

OPINIONS IN CONTEXT: RECONSIDERING *ENDOXA*  
IN ARISTOTLE'S *ON RHETORIC*

by

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ABSTRACT

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In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes rhetoric as an ability of seeing the available means of persuasion. Rather than suggesting that rhetoric is persuasive discourse, Aristotle presents it as a skill one utilizes to assess the situation at hand in order to discover what might prove persuasive. Much of this potentially persuasive material comes from opinions; however, Aristotle's presentation of opinion in *On Rhetoric* shows a clear departure from those offered by his predecessors such as Plato and Gorgias. Rather than considering general opinion (*doxa*), as did the earlier Greek thinkers, Aristotle concentrates primarily on reputable opinions (*endoxa*) pertaining to the particular circumstances. This thesis explores the highly contextual and systematic approach to the rhetorical process described in *On Rhetoric*. I suggest that, unlike his

predecessors, Aristotle sees opinions not as the main persuasive force, but as an essential component in a method of inquiry, functioning within a network of proven elements and plausible opinions, each pertaining to a specific occasion of speech. Aristotle describes a system of discovering the efficacy of *endoxa* within a given context, thereby improving the reliability of arguing from opinion.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The “Whole Business” of Aristotle

At the beginning of Book Three of *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle observes that the “whole business” of rhetoric concerns opinion (*Rhetoric* 1404a). In one respect, Aristotle’s claim is nothing new, since most considerations of rhetoric before his emphasized the importance of opinion. On another level, though, Aristotle’s approach marks a substantial revision of the role of opinion in rhetoric, and the importance of his method should not be underestimated. In fact, Edward P. J. Corbett observes that the key to understanding Aristotle’s approach to rhetoric is recognizing that probability is the basis for persuasion, since arguments are frequently based on opinions (*Classical* 599). Corbett’s statement is accurate, especially in light of Aristotle’s juxtaposition of rhetoric to dialectic. Whereas dialectic, at least in the Platonic presentation, relies on logical reasoning to discover the apparent truth, the probability associated with rhetoric deals with what people “believed to be true rather than what was demonstratively and universally true” (*Classical* 599). Rather than distinguishing between the two, though, Aristotle associates rhetoric with dialectic, as noted in the famous opening of *On Rhetoric*, where rhetoric is considered to be a counterpart to dialectic. Also, Aristotle’s approach to dialectic differs substantially from Plato’s, and opinion is at the heart of



Aristotelian dialectic. The treatment of opinion in Aristotle's rhetorical theory, however, is not limited to general opinion (*doxa*), as was the case with his predecessors, but rather on the efficacy of reputable opinions (*endoxa*) pertaining to the needs of particular circumstances. In this thesis I will explore elements of Aristotelian rhetoric that have often been underestimated, misinterpreted, or overlooked altogether. After an overview of opinion as addressed in the works of Plato, Gorgias, and Isocrates, I will examine how Aristotle both develops and reacts to the work of these earlier thinkers.<sup>1</sup> This thesis will provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of Aristotelian *endoxa*, acknowledging his profoundly contextual rhetorical process. What I suggest is that, unlike the theories of his predecessors, Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* sees opinions not as the main persuasive force, but as an essential component in a method of inquiry, functioning within a network of proven elements and plausible opinions, each pertaining to a specific occasion of speech.

Aristotle's methodology presents a departure from earlier treatments of rhetoric such as those of Plato and Gorgias. Rather than dismissing opinion as an unreliable basis for constructing a speech, as was the case with Plato, Aristotle elevates its status significantly. In past few years, several theorists such as Terence Irwin, Ruth Amossy, and Ekaterina Haskins have explored Aristotle's treatment of *endoxa*, and these studies have drawn attention to the value of opinion in *On Rhetoric*. This thesis will address these contributions and continue the discussion of *endoxa*, especially with regard to the function of opinions within a given community. Aristotle foregrounds the role of the public, suggesting that rhetoric is subordinate to politics (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1094b).

By emphasizing the political element of rhetoric, he acknowledges the important role of the public in oratory, turning what for Plato was a problematic feature of rhetoric into an asset. Aristotle makes his point particularly clear in *On Rhetoric*, where he shows a level of trust in human reasoning, describing how persuasion occurs in arguments when we “show the truth or apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case” (*Rhetoric* 1356a). Aristotle’s observation points to three key elements in his rhetorical system. First, whatever is persuasive does not elicit persuasion on its own accord; the truth or apparent truth has to be extracted from the potentially persuasive material. Second, persuasion is seen as something that comes into being through a process. (I will address aspects of this process in greater detail in chapter three with a discussion of potentiality [*dunamis*] and actualization [*energia*]). Finally, the rhetorical situation is crucial in developing an argument.

A problem concerning *endoxa* is that Aristotle does not offer an exact definition of the term in *On Rhetoric*. Instead, he uses the word *endoxa* without the explanatory information he provides in other works such as the *Topics* and the *Ethics*. George Kennedy distinguishes between *doxa* and *endoxa* in his translation of *On Rhetoric*, where he describes *endoxa* as commonly held opinions (*Rhetoric*1355a), but this description could just as easily pertain to *doxa*. In a footnote, Kennedy suggests readers consult the *Topics* for more information on *endoxa*. Clearly the presentation in *On Rhetoric* is not sufficient to gain an adequate understanding of the force and function of *endoxa*, so in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of their application, one should consider their treatment in the *Topics* and the *Ethics* and as well. Even in these

cases, though, Aristotle is still not completely explicit as to what these commonly held opinions are.

How then should we consider the Aristotelian treatment of opinion, and why would arguments based in *endoxa* be any improvement over those from general *doxa*? Part of the answer comes from the beginning of *On Rhetoric*. Aristotle defines rhetoric as “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (*Rhetoric* 1355b). *Endoxa* provide a substantial portion of this potentially persuasive material, through a limited set of opinions, which apply to a given situation. As he mentions in *On Rhetoric*, “people are pleased if someone in a general observation hits upon opinions that they themselves have about a particular instance” (*Rhetoric* 1395b). In many circumstances a rhetor can determine the *endoxa* of a given audience; however, certain problems concerning opinions arise during an inquiry. As Larry Arnhart points out, the *endoxa* “on any particular subject are usually confused and even apparently contradictory, but Aristotle assumes that in most cases they manifest at least a partial grasp of the truth, and therefore, that any serious inquiry into moral or political subjects must start from them” (*Political* 7). Arnhart raises an important issue concerning *endoxa* by describing potential conflicts that arise in a given set of circumstances. Aristotle was not unaware of this problem, as evidenced by his observation that opposite conclusions may be derived from the same topics, since many *endoxa* are opposed to each other (*Rhetoric* 1402a).

In order to grasp the full scope of the Aristotelian method, though, we must look to the treatment of *endoxa* in works other than *On Rhetoric*. The *Nicomachean Ethics*,

for example, offers a detailed approach to assessing a particular situation, working through problems that come from any conflicting *endoxa*, and proving the opinions pertinent to the inquiry (*Nicomachean* 1145b). Here Aristotle describes a system of discovering the efficacy of *endoxa* within a given context, thereby improving the reliability of arguing from opinion. It seems plausible to assume that a correlation exists between this *endoxic* method described in the *Ethics* and the system of discovering the most effective means of persuasion as shown in *On Rhetoric*. (I will address this relationship in detail in chapter two and continue in chapter three by showing how Aristotle's presentation of *topoi* and enthymemes fulfill the requirements suggested by the *Ethics*).

Aristotelian rhetoric employs a systematic method of inquiry, operating through the proofs (*pisteis*) described in *On Rhetoric*. Proofs do not operate in isolation but instead function as a network within a situation. Aristotle describes two types of proofs, artistic and non-artistic. Non-artistic proofs are those that are not supplied by the orator but may be used in argumentation. These include laws, witnesses, contracts, oaths and tortures. Artistic *pisteis* can be prepared by method and through our own efforts (*Rhetoric* 1355b). Aristotle describes artistic proofs as *ethos*, relying upon the authority of the speaker, relying *logos* on the strength of the argument, and *pathos*, relying on the reception of the speech by the audience. In describing the function of non-artistic proofs and artistic proofs, Aristotle points out that "we have only to make use of the former, whereas we must invent the latter" (*Rhetoric* 1355b). George Kennedy argues that the role of *ethos* in Aristotelian rhetoric is somewhat limited, and non-artistic proofs

“should perhaps be enlarged to include the appearance and authority of the speaker, features of the setting and the context of a speech that affect its reception, and other factors that a speaker can use for persuasive ends” (*Rhetoric* 22). In keeping with Kennedy’s observation here, one can see the proven *endoxa* could be one of the “other factors,” since these beliefs are accepted as true beforehand. From this viewpoint, *endoxa* serve a dual purpose in the overall system, with the potential to work as artistic or non-artistic proofs. Before concentrating on *endoxa*, though, I will consider the treatment of opinion by Aristotle’s predecessors.

### 1.2 *Doxa* vs. *Endoxa*: More Than a Battle of Words

The distinction between the Aristotelian treatment of opinion and that of his predecessors seems clear enough, since Aristotle concentrates mainly on *endoxa* rather than *doxa*, which Gorgias, Plato, and Isocrates each considered in their rhetorical theories. However, the issue of opinion goes beyond the difference of word choice. On the one hand, Aristotle clearly shows trust in the positive aspect of opinion, which was not always evident in the works of the other ancients. On the other hand, none of the earlier Greeks completely discounted the possibility of utilizing opinion in a constructive manner. Isocrates, for example, offers treatments of *doxa*, which are practically indistinguishable from *endoxa*, as is the case in the *Encomium of Helen*, where he claims that students should be educated about the “affairs in which we act as citizens,” because “it is much better to conjecture (*doxazein*) reasonably about useful things than to have precise knowledge of what is useless” (*Helen* 10:5). Plato and

Gorgias also describe the possibility of constructing valid arguments based in *doxa*; while *doxa* can prove problematic, the possibility of accuracy also exists.

Along with the constructive potential of opinion, an alternate possibility exists, where its instability can make it easier for an unethical rhetor to mislead an audience. The danger of opinion seems most prominent in the work of Plato, who shows an overall disdain for both rhetoric and *doxa*, since opinion by its nature is intermingled with uncertainty and speculation. One of the most telling examples Plato offers for the unreliability of rhetoric comes in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates tells of an uninformed rhetor trying to pass off a donkey as a horse to an equally uninformed audience. The lack of knowledge for both the speaker and the audience sets the stage for an absurd argument, which seems reasonable to those involved:

And so, when a rhetorician who does not know good from bad addresses a city which knows no better and tries to sway it, not by praising a miserable donkey as if it were a horse, but bad as if it were good, and having studied what people believe, persuades them to do something bad instead of good—with that sort of seed, what sort of crop do you think rhetoric can have? (*Phaedrus* 260c)

Socrates' question indicates an obvious censure of rhetoric, but this example from the *Phaedrus* also points to two important issues in Platonic theory. First, rhetoric and opinion are closely related; Plato contrasts both with dialectic and truth. However, neither rhetoric nor opinion is discounted entirely in the Platonic world, which leads to the second issue. For Plato, knowledge provides the cornerstone of reasoning. As he points out in the *Gorgias*, there are two types of persuasion, one consisting of belief

without knowledge and one with knowledge (*Gorgias* 454). In the example of the donkey, the problem is not as much the technique involved, but the ignorance of both the rhetor and the audience. Without corresponding knowledge, *doxa* can have destructive results. However, as evidenced by the questions Socrates raises in the Platonic dialogues, dialectic often utilizes opinions in conjunction with knowledge, thereby increasing the efficacy of *doxa*.

Although Plato acknowledges the possibility for positive uses of opinion, overall he downplays its constructive value and disassociates rhetoric from dialectic by emphasizing the uncertainty of building arguments from *doxa*. In contrast, Aristotle highlights the dialectic nature of rhetoric and the possibility of utilizing *endoxa* to ensure greater reliability in argumentation. However, while Aristotle's *endoxa* do offer a more streamlined presentation of opinion, they do not always guarantee an effective outcome in argumentation, since they are not the only matters to take into account. In the *Topics*, for example, Aristotle claims that dialectical propositions include *endoxa*, but also include "universal opinions (*doxa*), or those of the majority, or the wise—of all of them, or of the majority or of the most famous—or opinions contrary to those which appear to be generally held, and also opinions which are in accord with the arts" (*Topics* 105a-105b). As a result, the Aristotelian form of inquiry does not discount the sorts of difficulties suggested by the Platonic treatment. Obviously, Aristotle and Plato differ a great deal in their emphasis on opinion, but more is involved in their considerations of *doxa* and *endoxa*. In fact, one could argue that rather than being two entirely discrete elements, *endoxa* are an extraction or outgrowth from *doxa*. Essentially, *doxa*

incorporate *endoxa*, allowing for the possibility of effective as well as ineffective argumentation. Of course, by concentrating on *endoxa*, Aristotle increases the possibility of constructing effective arguments, but *endoxa* serve as elements in a complex rhetorical method. I will address *endoxa* in more detail in the upcoming chapter. Initially, though, I will continue exploring the role of opinion in the works of Plato, Gorgias, and Isocrates in order to develop a better understanding of how Aristotle develops and responds to earlier considerations of opinion.

### 1.3 Plato and the Potential Dark Side of *Doxa*

When the positive aspect of rhetoric is examined in Platonic dialogues, the emphasis is on knowledge rather than opinion. In the *Gorgias*, for instance, Socrates claims that rhetoric is the artificer of persuasion, but notes that there are two sorts of persuasion—one comes through belief without knowledge and the other is the product of knowledge (*Gorgias* 453-454). This distinction between belief and knowledge is crucial to the Platonic treatment of rhetoric, and an important examination of this relationship comes in the *Phaedrus*, where Plato tells of a chariot driven by two horses, one from a good bloodline and another from a bad one. The gods are in possession of pure knowledge, and the charioteers ride in a circuit to capture a glimpse of this knowledge, “not the knowledge that is close to change, that becomes different as it knows the different things which we consider real down here” (*Phaedrus* 247e). Plato’s statement here can be seen as an indictment of *doxa* as opposed to the truth. Consequently, *doxa* would be associated with the bad horse and truth with the good horse. During the journey to enlightenment, each driver struggles to control the horses, and at times the



charioteer's inability to manage them causes a return to earth. This allegory holds special meaning for the Platonic consideration of a true rhetoric, where the orator attains success by acquiring knowledge. Only attainment of knowledge allows us to approach truth. For Plato, true rhetoric is a mere possibility, largely dependent on the wisdom of the rhetor rather than the *doxa* of the audience.

The *Phaedrus* shows Plato clearly distinguishing between truth and knowledge. While universal truth exists, it is a possession of the gods and thereby exists outside of human experience. Men can attain knowledge, but can never fully discover truth. An illustration of this distinction comes in the *Republic*. Plato associates science with the infallible and *doxa* with the fallible (*Republic* 477e), and describes a dividing line between two entities, one of which is sovereign over the intelligible order and the other over what is only visible. On the visible side, investigation comes by means of making assumptions based upon appearances; on the intelligible, investigation comes about systematically through ideas (*Republic* 510e). For Plato the type of knowledge associated with dialectic and mathematical reasoning are based on the intelligible, thereby providing a greater sense of logical stability than considering only what seems apparent. The division Plato describes touches upon one of the central issues in dialogues concerning rhetoric, for example the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. Dialectic is placed on the side of knowledge, and is therefore a reliable means of reasoning. The other side of the line concerns opinion, which is the foundation for rhetorical argument, thereby leading to belief without knowledge.

Overall, Plato regards *doxa* as a degraded form of knowledge, much akin to

hearsay (Amossy 2002). Rather than relying on demonstrative proofs, the rhetor appeals to the apparent beliefs of the public, resulting reasoning based on appearances. In the *Crito*, for example, Socrates asks, “Why should we pay so much attention to what ‘most people’ think? The really reasonable people, who have more claim to be considered, will believe that the facts are exactly as they are” (*Crito* 44b). This passage from the *Crito* points to a major issue in many of the Platonic dialogues. Reasonable people, according to Plato, do not trust in *doxa* but rather rely on demonstrative proof; in fact, the description here sounds very similar to Aristotelian *endoxa*. However, the power of public opinion in the Platonic example is somewhat sterile. According to Plato, ordinary people lack the capacity for doing harm or doing good: “They cannot make a man wise or stupid; they simply act at random” (*Crito* 44b).

Plato does not completely disregard the potential value of opinion in rhetoric, though. In the *Meno*, for example, Socrates makes an observation that seems contradictory to the views expressed in the *Gorgias*: “But in insisting that knowledge was a *sine qua non* for right leadership, we look like being mistaken” (*Meno* 97a). Here Socrates does not abandon his emphasis on knowledge, but instead opens up the possibility of one having a “true opinion,” which is preferable to general *doxa*. As Socrates claims, “true opinion is as good a guide of knowledge for the purpose of acting rightly” (*Meno* 97b). In one aspect, the concept of a true opinion seems somewhat aligned with the Aristotelian *endoxa*, since these are informed opinions. On another level, though, true opinion and *endoxa* are not synonymous. True opinions are those acquired by an individual and employed with his or her own reasoning. Conversely,

*endoxa* are opinions accepted by some community agreement. The true opinions Plato describes, however, ultimately prove somewhat limited: “True opinions are a fine thing and they do all sorts of good so long as they stay in their place, but they will not stay long” (*Meno* 97e). As is the case with common *doxa*, true opinion cannot supersede knowledge.

For Plato, the surest form of reasoning comes through dialectic, which unlike rhetoric provides a sense of logical stability.<sup>2</sup> One of the most famous examples of dialectic as opposed to rhetoric occurs in the *Gorgias*, in the comparison of rhetoric to cookery: “An art I do not call it, but only an experience, because it is unable to explain or give a reason of the nature of its own applications” (*Gorgias* 465). Plato describes rhetoric as simply a knack,<sup>3</sup> which as Brad McAdon explains, leads to problems: “flattery in the form of rhetoric does to justice what cookery does to the body—provides the impression of health, but, in fact, is detrimental to health” (*Counterpart* 129). McAdon’s observation touches upon the core of the Platonic distrust in rhetoric by highlighting its dangerous potential. Plato considers rhetoric ignoble and a counterfeit part of politics, appealing to the apparent beliefs of the public. Cookery in the Platonic example here is probably more akin to the modern-day practice of snacking or eating junk food. Rather than supplying nutrition, it ultimately does more harm than good.

In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle challenges several aspects of Plato’s treatment of rhetoric. Whereas Plato considered rhetoric as the counterpart to cookery, Aristotle claims it to be the counterpart to dialectic, as noted in the famous opening sentence of *On Rhetoric*; rather than distinguishing the two, he emphasizes their relationship.

However, the word “counterpart” fails to offer an adequate sense of the relationship between the two fields. For example, in Kennedy’s edition of the *On Rhetoric*, he does not provide an English equivalent for the term *antistrophos*, pointing out in a footnote that it is commonly translated as “counterpart,” but other possibilities exist, including “correlative,” “coordinate,” and “converse.” By using the word *antistrophos* “Aristotle is more likely thinking of and rejecting the analogy of the true and false arts elaborated by Socrates in *Gorgias*, where...rhetoric, the false form of justice, is compared to cooking, the false form of medicine” (*Rhetoric* 30). Aristotle emphasizes connection rather than distinction, claiming that rhetoric “is partly dialectic, and resembles it, as we said at the outset; for neither of them is identifiable with knowledge of the contents of any specific subject, but they are distinct abilities of supplying arguments” (*Rhetoric* 1356a). Before discussing Aristotle in greater detail at this point, though, I want to concentrate the presentation of *doxa* in Sophistic rhetoric.

#### 1.4 The Sophistic Treatment of *Doxa*

In contrast to Plato, Gorgias of Leontini rejects any claims to knowledge and instead considers *doxa* to be the only guide to action (Conley 1990). The emphasis on *doxa* in Gorgias’ work is clear, but the strength of the argument also provides an essential component, since it is through the power of logos that the opinions are molded. With *Encomium of Helen*, for example, Gorgias considers four possible reasons for Helen’s abduction: the will of the gods, force, love, or speech. Gorgias claims that it was Paris’ speech that led Helen away, and that her mind was swept away by the power of rhetoric. Gorgias sees rhetoric as a magical spell transmitted through words, thereby

having the same effect on the soul as drugs have on the body. He argues that divine sweetness “transmitted through words is inductive of pleasure, reductive of pain. Thus by entering into the opinion of the soul the force of incantation is wont to beguile and persuade and alter it by witchcraft” (*Encomium* 10). Essentially, as George Kennedy explains, “The function of the orator is not logical demonstration so much as emotional presentation that will stir the audience’s will to believe” (*Classical* 36).

For Gorgias, effective discourse does not come about by an appeal to logic but through an interaction between the rhetor and the audience concerning the *doxa* involved in a particular instance. Gorgias observes that opinion proves to be the “counselor to the soul. But opinion, being slippery and insecure, casts those relying on it into slippery and insecure fortune” (*Encomium* 254). As Robert Wardy points out, Gorgias makes no mention of a rational conviction, but shows the malleability of opinion: “Despite its pretensions, philosophy does not establish secure, well-founded theses, but only demonstrates the mutability of passive belief” (*Mighty* 57-58). Wardy’s observation underscores an important distinction between Gorgias’ and Aristotle’s presentations of rhetoric. Whereas opinion provides an insecure foundation for constructing arguments in the Gorgias model, Aristotle’s treatment of *endoxa* provides a greater degree of certainty, thereby improving reliability.

In the case of the *Encomium of Helen*, speech achieves its powerful effect because people do not have complete memory of the past, knowledge of the present, or foresight of the future; it is only the reality that one encounters that makes the difference. In the Gorgias model, common opinions can help produce effective argument but also have

the potential for making “incredible and unclear things appear to be true” (*Encomium* 254). For Gorgias, as Christopher Johnstone observes, logic and proof are illusory, and ultimately prove false (*Sophistical* 274). The method by which we might distinguish authentic from inauthentic perceptions includes what appears to be supported by reasoning: “If no ‘reasoned account’ (*logos*) can be given about a perceived ‘reality,’ then one has no ‘reason’ to believe that it is an authentic perception” (*Sophistical* 274). Johnstone’s account highlights an important aspect of Gorgian rhetoric. It is the rhetor’s skill for constructing arguments based on *doxa* that gives speech its true power, and it is through *logos* that a perceived reality becomes an experienced reality (*Sophistical* 275).

The temporality Gorgias describes hints at the importance of *kairos*, or the opportune moment. *Kairos* was an essential aspect in much Sophistic rhetoric, as evidenced by the anonymous *Dissoi Logoi*, which stresses the situational aspect of rhetoric, the fact that the good and bad are not polarized: “the same thing is good for some but bad for others, or at one time good and at another time bad” (*Dissoi* 48). As was the case with Gorgias, the speaker’s ability to present what seems logical according to the occasion ultimately proves persuasive. What proves to be good or bad is contingent upon the circumstances. Aristotle offers a similar view in *On Rhetoric*, arguing that what is advantageous for one group might prove bad for a rival group (*Rhetoric* 1363a). The *Dissoi Logoi* shows another connection with Aristotelian rhetoric, by describing the characteristics of a skillful orator. A good orator will have accumulated a good deal of knowledge and will “give sound advice to the city on performance of good actions and prevent them from evil ones” (*Dissoi* 54).

The author of *Dissoi Logoi* was certainly not the first Greek philosopher to recognize the contingency of values. Protagoras, for example, was one of the earliest thinkers to recognize the circumstantial nature of what is good or bad, and the author of *Dissoi Logoi* was greatly influenced by him. As with *Dissoi Logoi*, a situational relevance determines the outcome of speech. In reference to Protagoras, Sextus Empiricus observes that matter is in flux and “that the reason-principles (*logoi*) of all phenomena subsist in matter” and that people “apprehend different things at different times in accordance with their different dispositions” (*Sophists* 13). To a certain degree, Protagoras’ philosophy here sounds closely aligned with Aristotle’s treatment of rhetorical inquiry, where each situation offers a new challenge to discover the apparent truth. However, there is also an important distinction between the two philosophers. First, Protagoras claims that man is the measure of all things, “of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not” (*Sophists* 3). Consequently, he stresses the sensory nature of reality over knowledge, claiming that “all appearances and opinions are true, and that truth is something relative, by reason of the fact that everything has appeared to be the case or been opined by someone is immediately real to that person” (*Sophists* 14).

Aristotle rejects Protagoras’ position concerning the apparent truth and the truth of one’s opinions. In reference to Protagoras’ claim, Aristotle observes that “if all opinions and appearances are true, all statements must at the same time be at the same time true and false. For many men hold beliefs in which they conflict with one another, and think those mistaken who have not the same opinions as themselves” (*Metaphysics*

1009b). Also, in the *Topics* he claims, “When we have counted up the opinions held by most people, we shall meet them on the ground not of other people’s convictions but of their own, shifting the ground of any argument that they appear to us to state unsoundly” (*Topics* 101b). Aristotle recognizes the instability of individual opinions, since what appears to be evident to someone may not always be accurate, which is one of the key reasons he places an emphasis on *endoxa* rather than *doxa*. Before considering *endoxa* in greater detail, however, we should first consider the importance of Isocrates’ rhetorical theory and its influence on Aristotle.

### 1.5 Isocrates and the Rhetoric of Philosophy

While the *Dissoi Logoi* contains elements that show a correlation with Aristotelian rhetoric, we can see a closer connection in the work of Isocrates. Although often placed in opposition to Aristotle, because they were competitors with their schools of oratory, Isocrates presents *doxa* in ways that seem closely aligned with the Aristotelian concept of *endoxa*. Isocrates’ consideration of opinions operating in conjunction with *kairos*, or the opportune moment, provides much broader potential for rhetoric than those offered by Plato or Gorgias. This situational aspect of rhetorical inquiry becomes further developed in Aristotle’s rhetorical system. Another correlation exists between Isocrates and Aristotle concerning their considerations of audience. Takis Poulakos, for example, points out the Isocratean use of *doxa* “sets the stage for examining further the possibility that Isocrates’ uniqueness may lay in his effort to explore rhetoric’s propensity to constitute audiences as civic agents, rather than to influence their behavior in particular situations” (*Isocrates* 65). This observation



underscores an important aspect of Isocratean rhetoric, indicating a transition from the view given by his predecessors. Gorgias and Plato often present rhetoric as a method of persuasion; Isocrates instead shows rhetoric as a component in developing a more informed audience. In fact, Isocrates does not refer to public speaking in terms of rhetoric, but in terms of philosophy, and the emphasis for Isocrates is on education.

Along similar lines, Brad McAdon draws attention to the political and educational aspects of Isocrates' rhetoric. The ability to speak well reflects the ability to think well, "and Isocrates understands that these two capacities—good thinking and good speaking—are the basis of a successful society, for by them the ignorant can be educated, the laws can be laid, and the character of those who compose society can be enhanced because the discourse that is true and lawful and just, that these citizens will acquire from his system, will lead to the outward image of a good and faithful soul" (*Counterpart* 118). The civic aspect of Isocrates' rhetoric, which McAdon touches upon here, indicates another departure from the treatment given by other Greek thinkers. Whereas Gorgias and Plato often represent rhetoric as an orator persuading an audience to agree with a particular argument, Isocrates shows oratory as a method of an ethical speaker educating an audience in order to develop a stronger social order. The agency Isocrates gives to audience becomes manifest to a greater degree in Aristotle's work.

For Isocrates, an essential component of effective speaking comes from practical wisdom, or *phronesis*. Poulakos examines the association of *phronesis* with the community and *doxa* as well.

For Isocrates, *phronesis* was a way of exercising one's *doxa*, the process of directing one's conjectures about the future through the past. A storehouse of values, traditions, and beliefs of the community, the past also includes the wise examples of earlier statesmen who directed their own conjectures toward the benefit of the city. Conceived in this manner, Isocrates' notion of *phronesis* anticipates Aristotle, whose eventual theoretical account of practical wisdom also situated *phronesis* in the past. (Isocrates 73)

Poulakos' observation indicates an association of Isocrates' philosophy with Aristotle's rhetoric on more than one level. First, Aristotle cites three reasons why speakers are persuasive: *phronesis*, virtue, and good will (*Rhetoric* 1378a). Each of these reflects a common standard of belief. Practical wisdom allows for an individual to make accurate assessments of public opinions. As C.D. C. Reeve argues, "someone who possesses *phronesis* will have emotions that correctly interpret a situation, that are appropriately responsive to it, and so will have veridical practical perception of it" (*Reason* 72). Reeve's observation highlights the importance of practical wisdom along with the situational aspect of Aristotle's theory. Isocrates' presentation of *phronesis* correlates with Aristotle's presentation of *endoxa* in that these beliefs and values are those held not only by community elders and the wise, but also by an informed community. Consequently, one could make a similar claim for Isocratean rhetoric, especially as it pertains to *kairos*.

Perhaps no other ancient Greek writer dealt with *kairos* to the extent of Isocrates. While he places *kairos* at the forefront of his rhetorical theory, Aristotle keeps it in the

background, leaving some theorists to suggest that Aristotle disregards it altogether (White 1987,<sup>4</sup> Kinneavy 1986<sup>5</sup>). However, one could just as easily argue that Aristotle makes meaning dependent upon the speech context, even though he does not discuss *kairos* directly. In order to develop a richer understanding into the situational aspect of Aristotelian rhetoric, we should continue the discussion of Isocrates. In *Against the Sophists*, for example, he claims that “speeches cannot be good unless they reflect the circumstances (*kairoi*)” (*Against* 64). The power of arguments, as a result, comes not as so much from the speaker’s knowledge as the demands of the situation. Isocrates places value on *doxa* and the proof needed for the circumstances. As Yun Lee Too points out in his introduction to *Antidosis*, for Isocrates, rhetoric “does not rely on a fixed body of knowledge but on the ability to guess and conjecture (*doxa*) at the right opportunities” (*Antidosis* 203). Poulakos echoes Too’s comments, observing that for Isocrates *kairos* belongs to the order of *doxa* instead of the order of episteme (*Isocrates* 62). Both Too and Poulakos provide accurate descriptions of the function of knowledge in Isocratean rhetoric. In the *Antidosis*, for example, Isocrates distinguishes between wisdom and philosophy, arguing that since human nature cannot attain the type of knowledge that would enable us to know what we must say or do, the wise “have the ability to reach the best opinions (*doxai*) most of the time, and philosophers are those who spend time acquiring intelligence as quickly as possible” (*Antidosis* 271). Along similar lines, Aristotle argues that even the most exact knowledge will not prove persuasive, so reliance upon opinion is essential (*Rhetoric* 1355b). Isocrates also argues that the wise have a “more secure understanding and their views (*doxai*) may be better adapted to the

right moments (*kairoi*)” (*Antidosis* 184).

Considering the word *doxa* simply in terms of opinion limits its overall capacity, since several different possible meanings apply. According to Poulakos, *doxa* did not mean “opinion” in the philosophical sense and “had no connection whatsoever to the philosophical problem of being and seeming, which eventually gave *doxa* the derogatory sense of uncertainty leading to deception and falsehood” (*Isocrates* 66). Poulakos addresses an aspect of Isocrates’ rhetorical theory that might otherwise go unnoticed. One of the most important alternative meanings of *doxa* for Isocrates is reputation. Having a good reputation is an essential component for being a good orator. If a person is deceitful, not only can he do harm by providing false opinions but by making himself appear to have a good reputation unjustly (*Antidosis* 18). Aristotle later makes a similar argument with his treatment of ethos, which he considers to be an essential component in persuasion. Both the Aristotelian and Isocratean presentations of opinion indicate a break from those of earlier Greek thinkers. In fact, Poulakos makes an observation about Isocrates’ use of *doxa* that might just as easily apply to Aristotle: “Unlike the Sophists’ approach to *doxa*, however, Isocrates’ use of the term suggests a deliberate effort on his part to disassociate *doxa* from persuasion and associate it, instead, with the process of constituting audiences and their identities” (*Isocrates* 64).

## CHAPTER 2

### OPINIONS, PROBLEMS, AND SYSTEMS

#### 2.1 What are *Endoxa* Anyway?

As with Isocrates' approach, Aristotle's rhetorical method presents both a development and departure from the earlier models of *doxa*. Whereas Gorgias and Plato presented *doxa* as the persuasive force in rhetorical argument, whether for constructive or destructive purposes, Aristotle describes a method of reasoning that improves the reliability of arguing from opinion, by utilizing *endoxa* as a component in a larger system of demonstrative argumentation. What actually constitutes *endoxa*, though, is not entirely certain. In the *Ethics* he claims they are views held by many men of old along with a few eminent persons, "and it is not probable that either of these should be entirely mistaken, but rather that they should be right in at least some one respect or even in most respects" (*Nicomachean* 1098b). In the *Topics*, he describes *endoxa* as those opinions "which are accepted by every one or by the majority or by the philosophers (the wise)" (*Topics* 100b). On the one hand, each of these explanations seems somewhat too broad in scope, open to a variety of possible applications, since these could be the opinions of a select few or those of everyone. Aristotle clarifies his position somewhat, claiming that a dialectical proposition is one with which most people would be in agreement, because "people are likely to assent to the views of those who have made a study of things, e.g. on a question of medicine they will agree with the

doctor, and on a question of geometry with the geometrician; and likewise also in other cases” (*Topics* 104b). In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle corroborates this consideration of specialists: “the master workers in each craft are more honorable than the manual workers, because they know the causes of things that are done” (*Metaphysics* 981b). In contrast, Aristotle describes some opinions that do not constitute as *endoxa*. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, for example, he explains that we should not consider the opinions of children, the diseased, or the mentally ill, since they are in need of maturity or medical treatment. Also, we should not consider the views of the many, since “they speak in an unreflective way on almost any topic” (*Eudemian Ethics* 1214b–1215a).

These presentations suggest that *endoxa* include a limited set of opinions, but the possibilities still remain quite varied. I suggest that by considering the value Aristotle places on the situational aspect of rhetoric, it seems feasible to assume that the *endoxa* under consideration should be those most applicable to the given circumstances. In certain cases, these may be the opinions of those in power; in other instances, these could be the opinions of specialists in a given field. However, a potential problem arises concerning *endoxa*, which comes from translation. Theodore Buckley’s 1851 version of *On Rhetoric*, for example, uses the word “probabilities” for *endoxa* (*Treatise* 7). While *endoxa* are certainly “probabilities,” the translated text does not emphasize the fact that these probabilities are opinions. Also, it is important to note that Aristotle refers to opinions in *On Rhetoric* by using both the words *doxa* and *endoxa*, but in many translations the distinction is not emphasized. Without knowing when each word is employed, one could easily believe that Aristotle is not consistent in his treatment of

opinion. One example comes from George Kennedy's 2007 translation of *On Rhetoric*. In Book 1, Chapter 7, Aristotle claims, "[t]hings related to the truth [are greater] than things related to opinion" (*Rhetoric* 1365b). In this case, Aristotle is using the word *doxa* rather than the more limited sets of opinions suggested by *endoxa*. In contrast, at the beginning of *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle claims that the true and just are stronger than their opposites, but since even the most exact knowledge would not make persuasion easy, "it is necessary for proofs (*pisteis*) and speeches as a whole to be formed on the basis of common [beliefs]" (*Rhetoric* 1355a). The reference to *endoxa* in this passage is clear; however, unlike his treatment of the word *endoxa*, Kennedy's translation of 1356b does not specify that the opinions referenced are *doxa*. Without awareness of this distinction, though, one might view Aristotle's statement here as a contradiction to the instances where he is using *endoxa*—a detail that might easily become lost in translation.

On one level, considering *endoxa* solely in terms of accepted opinion seems entirely logical. These are the opinions of the trustworthy, so argumentation based upon these views would seem stronger than those utilizing *doxa* alone. However, *endoxa* do not supply the only material for persuasion, but instead serve as an integral component in the Aristotelian system of discourse. Admittedly, rhetorical argumentation relies more on probability than scientific proof to produce persuasive discourse, but facts also enter into the overall equation. *Endoxa* share a correspondent relationship with truth, although the nature of this relationship is somewhat vague. In a study on opinion in rhetoric, for example, Ruth Amossy draws attention to a key aspect of the Aristotelian

presentation of dialectic: “All that is considered true, or at least probable, by a majority of people endowed with reason, or by a specific social group, can be called *doxic*” (*Introduction* 369). Amossy’s point here deserves close attention because it draws attention to two aspects of opinion in rhetoric. First, what is believed to be true by a given group falls under the realm of opinion, which is not to suggest that factual information and opinion are synonymous. Instead, certain opinions carry a potential power equivalent to that of truth in analytical reasoning. Second, *endoxic* elements are often confined to a specific group. It seems plausible to assume that concentrating on a limited set of opinions for a given argument highlights the situational aspect of rhetoric.

Amossy continues by describing Aristotle’s refinement of *doxa* in the streamlined version, *endoxa*, claiming that Aristotle treats *endoxa* as opinions that have authority insofar as they are part of the general consensus; however, the *consensus omnium* of Ancient Greece did not reflect the entire population, only those with power.

Moreover, in Aristotle’s view, the whole body of Athenian citizens can be replaced not only by an elite of wise men or experts representing them, but also by the judgment of undisputable authorities like the gods, the father, or the masters. Their opinion is truth worthy and respectable because they are themselves truth worthy and respectable. Thus *endoxa* would be both what is recognized as reasonable and respectable by anyone and what is endowed with power because it is believed and circulated by the legitimate representative of power. (*Introduction* 371)

Although Amossy is right to emphasize that *endoxa* for Aristotle can represent the



powerful, we may discover a much broader scope, which does not limit their function by making them a tool of the elite. Aristotelian *endoxa* can also be seen to represent accepted opinions most applicable to a specific case, not simply limited to those in power. At times these opinions may be those of the elite, which include political leaders and the most affluent citizens, but in many instances the authority comes from those with knowledge or experience. In the *Ethics*, for example, Aristotle explains that we should pay attention to the opinions of the experienced and those with practical wisdom (*Nicomachean* 1143b). As a result, the opinions that constitute *endoxa* can come from those considered knowledgeable in a certain field. Also, considering the description in *Topics*, opinions held by those in authority and the wise are held in equal value to the opinions held by the majority or all people (*Topics* 100b). On the surface, Aristotle's comment concerning the opinions of all people sounds similar to the opinions represented by *doxa*, but this is not the case. Aristotle does not limit public opinion to *doxa*, but instead recognizes the ability of the populous to hold reputable views, which hold authority in rhetorical inquiry.

Amossy is certainly correct in associating opinion with truth and showing that *endoxa* represent a more defined set of opinions than *doxa*. However, I suggest that Amossy's interpretation also limits the function of Aristotelian *endoxa*. Her view suggests that *endoxa* provide a viable means of developing argument where no truth is available. Admittedly, *endoxa* are proven opinions, but they are not an ersatz truth. By taking a close look at Aristotle's work, we can discover a method of reasoning that utilizes *endoxa* in conjunction with elements accepted as truth, thereby providing a

more effective means of argumentation than relying on opinion alone. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle claims that “few of the premises from which rhetorical syllogisms are formed are necessarily true” (Rhetoric 1356a), indicating that some of the material used in argumentation come from factual information.

As is the case with Amossy’s treatment of Aristotelian *endoxa*, other presentations also prove somewhat limited. Ekaterina Haskins, for example, points out that there are many ways to approach Aristotle’s work, depending on the objectives of the inquiry. She emphasizes the historical and cultural context of *On Rhetoric* Aristotle’s presentation of *endoxa*, which exhibits what she calls “epistemological optimism,”<sup>1</sup> or trust in the human aptitude for learning and the ability to make accurate judgments: “Aristotle consistently assimilates culturally and historically specific opinions to a system of knowledge that is meant to reflect the natural stability of the cosmos, social institutions, and human behavior” (*Endoxa* 7). Haskins argues that Aristotle’s *endoxic* method is anthropocentric, where the present is linked to the past, because each age “generates the same ideas about the world” and these ideas are preserved throughout history. Aristotle’s attention to reliable opinions reflects his belief in human ability to accurately perceive the world and use language to present the perceptions clearly (*Endoxa* 17). Haskins also claims that Aristotle’s approach to *endoxa* “collides with contemporary rhetorical practices, whose claim to social knowledge threaten Aristotle’s hierarchical partitions between proper objects of inquiry” (*Endoxa* 17). According to Haskins, Aristotle separates *endoxa* from the cultural context, which she finds problematic. Haskins juxtaposes Aristotle’s theory in

light of modern standards by referring to a passage in the *Politics* where women and slaves are considered inferior to rulers, and arguing that Aristotle's view of *endoxa* grants status to opinions that are "politically or culturally partisan" (*Endoxa* 9). She continues by stating that "Aristotle's position may strike most modern readers as strange or even offensive" (*Endoxa* 9). While her point deserves attention, Aristotle's presentation of *endoxa*, as she mentions in a later study, "transcends its historical context and therefore can be mapped onto other historical periods and cultures" (*Choosing* 191). In certain respects, Haskins' criticism actually proves the efficacy of Aristotle's methodology. He focuses primarily on the opinions of the majority, the educated, and the wise, which would have been a much different collection of people in his time than what we would see today; the overall function of Aristotle's method, though, is still as much in effect today as in ancient Greece. By utilizing the example of women and slaves, Haskins draws on contemporary *endoxa*, since the overwhelming majority of modern audiences, as she claims, would be offended by Aristotle's views. If her intention is to discredit Aristotle's elevation of opinion, she accidentally reinforces it through her own argument; rather than emphasizing detrimental aspects of Aristotelian theory, she shows its continuing viability.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 Why is Argumentation from *Endoxa* any Improvement over *Doxa*?

Aristotle's rhetorical method presents both a development and a departure from earlier models of *doxa*. Whereas Gorgias and Plato presented *doxa* as the persuasive force in rhetorical argument, whether for constructive or destructive purposes, Aristotle improves the efficacy of opinion in argumentation with his presentation of *endoxa*. In

order to develop a clear understanding on the place of *endoxa* in *On Rhetoric*, we should consider its treatment elsewhere in Aristotle's works. In the *Ethics*, for example, Aristotle describes a system of dialectic inquiry for proving *endoxa* within a particular context.

As in all other cases we must set out the *phainomena* and first of all go through the *aporiai*. In this way we must prove (if possible, the truth of) the *endoxa* about these ways of being affected—ideally all the *endoxa*, but if not all, then most of them and the most compelling. For if the *aporiai* are solved and the *endoxa* are left, it will be an adequate proof. (*Nicomachean* 1145b)

Here Aristotle describes a process consisting of three factors: appearances (*phainomena*), puzzles (*aporiai*), and opinions (*endoxa*). Initially we have the apparent case (*phainomena*), although Aristotle's description here is somewhat vague. Richard Kraut draws attention to the uncertainty of Aristotle's statement: "But what seems to be the case to whom? Only the person conducting the inquiry, whether or not anyone else agrees? That would be a precarious position from which to begin" (*Ethics* 77). Kraut makes a logical assumption that Aristotle has something between the two extremes in mind. His observation supports the overall method presented in *On Rhetoric*, although the situational element should have greater emphasis. Just as *endoxa* are a more refined version of *doxa*, pertaining to a limited set of opinions applicable to the given circumstances, the *phainomena* are also contingent upon a particular situation. Aristotle makes an important comment in the *Topics* concerning appearances and *endoxa* that deserves consideration. After describing *endoxa* as generally accepted opinions of the

majority or the wise, he claims that not every opinion that seems to be generally accepted is generally accepted” (*Topics* 100b). While this translation (W.A. Packard-Cambridge) of the text is fairly common, it does not show the detail of the original text. Another translation (Ross), presents the following: “For not every *phainomenon* is an *endoxon*” (*Topics*100b 21). So we can safely assume that some of the appearances are *endoxa*, but if this is the case, why would Aristotle have separate categories for *endoxa* and *phainomena* in the *Ethics*? We may discover a possible answer later in *Topics* 159b. Here Aristotle contrasts qualified *endoxa* with unqualified *endoxa*. The distinction between the two is not clarified in the text; however, J. D. G. Evans suggests that unqualified *endoxa* are those opinions that have already been established according to previous situations, unlike “those of some particular person” that need to be qualified (*Concept* 81). Evans’ observation of *endoxa* seems plausible, not only in terms of the *Topics*, but in the *Ethics* as well. When we assess the *phainomena*, we consider the potential material for constructing an argument. Some of this material comes from factual information and unqualified *endoxa*, both of which need no additional proving. Some of the opinions, however, meet the requirements to be considered as *endoxa*, but fail to meet unqualified acceptance. New situations present problems requiring the truth of *endoxa* to become proven during the process of argumentation. Aristotle provides an examination of discovering the truth in an inquiry in the *Metaphysics*, which correlates to the methodology he discusses in the *Ethics*:

The investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another easy. An indication of this is found in the fact that no one is able to attain the truth adequately, while on

the other hand, we do not collectively fail, but everyone says something true about the nature of things, and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by the union of all a considerable amount is amassed. Therefore, since the truth is like a proverbial door, which no one can fail to hit, in this respect it must be easy, but in the fact that we can have a whole truth and not the particular part we aim at shows the difficulty of it. (*Metaphysics* 993b)

Here Aristotle distinguishes between the general and specific truth. The general truth provides the door, but the specific truth gives us the key to pass through. I suggest this is what Aristotle has in mind with the presentation of *endoxa* in NE 1145b; the proven opinions are generally accepted as truth, whereas the unproven *endoxa* are the ones that often present problems needing resolution.

The process Aristotle presents in NE1145b describes proving *endoxa* by sorting through the *aporiai* the circumstances present. First we might ask, what are these puzzles? Aristotle offers a description of *aporiai* in the *Topics*, where he claims that a puzzle comes from an equality of contrary reasoning (*Topics* 145b). The *aporiai* are essentially *endoxa* that might be conflicting; as a result, the puzzles come about from a variance in opinion. As Terence Irwin explains, the puzzles need to be resolved through philosophical reflection: “The questions appropriate for rhetoric include many questions that raise puzzles for common beliefs, and so common beliefs will not be a reliable guide all by themselves” (*Ethics in The Rhetoric* 146). Irwin is correct in his assumption that the function of *endoxa* is not in itself a means of securing persuasion but instead a component in an amalgam of persuasive elements. The *techne* of rhetorical invention

comes from the speaker's ability to look at the situation and examine the problems associated with it.

Aristotle's system of rhetoric is deeply rooted in the particular occasion, and his treatment of *endoxa*, as a result, allows a method of discovering what will prove the most effective opinions for a specific case; each occasion results in a different appeal to *endoxa*. Such an *endoxic* method provides argument with greater validity than the models presented by his predecessors. Whereas Plato treats *doxa* as appeals to the unreliable opinions of the general public, Aristotle reexamines the function of opinion in rhetoric. According to Aristotle, "humans 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*]" (*Rhetoric* 1355a). In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle makes an observation that seems almost identical to this statement from *On Rhetoric*, but he elaborates: "Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least to determine what it is and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object" (*Ethics* 1094a).

With the presentation of *endoxa*, Aristotle accomplishes two things that separate his approach from earlier treatments of opinion. First, he acknowledges the human potential for seeing the apparent truth. Second, he emphasizes rhetoric's reliance on probability rather than certainty, but turns what was a detriment in the Platonic treatment into an asset:

That other writers describe an art as things outside the subject [of a speech] is clear; but rhetoric is useful, [first] because the true and 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. Further, even if we were to have the most exact knowledge, it would not be very easy for us in speaking to persuade [some audiences].  
(*Rhetoric* 1355a)

Aristotle's observation deserves recognition not only in that it is a response to the Platonic emphasis on knowledge, but also in that what is persuasive is not a matter of fact but opinion. Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric provides insight into his perception of the human psyche. The "truth" of Aristotelian rhetoric, as Kennedy explains, comes about "by nature" and is attainable through reasoning. Essentially, what Aristotle seeks is not "the truth" but a functional proof designed to meet the demands of the occasion. Kennedy notes that Aristotle offers a counter-argument to both the Platonic belief that truth is grounded in divine origin and the Sophistic view that truth is based in conventions (*Rhetoric* 35). Kennedy is certainly correct in pointing out the distinctive characteristics of Aristotle's concept of truth. However, when considering Aristotle's rhetorical system, it pays to emphasize the impossibility of persuasion with some audiences when dealing with exact knowledge. Aristotle makes a point in the *Ethics* concerning scientific and probable reasoning that deserves attention. Precision is not to be sought in all discussions, but the level of proof depends upon the circumstances: "It is equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs" (*Ethics* 1094b). Later, Aristotle observes that we should not look for precision in all things alike, but as it pertains to the subject matter in



accordance to the inquiry: “For a carpenter and a geometer investigate the right angle in different ways” (*Ethics* 1098b). It is within the inquiry that the proof comes to fruition, but the Aristotelian method of inquiry involves a complex process involving a network of proofs. Aristotle hints at such an involved process in the *Sophistical Refutations*: “For reasoning rests on certain statements such that they involve necessarily the assertion of something other than what has been stated” (*Sophistical* 165a). In order to uncover the complexity of the Aristotelian system, I will first consider the presentation of proofs (*pisteis*) and then continue by discussing the situational aspect of *endoxa*.

### 2.3 Network of *Pisteis*

Although the method for proving *endoxa* described in the *Ethics* is not directly addressed in *On Rhetoric*, a correlation between this method and the description of the *pisteis* seems plausible. Aristotle claims that persuasion occurs when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever will prove persuasive in each case (*Rhetoric* 1356a). As with the *Ethics*, we sort through the *phainomena* and demonstrate the validity of the *endoxa*; in *On Rhetoric* we sort through the available means of persuasion in order to discover what will actually become persuasive. In *On Rhetoric*, proofs (*pisteis*) provide the material needed for persuasive rhetoric. These proofs do not operate in isolation but instead function as a network within a given set of circumstances<sup>3</sup>. The process Aristotle suggests in *On Rhetoric* functions within a nexus where the individual *pisteis* form a network linking the audience, the speaker, and the text within the context of the speech. Aristotle separates proofs into two categories:

artistic proofs, and non-artistic proofs, with non-artistic proofs including pre-existing elements such as testimonies, witnesses, and contracts, while artistic proofs (*ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*) are developed by the speaker. Many considerations of proofs concentrate on individual proofs by considering their unique function and makeup. It seems plausible, though, to take a broader look at *pisteis* and determine ways in which they may be used as a network in rhetorical invention.

The interplay among *pisteis* is essential in developing a persuasive argument, and a common denominator for Aristotle's artistic *pisteis* is *endoxa*: "It is necessary for proofs and speeches [as a whole] to be formed on the basis of common [beliefs], as we said in the *Topics* about communication with a crowd" (*Rhetoric* 1355a). The translation by Kennedy in this example points to the importance of opinion, but lacks the force of the original Greek text. In reference to this passage, however, Grimaldi claims that the common translation of *pisteis* as proofs is limited and he suggests more in-depth possibilities. One meaning of *pisteis*, according to Grimaldi, is "a technical method used by a person to organize the material of an argument into a form of logical statement which will more readily create in a listener a state of mind called conviction" (*Commentary* I 19). If we consider *pisteis* in terms of this meaning, it is "equally possible to interpret our passage: 'to develop the *pisteis* and the discourse by means of evidence known to all'" (*Commentary* I 29). Grimaldi's consideration of *pisteis* allows us to see them not simply as "proofs," but as multifaceted components in the process of rhetorical invention, which might be viewed more in terms of demonstration than proof. Aristotle hints at such in a discussion of the parts of a speech: "There are two parts to a

speech...the first is the statement [*prothesis*], the other the proof [*pistis*], just as if one made the distinction that one part is the problem, the other the demonstration” (*Rhetoric* 1414a). Essentially, the validity of the *pisteis* are demonstrated during the process of argumentation, much as if one states a mathematical problem and shows how to arrive at a solution.

Grimaldi is not alone in his consideration of *pisteis*. The primary meaning of *pistis*, as Larry Arnhart explains, is belief, confidence, or trust, rather than just proof: “But in *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle employs *pisteis* not only in its fundamental meaning of ‘belief,’ but also in reference either to the formal logical process leading to belief (enthymeme or example) or to the material sources of belief” (*Political* 38). As is the case with Grimaldi, Arnhart’s observation sheds light on a key aspect of Aristotle’s *endoxic* method, described in the *Ethics*. The process of demonstrating the validity of *endoxa* utilizes the available *pisteis*, both artistic and non-artistic, to develop a unique set of beliefs pertaining to the occasion. According to Grimaldi, Aristotle’s *pisteis* operate on three levels: First, they provide “source material, or the subject matter capable of inducing an audience in a state of mind called *pistis*, or belief, if interpreted correctly.” Next, the proofs provide a “method or technique whereby one utilizes the material, gives this matter form, so to speak, and produces the state of mind, *pistis*, in the audience.” Finally, *pistis* is the state of mind produced in the audience (*Note on Pisteis* 189-190). It pays to note that Grimaldi makes the proof, *logos*, synonymous with the word *pragma*, where “language is used which sets forth for the mind of the auditor the logical structure of the subject matter so that his mind can grasp its inner coherence

and meaning” (*Commentary* I 40). Both Grimaldi and Arnhart provide examples showing the depth of Aristotle’s method by describing a process of proving *endoxa* similar to that presented in the *Ethics*.

The individual artistic proofs form a network from which persuasive discourse can occur. The state of mind produced within the speech occasion is essential to the outcome of the discourse, and each of the proofs is dependent upon the others for their effectiveness. The audience formulates their decisions on the matter at hand based upon the strength of the argument in conjunction with the speaker’s character:

The origin of action...is choice, and that choice is the desire and reasoning with a view to an end. This is why choice cannot exist without reason and intellect or without a moral state; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character. (*Nicomachean* 1139b)

Ethical proofs concern a speaker who is sensible, has good moral character, and keeps the good will of the audience in mind. Aristotle considers *ethos* to be “almost, so to speak, the most authoritative form of persuasion” (*Rhetoric* 1356a), and “we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly...where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt” (*Rhetoric* 1356a).

The consideration of Aristotelian *pisteis* is often limited, possibly because Aristotle does not address the full potential of the proofs. In his introduction to *On Rhetoric*, for example, George Kennedy makes an important observation concerning *ethos*: “Aristotle’s theory of *ethos* is striking, but he limits it to the effect of the character conveyed by the words of a speaker and he fails to recognize the great role of

authority of a speaker already perceived by an audience” (*Rhetoric* 22). Kennedy also mentions the fact that Aristotle limits the non-artistic means of persuasion to direct evidence that can be used in a trial, “while the concept should perhaps be enlarged to include the appearance and authority of a speaker, features of the setting and the context of the speech that affect its reception, and other factors that a speaker can use for persuasive ends” (*Rhetoric* 22). Kennedy’s point here deserves attention because it suggests a much broader scope for proofs than the presentation in *On Rhetoric*, which I believe fits in with his method of proving *endoxa*.

The importance of all three artistic proofs, Grimaldi points out, is revealed by Aristotle’s comment here on ethos. Ethos (and by implication, pathos and logos) motivates acceptance in all areas, whether the subject is something verifiable by itself or something uncertain (*Commentary* I 42). Obviously ethos concerns the speaker, but the community also figures into the picture as well. As Aristotle points out, “it makes much difference in regard to persuasion (especially in deliberations but also in trials) that the speaker seem to be a certain kind of person that his hearers suppose him to be disposed toward them in a certain way” (*Rhetoric* 1378a). In this respect, the speaker constructs a view of himself during the delivery process. From one perspective, the audience may have no foreknowledge of the speaker, but perceives him or her to be a certain type of person. However, in many if not most speech situations, some aspects of the speaker’s character are pre-established. Aristotle discusses, for example, those who are to be emulated from their honor, bravery, and public office. These preexisting elements help to develop a state of mind from which “the emotions are created and counteracted, from

which are derived *pisteis* related to them” (*Rhetoric* 1388b). Here we can see a correlation between ethos and pathos, since the audience perceives the speaker to be a certain type of person.

The audience’s emotional frame of mind is a central component in the Aristotelian system. An ethical rhetor will not take advantage of the audience’s psychological state, but rather rely on it to construct an effective argument. In Book II, for example, Aristotle devotes a good amount of space to the emotions of the audience, describing states of mind ranging from anger and calm to fear and confidence. In each case the emotional state refers to a given instance of the speech. By presenting the topics concerning an audience’s emotions, Aristotle provides possible methods for working through the problems associated with the particular situation. The occasion of speech, however, deserves consideration along with the proofs and topics associated with persuasive discourse. In order to develop an understanding of the speech situation and its depth, I will consider the function of topics and enthymemes in Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* as they pertain to a given set of circumstances. Additionally, I will explore the connection between Aristotle’s system of developing arguments described in *On Rhetoric* with the *endoxic* method presented in the *Ethics*.

## CHAPTER 3

### ROADMAPS TO PERSUASION

#### 3.1 The Potentiality of Persuasion

Opinions are part of a social network from which a rhetor must operate. On one level, Aristotle's treatment of *endoxa* might appear somewhat limited by at times depicting audiences as members of like-minded groups. On another level, though, Aristotelian rhetoric acknowledges the unique aspects of individuals within a network of groups, with the reasoning capacity to help solve the problems at hand. Aristotle presents such a process of argumentation in both *On Rhetoric* and the *Ethics*. I suggest that the method of constructing arguments Aristotle presents in *On Rhetoric* is consistent with the system of proving *endoxa* from the *Ethics*. In the *Ethics*, the emphasis is upon discovering and proving the apparent truth of the *endoxa* according to the given situation. Along similar lines, in *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle presents rhetoric as a process of discovering the available means of persuasion for the particular case. The emphasis is not as much on persuasion as on discovery of what might potentially prove persuasive. The persuasive material, much of which is from opinion, becomes proven in the rhetorical process. Essentially, Aristotle's system of rhetoric can be seen as a movement from potentiality (*dunamis*) to actualization (*energia*).

In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle explains that people do not theorize about each individual opinion, "but what seems true to people of a certain sort" (*Rhetoric* 1356b).

In some cases, these opinions may be those of specialists. For example, in regard to health issues, considering the opinions held by respected physicians would represent an appeal to *endoxa*. However, in many cases, the *endoxa* used in developing an argument are often those associated with a particular group. Such a treatment of opinion might appear somewhat limited, on one level, in its depiction of audiences as like-minded members of social groups. On another level, as noted earlier, Aristotle's reliance on *endoxa* as a central component in the rhetorical process increases the efficacy of argumentation. However, in the Aristotelian model, the speaker is not alone in the rhetorical inquiry; instead, Aristotle gives agency to individuals by acknowledging their reasoning capacity and making them participants in the rhetorical process. The enthymeme provides what is probably the most telling aspect of the cooperative element of Aristotle's rhetorical process. With the enthymeme, which Aristotle refers to as a rhetorical syllogism, audience members become constituents in the argumentation process.

Aristotle's system gives *endoxa* a dual function. During the invention process, *endoxa* provide the means for a rhetor to identify with the audience by locating areas of apparent agreement or disagreement. As the argument progresses, the *endoxa* enable the audience to develop conclusions based on the premises laid out in the speech. During the first stages of the rhetorical process, the commonplaces (*topoi*) allow speakers a means of making associations with the audience, often by employing *endoxa*. As Kennedy remarks in his translation of *On Rhetoric*, "Aristotle gives lists of opinions (called *endoxa* in dialectic) on political and ethical matters that are commonly held and



could be used as the premises in the formation of arguments” (*Rhetoric* 51-2). Kennedy continues by noting that Aristotle does not provide much information as to how the topics might be used. Kennedy’s observation touches upon an important factor concerning Aristotelian rhetoric. The *topoi* allow for the construction of effective arguments, but how do we employ them in practical circumstances? By considering the system of proving the apparent truth in *endoxa* described in the *Ethics* alongside the presentation of both the *topoi* and the enthymeme, we can gain some insight into possible applications.

Considering Aristotle’s emphasis, refinement, and redefinition of the importance of opinion in rhetoric, it might be tempting to assume that *endoxa* not only shape but also control discourse. One could easily interpret Aristotle’s presentation of opinion to be a preexisting foundation from which arguments can be fashioned. I suggest, however, that the Aristotelian treatment of *endoxa* is not confined to such control. Rather than providing an ironclad foundation for formulating discourse, *endoxa* prove to be malleable and proximate, while still serving as a fairly accurate guide. For Aristotle, rhetoric allows for provisional understanding rather than a demonstrative proof. Opinions, as Aristotle points out in Book II<sup>1</sup>, become actualized through discourse. The *topoi* and enthymemes allow for members of an audience to provide a conclusion based upon the premises set before them<sup>2</sup>. The process associated with the enthymeme can be viewed as a form of *energia*, or vivification, as Aristotle describes in Book III of *On Rhetoric*. *Energia* involves what Aristotle refers to as a bringing “before the eyes” (*Rhetoric* 1412a), allowing something to become present in the mind in order

for the individual audience members to “see” and reason for themselves. The material that allows for this vivification comes in large part from *endoxa*.

While *energia* represents the outcome of rhetorical activity, *dunamis* indicates the starting point. *Dunamis* is often translated to mean “potential” or “capacity,” but the term holds greater possibilities. In the *Metaphysics*, for example, Aristotle claims that *dunamis* has several possible senses, but he concentrates on one central definition: “Potency means the source of motion or change which is in something other than the thing changed, or in it qua other” (*Metaphysics* 1046a). Here he describes two forms of *dunamis*. In one, something is changed due to the force of an external agent. In the second sense, change comes from the thing itself. As David Ross notes, it is the second sense in which Aristotle is mainly interested (*Aristotle* 182). For Aristotle, *dunamis* refers to something that contains everything needed to bring something into existence. According to Aristotle, rhetoric is itself a *dunamis*, a capacity for seeing the available means of persuasion. While this definition of rhetoric has certainly been a common topic of debate, as David Metzger notes, “what such commentators have not explored is what it means to say rhetoric is a *dunamis*, that it is an existent qua other” (*Lost Cause* 31). Metzger notes “Aristotle does not write that ‘rhetoric is the faculty of observing.’ Rather, the imperative form of the verb ‘to be’ translates as ‘let rhetoric be the faculty’” (*Lost Cause* 30). According to Metzger, Aristotelian rhetoric is *dunamis* in the sense that it is a potentiality, an anticipation of the *energia* that may come about: “We simply must recognize in Aristotle’s system a respect for this object is nonpredicable, a respect for what is not psychological or what exists out of some perceptual field” (*Lost Cause*

36). Metzger makes an accurate assessment of the overall rhetorical process presented in *On Rhetoric*. With the enthymeme, Aristotle draws attention to the psychological aspect of rhetorical inquiry, since it is within the minds of the audience where actualization of the enthymeme takes place.

Along with *dunamis*, the potential *energia* is also embodied within the description of rhetoric. Aristotle mentions persuasion, though, it is in terms of potentiality as well. The art of rhetoric allows for persuasion to become a viable possibility. Persuasion comes through the process of argumentation, and within this system, potentiality and actualization share a symbiotic relationship. Aristotle discusses the connection between potentiality and actuality in *De Anima*: “For what possesses knowledge becomes an actual knower by a transition” (*De Anima* 417b). The balance between *dunamis* and *energia* presents a canvas for discourse, but *endoxa* provides most of the material for the rhetorical process. The rhetor must work from the *endoxa* pertaining to the case at hand in order to construct a potentially persuasive argument. The topics provide tools for discovering the potentially persuasive material, and the enthymeme allows for the potentiality to become realized.

### 3.2 Spatial Situations

A crucial aspect of any rhetorical inquiry is the situation in which it occurs. Aristotle stresses the importance of occasion throughout *On Rhetoric*, which is evidenced by his definition of rhetoric, describing the potential discovery of persuasive material applicable to the particular case. In spite of this emphasis, though, the

situational aspect of *On Rhetoric* has failed to receive the level of attention it deserves. The limited scholarship devoted to the situational aspect of Aristotelian rhetoric may be the result of a simple oversight. Treatments of situation in classical rhetoric generally concentrate on *kairos*, or the opportune moment. While *kairos* was a central feature in the works of Gorgias and Isocrates, Aristotle does not address it directly, which could lead some to assume that it is not a concern in *On Rhetoric*. *Kairos* exemplifies a temporal aspect, where the occasion is seen in the context of a linear time progression. In contrast, we can see examples in *On Rhetoric*, such as the genres of speech and the *topoi*, where Aristotle represents the situational aspect of rhetoric in circular patterns of inference. Although a case can certainly be made for considering *kairos* in Aristotelian rhetoric (Kinneavy 1994), it is important to note that the immediate context is not temporal alone. A situation may also be considered from a spatial perspective as Aristotle does in *On Rhetoric*.

“A speech,” as Aristotle explains, “consists of three things: a speaker and a subject on which he speaks and someone addressed, and the objective [*telos*] of the speech relates to the last (I mean the hearer)” (*Rhetoric* 1358b). Obviously, these three aspects refer to the artistic proofs of ethos, logos, and pathos, but more is involved in a speech than Aristotle lists here, although the missing element is implied. As Kennedy notes in his translation of *On Rhetoric*, eighteenth-century rhetoricians added occasion to these three factors, and by doing so recognized the situational aspect of Aristotelian rhetoric that might easily be overlooked when considering the original passage. Aristotle emphasizes the cultural interaction between speakers and audiences within a

given set of circumstances, and he recognizes certain patterns associated with different kinds of speeches by discussing the three genres of rhetoric, deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. Each of the genres, as Aristotle claims, has its own “time”—forensic deals with the past, deliberative with the future, and epideictic with the present (*Rhetoric* 1358b)—and the specific occasion presents unique demands for the given speech. Forensic deals with defense or accusation, deliberative with persuasion or dissuasion, and epideictic with praise or blame. The specific genres are linked to topics, where a rhetor can discover the material for constructing persuasive arguments. Essentially, with the topics, Aristotle provides rhetorical means to achieve the type of inquiry suggested in the *Ethics*: we assess the situation at hand and consider the potential problems that arise and prove the associated *endoxa*, thereby producing a potentially persuasive argument.

In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle points out that persuasion “occurs through the arguments when we show the truth or apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case” (*Rhetoric* 1356a). The passage here correlates to NE 1145b, and each occasion of speech invites new opportunities for inquiry, beginning with an assessment of appearances. In the case of rhetoric, one relies on artistic and non-artistic proofs to assess the given rhetorical situation. Scott Consigny argues that Aristotle’s method balances between the rhetorical, “grounded in and affirming an indeterminate reality” and the dialectical, “relying on and articulating truths about a determinate reality,” resulting in an alternative that “enables a rhetor to discern persuasive elements of a given framework of beliefs while remaining free of such ultimate ontological

commitments” (*Dialectical* 282). Consigny’s description of Aristotelian rhetoric sounds somewhat similar to Plato’s true art of rhetoric presented in the *Phaedrus*, where the speaker must be aware of the truth that comes through dialectic, balanced with an awareness of “the souls” of the audience: “Then, and only then, will you be able to use speech artfully, to the extent that its nature allows it to be used that way, either in order to teach or in order to persuade” (*Phaedrus* 277c). As is the case with the Platonic model, Consigny explains that, for Aristotle, the rhetor is a part of a reality he or she confronts, which may be altered:

For reality in the rhetorical domain is a part of a cultural framework and its discourse; and this framework is always open to change. The rhetor, through a shared inquiry with his audience, may actively transform and recreate that framework, and hence their perception of reality. Every rhetorical inquiry is fundamentally a new inquiry, in a new place and time. The rhetor’s discernment of commonplaces, development of enthymemes and examples...potentially alter the ways in which his audience perceives of and lives in the world. (*Dialectical* 286)

Consigny makes an accurate assessment of Aristotle’s rhetorical process, where argumentation operates within a spatial framework that is malleable. At the same time, Consigny indicates that the inquiry takes place within a specific cultural framework, which while accurate on one level, may also prove limited on another. Obviously the individual is part of a larger network; however, rather than being associated with clearly defined communities operating in isolation, the individual functions within a network of diverse communities and affiliations, each having its own set(s) of rules. Multiple

affiliations exist within any given society and are often at variance with one another. The variety of associations within a community results in potential challenges for rhetorical inquiry. Aristotle touches upon the diversity of associations in the *Politics*: “Different functions appear to be often combined in the same individual; for example, the warrior may also be a husbandman, or an artisan; or again, the counselor a judge” (*Politics* 1291b). Each function carries with it some form of *endoxa* pertaining to the given association. To use a modern example, a voter may be affiliated with a particular political party and at the same time be a member of a religious group that opposes certain issues supported by the political group. When facing an election, the voter is torn between the two opposing affiliations.

The aspect of multiple affiliations presents potential problems in need of resolution, since there may be conflicting opinions that arise during the process of inquiry. As Aristotle discusses near the end of Book II of *On Rhetoric*, the material we use for rhetorical invention comes from *endoxa*, and many of these opinions are in opposition to each other (*Rhetoric* 1402a). Aristotle suggests how we might resolve the problems associated with conflicting opinions in his treatment of first principles. Generally speaking, a first principle (*arkhe*) is a foundational principle, which in the case of dialectic must be attained through a process of examination. In the *Physics*, for example, Aristotle claims that we do not think we know something until we are acquainted with its first principles, so the first task of inquiry is to try to determine what relates to the first principles:

The natural way of doing this is to start from the things which are more knowable and clear to us and proceed toward those which are clearer and more knowable by nature; for the same things are not knowable relatively to us and knowable without qualification. So we must follow this method and advance from what is more obscure by nature, but clearer to us, toward what is more clear and knowable by nature. (*Physics* 184a)

Happiness (*eudaimonia*) is an example of a first principle for Aristotle, as he explains in the *Ethics*: “To us it is clear from what has been said that happiness is among the things that are prized and perfect. It seems also to be so also from the fact that it is a first principle; it is for the sake of this that we do all that we do” (*Ethics* 1102a). *On Rhetoric* confirms this statement from the *Ethics*: “Both to an individual privately and to all people generally there is one goal at which they aim in what they choose to do and in what they avoid. Summarily stated, this is happiness and its parts” (*Rhetoric* 1360b).

As noted earlier, potential problems concerning first principles arise in a given situation; first principles are often at odds, and each inquiry may uncover new problems needing resolution. Aristotle provides some insight into a possible solution: “And if there are two first principles [of two different things], that from the greater is the greater” (*Rhetoric* 1364a). The first principles associated with rhetoric often involve *endoxa*.

For when we are able to raise puzzles on each side thoroughly, we will more easily notice the true and the false in each case. Further, dialectic is useful toward



the first principles of each science. For from the proper principles of the given science it is impossible to say anything about them; but it is necessary to deal with them through the *endoxa* on each thing. This is peculiar, or more proper, to dialectic: for dialectic is a process wherein lies the path to the principles of all inquiries. (*Topics* 101a–101b)

Whenever we encounter a situation where there are conflicting opinions, we will often subordinate one to meet the demands of the occasion.

Again, we can see a correlation with the *endoxic* method in the *Ethics*, where Aristotle discusses working through the puzzles associated with competing *endoxa*. In the *Topics*, Aristotle makes an important observation concerning differences of opinion in dialectical inquiry: “Having enumerated the opinions of the majority, we shall be dealing with people on the basis of their own opinions...changing the course of any argument in which they appear to us to be using wrongly” (*Topics* 101a). Terence Irwin elaborates on this passage from the *Topics*: “And if our examination is to make progress, we must ‘redirect’ (or ‘modify,’ *metabibazein*) beliefs in the right direction, and so we must know both what the right direction is and how to make someone else see that it is the right direction” (*First Principles* 37). Irwin makes an accurate assessment of the Aristotelian method allowing for the possibility of redirecting opinions; however, he makes an additional comment that Aristotle’s description in the *Topics* is somewhat limited: He does not say whether a dialectical discussion of a given proposition will ever supply sufficient reasons for believing that the proposition is a principle of some science” (*First Principles* 37). Irwin is certainly correct in his

observation of the limitations of the Aristotelian model; however, we can see additional limitations in Aristotle's statement as well. In one sense, the process Aristotle describes seems clear enough: conflicts involved with the given opinions would become resolved during the argumentation process, thereby modifying the relevant opinions. However, Aristotle's description in the *Topics* does not indicate the process required for resolving the problems at hand. Although it is important to understand that conflicting opinions present potential difficulties for discourse and that some opinions may become modified, a rhetor must be aware of the means to work through these problems. The *Ethics* simply mentions that we should prove the truth of all of the *endoxa*, but how do we do this? In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle's method of sorting through the appearances involved in a particular situation to develop an effective argument comes from the *topoi*.

### 3.3 Topical Assessment

When Aristotle discusses his method of proving *endoxa* in the *Ethics*, he gives an overview of what occurs during a dialectical inquiry. In contrast, his presentation of the *topoi* and the enthymeme in *On Rhetoric* provides a detailed process of invention, which meets the requirements of the *endoxic* method. The *topoi* are literally commonplaces that provide a rhetor with the means to sort through appearances and allow for construction of arguments suited to the particular occasion. Aristotle classifies the topics as either common or specific, but beyond that he offers no explicit definition. The common topics pertain to any subject, whereas the special topics are devices for

discovering arguments “that come from the premises of each species and genus of knowledge” (*Rhetoric* 1358a). Underlying Aristotle’s description of the *topoi*, we have the situation at hand. Kennedy notes that a *topos* is “metaphorically that location or space...where a speaker can look for ‘available means of persuasion’” (*Rhetoric* 45). The spatial aspect to which Kennedy directs our attention underscores the importance of occasion. The topical process results in an interaction between a speaker and an audience, and for the speaker, the *topoi* are part of a potential strategy for developing enthymemes, which are formulated from opinions. As Aristotle claims, the topics serve as headings under which enthymemes fall (*Rhetoric* 1403a).

The *topoi*, however, are not a guaranteed means of formulating effective argument, but rather tools allowing for the possibility of invention. In order for a speaker to produce effective speech, there must be an assessment of the given situation, or the appearances (*phainomena*) as described in the *Ethics*, which include an awareness of the apparent beliefs of a given audience. However, not all of the appearances involved in a given situation come from opinions, which Aristotle hints at when he questions how it would be possible to “advise Athenians whether to go to war or not without knowing their forces” (*Rhetoric* 1396a). Clearly, the example Aristotle gives here involves factual information, but, as discussed in the *Ethics*, the appearances also include *endoxa*. In developing a potentially persuasive argument, a rhetor utilizes factual information along with opinion, and during the process of argumentation, proves the apparent truth of the *endoxa*.

As is the case with the *Ethics*, considering information presented in the *Topics*

will allow for a clearer understanding of Aristotelian *topoi* in *On Rhetoric*. At the beginning of the *Topics*, Aristotle offers a statement regarding the topical method of inquiry: “The purpose of the present treatise is to discover a method by which we will be able to reason from generally accepted principles (*endoxa*) about any problem set before us” (*Topics* 100a). When a rhetor addresses an audience, he or she has to make assumptions regarding the common opinions held by the group addressed. In most cases, speakers are able to determine what will be effective based on observations concerning the audience. The rhetor, in turn, must be able to sort through the problem (or problems) that may arise from the overview. Aristotelian *topoi* offer a sorting process for discovering arguments by providing categories of possible material. The topics, as Aristotle explains, “are the proper sources of exhortation and dissuasion, praise and blame, and prosecution and defense, and the kinds of opinions and propositions useful for their persuasive expression; for enthymemes are concerned with matters drawn from these sources” (*Rhetoric* 1378a).

One way to consider *topoi* is to compare their function to that of a roadmap—a roadmap to persuasion. Before setting out on a trip, map allows the traveler to see not simply the way to get from one destination to another but the variety of available routes. The *topoi*, as with the map, do not dictate the route but only shed light on the possibilities. The *topoi*, according to Gross and Descal, are “patterns of deductive inference, which speakers can use as resources for arguments. Just as the *use of endoxa* extends the range of acceptable premises, the use of *topoi* extends the range of valid patterns of inference” (*Conceptual* 278). Gross and Descal highlight the essential value

of Aristotelian *topoi*; by working from the topics, a rhetor is able to determine a variety of possible associations that enhance the reasoning process. With the *topoi*, Aristotle offers an inventory of material upon which we commonly construct arguments. Also, considering *topoi* as “valid patterns of inferences” reinforces the spatial nature of the situation. The topics represent possibilities derived from recurring debates. For example, he describes topics concerning each species of rhetoric, each of which has its own time, as Aristotle mentions in Book I of *On Rhetoric*.

Many of the topics present binary relationships, such as greater or less, similarity and difference, and cause and effect. *On Rhetoric* describes twenty-eight common topics, which fall into categories such as definition, division, and relationships. The *topoi* provide the first step for working through the *endoxic* method described in the *Ethics* by offering tools to help develop an awareness of the appearances involved in the given occasion of speech. As McAdon explains, “it is necessary to be acquainted with the present circumstances or facts concerning the issue at hand, either completely or in part, for without these, one would not be able to draw conclusions” (*Probabilities* 227). McAdon’s observation underscores the importance of the particular speech occasion. As with *endoxa*, conflicts can easily arise: “Now, clearly, an opposite syllogism can be made from the same topics [as the opponent used in drawing the opposite conclusion]” (*Rhetoric* 1402b). Edward Corbett points out that the topics reflect the way the mind reasons (*Topoi* 47), and his observation hits upon a key element in Aristotelian rhetoric. Aristotle claims that one should be able to argue persuasively on either side of a question: “None of the other arts reasons in opposite directions; dialectic and rhetoric

alone do this” (*Rhetoric* 1355a). These common opinions must apply to the given situation in order to achieve actualization, which comes about through the enthymeme.

### 3.4 Bringing Enthymemes to Actualization

“All art,” Aristotle explains in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, “is concerned with coming into being, i.e. with contriving and considering how something may come into being” (*Nicomachean* 1140a). Nothing in *On Rhetoric* exemplifies coming into being more than the enthymeme. The Aristotle explains that the enthymeme is “the body of persuasion” (*Rhetoric* 1354a). The enthymeme is often viewed in association with the syllogism and Aristotle in fact refers to the enthymeme as “a kind of syllogism,” where it is “not necessary to include everything” (*Rhetoric* 1395b), and are constructed “from probabilities [*eikota*] and signs [*semeia*], so it is necessary for each of these to be the same as each [of the truth values mentioned]” (*Rhetoric* 1357a). Essentially, the enthymeme is deductive type of argument, which is based on probability but may also include matters of certainty. As Aristotle notes, it is evident “that the materials from which enthymemes are derived will be sometimes necessary, but for the most part only generally true” (*Rhetoric* 1357a). In other words, the enthymeme may be constructed from some non-artistic proofs, but mostly from matters of judgment associated with artistic proofs.

Obviously, such matters of judgment will rely greatly upon opinion, but it is important to distinguish *eikota* from *endoxa*. As noted earlier, some editions of *On Rhetoric* translate the term *endoxa* as probabilities, and although similar to a certain degree, a probability is not entirely synonymous with *endoxa*. It is also important to

distinguish between potentiality and probability. In the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle defines probability as “a generally approved proposition: what men know to happen or not to happen, to be or not to be, for the most part thus and thus, is a probability, e.g. ‘the envious hate,’ ‘the beloved show affection’” (*Prior* 70a). Later, in *On Rhetoric*, he clarifies probability to greater extent: “In rhetoric there is an apparent enthymeme in regard to what is not generally probable but probable in a particular case” (*Rhetoric* 1402a). In contrast, potentiality is formal rather than contextual. We can see this distinction by considering a tool such as a hammer. If someone working with wood picks up a hammer, chances are good he will use the hammer to drive in a nail. However, the potential uses for a hammer are not limited solely to driving nails. So there are numerous potential uses for the tool, but considering the circumstances, one probable use.

Many scholars limit Aristotle’s concept of the enthymeme to merely an incomplete syllogism, where the audience supplies the missing element. Catherine Hobbs, for example, offers a fairly common overview when she describes the enthymeme as a rhetorical syllogism, which is formed “by leaving out the logical step, the assumptions forming the middle term of argument, in part because they are already understood by the audience” (*Margins* 23). On one level, Hobbs’ observation is accurate, since the enthymeme does rely on material supplied by the audience. On another level, though, her view of the enthymeme is somewhat limited. Bitzer, for example, suggests that the enthymeme can be viewed as a collaborative form of reasoning, in which the “audience itself helps construct the proofs by which it is

persuaded,” and “its successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of the speaker and audience, and this is its essential character” (*Enthymeme* 188-89). Perhaps a more reasonable way of considering the interaction that occurs with the enthymeme is in terms of cooperation. The audience does take part in the reasoning process, but its members do not construct the argument. Rather they cooperate with the speaker to construct the proofs out of the material given them. The enthymeme is much more complex than simply a partial or truncated syllogism. It represents the culmination of the reasoning processes involved in a rhetorical situation.

The enthymeme correlates to Aristotle’s presentation of *energia*, as discussed in Book III of *On Rhetoric*. Here, Aristotle describes *energia* as making the lifeless living through metaphor. In many cases, the word *energia* is translated as “actualization” or “vivification,” as suggested by Kennedy in his commentary in *On Rhetoric*. Essentially, the hearer envisions something in a different manner. Eugene Garver argues that rhetorical argument is an *energia*:

A civic art of rhetoric will explicate persuasion as something that happens in a speech, not simply by means of the speech. Seeing rhetorical persuasion as an *energia* is not looking through some strange Aristotelian perspective or lens.

Artful persuasion is something accomplished in the act of arguing. (*Character* 35)

Garver makes an accurate assessment of argumentation, which is embodied by the enthymeme, which represents a coming into being by the argumentation process. The enthymeme can be said to function much in the way the human mind works. Larry Arnhart addresses the complexity of the enthymeme by exploring it in terms of



metaphor: “Aristotle suggests, I think, that metaphorical movement from the known to the unknown by means of a resemblance between the two is the underlying structure of all human reasoning. All human knowledge is metaphorical”; the syllogism and the enthymeme, as a result, exhibit “a metaphorical structure” (*Political* 175). Metaphor, as Arnhart suggests, possesses a vividness that cannot be translated into literal language. “Aristotle notes the vividness of metaphor, speaking of its capacity for ‘setting things before the eyes’ by putting things into a state of ‘activity’ or ‘actuality’ (*energia*)” (*Political* 175). Arnhart touches on an essential quality of Aristotelian rhetoric. Through the process of argumentation, a speaker enables an audience to construct enthymemes, in great part from *endoxa*, which are brought into actualization according to the demand of the situation.

The vivification involved in the enthymeme operates in a similar fashion to the method presented in the *Ethics* 1145b, where Aristotle claims we must “prove” the *endoxa*. The verb Aristotle uses, which is generally translated as “prove,” is *deiknumi*, although C. D. C. Reeve suggests that this translation is somewhat misleading on one level, in that the verb *deiknumi* “has the primitive meaning of showing something forth or bringing it to light” (*Practices* 34). Reeve’s observation hints at a function of proving closely associated with the bringing to mind found in the enthymeme. Just as the enthymeme represents a fulfillment of the rhetorical process of persuasion, the showing suggested by *deiknumi*, as Richard Kraut argues, “is the payoff of all inquiry: investigation is a goal-directed process that aims at transforming appearances into

propositions that have earned greater confidence because they—at any rate, the ones that have made it through the process—have been proven” (*Blackwell* 84).

The enthymeme not only serves as the “substance (or body) of persuasion,” but also is at the heart of Aristotelian rhetoric. It exemplifies the holistic relationship existing among participants of a discourse and its relationship to a particular occasion. The speaker attempts to stimulate the reasoning processes of audience members by means of the enthymeme through the middle ground of common opinions. The enthymeme, as Bitzer describes it, unites the speaker and the audience: “Owing to the skill of the speaker, the audience itself helps construct the proofs by which it is persuaded. I believe this is the reason Aristotle calls enthymemes the ‘substance of persuasion’” (*Revisited* 188). Bitzer’s comment highlights the essential quality of enthymemes in Aristotelian rhetoric, serving as a catalyst for persuasion.

### 3.5 Conclusion

As evidenced by the enthymeme, much of the potentially persuasive material of discourse becomes actualized during the process of argumentation. *Endoxa*, as a result, not only provide material to generate persuasion, but may become reinforced during the process as well. Many of the opinions that are involved in the rhetorical process are subject to change during the inquiry. As Aristotle explains, it is necessary for an enthymeme to be concerned with things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are (*Rhetoric* 1357a). Although Aristotle’s presentation of the enthymeme is unique, his observation that opinions may become modified during the process of inquiry is certainly not new. Of course Aristotle’s treatment of opinion differs from that

of his predecessors, but how does *endoxa* help to develop more effective arguments?

First it is important to note that Aristotle's presentation of *endoxa* differs from previous presentations of opinion in rhetoric, not only because he concentrates on proven opinions as opposed to general opinion, but that he provides a method of utilizing opinion as a component in a rhetorical system of developing arguments. Whereas earlier Greeks such as Plato and Gorgias considered *doxa* as the foundation for rhetorical argument, Aristotle shows opinions as functioning within a complex rhetorical system. Utilizing *endoxa* as a part of network of rhetorical inquiry rather than the sole basis of an argument increases the overall efficacy. On one level, a potential problem arises when we consider the presentation of *endoxa* in *On Rhetoric*, since Aristotle gives no clear indication of which opinions we should take into consideration. However, the open-ended nature of the opinions proves not to be a detriment but instead an asset, in great part because of Aristotle's emphasis on the situation. By acknowledging a variety of acceptable *endoxa*, he allows for adaptation according to the particular rhetorical situation. Again, earlier theorists emphasized the speech occasion as well, but as with *endoxa*, He brings situation to the forefront in a slightly different fashion than his predecessors. Whereas the earlier Greeks considered the temporal nature of *kairos*, Aristotle draws attention to the spatial qualities of the speech situation with the *topoi*.

We can see correlations between Aristotle's method of constructing enthymemes from the *topoi* and the system of proving *endoxa* found in the *Ethics*. Each inquiry offers unique opportunities for proving the apparent truth of the *endoxa*

involved in the given situation. In the case of *On Rhetoric*, the enthymeme allows for this truth to be brought to life in the minds of the audience. The difference here, and possibly the central aspect of Aristotle's system, is that the rhetorical process is one shared by both orator and audience alike. It is from this symbiotic process that the strength of *endoxa* becomes realized.

Considering Aristotle's treatment of *endoxa*, specifically in terms of its emphasis on context, might help develop a renewed understanding of twentieth-century theorists who have addressed many of the same issues as Aristotle. Much of Chaïm Perelman's theory, for example, augments Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric. Dissatisfied with the hold of logic on reasoning in modern academics, Perelman proposed a new rhetoric, which serves as an amplification and extension of Aristotle's work. Perelman's treatment of rhetoric, as Amossy explains, represents a powerful return to Aristotle's art of persuasion, where *doxic* elements are "the ingredients of a dynamic interaction that could not develop without preexisting points of agreement and consensual views" (*Doxa* 467). According to Perelman, argument intervenes where self-evidence fails: "Aristotle had already noticed this; he recognized that it is absolutely necessary to resort to dialectical reasoning when the first principles of a science...are contested" (*Realm* 6). The language of argument possesses ambiguity that cannot be worked out in advance, and it is this ambiguity that distinguishes argumentation from demonstration. As a result, the basic aim of argumentation is not to deduce consequences from given premises, but rather to increase adherence of audience members to the theses presented (*Realm* 9). The type of adherence Perelman describes hinges upon *endoxa*: "Aristotle

tells us that dialectical reasoning presupposes premises which are constituted by generally accepted opinions” (*Realm* 2). As with Aristotle, the common ground of *endoxa* provides a starting point for argumentation in Perelman’s treatment of rhetoric.

As with Aristotle, Perelman highlights the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic:

Our analysis concerns the proofs which Aristotle termed ‘dialectical,’ which he examines in his *Topics*, and the utilization of which he indicates in the *Rhetoric*. This appeal to Aristotle’s terminology would justify the ‘rapprochement’ of the theory of argumentation with dialectic, conceived by Aristotle himself as the art of reasoning from generally accepted opinions (*endoxa*). (*New Rhetoric* 5)

According to Perelman, the purpose of speech “is to increase the adherence to values held in common by the audience and the speaker” (*New Rhetoric* 52). In keeping with Aristotle’s theory, Perelman emphasizes the occasion of speech where social communion takes place, and it is within this milieu that rhetoric proves its effectiveness: “Argumentation is intended to act upon an audience, to modify and audience’s convictions or dispositions through discourse, and it tries to gain a meeting of the minds instead of imposing its will through constraint or conditioning” (*Realm* 11).

Perelman describes how speech draws attention to opinions and gives them what here refers to as a “presence” for the audience members, which corresponds to the Aristotelian concept of *energeia*. As Carroll Arnold describes in the introduction of *The Realm of Rhetoric*, the word “presence” as Perelman uses it is in a sense of being made present in the minds of those addressed. “The speaker,” Perelman explains “unlike the

logician, ought not enumerate on all the links of his reasoning; he can hint at promises which everyone knows, and this arises from the Aristotelian definition of the enthymeme” (*Realm* 37). The enthymeme functions in a fashion similar to that of logical reasoning, which proves to be an essential component in Perelman’s “new rhetoric.”

Like Perelman, I. A. Richards also proposes a “new rhetoric.” Unlike Perelman, however, Richards departs from traditional rhetoric by claiming that old rhetoric “was the theory of the battle of words and has always been itself dominated by the combative impulse” (*Philosophy* 24). According to Richards, rhetoric should instead be “a study of misunderstanding and its remedies” (*Philosophy* 3). On one level, Richards’ comments indicate a radical break from classical rhetoric. On another level, his comments also reinforce certain ideas commonly addressed in “old rhetoric.” One of the foremost concepts Richards suggests, for example, is the “context theorem of meaning. “Most words,” Richards claims, “as they pass from context to context, change their meanings” (*Philosophy* 11). Part of the remedy “is not to resist these shifts but to learn to follow them” (*Philosophy* 73). Richards’ context theory of meaning owes much to the ancient concept of *kairos*, although he does not describe it as such. He observes that humans are responsive to things at a particular time, and our responses are influenced by past responses. Human reactions carry with them the complexity of past experience: “Effects from more or less similar happenings in the past would come in to give our response its character and meaning” (*Philosophy* 30). What Richards suggests compares to the Aristotelian presentation of *endoxa*, in that opinions that have been demonstrated to be

effective in earlier situations provide argumentation with a starting place.

Utilizing opinions as the starting point for discourse also corresponds to Donald Davidson's concept of a "passing theory," which he claims is "the theory we actually use to interpret an utterance is geared to the occasion" (*Truth* 101). The concept of a passing theory invites a reassessment of Aristotle's *endoxa*, highlighting their situational application. Stephen Yarbrough correlates Davidson's theory with that of Aristotle, claiming that what "traditional rhetorical theory calls invention is the same process Davidson refers to when he claims that the passing theory, which interlocutors must invent on the fly, is what they must share in order to communicate successfully" (*Passing* 82). Yarbrough's observation seems plausible, especially in light of the Aristotelian consideration of puzzles. Each situation creates new opportunities for those involved in discourse to find common ground. Davidson's passing theory correlates to Aristotle's presentation of *endoxa*, since these are not the opinions of individuals but the apparent opinions of a common group, and as Aristotle notes, "do not draw the conclusion only from what is necessarily valid, but also from what is true for the most part" (*Rhetoric* 1396a). According to Davidson, a passing theory is "derived by wit, luck, and wisdom from a private vocabulary and grammar, knowledge of the ways people get their point across" (*Truth* 107).

Utilizing opinions in argument proves to be a complex operation. As Donald Davidson explains, a deeper level of difficulty exists regarding beliefs: "There is at least a presumption that we are right about the contents of our own minds; so in the cases where we are right, we have knowledge. But any particular item of such knowledge is

logically independent of our beliefs about a world outside, and so cannot supply a foundation for science and commonsense beliefs” (*Subjective* 194). Davidson’s point here supports Aristotle’s description of mental experiences. Davidson observes, different speakers have different vocabularies and attach different meanings to words (*Inquiries* 277). In essence, each person has private opinions, which cannot become entirely public. The opinions utilized in public discourse may be “made” or “set down by people,” but they can only be generalizations, which may point to what is true, but can never be held as truth themselves.



APPENDIX A

NOTES

## Chapter One

1. Aristotle moves away from the Platonic model with his presentation of *endoxa*, indicating a shift from the emphasis on knowledge over opinion.

2. In many of the Platonic dialogues, the dialectic method Socrates prefers proves to be flawed. Donald Davidson makes an accurate assessment of dialectic process of question and answering (*elenchus*). According to Donald Davidson, elenchus is essentially a method for demonstrating that a set of propositions not consistent, which is “no help in establishing substantive, or moral, truths as opposed to logical truths” (*Truth* 227). Even though Socrates succeeds getting others to agree to his claims, he gains little ground with his conclusions. In the *Gorgias* for example, Socrates gets Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles to agree with his claims, but they do not accept the ultimate conclusions. Davidson describes such a situation, explaining how “Socrates’ victims end up confused, irritated, even insulted, but seldom do they claim to be, or seem to be, improved” (*Truth* 247).

3. See *Gorgias* 462-466. In this section, Socrates denies that rhetoric is an art, but rather “an experience, because it is unable to explain or to give a reason for the nature of its own applications. And I do not call any irrational thing an art” (*Gorgias* 465).

4. White argues that Aristotle “frees meaning from its dependence on occasion by a double strategy: first, he proposes that an ordered and coherent reality exists essentially unchanged from one occasion to the next; then, he argues that his own form of logic provides the means to replicate this structure in language” (*Kaironomia* 29). White places Aristotle in contrast to Gorgias, claiming that Aristotelian rhetoric places little emphasis on the situation but instead relies upon an “unchanged” foundation. Gorgias, in contrast, places all emphasis on the moment. White suggests a rhetorical practice where structure is counterbalanced with spontaneity; a model in which “Gorgias must become Aristotle” (*Kaironomia* 41).

5. When Kinneavy first addressed the subject of *kairos* in his 1986 article, “*Kairos*: A Neglected Concept in Classical Rhetoric,” he dismissed the importance of *kairos* in Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*. While Kinneavy makes an accurate observation concerning the lack of emphasis on *kairos* in modern rhetorical study, he also claims “Aristotle, interested more in the art of rhetoric than in the act of rhetoric, gave *kairos* considerably less prominence than did Plato” (*Neglected* 82). *Kairos* became a neglected concept in modern rhetorical theory, Kinneavy argues, “partially because of the overwhelming influence of Aristotelian rhetoric in this history” (*Neglected* 82). Kinneavy, however, later changes his point of view by recognizing the “necessity of *kairos* in the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle. Every section of this work uses this notion in one form or another” (*Kairos* 442).

## Chapter Two

1. Robert Wardy also uses the term epistemological optimism in reference to Aristotle in his 1996 essay, “Mighty is the Truth and it Shall Prevail?”

2. Haskins claims that she hopes to “present some good reasons for “questioning Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* as the pinnacle of evolution of rhetorical thought in ancient Greece” (*Choosing* 191).

3. For an in-depth discussion of Aristotle’s *pisteis*, see Grimaldi 1980, 349-56.

## Chapter Three

1. At 1378b, Aristotle observes, “Slighting is an actualization of opinion,” which I feel draws attention a central aspect of *On Rhetoric*.

2. Bitzer notes, “enthymemes occur only when speaker and audience jointly produce them. ...Owing to the skill of the speaker, the audience itself helps construct the proofs by which it is persuaded” (*Enthymeme* 188).

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