

THEORETICAL ESSAY

Modes of subjectivation, ethos and the “Pathway of passions”: a theoretical-methodological apparatus for rhetorical analysis



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ABSTRACT

The text argues for the possibility of multimodal argumentative analyses. The main objective of this essay was to speculate on how an orator's modes of subjectivation, discursively materialized by ethos, provide evidence for the persuasion of audiences. In order to do that, we use the “Pathway of passions” theory as a theoretical-methodological analysis apparatus. The object of study was the official campaign video of the current state deputy for the State of São Paulo, Arthur Moledo do Val, published on the YouTube website, in 2018. The results of the work indicate that the analysis of multimodal texts is essential at the present time, since the most varied social practices, such as politics, have been using these materialities to persuade. It is also clear that ethos gains more argumentative relevance within a virtual communicative context. Furthermore, the rhetorical perspective of argumentation, transdisciplinary since its genesis, can provide the necessary means to carry out such an undertaking.

RESUMO

O texto argumenta a favor da possibilidade de análises argumentativas multimodais. O principal objetivo deste ensaio foi especular sobre como os modos de subjetivação de um orador, materializados

discursivamente pelo *ethos*, fornecem provas à persuasão dos auditórios. Para tanto, valemo-nos da teoria “Trajetória das paixões” como aparato teórico-metodológico de análise. O objeto de estudo foi o vídeo oficial de campanha do atual deputado estadual pelo Estado de São Paulo, Arthur Moledo do Val, publicado no site *YouTube*, em 2018. Os resultados do trabalho indicam que a análise de textos multimodais é imprescindível ao momento atual, uma vez que as mais variadas práticas sociais, como a política, têm se utilizado dessas materialidades para persuadir. Fica nítido também que o *ethos* ganha cada vez mais relevância argumentativa dentro de um contexto comunicativo virtual. Ademais, a perspectiva retórica da argumentação, transdisciplinar desde sua gênese, pode fornecer os meios necessários à realização de tal empreendimento.

KEYWORDS

Ethos. Modes of subjectivation. Multimodality. *Self*. Pathway of passions.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Ethos. Modos de subjetivação. Multimodalidade. *Self*. Trajetória das paixões.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically affected the way people lived from 2020 onwards. Unable to carry out their routine activities, social isolation ensured the creation or updating of communication practices. This scenario reinforced a process that had already been underway for at least two decades: the use of social networks for interpersonal interaction.

Before the pandemic scenario, the use of social media was already the new normal. The most diverse social practices sought to adapt their activities and actions within digital platforms. Politics is an emblematic case of this phenomenon. More and more political agents have realized the advantages of using social networks to garner popular support and adherence to their discourses.

Persuasion seems to be increasingly linked to the ethical and pathetic dimensions of discourse. This premise, which is neither original nor modern, is greatly reflected in the political scenario, where the construction of images of oneself and the mobilization of passions created by them become the primary proof of speeches. In this paper, we sought to argue that the argumentative studies, in their rhetorical perspective and transdisciplinary dialogue, have the necessary means to analyze multimodal texts, thus substantially contributing to the discussion of contemporary issues.

This position will be defended throughout this paper through the analysis of a video from the electoral campaign of state deputy Artur Moledo do Val (better known by the epithet “*Mamãe, falei!*”), posted on his YouTube channel in 2018. The choice of this object justifies itself because it is in dialogue with the theme of this paper, that is, the investigation of how subjectivities (or selves) can function as rhetorical devices that ethically and pathetically project themselves onto speech in order to generate persuasion.

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to speculate about how selves behave rhetorically and their role in persuasion. The specific goal of this research is to propose the “Pathway of passions” theory as a theoretical-methodological apparatus for the analysis of multimodal texts.

Let us then move on to the theoretical discussions and analytical reflections undertaken.

1. Multimodality and the “Pathway of passions”

The possibility of argumentative studies, which cover the aspect of imagery in their analyzes is not contemporary, and apparently has no end date. Controversies about multimodal argumentation as an object of analysis are plenty, according to Gonçalves-Segundo (2021). In summary, some researchers advocate for the impossibility of an argumentative imagery analysis; others, assuming that such analyzes are possible, “reflect on the need to recruit knowledge and instruments from other disciplines [...] [or] on how different perspectives of argumentation – logic, rhetoric, and dialectics [...] can (or cannot) embrace the imagery within the scope of its theoretical-methodological models”. (GONÇALVES-SEGUNDO, 2021, p. 73-74, our translation).

Concerning the rhetorical analysis, Gonçalves-Segundo (2021) reminds that it emphasizes the argumentation efficacy through the investigation of the audience’s function/role, the values, the agreements and the argumentative techniques. The author discusses Jens Kjeldsen visual rhetorical argumentation as an example of a rhetorical approach to multimodal texts. In this paper we will argue that the theory entitled “Pathway of passions” is a theoretical-methodological tool that, in dialogue with other disciplines, represents a relevant apparatus for the studies of multimodal argumentation.

The “Pathway of passions” theory was proposed by Maria Flávia Figueiredo (2018; 2019; 2020) and was discussed and used as a theoretical analytical apparatus in the work *Trajectoria das paixões: uma retórica da alma* (2020)². It is an extension of Aristotle’s (2015) analysis of the instance of pathos. In a schematic and synthetic way, the Stagirite proposed that the flourishing of one or more emotions is a necessary factor for changes of judgment and, consequently, for the action of audiences. “Once such transitory states [passions] are configured, the transformation of the judgment must happen, as well as its resulting action, which triggers and performs the outcome of the persuasive

¹ “Mommy, I said it” (our translation).

² *Pathway of passions: a rhetoric of the soul* (our translation).

process”, points out Figueiredo (2020, p. 31, our translation). The following image synthetizes Aristotle’s discussion on pathos:

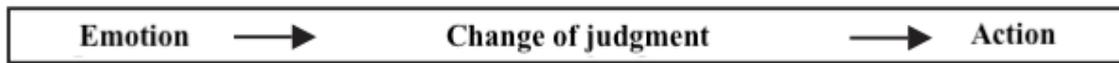


FIGURE 1 – Emotion’s effects according to Aristotle
Source: Adapted from Figueiredo (2020).

In her proposal, the author describes some underlying persuasive processes related to the audience’s psyche. Furthermore, she adds two stages to the process intuited by Aristotle, which she calls availability and identification. A diagram of her proposal can be seen in the image below:

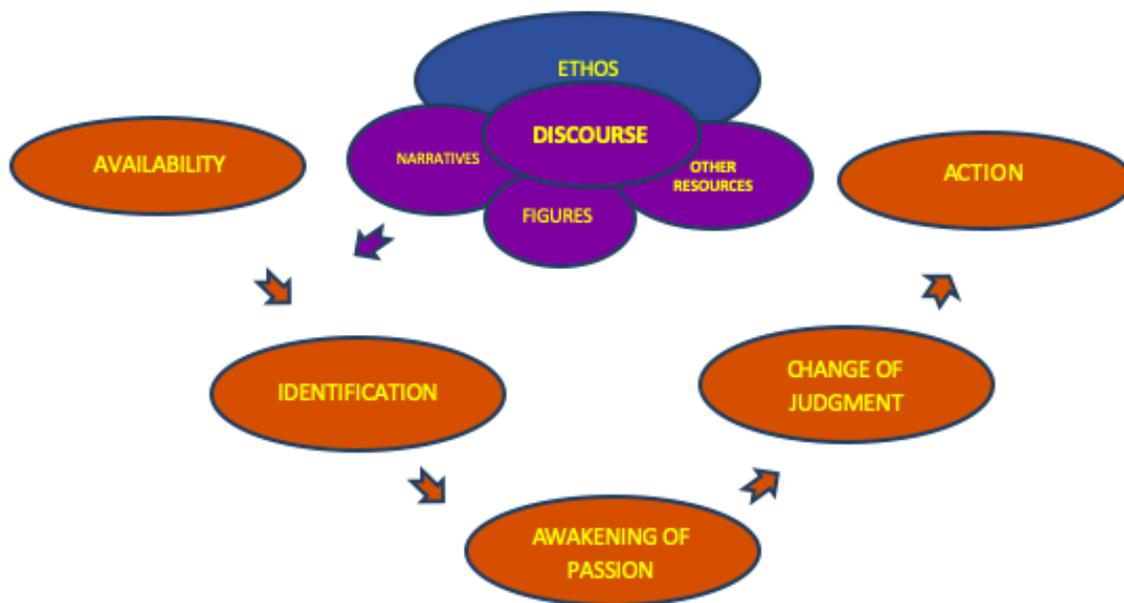


FIGURE 2 – Pathway of passions
Source: Adapted from Figueiredo (2020, p. 47).

In her analysis of the Aristotelian framework, Figueiredo (2020) advocates that the “awakening of passion” is the most important stage of the persuasion process, since it is the union point between two plates of a balance:

In this phase, the audience, immediately after experiencing the identity processes (which are triggered by elements present in the speaker’s speech), it begins to experience the changes and physiological processes that will cause sensations of pleasure and/or pain. Thus, we find that passions affect not only the soul, but also, and above all, the body of those who feel them. For this reason, the experience felt in the body will be responsible for the unfolding of the subsequent stages, as very well described by the Stagirite. (FIGUEIREDO, 2020, p. 37).

As Figueiredo (2021, p. 32) states:

The original contribution of this proposal rests initially on the first two stages (“availability” and “identification”), which will serve [...] as a trigger for the subsequent three stages (“passion flourishing”, “change of judgment” and “action”), already present in Aristotle.

Therefore, in this paper, we sought to reflect on the stages of **availability** and **identification** from a rhetorical and psychosociological perspective.

2. Some availability, plenty of identification

According to Figueiredo (2020), the availability stage is related to the passionate disposition of an audience, considering that persuasion is not limited to a rational evaluation of the discourse. In other words, logos (as well as paralinguistic elements) must be constructed to mobilize passions available in the individuals who constitute a given audience. The availability stage, in the words of Figueiredo (2020, p. 35, our translation), “refers to the emotional disposition of the audience and its reception to the emotions that will be mobilized in a given speech.” The author also adds that the speaker should gather as much information as possible of his/her audience so she/he can get to know it – not only superficially (based on information such as age, race, sexual orientation) but in a much more intimate way [...] to anticipate its emotional availability” (p. 34-35, our translation) – or at least to be able to make assumptions about it. In this paper, we sought to speculate on the possibility of understanding an audience’s disposition as the result of the rhetorical confrontation between modes of subjectification.

Rhetoric, since its classical roots and some of their contemporary branches – especially the Aristotelian ones – have discussed the subject through the concept of ethos. As Baumlin (1994, p. xvii, emphasis on the original) suggests:

Ethos concerns the problematic relation between human character and discourse; more specifically, it raises questions concerning the inclusion of the speaker’s character as *an aspect of* discourse, the representation of that character in discourse, and the role of that character in persuasion.

More recently, the author enriches his argument by affirming that “any adequate ‘map’ or model of ethos will include *a version of self*” (BAUMLIN, 2018, p. 4, emphasis on the original). Insomuch as our goal is to discuss availability by means of subjectification – whether when we are the speakers or the audiences – let us begin to reflect on the self, the concept that seeks to characterize each one of us in a unique manner.

In psychological theory, there are several perspectives on how we can understand what we are. In other words, different approaches speculate on ‘self-awareness’ from multiple theoretical apparatuses, often complementary and often controversial. Macedo and Silveira (2012), through a systematic review of the literature and the categories proposed by Bamberg (2008) and Bamberg and

Zielke (2007), advocate that the definitions of self limited to the framework of psychological studies can be grouped into two major thematic axes: 'perspectives that place clear boundaries between the internal and external world' (including psychoanalysis, behaviorism, humanism, for example) and 'perspectives in which the boundaries of the internal and external world are poorly defined' (socially based theories, such as constructionism, constructivism and their developments).

The second thematic axis broadly encompasses conceptions of the discursive constitution of the self, that is, "the self as discourse or the narrative self emphasizes the idea of the self as a text in process" (MACEDO; SILVEIRA, 2012, p. 286, our translation). It appears to be an approximation with the concept of human being proposed (or presupposed) by some contemporary discursive studies, since, despite their differences and epistemological particularities, they postulate that:

Our tireless contemporary language is not transparent; words, our most dear and favorite expressions, are not the things in the world they designate; a "Truth", in short, of an ontological or essential nature, does not exist. Furthermore, the structure of language does not mean or generate its effect by itself, that is, in an autonomous and universal way; in this case (and always), one has to consider the context to extract the particular meaning of a statement or utterance, or to speculate about their possible impacts, or even to support whether a given expression means this or that. (GALINARI, 2020, p. 1699, our translation).

If language has characteristics such as those described above, it seems reasonable to say that human thought is also marked by non-transparency, by the impossibility of reaching absolute truths and that its meaning is also produced according to the context in which one or more individuals are inserted.

Since antiquity, a wide range of authors have advocated for the thesis that rhetoric is not just an aspect of language but that the essence of language is in fact rhetorical. Arguments for this effect can be found in sophist authors, according to Galinari (2014). The author points out that Gorgias:

Demonstrates the interference of culture and social conventions (*nomos*), as well as of communication contexts (*kairos*), in the effects and meanings of things, and **all this without considering the will or the absolute control of subjects, who are never self-sufficient**. In short, **Rhetoric** here, before being a technique, **was already primarily the non-transparency of discourse**, incapable, by its own material nature, of fully reaching an infallible truth [...] for both perspectives [...] despite the terminology gap, **the discourse is crossed by deception, misunderstanding and opacity, phenomena resulting from its constitutive non-transparency**. (GALINARI, 2014, p. 27, our highlights and translation).

Some millennia after the philosophers who became known as sophists, the assumption of rhetoric as the very nature of language and discourse was used in an 18th- and 19th-century discipline: Social Psychology, whose proponents include the British social psychologist, Michael Billig.

According to Billig (1991; 1996), the cognitivist conception of human beings eclipses the fact that even the infamous schema (heuristics and automatic thoughts, for example) is a 'substrate' of the rhetorical property of language, i.e. it emerges from the potential controversy of logos. Therefore, according to the author, in order to comprehensively and coherently understand the relationship between the individual and society, one must necessarily conceive humans as rhetorical beings.

In this rhetorical approach to Social Psychology our subjectivity is understood from a discursive perspective, so that our thoughts and emotions result from the rhetorical confrontation of logoi produced by an individual and logoi originating from the external world. Based on the reflections proposed by Protagoras, Billig (1996, p. 79) states that “human thought is characterized by variety. We do not possess just one way of looking at, and talking about, the world. Instead, our species is characterized by the existence of contrary views.”

In short, to think of human beings as rhetorical beings is to advocate for a discursive image that presupposes a rhetorical-argumentative construction of the psyche, therefore, of the self:

When people deliberate, their thinking resemble an argument. In consequence, the deliberator is not so much an orator, but is two or more contesting orators rolled into one person. If people can deliberate, first by advocating one side and then by advocating the other, then they are possessed of the skills of advocacy. The second part of the image does not show the individual person engaged in internal deliberation, but the person advocating a single position, or becoming the domestic version of the public advocate. In this second image, the argument is not unfolding within the self, but actually takes place with another orator, who is advocating a contrary position. In this way, the rhetorical image draws attention to two sides of the person. We see the person as the deliberator, uncertainly shuttling between contrary opinions. And then, we see a determined advocate, who has decided upon a single stance and is orating upon the virtues of the chosen position. Thus, the rhetorical image embraces both the uncertain and the certain, or the perplexed and the forthright, sides of human thinking. (BILLIG, 1996, p. 186).

One can thus assume that our subjectivity, what we recognize as our selves, would derive from a certain stability resulting from the confrontation of internal and external logoi about who we are. That is, unlike post-structuralist perspectives, which advocate for an ‘infinitely plastic and without characteristic interior structure’ self (ALCORN, 1994), the self of rhetoric would update itself with each communicative interaction but would exhibit a certain stability over time and in space, as Alcorn (1994) argues.

On the basis of a perspective that assumes the undifferentiation between rhetoric and argumentation, that is, which considers that both of them “refer indistinctly to all and any discursive procedures capable of producing varying intensities of adherence in a specific situation” (GALINARI, 2014, p. 261, our translation), along with the previously discussed conception of self, let us speculate about which modes of subjectivation are most suitable for the speaker to achieve adherence to a certain thesis or to modify the audience’s ways of seeing/feeling (AMOSSY, 2020). In other words, we can ask ourselves: is it possible to envisage a ‘model’ of the self that is rhetorically efficient in a specific context? In order to answer this question, let us turn our attention to the analysis undertaken by psychologist and psychoanalyst Luís Cláudio Figueiredo (1995) on the modes of subjectivation in contemporary Brazil.

Based on a theoretical balance of authors from different fields of knowledge, Figueiredo (1995) offers an analytical-interpretive model of the modes of subjectivation in the Modern Age. According to the author, one can think of three categories that synthesize the contemporaneity way of subjectification of the self, namely: **people**, **subject** and **mere individuals**. To defend his point of view, Figueiredo (1995) advocates that, in any stratified society, there are many places and, therefore,

many qualitatively distinct people. Furthermore, in individualistic societies, there is an anonymous mass of mere individuals. There is, however, in all these situations, a single subject. Following this line of thought, the author argues that when the mere individual elevates itself to the status of subject, he/she reaches “a level of regularity, uniformity and unity that reduces or even eliminates all the qualitative differences that define people and any mere multiplicity of individuals” (FIGUEIREDO, 1995, p. 36, our translation).

It seems that such a model offers interesting answers about the stage of availability, if we consider the sociopsychological and rhetorical self previously discussed. As we argued earlier, the self builds itself from a certain stability resulting from the controversy between internal and external logoi, that is, one’s subjective status would constantly update itself as consequence of the confrontation of a relatively stable, yet resilient self-conception and an arbitrary, often disciplinary conception that others make of our selves. Our availability would thus be related to ways of subjectivation of our selves, which, according to Figueiredo’s (1995) model, would sometimes behave as **mere individuals**, sometimes as **people**, sometimes as a **subject**. Our speech, when uttered, bears marks of this process.

According to the considerations made, as an audience, our availability would be more directed to the multiple and relative possibilities of existence experienced by mere individuals, or to behaviors and beliefs of affiliation that characterize people, or the values of autonomy and stability that the subject possess. The orator, to gain adhesion, would consciously or unconsciously adjust his ethos to one or more of these three modes of subjectivation, depending on the characteristics of the verbal exchange in question.

By recognizing their own subjectivity in a certain mode of subjectivation, which is materialized by the discourse in the speakers’ self-image or ethos, the audience would identify with the (true or true enough, as Aristotle proposes) self of the speaker, which would trigger the persuasive process as proposed by the “Pathway of passions” theory. This is because, according to Figueiredo (2020, p. 36, our translation) in the stage of identification, “I identify myself with what reminds me of me, what talks about my history, what respects my scale of values, what deals with issues close to my heart [...]. So, I identify myself with everything that reveals to me who I am”.

In short, in the hypothesis in question, our availability would depend on a certain stability that arises from our recognition of who we are, about our subjectivity, that is, about our self. We would, therefore, as an audience, be more available to a way of subjectivation that reflects our own subjectivity or that which we aspire to dispose of. Based on the model discussed above, we could identify ourselves with the conscious autonomy of a subject or with the historical, concrete and desiring particularities of people or with the multiple impersonality of mere individuals. Thus, the self would function as a rhetorical device that is discursively present through the ethical argument.

This proposition finds one of its bases in the discussion undertaken by Alcorn (1994), for whom ethos is conceptualized as the “existing relationship between the discursive structures of the selves and the discursive structures of the ‘text’” (ALCORN, 1994, p. 6). From this perspective, “something within its own internal organization favors the self to identify with certain social forms and reject

others” (ALCORN, 1994, p. 13). Differently from the author, who approaches our subjectivation from a psychoanalytic framework, we propose that the discursive structures of the self can be analyzed using the model exposed above. In other words, people, mere individuals and the subject would be discursive structures designed ethically by/in discourse.

In order to conclude this section, some considerations about the developed argument are necessary. The Pathway of passions theory proposes an instrumental analysis of the discourses regarding the means of persuasion. The outcome of the argumentative process would take place through five stages, necessarily in this order: **Availability, Identification, Awakening of passion, Change of judgment** and **Action**. We sought to argue that, to understand the availability of individuals, it would be necessary a rhetorical conception of the self. We advocated that such a position was already, in some way, present among the sophistic thinkers of rhetoric, as well as in modern disciplines such as **Social Psychology** within a rhetorical-discursive framework. Language, therefore, thought and emotions, and by extension the self, would be essentially rhetorical, that is, they would be a product of the potential controversy of logos. Based on these assumptions, we presented a model of modes of subjectivation to reflect on discursive structures that could serve as rhetorical identification devices through the ethos projected in a given discourse.

It seems reasonable to say that, in order to be successful in the persuasive activity, the orator’s ethos must go back to the most identifiable modes of subjectivation by his audience, which, in part, would result from the unique processes of constitution of each self and which, ultimately, would depend on the rhetorical context involved.

With the aim of verifying the viability of our propositions, let us move on to the analysis of the object selected for this article.

3. Analytic study

3.1. Some context

In the last two decades, electoral campaigns have undergone major changes worldwide due to the advent of social networks (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). In Brazil, this phenomenon seems to have gained strength especially in the second decade of the 21st century. Through these digital platforms, electoral campaigns gained new possibilities of feasibility. For example, candidates can post their campaign content for free, with the possibility of reaching out to any citizen with access to the world wide web, in a programmed, systematically and autonomously manner. Furthermore, new multimodal elements can be added to electoral campaigns to increase the possibilities of adherence to the discourse.

Politicians have realized the advantages of running election campaigns through social networks and have started to use this strategy. This is the case of the orator in the video that will be analyzed below. Following global trends of usage of the virtual space as a tool for the dissemination and

propagation of speeches, Arthur Moledo do Val, who is currently seeking to disassociate himself from the epithet 'Mommy, I said it!', posted the official video of his campaign on the YouTube platform in 2018, when he was running for the position of state deputy for the state of São Paulo. It is worth noting that this is an audiovisual product inspired by the Rocky Balboa franchise-character.

Not only did the orator get enough adhesion from the citizenry to guarantee a seat in the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo, but he also achieved the second-highest number of votes in the state and one of the highest in the country, that is, surprising 478,280 votes. The adjective seems appropriate because it was a candidate with no history of political participation; as he states in a recent YouTube video, before he was elected, he was a businessman.

Arthur do Val started to be recognized in Brazil, more specifically in São Paulo, after the protests calling for the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and the punishment of those involved in the *Operação LavaJato* (Car Wash Operation) in 2015 and 2016. His YouTube channel, which takes his epithet as its name, was created on May 25, 2015 and today has 2.78 million followers. The prestige (or the discredit) of the ethos that was being publicly constructed in the 2018 elections was largely related to the institutional ethos of the Free Brazil Movement (MBL), a group created in 2014, which defends, among other agendas, liberalism as a political philosophy, individual freedom and private property. According to information available in their website³, the MBL sought to build an image that symbolizes a new political way, challenges the leftist hegemony and fights against institutionalized corruption.

In addition to this intended 'reasonable' political-ideological facet of the ethos that was being constructed, favored by a context of political antagonism (AVELAR, 2021), there were already a series of videos in which Arthur do Val 'confronted his enemies head-on'. In all of them, the candidate has been seen questioning people, without apparent fear of reprisals, while participating in acts, events, occupations, etc., organized by popular movements, parties and leftist groups.

Based on the above, it seems feasible to affirm that Do Val's speeches were uttered so it projected an ethos of a subject who dominated contemporary forms of political mobilization/action, that is, social networks; a liberal subject fully aware and critical of the harmful indoctrination that, according to him and the MBL, the left operated in Brazil; a thoughtful subject who understood what the country's problems were, how to overcome them, and who was willing to sacrifice himself, even physically, so that Brazilians could overcome alienation.

It seems to us that Do Val's discourses long for, conscious or unconsciously, to fulfill the three qualities that inspire the confidence of audiences according to Aristotle (2015), that is, *phronesis*, *arete* and *eunoia*. According to Eggs (2019, p. 32, emphasis in the original and our translation), they can be translated as follows: "Speakers inspire confidence, (a) if their arguments and advice are wise and *reasonable*, (b) if they argue *honestly* and *sincerely*, and (c) if they are *sympathetic* and *kind* to their listeners."

Such an image undoubtedly aroused different passions in different audiences. For those who already knew the orator, who had or desired a subjective disposition of characteristics close to his

³ Available on: <https://mbl.org.br>.

and were exposed to the analyzed object, there would be a high probability of passions such as trust (security), emulation and/or love (friendship) be awakened through the video. This is because the first (trust) would be “the opposite of fear. It is accompanied by hope (anticipation) of the things that lead to security as something close” (FIGUEIREDO, 2020, p. 30, our translation); while the second (emulation) is related to “the imitation movement of the other” (p. 31); and the third (love) would be the “bond of identity with the other” (p. 29).

Conversely, the audience that already knew him but did not have or rejected a subjective disposition of characteristics close to Arthur’s would end up not identifying with his speech, generating the mobilization of passions such as anger (wrath), which would be “an impulse of revenge, caused by unjustified negligence towards [...] those who are their loved ones” (FIGUEIREDO, 2020, p. 29, our translation); hatred (enmity), which would be “the craving [to] harm another” (p. 29). Furthermore, fear could also be mobilized, that is, “a pain or disturbance resulting from the projection of an imminent evil that has a destructive and painful characterization” (p. 29); indignation, as it “comprises regret for those who [...] enjoy undeserved success” (p. 30); and, finally, contempt, since it is the “antithesis of emulation” (p. 31).

For the audience that did not know him, the ethos that was projected by his previous images, reputations, status, fame, or any other aspect that is related to the ethical dimension of the discourse, would not have a relevant rhetorical effect and, therefore, persuasion would depend on reasoning, self-images, and passions derived from a given discourse.

3.2. The object itself

As mentioned before, the object of study whose analysis will illustrate our proposal is the official video of Arthur do Val's campaign for the position of state deputy. From a classical rhetorical perspective, this type of discourse, derived from electoral campaigns, generally fits into the umbrella conception of deliberative oratory genre, as described by Aristotle (2015)⁴. This framing has some implications for our object. The first of them is related to the communicative purpose of the analyzed text. As it is a speech whose main objective would be to encourage the audience to act, the video's argument is structured in a way to justify the thesis that the orator would be the best choice to occupy the position of state deputy of São Paulo in the 2018 elections. Based on this 'advice', it would be up to the audience to decide whether it would be convenient or harmful to vote for the candidate.

⁴ The Aristotelian categorization of oratory genres is adequate and sufficient for the objectives of this work because it highlights the deliberative aspect of political discourses; that is, although the contemporary political campaign is as different and diverse as it could be from Aristotle's time and context, political discourses, general and rhetorically speaking, seeks to persuade the audience to decide upon some issue that will have future consequences. Therefore, its main communicative purpose is to stimulate the audience to do or not do something on the basis of what is convenient or harmful. Since the analyzed video is an electoral political campaign, the orator seeks to persuade the audience to adhere to his proposals, consequently taking the action of voting for him.

Furthermore, for this type of discourse, Figueiredo and Ferreira (2016), on the classic's trail, emphasize that the ethical and pathetic dimensions are decisive for persuasion.

In the video, four of his government proposals are textually presented:

- 1) Strengthen the police (0'30");
- 2) End privileges (0'43");
- 3) End USP vagrancy (1'16");
- 4) Privatize (1'33")⁵.

Since the ultimate objective of the deliberative discourse is to define and execute what would be useful to the interests of the citizen instance, the proposals, in theory, should constitute the most preponderant shreds of evidence for the thesis that the best option is to vote for Arthur. In our analysis, as we will see, these arguments play the role of mere auxiliaries to the thesis defended, since, in reality, they only seek to corroborate the self-image built by the orator through his performance and reinforce some emotions that are mobilized by it.

As we pointed out earlier, the video was inspired by the Rocky Balboa character. Thus, the orator's speech, in order to structure the reality, presupposes that the character would be a model to be followed. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1996, p. 414-415, our translation), "you don't imitate just anyone; to serve as a model, a minimum of prestige is needed". The character's prestige seems to relate to the prototypical ethos of a 'contemporary fighter'; it is not a mere individual, we are talking about a subject who, despite all the adversities faced, has always fought for his goals through effort, discipline and will.

The reasoning longed by the orator could be described by the following enthymeme⁶:

⁵ Fortalecer as polícias (0'30"); Acabar com privilégios (0'43"); Acabar com a vagabundagem da USP (1'16"); Privatizar (1'33") on the original.

⁶ It is worth noting that we use the term enthymeme according to the discussion undertaken by Rui Alexandre Grácio. The author states that "the enthymematic form of reasoning, which Aristotle considers a characteristic of rhetoric, brings together a double function: **logical-deductive** and **rhetorical**. Logical-deductive because it proposes that a conclusion be inferred from premises, which is the basic scheme of the syllogism; by tacitly assuming certain points of agreement and leaving the implicit one to be filled by the audience, the rhetorical inference leads the latter to engage in the reasoning process and sanction it, simultaneously producing a process of self-persuasion and sending a signal of agreement to the orator. The importance of enthymematic reasoning can thus be linked to the **implicit-explicit game** that occurs in communication situations." (GRÁCIO, s/d, emphasis on the original and our translation).

- Rocky Balboa is a model of a subject to be followed (a major premise that is both presupposed by the orator's choice of having his official campaign video inspired by the character and in a set of knowledge shared by the audience).
- Arthur do Val incorporates the character and acts of Rocky Balboa (minor premise, demonstrated in the text through the video's parody⁷ of the franchise, that seeks to demonstrate the symbolic condensation of the process in which the character 'accepts the battle and prepares for confrontation').
- Therefore, Arthur is also a role model to be followed (presumed conclusion longed by the orator).⁸

In order to make this enthymemic reasoning feasible, the orator uses the semi-logical argument of comparison (PERELMAN; OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, 1996), which manifests itself in the dynamic imagery portion of the video. In other words, through the audiovisual parody, Arthur seeks to validate the enthymeme described above by arguing that the comparison is true and attested by his actions. This is an intrinsic characteristic of this type of argument, since comparisons "are usually presented as fact statements" (PERELMAN; OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, 1996, p. 274, our translation)⁹.

The subject that Arthur seeks to project in/with his speech, as well as the comparative argument used, begins to take shape in the first seconds of the video. In *Rocky* (1976), a scene begins with the frame of a wall cabinet in which an alarm clock can be seen ringing and some of the character's personal belongings, including a radio, some cans/pots and three books. Then Rocky's hand appears and interrupts the alarm.

⁷ Parody is a type of implicit intertextuality, as "it takes place without expressly citing the source, and it is up to the interlocutor to retrieve it from memory in order to construct the meaning of the text". (KOCH; ELIAS, 2013, p. 92, our translation).

⁸ It worth noting that, according the "Pathway of passions" theory, the parody will gain a humorous connotation depending on the availability of the audience.

⁹ Although the authors describe the argumentation/persuasion process through the analysis of verbal texts, our analysis advocate for the idea that images can be interpreted and decoded "in the same way as words", what implies that they are understood as a form of language (cf. KJELDSEN, 2018).



FIGURE 3 – The wall cabinet
Source: *Rocky* (1976).



FIGURE 4 – Rocky turns off the alarm
Source: *Rocky* (1976).

Arthur's video starts in a similar manner, some kind of a contemporary parody of the film: on top of what appears to be a bedside table, it is possible to observe a digital alarm clock (which reads 5:59 am), a photograph of a motorcyclist in a humanoid-type frame, a Peppa Pig teddy bear and a box containing Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*. Then, there's a cut, the camera starts to focus on the bedside table frontally, the clock moves to 6:00. Concomitantly, the first verbal elements of the text appear: "ARTHUR DO VAL PRESENTS" (0'03").



FIGURE 5 – Bedside table
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).



FIGURE 6 – Beside table front view
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

Unlike the character Rocky, who appears sleepy and with little predisposition to get out of bed, the orator in our video appears to be ‘ready for the day’. After a stretch, the protagonist/orator turns off the alarm, and the camera frames the cover of the aforementioned box more clearly, in a manner that both name and author are in evidence.



FIGURE 7 – Arthur waking up
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).



FIGURE 8 – Bedside table seen from above
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

After that, the orator puts on his slippers and walks towards a door, already with his cellphone in hand and still in his pajamas. The second verbal element of the video appears: “MY PROPOSALS”

(0'13"). Arthur enters the room and exits it dressed in jeans and a gray T-shirt where his epithet – ‘Mommy, I said it’ – can be read.



FIGURE 9: Arthur leaves the room
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

The imagery and verbal elements seen between 0'00' and 0'19" fulfill the exordium function¹⁰ of introducing the theme of the video and its orator, as well as spotting some of the ethical facets explained at the beginning of this section.

The novel *Atlas Shrugged* is a trilogy of an American utopian fiction whose plot emphasizes values such as reason, individualism and capitalism. No wonder the work is popular amongst liberal thinkers and politicians. Thus, Arthur do Val's ethos, in its political-ideological facet, begins to be projected and updated through this reference. As discussed, it is a discursive image that seems like a liberal, conscious and rational subject, characteristics symbolically condensed in the image-object.

The exordial imagery portion also starts the comparative argument through Rocky's 1976 film parody to point out the subjective and behavioral similarities between Arthur do Val and Rocky Balboa. Like the character, the image of a disciplined and hardworking subject is projected, someone who wakes up very early and ready, and who has one of his main work tools in his hands almost immediately after getting up¹¹.

The orator's epithet carries with it, even for an audience that did not know him before, a virtuous aspect of Arthur, that is, an honest and sincere facet. The expression ‘Mommy, I said it!’ seems to

¹⁰ As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2000, p. 561) point out, the exordium objective is to “conquer the audience, coopt benevolence, attention, interest. It will also provide certain elements from which spontaneous arguments will be born, having the speech and the speaker as the object.”

¹¹ The ethical construction that we are presenting dialogues with many current discourses propagated, for example, by coaches in the business, or even in the political environment, which allows expanding the scope of identification of the audience. Regardless of a possible humorous aspect of the parody, our analysis emphasizes the subjective aspects of the speaker's self discursively materialized by the video. Although the video may have a comic, even ridiculous connotation for some audiences, it is worth remembering that, at the time this was written, the video had more than 80,000 likes, and the most relevant comments included, for example, "best political advertisement of history" (1,500 likes), "You may not like the guy, but you have to agree that the video was good" (2,100 likes), "It doesn't matter how much you are hit, but how much you're willing to get hit and keep trying. That phrase suits you" (853 likes) (our translation).

assume that the individual said something that he apparently shouldn't have, but, at the same time, he does not regret having done it, even in front of an authority figure; in short, in popular English, the image of someone that does not mince words.

We are faced with the subject described by Figueiredo (1995, p. 39, emphasis on the original and our translation), a “self-sustaining and self-sustained being”, who expresses “rational autonomy in the face of a world of fully 'objective' objects” and “expressive autonomy from natural and/or historical forces.”

We can conclude that, in the exordium, the argumentative structure emphasizes: i) Rocky Balboa is a model to be followed (this happens through an appeal to doxa and the selection of the character as inspiration) ii) the comparative argument, which materializes imagetically through the Rocky Balboa parody, intends to demonstrate that Arthur's character and behaviors are the same as those of the character iii) the orator's ethos projects a mode of subjectivation of stable characteristics, extremely widespread, encouraged and desired, a contemporary, hardworking, conscious, and disciplined subject; a reasonable and ultimately virtuous one.

As we previously speculated, the mode of subjectivation presented by the speaker favors in a partial of the audience the creation of a bond of identity (love/friendship), a feeling of security (trust) and an impulse of imitation (emulation), particularly from the audience who already knew and identified with him.

The theme song from Rocky (1976), “Gonna fly now”, by Bill Conti, starts to play while it is possible to observe a set of accessories and filming equipment on what appears to be a table (0'20"). The music reinforces the comparative argument illustrated by the parody and works as a pathetic argument that communes the bond between the orator and the audience who have in high esteem the franchise and its main character. Arthur then removes the footage items from the surface of the furniture and fixes them in his body.

The Rocky (1976) references continue: in the film, the character, after a few moments seated, gets out of bed and goes to a fridge in front of him. Rocky then takes five eggs and breaks them, one by one, into a cup placed on top of the appliance. In four sips, he drinks the raw eggs (the content of the glass runs down his lips, and he cleans himself using the sleeve of his shirt).



FIGURE 10 – Rocky breaking the eggs
Source: Rocky (1976).



FIGURE 11 – Rocky sipping the eggs
Source: Rocky (1976).

In our video, on 0'26", it is possible to observe a surface with a vase, a cup and three eggs, which are broken one by one. As the verbal text STRENGTHEN THE POLICE (0'30") appears, Arthur swallows the three raw eggs.



FIGURE 12 – Arthur breaking the eggs
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).



FIGURE 13 – Arthur sipping the eggs
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

Next, we have the surface view again, now with a robust, contemporary aesthetic blender and a jar of Whey Protein, a popular protein-synthesizing supplement used to increase lean body mass.

There is a presupposed analogy reasoning, which occurs through the interaction of the imagery with the verbal modality: a metaphorical relationship is established between the intake of protein food and the strengthening of police forces. These scenes bring up another aspect of the comparison undertaken by the orator: Arthur is not just a model because he has the same characteristics as Rocky Balboa; he is because he is a sophisticated, contemporary version of the character.



FIGURE 14 – Blender
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).



FIGURE 15 – Arthur drinking Whey Protein
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

After entering an elevator, Arthur appears running down a street, with a camera fixed to his chest and another in his hand, with which he films himself (a trademark of his videos, it is worth remembering). Another element of the parody is present. In a scene from the 1976 film, Rocky is running in the streets when someone tosses to him what appears to be a fruit; the character appreciates it and continues his exercise. In the video, a woman tosses what also appears to be a fruit to the orator and says “Hi, Arthur”. In addition to being another imagery element of the comparative argument, this scene also contributes to the ethical construction of the orator regarding aspects related to *eunoia* (ARISTÓTELES, 2015). This is because the scene points out the benevolent and supportive construction of Arthur, since it insinuates that he has popular support, that people believe and encourage him.

Arthur continues running, now in front of the Monument to the Flags, in Ibirapuera Park, in São Paulo, and it is possible to observe the second proposal of his platform: END PRIVILEGES (0'43"). The stage of this scene, the Monument to the Flags, was built in honor of the Bandeirantes¹², a symbol of progress and development for some sectors of the Brazilian doxa. More than functioning as an argument that directly supports the thesis that the orator would be the best option for voting, this logos seems to play a role in the ethical construction of Arthur do Val. Extremely vague if the rhetorical context was not considered, the proposal is singularized when the polarized political antagonism of the 2018 Brazilian elections is taken into account.

Part of the Brazilian electorate aligned itself with and/or made use of the argument that Brazil had become a privileged country due to the years of the Workers' Party (PT) government. The MBL, as well as the orator himself, exhaustively reaffirmed this proposition. Thus, the proposal seems to function more as a subjective device of ethical identification, which concomitantly reinforces the political-ideological projection of the orator and seeks to mobilize passions such as indignation, hatred, fear and contempt (FIGUEIREDO, 2020), with the purpose of stimulating not only the identification with a certain available subjectivation mode but also, and especially, through the pathetic identity bond.

The video continues with its Rocky (1976) parody. We see at 0'49", Kim Kataguir and Fernando Holiday¹³ incarnating roles of some supporting characters in the film; that is, they parody the trainers that the character Rocky Balboa had. This fact not only reinforces what was exposed in the previous paragraph, but also validates the point that Arthur's discursive image mixes, to a great extent, with the institutional ethos of the MBL and, consequently, with the passions mobilized in/by its discourses.



FIGURE 16 – Kim Kataguir 'training' Arthur
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

¹² The "Bandeirantes" were the individuals who participated in expedition groups organized by colonizers that sought to expand the Portuguese territory in Brazil since the beginning of colonialism. According to the imperialist thought, they represented the developmental aspect of its domain because the expeditions longed for prospecting precious metals, capturing native people, and fighting against the insurrection of the people who had been slaved.

¹³ Kim Kataguir, currently a congressperson of Brazilian parliament, Fernando Holiday, currently a city councilor in São Paulo, and Arthur do Val were, in the 2018 elections, some of the most influential and known members of the MBL movement.



FIGURE 17 – Fernando Holiday as a 'coach'
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

The scenes observed between 0'49" and 1'05" seem to give rise, in a more substantial manner than the previous ones, to another reasoning, which completes the argumentative schematization of the video and which we structured through the following enthymeme:

- Politics is a battlefield (a major premise that is presupposed in both the orator's choice to have his official campaign video inspired by the franchise and the parody itself).
- Arthur do Val embodies the character and acts of a fighter (a minor premise demonstrated in the video through the parody of the franchise).
- Therefore, Arthur is prepared for politics because he is a fighter (a presumed conclusion longed by the orator).

Every battle presupposes the existence of at least two opponents and, to support this enthymemic reasoning, the orator continues to appeal to the parody. This time the reference changes to *Rocky III* (1982). Until this point, the video soundtrack was composed of the theme song of the first film in the franchise. However, from 1'12" onwards we have the track that, apparently, connects more firmly to the character and the films, which is, "Eye of the Tiger", by Survivor. Its lyrics symbolically condense the image of the subject Rocky Balboa, which we sought to synthesize earlier; someone who is prepared to face his enemies (real or imagined, concrete or abstract) and reach his goals through effort and discipline.

At 1'16", the orator introduces us to his 'enemy' through the resulting combination of the song (Eye of the tiger), his third proposal [END USP VAGRANCY (1'16")], and the image [the stereotyped students of USP (1'19")]: the left party, the 'leftists' (caricaturedly exposed). The actors in the video, dressed in black and red clothes, with pictures of Che Guevara, verbally attack Arthur, who remains steady, holding his guns (cameras), until he sees a way of 'escaping the ambush'.



FIGURE 18 – Arthur facing his 'enemies'
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

Still running from his enemies, the orator passes in front of the University of São Paulo in 1'33". Finally, we see Arthur's last political proposal, that is, PRIVATIZE (1'33"). Again, it seems that this argument is used to reinforce the image of the liberal subject we discussed previously. Furthermore, it seems to assume that the solution to the ideological apparatus that the left allegedly operated in universities would be privatization.

In our analysis, the narration-confirmation part of the video (0'20" to 1'28") fulfills its argumentative role: it provides the main arguments for the thesis that the speaker seeks to corroborate. In other words, the combination of imagery and verbal text forms an argumentative movement that intends to support the thesis that Arthur do Val would be the best option to vote for state deputy.

This occurs as follows: i) the imagery portion, through the Rocky Balboa franchise parody, uses the comparative argument to support the structure of reality that the orator seeks to create, that is, Arthur is a sophisticated model of the character because his actions and characteristics embody Rocky's mode of subjectivation, and, therefore, he is worthy of prestige, recognition, and credibility¹⁴; ii) the proposals presented in the video, more than just supporting the main thesis, provide the basis for the ethical construction of the orator, which, in turn, enables the pathetic mobilization of the audience, which seems to corroborate the proposition that, in the deliberative genre, ethos and pathos are the most relevant evidence of the discourse, as pointed out by Aristotle (2015); iii) in order to gain adhesion, the verb-image combination seeks to give rise to the argumentative scheme of the video, which was described through two enthymemes.

Continuing the analysis, it is possible to observe that, in the peroration, the main points of the argument are recapitulated. Between 1'33" and 1'54", a real audiovisual and filmed content appears on the screen; those are excerpts in which the orator is attacked and intimidated, a peculiarity of the videos that made his interdiscursive ethos known. It is possible to hear the lyrics of the song "Eye of the tiger" (until then, only the instrumental part of it was heard).

¹⁴ It is noteworthy that the recovery of the intertext is not a necessary condition for recognizing the subjective characteristics of the Rocky Balboa character, since they are brought up throughout the analyzed video.

The scenes not only function as concrete and true examples of the orator's actions, but also seek to bring a dimension of reality to the comparative argument, that is, Arthur's behaviors and character are observed within his political practice; in contemporary terms, it is not fake. This fact is expressed by the lyrics of the song, which say "Rising up, back on the streets. Did my time, took my chances. Went the distance, now I'm back on my feet. Just a man and his will to survive".

The last element of the parody starts at 1'55". We see Arthur climbing a staircase backward, as in several of the films of the franchise, where the main character, after undergoing an exhausting training routine, reaches his goal. Rocky's (1976) theme song plays again, and the orator reaches the top and jumps up, in a sort of celebration for having 'reached his goal'.



FIGURE 19 – Arthur celebrating
Source: Arthur do Val (2018).

The orator, through the use of real footage and the last element of the parody, seeks to recapitulate the fundamental reasoning of his video: Rocky Balboa is a model of a subject to be followed → Arthur do Val incorporates the character and behaviors of Rocky Balboa → Therefore, Arthur do Val is also a role model to be followed. Furthermore, he seeks to reaffirm the second reasoning that derives from the first: Politics is a battlefield → Arthur embodies the character and behaviors of a fighter → Therefore, Arthur is prepared for politics because he is a fighter.

As we sought to state earlier, government proposals that, in theory, should serve as the main evidence of an electoral campaign discourse, become auxiliary and aim at the ethical construction of the speaker, which, in turn, provides opportunities for the mobilization of certain passions.

In this way, the self that the orator seeks to construct in his video fits into the subject category we discussed earlier. As stated by Figueiredo (1995, p. 32, emphasis on the original and our translation):

The subject – a true *sub-jectum*, in the proper sense of what it underlies – must constitute itself as a foundation so the world of modernity becomes a habitable world and, above all, manageable, controllable, predictable. So, to be able to assume this heavy burden, it is necessary to demand of himself a total self-transparency and self-determination, that is, complete autonomy. Only a fully reflective subject, in terms of perfect self-awareness and a total mastery of his own will, could occupy this founding position that the Modern Age demands of each one. The consciousness coincidence with itself and

free will and with each other will thus be both a *presupposition* and an **imperative duty** for the modern individual.

In line with the discussion undertaken in the first section of this work, we can conclude that the self, more specifically, the mode of subjectivation that is evidenced both in imagery and discourse, is an extremely important rhetorical device, as suggested by Alcorn (1994). Its argumentative potential is safeguarded by the fact that an orator can access the cognitive-passional dispositions of an audience through the presentation of his own subjective structure. Thus, ethos fulfills the role of presenting the speaker's mode of subjectivation, which enables processes of identification or disidentification.

3. Concluding remarks

This work aimed to verify the plausibility of a multimodal rhetorical-argumentative analysis. To that end, as a methodological analysis arsenal, we used the theoretical apparatus entitled Pathway of passions (FIGUEIREDO, 2020) and the reflections of Figueiredo (1995) about the modes of subjectivation.

Among the stages proposed by the “Pathway of passions” theory, we focused on **Availability** and **Identification**. As of the conception of a rhetorical-discursive self, we sought to point out that our availability increases as we identify ourselves with the subjectivation modes projected by the orator in a specific discourse.

Thus, the analysis undertaken allowed us to observe that the self can function as an important rhetorical device, as advocated by Alcorn (1994), which would be discursively materialized via ethos. The analysis also showed that the three modes of subjectivation described by Figueiredo (1995) – **people**, **mere individuals** and **subject** – provide a useful model for investigating the phenomenon mentioned above.

Finally, we emphasize that intertextuality, manifested in the object of study through the Rocky Balboa parody, proved to be an important instrument of persuasion at the service of the multimodal text. We described the textual functioning of this resource based on the formulation of two enthymemes. We found that, through this intertextual strategy, the orator sought to produce arguments for the construction of a self-image, whose mode of subjectivation would approach a subject, which can create opportunities for the awakening of passions and, depending on them, their consequent (not) adhesion.

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