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MNEMOSYNE 77 (2024) 353-366

MNEMOSYNE
A Journal of Classical Studies
brill.com/mnem

Pistis and *Apodeixis*: On the Disputed Interpretation of Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.1, 1355a5-6

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Received 3 November 2022 | Accepted 20 December 2022 | Published online 23 January 2024

Abstract

'We are convinced most of all whenever we take something to have been demonstrated' (1355a5-6). The meaning and significance of this claim is a key point of dispute between those who take Aristotle's project in the *Rhetoric* to be defending his distinctively argument-centred kind of rhetoric on the grounds that it is most persuasively effective, and those for whom he does so on the more normatively-charged grounds that this is the most valuable kind of rhetoric, and best delivers rhetoric's distinctive benefits to civic communities. On the interpretation defended, the claim links being convinced (πιστεύειν) and the things that get us convinced (πίστεις) to the kind of epistemic merits possessed above all by demonstrations. This saves Aristotle from an implausible generalisation about the persuasive supremacy of deductive arguments. Since πίστεις are clearly central to Aristotelian rhetoric, this interpretation also lends support to the more normative understanding of Aristotle's project overall.

Keywords

rhetoric – proofs – Aristotle – demonstration – epistemology – persuasion

1 Introduction

'We are convinced most of all whenever we take something to have been demonstrated.'[1] The interpretation of this sentence plays an important role in the debates around the concerns that shape Aristotle's conception of rhetoric. I argue that it is best interpreted in a way that lends significant support to the view that for Aristotle, rhetoric is governed by epistemic norms because of its distinctive role in civic communities.

Among interpreters of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, there has been a wide range of views about his driving concerns. For some, Aristotle has the high-minded concern to set out the kind of rhetoric that would be practised by a virtuous orator or would contribute to the development of virtue in citizens.[2] At the other end of the spectrum, an older generation of scholars saw Aristotle as having few scruples about methods, and happy to recommend whatever methods would help an orator to win their case in the assembly or lawcourts, whatever that case was.[3] Both of these types of views face significant difficulties. The 'high-minded' view struggles to accommodate Aristotle's clear insistence that rhetoric can be used for bad purposes and on both sides of any issue.[4] And the 'unscrupulous' view struggles to accommodate Aristotle's exclusion from rhetoric of some widely-practised and evidently highly-effective techniques, and his insistence on the centrality of arguments.[5] The most prominent views of recent years have highlighted this latter feature, and argued that Aristotle was advocating a highly-distinctive, proof-centred brand of rhetoric modelled on dialectic, and drawing on Aristotle's own theories of argumentation.[6] But among such interpreters, there is a difference of opinion about *why*, for Aristotle, orators should embrace his distinctive view of rhetoric, rather than that of others in (say) the tradition of Thrasymachus. On one view, advocated by Christof Rapp, orators should adopt his proof-centred view of rhetoric because this is simply the most *effective* way of getting listeners to form a judgement in the way the orator wants.[7] On a rival view I have myself defended, they should

1 Arist. *Rh.* 1.1, 1355a5-6. Translations of the *Rhetoric* are by the author.

2 E.g. Wörner 1990, Garver 1994.

3 E.g. Ross 1923, 270-276; Oates 1963; Schütrumpf 1994, 115; Sprute 1994. In some ways Solmsen 1929 is in this category but this is complicated by his developmental view of the *Rhetoric*. See Natali 1994 for the reception of the *Rhetoric* in twentieth century European scholarship.

4 See e.g. *Rh.* 1.1, 1355a29-b7.

5 See e.g. *Rh.* 1.1, 1354a11-31.

6 See esp. Rapp 2002; 2009 and Dow 2015.

7 See Rapp 2009, 579-581, 583-584; 2022.

do so because a proof-centred expertise is the most valuable—to them and to the state—of the various things that might lay claim to the term 'rhetoric': in other words, his is the kind of rhetoric most *worth* cultivating.[8] Our focus here will be on this latter dispute.

The disagreement, argued on broader grounds elsewhere, cannot be adjudicated in full here. Our focus is one key passage of argument, and one key claim within it that is interpreted differently by the two views. Nevertheless, it is a very important claim, and has ramifications for the wider plausibility of those views, because of the role it plays in Aristotle's defence of his distinctive view of rhetoric. That claim is as follows:

> τότε γὰρ πιστεύομεν μάλιστα ὅταν ἀποδεδεῖχθαι ὑπολάβωμεν. (*Rh.* 1.1, 1355a5-6)
>
> We are convinced most of all whenever we take something to have been demonstrated.[9]

It is common to many interpretations of the *Rhetoric* that this claim offers grounds for giving a central place in rhetoric to rhetorical demonstrations, i.e. enthymemes. But interpretations diverge over what kind of grounds it provides. On Rapp's interpretation (hereafter the 'effectiveness' interpretation), Aristotle is commending demonstrations—and thus enthymemes—for being the most causally-effective tool in the service of getting people to judge and act as you want them to. On my preferred interpretation (the 'epistemic' interpretation), Aristotle is commending demonstrations also, and especially, for their epistemic credentials—they, more than anything else, give people an epistemically secure basis on which to be convinced of something.[10]

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8 See Rorty 1992, and more recently Dow 2014; 2015 ch. 2-4. On this view, Aristotle sees the kind of rhetoric worth cultivating as an expertise whose methods are governed by epistemic norms and hence inherently tending to make beneficial contributions to civic deliberation.

9 Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

10 These two leading interpretations are our focus here, but of course these might not exhaust the range of possibilities. But we may set aside the uncharacteristically implausible suggestion, in Burnyeat 1994, 12, that 'demonstration' here is to be read in ways that are 'neither weighty nor technical.' The whole focus of the immediate context is connecting rhetoric with reasoning (συλλογισμός) and crucially with dialectic, and the immediately-surrounding lines allude extensively to the *Topics*—a work in whose first page, demonstration tops the list of uses of reasoning. The *Rhetoric* may plausibly pre-date Aristotle's fully developed syllogistic theory, but that does not affect the current point: in the *Topics*, demonstration is a (valid) piece of reasoning (συλλογισμός) from premises that

Which interpretation is right? I suggest that the 'epistemic' interpretation is clearly preferable, on three grounds. (1) The generalisation stands a better chance of being true. (2) The inference is better (to the conclusion that proof is demonstration of a kind).[11] (3) It provides better support for (and a better interpretation of) the claim that the enthymeme is the most κύριος of the proofs.

If correct, this has some significance for the wider question of how we should understand Aristotle's project in the *Rhetoric*. Firstly, the epistemic interpretation of this claim implies support for a normative reading of the key term πίστις (proof) here and elsewhere in the *Rhetoric*, which is a key part of the view that when Aristotle is commending a proof-centred view of rhetoric he is doing so for its epistemically-valuable contribution to civic deliberation. Secondly, it would seem to make it an open question which persuasive tools were for Aristotle the most causally efficacious. At the very least, *this claim* would provide no evidence that Aristotle thought that arguments were the most effective persuasive tool. That leaves Rapp's view with the challenge of finding either alternative evidence that Aristotle thought arguments were more persuasively effective than other methods, or some alternative explanation for why Aristotle put so much emphasis on the use of arguments in his account of rhetoric.

This latter point is of enormous significance. Many scholars have called attention to Aristotle's distinctively central emphasis on *arguments* in his view of rhetoric.[12] But this obvious fact raises the question of how he might have commended (or did commend) his argument-centred view over and against the array of rival accounts available in his day. The two most obvious answers are (1) the view that I am canvassing, i.e. that he considered an argument-centred rhetoric more *valuable* than the rival kinds of rhetoric, and (2) that he considered arguments to be more persuasively effective than other methods. But once the effectiveness interpretation of 1355a5-6 is undermined, it becomes much harder to see what textual basis there is for supposing that Aristotle commended his brand of rhetoric on the grounds of its persuasive effectiveness. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that (like some earlier teachers of rhetoric) he thought that things other than arguments were often

are true and primary (100a27-28), and any interpretation of 'demonstration' here must accommodate that background to this passage.

11 There is a question over whether τις here should be read as *alienans*, but it does not affect my argument.

12 Note, in addition to those already mentioned, Oates 1963; Grimaldi 1972; Grimaldi 1980; Wardy 1998.

more persuasively effective.[13] Of course, the interpretation of this one line does not settle these wider questions about Aristotle's characterisation of rhetoric, and on what basis he commended it. Clearly there is a great deal more to the merits of, and challenges facing, each view than their understanding of this claim alone. But it and the passage in which it is found do nonetheless play an important role in this wider debate.

2 The Connection between Demonstration and Conviction

The rival interpretations of 1355a4-5 might be paraphrased as follows.

> EFFECTIVENESS INTERPRETATION:
> Of the range of methods by which one might seek to get people convinced, providing them with (what they take to be) demonstrations is the most effective.
>
> EPISTEMIC INTERPRETATION:
> We take our convictions to be most secure when we think something has been demonstrated.

The issue is what kind of 'being convinced' is in view and what feature demonstrations are being said to possess, such that the latter 'most of all' (μάλιστα) produce a situation in which people are 'convinced' (πιστεύομεν) in the relevant way.

On the effectiveness interpretation, 'being convinced' is a matter of acquiring or retaining beliefs (and perhaps holding them strongly). The claim is that the provision of (what are taken to be) demonstrations 'most of all' has causal efficacy in producing such beliefs. The comparison implied by 'most of all' is with other means by which such beliefs might be produced.[14]

On the epistemic interpretation, 'being convinced' is a matter of taking the beliefs in question to rest on epistemically secure grounds, such as evidence or arguments. The claim is that demonstrations provide the securest grounds for believing something (when we believe a demonstration of something has

13 See e.g. portrayal of the speaker's character (*Rh.* 1.2, 1356a10-13); character and emotion (*Rh.* 2.1, 1377b20-1378a5); delivery (*Rh.* 3.1, 1403b20-35).

14 Explicitly in Rapp 2022, §§ 3, 5.2; 2012, 590-591.

been provided we believe we have the securest grounds for believing it).[15] The implied comparison is with cases in which our beliefs rest on grounds less secure than that provided by demonstration: in those cases it is implied we would be 'less convinced' in the sense of taking the grounds for belief to be not as strong as demonstration provides.

This immediately brings to light grounds on which to prefer the epistemic interpretation. For it is clearly *true* that valid syllogisms from premises with the highest epistemic credentials offer the securest grounds for believing something. And it is clear that Aristotle thought so—beliefs held in this manner count, for him, as 'understanding' (ἐπιστήμη). By contrast, it is probably false, or at least doubtful, that providing demonstrations, or even what people (possibly mistakenly) take to be demonstrations, is the most causally-effective tool for convincing people of something, as Aristotle would be claiming on the effectiveness interpretation. A principle of charity in interpretation therefore suggests we should avoid attributing such a view to Aristotle. And indeed textual evidence suggests that Aristotle did not hold such a view. We have already noted some evidence from elsewhere in the *Rhetoric* that he did not.[16] To this we might add 1355a24-29, in which he says that persuasion 'on the basis of the most exact understanding (ἐπιστήμη)' (= demonstration) is impossible, i.e. persuasively ineffective, in encounters with 'some people'—where this clearly includes most uses of rhetoric. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*' discussion of weakness of will, Aristotle notes that as far as strength of conviction (πιστεύειν) and wholeheartedness is concerned, this can as easily result from states of belief (δόξα) that are not the product of demonstrations, as from the kind of 'understanding' (ἐπιστήμη) that is.[17] Aristotle simply did not think that producing demonstrations (or even appearing to do so) was the most effective way of

15 What does Aristotle have in mind when he says 'we take something to have been demonstrated' (a5-6)? He seems to be invoking the ordinary experience either of humans generally or at least of the kind of people who will be his readers. He need not be supposed to be thinking of a situation in which 'we' apply some particular theory of demonstration, such as his own. He can plausibly be thought of as envisaging a situation in which we simply take ourselves to have been presented with an argument of the most irrefutable, knowledge-supporting kind possible. We take ourselves to have been given an argument that meets those standards (whatever they might turn out to be).

16 Cf. above n. 13, and notice that the use of character, delivery and probably emotion too, does not result in the kind of conviction that inherently involves *taking something to have been* 'demonstrated', still less are these methods of actually producing demonstrations.

17 *EN* 7.3, 1146b24-31. Aristotle's main emphasis there is on the fact that some (ἔνιοι) people with belief have conviction as strong as others with understanding. But he also notes that as far as his argument is concerned, regarding strength of conviction, 'there is no difference between understanding (ἐπιστήμη) and opinion (δόξα)' (b29).

generating conviction. These are substantial reasons for preferring the epistemic interpretation.

3 The Claim's Role in the Argument of the Passage

The sentence we are considering (1355a5-6) forms part of an argument, and in this section I will show that the epistemic view offers a superior view of how that argument works both internally and in its context. To see this, it will be helpful to situate the argument within the wider sweep of Aristotle's argumentative strategy within the opening chapter of *Rhetoric* 1.

The start of the *Rhetoric* can be summarised as follows.[18] Rhetoric is, contrary to what was claimed by Socrates of the *Gorgias*, a method-based expertise (τέχνη) for the kind of practice of public argument that is a ubiquitous feature of human experience (1354a1-11). But those who publish handbooks titled 'Art of Rhetoric' haven't told us anything about that expertise. They taught how to manipulate others by speaking irrelevantly. But that isn't rhetoric. Rhetoric is a skill in producing proofs in support of a particular view of the matter under public consideration (1354a11-21). Once we understand rhetoric's vital, beneficial role within the state, it is obvious that proofs are central to it, and that irrelevant speaking has no place in it (1354a21-b22). States can't or don't always regulate effectively to keep public advocacy within this beneficial role, but they should (1354a21-24, a31-b16). No wonder, then, that this misguided type of irrelevant speaking that the handbook writers passed off as 'rhetoric' flourishes more in poorly-regulated states (1354a18-24), and in institutions within states where speeches are not confined to their proper role (e.g. in the law-courts much more than in assemblies, since citizens' self-interest forces speakers to keep to the point in the latter, 1354b22-1355a3). The proper role of public speakers is proving the case for their side, so it is obvious that my view of rhetoric (says Aristotle) as a skill in producing proofs is correct. Now take note of an important consequence of this insight: since I (Aristotle) am the expert in dialectic and how to construct arguments (συλλογισμοί), clearly it is I who am best placed to offer the correct account of the expertise of rhetoric (1355a3-18, the passage with which we are concerned here).

Our claim (1355a5-6), thus falls within a passage of argument in which Aristotle shows how the central role for *proofs* within rhetoric means that in order to understand the core of rhetorical expertise, we must turn to the

18 The view summarised here is defended in a detailed reading of each argument in Dow 2015, chh. 2 & 3.

dialectician (i.e. someone like himself!). The argument of the passage runs as follows.

> Since it is plain that the expert method is concerned with the proofs, and proof is a demonstration of some kind,* … and an enthymeme is a rhetorical demonstration, … and the enthymeme is a kind of reasoning (συλλογισμός), and it is the job of dialectic (either dialectic generally, or one of its parts) to consider all reasoning alike, …
>
> it is clear that the one who is best able to study this—from what and how a piece of reasoning comes about—would also be best skilled in enthymemes, providing he also grasped [some additional things]. (Arist. *Rh.* 1.1, 1355a3-14)[19]

Here, the crucial issue is specifically *how* the key claim on which we are focused here (which comes in the passage above in the place marked with the asterisk*) provides grounds for believing the assertion in the immediate context for which it is offered in support.

> CONCLUSION: Proof (πίστις) is a demonstration of some kind (ἀπόδειξίς τις); for
> PREMISE: we are convinced most of all whenever we take something to have been demonstrated.[20]

On the effectiveness interpretation, Aristotle seems to have a bad argument. He observes that demonstrations are the most causally effective tool at producing conviction, and infers from this that it must be 'demonstrations of a kind' that produce conviction *quite generally*. The conclusion of the inference is clearly a generalisation about 'proof' (πίστις), which on this interpretation is understood as something like 'tool for producing conviction',[21] or the thing that generates states of conviction. But the inference is fallacious—even if demonstrations were the most causally-effective tools for producing conviction, it

19 Some clauses are omitted in order to make clear the *structure* of the argument. The next five lines (b14-18) offer some further support for the conclusion that it is the dialectician who is best placed to understand rhetoric.

20 *Rh.* 1.1, 1355a4-6.

21 Those who adopt this kind of interpretation standardly translate πίστις as 'means of persuasion', e.g. Reeve 2018; Rapp 2022, or 'modes of persuasion' as W. Rhys Roberts in Barnes 1984; *contra*: Kennedy 1991.

does not follow that all tools for producing conviction must be demonstrations of some kind.[22]

By contrast, on the epistemic interpretation, the argument is rather different. When Aristotle asserts that 'we take our convictions to be most (epistemically) secure when we think something has been demonstrated' (a5-6), he is taking the most successful cases of producing 'conviction' (πιστεύειν) to illuminate the essential nature of conviction, in a way that will warrant generalisations about what can elicit it. He is highlighting that being convinced involves taking oneself to have good grounds for the thing one believes.[23] This happens most of all when we think something has been demonstrated. But this limiting case highlights a feature that must be possessed by *all* cases of conviction (lest they fail to be cases of conviction at all), and that can determine *how* convinced someone is in any given case. That feature is having good grounds for the thing believed. The better grounds for a belief you take yourself to have, the more convinced you will be, in the sense of taking your conviction to be epistemically secure. And demonstrations (valid inferences from epistemically impeccable premises) are the best grounds you can get.[24] Equally, taking oneself to have no good grounds at all for believing something is incompatible with being convinced of it. On this interpretation, Aristotle's superlative claim 'we are convinced most of all when we take something to have been demonstrated' implies the related comparative claim 'we are the more convinced the more we take something to have been demonstrated'; and this in turn suggests that it is essential to being convinced that one take oneself to have something demonstration-like in relation the thing in question, that is to say: some grounds for believing it. If this is what is meant and implied by this 'PREMISE', it is clearer why Aristotle would take it as a good basis on which to infer the 'CONCLUSION'. For 'proofs' (πίστεις) just are what elicits 'being convinced' (πιστεύειν), and if being convinced essentially involves taking oneself to have something demonstration-like in relation to what is believed, then it is natural

22 This is so, even if τις is read as *alienans*.

23 This matches what Aristotle says explicitly in *DA* 3.3, 428a23, 'conviction implies having been persuaded, which in turn implies reason,' and see Sorabji 1993, 36-38; Polansky 2007 and Shields 2016, *ad loc*. Any difficulties around Aristotle's denial of δόξα to non-human animals in this passage should be traced to the complexity around Aristotle's terminology for the mental states of non-human animals (*pace* Hamlyn 1993, *ad loc*.). The passage clearly links conviction to the kind of persuasion that elicits a reason-based response.

24 The argument here thus does not *depend* on reading τις as *alienans*, as famously suggested by Burnyeat 1994. But it is compatible with Burnyeat's reading, since even if ἀποδεδεῖχθαι (a6, with no *alienans* qualification) is understood in a more everyday, non-technical sense, it is still referring to the provision of compelling evidence or reasons in support of believing the thing in question.

to suppose that proofs will be precisely those demonstration-like things that provide the basis for conviction. By implication: the more like demonstrations they are, the more convinced the person will be, and the better specimens of proof they will prove to have been.

Note further that, thus construed, the conclusion about the nature of πίστις in general, i.e. that it is a kind of demonstration, supports the chain of reasoning that follows (a6-14), culminating in the claim that the relevant expert in this domain will be the expert on syllogisms—someone like Aristotle!

Thus we have a further reason to prefer the epistemic interpretation: it avoids attributing to Aristotle a bad argument in the immediate context, and instead gives him a good one.

4 How Is the Enthymeme the Most κύριος of the Proofs? (a7-8)

The third kind of reason for preferring the epistemic interpretation of Aristotle's claim about the connection between proof and demonstration is that it opens up an attractive interpretation of the claim later on in the same sentence that 'enthymeme is the most κύριος of the proofs'.

This latter claim can be interpreted, and indeed translated, in broadly two different ways.[25]

(1) Enthymeme is the most powerful of the proofs.
(2) Enthymeme is the most properly-so-called of the proofs.[26]

While either interpretation is possible, the second interpretation is more desirable. It attributes to Aristotle a more plausible view (it is not clear either that enthymemes are the most powerful kind of proof), and defuses a conflict that would otherwise obtain with what Aristotle says elsewhere in the *Rhetoric*. At *Rhetoric* 1.2, 1356a4-13, Aristotle contrasts his own view with the views of some of the handbook writers who claimed that the character of the speaker 'contributed nothing towards persuasiveness'—i.e. was not persuasively powerful. On Aristotle's view, the presentation of the speaker's character is one of three kinds of proof that constitute the core of the expertise. And, in contrast to those handbook writers, he held that the speaker's character 'carries pretty

25 See e.g. Lloyd 1996, 17, who records both possibilities. Curiously, this passage is absent from the entry on κύριος in Bonitz 1870, so we do not know how he would have decided between these.

26 To put this point in terms of the classification of uses of κύριος proposed by Schreiber 2012, appendix 3: of all the applications of the term 'proof' (πίστις) to rhetorical methods, its use for enthymemes is the most standard use of the term. Enthymemes most of all possess the attributes that make the standard application of the term fitting.

much the most powerful (κυριωτάτην) proof' (a13).[27] In that context, given the contrast Aristotle is drawing, it is clear that κυριωτάτην must mean most powerful, and if the κυριώτατον at 1355a7 is also interpreted as meaning most powerful, this seems to set up something close to a direct contradiction between the two passages.[28]

We can avoid attributing a contradiction to Aristotle by adopting the second interpretation of 1355a7-8. On this view, Aristotle believes (like many of his predecessors)[29] that the speaker's perceived character was the most *powerful* persuasive tool available to them, whilst also holding that enthymemes are the type of proof that most possesses the features essential to being a proof.

On this reading, Aristotle has argued that being a proof is a matter of exhibiting the features that are possessed above all by demonstrations. Clearly these can be possessed to a greater or lesser degree. And within rhetoric, it

27 The sequence of thought in 1356a10-13 is tricky. One plausible interpretation is that Aristotle is simply clarifying his reasons for insisting that character proofs are achieved *through the speech*. He disagrees with the claim of predecessors (such as Gorgias and Polus, perhaps, with their 'neutral' conception of rhetoric, usable by the just and the unjust alike) that a speaker's character is no part of rhetoric because it makes no persuasive difference: Aristotle thinks that reason is false—it makes a huge persuasive difference (a13). For Aristotle, it is excluded from the expertise of rhetoric for a different reason, i.e. because the expertise is focused on what is achieved *through speaking*, and a person's actual character (as contrasted with its portrayal) is not something achieved through the speech (see Rapp 2002, 143-144).

28 There is little softening of the conflict to be found in the fact that 1355a7-8 says that the enthymeme *is* the most powerful of the proofs, whereas 1356a13 says that character *carries* the most powerful proof. Another strategy for softening the contradiction involves suggesting that Aristotle envisages character as being used *in tandem with* enthymemes (i.e. delivering enthymemes in a way that portrays the speaker's character)—but the textual evidence for this view is hardly compelling and 3.17, 1418a38-40 seems to count decisively against it (Reeve 2018, 164). Rapp 2002, *ad* 1356a13, distinguishes between two things that might be conveyed by claims of the form 'x is the most important kind of proof': one concerns what *should* be most important in an 'adequate' and 'justified' conception of rhetoric, and the other what *is in fact* most important for persuasive effectiveness with actual audiences. Since he suggests that 1356a13 should be read in the latter way, the implication is that contradiction can be avoided by reading 1355a7-8 as meaning that enthymeme should be the most important of the proofs in an adequate / justified rhetoric. This seems to me a stretch: the resolution offered above is much simpler. But in any event, Rapp's distinction collapses if what justifies a conception of rhetoric, or makes it adequate, is that it is persuasively effective with actual audiences.

29 Cf. e.g. Old-Oligarch ([Xenophon]), X. *Ath*. 1.7; Isoc. 15.280 (*Antidosis*); on which, see Dow, n.d. Plato attributes to Gorgias the boast that his rhetoric can make someone appear knowledgeable in relation to both technical and moral subject matters, and thereby persuade the mass of citizens; indeed he makes this the centre of his characterisation of Gorgianic rhetoric (*Grg*. 459a-d).

is enthymemes—being 'rhetorical demonstrations' (a6)—that do so more than any other kind of proof. His assertion that the enthymeme is the most properly-so-called of the 'proofs' is then to be understood as an *inference* from this view of what a proof is. Interpretation (2) thus yields a nicely unified understanding of the argument of the passage.

Interpretation (2) of 1355a7-8 thus has significant attractions. It is perhaps not strictly incompatible with the effectiveness interpretation of our key claim at a4-5 about the connection between proof and demonstration, and with understanding Aristotle's overall project as commending his proof-based rhetoric on grounds of its superior persuasive effectiveness. But it is much harder on that view to make sense of what Aristotle's basis would be for asserting that enthymemes are more properly thought of as 'proofs' than (say) examples, character proofs, or the use of emotion (or non-technical proofs, such as witnesses and contracts). If πίστις simply means a thing that a speaker produces to cause persuasion to take place in the minds of their audience, as that view insists it does, it is unclear why these other kinds of πίστις are any less deserving of the term than enthymemes. Whereas if πίστις means proper grounds for conviction, and essentially involves features exhibited to the highest degree by demonstrations (as the epistemic interpretation of the key claim above has it), then it is obvious why an explicit, syllogistic argument from reputable premises is a more straightforward application of the term than the presentation of the speaker's character, or the arousal of the audience's emotions.

5 Conclusion

I have defended the view that at 1355a5-6, Aristotle claims that we take our convictions to be most epistemically secure when we think something has been demonstrated. That is to say, the connection between demonstrations and 'being convinced' (πιστεύειν) and hence also 'proofs' (πίστεις) centres on their normative features: specifically, their epistemic credentials. This interpretation has been defended against the principal rival interpretation, according to which he is claiming that demonstrations (strictly: what an audience takes to be demonstrations) are more causally effective than other methods at convincing audiences. It has been commended on the grounds that it gives Aristotle a generalisation about πίστις and ἀπόδειξις that is more likely to be true, it gives Aristotle a better inference from this generalisation to his general characterisation of πίστις, and it supports an interpretation of his claim about enthymeme two lines later that we have independent reason to prefer. This contributes to answering the wider question of whether Aristotle's overall

project in the *Rhetoric* is to recommend his preferred brand of rhetoric on the grounds of its superior persuasive effectiveness, or because it is the kind of rhetoric that is worthy of cultivation, beneficial both to its possessor and to the political community in which it is exercised.[30] It counts in favour of the latter. Since the passages discussed here articulate Aristotle's view of the connection between three concepts central to his view of rhetoric, i.e. proof (πίστις), demonstration (ἀπόδειξις), and enthymeme, this contribution is a significant one.[31]

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30 The broader case for the 'normative' view is made in Dow 2015, on the basis of how Aristotle's arguments in key chapters of the *Rhetoric* should most plausibly be construed, and on the basis of a wider exploration of the meaning of πίστις within the *Rhetoric* and Aristotle's other works, and beyond them.

31 I am very grateful indeed to Laura Castelli. Paola Chapa-Montes, Miira Tuominen, and Christof Rapp for comments and encouragement based on earlier drafts of this material. Any errors that remain are of course entirely my own responsibility.

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