

## **Aristotle's Enthymeme: What Does It Mean to "Become Enthymematic"?**

Aristotle defines enthymeme as a "sort of syllogism" (1.2, 2.22) or a "rhetorical demonstration (*apodeixis*)" (1.1). Throughout the *Rhetoric*, the enthymeme is referred to by likening or contrasting it to the logical or dialectical syllogism, giving rise to the common interpretation of enthymeme as a "relaxed" syllogism of logic. Beyond that, there is considerable controversy. The following is a sketch of the basic ideas.

First, what is a "syllogism"? Aristotle's definition of syllogism, and his distinction between the logical or demonstrative syllogism and the dialectical syllogism, is given at *Topics* 1.1 (this can be found in the Kennedy translation of *Rhetoric*, p. 264). The passage runs as follows:

Now syllogism is a statement (*logos*) in which, certain things having been posited, something other than the posited necessarily results through what is posited. *Apodeixis* (logical demonstration) occurs whenever the syllogism is drawn from things that are true and primary or from things that are of the sort as to have taken the first principle of knowledge of them from what is primary and true [i.e., from *a priori* propositions, such as axioms of geometry, or from propositions proved in some other science, as physics uses propositions from mathematics]; but a syllogism is dialectical when drawn from generally accepted opinions (*endoxa*). Things are true and primary when they are persuasive through themselves. . . Generally accepted opinions (*endoxa*), on the other hand, are those that seem right to all people or most people or the wise—and in the latter case, all the wise or most of them or those best known and generally accepted (as authorities)."

Aristotle then draws a further distinction between dialectical syllogisms and "eristical" syllogisms":

A syllogism is eristical (or 'contentious') when derived from what appear to be generally accepted opinions but are not and when it appears (but is not truly?) derived from generally accepted or apparently generally accepted opinions . . . [L]et the former kind of syllogism that has been termed eristical also be called syllogism, and the other not syllogism but eristical syllogism, since it appears to syllogize but does not syllogize."

Kennedy gives a handy non-technical definition of the enthymeme: "a rhetorical syllogism, i.e., a statement with a supporting reason introduced by *for*, *because*, or *since* or an *if* . . . *then* statement". For example, "Socrates is virtuous, for he is wise." This adequately captures virtually all the examples of the device Aristotle himself provides. But the connection to syllogism bears further investigation. A syllogism consists of 3 parts; here's a typical example:

All men are mortal  
Socrates is a man  
Socrates is mortal

MAJOR PREMISE  
MINOR PREMISE  
CONCLUSION

A syllogism arranges two propositions which feature a (quasi-)logical relationship or overlap so as to lead to the inference of a third, new proposition that combines these elements. This conclusion has a ring of rightness owing to the deductive structure -- but its status as certain truth will vary according to the nature of the premises employed. Because the premises employed in an enthymeme are not first principles or certain truth, its conclusion is ordinarily probable at best and not necessarily logically valid.

Aristotle distinguishes reasoning by enthymemes from dialectical syllogistic reasoning and/or logically demonstrative syllogistic reasoning in 3 main ways:

- (1) Shortness or brevity. He insists that the conclusion should not be drawn “from too far back” (2.22)
- (2) The enthymeme itself is not *required* to be formally complete (1.2.13, 2.22.3), fully spoken or spelled out *and* can vary quite dramatically in its surface expression. That is, premises or even the conclusion could be left out and still be an effective argument:

Socrates will die.  
He’s a man, isn’t he?

You can trust me.  
Have I ever deceived you?

- (3) The premises are drawn from probabilities (*eikos*, “truth-like” propositions or “what happens for the most part”) and signs (especially non-necessary signs).<sup>1</sup> As can be seen in the account of dialectical syllogism in *Topics* 1.1, premises for rhetorical syllogisms (enthymemes) can be drawn from “*endoxa*”, i.e., “prevailing opinions, ideas held to be true” [by many, by the wise, etc.]

Aristotle also refers to a fourth characteristic of the enthymeme, its “communicative”, “interactive,” or “collaborative” quality:

- (4) “[The enthymeme’s] successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of speaker and audience” (Bitzer 408).

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<sup>1</sup> “A sign is an event or characteristic that accompanies another event or almost always accompanies it; in modern parlance, a correlation” (F. Hill in Murphy & Katula, p. 103). Note that although he tends to emphasize “non-necessary” signs as sources for enthymematic premises, Aristotle does admit “necessary” signs, too; see Bitzer on this.

### ***Place of Enthymeme Relative to Other Forms of Rhetorical Reasoning (Logos)***

**Paradigm:** The enthymeme is generally treated as in some sense coordinate with paradigm (or rhetorical induction): at p. 41 f., however, it is said that speeches with paradigms are no less persuasive but that enthymemes excite a more favorable audience *reaction*. [*Compare Bitzer on the audience's involvement in the completion of the enthymeme*]  
(Chief passages of *Rhetoric* treating the paradigm are at 1.2, 2.20, and 3.17)

**Maxim:** Maxims are proverbs or truisms or even slogans, usually stated in a brief, sententious form. Some are obviously true in themselves; others require a reason be supplied (2.21). Although they can apparently stand alone, maxims can also serve as conclusions or as premises for enthymemes and can become a complete enthymeme if a reason or conclusion is added. Maxims embody widely held opinions and have generic application to many particular cases. (Chief passages of *Rhetoric* treating the paradigm are at 2.21 and 3.17.9)

**\*\*For the Relationship to Pathos & Ethos: See *Rhet.* 3.17**

### ***Some (Re)Sources for Enthymemes***

Sources for enthymemes can be divided into two basic sorts (Aristotle's terminology shifts)

1. "Common *topoi*" of 2.23 f. might be called general patterns of reasoning or even *rules* of argumentative reasoning; function as devices for the discovery and construction of premises in all genres.
2. Other materials for enthymemes include *probabilities*, *signs*, and "*peculiarities*" (*idia*). Together, these can be likened to *inventories* of propositions or opinions that would be useful in all genres or in specific genres. These propositions or opinions can usually be distinguished from the axioms or first principles of specific sciences (though Aristotle does count "necessary" as well as "non-necessary" signs as an appropriate material for enthymeme); they are in the main ideas that are "believed likely" or things believed to hold "for the most part." *Rhetorical argumentation* (like dialectic) *requires joint application of both sorts of materials plus consideration of audience type* so as to determine opinions held acceptable to it.

**Maxims** can be used as premises for -- or even *become* enthymemes (*See above*)

**Paradigms or Examples**, too, can render premises for enthymematic reasoning

### ***Suggested Uses of Enthymemes:***

At 1.9 and 3.17, Aristotle observes that enthymeme is **especially suited to judicial oratory**. The reasoning seems to be as follows: Judicial discourses deal with past actions, actions already performed but of a character that is often unclear or ill-defined. An enthymeme, he says, is best to give such cases "a cause and demonstration" (1.9) -- suggesting that the quasi-logical or deductive quality of the enthymeme brings a definitional clarity to the speaker's case or argument. At 3.17, he says that judicial cases "are concerned with what are or are not the facts, which are more open to demonstration."

Aristotle states several times that the speaker should not make enthymemes in a long chain or try to include all its parts (premises, conclusion) (2.22, 3.17 and *passim*).

**Some recommended sources for further study of the Enthymeme (and *topoi*):**

(See also course Bibliography for sources on Enthymeme and *Topoi*)

- Walton, Douglas. 2001. "Enthymemes, Common Knowledge, and Plausible Inference." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 34: 93-112.
- McAdon, Brad. 2003. "Probabilities, Signs, Necessary Signs, Idia, and Topoi: The Confusing Discussion of Materials for Enthymemes in the Rhetoric." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 36: 223-248. (Available through e-subscription)
- Burnyeat, M. F. 1994. "Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Logic of Persuasion." In *Aristotle's 'Rhetoric': Philosophical Essays*, ed. David J. Furley and A. Nehamas. Princeton: Princeton UP. 3-55.
- Burnyeat, M. F. 1996. "Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric." In *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. A. Rorty. Berkeley: University of California Press. 88-115.
- Walker, Jeffrey. 1994. "The Body of Persuasion: A Theory of the Enthymeme." *College English* 56: 46-65.

## **Aristotle on the Enthymeme: Further Notes & Clarification**

A few points about enthymemes commonly generate snags for understanding. One point has to do with the “probabilistic” quality of the “rhetorical syllogism” (i.e., the enthymeme); the other, with how the various concepts of *koinoi topoi*, *koina*, and *idia* relate to one another and serve as resources for the production of enthymemes. Here, I insert excerpts from two fairly recent studies that address precisely these issues and have been helpful to me.

I’d like you all to read the excerpts (they’re short!); I may refer to them in class.

Some of you may find that one or the other of these pieces look like good candidates for your annotated bibliographies or final projects. **For those who are interested in seeing more, I’ll post both of the full essays on the course website in the “Aristotle” folder.**

### ***Excerpt 1***

*From:* Douglas Walton, “Enthymemes, Common Knowledge, and Plausible Inference,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 34 (2001): 93-112.

*(NOTE: Bits in **boldface italics** are my own annotations calling attention to items I think are especially relevant).*

The study of enthymemes has always been regarded as important in logic, critical thinking, and rhetoric, but too often it is the formal or mechanistic aspect of it that has been in the forefront. This investigation will show that there is a kind of plausibilistic script-based reasoning, of a kind that has mainly been studied in artificial intelligence, that should have a much more important role to play in the study of enthymemes. But then curiously, as will also be shown, this plausibilistic type of reasoning was familiar in the ancient world, to the Sophists, as well as to leading philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. By linking this ancient notion of plausibility to the modern notion used in computer science, this investigation reveals an important basis for the enthymeme that has a type of logical structure in its own right, but also has an informal aspect.

An enthymeme, in current usage [***Key: “in current usage”; see essay by R. Gaines in Gross/Walzer’s Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric for more on this common but misleading interpretation of Aristotle’s enthymeme***], is an argument that has one or more premises, or possibly a conclusion, not explicitly stated in the text, but that needs to have these propositions explicitly stated to extract the complete argument from the text. Sometimes enthymemes are described as arguments with “missing premises.” That vocabulary is awkward, however, because the nonexplicit statement that needs to be added can be a conclusion, at least in a minority of cases. To make the exposition below smoother, the term *nonexplicit assumption* will be used to cover either the case of a nonexplicit premise or that of a nonexplicit conclusion. The problem with enthymemes is that if the nonexplicit assumptions in an argument are sup-

posed to be propositions used by the arguer (as opposed to just the propositions needed to make the argument structurally correct, according to some standard), reasonable people can have differences of opinion on what the nonexplicit assumptions are supposed to be. The problem is that filling in the missing parts of enthymemes depends on interpreting the natural language in which the argument was put forward to try to determine what the speaker meant to say.

The solution to the problem comes through the recognition that enthymemes rest not only on formal (structural) criteria, but also on informal criteria [***A crucial distinction: “formal” vs. “informal” aspects of enthymeme***]. One of the most important of these informal criteria is something often called “common knowledge” (Govier 1992; Freeman 1995). [***Compare the ideas on “social knowledge” advanced in more recent rhetorical theory – e.g., Thomas Farrell***] But as shown below in a set of selected case studies of enthymemes, “common knowledge” is not really a kind of knowledge at all. It is really plausibility, or *eikos*, something well known in the ancient world and often misleadingly translated as “probability.” Curiously, Aristotle’s original doctrine of the enthymeme was based on this notion of plausibility [***A useful distinction: eikos as “plausibility” vs. “probability” – Walton explains more fully below***]. This historical fact has often been a source of puzzlement and confusion, and sometimes it has even been taken to indicate a defect or contradiction in Aristotle’s treatment of the enthymeme. However, the goal of this investigation is not primarily historical. It is to work out one of the most important required steps toward a solution to the problem of enthymemes. But to do this, it is necessary to come back to the ancient notion of plausible inference.

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## 2. Aristotle and the history of the term *enthymeme*

The term *enthymeme* is a source of some historical and etymological confusion. The Greek term used by Aristotle that has been translated as “enthymeme” does not mean “nonexplicit assumption in an argument,” which is the modern meaning of the English term. As H. W. B. Joseph (1916, 350) explained in a long footnote, the term *enthymema*, as used by Aristotle (*Prior Analytics* 70a11), referred to the syllogism based on probabilities or signs (*syllogismos ex eikoton e semeion*). Joseph cites the following inference as an example:

Raw foods are not wholesome;  
this bit of food is raw;  
therefore this bit of food is not wholesome.

In some cases, this inference could be defeated. While it may generally be true that raw foods are not wholesome (as thought in Joseph’s time), in the case of

this particular bit of food, it may be wholesome if taken in raw form. Eikotic arguments are arguments based on defeasible inferences or generalizations. The most famous example is the Tweety inference:

Birds fly;  
Tweety is a bird;  
therefore Tweety flies.

In a defeasible (default) inference of this kind, the premises may be true while the conclusion is false in some cases (exceptions to the rule). For example, in the case where Tweety is a penguin, the inference fails. This kind of eikotic inference used to be called an argument based on *probability*, but since that term has been taken over by the statisticians, it is better to use the term *plausibility* (Rescher 1976). Used by Aristotle in this way, the term *enthymeme* did not mean “missing” or nonexplicitly stated premises (or conclusions) in an argument. But since the term *enthymeme* has taken on this meaning in such a well-established way in modern logic, it is probably best to stick with the modern meaning of the term. At any rate, that is the accepted meaning the term now has.

As Sir William Hamilton (1874, 389) explained, it may seem like Aristotle has contradicted himself because in some passages he defines the enthymeme as a syllogism “from signs and likelihood” while in other passages he defines the enthymeme as an argument in “imperfect form,” that is, an argument with missing premises. This apparent contradiction is a problem, according to Hamilton (389), because “a syllogism from signs and likelihood does not more naturally fall into an elliptical form than a syllogism of any other matter.” Hamilton resolves the problem by arguing (389–90) that the latter interpretation is a later insertion into the Aristotelian manuscripts—an interpolation that has been rejected from the best editions. R. C. Jebb (1893) agreed that Aristotle did not use the term *enthymeme* to refer to arguments with a missing premise. According to Jebb (291), by enthymeme Aristotle meant syllogism from probabilities and signs, and it is a “misapprehension” of his meaning to think that he conceived of an enthymeme as a syllogism in which one premise is suppressed.

As Daniel J. Goulding (1965) pointed out, however, there is a kind of connection between the two meanings of the term *enthymeme*, and evidence of the connection can be found in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle repeatedly insists that premises used for constructing enthymemes should represent the attitudes, beliefs, and commonly accepted opinions of the audience to which an argument is addressed [*I.e.*, **Endoxa**. *Curiously, I don’t think Walton ever uses the term*]. There is a kind of link here between the enthymeme and the appeal to popular opinion as a kind of argumentation. In the *Rhetoric* (1355a30), Aristotle wrote, “We must use as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed

by everybody.” As Goulding (1965, 108) makes clear, in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle associated enthymemes with maxims (topics), showing how a popular audience cannot be convinced by long, abstract chains of reasoning, but must be convinced by arguments containing suppressed premises representing practical topics with which they are familiar. What we see is that in the *Rhetoric* there seems to be a connection between the two meanings of *enthymeme*. In rhetorical persuasion, it seems that eikotic or plausibilistic arguments are frequently combined with arguments that have nonexplicit premises or conclusions. . . . .

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#### 4. The concept of plausibility (probability; *eikos*)

A common basis for many of the enthymemes above is found in propositions that are relied on as acceptable assumptions that need not be explicitly stated because they can be taken for granted as holding on the basis of common experience, or common understanding of the ways things normally work in familiar situations. This concept of the way things can be normally expected to go in familiar situations was lost sight of in logic for two thousand years. But it was known in ancient dialectic and rhetoric as an important basis for logical inferences. One of the most important concepts used by the Sophists was the so-called argument from *eikos*, from plausibility, from what “seems likely.” Traditionally, this type of argument has been translated into English via Latin as “argument from probability,” a choice of words that, in light of the modern statistical meaning given to *probability* is too easily misleading. Plausible or so-called eikotic arguments are based on a person’s subjective understanding of how something can normally be expected to go in a familiar situation. Plausibility is based on something we would nowadays call “empathy,” the ability to put oneself into a familiar situation in a story or account in which the actions of some protagonist are described. In modern thinking, the concept of plausibility is typically seen as “subjective” and therefore not something upon which logical reasoning can be based. But there is plenty of evidence that when logic was originally developed as a science or art of reasoning, before the advent of the syllogism, plausibility was seen as a fundamental part of it.

Eikotic arguments were especially significant for the early philosophers called Sophists. The classic case is the so-called reverse eikotic argument, attributed to two Sophists, Corax and Tisias, who lived around the middle of the fifth century B.C. (Gagarin 1994, 50). This classic example is described by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* (1402a17–28), where it is attributed to Corax.



## Case 5

In a trial concerning a fight reported to have taken place between two men, one man was visibly bigger and stronger than the other. They are described as the weak man and the strong man. The weak man, appealing to the jury, asks them whether it appears likely to them that he, the smaller and weaker man, would have assaulted a much bigger and stronger man. Such a hypothesis would not appear to be plausible, assuming the smaller man is a reasonable person who knew what he was doing, because the likely outcome would be his getting beaten up. And the jury would presumably know that the smaller man would know it. Putting themselves into the position of the smaller man in the given situation, they would know that it would be unlikely they would attack the larger man, unless they were pretty desperate, and perhaps even not then. They conclude that it is possible that the smaller man attacked the larger, but that it is improbable that this is what happened, in the absence of any other hard evidence about what happened.

The logic of the inference drawn in this case hangs on a balance of considerations. It is one man's word against the other's, and, let's say, no witnesses or other evidence proves which account is right. The issue of which man attacked the other hangs in a balance, so even a small weight on one side can tilt the balance. Accordingly, the weight of plausibility yielded by the eikotic argument would go against the hypothesis that the smaller man attacked the larger.

But the nature of the plausible reasoning that could be used in such a case is given an additional twist in Aristotle's description. It is also possible to have what he calls a reverse eikotic argument, as described in case 6 below.

## Case 6

The stronger man asks the jury whether it is plausible that he, an obviously much stronger and larger man, would assault the visibly smaller and weaker man. His reasoning runs as follows: He knows how criminally responsible such an act would make him look if the case ever came to court. He knows he would be likely to be blamed. But he also knows that the jury knows that he would know that. Given this knowledge, is it plausible that he would attack the weaker man? The answer is "no." The conclusion drawn is that it is implausible, other things being equal, that the larger man attacked the smaller.

The reverse eikotic argument draws the opposite conclusion as that drawn by the original eikotic argument. So, it is possible to have eikotic arguments that support both sides in a conflict of opinions. In case 6,

however, the reverse eikotic argument restores the balance back to equilibrium, by countering the prior eikotic argument by the smaller man with equally plausible considerations. Michael Gagarin (1994, 51) tells us that the reverse eikotic argument was a typical turning-of-the-tables type of plausible argument used by the Sophists of the second half of the fifth century B.C. In both the eikotic and the reverse eikotic argument, the plausible inference is drawn from a basis of the jury's being able to put themselves into the situation and see it from the perspective of the person who was involved. The argumentation is far from foolproof, in both cases, but it is just the sort of argumentation that would carry weight with a jury.

It was this kind of plausibilistic or eikotic reasoning that Aristotle had in mind when he defined the enthymeme as a syllogism based on probability (*eikos*) and signs. Curiously, then, the account of the enthymeme given by Aristotle in the *Prior Analytics*, cited in section 2 above, ties in quite well with the generally accepted account of the enthymeme as an argument containing nonexplicit assumptions. The concept of *eikos* proved to be one of the most important bases of the enthymeme (in the modern sense), the element of so-called "common knowledge." But this basis is not really a kind of knowledge at all, in the strict sense of the word *knowledge*. It is plausibility, of the kind identified by Corax in cases 5 and 6.

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**Excerpt 2**

From: Brad McAdon, “Probabilities, Signs, Necessary Signs, Idia, and Topoi: The Confusing Discussion of Materials for Enthymemes in the *Rhetoric*,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 36 (2003): 223-247.

This essay examines three groups of “sources” or “materials” of enthymemes in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. According to the text of the *Rhetoric*, enthymemes are derived from, among other things, *probabilities*, *signs*, and *necessary signs*, and/or from the *topics*, and/or from *idia* as the following table indicates.[1]

Topoi as materials from which enthymemes are said	<i>Probabilities, signs, and necessary signs</i> as the materials from which enthymemes are said	<i>Idia</i> as materials from which enthymemes are said
I mean by dialectical and rhetorical <i>sullogismous</i> those which are concerned with what we call <i>topous</i> , which may be applied alike to law, physics, politics, and many other sciences (1358a10–11; cf. 1358a26–29).	Enthymemes are said from probabilities ( <i>eikotōn</i> ) and signs ( <i>semeiōn</i> ) (1357a32–33; cf. 1402b12–14).  For <i>necessary signs</i> , and <i>probabilities</i> and <i>signs</i> are rhetorical propositions ( <i>protaseis eisi rhētorikai</i> ) (1359a6–9).	The majority of enthymemes are from these specifics ( <i>toutōn tōn eidōn</i> ) which are also called peculiar ( <i>idiōn</i> ), specifically ( <i>kata meros</i> ); fewer are from the common things ( <i>tōn koinōn</i> ) (1358a27–30).

The *Rhetoric* does not explain any relationships that may exist between these different sources (or materials) from which enthymemes are said. This problem, as I am framing it, is two-fold: First, these different conceptions of materials from which enthymemes are said are never reconciled into a coherent account (or theory) in the *Rhetoric*. Rather, each conception of materials for the enthymeme is presented in a way that obscures, rather than facilitates, our understanding of the materials of enthymemes in the *Rhetoric*. Moreover, when *Rhetoric* 2.22-23 and its textual contexts are compared to 1.2 and its textual contexts, several differences will emerge in respect to the nature of the materials of enthymemes and the distinctions in enthymemes that further cloud our understanding of the text. . .

. . . .

As far as I can tell, Grimaldi’s discussions of the “*Eikota and semeia*” (1972, 104-15) and “The *topoi*” (115-35) are the only contemporary attempts to explicitly address the relationship between *probabilities* and *signs* and the *topoi* in the *Rhetoric*. . . Grimaldi’s account is confusing in many

respects. For example, in addition to understanding the *idia* as *topoi*, he claims that “[w]hen Aristotle has presented us with the sources of the enthymeme, *eikota* and *sêmeia*, and told us that they are the premises of enthymematic reasoning (A3, 59a7-10) the question which immediately arises is where does the rhetor turn for the material which will provide him with such *eikota* and *sêmeia*. The answer is: the topics” (115). Yet, a little further down the same page, he claims that “the topics are sources, or *loci*, both particular and general, to which one must have recourse in constructing probable argumentation by enthymeme in an effort to effect *pistis*”(115). So, in effect, Grimaldi claims that *probabilities* and *signs* are the sources of enthymemes and then that the *topics* are the sources of *probabilities* and *signs*,. . . but, as demonstrated above, the text of the *Rhetoric* clearly claims that the *topoi* are the sources of enthymemes just as *probabilities*, *signs*, and *necessary signs* are sources of enthymemes. Grimaldi fails to address or even acknowledge this. Rather, in his attempt to maintain the unity of the text of the *Rhetoric*, he has advanced this working relationship between *eikota* and *sêmeia* and the *topoi* in what he claims is a consistent theory in the *Rhetoric* concerning the relationship of *eikota* and *sêmeia* (and *tekmêria*) to the *topoi* that, I will argue, is not supported by the text as Grimaldi suggests. More recently, Robin Smith (1989 and 1997) provides carefully informed commentary on some of these terms -- *topos*, *idia*, *eikos*, *sêmeia*, and *tekmêria* -- but, and this is not his purpose, he does not provide a discussion that explicitly examines how (or if) these different terms relate to one another as sources of enthymemes. Thus, this essay is an attempt to explore and succinctly articulate the problems with the discussion of materials of enthymemes in the *Rhetoric*. As I will attempt to demonstrate, the discussion of the *materials of enthymemes*, as presented in the *Rhetoric*, is plagued with serious difficulties. . . .

In addition, there are significant differences concerning the concepts of *signs*, *necessary signs*, *probabilities*, *idia*, and *topoi* that are not distinguished in the text. These differences in conception are elaborated upon in other Aristotelian works and are important to understanding the discussion of the different materials of enthymemes in the *Rhetoric*. Moreover, it is the disjointed discussion in the *Rhetoric* itself concerning *the materials from which enthymemes are said* that is to blame for these problems in understanding the materials of enthymemes. In my concluding remarks, I will offer what I think is a viable solution that satisfactorily explains the confusing discussion in the text.

There are many possible ways to approach this discussion. Because the different terms to be considered -- *eikota*, *idia*, *sêmeia*, *tekmêria*, and *topos* -- are primarily confined to two passages in the *Rhetoric*(1.2 and 2.22-25), I will examine these passages and contexts separately, after a few preliminary comments concerning the term *topos*. And, rather than examining carefully how the *topoi* in the *Rhetoric* relate to or are different from

the *topoi* in the *Topics*, I am more interested in understanding how (or if) the different conceptions of *probabilities*, *signs*, *necessary signs*, *idia*, and *topoi* relate to one another as materials from which enthymemes are said. So while I will briefly consider different views of what a *topos* is, I will spend more time attempting to relate the *topoi* to *probabilities*, *signs*, *necessary signs*, and the *idia* as sources of enthymemes than explain how the *topoi* work in the *Rhetoric*.

. . . .

#### Drawing conclusions

. . . .It seems to me that the only reasonable response to the discussion of the materials of enthymemes in *Rhetoric* is to admit that it is exceptionally confusing and any attempt to reconcile the confusing discussion or any attempt to offer a unified understanding of the materials of enthymemes detrimentally simplifies these perplexing difficulties. Thus, rather than throwing one's hands up in utter frustration (as I have been tempted to do), I suggest the following two courses of study. First, more work needs to be completed that will facilitate our understanding of the terms *idia*, *ta koina*, and *topoi* within the Aristotelian corpus. . I am thinking that there is a particular problem with understanding the *idia* as first principles and then realizing that the *idia* of *Rhetoric* 1.5-15 are not *idia* as first principles, but rather *common opinions* (even though they are not ever called *common opinions*) or *specific topics* concerning the various fields discussed. On the other hand, though, if "straightness" and "line" can be construed as first principles (*idia*) in the *Posterior Analytics*, then it would seem that some discussion of, say, the distinctions of political realms in the *Rhetoric*, could also be considered first principles. The question of whether or not the *topoi* are to be understood as *common principles* also requires more consideration. Second, perhaps we need to give more consideration to the possible influence that hundreds of years of editorial work may have had on the *corpus Aristotelicum*. It does not seem to me to be too far-fetched to think that the glaring difficulties within the discussion of these important terms--*idia*, *topoi*, *ta koina*, and *enthymeme* (and others)--may be the result of later editors' interpolations or later Peripatetic lecturers' engagements with an earlier text. Perhaps we can begin to trace different lines of thought--such as, for example, differing views as to what *ta koina* are--and perhaps such an investigation will demonstrate that there are two very different but independently consistent strands of thought as to what, for example, *ta koina* are within the *corpus Aristotelicum*. . . . .

#### Notes

[1.] *Probabilities*, *signs*, and *necessary signs* are discussed in the *Rhetoric* at 1357a30-1357b25, 1359a6-9, and 1402b10-1403a16. The *topoi* are considered explicitly at 1358a10-35, 1396b20-1400b33, and somewhat less explicitly at

1377b16-21 and 1403b6-15. Examples (*paradeigmata*) and maxims (*gnomê*) are also said to be sources of enthymemes (1402b13-14 and 1394a22ff, respectively), but, due to space constraints, these will not be considered at much length in this discussion.

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[27.] To compare these terms in the *Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum* to their use in the *Rhetoric* see:

*Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum*

1428a25-1428b11 (7)

1430b30-1431a6 (12)

1430a14-1430a21 (9)

*Probabilities (eikos)*

*Signs(sêmeia)*

*Tekmêria*

*Rhetoric*

1357a32-33; 1359a6-7, and 1402b12-14

1357a32-1357b25; 1402b12-1403a1

1357a32-1357b25; 1402b12-1403a1