

A-B-D-C-E

PART III

TRACKING DOWN THE TRIANGLE

PART 3

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IT SEEMED SO SIMPLE: just document the triangle that, since my school days, I'd accepted as a given for symbolically representing both the mathematical and linguistic organizing principle, whose common term was "logic." Instead, it proved to be the beginning of my own surprising quest.

My goal in finding this schematic rendition of Aristotle's theory of aesthetics was more than merely having an *official* diagram, ie, something I hadn't drawn myself. I wanted to possess proof so irrefutably potent it would cause my son to grovel at my feet, abjectly apologetic, after which his penance would consist of forever wearing a sandwich board reading: "Aristotle's Template Rules."

STEP 1: DOWNLOAD A DIAGRAM OF TRIANGLE.

Matter-of-factly, I instruct www.Google.com to produce said triangle under the entry, "Aristotelian story arc." 1,380 entries spring into view. Not a single one makes mention of, or depicts, the triangle. The sought-after-pictogram doesn't show up under just plain "Aristotle," "Aristotle's triangle," "epiphany," "protagonist," or "plot point," either, or any other variations I can think of.

There *are*, I'm relieved to say, some triangle-related links to ...

- "Pythagorean ratios," "harmonics," "numerology," "mystical cosmology," and the "importance of the pyramid in transferring dead souls to the nether world and their next transmigration into another corporeal being";
- the etymological connections between Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Greek triangle-shaped letter Δ , "delta"—as in the "mouth of a river," the Greek word for "womb," as in the "Delphic oracle," who made her visionary pronouncements seated before a tripod;
- there are even triangle-related depictions of the GUT-TOE (Grand Unifying Theory of Everything) concept of the cosmos.

None of the above refers to Aristotle.

STEP 2: RETHINK APPROACH.

Recovering from my initial shock, I attempt to track down a diagram of the triangle from the point of view of a writing teacher. Still no triangle, though this time Google is more obliging in terms of volume. In under a second, I find myself at the web site of the *Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing*, where, sure enough, Aristotle is everywhere—just not any Aristotle I’m familiar with. The thousands of writing links listed on the site map here concern themselves solely with the complete-into-itself alternative universe of Aristotelian *rhetoric*.

THE BEDFORD BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR TEACHERS OF WRITING

www.bedfordbooks.com/bb/contents.html

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RHETORIC & COMPOSITION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RESOURCES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodicals Online Journals General Bibliographies • HISTORY AND THEORY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rhetorical Tradition History of Rhetoric and Education Rhetoric and Composition Theory • COMPOSING PROCESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composing Processes Invention: Heuristics and Pre-Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrangement Argument Audience Revision Style, Grammar, and Usage Response and Evaluation Literacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Development Collaborative Learning Essay and Personal Writing Literature and Composition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Composition Basic Writing Gender, Race, and Class Cultural Studies Teaching English as a Second Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical Communication Business Communication • WRITING PROGRAMS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing Program Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing Centers Writing across the Curriculum Electronic Writing Technologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Learning |
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I am, however, able to make the surprising but welcome discovery that, like A-B-D-C-E, Aristotelian rhetoric also claims a five-step order. This, I decide, merits closer attention. If I am going to go around authoritatively citing Aristotle, the least I can do is familiarize myself with this side of what he has to say, especially since the term “template” appears in the second paragraph, and “imitation,” the First Canon of Rhetoric, sounds to me an awful lot like “Brainstorming”! Here, edited, from, <http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm>, is what I read. Its purpose for being included is to serve as an informal sampling of the vast triangle-less terrain of Aristotle’s parallel universe of writing.

THE FIVE CANONS OF RHETORIC

RHETORIC HAS LONG BEEN DIVIDED INTO 5 MAJOR CATEGORIES OR "CANONS."

INVENTION • ARRANGEMENT • STYLE • MEMORY • DELIVERY

These categories have served both analytical and generative purposes. That is to say, they provide a template for the criticism of discourse (and orations in particular), and they give a pattern for rhetorical education. Rhetorical treatises through the centuries have been set up in light of these five categories, although Memory and Delivery consistently have received less attention. Rhetoric shares with another long-standing discipline, Dialectic, training in Invention and Arrangement. When these disciplines competed, Rhetoric was sometimes reduced to Style alone.

Although the five canons of Rhetoric describe areas of attention in rhetorical pedagogy, *these should not be taken as the only educational template for the discipline of Rhetoric.*

1. **INVENTION CONCERNS FINDING SOMETHING TO SAY** (its name derives from the Latin *invenire*, "to find.") Certain common categories of thought became conventional to use in order to brainstorm for material. These common places (places = *topoi* in Greek) are called the "Topics of Invention." They include, for example, cause and effect, comparison, Antecedent / Consequence, Contraries and Contradictions.

Stasis was an important procedure by which one would ask certain questions in order to arrive at the point at issue in the debate.

Questions to find Stasis	Kind of Question	Kind of Stasis
Did he do it?	of Fact	Conjectural Stasis
What did he do?	of Definition	Definitional Stasis
Was it just/expedient?	of Quality	Qualitative Stasis
Is this the right venue for this issue?	of Jurisdiction	Translative Stasis

2. **ARRANGEMENT CONCERNS HOW ONE ORDERS SPEECH OR WRITING** (its Latin name, *dispositio*, means "placement"). In ancient rhetorics, Arrangement referred solely to the order to be observed in an oration, but the term has broadened to include all considerations of the ordering of discourse, especially on a large scale.

ARRANGEMENT OF A CLASSICAL ORATION

1. Introduction	<i>exordium</i>
2. Statement of Facts	<i>narratio</i>
3. Division	<i>partitio</i>
4. Proof	<i>confirmatio</i>
5. Refutation	<i>refutatio</i>
6. Conclusion	<i>peroratio</i>

3. STYLE IS A RICH AND COMPLEX CONCERN OF RHETORIC THAT GOES FAR BEYOND THE CONNOTATION OF "PERSONAL FLAIR" OR THE USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

In Classical and Renaissance Rhetoric, Style was indeed concerned with ornamentation, but in the original sense of that word (from "ornare," to equip, fit out, or supply).

Consequently, Style encompasses both very minute and very large scale language choices, all of which affect the overall style. One could divide the concerns with Style as found in Classical and Renaissance rhetorical manuals as follows:

1. Word Choice
2. Sentence Composition
3. Levels of Style
 - * Low
 - * Middle
 - * Grand
4. Qualities of Style (Descriptive terms)
5. Figures of Speech
 - * Schemes
 - * Tropes

In addition, classic formal rhetoric recognized figures of Pathos, Figures of Ethos, and these Figures of Reasoning:

enthymeme The informal method of reasoning typical of rhetorical discourse. A truncated syllogism.

sorites A chain of claims and reasons which build upon one another. Concatenated enthymemes.

sylogismus The use of a remark or an image which calls upon the audience to draw an obvious conclusion.

aetiologia A figure of reasoning by which one attributes a cause for a statement or claim made.

ratiocinatio Reasoning (typically with oneself) by asking questions.

anthypophora A figure of reasoning in which one asks and then immediately answers one's own questions.

apophasis The rejection of several reasons why a thing should or should not be done and affirming a single one, considered most valid.

contrarium Juxtaposing two opposing statements in such a way as to prove the one from the other.

expeditio After enumerating all possibilities by which something could have occurred, the speaker eliminates all but one.

proethesis When, in conclusion, a justifying reason is provided.

prosopodosis Providing a reason for each division of a statement, the reasons usually following the statement in parallel fashion.

In all, the Forest of Rhetoric website lists 427 such figures.

Style is essential to Rhetoric in that its guiding assumption is that the form or linguistic means in which something is communicated is as much part of the message as is the content. For example, when Julius Caesar said "*Veni, vidi, vici*," ("I came; I saw; I conquered") he communicated a lot with a little. In fact, the efficiency of this statement about his military conquest seems to mirror the efficiency of his campaign itself. Nothing is wasted in accomplishing the intended task. Through his use of *asyndeton*, (the lack of conjunctions between independent clauses,) he demonstrates that he is direct and to the point. We can only assume that this forthright characteristic of speech reflects his leadership as a general. Caesar's short saying also constitutes a perfect tricolor! (three parallel clauses of identical length—at least in the Latin!) One can almost visualize the orderliness of a phalanx of soldiers, marching rank and file to battle, in the smooth orderliness of these parallel statements. The rhythm of the words in Latin, also, drums out a marching cadence that seems inescapable: *VE-ni; VI-di; VI-ci*. Caesar certainly reflected and probably augmented his credibility, or "*ethos*" in making this statement, one that seems completely appropriate for the report of a successful military campaign.

4. MEMORY HAS TO DO WITH MUCH MORE THAN JUST MEMORIZATION.

It was a requisite for becoming *peritus dicendi*, well-versed in speaking, something only possible if one had a vast deal of information on hand to be brought forth appropriately and effectively given the circumstances and the audience.

The canon of Memory also suggests that one consider the psychological aspects of preparing to communicate and the performance of communicating itself, especially in an oral or impromptu setting. Typically Memory has to do only with the orator, but invites consideration of how the audience will retain things in mind. To this end, certain figures of speech are available to help the memory, including the use of vivid description (*ecphrasis*) and enumeration. Along with Delivery, Memory has often been excluded from Rhetoric. However, it was a vital component in the training of orators in antiquity.

Orators were encouraged to envision where they would be speaking as a preparation for memorizing their speech. Then, having completed the speech's composition, they were to divide it into manageable portions, each of which they would assign, in turn, to a different part of the room where the speech was to occur. Thus, by casting their eyes about during their speech, they would be reminded of the next part of their speech to give.

5. DELIVERY IS THAT ASPECT OF RHETORIC THAT CONCERNS THE PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF DISCOURSE, ORAL OR WRITTEN.

To prepare, students were asked to observe closely a progression model of figures known as The 14 Progymnasmata, and then, first as a writing exercise, to copy the form but supply new content; or to copy the content but supply a new form. *Such imitations occurred on every level of speech and language, and forced students to assess what exactly a given form did to bring about a given meaning or effect.*

Here in sequence are the fourteen literary forms students were called upon to imitate.

Fable	Encomium
Narrative	Vituperation
Chreia	Comparison
Proverb	Impersonation
Refutation	Description
Confirmation	Thesis or Theme
Commonplace	Defend/Attack a Law

There's tons more, but you get the idea.

Illuminating and thought-provoking? Even elegant? Decidedly. So how come, since this is our linguistic legacy from Aristotle himself, no one today knows how to write? Except for the template part, and imitating an archetypal formula, it certainly wasn't the way I worked with kids, who, by the time we were finished, *could* write. Wherever it was, the still-missing triangle contained the key, whenever it felt like showing itself.

STEP 3: RE-RE-THINK APPROACH.

If I could only pinpoint just where this impossible-to-document understanding of mine had originated. At my desk, as I search my memory, my eyes fall on a book with a faded spine across the room on my bookcase. *The Anatomy of Criticism* by Northrop Frye, and again I experience the shock of recognition. It's a book which I've never read, but always meant to, a book which Austin Wright read aloud to us from constantly in his tongue-tied efforts to convey his rapture over Aristotle. My hunch is if this book doesn't offer me my answer, nothing will.

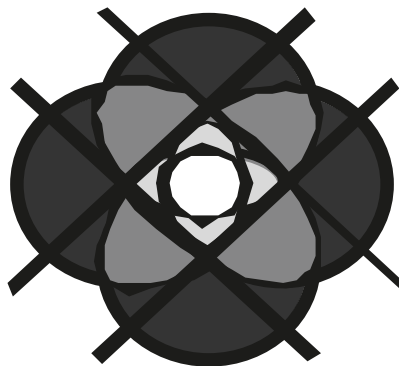
And sure enough, the very first sentence of Frye's "First Essay: Historical Criticism: The Theory of Modes," begins thusly:

In... The Poetics Aristotle speaks of the differences in works of fiction which are caused by the different elevations of the characters in them...

Finally! Confirmation that "my" Aristotle actually exists. And if I don't find a triangle or reference to one anywhere within the pages of *The Anatomy of Criticism*, (which I don't! For schematic symbolism, Frye favors a circle divided into quadrants), I have finally connected with a mindset that posits the presence of a coherent universal narrative pattern, one possessing a purposeful beginning, middle and an end.

On page after brilliant page of *The Anatomy of Criticism* I am looking at an ordered, even symmetrical, literary cosmology where Fall = Tragedy; Spring = Romance; Summer = Comedy; and Winter = Irony, where the imitation of the monadal archetype is Everything, and the concept of Originality is meaningless and irrelevant. To my delight and distinct relief, Frye cuts to the true heart of what real writing is, and how it happens, by squarely addressing the nonissue of “originality.”

In our day, the conventional element in literature is elaborately disguised by a law of copyright pretending that every work of art is an invention distinct enough to be patented. This state of things makes it difficult to appraise a literature which includes Chaucer, much of whose poetry is translated or paraphrased from others; Shakespeare, whose plays sometimes follow their sources almost verbatim; and Milton, who asked for nothing better than to steal as much as possible out of the Bible....Any serious study of literature soon shows that the real difference between the original and the imitative poet is simply that the former is more profoundly imitative....



I attempt to read this passage to my son, but skittish, he dances out of earshot. No matter. I have found all the validation I will ever need for the continued guiltfree application of my template.

Without actually singling out the particular narrative formula I employ, Frye also speaks of the narrative formula in general:

Total literary history gives us a glimpse of the possibility of seeing literature as a complication of a relatively restricted and simple group of formulas that can be studied in primitive culture. We next realize that the relation of later literature to these primitive formulas is by no means purely one of complication, as we find the primitive formulas reappearing in the greatest classics—in fact there seems to be a general tendency on the part of great classics to revert to them. This coincides with a feeling we have all had: that the study of mediocre works of art remains a random and peripheral form of critical experience, whereas the profound masterpiece draws us to a point at which we seem to

see an enormous number of converging patterns of significance. We begin to wonder if we cannot see literature, not only as complicating itself in time, but as spread out in conceptual space from some kind of center that criticism could locate.

It is clear that criticism cannot be a systematic study unless there is a quality in literature which enables it to be so. We have to adopt the hypothesis, then, that just as there is an order of nature behind the natural sciences, so literature is not a piled aggregate of "works," but an order of words.

Fascinatingly, Frye takes the precept that points to A-B-D-C-E farther than I'd imagined it was possible to go. Before he's done, *The Anatomy of Criticism* has brilliantly laid out a universe of literature, which makes one poem every poem, embodying and revealing the *Logos*, the power of The Word to create and organize the Cosmos.

One can get a whole liberal education simply by picking up one conventional poem and following its archetypes as they stretch out into the rest of literature....One step further, and the poem appears as a microcosm of all literature, an individual manifestation of the total order of words. Anagogically, then the symbol is a monad, all symbol being unified in a single infinite and eternal verbal symbol which is, as *dianoia*, the *Logos*, and as *mythos*, total creative act. It is this conception which Joyce expresses, in terms of subject matter, as "epiphany," and Hopkins, in terms of form, as "inscape."We can therefore think of literature as existing in its own universe ...containing reality in a system of verbal relationships....This unit of relationship is metaphor...

Even as he pens page after page of razor sharp distinctions and sustained sensitive fresh observations, perhaps because it's too obvious, Frye never quite makes the connection that the act of crafting *his* words on paper is *writing*, something he and we could each access in ourselves and about ourselves with but a slight adjustment—locating a qualified guide.

As he himself would be the first to acknowledge, Frye did not write *The Anatomy of Criticism* in a vacuum. A visit to *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory*, (http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory.html) abundantly demonstrates, a convergence of many other researchers' multidisciplinary work, who came before him or who were his contemporaries, but it has very much shaped the paths of many academicians across many disciplines. Published by Princeton University Press, *The Anatomy of Criticism* seamlessly eased itself onto the same shelf as the Bollingen series published by Princeton, which also contains in part, the complete works of Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Mircea Eliade, Carl Kerényi, and complete translations of Homer, Plato, and Aristotle, and hundreds of other classic, multicultural and original works devoted to the "science of mythology." Nor has Frye's lucid analyses of form, genre, symbol, and archetype shown any sign of becoming dated. On

the contrary, Frye served as mentor to Hayden White, who adopted his schema to the study of history. Other academic researchers who comfortably share his basic premise that all stories are embedded with their own deeper universal “grammar” are Russian formalists such as Tzvetan Todorov and Mikhail Bakhtin, and French structuralists, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, A.J. Greimas, Bertrand Gervais, and Julia Kristeva. Frye paved the way, as well, for the explosion of interest in narratology in all its manifestations, the scope of which becomes clear from the number of academic areas of study that have sprung up in the fields of literature, linguistics, anthropology, psychology, biology, cognitive science, communications, and philosophy.

Applied linguistics	Literature & culture	Narratology
Classical hermeneutics	Literature & history	Narrativity
Classical philology	Literature & ideology	Nonverbal communication
Cognitive linguistics	Literature & philosophy	Paralanguage
Comparative literature	Literature & politics	Philology
Computational linguistics	Literature & popular culture	Philosophy of language
Conversational narrative	Literature & psychology	Pornographic narrative
Critical theory	Literature & race	Pragmatics of literature
English philology	Literature & religion	Psycholinguistics
Fictionality	Literature & science	Rhetoric
Figures of thought	Literature & sexuality	Semantics
Form & structure in poetry	Literature & society	Semiology & structuralism
Functional linguistics	Literature & sociology	Semiotics of drama
Generative transformational linguistics	Literature & space	Semiotics of literature
Genre theory	Literature & technology	Semiotics of poetry
Interdisciplinary narratology	Literature & the visual arts	Semiotics
Interpretive theory	Meaning & linguistic interpretation	Sociolinguistics
Language & linguistics	Morphology	Speech acts theory
Language of poetry	Myth & Folk Tales	Structural linguistics
Lexicology	Narration	Text & text grammars
Linguistic concepts	Narrative embedding	Thematics
Literary language	Narrative modes	Theory of literature
Literary Theory	Narrative patterns	Theory of motifs
Literature & anthropology	Narrative structure	Therapeutic narrative
		Word formation
		Writing

The interest in consistently generating a universal psychically satisfying way of perceiving order also led to wider attention being paid to Aristotle’s *Poetics* in the 1990’s by screenwriters/screenwriting teachers Syd Field and Chris Vogler, who likewise pay their props to 19th century Russian narratologist Vladimir Propp.

I happen upon numerous papers in the field of cognitive science, which accept as a given that the human brain naturally impose a ‘beginning–middle–end’ narrative grammar even in such far-flung fields as mathematics, chemistry and physics. According to H. Porter Abbott in *The Cambridge Introduction*

to *Narrative* (2002), "The gift of narrative is so pervasive and universal that there are those who strongly suggest that narrative is a "deep structure," a human capacity genetically hard-wired into our minds in the same way as our capacity for grammar (according to some linguists) is something we are born with."

Again, the process of absorbing knowledge does not happen in a vacuum. Learning anything is an interactive imitative activity imparted by a teacher who is him/herself an active practitioner of his/her subject. Cognitive scientist and educator Howard Gardner could not state this premise any more clearly. Here, in his landmark work, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1993) he expands our understanding of the necessary pivotal role played by the catalytic guide, who physically serves as the active go-between leading his/her pupils from ignorance to knowledge:

...We are all equipped with a sixth sense of kinesthesia—the capacity to... (automatically) apprehend directly the actions or the dynamic abilities of other people or objects....If imitation is the central component of kinesthetic thought, then imitative teaching and learning may be the most appropriate way to impart skill in this domain....

Then, specifically applying the process to learning how to write, Gardner tellingly reports:

Cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict noted that, in Japan, in the traditional teaching of writing...the instructor took the child's hand and made the ideographs. It was to "give him the feel." The child learned to experience the controlled, rhythmic movements before he could recognize the characters, much less write them.

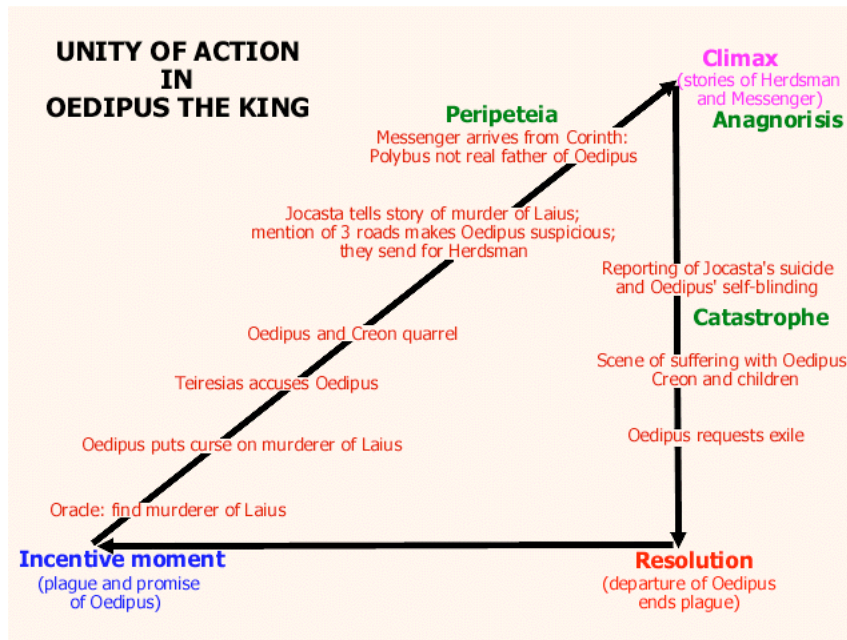
Indeed, there is a case to be made that all living creatures, at least as far down the Great Chain of Being as the bees, communicate by means of interactive imitation:

Foraging honeybees *Apis mellifera* render a dance that symbolically codes knowledge of the distance and bearing of the food from the hive. This dance recruits other workers, which are then able to travel to the distant food site.... This general pattern of communication is used by all bees of the genus *apis*, but different species and races vary in the detail of the waggle dance...These variations have been dubbed dialects.

By following the dance, the receiving bees rehearse the journey in miniature and prepare to translate it into a real flight. When the bees execute the flight, it can be said that they were sent and not led to the goal. What is different about the waggle dance, then, is that it is a truly symbolical message that guides a complex response after the message has been given.

The fascination with the means in which honeybees recruit nestmates to a food source even aroused curiosity in *Aristotle's time*. [www.nobel.se/medicine/laureates/1973/frisch-lecture.pdf]

Now I don't know what epiphany I am expecting to experience when, after long last, I finally come across The Triangle (under "Sophocles + Oedipus + text" on www.Google.com). In truth, what I feel is a gigantic letdown. Turns out, it's not Aristotle's triangle at all—turns out, according to its caption, that in 1863 a German playwright named Freytag suggested that the action of a play could be represented graphically. "This visualization of dramatic anatomy is known as the "Freytag's triangle." The triangle is based on the notion of rising and falling action, which form the sides of the triangle whereby the apex is the climax. ... "



[<http://www.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/oedipusplot.html>]

Who the freak is Freytag? I know I'm finally looking at a triangle that's covered with Aristotelian terminology. And I also know I'm not up to another wild goose chase through ambiguous secondary sources. *Is the triangle Aristotle's, or isn't it?*

WHICH IS HOW, **MOST RADICAL STEP OF ALL**, I FINALLY BITE THE BULLET AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME, ACTUALLY OPEN ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS* AND BEGIN TO READ IT FOR MYSELF!