, will bring us closer to the goal of a balanced budget, restored industrial power and employment for all who want to work.

(August 16, 1982)

In this example Reagan's careful wording helps contribute to the emotional overtones portrayed in the two options. The words Reagan uses to describe the enemy include, "dead," "selfishness," "partisanship," and "bullheadedness." When speaking of his tax bill option, positive words, such as, "hope," "safe," and "recovery," are used. In hopes of winning audience support, Reagan first presents them with a dilemma and then offers two emotionally tinted options from which to choose. Erickson comments on Reagan's technique:

Reagan translates the relatively mundane details of political life into a variety of new narrative contexts. He reduces questions about economic planning, constitutional interpretation, national defense, and all other matters to their most basic emotional level and presents them as parts of a struggle between good and evil.215

215Ibid., 72.
The third way Reagan uses pathos is in audience identification. Through his pathos appeals Reagan successfully motivates his audience by emotionally involving them in the speech. In the following speech Reagan is requesting $600 million in aid for Central America. While this seems like a very matter-of-fact, prosaic issue, Reagan manages to bring the effort closer to home:

Members of this Congress who went there as observers told me of a woman who was wounded by rifle fire on the way to the polls, who refused to leave the line to have her wound treated until after she had voted. Another woman . . . told the guerrillas, "You can kill me, you can kill my family, kill my neighbors, you can't kill us all. . . ." The world should respect this courage, and not allow it to be belittled or forgotten. And again, I say in good conscience, we can never turn our backs on that.

(April 27, 1983)

With his sympathetic examples, Reagan attempts to illustrate that the people of Central America are courageous and admirable; they are worthy of U.S. aid and concern. Americans are made to feel that, like Reagan, they should also show "good conscience" and support his economic plan to help those who are less fortunate. Otis Walter explains this type of motivational situation: "When we identify with a person or group, their problems become our problems, their struggles are our own, and their failures and successes are experienced as if they happened to us."216

216Walter, 86.
Another way Reagan attempts to identify with the audience is by keeping pace with America's changing moods and dispositions and by addressing them in his speeches. Timely use of pathos has helped Reagan persuade his audience on several occasions. For example, upon taking office in 1980, Reagan responded to the depressed people of America with speeches filled with optimism and hope for the future. In these earlier speeches, before the economic recovery, there is a heavier concentration of optimistic references than can be found in the last three speeches.

Another example of Reagan's timely use of pathos occurs with the patriotism appeals. During the time span of the selected speeches, the U.S. experienced an upsurge in national unity and patriotism. Reagan's speeches also reflect an increase in patriotic references and appeals. His usage of these types of appeals peaks in the last three speeches as the mood became stronger and more popular.

A third example of how Reagan manages to keep in tune with his audience is through his Puritan and pioneer morality appeals. Several times while in office, Reagan says that the U.S. is in need of a spiritual revival and even takes it upon himself in his speeches to lead the spiritual crusade. Reagan attempts to touch the spiritually hungry audience by sharing his vision of America's divine destiny.
At times, Reagan manages to incorporate all three--optimism, patriotism, and morality--in his speeches. Erickson elaborates, "Reagan applies the tropes and strategies of his ultimate optimism to nearly every issue which he addresses, translating Christian regeneration into patriotism and civic duty."\footnote{Erickson, 89.}

**Pathos and the Use of Television**

Reagan's use of pathos has been more effective through the utilization of television and has benefited from the use of television in three ways. The first is through the use of the television media itself. Television is the best manipulator and amplifier of human emotions known today. Roger Entman advises in his guidelines for presidential press relations that the president should match the proper media form to the type of message being presented. Entman writes that "television is best for ephemeral rousing of mass sentiment through symbolism."\footnote{Robert Entman, "How Reagan Does It," Harper's 268 (June 1984): 26.} Reagan does take advantage of this type of media when he uses his stirring emotional appeals. He understands the usefulness of utilizing pathos, without overdosing on the sentiment. Wirthlin has described Reagan as the only politician "who can hold
the attention and interest and grab the emotions of a television audience."219 In short, Reagan and his skill fit the medium of television.

A second way television has aided Reagan is in his physical portrayal of emotions. His past experience before the cameras has helped him perfect his own emotional responses. Joseph Spear says that Reagan's experience in role playing has taught him "how to hide his emotions and how to feign them. He learned a sense of timing and pitch, when to pause, nod, and smile. He learned how to shed tears on cue."220 Other evidence also supports this idea. Mark Miller, a television critic agrees that Reagan's use of emotional gestures helps his persuasive ability today:

While he couldn't fill the grand patterns of the silver screen, then, he has managed, with immense success, to adapt those patterns to the smaller scale of television. Moreover, he has learned to liven up his every televised appearance with frequent shifts in expression, constant movements of the head, lots of warm chuckles and ironic shrugs and sudden frowns of manly purpose. Such perpetual motion is a must on television, and a must for Ronald Reagan, who tends to lose his charm when he comes to rest.221


220Spear, 267.

221Miller, "Virtu Inc.," 29.
Furthermore, a study published in 1986, confirms the idea that Reagan's emotional projections have aided his pathos attempts. Reagan's nonverbal cues and facial expressions are "much better at evoking reassuring feelings than were any of his rivals," and his facial displays also tend to "inspire more easily feelings that he was strong and happy."222 Thus, part of Reagan's success in his emotional appeals lies in the fact that television amplifies his own physical portrayal of these emotions.

A third reason why television has helped Reagan in his use of pathos is in his extensive use of emotional imagery. He illustrates his points in an emotional manner. "The President seems to think in pictures--pictures soaked in a single strong emotion," writes James Traub. "Thus his habit, infuriating to critics, of illustrating his points with vignettes, or images, rather than clinching them with arguments [sic]."223 Television becomes a vehicle for these images Reagan creates in the mind of his audience. He has successfully transferred his message into graphic images to match the image medium of television. The following example illustrates how Reagan emotionally

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"pictures" the actions of the dictatorship in Nicaragua:

The Government of Nicaragua has imposed a new dictatorship; . . . it denied the bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic Church the right to say mass on radio during Holy Week; it insulted and mocked the Pope; it has driven the Miskito Indians from their homelands—burning their villages, destroying their crops, and forcing them into involuntary internment camps far from home . . . .

(April 27, 1983)

In this passage Reagan is attempting to convince his television audience that the present dictatorship in Nicaragua is cruel and repressive. He argues this by supplying emotional examples of imagery to prove his point, instead of drawing upon logical support. This type of approach is successful on television because of the fact that "images do overwhelm the sound of voices."224 Thus Reagan's contrived pictures and images have aided his use of pathos on television. Cialdini says it well,

There is a group of people who know very well where the weapons of automatic influence lie and who employ them regularly and expertly to get what they want. They go from social encounter to social encounter requesting others to comply with their wishes; their frequency of success is dazzling. The secret of their effectiveness lies in the way they structure their requests, the way they arm themselves with one or another of the weapons of influence that exist within the social environment.225

Reagan clearly belongs to this group.

224 Ibid.
225 Cialdini, 23.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

"... the real power of Reagan the communicator was not a trick of the trade. It was the simple fact that he held a set of simple beliefs and was able to express them in a simple and direct language. He did not sound like a politician, which made him a great politician."226

In this study, the Aristotelian concepts of artistic proof were applied to nine televised speeches presented by President Reagan between February 1981 and April 1983. The Aristotelian rhetorical principles of ethos, logos and pathos were examined and evaluated as they were demonstrated by Reagan.

It was found that Reagan's initial ethos, prior to the presidency, was formulated from his public-performance background. His acquired skills in speaking and acting helped his credibility. The strong, optimistic image he projected in 1980 appealed to the voters and helped get him elected.

Reagan's derived ethos was analyzed according to Aristotle's guidelines of character, goodwill and sagacity. It was concluded that while Reagan utilized character and

226 Reeves, 10.
good will to help his credibility, he was not known for his sagacity or intelligence. This weakness, however, had not harmed his credible image. Three reasons for Reagan's ethical success despite his lack of sagacity were presented. One was that Reagan's personal popularity was so high that the American public was willing to forgive him any weak point. A second reason appeared to be that the public's interest in politics was centered more upon Reagan's personal appeal rather than his intelligence. The third reason for Reagan's ethical success was that, even though he may err in his judgment, the American public does not believe Reagan's intentions were dishonorable. His weaknesses only served to make him more like "one of us."

Reagan's use of wit as a dimension of his personality was also examined and found to support his image as an affable, congenial person. Wit also tended to disarm his audience and to illustrate his good intentions toward them.

Further, Reagan's use of logos was analyzed and evaluated, and his use of evidence and reasoning structure were tested for validity. It was found that Reagan had problems with both. Reagan's most highly used form of evidence, the generalized statement of fact, was tested for validity and failed. Thus, his statements were judged to be unacceptable forms of evidence.
Seven arguments were examined and tested from a single speech of Reagan's. When tested for validity, only one argument passed all testing. Based on the tests and standards of logical reasoning, Reagan's arguments were illogical in nature and should not have been used as a valid argument.

Finally, Reagan's pathos appeals were classified into five main categories of value orientation: (1) Puritan and pioneer morality, (2) patriotism, (3) effort and optimism, (4) change and progress, and (5) efficiency, practicality and pragmatism.

Based on the research findings of this study, it was concluded that Reagan utilized pathos in three main ways: (1) as an advertising technique, stressing the emotional benefits of his "product", (2) as a coercive influence to force his audience into choosing one of two options, and (3) as a means of gaining support, immediacy and emotional identity with his audience. As a result, the press appeared to be reluctant to shatter Reagan's image, and the American public treated Reagan like a beloved child, especially in their willingness to overlook his flaws.

His knack for saying what the people wanted to hear, in a manner they understood, encouraged their support:

Reagan's audiences clearly longed for a leader who felt as they did, who felt the same gnawing feeling in his stomach, the same uncomfortable sense of insecurity and the end of confidence in Americans and
their country. But more, he was an orator who convinced them that it didn't have to be that way, that he knew how to turn back the clock and restore the United States to the unrivaled position of power it once had in the world, who could make them believe, as he often said, that America, since its earliest days, had been a "nation of destiny" and that it could become a land of opportunity again. . . . 227

Reagan was successful; he made Americans feel good about themselves and their country. They continued to support him.

In fact, a major reason he remained effective was through his skillful use of the television media which accentuated his ethical appeal by highlighting his charming personality and pleasing physical presence. As a veteran of stage and film, Reagan was quite comfortable with this medium. His relaxed confidence and his expertise with the teleprompter promoted more eye contact and credibility. By connecting his emotional requests to visual current events, such as a celebration for Vietnam veterans, Reagan was able to identify with America's current emotional mood. Because the focus of television is essentially visual, the use of it compensated for Reagan's poor logical skills.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

While this study has focused on the rhetorical aspects of Reagan's success, several non-rhetorical reasons for Reagan's effectiveness warrant future study. For example,
Reagan has remained successful perhaps because his string of accomplishments have outweighed any wrongs he has committed. Nor have his mistakes caused the voters any ill effects. Further study is suggested.

While this study has focused on the televised speeches of Reagan's first term, Reagan has also utilized the media of television during his second term as president. A comparison and analysis of the speeches in these two terms should be undertaken to determine any new adjustments, techniques, or strategies on the part of Reagan. A study of this kind might reveal entirely different patterns of structure in Reagan's later speeches.

Finally, the events surrounding the Iran-Contra scandal and Reagan's involvement in and rhetorical response to the affair should be analyzed. Perhaps Reagan may have encountered an obstacle which rhetorical skills cannot overcome.

The current study should enable the reader to question the words and rhetoric of Reagan in the future. By familiarizing one's self with the persuasive techniques exposed in this study, a reader should be more perceptive, more skeptical, and more questioning of all rhetoric and its appeal regardless of the source.

228 Sidey, 53.
229 Thomas, 20.
## APPENDIX

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**REAGAN'S USE OF LOGICAL APPEALS**

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