Teaching the enthymeme: On becoming a critical-rhetorical consumer of verbal and visual arguments

Ana Vlah* & Michael Burke**

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Utrecht University

Utrecht, The Netherlands*

Department Arts & Humanities, University College Roosevelt

Middelburg, The Netherlands**

a.vlah@uu.nl, m.burke@ucr.nl

Abstract

In this chapter we consider the enthymeme: first of all, what it entails, and secondly, how to best teach it in a lecture format in order to help people become critical, rhetorical consumers of both verbal and visual enthymematic arguments. In the section of what enthymemes entail, we systematically proceed through a range of argument-related phenomena. The first of these is the theoretical basics of the enthymeme and its connections to formal logic and in particular the syllogism. Next, we consider the rhetorical praxis of the enthymeme, including discussions on its relations to persuasion and argumentation theories. Thereafter, we discuss the multimodality of the enthymeme with examples from digital and social media, looking at advertisements and memes. We then move on to the importance of the use of enthymemes in storytelling. Lastly, we consider how enthymemes can still work in a silent world. Taking an umbrella view, we then consider why it is that enthymemes work so well in persuasive situations. Here, we especially focus on the role of the recipient and how he/she can become willingly involved in his/her own (self)-persuasion. In the final section of this chapter, we produce a pedagogical proposal, drawing on all the previous sections as to how the enthymeme might best be taught, and why. We adhere to the philosophy that knowing what enthymemes are, how they work, and also that they are around us every moment of the day, in both verbal and visual modes, can help to equip us with the tools that we will need to become a productive critically thinking member of society. In rhetorical citizenship terms, it is our goal to help people become critical, rhetorical consumers of both verbal and visual enthymematic arguments. This is important, not merely for its own good, but for the greater good of our discursive society.

Keywords: enthymemes, rhetorical pedagogy, critical reasoning, persuasion, (digital) media

1. Introduction

"I don't want to get the COVID vaccine because one day I want to have babies" – this was what a woman in her late twenties said to her best friend in late spring of 2021 in a private conversation[3]. That sentence was highly meaningful at that time, because, as we will probably all remember, that was when the COVID vaccine first became widely available. Although the speaker was unaware of an enthymeme in her statement, she fluently expressed one in trying to persuade her friend to reject the vaccine. She was not the only one who was misinformed, scared and emotional at that time. Her best

[3] One of the authors of this chapter (AV) was present during that event, on June 2nd 2021 in Zagreb, Croatia.

friend was able to recognize the unstated 'truth' and ask "who told you that the COVID vaccine causes infertility?" She was wondering if there were scientific articles, published and peer reviewed, or statements from figures of medical authority to back up the claim, but there were none. Her friend was basing her conclusion on a claim she once heard in the media[4]; a claim that then became her major premise.

In this chapter, we are not going to give medical advice, but we are going to define what an enthymeme is, from a logical, and especially from a rhetorical, perspective. We will also see why it is important to be aware of the power that the enthymeme has over us. Further, we will look at some examples of enthymematic reasoning – including the seemingly paradoxical idea of enthymematic silence. Lastly, we will set out what we believe a class/lecture on the enthymeme, given to non-rhetoric majors, should ideally consist of and why.

Theoretically, enthymemes can be traced back to Aristotle in his *Art of Rhetoric*. However, it is important to mention that modern philosophers warn that Aristotle's definitions of the enthymeme are not the only ones that we are familiar with nowadays, and that there are various conceptions of what enthymemes entail. For example, William Hamilton distinguished 17 different meanings of the enthymeme (Madden, 1952). In most of the popular definitions, enthymemes have a premise or a conclusion which is implicit or unstated. In order to be sure that we fully understand what that means, we looked at the Merriam-Webster dictionary. There, 'unstated' is defined as 'not directly stated or set forth', while 'implicit' has two meanings. The first is 'capable of being understood from something else, though unexpressed', for example, implicit assumption. The second is 'present but not consciously held or recognized', for example, implicit racism. The term 'implicit' therefore has a broader definition, and considers not only the person stating (or withholding) something, but also the receiver in the communicative situation. Looking at these definitions, we can assume that we have all encountered enthymemes, on multiple occasions, in our lives, and that this occurred long before we knew about any definition. Even children employ them when they assume that a listener will understand the reasoning they have, because, for them, that is the only possible way to see the world. A child climbing a jungle gym on a playground might ask its parents to get him/her a red bull drink, because 'Red Bull gives you wings'. Whether the child knows that his/her persuasion – in which he/she is not stating all the premises out loud – is effective or not, is something to be researched further.

A lecture on enthymemes has been chosen to improve critical thinking in this study, because enthymemes and enthymematic reasoning have a rhetorical tradition that relies on logic, and logical/rational reasoning is something that is valued in critical thinking. Moreover, enthymemes are present in interactions and dialogues that we have in our daily relationships, but they are also widely spread in modern and contemporary communicative interactions, for instance, when we are exposed to social and digital media and when we encounter marketing strategies and advertisements. Being aware of our own reasoning and arguments is what critical thinkers should ideally aim for when participating in such communicative interactions. A lecture on the enthymeme could be an important step in that direction.

[4] See Goodman (2021), who, in an article written by a medical doctor and posted on WebMD, a prominent healthcare website, explains how this myth was first created and spread across social media as a conspiracy theory.

2. The Theoretical Basics

In logic, the enthymeme is recognized as an argument (Govier, 2013). It is a syllogism with an unstated part. This part can be one, or more, of the premises or even the conclusion. It is sometimes referred to as a *rhetorical syllogism* (Madden, 1952). A regular syllogism has two premises (a major one and a minor one) and a conclusion. An enthymeme is missing one (or more) of those three parts. If what is missing is a premise, it is expected that the listener will be able to reconstruct what enabled the speaker to get to the conclusion; that he and the speaker would share that premise together, in a form of 'common knowledge'. We can notice two examples of enthymemes, depending on which 'realm' they belong to, namely, to formal logic or to informal logic.

In formal logic, the examples are enthymemes which come from syllogisms that are easily accessed. For example, imagine the following conversation:

Person A utters the first premise: *Each season, I buy a new pair of jeans.*

Person B draws a conclusion: *So, you buy four pairs of jeans per year.*

The reason for this is because a year has four seasons – which is unsaid. In some parts of the world, of course, a year could, climatologically, have fewer than four seasons or spring and autumn could be incredibly short. Alternatively, given the sartorial context, a person could be thinking of 'fashion seasons', which often comprises of just two (i.e. spring/summer and autumn/winter), in which case, the conclusion would be wrong. But in the most plausible scenario, common knowledge dictates that a year has four seasons, and person B has probably drawn the correct conclusion.

Informal logic investigates messy discursive situations. These are more likely than not actual human arguments, as found in talks and writings (Hample, 2003, p. 441). The example below is arguably a case of such a conversation:

Person A asks Person B: *You eat meat?*

(Person B confirms)

And then, Person A concludes: *So you support killing animals!*

Now, the missing premises can be something like 'people who eat meat support killing animals' or 'before being eaten, animals must be killed' or 'meat is from an animal that has been slaughtered' or even a combination of these and others. It is not always clear and also not always easy to see which unstated premise is in the enthymeme. If we knew that, we could test how valid this enthymeme is.

The enthymemes that are considered to be syllogisms are ones in which the premises are considered to be 'signs' and 'likelihoods' or 'probabilities' (Madden, 1952). An example of a series of signs would be a young boy who is sweating, has a red face and a very warm forehead. Common knowledge suggests to us that a person with these symptoms has a fever. Therefore, a parent's conclusion in this enthymeme would be 'My child probably has a fever'. Likelihoods are premises of common knowledge that are 'highly likely' but not certain. Even in this 'fever' example, the symptoms described are still only 'probable' signs of fever. Maybe the boy's body temperature has risen due to some unobserved prior physical activity, like running or jumping. Although we cannot claim this with absolute certainty, we can still use likelihoods in enthymemes. That is what separates signs and causes and creates an important distinction between enthymemes (i.e. rhetorical syllogisms) and scientific syllogisms. A sign in an enthymeme indicates that something exists and gives us reasons to know about it; it does not give us a reason for that thing's existence. On the other hand, causes in scientific reasoning give us a reason why something occurs or exists (Madden, 1952). To return to our example, after identifying the child's symptoms, a doctor can then reason about its plausible causes.

The best way to analyze enthymemes is to see to what kind of argument the unstated premise belongs and then to apply argumentation schemes of that type of argument (Walton & Reed, 2005). In their text, Walton and Reed analyze enthymemes with major (implicit) premises such as (i) the argument from negative consequences, (ii) arguments from classification, (iii) practical reasoning, and (iv) arguments from analogy. Sometimes, filling in the missing premises (or the conclusion) can show us that the argument is poor; that is, that the premises are false or implausible. This suggests, as Walton and Reed emphasize, that filling in the missing assumptions is a critical component of enthymematic reasoning. To successfully analyze enthymemes, the context needs to be considered in addition to the formal argument analysis. Finally, the authors conclude by mentioning 'a problem of attribution', namely, that it is difficult to call out someone for having a poor or a false argument if they never explicitly made it (Walton & Reed, 2005, p. 361). However, a critical thinker who is analyzing media content would not have to interact with those who created enthymemes. Her/his job would be to recognize faulty reasoning or bad intentions and choose not to engage with them and therefore not get misled, purposely or otherwise.

3. Rhetorical Praxis

The enthymeme can serve as a good introduction to rhetoric because it has many rhetorical components. As we saw, and will further see, it is logical, dialogical, persuasive, and multimodal. When it comes to its structure, what is recognized as common knowledge in the logic of the enthymeme, could, in some examples, be related to the notion of *topoi* in classical rhetoric, i.e. topics or commonplaces. Commonplaces are "general propositions applicable to any area of experience" (Madden, 1952, p. 369). These are the ideas that we do not question, and can be implicitly and instinctively recalled, since they are a part of our culture and identity. They can circulate within cultures (like mini-ideologies) and are also seen within communities as 'truths'.

The enthymeme is arguably only possible in a dialogue, where a proponent is producing the enthymeme and a recipient is reacting to it. This can also be a 'dialogue' that a speaker has with his or her audience, while delivering a public address in which the audience is actively involved (Tindale, 1999). However, the processes of the enthymeme also take place earlier, in the 'invention' stage, as it were, of generating and crafting arguments to make the best impression on an audience. Here, the speaker has his/her audience in mind and their possible reactions to the arguments that will be set out. A persuasive speaker has to know about the make-up (demographics, values, beliefs, attitudes, etc.) of his/her audience in order to be rhetorically successful. This is the case, because it is not easy to presume an audience's level of common knowledge, nor how eager an audience might be to unpack premises and agree with the speaker. Public speaking textbooks that rely on the rhetorical tradition (e.g. Coopman and Lull, 2012 and Jaffe, 2015) mention the enthymeme in the section on 'argumentation and deductive reasoning'. The most common association of dialogue is not speaking in public to an audience of mainly auditors, but rather a verbal interchange between two (or more) interlocutors, who are conversing with each other in close proximity. The topic of such conversation often centers on personal matters. In such dialogues, the roles, which are reversible in the back-and-forth flow of the conversation, are split between a speaker and a listener.

These two notions of dialogue, i.e. in public speaking and in interpersonal communication, are not the only ones. A dialogue can also take place between media content that is created by a journalist, a copywriter, a board of editors, etc., and a reader/discourse consumer. In all these cases, enthymemes 'unite' the speaker and his/her audience, making it possible for the sender/addresser of a message to influence the thought processes and reactions of the recipients/addressees.

3. 1. Persuasion

For Aristotle, the enthymeme was 'an important idea, the most effective means of persuasion' (Benoit 1982, p. 6). By its definition, persuasion is the intentional change of a person's beliefs, values, and attitudes, which leads to a change in their behavior. Jones and Simons (2017, p. 23) define persuasion as "human communication designed to influence the judgments and actions of others" distinguishing it from other forms of influence, such as inducement or coercion. Before the act of persuasion, a proponent. i.e. the arguer, has already included in his/her argument the beliefs, attitudes and understanding of the 'other', i.e. the audience or recipient. When the arguer aims to persuade, 'the movement of expected changes' takes place in that other, i.e. in the audience or recipient (Tindale, 2004, p. 101).

Although it might seem that with the enthymeme one might expect a person to change his/her mind right away, that does not have to be the case. Indeed, it is often not the case. At best, using enthymemes may gradually start with small alterations in a person's reasoning (for example, he/she may start to accept parts of, or even all of, a major premise, that previously would not have been acceptable to that person). This could then lead to adjustments that could have more significant long-term persuasive effects.

3. 2. Arguing

When writing about arguing skills, Hample (2003, p. 439) distinguishes three meanings of an argument. The first is argument as a product that can be studied in textbooks on logic and argumentation. The second is as a discussion between two (or more) people. The third is the cognitive experience of producing an argument and experiencing the act of arguing. In Hample's mind, arguments are products and discussions for which the cognitive experience of arguing is needed.

When people are arguing, they have a few possible goals in mind. Each of the interlocutors has their primary goal. Most often they simply aim to resolve an issue by arguing, providing reasons for their positions, and trying to reasonably find the best solution. Other times, they might be arguing because they want to establish dominance over the other person, i.e. to 'self-present' themselves, or they may be doing so in an act of 'play', for example, in a debate (Hample, 2003). Moreover, while they are arguing, they can have more than one goal. However, what is also important is that the people that they are arguing with can have their own goals. Arguing is also a matter of trying to coordinate all those different goals during a conversation. As Hample (2003, p. 465) concludes, interpersonally competent people "will be continuously trying to identify and adapt to other's goals and plans". Furthermore, context plays a major role in the discourse situation, as understanding the context of the conversation (e.g., the power dynamics that might exist between interlocutors) makes the processes easier and more efficient.

The Toulmin model of argumentation (developed in 1958 in *The Uses of Argument*) has been the staple in teaching argumentation since its inception. It consists of three parts: a claim, grounds (or data – facts/evidence) and a warrant. In a more extended form, it consists of a further three parts. These are backing, a qualifier and a rebuttal. The warrant, in Toulmin's model, which can be implied or stated, is the assumption that connects the grounds to the claim. For an argument to be valid, the warrant must be acceptable, and must explain clearly how the ground leads to the claim. In many public argumentative texts, the warrant is often a part that is unstated, i.e. enthymematic (Hample, 2003, p. 469).

Taking an example from the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian war, it can be seen that a fact and a claim can be stated, and a valid argument made, even without sharing the warrant explicitly.

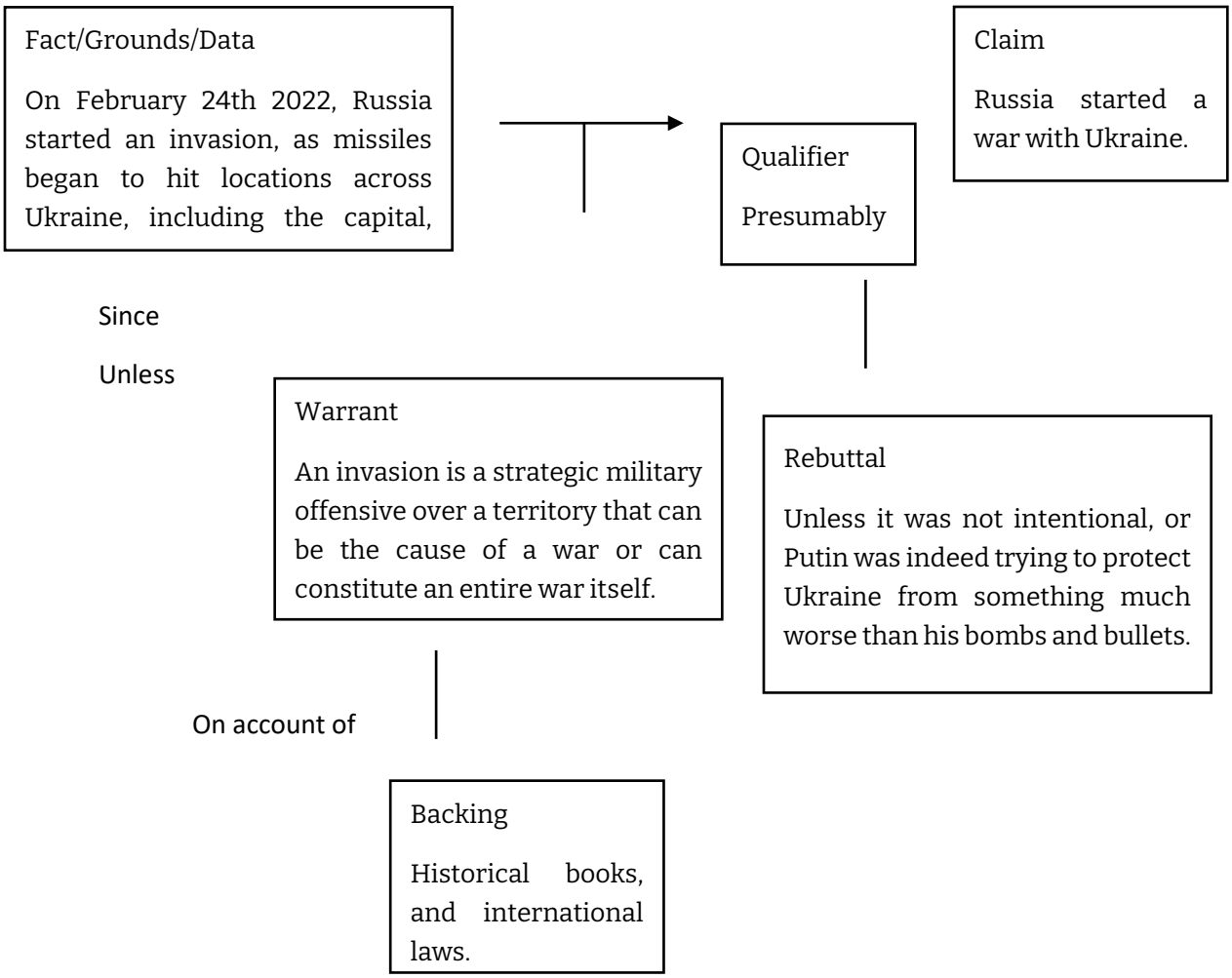

Figure 1. An example of a six-part Toulmin argument

4. Multimodality: visual and digital enthymeme

As was mentioned, enthymemes can have propositions as signs. Signs do not have to be verbalized; they can be non-verbal, multimodal (like the symptoms of a fever discussed previously).

4.1. Visual enthymeme

Visual enthymemes have one of the premises, or the conclusion, in a visual form. This could, for example, be a photograph. Unlike words, photographs cannot be unspecified (Kjeldsen, 2015). If one mentions *a dog* in a story, then all the listeners will imagine a dog the way they want to, drawing on their cognitive schemata and past knowledge and memory, consciously or otherwise. This could take many forms: from a golden retriever puppy wagging its tail, to a sleepy dachshund or an angry German shepherd running and catching a ball. However, if we see a photograph of a dog, or, for that matter, a painting or video of one, we will almost certainly be stimulated to think of the exact dog that is

represented in the image. For example, if we read a story about a 'playful dog that chases his own tail', and if that story is accompanied with a photo of a specific dog, then, in all likelihood, this dog becomes the dog in the story and the dog that we imagine in our mind. Looking at that photo of a dog that is chasing its tail will invoke a process that Finnegan (2001) calls 'naturalistic enthymemes'. This involves our assumptions that photographs have argumentative potential; that they can be 'true' or 'real', until we discover or are presented with persuasive evidence or reasons to suspect that they are not. Henkel (2012) refers to this as 'veridical recordings'.

This praxis of using photos as naturalistic (visual) enthymemes is used and also abused in online journalism. We can see this, for example, in clickbait headlines where a title (i.e. a headline) and a photo together create a conclusion that is different from the conclusion a person would logically reach after having read the actual article. Clickbait headlines with photos are therefore deeply misleading. Here is an example. The title was framed as: '*Do you like to drink green tea? It has been discovered that it hides a significant danger*'... And in the photograph below (Figure 1), a teapot filled with green tea can be observed.

Figure 2 Photo in a clickbait headline (Pxfuel. (n.d.). [Teapot with green tea]. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from https://www.pxfuel.com/en/free-photo-xppwi)

The enthymeme could be unpacked as follows:

Major premise: *Drinking green tea carries with it a significant danger.*

Minor premise: *You drink green tea.*

Conclusion: *You are in danger.*

However, after reading the article, it becomes clear that drinking green tea is not dangerous at all. What in fact is dangerous is taking an excessive amount of food supplements (i.e. pills) that are made from green tea extract. What is interesting here is once a person has created or arrived at the plausible

meaning of the article (based on the clickbait and before even reading it), it is hard for them to (re)adjust to the real/true meaning. When they start reading, they are reading the text, as it were, only to confirm what they already know/understand. This can be seen as an example of 'confirmation bias'; a commonly known theory from social and cognitive psychology.

One of the most popular visual enthymemes – cited and indeed valued by scholars of rhetoric[5] – is a *sweet* advertisement with ants and a lollipop (Figure 2).

Figure 3. Chupa Chups ad - Visual enthymeme (Chupa Chups sugar free candy clever advertisement]. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from https://medium.com/illumination/chupa-chups-lollipop-its-sugar-free-4392caf1f777)

It unpacks something like this:

Major premise: *Ants like sugar.*

Minor premise: *Ants avoid this lollipop.*

Conclusion: *This lollipop is sugar-free.*

Its structure and meaning are easy to follow. Ants like sugar (common knowledge) but go out of their way to avoid this lollipop (as we can see on the photo). The only explanation for that is – this lollipop has no sugar in it ... and therefore is healthy and plausibly 'good' for you.

4.2. Digital enthymeme

Digital enthymemes are arguments with unstated premises (i.e. reasons) that are found in digital media. They imply that those premises that are being considered as major premises that people are

[5] Dr. Petra Aczél (Cornivus University of Budapest) used it as an example of visual enthymemes during the RHEFINE conference in Zagreb, where some of the papers from this book were presented.

aware of can be 'found in the surrounding digital environment of links, texts, pictures, and videos' (Eronen, 2013, p. 57). For example, arguing in the comment section on social media that someone is a bad person, without backing that up with reasons or sources, but instead relying on the photos or records (or only mentions) of them being, for instance, violent, that were published somewhere on the web, constitutes a digital enthymeme. Two premises are unstated here: that the proof exists, and that those who engage in violence are always bad people.

As an example, we can remember Alec Baldwin's incident in fall 2021, when on a movie-set he shot and killed a cinematographer. On social media, there were many claims regarding his guilt and/or responsibility, and to prove their point, social media users did not refer to any new sources, just to the story that happened and premises that were implied 'somewhere' in the media world (Ross, 2021). One of the tweets related to this was "I never thought that any of this was Alec's fault, and after this interview, I know he is not responsible. He's grieving and we should give him his space. I hope that the FBI doesn't give up." The terms 'this interview' refers to the interview Baldwin gave to the ABC News, and, according to this tweet, that is where the arguments for his innocence are to be found. Also, we can see that it implies that those who publically lament their actions to left-of-center news media outlets are not responsible for their actions.

4. 3. Memes

An interesting modern phenomenon that must be mentioned here is internet memes, which are pictures (i.e. illustrations, photos, drawings, etc.) with short texts that are shared between peers when sending messages (mostly just for fun). Their name has its linguistic roots, allegedly, in Greek word *mimema* ("that which is imitated") but an anonymous author on Medium.com argues that *memes* are named after *enthymemes*, because they are syllogisms – a "combination of a major premise and a minor premise, in which the conclusion is gathered by deduction" (Enthymemes and Internet memes, 2016). Memes are subjective, relying on the experience and knowledge of those who create them and who share them. The meaning that is transferred via memes is implicit. They have the ability to connect and easily express complex ideas, perhaps because of the visual aspect in which the common knowledge is transmitted. Anyone can create memes; that is why they have become so popular: "The only rules [when creating them] are to make them funny, concise, and relevant (ibid)".

Figure 4. Memes: pandemic and disappointment Aguilar, C. (2021). [My Fall plans Vs. the Delta variant tweet]. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from https://www.boredpanda.com/my-fall-plans-vs-delta-variant-coronavirus-tweets/

Political memes (and political rhetoric in general) are globally one of the most popular genres, as well as memes that refer to other aspects of popular culture. In the example in Figure *3*, the COVID-19, coronavirus pandemic is thematized. Common knowledge (i.e. shared experience) behind the meme, that is implicit, could be verbalized as: *When you see a tin of Royal Dansk biscuits, it either means biscuits (that will make you happy) or sewing materials (that will usually lead to disappointment).* The meme consists of two photos and a text that could read as: *My fall plans were like a case of Royal Dansk biscuits (going to make me happy). However, due to the Delta variant, my fall plans became centered on sewing materials (i.e. disappointment).*

5. More examples: storytelling and silence

In modern rhetorical scholarship, we can recognize another two interesting approaches to enthymemes: enthymematic narratives and enthymematic silence.

5.1. Storytelling

In the distant past of human existence, long before the majority of people(s) were writing, people were telling stories to each other and to their children. The act of (oral) storytelling was a large part of everyday life. This is how people transmitted ideas, values, memories, and important information. Speakers were able to practice their storytelling skills, and many of them undoubtedly had the ability to tell a story using enthymemes, that is, in each of their sentences they would leave out information that was revealed in the next sentence or sometimes even later. This was often done in order to keep their audience engaged. While they were listening to the storyteller, the audience was already being invited to come up with their 'answers' and to fill in the missing statements. Fredal (2020, p. 9) refers to this as narrative reasoning, namely, "the following of narrative details to locate or invent links among story elements and from story elements to the outside world." Fredal links narrative reasoning

with rhetorical reasoning. He writes about "temporally and spatially situated reasoning about human events and their consequences" (ibid.) and he sees their impact in what he calls 'narrative enthymemes'. These are 'inference markers' in which "a speaker draws the attention of the audience to a narrative detail" (Fredal, 2020, p. 11). Examples of these can be found, for example, in detective novels. Writers intentionally omit premises and conclusions, but leave just enough signs throughout the story for the readers to guess who might have committed a certain crime and why. After this is revealed, the reader is reminded that if they had paid closer attention earlier while reading, and if they had applied sound reasoning with common knowledge (i.e. a large base of arguments and topoi), then they would have been able to both follow and understand the arguments and therefore to conclude who the murderer was even before the theatrical revelation/denouement that takes place at the end of the detective novel.

5. 2. Enthymematic silence

Another aspect of enthymematic reasoning is the paradoxically-sounding 'enthymematic silence'. It may seem unlikely, but silence too can be a sign or a premise that is unstated and that when successfully connected to proper *topoi* can be meaningful for interlocutors. A long pause that indicates meaning or significance is also known as 'pregnant silence' (*Farlex Partner Idioms Dictionary*, *2017*). Researching oral history interviews, researchers were able to distinguish five types of silence (Farmer & Strain, 2011, p. 243-245). These are (i) ambient silence (moments before a person starts to speak), (ii) meditative silence (interlocutors taking the time before their next utterance), (iii) kairic silence (using silence for the right timing, for example, in a joke), (iv) strategic (purposeful) silence, and (v) enthymematic silence. The latter is recognized in a scenario between interlocutors, who were so familiar with each other, that they were able to understand each others' unstated premises through their silence. It happened because they shared something together. An example of this could be that they participated in the same historical event. Imagine two women survivors of verbal abuse, chatting to each other, and at the same time witnessing a man yelling at his wife across a large room. They would not have to say anything to explicitly confirm their understandings of the situation and their impressions of the man. The first premise would be based on the thing they are witnessing: *This man yells at his wife.* Because of their experience, the second (major) premise would be: *A man who yells at a woman is abusive*. And therefore, the conclusion, which no one had to say, is: *This man is abusive towards his wife*. These lines would not have to be stated. A furtive glance or even a raised eyebrow might be all it takes. Being silent, that is, employing enthymematic silence, would create the desired argumentative pattern and effect and it would probably have the further effect of uniting these women even more.

6. Why are enthymemes powerful?

Intrinsically, we are aware of the effects created when we speak or write in enthymemes. We can see they are successful, because we manage to influence those people we want to. They are powerful for different reasons. Most of them aim to influence the psychology of both the recipient and the speaker/proponent. It works favorably for both; if enthymemes are efficient, then they often create stronger bonds between interlocutors.

6. 1. The Proponent's perspective

We could say that the sender (proponent, speaker, writer) has her/his part of the burden of proof taken away from her/him, as everything happens in the mind of the recipient (i.e. listener/hearer). The sender is the creative one. He/she is tested to be witty and eloquent in order to engage her/his audience. It is possible to view this as a game in which he/she notices who might understand the enthymemes that are being produced. It is almost as if he/she is telling an inside joke, and in some cases that can actually be the case. The speaker is, in effect, relying on the interlocutor to read his/her mind. The joy of success, if that occurs, could plausibly be related to our childhood needs, when, because we did not yet have the power of speech, we had to be understood by our caregivers without being able to be verbally explicit.

By using an enthymeme, a speaker can also hide his/her intentions. Consider the following hypothetical situation. Let us say that it takes place in the year 2019. Two people meet, and one person (Person A) wants to shake hands with the other person (Person B). Person B, however, does not like a Person A, and declines the offer of the handshake. After person A reaches out, Person B says *I'm not comfortable shaking hands with you*. Explicit reasons are often not given for this. In this situation, the unpacked enthymeme of Person B would be:

Major premise: *I'm not comfortable shaking hands with people I don't like.*

Minor premise: *I don't like you.*

Conclusion: *I'm not comfortable shaking hands with you. (Stated)*

Now imagine that same scene occurring in the year 2021, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Person A wishes to shake hands with Person B and he says *I'm not comfortable shaking hands with you*. The enthymeme can arguably be unpacked differently owing to the context.

Major premise: *I'm not comfortable shaking hands during the pandemic owing to the spread of the virus.*

Minor premise: *There is an ongoing COVID/corona pandemic and I do not want to pass the virus to you or have it passed to me*

Conclusion: *I'm not comfortable shaking hands with you. (Stated)*

Person A might respond to this further with "*Oh, I see, it's the pandemic*" without challenging or feeling offended or asking for reasons. In both enthymemes, the conclusion ('I'm not comfortable shaking hands with you') is the same, as is the lack of manual performance (i.e. two people not shaking hands). What was different was the reason.

Generally speaking, if your interlocutor likes you, he/she will be quicker to believe you and to agree with you. Sometimes they might agree with you because you did utter everything out loud. If you did, if you were explicit in all your premises, then it might arguably cause them to disagree.

This works well in advertisements. Lombardi Vallauri et al. (2020) give an example with a car. There is a photograph of a car and a slogan *Stop watching, start living* (Figure 4). If, in the advertisement, they had explicitly written the syllogism and major premise in full, then people would have probably been offended, as it would have said something like 'Right now you are not living; you are just participating in life. Only if you buy this car, will you really start to live'. Fully unpacked, the accusation is nothing short of stating that you are a loser. But presented in this reduced, enthymematic way, it is a catchy phrase that pleases, delights even, and the reader/recipient is in no way offended.

Figure 5 "Stop watching, start living" - persuasion works because it is implicit (Lombardi Vallauri et al, 2020, p. 109)

Enthymemes and premises can be vague and as, for instance, Lombardi Vallauri et al., suggest, vagueness allows free interpretation (2020, p. 105). Just like in the previous example of hand shaking, where because the premises were not explicit, Person B was able to get his/her way (without facing the consequences of an interlocutor becoming angry or sad or calling them out for their rudeness). If a recipient does not understand the premises, then he/she may not seek clarification, as that person might be ashamed of asking.

Misunderstandings could also potentially occur owing to cultural differences. Just because a premise works for one person in a given culture, it does not mean that it will automatically work for someone else, who had a different cultural background with different kinds of background knowledge. We saw this in the earlier example of someone who works in the fashion industry only acknowledging two seasons each year (i.e. selling seasons) instead of four season each year (i.e. meteorological seasons).

6.2. The recipient's perspective

From the perspective of a recipient of an enthymeme, the argumentative structure works for the proponent because of several effects that occur during the interaction. For example, a recipient has to

'fill in the blanks' on his/her own. So, when a speaker's premise and his/her conclusion are enunciated aloud, the recipient is invited to find a premise (i.e. a piece of shared or common knowledge or a topic) to connect them, to form a bridge to the meaning, and to do this in the right way. Discovering the missing premise will allow a link to be made to the conclusion. In general, people want to be discursively engaged. They often also like to feel important, useful, and clever in discourse situations, and to contribute to meaning making. Perhaps it also makes them feel good to know they appear able to read someone else's mind, to predict what it is that they are trying to say.

When people who on the receiving end of enthymemes analyze them, they also might rely on tendencies that do not always work in their favor. These could include self-persuasion, egocentric bias, cognitive optimism, heuristics, etc. Self-persuasion is when a person persuades him/herself far better and far more completely than the degree to which they would have been persuaded had someone tried to do it explicitly (Aronson, 1999). This is because in self-persuasion a person feels engaged. It is as if they have brought something to the table and it gives them a sense of importance and satisfaction. But in the end, message recipients who fill in missing premises feel like it was their decision, their call, their original reason/argument, and as such it therefore makes it easier for them to accept the conclusion. Such is the rhetorical magic of the enthymeme.

A few other tendencies can help explain why this happens. One of these is the notion of egocentric bias. Here, people are biased to favor their own reasoning. This is the case because people are egocentric and therefore put themselves first. They will also fight to keep their thoughts untouched, structured and clear (to them, at least). Such people might also be viewed as 'cognitive optimists'. This entails that not only do they only favor their own premises (and they act as if they were true, and nothing else could possibly be true), but they also believe that they are always right. It has also been observed in mainstream psychology that once a person has an opinion on something, he/she tends to stick with it. This is owing to beliefs and values and the subsequent attitudes that are formed. It is difficult to change an opinion and indeed it may strengthen and develop into one or more belief biases (Sá, West & Stanovich, 1999). This underscores the importance of being able to understand every part of an argument's structure before reaching a conclusion, including what has not been said. We could verbalize all these bias-based strategies as follows: "If I thought of it, if I created it, if I have spent time on it – then it is more important to me".

How is it possible that people regularly make these errors and mistakes in their reasoning? One of the explanations is that people rely too much on cognitive shortcuts, also known as heuristics. They rely on first reasonings and on first impressions towards the premises or conclusions that occur. This can be seen as Type 1 thinking, which is fast, intuitive and automatic (Bensley, 2020; Kahneman, 2011). From an evolutionary perspective, this can be explained because, our ancestors had to react immediately when faced with a 'fight or flight' situation. They would often not have time to analyze and think. Their decision making had to be fast and effective. 'Fast thinking' is still very important when we are faced with quick decisions, in fast moving situations, for example, when we are driving. But often, when thinking about more complex things, it does not work the same way. What is needed is Type 2 reasoning, which is more central, more studied, more investigative and more critical. So, when people encounter an enthymeme, recipients all too often rely on first thoughts or reasoning and on finding the fastest and most efficient solutions to fill in the blanks. This is often a poor choice.

In conclusion to this section, we have seen how in enthymematic reasoning and argumentation, a speaker shifts the responsibility to the recipient of his/her utterance to unpack the meaning and also to interpret the premises and/or conclusion. We have also seen how a recipient or audience appears to enjoy this role. As described earlier, they are engaged (i.e. actively participating), they feel smart (egocentric bias), and they get more easily persuaded (self-persuasion, cognitive optimism), because unpacking the premises takes time. It is a little like feeling self-satisfied, smug even, after having solved a puzzle or after having answered a question correctly. In contrast, in cases where the enthymeme has not been executed properly, they could feel offended, and ashamed to ask for clarification. In some cases, they might also be seen as disagreeable.

With all this in mind, let us now return to the main goal of this chapter, namely, to suggest how the enthymeme might best be taught.

7. Pedagogical approach

As can been seen in this short review above, enthymemes can be found in both logic and rhetoric. Examples occur in everyday communication and media discourse, especially advertisements and digital media. It is important to be aware of the psychological theories that describe their effects, with regard both to the speaker and the recipient. Creating a lecture on the enthymeme, we argue, should ideally include all the perspectives that we have mentioned above in order to present the entire picture, and the full diversity and complexity of enthymematic reasoning, and not just parts of it. The question, therefore, is: what, ideally, should be in a such lecture on the enthymeme? Below we identify ten elements that we feel should be included.

First, students should be introduced to the concept of enthymemes by showing them topical examples: ones that they have most likely already recently encountered in everyday life. The example we mentioned earlier with regard to the COVID vaccine is a fitting case in point. Moreover, since enthymeme is a logical term, for most of the general population, introducing it too soon, with all of its syllogistic complexities, might have an adverse effect. Indeed, because it is a word of Greek origin, students might wonder how to pronounce it and may even be afraid of trying. Therefore, by starting the lecture with something that is topical, and something they are already familiar with in their everyday lives should make them more curious about what is about to be said in the rest of the lecture.

The second element that should be taught is that the enthymeme exists in a dialogue. It is important to emphasize this. This is clear to rhetoricians, because they are aware that everything that is created or said is done so for someone to interact with and is therefore for a reason. Indeed, while rhetoricians are preparing a speech, or writing a piece of text, they, as authors, are already imagining who might be reading or listening to their discourse, and they are, in all likelihood, already hypothesizing about possible questions and reactions that they might receive in response to their discourse.

That brings us to the third element of a lesson on the enthymeme. This is the main feature of enthymematic reasoning, namely, the intentional omission of a statement or the intentional implication of a proposition. A proponent/speaker sets forth an enthymematic argument having in

mind his/her audience (or interlocutor) as well as their will to participate in a dialogue and to understand it. An enthymeme is not used in situations where something was left unsaid because of pure ignorance. Rather, an enthymeme is always a choice to not share a premise, because we expect a certain behavior or reasoning from others.

A fourth element in the lesson should be that something that is unsaid or implied often belongs to the domain of common knowledge within much of society. A listener is able to construct and understand the argument in an enthymeme, because he/she can connect premises to the conclusion, since the unstated part is available to them through common knowledge. Common knowledge refers to major premises that deal with the nature of the world, science, facts, and everything that has already been proven and widely accepted by the academic and intellectual community. In addition, in rhetoric, we add *topoi* and commonplaces. These are local/cultural 'truths' that explain certain behaviors and reasoning patterns that we have. They are often taken for granted and are not critically probed by the individual in the communities within which such commonplaces circulate.

The fifth element of the proposed lecture is that it should be made clear that propositions in enthymemes can be signs or probabilities. In other words, we do not have to use only evidence-based common knowledge and verbal facts (like in formal logic), but also signs that we notice in real life that can also refer to something else. A fitting example of this is, for example, the symptoms of fever. As was mentioned earlier, we should not confuse signs in an enthymeme with scientific reasoning, as science explains the causes of signs, while in the enthymeme we only indicate the existence of those signs. The enthymeme dwells in the domain of the probable, not in the realm of exactitude.

The sixth element in an ideal lesson that needs to be made clear is that omitting / implying is not only the main feature of an enthymeme, but that a main function is also persuasion itself. Persuasion happens in all of the contexts in which enthymemes can be found, be they interpersonal communication, digital communication, speaking in public, etc., but such situations do not always involve instantaneous major changes. In other words, the result of persuasion does not have to be apprehended immediately. A speaker's goal, when producing a certain utterance, can simply be to be recognized as more trustworthy and more attractive. If one builds upon that with other enthymemes in future speaking situations, then this can later result in changing another person's attitude or behavior. In other words, most persuasion, including enthymematic persuasion, is not immediate. It is not a 'St Paul on the road to Damascus' affair. Rather it is gradual and it often occurs in fits and starts and proceeds gradually.

Rhetoric is not only verbal in nature, but can also be achieved through silence. We know that rhetoric is the very fibre of discourse and storytelling. That is why it is interesting to explore, as a seventh aspect, narrative enthymemes and enthymematic silence. As we saw, enthymematic silence occurs between two interlocutors when they have shared an experience, and they do not verbally acknowledge that their conclusion on that experience is the same, even though it is. In such situations, the premises, the conclusion and the recognition are all produced and received in silence. Narrative enthymemes go a long way back to our ancestors, who did not have all the digital and electronic means and modalities that we have today, but who instead were sitting and telling stories to each other. At the same time they were sharing knowledge and values and information and advice. It is plausible that they were aware of the power of narrative enthymemes that occur as stories are being told, enunciated

and performed; aware that in each sentence a piece of information is being omitted that should become clear a little later in the flow of discourse. A listener is therefore invited to listen closely, to stay engaged, to take part even in what is being said and implied.

An eighth element to learn in a lesson on enthymemes is to realize that they are omnipresent and that they are contemporary too, that is, we observe them in every mode of human interaction and communication in present-day life. Visual enthymemes, for example, can be recognized, because one of the propositions can be a sign, and signs can be visual as well as verbal. Some enthymemes combine a verbal and visual component, for example, advertisements, headlines with photos, or popular memes that make us laugh and/or provoke a reaction. Furthermore, we can recognize digital enthymemes, where propositions are unstated because they are somewhere out there in a digital world, perhaps on another website, either in a form of text or a picture. Those who use digital enthymemes rely on a recipient's awareness of those 'external' propositions, or at least their ability to be able to find them.

A ninth element in a lesson on the enthymeme is to explain the psychological aspect of enthymematic reasoning, namely, that it has many effects on both the proponent and the recipient of the discourse act, among other things creating, and strengthening the bonds between them. A proponent can feel good when someone appears to be able to read her/his mind; a recipient also feels good, because he/she is included and is thus engaged. This person then becomes more easily persuaded, because he/she has had to (re)create what was being said, i.e. this person did the extra work: that is why he/she now appreciates it even more.

The tenth and final element of a model lesson, and perhaps the most important element of all, is that enthymemes show us that we have to unpack all the hidden premises and make sure that we agree with them before accepting them. This will help us avoid misunderstandings, as well as falling prey to fallacious reasoning. In short, enthymemes teach us to be 'critically consuming citizens' of both visual and verbal arguments.

In summary, to create an effective lecture on the enthymeme, and to explain what it is, we first have to cover some basics on logic, namely, we need to introduce the students to the structural workings of the syllogism and acquaint them with the basics of logical reasoning. We must also inform them about multimodality (i.e. visual and digital, storytelling, as well as the role of silence in enthymematic reasoning). We also need to set out the basics on communication, persuasion, and hidden motives. This way they can become more critical, and more analytic, individuals when engaging discursively with others, and when consuming mainstream, social and digital media.

References

Aristotle, F. (1926). The art of rhetoric (Vol. 2, p. xiii). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Aronson, E. (1999). The power of self-persuasion. American Psychologist, 54(11), 875.

Benoit, W. L. (1982). The Most Significant Passage In Aristotle's Rhetoric. Rhetoric Society Quarterly, 12(1), 2-9.

Bensley, D. A. (2020). Critical thinking and the rejection of unsubstantiated claims. Critical thinking in psychology, 2, 68-102.

Coopman, S. J., & Lull, J. (2012). Public Speaking: The Evolving Art, Enhanced. Cengage Learning.
Enthymemes and Internet Memes (2016, December 14). Medium. https://medium.com/@amourelle_/enthymemes-and-internet-memes-de75174a43d6
Eronen, M. (2013). Digital enthymeme: morality, emotions, and materialism in new media participation. Sociedad de la Información, 44, 35-64.
Farmer, F., & Strain, M. (2011). A repertoire of discernments: Hearing the unsaid in oral history narratives. Silence and listening as rhetorical arts. Southern Illinois University Press. 231-249. (Editors: Glenn, C., & Ratcliffe, K.)
Finnegan, C. A. (2001). The naturalistic enthymeme and visual argument: Photographic representation in the "skull controversy". Argumentation and Advocacy, 37(3), 133-149.
Fredal, J. (2020). The Enthymeme: Syllogism, Reasoning, and Narrative in Ancient Greek Rhetoric. Penn State Press.
Goodman, Brenda (2021, January 12) Why COVID Vaccines are Falsely Linked to Infertility. WebMD. https://www.webmd.com/vaccines/covid-19-vaccine/news/20210112/why-covid-vaccines-are-falsely-linked-to-infertility
Govier, T. (2013). A practical study of argument. Cengage Learning.
Hample, D. (2003). Arguing skill. Handbook of communication and social interaction skills, 439-478.
Henkel, L. A. (2012). Seeing photos makes us read between the lines: The influence of photos on memory for inferences. Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 65(4), 773-795.
Jaffe, C. (2015). Public speaking: Concepts and skills for a diverse society. Cengage Learning.
Jones, J. G., & Simons, H. W. (2017). Persuasion in society. Routledge.
Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, fast and slow. Macmillan.
Kjeldsen, J. E. (2015). The study of visual and multimodal argumentation. Argumentation, 29(2), 115-132
Lombardi Vallauri, E., Baranzini, L., Cimmino, D., Cominetti, F., Coppola, C., & Mannaioli, G. (2020). Implicit argumentation and persuasion: A measuring model. Journal of Argumentation in Context, 9(1), 95-123.
Madden, E. H. (1952). The enthymeme: crossroads of Logic, Rhetoric, and Metaphysics. The Philosophical Review, 368-376.
Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Implicit. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/implicit
Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Unstated. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/unstated
Pregnant silence. (n.d.) Farlex Partner Idioms Dictionary. (2017). Retrieved February 25, 2022 from https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/pregnant+silence
Ross, Martha (2021, December 3) How can Alec Baldwin feel no guilt about 'Rust' killing?. Mercurynews. https://www.mercurynews.com/2021/12/03/how-can-alec-baldwin-feel-no-guilt-about-killing-halyna-hutchins/
Sá, W. C., West, R. F., & Stanovich, K. E. (1999). The domain specificity and generality of belief bias: Searching for a generalizable critical thinking skill. Journal of educational psychology, 91(3), 497.
Tindale, C. W. (1999). Acts of arguing: A rhetorical model of argument. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Tindale, C. W. (2004). Rhetorical argumentation: Principles of theory and practice. Sage.
Toulmin, S. (1958). The uses of argument. UK: Cambridge University Press
Walton, D., & Reed, C. A. (2005). Argumentation schemes and enthymemes. Synthese, 145(3), 339-370.