CHAPTER 3

Three Kinds of Proof

Early in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle famously defined the art of rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (Book I, Chapter 2). He then grouped these means into three classes or, as he called them, *pisteis*. Often translated as "modes of persuasion," the three pisteis in Aristotle's classification may already be familiar to you, since it has become common (once again) in recent years to speak of rhetoric in terms of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. Ethos, according to Aristotle, involves "the personal character of the speaker"; pathos consists of "putting the audience into a certain frame of mind"; and logos refers to "the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself."

Aristotle's use of pisteis is notable because the term literally designates not only *proofs* but also *beliefs*, *faith*, *trust*, and *confidence*. In an important sense, then, *pisteis* suggests persuasion is fundamentally connected to the ability of a speaker to inspire her audience to believe her words, to trust that she is making true claims. Proving one's case, in other words, begins with inducing confidence in one's audience. So while persuasion works when a speaker skillfully uses one or more instances of pisteis, we can begin our discussion of the modes of persuasion with ethos.

ETHOS

In addition to the connections between proof and trustworthiness implied in the word *pisteis*, Aristotle also called **ethos** the most effective or persuasive of the proofs in the *Rhetoric* (I.2). Establishing ethos thus presents a tremendous opportunity to the writer who wishes to persuade. How do you take advantage of this opportunity? The short answer is that you exhibit three features—good sense, virtue, and good will—in your writing. We will explore each of these features.

Three Ethical Properties

In contemporary usage, we often use the term *ethos* in two senses, one quantitative and the other qualitative. In the quantitative sense, ethos is something a rhetor has (or doesn't) in varying degrees or amounts. It is mostly what we mean below when we discuss the three properties of ethos. The more a speaker or writer has of each the better, so the question we ask when we speak of this sense of ethos is *how much* a person has. The second use of the term refers to the kind (or quality) of character a person is thought to have. In this sense, ethos is synonymous with *character* or *persona*. Everyone has a character (even homes and other objects are described as having a particular character). The question here is *what kind of* character a person has: reliable? lazy? considerate? haughty? responsible? corrupt?

These two meanings of ethos are not unrelated, and their relation suggests something about the connection between the rhetorical concept of ethos and conventional uses of the term *ethical*. For instance, the person who demonstrates the qualities of trustworthiness and considerateness in his (verbal) action will typically be considered a trustworthy and considerate person. For this judgment to hold, the person must demonstrate these qualities again and again—and must not break our trust or demonstrate disregard for the well-being of others. We would likely then describe the person who demonstrates such qualities as possessing ethics—or as an ethical person. At any rate, we will from time to time use ethos in both its quantitative and qualitative senses. And as you think about how others have established ethos and how you wish to do so in your own writing, you can keep in mind both meanings of the word.

GOOD SENSE

One element of good sense is knowledge. At first glance, your effort to appear knowledgeable may seem to rely only on one thing—your possession of actual knowledge. And it is of course true that, if you wish to persuade your audience to take a particular view of a topic, it is crucial that you be informed about that topic. For this reason, expert testimony is valued in courtrooms. Experts simply have a lot of knowledge in the field they're asked to testify about. To the extent, then, that you can **acquire expertise about your topic**, you will enjoy greater ethos. This does not mean you must set a high bar for what it means to be an expert. If you only know somewhat more about your topic than your audience does, you can still provide your listeners with information that will help convince them they have reason to trust your relative level of expertise.

This is not to say that you should pretend to know more than you do. (Nor should you suppose—or appear to suppose—that your relative expertise makes you superior to your audience. On this point, see *good will* below.) You can think about the reasons for this admonition in two ways. On the one hand, the danger of the audience's thinking you are wrong about your claims (and hence, ignorant or, worse, deceptive) far outweighs the benefit of the audience's assumption that you know an increment more than you do. On the other hand, there is virtue in

knowing—and acknowledging—what you do not know. Knowing the limits of your knowledge is the first step in acquiring new knowledge, and a frank and deferential concession that we can look elsewhere for more information can enhance your audience's trust that you are scrupulous about seeking and sharing the best information available.

Of course, acknowledging what one *doesn't* know works largely because (and when) it can be paired with evidence of other knowledge you have about your topic. Good sense can—and should—also be demonstrated in other ways. In addition to providing information about your topic, showing that you understand that claims must be supported by evidence enhances the impression that you have good sense. (Recall the discussion of claims and evidence from chapter 2.) Or rather, we should put the claim this way: claims must be supported by evidence *when appropriate*. Imagine the following scenario. You are speaking to your brother-in-law, who is the director of sales for a natural foods company. You say:

> Breakfast bars made by natural foods companies are better than those of conventional food companies.

To your brother-in-law, this is an uncontroversial claim. An attempt to *prove* the claim would strike him as odd. He already agrees with your claim, and he is aware of any evidence you could offer to support the claim. If you offered the evidence anyway, telling him what he already knows, it would possibly annoy him. Or it might insult him, since telling him something he should already know (given his line of work) would suggest you think you know his industry better than he does. At best, then, you would seem a bit clumsy, at worst, condescending. It would be altogether better to stop with the claim.

But imagine a different scenario, one where you want to convince your mother to spend a little more money than she usually does for breakfast bars made by a natural foods company. If you stop at the claim, your argument might seem to her smug or snobbish or frivolous. It would *help* your argument, in this scenario, if you explained that natural food companies use all organic ingredients, that they limit added sugars, that they avoid food additives. You would further demonstrate your good sense if you explained why additives such as artificial preservatives are potentially harmful. All of this information would clearly show that you understand not only some valuable details about nutrition, but also the importance to your mother that you explain why your claim is valid—and that you know *how* to make your claim appear valid (by supporting it with evidence).

To put this advice about ethos in general terms, we can say that it incorporates what the Greeks called *phronesis*, practical wisdom. **Demonstrating practical wisdom** or commonsense suggests the rhetor can be relied upon to take a reasonable position both in general and with respect to her topic. The rhetor with practical wisdom is prudent (indeed, the Latin version of *phronesis* is *prudentia*). Her judgment can be trusted.

VIRTUE

In establishing oneself as an ethical rhetor, it is not enough to be intelligent or to demonstrate good sense. A speaker's demonstration of good sense may tell us that he knows much about his topic and that he makes careful decisions, but it does not tell us that he will make morally sound decisions. The quality of character that would ensure such decisions was of considerable interest in ancient Greece and Rome. The Greeks discussed this quality in terms of *arete*; for the Romans, it was *virtus*. In both cases, *virtue* is an apt modern term. To describe virtue as a "quality of character" risks misleading you, however. For most rhetoricians from the classical period through today, the kind of moral character critical to the formation of ethos was less the *source* of morally sound decisions than their *result*. One did not perform virtuous actions because he possessed virtue in his essential being; one was virtuous (i.e., would have been described as having virtue) because he performed virtuous actions. This distinction between one's essence and one's conduct matters for rhetoric because it means (and meant) that one's virtue could effectively be demonstrated through his words (his verbal conduct): one could become virtuous by speaking in virtuous ways.

But how does one demonstrate virtue through words? In contemporary rhetoric, one typically does so *indirectly*. Aristotle taught that **praising virtue** (and **censuring vice**) in others will "at the same time" instruct our audience how to understand "our own characters" (I.9). To praise courage means that I recognize its value, and doing so expresses my desire to perform courageous acts. Likewise, a statement of my disgust at deception provides some indication that I will avoid deceiving my audience. Such a verbal performance, of course, is not a foolproof guide to a speaker's future behavior. The psychological concept of projection provides an alternative explanation for a speaker's motive when censuring vice. We could readily imagine a speaker who calls his opponent "crooked" but is deeply corrupt himself. This is why such an indirect demonstration of virtue is but one ingredient in a range of resources available to the rhetor who aims to establish ethos.

If we look to existing rhetorical practice, we find numerous examples of speakers who praise both virtues and the virtuous and who condemn vice. When Barack Obama gave his first inaugural address in January of 2009, he said the following.

> That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood.… Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered.

By inveighing against greed and irresponsibility and by expressing sympathy for those who lost homes, jobs, and businesses during the 2007-08 financial crisis, Obama sought to **establish his good moral character**.

Another example, from nearly four years later, shows a similar attempt to shore up the virtuous character of the speaker. In accepting the vice-presidential nomination at the 2012 Republican National Convention, Paul Ryan said:

> I learned a good deal about economics, and about America, from the author of the Reagan tax reforms—the great Jack Kemp. What gave Jack that incredible enthusiasm was his belief in the possibilities of free people, in the power of free enterprise and strong communities to overcome poverty and despair. We need that same optimism right now.

Two strategies stand out here. The first is the mention of "free people" and "free enterprise," meant to imply Ryan's (virtuous) commitment to preserving freedom through economics. Ryan was by this time well known for his interest in tax policy, and one effect of his words here is to frame taxation as more than an issue of mere economics. Tax reform, he suggests, is the basis for freedom. (This is what implicitly connects the love of freedom by Ryan's mentor Kemp to Kemp's enthusiastic labor in support of tax reform in the 1980s.) Ryan is thus able to communication the proposition, "I am the kind of person who will ensure your freedom," without ever explicitly saying so. In fact, the more subtle communication of the claim is more effective than its explicit statement would be.

The second strategy at work in Ryan's speech is his invocation of the names of Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp. The first occupies a place of unmatched esteem for Ryan's audience of Republican delegates. Reagan's virtue is unimpeachable for the average Republican. Ryan's indirect connection to Reagan (he worked for Kemp, "the author of the Reagan tax reforms") allows him to share in some of the former president's favorable reputation. His connection to both Reagan and Kemp creates the tacit impression that these men can serve as Ryan's **character references**. Another function of Ryan's mention of Kemp is to highlight the speaker's **experience**. While experience is not a quality we may typically classify as a virtue, it does provide evidence of one's competence—and of one's likelihood to do what one says one will do.

Just as this expansion of "virtue" to include experience suggests, what counts as virtuous is not static across time or space. Rather, it varies from culture to culture. What virtues a rhetor must demonstrate that she possesses, in other words, depends largely upon the views of her audience.

GOOD WILL

The audience is central, too, in the rhetor's effort to establish good will. The Greek term *eunoia*—benevolence—is instructive. The speaker or writer who wishes to establish ethical appeal must prove she feels benevolence for her audience. And since good will is a two-way street, the rhetor secures good will *from* her audience by **manifesting her own respect and concern *for* her audience**. (This is why arrogance about relative expertise, as we discussed when examining good sense above, isn't really a good look.) To put this in slightly different terms, we could say that good will indicates feelings of mutual respect between a rhetor and her audience.

In certain genres, speaking directly to "the reader" or using second-person pronouns to address the audience isn't entirely uncommon. There is risk, however, in stating something so explicit as "Dear reader, I care about you." Such a statement is likely to seem unnatural, contrived, and may thus strike the audience as insincere, undercutting your very effort to assert and secure good will. So the rhetor often expresses benevolence is a more understated way.

The best way to explain the kind of explicit steps that writers take to establish good will is to look at an example. In the following, Ta-Nehisi Coates announces to readers of *The Atlantic* that after writing *Black* Panther and having "lived in the world of Wakanda" for two years, "I'm entering a new one—the world of Captain America." His announcement is notable because Captain America is a symbol of optimism about American ideals, while Coates is famous for his critiques of American reality and his pessimism that Americans can ever live up to those ideals. His task in this piece, therefore, is to convince his readers that it is appropriate that he write *Captain America* (and that they ultimately should read his work). That Coates thinks he must write this explanation to his readers is the first sign that Coates respects his audience: He cares enough that readers believe that his writing of *Captain America* comes from a sincere place, not merely an opportunity to ride the bandwagon of comic book success, that he addresses this issue directly. He does so by tying his writing of non-fiction cultural critique (which he refers to here as "opinion journalism") to his writing of graphic novels:

> I have my share of strong opinions about the world. But one reason that I chose the practice of opinion journalism—which is to say a mix of reporting and opinion—is because understanding how those opinions fit in with the perspectives of others has always been more interesting to me than repeatedly restating my own. Writing, for me, is about questions—not answers.

In the modest acknowledgement that his opinions matter no more than "the perspectives of others"—including the perspectives of his own audience—Coates expresses his regard for his readers. If writing is about asking questions instead of having all the answers, the fundamental question, Coates suggests, whether writing opinion journalism or *Captain America*, is what it's like to experience a perspective unlike the writer's own:

> Captain America, the embodiment of a kind of Lincolnesque optimism, poses a direct question for me: Why would anyone believe in The Dream? What is exciting here is not some didactic act of putting my words in Captain America's head, but attempting to put Captain America's words in my head. What is exciting is the possibility of exploration, of avoiding the repetition of a voice I've tired of.

This combination of humility (about the value of one's own claims) and curiosity (about the experience of others) seems a fine recipe for generating good will.

Two Sources of Ethos

The very need for Ta-Nehisi Coates to make the kind of explanation we have just examined is notable because it suggests that ethos persists from occasion to occasion or is built up over time—that ethos exists outside of one's writing. The fact that Coates thought he could persuade readers that his ethos should include "writer of *Captain America*," on the other hand, suggests that ethos also has a second source: writing itself.

SITUATED ETHOS

We often refer to the ethos that emerges from the first of these sources as **situated**. Its source is the situation—or the series of situations for which the rhetor has previously delivered some instance of discourse. If a rhetorical situation consists of a context, a rhetor, an audience, and a text, a situated ethos refers to anything contributed by the first three of these. Thus, a rhetor's *credentials* (an advanced degree or a job title) or his *being vouched for* by a trusted associate (as when a member of an organization introduces a speaker who does not belong to the organization) may all enhance his ethical appeal. So may his *reputation* for honesty, for insight, for generosity. Note that reputation as indicating the kind of person one is, and the evidence we use includes both rhetorical and extra-rhetorical actions that person has performed. In any case, all of these external contributions to a rhetor's ethos may be invaluable. But they precede the delivery of a composed text (a speech or piece of writing) and thus are difficult to control. This does not mean they are impossible to control, but since a rhetor's situated ethos is built cumulatively over time, it is more resistant to immediate influence.

INVENTED ETHOS

More immediately responsive is a rhetor's **invented ethos**. It is this type of rhetorical proof that is effected by the demonstration of good sense, virtue, and good will *within* a text. When Coates attempts to persuade his readers that the same good will that had motivated him to write several issues of *Black Panther* and his book *We Were Eight Years in Power*, he does so not only by reminding his audience of the good will he had formerly generated (that is, by assertion). But as we saw above, he (re)establishes his good will by expressing his humility and curiosity as a writer *within* "Why I'm Writing *Captain America*."

Implicit in what we have said above is that situated ethos and invented ethos are related. If ethos invented in a particular text does not immediately rewrite a rhetor's situated ethos, it can begin to shift the appearance of the rhetor's *future* situated ethos. However, in the case of demonstrated vice (as opposed to virtue) or disgust for (instead of good will toward) one's readers, it may be possible to replace a well-established and prized situated ethos altogether.

Plagiarism and Citation

Perhaps the easiest way to destroy one's ethos (invented as well as situated) is to plagiarize. Plagiarism is often discussed in the context of citation or use of sources. In that context: Plagiarism is to be avoided. We prefer to think in terms of opportunities, not prohibitions. Hence: Citation is to be embraced.

It is critical that you think of plagiarism and citation as intimately connected to your ethos. Your transparent and thorough attribution of sources shows both a desire to be honest and fair and—just as importantly—that you have conducted research into your subject, that you have familiarized yourself with what others have said about your subject. In other words, by using what others have said and written and by acknowledging that use, you demonstrate good moral character, good sense, and (at least a developing sense of) expertise. This is an opportunity well worth taking advantage of.

PATHOS

A second kind of proof is available to rhetors, and it is used when a rhetor appeals to the tastes, the predispositions, the attitudes, the fears, and the pleasures of the audience. We call this kind of proof **pathos**, and as its adjectival form (*pathetic*) suggests, it has much to do both with the emotions of the audience and with the rhetor's ability to share those emotions (hence: *empathy*).

The Uses of Emotions

At the very beginning of the second book of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle observed that the rhetor who hoped to succeed must ensure not only that "his own character should look right" but "also that his hearers themselves should be in just the right frame of mind" (II.1). This point about the frame of mind of his audience suggests a couple of possibilities. The rhetor can, first, hope the audience is *already* in a propitious emotional state. But if it is not, the rhetor has a second option: attempt to change the way the audience feels. Implicit in Aristotle's next statement—"When people are feeling friendly and placable, they think one sort of thing; when they are feeling angry or hostile, they think either something totally different or the same thing with a different intensity" (II.1)—is a need for rhetors to conduct audience analysis of two kinds. Before addressing an audience, a rhetor should have well-founded knowledge about

- what emotions the audience feels, and
- how intensely the audience feels those emotions.

The first question points to the opportunity a rhetor has for enlisting the audience's emotions to encourage a particular decision or action. The audience member angry about a particular injustice, for instance, is more likely to call an elected official and demand change than an audience member indifferent to the injustice or

ashamed of his role in it. How a rhetor approaches her rhetorical task will change, then, depending on the **emotional disposition** of her audience. Because different emotions incline an audience toward different reactions, Aristotle devoted most of the *Rhetoric*'s second book to discussing the range of possible emotions (anger, fear, shame, pity, envy, etc.).

If an audience's emotions seem to dispose it unfavorably toward the rhetor's desired end, the rhetor faces the prerequisite of encouraging the audience to feel different emotions. This is why the question of how intensely the audience feels its anger, fear, shame, pity, or envy is important. An audience member who feels only mild envy about the past fortunes of a group now suffering can be made more easily to sympathize with the group's present suffering than an audience member intensely envious of their past fortunes. The audience's **intensity of emotional experience** also will affect the way the rhetor approaches her argument, particularly in terms of how much time she must spend moving the audience to feel the emotion she thinks appropriate to the action she will persuade them to undertake.

Encouraging Different Emotions

In this view, audience analysis can produce an awareness that a rhetor *needs* to change his audience's emotional state. This analysis can even tell the rhetor whether doing so is likely to be easy or difficult (depending upon how intensely the audience is wrapped up in its emotional disposition). But it is not yet clear how this awareness can lead the rhetor to *change* the audience's emotions.

For this purpose, the rhetor can begin with Aristotle's two observations about how emotions operate:

1. they attach to a particular object.

Who is the audience angry at? What does the audience fear? Who does the audience envy? For whom does the audience feel pity? The rhetor who can answer these kinds of questions can begin to talk about the object (of the anger, the fear, the pity, etc.) in ways that make other feelings about it possible. Or the rhetor can recall for the audience different objects to elicit different feelings.

2. they arise in common environments.

Perhaps an audience becomes angry when stuck in traffic, fearful when separated from a loved one, envious when paying monthly bills. The rhetor who can recall for the audience the circumstances that produced these feelings can reproduce them. Alternately, the rhetor can talk about the circumstances in ways that shift their significance and make other feelings possible.

We can begin to see how we might apply this kind of audience analysis by considering reactions to mass shootings in two American high schools in the spring of 2018. Concerned parties responded principally to two questions: What causes such high levels of gun violence in the United States? and What should Americans do to reduce gun violence? If you have paid attention to public

discussions about guns and school shootings in 2018 (or frankly, for many years before), you know that your own answers to those questions would be met with one of two kinds of reception. A large group of your fellow Americans would receive your answers favorably and would require you to offer little or no support for your answers before agreeing with you. Another large group of your fellow Americans would dismiss your answers out of hand, and no support for your answers would persuade this second group. You also are aware that very few Americans are in neither group—and that no one is in both groups.

As far as public deliberation and decision-making goes, such divided and apparently settled opinion is not especially helpful. But how do we move beyond our present impasse? It should be immediately clear that either side's shouting at, ridiculing, or refusing to talk to its opponents is unlikely to resolve anything. To achieve some kind of resolution, the groups must talk to one another, and to do so, each group must begin with understanding the emotions felt by its opponents. The question for our analysis here, then, is what attachments and contexts dispose audiences toward these particular reactions to mass shootings, reactions which seem almost automatic.

Work in the field of critical discourse analysis, especially research by Douglas Downs, is useful for these purposes. This research suggests that individuals experience the world through certain "frames"—and that two dominant frames (at least in the United States) are the *cosmopolitan* and the *rural* frames. These frames tend to track with some reliability onto individuals in urban and rural parts of America. But more importantly, they help explain why Americans do hold pretty starkly divided opinions. Nearly twice as many people in urban areas (62%) favor stricter gun laws as people in rural areas (33%) (*Public Views*), and these different positions can be explained in part by the different emotional responses the cosmopolitan and rural worldviews encourage.

What do these frames consist of? On the one hand, the cosmopolitan

- views society as highly **interdependent**, with the actions of any member of society producing small or large consequences for other individuals and for the group as a whole;
- highly values **expertise** and is willing to trust the expert to do the kinds of work the cosmopolitan individual does not feel he has the time or knowledge to do himself; and
- has **risk aversion**. Seeing danger as complex (the result of interdependence) but the sort of thing that experts can minimize, the cosmopolitan would prefer to reduce risk where possible (and has a pretty liberal view of where risk reduction is possible).

The rural worldview, on the other hand,

- views social life as simpler and values the **independent** individual who can ignore or overcome the noise of society;
- prefers **self-reliance** to expertise; and
- sees risk as inevitable and not to be avoided but overcome. The rural frame is thus **more risk tolerant**.

If the cosmopolitan frame applies to advocates of increased restrictions on gun sales and ownership and the rural frame to opponents of increased restrictions (who sometimes propose other solutions to gun violence that have nothing to do with gun ownership), what can the frames tell us about the emotional responses of each group when school shootings occur?

Cosmopolitans see guns as dangerous contributors to overall risk, and because they would prefer less risk, they favor measures that would reduce the number of guns. Hence, their support for gun restrictions. Moreover, these advocates of greater restrictions perceive gun violence to be an outcome with complex causes (given the interdependent society in which we live). For instance, the effects of limited social and economic resources in early childhood, the lingering consequences of racial and ethnic segregation and inequality in the United States, and the threat of economic deprivation may all contribute (in ways that are difficult to pin down) to the motivations and reactions of potential mass shooters. But for these supporters of restrictions on guns, if we all share the risks of these complex social problems, we also collectively share the responsibility of finding a solution. And while the solution may too be complex, a particularly simple solution to one of the manifestations of the problem (mass shootings) would be to trust the legislative experts to enact laws that would reduce the number of guns in circulation.

If we understand that advocates of gun restrictions perceive the gun-violence problem this way, then we can begin to comprehend their emotional reactions to mass shootings. For one thing, they feel sad: for the victims of shootings. For another, they feel fear: that they or someone they know directly will be a future victim. Additionally, after decades of gun violence with little change in gun laws, they feel frustration and anger: especially at the opponents of change. The objects of this audience's emotions, to summarize, are victims, friends and relatives, and opponents. And what of the circumstances that produce these emotions? Obviously, the primary circumstance from which the emotion arises is one where a shooting has occurred. That is also the circumstance that causes the feeling of sadness. But a larger environment is important as well—the environment of a culture that has witnessed numerous mass shootings (and school shootings, in particular) over the past few decades and has made no significant change to its gun policy.

Turning to the rural frame, we can see why a mass shooting may trigger different emotional reactions. To begin with the shooting, risk is unavoidable. Bad

people exist, and they can get their hands on guns. So the question is not how you prevent shootings, but how you respond in the face of one. In the rural worldview, you respond by defending yourself and those you care about and perhaps those innocents around you in danger of becoming victims. Such a defense is made easier if you are allowed to carry a gun yourself. But the very reaction you now know you can anticipate from advocates of gun restrictions is a call for fewer guns and for greater difficulty of owning and carrying a gun. Thus, just as a mass shooting arrives for the gun-law advocate wrapped in a layer of past frustrations, it arrives for the gun-law opponent as a shooting that is also a threat to existing gun rights. As a self-reliant individual who would prefer to take care of yourself, the meddling of "legislative experts" in the free exchange of guns in America represents an infringement on your freedoms, a weakening of your ability to protect yourself, and the unwelcome judgment that the government knows better what you should do than you do.

This perception of mass shootings suggests why opponents of increased restrictions on gun ownership may have different feelings. These opponents no doubt feel sad for the victims of shootings. But they seem less likely to fear shooters. Or if they do fear the idea of shooters, it is only because they fear facing shooters unarmed. The true object of their fear, then, is the culture—cosmopolitans, legislators, the government—that would take away their guns. We have also already begun to see that they may feel frustration and anger and resentment at the threat of incursions into their private lives and the perceived condescension of others who think they their policies are so superior that they're willing to implement them against the will of these opponents (and dispossess the opponents in doing so). We can also begin to understand the circumstance that causes opponents to respond with the emotions of fear, frustration, and anger. Like cosmopolitan advocates, for whom a shooting is also a history of frustrated attempts to enact their own safety measures, rural opponents experience the shooting event simultaneously as a continual effort to roll back their rights and opportunities for self-protection. This larger environment of an ongoing political effort determines the kinds of emotional response likely by what is sometimes called the pro-gun group.

The above descriptions of the emotional predispositions that distinguish supporters and opponents of gun restrictions help us see how both audiences are sympathetic, in both senses of that word: they feel—or are motivated (in part) by emotional responses—and others can feel (sympathy) for them. To return to an earlier point, if our hope is that the two groups can come together to develop some kind of policy that will reduce gun violence, then a first step is for each to feel sympathy for the other, and the precondition for that first step is for each to see the others' sympathies or, in other words, to understand why the opposition feels the way it does. If this audience analysis were primarily a *productive* exercise (an exercise in producing arguments), we could go further and identify strategies for addressing the opposition, for encouraging it to feel differently about mass shootings or gun violence. Although (as we have said) the ultimate purpose of

analysis is to make us better producers of persuasion, the immediate purpose here is to see the tools available for analysis, as this brief consideration of two opposing audiences illustrates.

LOGOS

The third kind of proof, according to Aristotle, that rhetors may use to appeal to their audiences is **logos**. You may readily associate the term with "logic," and while there is some reason for doing so, we shouldn't think too narrowly about logic when conceiving logos as a mode of appeal. Logic in the broadly philosophical sense refers to the practice of inferring conclusions from a set of premises and of evaluating the validity of those inferences. We will examine both the more formal steps of syllogistic logic and a range of logical fallacies in the next chapter. But we can lay the groundwork by looking here at what happens "when, in everyday life, we actually assess," in the words of English philosopher Stephen Toulmin, "the soundness, strength and conclusiveness of arguments." If we are to judge an everyday argument successful or strong or reasonable (or unsuccessful or weak or stupid), in other words, then we need to know what parts of the argument contribute to our judgment. Toulmin broke the components of an argument down into four parts: the **claim**, **data** to support it, a **warrant** connecting the data to the claim, and **backing**.

We can look at each of these below, and it will help to do so by considering an example. To stick with the topic of American responses to gun violence, we can recall a speech by Barack Obama in January of 2015, where the (at that time) president announced a set of executive actions designed "Not to debate the last mass shooting, but to do something to try to prevent the next one." At the heart of the measures Obama introduced in this speech was the argument that too-ready access to guns are the primary cause of gun violence in the United States. Such ready access allows the irresponsible or ill-intentioned few to purchase guns. If these few (who often turn out to commit crimes, including mass shootings) were prevented from acquiring guns, gun violence would decrease. So the argument goes, and we can see it in Obama's discussion of background checks below:

> Today, background checks are required at gun stores. If a father wants to teach his daughter how to hunt, he can walk into a gun store, get a background check, purchase his weapon safely and responsibly. This is not seen as an infringement on the Second Amendment. …You pass a background check; you purchase a firearm.
>
> The problem is some gun sellers have been operating under a different set of rules. A violent felon can buy the exact same weapon over the Internet with no background check, no questions asked. A recent study found that about one in 30 people looking to buy guns on one website had criminal records—one out of 30 had a criminal record. We're talking about

> individuals convicted of serious crimes—aggravated assault, domestic violence, robbery, illegal gun possession. **People with lengthy criminal histories buying deadly weapons all too easily**. And this was just one website within the span of a few months.
>
> So we've created a system in which dangerous people are allowed to play by a different set of rules than a responsible gun owner who buys his or her gun the right way and subjects themselves to a background check. That doesn't make sense. Everybody should have to abide by the same rules. Most Americans and gun owners agree.

A couple of appeals help Obama support his argument. One concerns the unfairness that "dangerous people" can get guns more easily than law-abiding people. A second is that background checks are relatively non-onerous (they aren't "an infringement on the Second Amendment") for responsible citizens. But the main claim is emphasized above: People with a record of committing violent crime can too easily—and do—purchase deadly weapons. (A claim can, of course, serve as the basis for another claim, as this one does: Because guns are too readily available [claim 1], we should make it more difficult for dangerous people to acquire them [claim 2].)

Claims

We have already identified the central **claim** in the quoted portion of Obama's argument. We can discuss here what distinguishes a claim from the other components of an argument. For Toulmin, a claim is the "conclusion whose merits we are seeking to establish." The fact that effort and perhaps desire ("seeking") are required for establishing a claim indicates its tenuousness. That is to say, a claim is a contingent, not a necessary, conclusion, which means others may not reach the same conclusion even when given the same data. Two characteristics of a claim are thus apparent. First, a claim is not the set of observable facts with which any of us begins but a *realization that is the result of our reflection upon those observable facts*. Second, a claim is *a disputable proposition* (and if it weren't, there would be no need for argument anyway).

Data

If a claim is what we infer from observable facts, *observed facts* are the data. In our example, Obama mentions several points of data: Background checks are required at gun stores; a majority of gun owners support the kinds of limitations on possession he would like enacted or enforced; and so forth. He offers two pieces of data to support his claim about easy access to guns for people who have committed violent crimes: Guns can be bought online without background checks, and one of every 30 online gun shoppers has a criminal background.

The term "data" may suggest that support for claims only exists in the form of numbers—or that numerical evidence is the only or best kind of evidence

we should trust. As these examples indicate, however, that's not the case. "Data" encompasses all forms of evidence, and the best kinds are simply those that best support the claim an arguer is making. For some claims, numerical (quantitative) data can be pretty helpful.

Claim: Humanities majors *do* get jobs.

Data: Only 4.3% of holders of bachelor's degrees in the humanities were unemployed in 2015 (*State of the Humanities 2018*).

For other claims, qualitative data offer better support.

Claim: Merrick Garland would be a terrific Supreme Court justice.

Data: The opinions he wrote as chief judge on the D.C. Court of Appeals demonstrate both deep knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and existing case law and a record of judicious application of the law.

Usually, of course, the best support for claims comes from multiple pieces of data, and so the most persuasive arguments are often composed of a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

Warrant

But not all data are equal. Consider the following argument:

Claim: Belgium won the 2018 World Cup.

Data: Belgium scored more goals (16) than any other team in the tournament.

The data point is accurate. France and Croatia each only scored 14 goals throughout the tournament. But the claim is not accurate. Belgium lost to France in the semi-final round, and since France beat Croatia in the finals, France are the World Cup champions.

So what is wrong with the argument above? You will already recognize the problem: the data provided (goals scored) are not the most relevant data available (wins). In a simple example like the one above, we can easily see that an *implied statement is meant to connect the data to the claim*: The team that scores the most goals in the tournament will win the World Cup. This is the **warrant**. When it is made explicit, we can see that it is absurd. (A better warrant, of course, would be: The team that wins in each of the knock-out rounds of the tournament will win the World Cup.) We can also see, when we make the above warrants explicit, that a warrant is a more *general statement* than the data to which it refers.

We can now return to the example from Obama's speech. We have already identified the claim and the data:

Claim: "People with lengthy criminal histories [are] buying deadly weapons all too easily."

Data: "A violent felon can buy [a gun] over the Internet with no background check, no questions asked. A recent study found that about one in 30 people looking to buy guns on one website had criminal records—one out of 30 had a criminal record."

By making the warrant explicit, we can begin to evaluate the strength of the argument. Since we have two pieces of data, we need to identify two warrants—two general statements that would authorize us, given the data, to draw a conclusion like the claim above.

Warrant 1: Because background checks are not required for online firearm purchases, people (some "with lengthy criminal histories") can buy guns online.

Warrant 2: If any of those people have criminal records, then criminals are "buying deadly weapons."

These warrants seem pretty reasonable. While many factors go into a decision about where to make a purchase (price, selection, customer service, etc.), barriers that prevent someone from completing a transaction (such as the inability to pass a background check) would seem to be among the factors that might encourage a potential consumer to make a purchase online. Likewise, if "one out of 30" potential online consumers has a criminal record, it seems a fair conclusion that criminals are using online vendors to buy guns without completing a background check.

A skeptical reader may see the shift from "people [who] had criminal records" to "violent felon" to "people with lengthy criminal histories" and ask for clarification about the first of these (the term used in the second piece of data). Are all crimes violent crimes? If not, then some people with criminal records are not violent felons. Even so, the skeptical reader should probably accept the broader claim that anyone, irrespective of her criminal past, can, and in some cases *does*, buy guns too easily online. In what way that skeptical reader thinks it appropriate to respond to this claim is another matter.

Backing

But why should we accept these—or any—warrants? For example, we might ask how we know that background checks are not required for online purchase. Can a criminal buy a gun online "with no background check" because *in practice* no one enforces the requirement that online vendors conduct background checks? Or do these vendors not conduct background checks because existing laws contain *loopholes* that mean these requirements do not apply to online sales? In the case of the latter, Obama could, if challenged about the authority of his warrant, cite existing law and point to the opportunities in the language of the law online vendors use to exempt themselves from the law's requirements. Doing so provides **backing** for a warrant. In general, backing consists of the kinds of statements that shore up the credentials of an argument's warrants.

SUMMARY

The discussion in this chapter is meant both to introduce and to deepen your understanding of ethos, pathos, and logos as proofs or means of persuasion. Aristotle taught students these three proofs (pisteis) because he had analyzed successful rhetoric and had determined that if students wanted to *produce* successful rhetoric, they would need to use the same tools as other effective rhetors. Ethical, pathetic, and logical proofs, then, are useful for purposes of analysis and of production. (In fact, they can be useful for both purposes at the same time, since we can ask of a particular argument, "What about the implied character of the writer do I admire, and how can I reproduce that effect in my own writing?")

It is primarily analysis we are concerned with in this section of the textbook, and that means we can use the pisteis to ask the following questions of rhetorical artifacts we encounter:

Ethos

- What kind(s) of good sense does the rhetor exhibit in the text?
- Why do I judge the rhetor to be virtuous (or not virtuous)?
- Does the rhetor have good will toward his audience? Why do I think so?
- Which of these ethical appeals are the result of rhetoric I encounter in the text, and which come from my prior knowledge of the rhetor?

Pathos

- How does the rhetor appeal to the audience's existing emotions?
- Does the rhetor encourage the audience to feel different emotions? To what end?
- What environments and attachments does the rhetor use to frame her appeals?

Logos

- What claims does the rhetor hope to establish?
- What data does the rhetor supply to support his claims?
- Would some warrant authorize the step from the data to the claim?
- If so, would that warrant be widely considered credible, or is backing provided to strengthen the warrant's credibility?

In the next chapter, we will see other possible questions we could ask when considering logos further as a means of persuasion.