This piece by John Laney grew out of an assignment for his Argumentative Prose Writing course that asked him to create a dialogue between two or more characters. The dialogue was required to have a clear claim or thesis, followed by reasons for the thesis, as well as evidence for those reasons. Laney's goal is to persuade his readers to understand that neither Logos nor Pathos goes "very well without the other."

The Harmony of Logos and Pathos

This dialogue occurs sometime during the first quarter of the 19th century. The literal action takes place in Lowell's garden on a pleasantly warm, Saturday afternoon.

Lowell. Do I perceive tiny tremors emanating from the terra firma beneath my feet or are those the weighty footfalls of my corpulent companion Paschalis?

Paschalis. Correct the second time, my oldest and dearest friend.

Lowell. Ah, Paschalis. As Lisbeth's child, my heart did leap within my breast the very moment my nostrils had feasted upon the pleasantly sweet scent of thy cigar.

Paschalis. 'Tis good to see you as well, Lowell. 'Tis a wondrous, glorious day for stimulating conversation.

Lowell. A sentiment with which I could not more wholeheartedly concur.

Paschalis. I have earnestly pondered the subject of our previous intercourse, and feel I am now adequately prepared to discuss with you why the use of pathos in argumentation is much more effective and desirable than the use of logos.

Lowell. I shall warn you ahead of time, Paschalis, that my intention is to oppose you. I believe the use of logos superior in all instances, and no amount of petty pragmatism shall sway my belief.

Paschalis. Your position is duly noted, my friend. However, prior to the actual discourse, I propose we thoroughly define the area of argument we will be defending, for the sake of clarification.

Lowell. Agreed. With no further ado, I shall grant you the honor of the first exposition.

Paschalis. Ahem. Emotion may be thought of as a variable, innate cognitive response to any given internal or external stimulation. Although not
the same as thought, emotion oftentimes determines the way one reacts to thought. I can tell by the bewildered look glazed upon your face that perhaps a bit of elucidation is in order. Take your wife Coraline, for example. To you, the idea of Coraline is accompanied by the emotions of love and respect. The warts that dot the landscape of her face are not detestable, but rather, adorable. The shrillness of her voice, which some would liken to the sound of a fork grating against a China plate, is symphonic to your ears. Her incessant nagging, which would surely entrust a less stable mind into the delicate care of an asylum, is viewed by you as compassionate concern. Thus, it is my assertion that emotion is the garment dye of notion. A notion enters the mind, whereby it is colored by the emotions we apply to it.

Lowell. An intriguing definition that will require only the slightest clarification. What are you implying, when stating that an emotion is variable?

Paschalis. Emotions, by nature, are fluid constructs. They swirl, pool, and disappear as quickly as an ocean wave into warm, welcoming sand.

Lowell. And you intend to build an argument on such an unstable foundation?

Paschalis. If that were not my earnest intent, would this engaging conversation be taking place?

Lowell. Suit yourself, dear friend. Are you prepared for my definition of logic?

Paschalis. More prepared than for the Judgment.

Lowell. Logic is that pair of spectacles through which we view the world in an ordered, reasonable manner. It separates, categorizes, and synchronizes the information we human beings receive. Whereas emotion befuddles the reason with irrelevancies, logic has no ulterior motive. Therefore, I can honestly say logic is the superior nemesis of emotion.

Paschalis. My feeble mind could not conceive of a more well-put definition. Would you now agree that with the subject matter thoroughly defined, we should proceed with reasons and evidence for our individual claims?

Lowell. Indeed. I propose we deliver two reasons for our claims, with each reason being founded by one piece of observable evidence, followed by an opportunity for rebuttal.

Paschalis. Splendid.
Lowell. My first assertion is that logic’s ultimate goal is the revelation of truth. I believe your nephew Dyson would serve as a perfect illustration. Just as he uses his surgeon’s scalpel to gently dissect the flesh, in order that a proper diagnosis may be given, so too does logic when it is applied to any given notion. Logic strips the notion of all superfluous variables, leaving the notion in its basest form.

Paschalis. You’ve spoken truly, Lowell. However, I have but one minor query.

Lowell. Speak freely, dear friend.

Paschalis. If it is your honest assertion that logic is a revelator, I shall also understand you to believe that emotion cannot serve as a harbinger of truth?

Lowell. You may indeed. Well, I mean . . . perhaps you may. All right, perhaps you may not. I concur that emotion may serve as a conveyor of truth, albeit a crafty one.

Paschalis. Thank you, Lowell. Do continue.

Lowell. As further evidence for my claim, I assert emotions are irrelevant to the decision-making process. Although I may speak for no one other than my humble self, try as they may, emotions have never succeeded in tainting any decision I have ever made.

Paschalis. I may assume, then, that two years ago, when your daughter Mildred was found with child out of wedlock, that your decision to move her to your brother’s manor in Liverpool was based solely on logic and not on a desire to prevent your family from being shamed?


Paschalis. Remember your logic, Lowell, before saying something you may regret.

Lowell. Indeed, you have my capitulation. Proceed with your reasons and evidences.

Paschalis. Well then, my first assertion is that an emotional appeal, as opposed to an appeal based on logic, will increase the likelihood of an action. When we send young men off to wars, we spend little time informing them of the slaughter, butchery, and certain death they will encounter. Rather, by petitioning emotions of loyalty and pride in their country of origin, we override their natural instincts for self-preservation.
Lowell. A noteworthy point, Paschalis; however, one I must refute. Logic may instigate action as readily as emotion. I could persuade a soldier to lay down his life as quickly as you could, simply by informing him of the consequences of his lack of action.

Paschalis. An intriguing comment, Lowell, which brings me to my second assertion: logic lacks spontaneity. Do you recall the magnificent stories told to us by our noble friend, Lord Edmund, upon returning from his adventurous travels throughout India?

Lowell. Indeed I do.

Paschalis. Then I am certain you shall recall the tiger story?

Lowell. Vibrantly.

Paschalis. Unbeknownst to him, as the courageous Lord Edmund had narrowed his sights on a rather large, ferocious tigress, her all-too-cunning mate had apparently done the same with Edmund’s headquarters. As that bloody tiger proceeded to remove the seat of Edmund’s pants, do you believe his inspiration to run was birthed out of logic or emotion?

Lowell. That is an exceptional situation and one on which I refuse to comment!

Paschalis. Answer the question, Lowell. Was Edmund’s flight a response to emotional or logical impulses? You have an obligation to answer my inquiry to the best of your ability!

Lowell. Logic then, of course!

Paschalis. Nonsense, it was emotion!

_A lingering hush descends upon the gardens, leaving only the lush greenery and humid sweetness of the air to stimulate the senses._

Lowell. Perhaps ‘twas a bit of both I should say.

Paschalis. ‘Tis a balance most precarious.

Lowell. Well, my good man, it appears as though we have wandered all the way back to my home. As we departed, I believe Coraline was preparing some tea and crumpets. Would you care to join me?

Paschalis. Ah, tea and crumpets – an inseparable combination.

Lowell. One doesn’t go very well without the other.

Paschalis. Indeed.

Lowell. Indeed.