

Virtue on Display: Ethics in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*

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One of the great discoveries in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is the enthymeme, the rhetorical *sullogismos*. In the opening chapter of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle states that the enthymeme is the "body of persuasion" and the strongest of the convincing arguments; it is the achievement of the rhetor's special use of *logos*.¹ Given the pride of place afforded to enthymematic *logos*, it is puzzling to discover that of the three forms of persuasion—*logos*, *pathos*, and *ēthos*—Aristotle claims that "character [*ēthos*] is almost, so to speak, the most authoritative form of persuasion."² The claim is all the more surprising given that, in the opening of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle disparages rhetorical appeals to *ēthos* and *pathos* as beneath the true art of rhetoric, which should be based (solely?) on appeals by *logos*. This initial murkiness pertains not only to the role that *ēthos* plays relative to other forms of persuasion, but also to the substance of rhetorical *ēthos*: will an appeal to character "succeed" if it persuades the audience, regardless of whether the character appeal is virtuous or representative of the rhetor's true character? Put another way, is rhetoric an amoral art? If not, what must the rhetor know about ethics for there to be a successful appeal by *ēthos*?

The existing scholarship diverges widely on this question and can be divided into five main views.³ One view holds that the Aristotelian rhetor is either amoral or vicious. For instance, Whitney J. Oates claims Aristotelian rhetoric moves into a "realm of amoralism, if not immoralism."⁴ The moderate view maintains that there is some connection of rhetoric to ethics and politics; however, this connection is not guaranteed or all that clear. This is due to ambiguity regarding the knowledge rhetoricians have of ethics and politics, and how rhetoricians begin their arguments with popular opinions, rather than what ethics and politics

¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. George A. Kennedy, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1354a16, 1355a9.

² Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a16-17. The terms refer, in order, to reason, emotion, and character.

³ See John M. Cooper, "Ethical-Political Theory in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*," in *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*, ed. D.J. Furley and A. Nehamas (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 193-210; Stephen Halliwell, "Popular Morality, Philosophical Ethics, and the *Rhetoric*," in *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*, 211-30; W. J. Oates, "Evidence from the *Rhetoric*," in *Aristotle and the Problem of Value* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Is There an Ethical Dimension in Aristotelian Rhetoric?" in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 116-41; Robert Wardy, "Mighty Is the Truth and It Shall Prevail?" in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, 56-87; M. H. Wörner, *Das Ethische in der Rhetorik des Aristoteles* (Freiburg: Alber-Reihe, 1990).

⁴ Oates, "Evidence from the *Rhetoric*," 351.

know to be true. This position is illustrated by Stephen Halliwell's claim that the Aristotelian rhetor's "engagement with popular morality will sometimes, non-accidentally, succeed in contributing to the realization of the human good."⁵ The ambiguous nature of the rhetorician's knowledge is present in John Cooper's position that Aristotelian rhetoric begins with common opinions (*endoxa*) but does not rise to the level of scientific truth, though there is a continuity between *endoxa* and truth. Cooper argues that the rhetorician who successfully appeals to *endoxa* "stands in the same relationship with truth" as one who has scientific knowledge.⁶ At the other end of the spectrum are those who maintain the Aristotelian rhetor is fully virtuous and persuades others in light of his knowledge of the good. For example, Markus H. Wörner claims Aristotle's rhetor is "an *epiēkēs*, an *agathos*, a *vir bonus*."⁷

Others maintain there is no clear answer to the question because passages from the *Rhetoric* are ultimately in conflict, with some passages suggesting rhetoricians should only persuade others of good, while other passages claim that rhetoric is just as much the art of the sophist as it is the virtuous person. Robert Wardy argues for this position, concluding that "there is no firm answer" to whether Aristotle rejects the sophistry illustrated in Plato's *Gorgias*, and "the surprising thing is that his own handbook, time and again, subordinates truth to victory," despite Aristotle's own claims that rhetoric ought to pursue truth.⁸ Another claims the ethics of the *Rhetoric* is supplied from outside the art itself. From this view, Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues that Aristotelian rhetoric is practiced within a language-game of "truth discovery" whose aim is "to arrive at judgments in ethical and political matters that [are] true."⁹ Engberg-Pedersen argues that language-games ground the ethical orientation of Aristotelian rhetoric.

I argue that a rhetorical appeal by *ēthos* springs from a style of *logos* specific to rhetoric. Rhetorical appeals by *logos* are enthymemes, proofs that are neither syllogisms nor demonstrative, but nevertheless logically persuasive. Through the enthymeme, *ēthos* surfaces in the rhetorician's choice of where to begin her arguments and how well she conveys her goodness and good will toward the audience. These conceptions of *logos* and *ēthos* enable

⁵ Halliwell, "Popular Morality, Philosophical Ethics, and the *Rhetoric*," 228.

⁶ Cooper, "Ethical-Political Theory in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*," 208.

⁷ Wörner, *Das Ethische in der Rhetorik des Aristoteles*, 24; cf. 193.

⁸ Wardy, "Mighty Is the Truth and It Shall Prevail?" 81.

⁹ Engberg-Pedersen, "Is There an Ethical Dimension in Aristotelian Rhetoric?" 124.

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us to assess the broader question about ethics in Aristotle's theory of rhetoric. What is most persuasive will be, for the most part, what comports with what is truer and better by nature. Thus, a framework of naturalism guides *logos* and *ēthos* in Aristotelian rhetorical theory.¹⁰ To this extent, there is an ethical dimension to the *Rhetoric*, but it is not supplied from within the art of rhetoric proper. Rather, it comes from the natural teleology that informs the art.

In this sense, Aristotle's rhetoric is an amoral art: rhetoric, considered in abstraction from the larger normative framework in which it is embedded, has no ethical orientation. At the same time, this point should not be taken too far. Just as form cannot be separated from matter in natural substances, rhetoric cannot be separated from its normative context. To say that Aristotelian rhetoric is amoral is ultimately only an abstraction, for in practice there are always normative ends that supply the art of persuasion with its material. And in this sense, Aristotelian rhetoric is not amoral; it is deeply guided by a broader metaphysics of natural goodness that serves as its frame.

I conclude by arguing that Aristotle's theory of rhetoric responds successfully to dilemmas that beset his predecessors: his rhetorical theory offers a way to explain how rhetoric is not a form of sham philosophy, as Socrates claims in Plato's *Gorgias*. Rhetoric is not reducible to philosophical dialectic, nor are appeals to *ēthos* and *pathos* based on the subjective power of the rhetorician. *Ēthos*, while not reducible to *logos*, has a rational component whose successful use is partly determined by how well it comports with natural goodness. This enables Aristotle to have a positive theory of rhetoric that is informed by, but not reducible to, reason: a notable departure from Platonic rhetoric in particular.

ARISTOTLE'S PREDECESSORS AND THE PROBLEM OF RHETORIC

Aristotle inherited a tradition mixed with criticism and support of rhetoric. While philosophers were frequently skeptical of rhetoric's legitimacy, the sophists embraced it. Aristotle's views of rhetoric seem to be, in part, a response to the competing claims of his predecessors. While the *Rhetoric* endorses the legitimacy of the art, its reasons for doing so differ from those of its traditional defenders. We turn now to an overview of this debate.

¹⁰ By "naturalism" I mean the view that nature itself is laden with goodness; as such, ethical goodness is a kind of natural goodness.

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On one side, there are those who argue that rhetoric is not a legitimate art; rather, it is a sham form of philosophy. Representative of this view are Parmenides, Zeno, and Plato. Parmenides's goddess declares, "You must hear everything, both the unmoved heart of persuasive truth and the opinions of mortals, wherein there is no true conviction."¹¹ The goddess tethers persuasion to truth, and opposes this to opinion, which has no tie to truth or legitimate persuasion. She suggests that true conviction aligns with reality itself and declares that "persuasive *logos* and thought about the truth" stand in opposition to "mortal opinions" that come from "the deceptive arrangement of ... words."¹² The goddess opposes true *logos* with deceptive mortal opinions and suggests that the way to truth and legitimate persuasion is through *logos* alone; succumbing to appeals to pathos or *ēthos* are at best distractions.

Zeno also offers a relevant challenge:

Against the person who said, 'Don't give your verdict until you have heard both sides,' Zeno argued as follows: The second speaker is not to be heard whether the first speaker proved their case (for then the inquiry is at an end), or they did not prove it (for this is tantamount to their not having appeared when summoned, or to their having responded to the summons with mere prattle). But either they proved their case or they did not. Therefore, the second speaker is not to be heard.¹³

According to the proper understanding of what it means "to prove" something, Zeno concludes that it is impossible to have a debate, if "to prove" means "to derive a conclusion by valid argument from true premises that are known to be true." If conclusions of valid proofs must necessarily be true, opposing speakers argue for opposite conclusions, and opposite conclusions cannot both be true together, then two speakers on opposite sides cannot both prove their case.¹⁴ If Zeno is correct, then rhetoric is not only restricted to *logos* alone; all meaningful speech is restricted to only one side of an argument.

Plato also formidably challenges the claim that rhetoric is a legitimate art. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates attacks the sophist's claim that rhetoric is an art, while the *Phaedrus* argues that the truest form of rhetoric springs from a philosopher who has attained knowledge not only of the subject under discussion, but of the whole of reality. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates asks Gorgias

¹¹ Parmenides, Fragment 1. See Wardy, "Mighty Is the Truth and It shall Prevail?" 56-57.

¹² Parmenides, Fragment 8; cf. Wardy, "Mighty Is the Truth and It Shall Prevail?" 57.

¹³ Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*, 1034e, in Miles Burnyeat, "Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric," in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (California: University of California Press, 1996), 88.

¹⁴ Burnyeat, "Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric," 88.

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to define rhetoric. Gorgias and Socrates ultimately define rhetoric as the art of persuasion pertaining to the just and the unjust that creates belief in an audience by a speaker who does not possess knowledge of his subject matter.¹⁵ Socrates argues that this definition entails that rhetoric is useless. The person who possesses knowledge of the subject can persuade more credibly on account of that knowledge, instead of relying on the rhetorician's substanceless flash.

Because only the ignorant are rhetoricians, rhetoric also turns out to be an ignoble counterfeit to politics, the inquiry into what is just and unjust.¹⁶ Socrates likens rhetoric to the production of junk food: the dessert might taste good when served by the rhetorician, but it will rot the insides of those who consume it. Instead, one must turn to "true rhetoric," which turns out to be philosophy. By this description, Plato's Socrates advances the view that rhetoric is not an art. The philosopher who seeks wisdom through dialectic is the one most capable of legitimate persuasion.

Each of these philosophers advances a claim about *logos* that undermines rhetoric's legitimacy. Parmenides contrasts *logos* with mere opinion, claiming that truth cannot spring from opinion (which is the springboard for Aristotelian rhetorical arguments). Zeno argues that it is impossible to arrive at the truth through a public debate, asserting that *logos* only pertains to one side of every question; all that is needed are logical arguments for one side. Plato's Socrates maintains that rhetoric only operates in the absence of knowledge, making it philosophy's counterfeit. As such, Aristotle's tradition consciously developed arguments against the legitimacy of rhetoric as a virtuous art, let alone an art.

By contrast, the sophists defended the nature and power of rhetoric, but they imported a problematic view of truth and goodness into their defense. Gorgias, in his *Encomium to Helen*, suggests that *logos* is unfettered by objective standards,¹⁷ a view that Protagoras openly professed: "Of all matters, humankind is the measure, concerning not only those things which are, but also those things which are not."¹⁸ On this view, arguments are but one variety of subjective attempt at persuasion. Appeals to virtue or philosophical argument are just various ways to exercise power, and the philosophers delude themselves by believing they

¹⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. James A. Arieti and Roger M. Burns (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2007), 454b.

¹⁶ Plato, *Gorgias*, 463b; cf. Wardy, "Mighty Is the Truth and It Shall Prevail?" 57–58.

¹⁷ Gorgias, *Encomium to Helen*, §8; cf. Wardy, "Mighty Is the Truth and It Shall Prevail?" 57.

¹⁸ Plato, *Protagoras*, 80 B1.

are grasping at non-subjective truth. Rhetoric is the art of harnessing this power of persuasion, which ultimately comes from the power of the speaker, not the speaker's ability to understand and effectively convey what conforms to nature.

With this debate in mind, if Aristotle wants to defend a noble conception of rhetoric, it seems he will have to defend it against both the philosophers and the sophists. Against the philosophers, he will have to show that rhetoric is an art separate from philosophical dialectic. If successful, he will then have to show that appeals to *logos* are not the only legitimate forms of persuasion: appeals to *ēthos* and *pathos* are part of the art as well. Against the sophists, he will have to show that persuasiveness has a mooring outside of the rhetorician's subjective power. We turn now to relevant passages in the *Rhetoric* that motivate Aristotle's account.

APORIAS IN THE RHETORIC

The *Rhetoric* does not offer a straightforward explanation of whether rhetoricians need virtuous character to craft persuasive appeals by *ēthos*. Moreover, while the book's very existence suggests that rhetoric is a legitimate art, an explanation is needed for why rhetoric is not merely a perversion of philosophical dialectic. Numerous passages in the *Rhetoric* initially seem to conflict on these issues.

On the one hand, it seems that virtuous character is not a prerequisite for rhetorical success, and that rhetoric itself is intrinsically morally neutral. Aristotle defines rhetoric as "an ability in each [particular] case to see the available means of persuasion."¹⁹ This ability includes the capacity to see what is true and what resembles the true as well as the capacity to prove opposites. It is an ability open to virtuous rhetors and cunning sophists alike. Aristotle further states that "sophistry is not a matter of ability [*dunamis*] but of deliberate choice [*proairesis*],"²⁰ suggesting that rhetoric is an amoral art that can be used virtuously or viciously depending on a choice external to the art. As more evidence of its mercenary nature, rhetoric also has no definite subject matter. It is simply an ability to procure arguments.²¹ Also, the *Rhetoric's* description of *ēthos* as a means of persuasion often refers to the character a rhetor merely appears to have, and this appearance may only run skin

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355b24-25.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355b15; cf. 1355a13-14, 1355b2-7, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144a230; 1355a34.

²¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a32-33; cf. 1355b31-34 and 1358a10-21 which states that rhetoric deals with "common" premises (*koīna*) shared by several areas of discipline.

deep. Even *logos* seems cut off from any ethically substantive telos. Enthymemes work because people are persuaded when they suppose something has been demonstrated, but people can be wrong in their suppositions, particularly because enthymemes fall short of being scientific demonstrations.²² These passages suggest that the rhetorician's available means of persuasion have no internal direction toward virtuous ends. If so, appeals by *ēthos* are just one more tool of this amoral art.

On the other hand, Aristotle claims that rhetoric is "like some offshoot [*paraphues*] of dialectic and ethical studies (which is rightly called politics)."²³ He then uses an analogy to illustrate how rhetoric involves "seeing the available means of persuasion": as the goal of medicine is not health, but promoting health as much as the situation affords, so the goal of rhetoric is not persuasion, but persuading as much as the situation affords.²⁴ Medicine is intrinsically ordered toward health, so it would seem that rhetoric is intrinsically ordered toward the ethical and the just. The *Rhetoric* also argues that appeals grounded on what is "true" and "better" are more likely to succeed. Aristotle states that "the underlying facts are not equally good in each case; but the true and better ones are by nature always more productive of good syllogisms and in a word, more persuasive."²⁵ These passages suggest that Aristotle's rhetorical theory does have an ethical orientation, that some kind of virtuous *ēthos* is an ingredient for rhetorical success.

I aim to show that these groups of passages are ultimately reconcilable. The reason why has to do with rhetoric's special use of *logos*, the enthymeme.

RHETORICAL *LOGOS* AS "DEGENERATE DEDUCTION"

Given the centrality of *logos* to the rhetorician's artistic appeals, it is surprising that Aristotle does not explicitly define "enthymeme." The term first appears at 1254a11-16, which states that the enthymeme is the body of proof in a speech. In this section I will argue that the two dominant ways of defining Aristotle's enthymeme are incorrect.²⁶ The first way defines an

²² Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a5-6.

²³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a34-35.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355b8-9.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a34-35.

²⁶ For a survey of the scholarship pertaining to both definitions, see M. B. Burnyeat, "Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Logic of Persuasion," in *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*, eds. David J. Furley and Alexander Nehamas (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3-10.

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enthymeme as “a syllogism with a missing premise.” William Hamilton uses the following example to illustrate the definition:²⁷

Every liar is a coward; Caius is a liar; Therefore, Caius is a coward.

On this view, the syllogism can be turned into an enthymeme by omitting the major premise, the minor premise, or the conclusion:

1. Omit major premise	2. Omit minor premise	3. Omit conclusion
Caius is a liar; <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px auto;"/> Therefore, Caius is a coward.	Every liar is a coward; <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px auto;"/> Therefore, Caius is a coward.	Every liar is a coward; And Caius is a liar. <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px auto;"/>

By suppressing part of the syllogism, the enthymeme supposedly draws the audience into the speech by making them fill out the missing part of the argument, and the rhetor avoids having to say parts of the argument that would make the speech unnecessarily pedantic.

A second group advances a different definition. Drawing from *Prior Analytics* and *Rhetoric*, they define an enthymeme as “an incomplete *sullogismos* from likelihoods or signs.”²⁸ The strength of this definition is the numerous passages where Aristotle directly links the enthymeme to probabilities and signs.

By contrast, I argue that an enthymeme is a kind of reasoning about contingent matters, where the decision of the audience impacts the outcome of the issue under consideration.

The nature of this kind of reasoning reveals that what is true in a rhetorical situation may be

²⁷ Those who strictly follow Aristotle’s requirements for a syllogism will reject the example, since it deploys a singular term “Caius” instead of a universal. See Sir William Hamilton, “Lecture XX,” *Lectures on Logic*, ed. Rev. H. L. Mansel and John Veitch (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1860), found in Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Logic of Persuasion,” 3. This definition of the Aristotelian enthymeme was notably endorsed by many logic books, including Irving Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 4th ed. (London and New York: Collier Macmillan, 1972), and the popular Edward Meredith Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle, with a Commentary*, ed. John Edwin Sandys, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877); it also has interpretive roots dating back to Philoponus. See M. Wallies, *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis analytica priora commentaria*. Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca XIII 2 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1905) and Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Logic of Persuasion,” 6.

²⁸ See Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, 2.27, 70a10; *Rhetoric*, 1.2.14, 1357a32–33; 1.3.7, 1359a7–10; 2.25.8, 1402b13–20. For the scholars defending this definition and a developed criticism of these passages as evidence for a technical definition of enthymeme, see Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Logic of Persuasion,” 6, *passim*.

indeterminate and difficult to discern, due to the contingent nature of the course of action under deliberation and the legitimate reasons that can be given for accepting divergent conclusions. Contra Zeno, it may be possible “to prove” that more than one course of action is reasonable to pursue, and enthymemes reason about these kinds of cases. Moreover, the contingent nature of enthymematic content reveals that there is an ethical dimension to discerning which proof is best. A prudential ability to see what is best accompanies the ability to craft successful enthymemes.

To begin, it is well known that Aristotle provocatively opens the *Rhetoric* by claiming, “Rhetoric is an *antistrophos* to dialectic.”²⁹ The *Rhetoric*'s opening statement puts rhetorical *logos* on equal footing with philosophical dialectic. There are several reasons why dialectic and rhetoric are counterparts: neither has a definite subject matter, and both are abilities for procuring arguments.³⁰ Both take their premises from *endoxa*, or claims that are favorably received.³¹ This differs from the much more stringent starting point of scientific deductions (*apodeixis*).³² Thus, Aristotle couples rhetoric with dialectic because they are distinct from scientific deduction that begins with self-evident axioms and ends with necessarily true conclusions.

Though rhetoric and dialectic are not capable of scientific demonstration, Miles Burnyeat compellingly argues that they do successfully craft arguments of a more relaxed form. The *Rhetoric* claims it is possible to demonstrate a conclusion from a subject's relevant facts, or *what are taken to be* the facts.³³ Such a demonstration is possible “whether the speakers argue in a more precise or in a more relaxed way.”³⁴ Rhetoric's form of a relaxed argument is the rhetorical *sullogismos*, or the enthymeme. Aristotle states, “I call enthymeme

²⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1354a1.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a32–33; cf. 1355b31–34 and Engberg-Pedersen, “Is There an Ethical Dimension in Aristotelian Rhetoric?” 128.

³¹ In rhetoric, the *endoxa* belong to people who need to deliberate. In dialectic, the *endoxa* belong to people who are used to deliberation. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356b32–1357a1; cf. Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 99.

³² A *sullogismos* in scientific deduction (*apodeixis*) flows from premises that are true, primary, immediate, better known than, prior to and explanatory of, the conclusion demonstrated from them (Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 71b20–25). In other words, for *apodeixis*, there exists “an explanatory demonstration in which a necessary truth is shown to follow necessarily from necessary and self-explanatory axioms,” whereas “a dialectical *sullogismos* is specified as one that proceeds from premises that are reputable (Aristotle, *Topics*, 100a27–30)” (Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 94, 95).

³³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1396a3–33; cf. Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 96.

³⁴ Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 96–97; cf. *Rhetoric* 1396a34–1396b1.

rhetorical *sullogismos*, example rhetorical *epagōgē*.³⁵ Burnyeat notes that in this passage, Aristotle:

equates enthymeme with *sullogismos* and example with *epagōgē*, when, and only when, these occur in a rhetorical speech rather than in a dialectical discussion.... The framework for the account is a logical claim that, of necessity, there are two and only two ways to show something. *Sullogismos* and *epagōgē* (roughly and for the moment: deduction and induction) are an exhaustive division of proof to which, consequently, rhetorical proofs must correspond (1356b 7-9).³⁶

This comparison of rhetorical *sullogismos* to *epagōgē* is not meant to show that the enthymeme is a syllogism with a missing premise.

When Aristotle speaks of the enthymeme as *sullogismos*, then, he means that a conclusion is demonstrated in a looser sense than is meant by his definition of *sullogismos* in the *Topics* or *Prior Analytics*, which have much stricter requirements for validity.³⁷ A rhetorical *sullogismos* (1) has a conclusion that results from the premises and (2) is distinct from them, but (3) the connection of premises to conclusion need not be exceptionless.³⁸ Burnyeat argues that this looser conception of *sullogismos* “is a deliberate attempt by Aristotle to fashion a concept of degenerate deduction that can be applied to contexts where conclusive proof is not to be had.... ‘[R]easonable inference’ is the notion Aristotle aims to develop for the study of rhetorical argumentation.”³⁹

As a “relaxed” proof, the subject matter of enthymematic *logos* does not lend itself to certainty, so its argumentative conclusions are only probable. Aristotle’s description of *logos*

³⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356b4-5; cf. “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 97. Prior to Aristotle, enthymemes were “considerations one is swayed by when reflecting on an issue where conclusive argument is not to be had” (Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 93). Aristotle is the one who articulates the style of reasoning that contributes to this persuasion (Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 100).

³⁶ Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 97. Enthymematic terms are not universals, nor do they fit the conditions of first principles detailed in the *Posterior Analytics*.

³⁷ Aristotle, *Topics*, 100a25-27: “A *sullogismos* is a discourse [or: argument] in which, certain things being posited, something different from the things laid down necessarily results through the things laid down.” The *Prior Analytics*’ slight variation states that it is “a valid deductive argument in which the premises...provide a logically sufficient justification for a conclusion distinct from them” (24b18-22). Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 95, explains, “Aristotle defines *sullogismos* as a valid deductive argument in which the premises (note the plural) provide a logically sufficient justification for a conclusion distinct from them. The notion of *apodeixis* can then be defined by adding further conditions on the premises.” This entails that an enthymeme should not be defined as a “rhetorical syllogism” or a “syllogism missing one premise.” It is not a syllogism in the above senses at all.

³⁸ Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 99. As such, enthymeme is a kind of *sullogismos* (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1400b37) where there is no certainty to be had (1356a7-8, 1357a1-2), yet a judgment must be made (1358a36-1358b8, 1377b21-1378a6, 1391b8-20, 1420b2-3) and things can be said on either side (1402a31-34).

³⁹ Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 99, argues that *sullogismos* should be translated as “valid argument” and never as “syllogism” to avoid confusing it with the stricter syllogistic requirements of *Topics* and *Prior Analytics* (96).

in the *Rhetoric*, then, is the attempt “to find terms and techniques to make *this sort of argument* amenable to systematic study.”⁴⁰ The kind of validity that applies to rhetorical *sullogismos* does not have to do with apodeictic necessity (as is the case with scientific demonstration), but with what happens for the most part. Rhetorical *sullogismos* turns not on what is necessarily true, but on what is reasonable. Rhetoric’s subject matter makes it such that there are genuine reasons that can be offered on both sides of the argument. Thus, Aristotle argues for a position beyond the horns of Zeno’s dilemma: rhetoricians can offer relaxed proofs about things that cannot be conclusively demonstrated and where there are reasons that pertain to both sides of the question. This partly explains why *logos* alone does not always persuade: rhetorical *logos* can cut in many directions.

This style of *logos* operates within its own proper context. The goal of rhetoric is persuasion, not teaching, and the rhetorician does not need to be an expert on the subject matter at hand. This is unlike dialectic, where the subject matter is more universal (for example, trying to discover the definition of justice) and teaching is the goal.⁴¹ By contrast, a rhetorician who possesses expertise would not have an advantage in her ability to persuade, since demonstration is not interchangeable with persuasion. Instead, persuasive speech begins with the particular *endoxa* of the audience.⁴² Rhetoricians also use truncated “proofs,” not long demonstrations, that they deliver to an audience that is generally morally good.⁴³ The long argumentation required for exact knowledge is unsuitable for audiences who generally cannot follow them.⁴⁴ Arguments must have few premises and make easy, quick comprehension possible.⁴⁵ Audiences are often deliberating about what to do in a time-sensitive circumstance, so a truncated argument is best for persuasion.

Thus, rhetorical *logos* operates in the following context: with a rhetorician who can be a non-expert, and who aims at persuasion, not teaching; rhetoricians begin with the *endoxa* of an audience who is generally good and speak about a particular course of action whose

⁴⁰ Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 93. Cf. *Rhetoric* 1354a1–11. Aristotle also claims elsewhere that some demonstrations can be “more relaxed” (*malakōteron*) than others (*On Generation and Corruption* 333b25–26; *Meteorology* 1026b13; cf. Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 95).

⁴¹ Engberg-Pedersen, “Is There an Ethical Dimension in Aristotelian Rhetoric?” 122. The main features of the rhetorical context are stated at 1357a1–22, and the distinction between rhetorical and dialectical *sullogismos* is restated at 1395b22–1396a3; cf. Burnyeat, “Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric,” 99–100.

⁴² Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355a24; cf. *Physics* 199b28, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1112a34–1112b9; 1355a24.

⁴³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404a7–8, 1403b34.

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1357a1.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1419b21, b10.

outcome the audience can affect with its decision and for which reasons can be given on either side.

TRIPARTITE CHARACTER

We turn now to the *Rhetoric's* account of how *ēthos* emerges from enthymematic *logos* and this general rhetorical context. Appeals by *ēthos* aim to persuade the audience to trust the rhetorician. A good appeal will put the audience “in the right frame of mind,” making them “friendly and placable,” not “angry or hostile,” “indifferent or annoyed.”⁴⁶ While he uses the same word, *ēthos* can refer to three different objects. First and primarily, there is “display character,” the presentation of character that the rhetor conveys to her audience. Second, there is “audience character.” Third, there is the rhetor’s “true character,” which encompasses who the rhetor really is, whether or not she chooses to convey that to her audience. While all three senses of character are essential for Aristotle’s theory, the second and third senses are subsidiary to display character.

Aristotle explains the success of display character as follows: “[*Ēthos* is persuasive] whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for [the rhetor’s audience] believe[s] fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly, on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt.”⁴⁷ The primary function of display character is to make the audience believe that the rhetor is trustworthy and good at deliberation. Though character is not the only mode of persuasion that Aristotle describes as trustworthy, there is a distinctive way in which display character appears to be so: trustworthy display character occurs when the rhetor appears to have prudence (*phronēsis*), virtue (*aretē*), and good will (*eunoia*).⁴⁸ The rhetor’s task is to discover the ways in which he can seem to have these qualities.

To do this, rhetors must study the “audience character” that surfaces most clearly from the audience’s choices. The rhetor can thereby infer who her audience is and tailor her ethical appeals accordingly. If she misjudges or, out of ignorance, presents a display character that is unappealing, her use of *ēthos* will not be persuasive and will incite suspicion and the appearance of unfriendliness instead.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1378a1–7.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a6–8; cf. 1354a4, 1355b8, 1356a30–33; 1358a2–35.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1378a8–10. The audience can also trust logical demonstration (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1366a10–11).

VIRTUE ON DISPLAY: ETHICS IN ARISTOTLE'S RHETORIC

The display character the rhetor crafts surfaces in the *logos* of rhetorical speech. Returning once more to the *Rhetoric's* definition of *ēthos*, Aristotle states, “[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence,” especially “in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt.”⁴⁹ In other words, display character surfaces *through* speech.⁵⁰ This manifestation of display character must be both clear and inconspicuous.⁵¹ If the rhetor were to claim overtly how virtuous and trustworthy she thought herself to be, the audience would find the appeal unpersuasive because it would not appear in the speech naturally. Like the character of a virtuous person is displayed through the actions of her life that are the result of the choices she has made, so display character must reveal itself in the action of a speech resulting from the choice of rhetorical appeal by *logos*. As Eugene Garver states, “Reasoning [in speech] is what reveals character.... It is the speaker’s argumentative and deliberative ability that creates *ēthos* as a by-product.... It is that act of deliberation that the audience trusts.”⁵² *Ēthos*, then, is not a cosmetic application sitting on the surface of the body of persuasion that is *logos*. If the enthymeme is the body of persuasion, an appeal to character is the blood: it runs through the body and is a vital component to the life of the organism.

A rhetor’s ability to convince the audience she has good sense is important, given that the starting point of the argument is not a necessary, self-evident truth. Because any number of *endoxa* could be the starting point for persuasion, the audience must trust the judgment guiding the speaker’s argument. The rhetor’s *ēthos* also persuades the audience the rhetor has good will and virtue. This engenders a kindly disposition in the audience that is more than a mere manipulation of the audience’s subrational feelings. Emotions have a rational component in Aristotelian psychology.⁵³ This entails that a rhetorician can artfully persuade the audience’s emotions rather than manipulate them by verbal force. It also explains why it would be a mistake to try to reduce rhetoric to enthymematic *logos* alone.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355b23–24.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1395a30–31; cf. 1408a37–38.

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1417b5–7.

⁵² Eugene Garver, *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 151, 192–93.

⁵³ See Martha Nussbaum, “Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion,” in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, 303–23. By contrast, Engberg-Pedersen’s view seems to be that appeals by *ēthos* and pathos are “regrettably necessary” for audiences that are not persuaded by *logos* (“Is There an Ethical Dimension in Aristotelian Rhetoric?” 125–26).

ASSESSMENT: IS RHETORIC AN AMORAL ART?

We are now positioned to see how Aristotle's naturalism can harmonize the apparently dissonant passages about *ēthos* with which we began. I argue that there is an ethical framework that surrounds, but does not inherently belong to, Aristotelian rhetoric. Aristotle's use of analogy when describing the ethical dimension of rhetoric suggests this, as does his account of persuasion.

I turn first to an analogy illustrating that rhetoric has an ethical orientation. In *Rhetoric* 1.2, Aristotle states, "[Rhetoric's] function is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case, as is true also in all the other arts; for neither is it the function of medicine to create health but to promote this as much as possible; for it is nevertheless possible to treat well those who cannot recover health."⁵⁴ The analogy to health makes clear the contrast Aristotle draws between "persuasion" and "seeing the available means of persuasion in each case." The contrast is not between *actively persuading* an audience as opposed to *thinking about* what means one could use to persuade. Rather, the contrast is between achieving the best possible outcome, *regardless of one's actual situation*, and achieving the best possible outcome *given one's actual situation*. Like the actual practice of medicine tries to restore a given patient to the greatest state of health possible in her circumstances, rhetoric seeks to persuade, but always in light of what is possible, given character of the audience and the circumstances of the rhetorical moment. The analogy suggests that rhetoric does have an ethical orientation: like medicine aims at health, not disease, rhetoric aims at persuading the audience of what is virtuous, not vicious.

Second, there are limits to what rhetorical prowess can achieve: rhetoric is not an all-powerful force that can achieve whatever outcome it desires, no matter the circumstances:

In addition, it is clear that it is a function of one and the same art to see both the persuasive and the apparently persuasive, just as it is the function in dialectic to recognize both a syllogism and an apparent syllogism; for sophistry is not a matter of ability but of deliberate choice of specious arguments. In the case of rhetoric, however, there is the difference that one person will be called *rhētōr* on the basis of his knowledge and another on the basis of his deliberate choice....⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355b9-12.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355b12-20.

Rhetoric involves seeing “the persuasive” and the “apparently persuasive.” At first glance, this calls into question the analogy to health. What is “apparently persuasive” would be what appears to be healthy, but is in fact unhealthy. If rhetoric *as rhetoric* deals with what is “apparently persuasive,” is it not amoral?

That one is a sophist on account of his choice rather than his ability does not help settle the matter. In dialectic a “dialectician” is one who uses valid “syllogisms,” while a “sophist” chooses to use invalid “apparent syllogisms.” In rhetoric, a “*rhētōr*” can be *either* one who knows what is persuasive and what is apparently persuasive, *or* one who chooses the persuasive and avoids the apparently persuasive. In other words, the term “*rhētōr*” is more ambiguous than “dialectician.” It does not have the inherently ethical orientation that the term “dialectician” has, though the passage does not rule out the possibility of using the term to refer to a virtuous speaker. Thus, we have here some evidence for an ethical orientation, but nothing conclusive.

Moreover, what is “persuasive” is itself complex. Four passages reveal why:

(1) “[H]umans have a natural disposition for the true and to a large extent hit on the truth; thus an ability to aim at commonly held opinions [*endoxa*] is a characteristic of one who also has a similar ability in regard to the truth.”⁵⁶

(2) “[T]he true and the just are by nature stronger than their opposites, so that if judgments are not made in the right way the true and the just are necessarily defeated by their opposites. And this is worthy of censure.”⁵⁷

(3) “[O]ne should be able to argue persuasively on either side of a question, just as in the use of syllogisms, not that we may actually do both (for one should not persuade what is debased) but in order that it may not escape our notice what the real state of the case is and that we ourselves may be able to refute if another person uses speech unjustly.”⁵⁸

(4) “None of the other arts reasons in opposite directions; dialectic and rhetoric alone do this; for both are equally concerned with opposites. Of course the underlying facts are not equally good in each case; but the true and better ones are by nature always more productive of good syllogisms and, in a word, more persuasive.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a16–18.

⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a24–25.

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a34–36.

⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a45–47.

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The passages reinforce similar points: First, what is “true” is “better” and (or because it is?) in accord with “nature.” Second, what is true, better, and by nature is more persuasive. There is an apparent tension between these claims and the claim that “[p]ersuasion occurs through the arguments [*logoi*] when we show the truth *or the apparent truth* from whatever is persuasive in each case.”⁶⁰ The former claims that persuasion is connected to truth, nature, and what is best. The latter claims that persuasion attaches to what the audience perceives as true, and audiences can be wrong.

I suggest the tension can be resolved by looking to the naturalism affecting this general account of rhetoric. The selected passages assert what Aristotle defends elsewhere: what *is* by nature is coextensive with what is better. What makes a thing *be* is marked by what that thing has the natural potential to do. For the most part, natural potential unfolds into actual capabilities as a thing grows. A substance’s nature determines its range of potentials. For example, penguins naturally have the potential to keep warm in frigid water, but they do not have the potential to echolocate. For human beings, actualization is additionally determined by choices.

The more highly coordinated a substance is (both relative to its own natural potential and relative to the capabilities of other substances), the better it is. A thing is better than it would otherwise be if it has more highly coordinated activity. Actuality comes in degrees, and those degrees mark the degree of natural goodness a thing possesses. For example, a photosynthesizing plant that actively turns its external physical environment into energy engages in highly coordinated activity that leads to its own flourishing. This activity means the plant can *do* more than the dirt that surrounds its root system. Aristotle asserts that a qualitative ascription of “better” applies to the plant over the dirt due to its greater actualization. A thing’s given nature determines what it has the potential to do, and this degree of its coordinated activity—its state of actualization—marks its goodness. Moreover, that this life force is “good” is a metaphysical feature that applies to the plant *qua* plant; it is not a reflection of one’s subjective view of the good of the plant. My suggestion is that this underlying metaphysics of goodness and its attendant teleology is why Aristotle repeatedly claims in the *Rhetoric* that what is best by nature is also what is persuasive. If flourishing is bound up with our natural goodness, and we are in some sense attracted to what is naturally

⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a23–25.

good, then audiences will generally find claims that comport with natural goodness to be persuasive.

As such, rhetoric is always practiced in the context of human deliberation about the best course of action regarding a practical matter. Rhetorical contexts concern human beings, who have a nature that formally directs their state of flourishing. This teleology affects what people find attractive and persuasive, and it supplies the rhetorician—from outside the art proper—with the fodder for crafting persuasive appeals—which are inside the purview of the art of rhetoric. Rhetoric's natural context, in other words, supplies rhetoric with its ethical orientation. This is how we make sense of Aristotle's repeated claims that rhetors ought to pursue what is just, that what is true and just is always more persuasive, and that audiences have a natural ability to recognize such appeals.⁶¹ If natural goodness frames the art of rhetoric, then rhetoric can be the art that sees the persuasive and the apparently persuasive *while also* having an orientation toward the ethical and the just.

Rhetoric, then, has both a moral and amoral dimension. Considered as an art in abstraction from the context in which it always occurs, it is an amoral art. However, its amorality is only an abstraction. In practice, rhetoric always occurs in a natural context that supplies it with an ethical orientation. Just as it is an abstraction to consider the matter of a natural, bodily substance apart from its form, it is an abstraction to consider the amoral art of rhetoric from its naturally good context.

CONCLUSION

The *Rhetoric* offers a coherent and compelling account of persuasive speech in light of its rival alternatives. Unlike Parmenides's goddess, who distinguishes philosophical logos from the 'mere words' of common opinions, Aristotle carves out a legitimate place for "relaxed logos," the logos of the rhetorical enthymeme that begins with *endoxa*. The theory of rhetoric that emerges is grounded on *logos* but is not reducible to formally valid argumentation, and it rises above mere pandering or power-motivated deception.

⁶¹ Engberg-Pedersen, "Is There an Ethical Dimension in Aristotelian Rhetoric?" 124, comes closest to making this claim by calling Aristotelian rhetoric a language-game whose setting is "a case of search for factual, ethical, or political truth." However, the framework of a language-game is far less substantive than the ethical naturalism for which I am arguing. Wardy, "Aristotle and His Predecessors on Mixture," in *The Chain of Change: A Study of Aristotle's Physics VII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), claims there is a connection of Aristotle's "dialectical method as an instrument for discovering absolute truth" to his "philosophical biology," but he does not make an explicit connection to rhetoric.

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Because rhetorical moments occur in concrete circumstances for which legitimate reasons can be given on both sides, the *Rhetoric* also maintains, against Zeno, that there are “proofs” that can be given on both sides of a debate. The ability to know what proofs will be most persuasive will depend on the rhetorician’s prudential ability to recognize the proclivities of his audience, the naturally best ends that apply to his topic, his ability to see powerful and brief reasons for pursuing those ends, and his ability to convey those views effectively. A speaker’s true *ēthos* and artistic appeals to *logos*, *pathos*, and *ēthos* each contribute to this ability.

Finally, while Socrates claims in the *Gorgias* that rhetoric only persuades in the absence of knowledge, the *Rhetoric* is more optimistic about the connection between *endoxa* and truth. The content for rhetorical arguments springs from the non-scientific *endoxa* that correlate with ethics and politics. In this sense, rhetoric does persuade in the absence of *scientific* knowledge. Yet common opinion and what human beings generally find persuasive are not necessarily opposed to such knowledge. The *Rhetoric*’s epistemic optimism about *endoxa* springs from Aristotle’s metaphysics of goodness. In general, common opinions will have some core content that aligns with what is true and naturally good, and this is why people hold these opinions in the first place. Appeals to *ēthos* and *pathos* that comport with natural goodness will likewise stand the best chance of persuading. As such, there is nothing untoward about a rhetor who begins with *endoxa* and crafts short arguments to persuade a general audience. The art of rhetoric is precisely what enables groups like this to deliberate well in concrete, time-bound circumstances. Practical contexts require that not all inquiry is confined to philosophical debate, and it is a strength of Aristotelian rhetoric that there is a form of *logos*-based persuasion that operates outside of these boundaries.

A successful rhetorician will generally have to operate within these same confines of natural goodness, not because the art of rhetoric requires it, but because the broader context in which rhetoric is practiced requires it. At the same time, the tie of rhetoric to natural goodness safeguards against the most cynical, sophistic view that words are tools of force whose content is subjective and whose purpose is to give the rhetorician power. The sophist turns out to doubly err, first by considering rhetoric to have no ethical framework, and, second by misunderstanding the telos of human nature to be power rather than virtue. As

such, the *Rhetoric* successfully preserves the integrity of the art of rhetoric by showing how it is neither sham philosophy nor mere sophistry.

I have argued that Aristotle's statement that rhetoric is about "seeing the available means of persuasion" is about sharpening the ability to see how to effect goodness in concrete situations. Because rhetorical *logos* involves cases where "there is room for doubt" and where there can be legitimate reasons given on both sides of a question, one needs good judgment to choose one's premises. This prudential judgment springs from the rhetorician's *ēthos*, not *logos*.

At the same time, because nature only works "for the most part," the *Rhetoric* can also accommodate rhetorical shortcomings. Common opinion is not always correct, and appeals by virtuous display character will not always win the day. An audience may, due to their own vice or ignorance, be unpersuaded by a virtuous display character.⁶² It is also possible for a rhetorician to persuade using a virtuous display character that does not represent her true character. Knowing how to appeal to what the audience believes is a good character does not guarantee the rhetorician is good. A rhetor's selection of *endoxa* can be mere cleverness and not prudence. However, the framework of natural goodness that surrounds the *Rhetoric* implies that, for the most part, virtuous appeals will be more successful and prudence will be the surest way to craft one's display *ēthos* and enthymematic *logos*. This stands even if there is no guarantee that the rhetor's display of good sense and virtue is genuine. On the whole, however, the scales are tipped in favor of rhetorical appeals to and by virtue. In this sense, rhetoric is an "offshoot of dialectic and ethical studies (which is rightly called politics)."⁶³ The rhetor need not have scientific knowledge of ethics or politics, but he should know the *endoxa* about them.

If I am right then, contrary to what the present scholarship claims, Aristotle does provide a coherent and discernable response to the sophistic and philosophical alternatives to rhetoric. He has nuanced views about the kind of *logos* that pertains to persuasive speech, about natural goodness, and about how appeals by *ēthos* operate in this context. Taken together, I have argued that these positions entail any given rhetor is not necessarily amoral,

⁶² Wardy seems to deny this. He interprets the *Rhetoric's* claim that "because the true and the just are by nature stronger than their opposites" then failure to defend the true and the just "is worthy of censure" to mean that rhetorical losers are guilty of "stupidly squandering the advantage conferred on them by the rightness of their cause" (59; cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355a26-27).

⁶³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a30-33.

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vicious, or virtuous. However, the art of rhetoric occurs within a natural context that means its right use is oriented toward virtue.

In summary, when Aristotle says, “[C]haracter is almost, so to speak, the most authoritative form of persuasion,” he appears to mean that character is authoritative because it establishes the bond of trust between the rhetor and the audience, thereby disposing the audience to be persuaded by enthymematic appeals. While character enters the rhetorical scene indirectly, through the body of the speech, initial trust in the rhetor’s authority disposes the audience to appreciate appeals by *logos*. Rhetorical situations require audiences to make judgments, which require good deliberation about immediate practicalities based on limited information. Audience members generally find themselves in a state of epistemic uncertainty, not being experts in the matter at hand. As a result, the audience is most likely to accept reasons given by those they trust. This trust comes from the rhetor’s display character as revealed in the body of the speech. If the audience and rhetor are both well formed, appeals by virtuous display character should be, in Aristotle’s word, “authoritative.”

At the same time, Aristotle is right to qualify his statement about the authority of display character. While the audience’s trust in the rhetor is powerful, it nevertheless surfaces through *logos* and disposes the audience to trust the conclusion drawn by the rhetor’s central kind of appeal: enthymematic *logos*. Appeals to *logos* remain at the heart of the *Rhetoric*’s teaching, and it is fitting that this is so. It is *logos*, after all, that most fully grasps what nature is and explains the epistemic optimism Aristotle places in common opinion and the reasonableness of appeals to *ēthos* and *pathos*. When tied to an effective display character and an audience capable of being persuaded by a virtuous appeal, rhetoric is a powerful art indeed.