

ON *ENDOXA* IN ARISTOTLE'S *TOPICS*\*

## 0.

In this article I propose to look again at the ἔνδοξον in Aristotle's *Topics*, contesting the widely held view that the ἔνδοξον owes its status to the endorsement it enjoys among certain groups of people. Instead, I shall argue that ἔνδοξα owe their status (as well as what endorsement they enjoy) to appearing true in virtue of their coherence with other ἔνδοξα in the relevant domain. It will be shown that many of the rules for the conduct of dialectical exchanges in *Top.* 8 can only be interpreted on the suggested conception of the ἔνδοξον, and that evidence from *Top.* 1 as well as the *Rhetoric* is consistent with this picture. It will also be shown that passages in which the term ἔνδοξον is used interchangeably with others meaning 'actually held view' (e.g., δόξα) neither support the view which I contest nor point to a disjunctive conception of the ἔνδοξον, i.e. one on which it owes its status either to actual endorsement or to appearing true on the rational grounds mentioned. Endorsement, it will be argued, attaches to ἔνδοξα as a non-necessary property, which serves heuristic purposes *inter alia*.

## 1.

The prevailing interpretation of ἔνδοξα in Aristotle's *Top.* is formulated by Brunschwig (1967) 113–14 in his note on 1,1,100a20 [author's emphasis]:

Bien que le mot ἔνδοξος apparaisse peu dans les *Topiques* (à l'exception du livre I), sa signification exacte mérite une attentive mise au point. Il faut souligner que le caractère "endoxal" d'une opinion ou d'une idée

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n'est pas, en son principe, une propriété qui lui appartient *de droit*, en vertu de son contenu intrinsèque (ce qui interdit les traductions par *probable*, *vraisemblable*, *plausible*, et autres adjectifs comportant un suffixe analogue), mais une propriété qui lui appartient *de fait*: comme le précisera la définition donnée en 100b21–23 (cf. aussi 104a8–37), les énoncés “endoxaux” sont ceux qui ont des garants réels, qui sont autorisés ou accrédités par l'adhésion effective que leur donnent, soit la totalité ou la quasi-totalité des hommes, soit la totalité ou la quasi-totalité des σοφοί, des représentants de ce qu'on peut appeler l'opinion éclairée (corrélativement, un énoncé paradoxal n'est pas, en son principe, un énoncé intrinsèquement improbable ou invraisemblable, mais un énoncé qui, *en fait*, heurte les opinions dominantes). Ainsi s'explique qu'il ouisse y avoir des énoncés qui se présentent comme “endoxaux” sans l'être véritablement (100b24 sq.) et d'autres qui ressemblent aux énoncés “endoxaux” (104a13, 15–20). Ces justifications fournies, reste à faire entendre que le mot ἔνδοξος couvre à la fois des idées admises par l'opinion commune et des idées admises par les σοφοί: je pense avoir approximativement préservé cette double possibilité en utilisant simplement l'expression d'*idée admise*.

Similarly Primavesi (1996) 33–4 and 40–7. There is good *prima facie* evidence for this view: apart from the so-called definition of the ἔνδοξον referred to by Brunschwig,<sup>1</sup> there are passages (to be discussed below) which use the terms ἔνδοξον and δόξα interchangeably (e.g. Top. 1,14), and the word itself of course means ‘enjoying a good reputation’, especially when applied to people, as it often is prior to Aristotle as well as in the ‘definition’ itself.

Brunschwig himself qualified his view (without retracting it) in the second volume of his Budé edition (Brunschwig 2007) 280,<sup>2</sup> impressed by arguments advanced by Fait (1998) in an acute article which scholarship has otherwise ignored. Fait had concluded that ‘to be ἔνδοξον’ is in Top. best interpreted as a species of ‘to appear true’. Of other recent interpreters, Rapp and Wagner (2004) 268–9, who do not cite Fait, endorse the traditional view while qualifying it in the following way:

1) Top. 1,1,100b21–3: ἔνδοξα δὲ τὰ δοκοῦντα πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς σοφοῖς, καὶ τούτοις ἢ πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς μάλιστα γνωρίμοις καὶ ἐνδόξοις; cf. 1,10,104a8–11 (quoted below, section 3.), which shifts from talking about what Brunschwig calls “idéas” to talking about dialectical premisses (προτάσεις; on the difference see section 2. below).

2) However, the brief remarks in Brunschwig (1986) 39 point in a completely different direction: “Consider always both the question and the thesis, and their respective degrees of plausibility.” The context is a summary of the rules for the respondent (cf. Top. 8,5 in particular).

An einigen Stellen jedoch ist deutlich nicht die faktisch anerkannte Meinung gemeint, sondern es wird jemandem diese Anerkennung erst angeschlossen; in diesem Zusammenhang geht es nicht um anerkannte, sondern um anzuerkennende, akzeptable Sätze.

The latter of the two views contrasted in this quotation is consistent with the position I am going to defend as applicable throughout *Top.*; however, Rapp and Wagner leave the grounds for the acceptability envisaged unspecified, as well as whether these grounds are supposed to be actually invoked and considered by participants in dialectical exchanges.<sup>3</sup> Another view with affinities to my own is that of Reeve (1998) 238–43, according to whom *ἔνδοξα* are ‘deeply unproblematic beliefs’; I shall aim to be more specific and will question that *ἔνδοξα* are invariably beliefs.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence which is cited in support of the ‘traditional’ interpretation is usually derived from *Top.* 1, the book where the term occurs most frequently (cf. Brunschwig quoted above), and accordingly Fait (1998) argues from passages in *Top.* 1. I will discuss some of the passages in question in due course, but will start from *Top.* 8, because it has not featured prominently in the debate so far and because the detailed rules for questioners and respondents in that book make it apparent that grounding *ἔνδοξα* in *de facto* support would have made for dialectical exchanges which were neither viable nor beneficial as an exercise.

## 2.

Aristotle's *Top.* has the air of a creation *ex nihilo*: before Aristotle, there may have been dialectical exchanges; after Aristotle, there was a method for them.<sup>5</sup> We think of the *ἔνδοξον* as Aristotle's cre-

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3) Likewise, according to Smith (1997) xxiii–iv (cf. 78), *ἔνδοξα* are in general propositions which are ‘acceptable’ to all, or most, or the experts; cf. Smith (2012) section 8.1.

4) Bolton (1990) argues for a conception of the *ἔνδοξον* which is similar to the one I am going to defend, but the arguments he cites in favour are different from those offered here and, to my mind, often problematic, since they assume continuities between *Top.* and the use of *ἔνδοξα* in other treatises which are disputable (and with which I cannot engage here where my focus is on dialectical exchanges in question and answer); see also Brunschwig (1990).

5) Cf. Arist. S.E. 34,184a1–8.

ation, encapsulating a distinctive aspect of Aristotle's methodology. However, there is the possibility, even likelihood, that the notion existed in pre-Aristotelian rhetorical theory. The author of *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, which postdates Aristotle's *Top.* and probably also *Rhet.* but reflects pre-Aristotelian material,<sup>6</sup> distinguishes two types of γνώμη, one ἔνδοξος and one παράδοξος (11,1430a40–b29). For the former, no grounds need to be cited, we are told, since everybody is familiar with it and has confidence in it.<sup>7</sup>

That Aristotle may be appropriating a notion from rhetorical theory is significant for my purposes for at least two reasons. First, if the term could be assumed to be familiar to the audience, it would be less likely that Aristotle would give a stipulative definition of it.<sup>8</sup> Second, rhetorical theory as expounded in *Rhet. ad Alex.* is in some ways pre-theoretical and manages to do without logical conceptions which are crucial to *Top.*: e. g., that of a proposition, in which one term is predicated of another, or that of an argument, which is expected to satisfy certain standards of validity, to name only two. Consequently, we should distinguish between ideas or views, which are the kind of thing rhetoricians and ordinary people deal with, and propositions or 'premisses' (προτάσεις, i. e. yes/no questions which invite acceptance or rejection of a proposition), which is what logicians and dialecticians deal with. Brunschwig (quoted in section 1.) seems careful to speak of ἔνδοξα as 'opinions' or 'idéés'; both terms put ἔνδοξα in the doxastic domain, and only the first clearly classifies them as 'beliefs'. Rapp and Wagner shift from 'Meinung' to 'Sätze'. A view may be capable of being captured in a number of different formulations without one of them enjoying cardinal status. The same is not necessarily true of 'premisses'.

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6) See Reinhardt (2010) 3–4 n.7, as well as Reinhardt (2007) on how in *Rhet.* Aristotle engages with and appropriates the kind of material assembled in *Rhet. ad Alex.* I am indebted to James Allen for pointing out the relevance of *Rhet. ad Alex.* 11 to the present study.

7) It could be shown that Aristotle's account of γνώμη in *Rhet.* 2,21 is indebted to and builds on something like the account in *Rhet. ad Alex.*, but avoids the term ἔνδοξος.

8) Cf. Smith (1989) 226 on A.Pr. 2,27,70a3–4, where τὸ εἰκός is glossed as a πρότασις ἔνδοξος: "As with Aristotle's other definitions, this is not intended to explain the term for those (like us) who are ignorant of its meaning, but to accommodate it in the deductive theory of the figures."

## 3.

In *Top.* 8,2,157b32–3 there is a general statement which stands in direct conflict with the supposedly definitory statements in *Top.* 1 (see n. 1), if one interprets these in terms of *de facto* endorsement by certain groups of people: *διαλεκτική γάρ ἐστι πρότασις πρὸς ἣν οὕτως ἐπὶ πολλῶν ἔχουσιν μὴ ἔστιν ἔνστασις* ('For a dialectical premiss is one with respect to which, while it obtains for many instances, there is no objection').

Clearly, the proposition contained in a dialectical premiss cannot both owe its status to being plausible in the quite specific sense at issue in 8,2,157b32–3, which does envisage a standing 'de droit', and derive its standing solely from actual endorsement enjoyed amongst certain groups of people, i. e. have its status 'de fait'.

In order to gauge what exactly Aristotle means in 8,2,157b32–3, we need to look at the meaning of ἔνστασις, which I have rendered 'objection' above. The term is not defined in *Top.*, nor does it receive a general discussion, and some of the passages where it occurs might give the impression that it means 'counterexample', i. e. an instantiation of a general proposition which is false. In that case Aristotle would not be saying more than that one should be able to think of many true instantiations of a proposition and of no false instantiation.

However, comparison with *Rhet.* shows that 'counterexample' is only one of the meanings of the term and that Aristotle has further types of objection in mind. In 2,25,1402a34–7 Aristotle introduces a typology of ἐνστάσεις, prefaced with *καθάπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς Τοπικοῖς, τετραχῶς*; *Top.* as it has come down to us contains no such typology,<sup>9</sup> but the cross-reference shows the intended applicability of the typology for dialectical contexts, too. The four types are characterised as ἢ γὰρ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ ἢ ἐκ τοῦ ὁμοίου ἢ ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου ἢ ἐκ τῶν κεκριμένων. The first type is illustrated through objections to the proposition 'love is virtuous'; to this one can reply either by citing a counterexample of a particular kind of love which is not virtuous, or one can show that the predicate 'virtuous' does not apply to the genus of 'love' (ἐνδεῖα; 'desire'). The latter, as well as the remaining three types of objection, extend the range

9) Rapp (2002) 789 discusses passages from *Top.* which have been proposed as the intended reference point and concludes that none of them can be meant.

of propositions an ἔνδοξον is expected to cohere with beyond instantiations of it.<sup>10</sup>

If 1,1,100b21–3 gives the definition of the ἔνδοξον and 8,2,157b32–3 a property which may or may not attach to ἔνδοξα (i. e. an accident), then what Aristotle says about the rules of the game in *Top.* 8 (as well as elsewhere) ought to allow us to see that this is so; likewise if 8,2,157b32–3 gives the definition and 8,2,157b32–3 an accident. 1,1,100b21–3 and 8,2,157b32–3 cannot both give definitions unless Aristotle relied on a disjunctive conception of the ἔνδοξον and thought that a dialectical premiss could contain either a proposition whose standing is due to *de facto* endorsement or a plausible proposition; this option will have to be considered. If both gave accidents, then the mystery of what an ἔνδοξον is in *Top.* would deepen yet further.

What should not distract us is that 1,1,100b21–3 speaks of ἔνδοξα while 8,2,157b32–3 speaks of the dialectical premiss and does not mention endoxality: consider *Top.* 1,10,104a8–11: ἔστι δὲ πρότασις διαλεκτικὴ ἐρώτησις ἔνδοξος ἢ πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς σοφοῖς, καὶ τούτοις ἢ πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς μάλιστα γνωρίμοις, μὴ παράδοξος.<sup>11</sup>

I now turn to *Top.* 8 with the two competing conceptions of ἔνδοξον in mind.

#### 4.

If one reads *Top.* 8 and appreciates that it was written as an attempt to systematise and impose order on an existing practice, then it becomes clear that we should assume the typical respondent to be difficult, and that consequently Aristotle regarded regulating respondent behaviour as vital. Aristotle tells us, in the chapter (8,5) which deals with the question of when the respondent has to accept a premiss that is offered to him, that the respondent should accept it if it is more ἔνδοξον than the questioner's intended conclusion. Both in practical terms and considering that dialectical dis-

10) Cf. also A.Pr. 2,26,69a37 (the first line of that work's chapter on ἔνστασις): ἔνστασις δ' ἐστὶ πρότασις προτάσει ἐναντία.

11) In A.Pr. 1,1,24b1–3 the dialectical premiss is characterized as an ἐρώτησις ἔνδοξος only.

cussion is to be a useful philosophical exercise, one wonders how the question of whether a given premiss meets this criterion is supposed to be settled on the traditional conception of the ἔνδοξον: by citing the number of people who as a matter of fact endorse a given premiss and showing it to be higher than the number of those who endorse the conclusion, or by getting into debates about the credentials of any endorsers?<sup>12</sup> Consider further that unless there is a dramatic difference in argumentative skill between the two dialecticians, dialectical προβλήματα where one pole of the contradictory pair is eminently ἔνδοξον and the other highly ἄδοξον make for unproductive dialectical exchanges, since the respondent would invariably select the position which is easier to defend, leaving the questioner with a near-impossible task. So the positions chosen by or assigned to respondent and questioner respectively are likely to cluster around a median of endoxality,<sup>13</sup> which would make establishing a baseline against which to evaluate a premiss very difficult on the standard view. Perhaps more importantly, how could it be beneficial as philosophical training to discuss the question of how many people endorse a given proposition, or to weigh the relative credentials of the endorsers against each other?

If Aristotle had had such a manifestly absurd procedure in mind, one would have expected him to tell us more (or at least something) about how such a discussion is to be conducted, in general and in particular in situations where the differences in relative endoxality are small, and where the respondent is obstructive. And if the idea was that dialecticians are to make a projection about likely endorsement, then we would already have left the traditional view of the ἔνδοξον behind and would instead have to ask on what grounds such a projection could be made. An answer suggested by 8,2,157b32–3 (quoted above) would be that a premiss, in order

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12) Thus Primavesi (1996) 46: “Erst diese Deutung trägt auch der Tatsache Rechnung, daß nach der Top. A1 aufgestellten Definition des *Endoxon* die Reputation der zur Klasse der *Endoxa* gehörenden Sätze nicht einheitlich hoch ist, sondern nach Zahl und Rang der Gewährsleute gestuft.” Rapp and Wagner (2004) 354 state, in the notes on Top. 8,4, that ἔνδοξον, as understood on the traditional interpretation, could not take the comparative or superlative, which does not quite capture the problem: “‘more ἔνδοξον’ can, considered in itself, mean ‘endorsed by more people or people of higher standing’”.

13) On this point see Frede (2012) 195. Examples of προβλήματα given in Top. 1,11 include ‘Is pleasure to be chosen or not?’ (104b7) and ‘Is the universe eternal or not?’ (104b8).

to be acceptable, would have to hold for ‘many’ instantiations without there being an objection, e. g. a proposition implied by the proposition in question which is false, or a counterexample to it that one can think of. Variations in endoxality thus construed may be due, e. g., to the number of apparently true propositions one can think of with which a given proposition coheres, or to that proposition’s illuminating or explanatory power vis-à-vis other propositions.<sup>14</sup> The ‘definition’ of the ἔνδοξον in Top. 1,1 (see n. 1 above) would not be a definition but would name a feature that typically though not invariably holds true of such propositions: that they are endorsed by all, most, or at least those who know something about the subject area to which the proposition belongs.

8,5 repays a closer look in that it offers further support to my argument. After a preface (159a25–37), Aristotle describes the general task of the respondent and introduces a distinction which was not explicitly made but relied on earlier (e. g. in 1,14, on drawing up collections of ἔνδοξα; see below), namely that between general ἔνδοξα (these are described in the ‘definition’ of the ἔνδοξον in Top. 1) and particular ἔνδοξα, propositions held by one individual, e. g. a participant in dialectical debate or a famous thinker.<sup>15</sup> The main part of the chapter (159a38–159b35) divides into two sections, 159b8–25 on general ἔνδοξα and 159b25–35 on particular ἔνδοξα. (Trivially, particular ἔνδοξα, given their role elsewhere in the Cor-

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14) The demanding standard of plausibility imposed by 8,2,157b32–3 might give rise to the following worry: could dialecticians hope to mount a successful argument in cases where the two poles of the contradictory pair which the πρόβλημα represents are comparable in endoxality, given that the finely balanced issue should provide plenty of ἐνστάσεις either way? Two considerations are relevant here. One is that each pole will cohere with a complex set of other propositions, will, as it were, belong with its own world. The second is that the questioner directs the whole exchange, by being the one who advances questions, seeking yes/no answers, and at best allowing for requests for clarification or for ἐνστάσεις. This means that it is to a large degree up to him to keep the discussion within the coherent set of propositions to which his intended conclusion belongs. The respondent will be able to mount an objection successfully in only two situations: if there is an inconsistency within the questioner’s position on which one of his premisses touches, or if one of these premisses stands in direct conflict with a proposition that belongs to the same set as the position the respondent opted for at the beginning of the exchange. Training the ability to spot such openings would seem to be more useful than weighing the number and reputation of endorsers of a proposition.

15) The σοφοί referred to in the ‘definition’ of the ἔνδοξον in Top. 1,1,100b22 are experts in a given field; see Brunschwig (1967) 114.

pus Aristotelicum, are in part responsible for the notion that an ἔνδοξον derives its standing from actual endorsement.) In 159b25–35 Aristotle distinguishes two cases: first, if what has been accepted is not a general ἔνδοξον or indeed ἄδοξον, but the respondent's personal opinion, then what appears true to him and what does not (πρὸς αὐτὸν τὸ δοκοῦν καὶ μὴ δοκοῦν, 159b26–7) should be considered when it comes to accepting or refusing premisses. (Note that τὸ δοκοῦν cannot here mean 'that which appears ἔνδοξον' on the traditional view, since the 'endorser' is the respondent.) Second, if someone assumes the role of a particular thinker like Heraclitus in dialectical argument, one should argue not with regard to what to the respondent appears to be true, but rather as Heraclitus would (οὐχ ὡς οὐ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ὅτι καθ' Ἡράκλειτον οὕτω λεκτέον, 159b32–3). Now, as a moment's thought will make clear, this cannot mean that what is available to dialecticians is just the actual statements made by Heraclitus, since Heraclitus does not present his views in the form of neatly arranged arguments (and if we had more of him, this impression would be unlikely to change), as in general nobody sets forth his reasoned views on anything in such a way that every belief one has is actually stated. Rather, what must also be meant is the views which Heraclitus is likely to have held, or may be taken to be committed to, given his known views. So even a debate which is conducted within the horizon of Heraclitean thought would not be possible without generating and evaluating propositions by, in principle, the same rational procedures which, or so I argue, are supposed to be employed in discussing and constructing arguments from general ἔνδοξα. Now Brunschwig (2007) 280–84 realised that τὸ δοκοῦν in 159b26–7 must mean 'that which appears true' and cannot mean 'that which appears ἔνδοξον', which made it necessary for him to explain what the same expression means in the preceding section on general ἔνδοξα (159b8–25), and because he retained a commitment to the notion that ἔνδοξα owe their status to *de facto* support, he assumed τὸ δοκοῦν in the earlier passage to mean 'that which appears ἔνδοξον'.<sup>16</sup> On my view,

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16) One can see why it was felt to be attractive from a formal point of view if 8,5 contrasted propositions endorsed by all, most, or the experts with propositions endorsed by an individual. A clue in the chapter itself which suggests that this is not what Aristotle meant is that 159b8–9 links the ἔνδοξον with the γνώριμον (ἐπεὶ δ' ὁ καλῶς συλλογιστόμενος ἐξ ἔνδοξοτέρων καὶ γνωριμωτέρων τὸ προβληθὲν ἀποδεικνυσι . . .); on the uses of the latter term in *Top.* 8 see below.

there is no need to assume such a shift of meaning, nor to assume that Aristotle left it unsignalled. This is not to say, however, that there is no difference between the uses of τὸ δοκοῦν in the two sections. Assuming the phrase means ‘that which appears true’ in both parts of the chapter, the question is if a respondent in the first case does or does not respond in accordance with his beliefs, i. e. whether the contrast envisaged is

(a) one between answering in accordance with one’s beliefs in cases where these fall in with everybody else’s and answering in accordance with one’s own acknowledgedly quirky peculiar beliefs,

or

(b) one between answering in such a way that the premiss in question does, if accepted, not characterise a belief one holds but a position one adopts dialectically or hypothetically or for the sake of the argument (in a disinterested and detached way while nonetheless employing one’s own reason and following rational procedures appropriate for intelligent people) and answering in accordance with one’s beliefs, whether or not these happen to be general ἔνδοξα, too.

What makes it plain that Aristotle must have the second contrast in mind is that the section is preceded by a remark that so far there are no rules for those who engage in dialectical exercise (γυμνασία) and testing (πεῖρα), a situation which is to be remedied in the present chapter (see 159a25–6 and 36–7). Now testing is a dialectical exchange of the kind we know from Platonic dialogues, where Socrates engages an interlocutor whom he asks to answer in accordance with his beliefs, with the result that ignorance of which the respondent is unaware emerges in the course of the argument.<sup>17</sup> The instruction relating to answering in accordance with one’s own beliefs in 8,5,159b25–7 then introduces the specific difference of question-and-answer λόγοι which are πεῖραι, which means that the preceding section cannot also be concerned with the respondent’s opinions, whether or not they fall in with general ἔνδοξα.

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17) See, e. g., Smith (1997) 129.

If we pick our way through Top. 8 from the beginning, there will be a number of passages which are difficult to make sense of on the traditional view. One of the tasks of the questioner is the κρύψις τοῦ συμπεράσματος, the concealment of how exactly one is going to establish one's intended conclusion through argument.<sup>18</sup> In 8,1,155b29–35 the questioner is instructed to refrain from offering his necessary premisses, i. e. those on which his dialectical syllogism rests, one after the other. Rather, one is supposed to seek approval of a premiss which implies the one that is actually required for the argument. Even if the premiss which is offered to the respondent and accepted derived its standing from the authority of backers, this would not be true of the premiss which is actually needed for the argument; this the respondent is expected to accept because of its logical relationship to another premiss which he has accepted (see also below, on Top. 1,10). And if the traditionalist wanted to withdraw to a position whereby actual support secures for a premiss access to the dialectical exchange, after which it has to withstand logical scrutiny, then it would need to be appreciated that here first access to an exchange is at issue. Aristotle continues that, if the respondent refuses to accept the premiss which one actually needs, one should obtain it through a συλλογισμός or through ἐπαγωγή, unless the premiss in question is exceptionally evident (προφανής, 155b37), in which case it can be offered directly. Again, one would have expected Aristotle to derive the standing of exceptionally unproblematic premisses from authority, not from the intrinsic feature of being evident, if the former was what he had in mind.<sup>19</sup>

In 156b4–9 the dialectician is instructed to offer premisses not in a way which signals their importance for obtaining the conclu-

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18) The requirement of κρύψις is one reason why the central claim of Slomkowski (1997) – that dialectical syllogisms are hypothetical syllogisms in which the conditionals which characterise dialectical τόποι feature as first premisses – cannot be correct. It is true that there is one instance in Top. (3,6,119a38–119b1) where Aristotle calls a conditional ἔνδοξον, but not every ἔνδοξον is a potential premiss in a dialectical syllogism just because premisses have to be ἔνδοξα. That Aristotle can call a conditional ἔνδοξον of course gives out nothing for the question of what he takes an ἔνδοξον to be, given that both conceptions at issue here are conceivable for conditionals just as for simple propositions.

19) The adjective προφανής is rare in Aristotle. Its only other occurrence is a little later in 156a26, where a conclusion is said to be προφανές as following from a set of premisses. See below on Rhet. 1,1,1355b15–7.

sion, but as if the acceptance for the premiss was sought for some other reason (e. g. to establish an intermediate step); for respondents are said to be wary of premisses necessary for establishing the questioner's argumentative aim and liable to reject them. When it is not clear that the premiss in question is relevant to obtaining the conclusion, respondents are said to be more likely to grant what seems to them to be the case (156b8 τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς; see above). Here Aristotle aims to provide guidance on how to prevent the respondent from stonewalling for fear of defeat; one is to get the respondent to take the premiss on its merit, which means asking oneself if it appears true. In 156b20–3 Aristotle suggests that it is useful to add, in offering a premiss, that the proposition in question is 'familiar and something people say' (σύνηθες καὶ λεγόμενον); for respondents would be hesitant to reject what is familiar, since they make use of such propositions, too. What is striking about this is that, unless one wanted to draw a (to my mind, precarious) distinction between being an ἔνδοξον on the traditional view and being σύνηθες καὶ λεγόμενον, Aristotle should be instructing dialecticians to invoke on occasion the grounds from which ἔνδοξα in general are supposed to derive their 'good repute'.<sup>20</sup>

8,3 is mostly taken up by instructions for the questioner on how to deal with theses which are difficult to establish, but the very end of the chapter (159a3–14) looks at this kind of dialectical situation from the respondent's point of view. This represents something of a false start, given that 8,4 marks a new beginning (the instructions for the respondent are announced), and raises the question whether the paragraph is a secondary addition by Aristotle, as does the fact that it seems to rely on the precepts for respondents discussed only in 8,5. In any case, the passage is germane to my discussion because of the way in which it describes the possible choices a respondent makes in accepting or declining premisses offered to him in support of a thesis which is difficult to establish. Aristotle says that, if it is harder to argue for the premiss offered than for the thesis (i. e. the questioner's intended conclusion), i. e. if the premiss is less ἔνδοξον than the thesis, one can either accept or reject it. If one does the latter, one will impose an even harder task on

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20) Aristotle would be expressing himself in a peculiar way if his point was that a questioner who is asking for acceptance of a general ἔνδοξον is to put a respondent right who thinks a particular ἔνδοξον or an expert view was being offered.

the questioner (i. e. to obtain the premiss through argument). If one does the former, then one will 'have confidence (sc. in the conclusion) on the basis of less reliable premisses' (πιστεύσει ἐξ ἥττων πιστῶν, 159a8–9).<sup>21</sup> What is remarkable about this formulation is that it suggests an epistemic investment in the questioner's argument on the part of the respondent which would be unnecessary if the endoxality of a proposition was grounded in *de facto* support; in that case the question of whether a premiss deserves the respondent's credence should not arise. Aristotle continues that, if the task of the questioner is supposed to be to construct an argument 'from what is better known' (διὰ γνωριμωτέρων), then one should reject the premiss. This aligns dialectical argument with scientific demonstration as what follows (159a11–14) makes clear,<sup>22</sup> but would again leave little room for *de facto* endorsement as the basis for the standing of the premiss in question (unless γνώριμος was, uniquely, construed with reference to *de facto* support here). In 159a11–14 Aristotle seems to add a postscript, referencing different types of question-and-answer λόγος distinguished elsewhere (e. g. Top. 1,1): the learner should not accept the premiss if it is not better known (since, we may assume, genuine instruction would not be forthcoming and the *obscurum* established *per obscurius*), while someone engaging in dialectical exercise should accept it if the premiss 'only' appeared true (159a12: ἂν ἀληθὲς μόνον φαίνεται). Given the contrast with the learner and the characterisation of the circumstances under which he should accept, the qualification 'only' presumably means that the premiss's merely appearing true, as opposed to appearing true to a higher degree than the thesis, would warrant acceptance in this case. The question of what degree of endorsement the premiss enjoys does not arise.

In 8,9,160b17–22 the respondent is instructed not to accept assumptions (ὑποθέσεις) which are ἄδοξον, i. e. the opposite of

21) Aristotle, here and in general, does not think that, the more people believe a given proposition to hold, the more credence it deserves; cf. Obbink (1992) 225–7. Even the traditional view does not assume this.

22) Rapp and Wagner (2004) 357 comment on the later passage 8,5,159b8 that "die vorgebrachten Argumente [sc. in dialectical contexts] an Qualitäten gemessen werden, die auch für den wissenschaftlichen Beweis (ἀπόδειξις) maßgeblich sind", but they do not apply this insight in 8,3, perhaps because they do not appreciate that the perspective shifts temporarily to the respondent. Cf. e. g. their translation of 8,3,159a8–9 εἰ δὲ θήσῃ, πιστεύσει ἐξ ἥττων πιστῶν ('Wenn er es aber festsetzt, wird er aus weniger Überzeugendem überzeugen [wollen].' [my emphasis]).

ἔνδοξον. One might think that an assumption is ἄδοξον if it enjoys no support, but Aristotle gives two different possible reasons. The first is that the hypothesis has implications which are absurd, like the claims that everything is in movement or that everything is at rest. The second is that the claim would either only be accepted by depraved people or would be opposed to what ‘one’ – evidently assumed to be a reasonable individual – would want. One example given is that inflicting harm is better than to suffer it.

## 5.

I now turn to Top. 1. Chapter 14 is a key exhibit for the traditional interpretation of ἔνδοξον, in that it instructs the reader to collect ἔνδοξα with a view to using them as προτάσεις, to order them by subject area as well as other principles, and to include the views advanced by famous individuals, too (Aristotle adds that marginal notes should be used to identify the individual who held a certain view, e.g. Empedocles 105b16–17). What is more, the chapter uses the terms ἔνδοξον and δόξα interchangeably, which on the most natural reading suggests that the views to be collected are actual opinions held. (That, however, does not mean that this needs to be all they are.) The whole passage plays an important role in any early history of the doxographical tradition. Here, as is widely and plausibly assumed, Aristotle is breaking new ground, as opposed to formalising a practice which was already being followed in the Academy. However, when modern interpreters like Smith (1997) xxviii draw up a list of the tasks which the questioner in a dialectical debate has to perform and posit that any premiss generated by means of a τόπος would have to be checked against the inventory of ἔνδοξα before it could be deployed in dialectical debate, then one wonders, for a number of reasons. First, dialectical debate existed well before Aristotle, and we may want to make it clear that at best this scenario is how Aristotle (whose idea, for all we know, inventories of ἔνδοξα were) suggested the game should be played. Second, it does not seem credible that a premiss generated by means of a τόπος would be deemed unfit for use just because it was not already listed in an inventory, as opposed to being used provided it was true for several instances without there being an objection to it. Third, and more importantly, Smith’s interpretation

seems to involve a misunderstanding of how dialecticians should proceed, given the purpose of the exercise. If the dialectical γυμνασία is to serve as useful philosophical training, then the function of collections of ἔνδοξα cannot be to validate or exclude premisses in a tick-box approach on external grounds; rather they must be used to guide and inform the dialectician's argument in a looser way, in the way in which a principled politician, as opposed to an opportunist, would use opinion polls to communicate effectively to the electorate positions which have antecedently been identified as the right thing to do on rational and independent grounds. Finally, it is striking that 1,14 gives every impression of being wholly Aristotelian in conception, while it is explicitly stated in 8,5,159a36–7 that Aristotle is drawing up rules where there were none before. It would be peculiar if the two passages could not be aligned as far as the conceptions of ἔνδοξον employed are concerned.

1,10 is also invoked in support of the traditional interpretation. It explains what dialectical προτάσεις and προβλήματα are, re-employing in 104a9–10 the so-called definition of the ἔνδοξον which had been introduced earlier (see above, n. 1). From 104a15 Aristotle discusses ways of generating new ἔνδοξα out of existing ἔνδοξα, employing rules of transformation as form the basis of many τόποι in the central books of the *Topics*, e. g. 104a22–3 εἰ γὰρ ἔνδοξον ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς φίλους εὖ ποιεῖν, καὶ ὅτι οὐ δεῖ κακῶς ποιεῖν ἔνδοξον.<sup>23</sup> As Fait (1998) 36–8 has observed, the kind of transfer of endoxality which is posited here is hard to reconcile with the traditional view and favours an interpretation of endoxality as an intrinsic quality. If one wanted to argue that what is meant here is that, if the proposition from which we start is an ἔνδοξον, then the proposition generated may be expected to be or ought to be generally accepted, too (an interpretation for which footholds could be found in other examples in the passage, which state that the proposition generated 'will' or 'might be' ἔνδοξον),<sup>24</sup> then this would seem questionable: if, to use the example, the opposite of the

23) On the nature and use of τόποι see Brunschwig (1967) xxxviii–xl.

24) Thus Rapp and Wagner (2004) 285: "Aristoteles formuliert in diesem Kapitel [1.10] so, als seien die Verneinungen der Gegenteile von anerkannten Meinungen schon aktuell anerkannte Meinungen; möglicherweise ist aber nur gemeint, dass wer die Meinung A anerkennt, auch die Verneinung des Gegenteils von A anerkennen würde, wenn man ihn nur auf einen entsprechenden Zusammenhang aufmerksam macht."

predicate is or contains a less familiar term than the predicate, there may be far fewer people who are willing to endorse that the opposite of the predicate holds of the opposite of the subject than there are subscribers to the view that the predicate holds of the subject. But if the newly generated proposition is found to be true in many instances without there being an objection to it, then whether or not the terms in it are familiar will not matter. Moreover, as we saw, Top. 8 also advises to obtain approval of premisses which merely imply the premiss we actually need, without the context there being suggestive of a presumption of *de facto* support or, rather, of *de facto* support being the reason for endoxality.

In Top. 1,1 Aristotle defines the συλλογισμός in 100a25–7 and then proceeds to distinguish different types of question-and-answer λόγος. Demonstrations proceed from ‘true and first premisses, and which are convincing by themselves and not because of their relationship with other propositions’ (100b1–2), which, against the background of what has been said above, must raise the question whether other λόγοι employ propositions which do owe their being convincing to their relationship with other propositions. However, the dialectical συλλογισμός is then characterised as being ἐξ ἐνδόξων (100a30), and what ἐνδοξα are is then explained in the familiar ‘definition’ (100b21–3). There follows the characterisation of the ἐριστικὸς συλλογισμός (100b23–101a1):

ἐριστικός δ' ἐστὶ συλλογισμὸς ὁ ἐκ φαινομένων ἐνδόξων μὴ ὄντων δέ, καὶ ὁ ἐξ ἐνδόξων ἢ φαινομένων ἐνδόξων φαινόμενος: (i) οὐ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ φαινόμενον ἐνδοξόν καὶ ἐστὶν ἐνδοξόν. (ii) οὐθὲν γὰρ τῶν λεγομένων ἐνδόξων ἐπιπόλαιον ἔχει παντελῶς τὴν φαντασίαν, καθάπερ περὶ τὰς τῶν ἐριστικῶν λόγων ἀρχὰς συμβέβηκεν ἔχειν· (iii) παραχρήμα γὰρ καὶ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ τοῖς καὶ μικρὰ συνορᾶν δυναμένοις κατάδηλος ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ τοῦ ψεύδους ἐστὶ φύσις.

An eristic syllogism is one which proceeds from propositions which appear to be *endoxa* but are not, as well as an apparent syllogism either from *endoxa* or from apparent *endoxa*. (i) For not everything which appears to be *endoxon* actually is *endoxon*. (ii) For none of the said *endoxa* has this appearance purely on its surface, as actually does happen with the starting points of eristic arguments. (iii) For in their case, the nature of the falsehood is usually quite obvious even for those who are able to understand but little.

Eristic syllogisms have as premisses apparent ἐνδοξα which are in fact not ἐνδοξα, or are not syllogisms in the sense of the definition, whether or not their premisses are genuine or merely apparent ἐνδο-

ξα. The rest of the quotation above deals with the first of these cases. Fait (1998) 24–5 has shown that μικρὰ in τοῖς καὶ μικρὰ συννορῶν δυναμένοις must be adverbial and cannot be an object of συννορῶν, so that the phrase must mean ‘for those who are able to understand but little’, not ‘for those who are able to appreciate even the finer points’. Even to these people of limited insight the falsehood of at least one premiss, as well as why it is false (φύσις), of an eristic syllogism of the type under consideration becomes apparent once it has been laid out. This makes it necessary to explain how exactly (i) and (ii) are to be interpreted. When Aristotle says that not every apparent ἔνδοξον is a genuine ἔνδοξον, we must ask if Aristotle means, as he would on the traditional view, that one can be mistaken about actual endorsement of a given proposition, in such a way that, once the proposition in question has featured in an eristic argument, even people of limited insight cease to think that the proposition in question is endorsed by all (or most people ...). While one might think that a proposition’s being found to be false ought to leave the degree to which it is held to be endorsed unaffected, an ambiguity is often what makes an argument eristic. Thus Aristotle might be thinking that a dialectician could indeed be mistaken about endorsement, in the sense that only when the ambiguity is identified it becomes plain that all (or most ...) endorse a premiss featuring a term in one sense, but do not endorse it if the term is understood in a different sense. However, I think it can be shown that Aristotle is not thinking of ambiguity here and that he held that our view regarding the intrinsic merits of a premiss changes when we realise what is wrong with an eristic argument (sc. in the cases under consideration). In section (ii), λεγόμενα ἔνδοξα looks back to the description of the ἔνδοξα which feature in a dialectical syllogism, i. e. to the genuine ἔνδοξα (100b21–3, quoted above). These are said not to exhibit a ‘superficial appearance’ – superficial appearance of what, we must ask. It was Alexander of Aphrodisias (in *Top.* 20, esp. lines 19–20) who first observed that Aristotle is here comparing two classes of false propositions: genuine ἔνδοξα, if false, exhibit a deep-seated appearance of truth, whereas merely apparent ἔνδοξα show a superficial appearance of truth, one which quickly disappears even in the eyes of the dim once such propositions feature in an eristic argument. The notion of appearance of truth of varying superficiality is illuminated by 8,2,158a3–6, where Aristotle uses, in a relevant context, the noun (ἐπιπολή, in the genitive with

adverbial force) from which the adjective ἐπιπόλαιος is derived. He says there of dialectical premisses that ‘either no objection should be forthcoming to them at all, or at any rate none at the surface; for if men can see no instance in which a premiss does not hold, they grant it as true’.<sup>25</sup> Here a premiss appears true if it is not found to be inconsistent with other propositions, and the consistency which it exhibits has been established through a suitable appraisal for coherence with relevant propositions (gestured at in the prefix of συνιδεῖν and συνορᾶν). The superficiality of the appearance of truth depends on how easy or difficult it is to find objections. Yet even if the ἔνδοξος is that which appears true (to a rational agent and is therefore likely to enjoy good repute), a φαίνόμενον ἔνδοξος remains a puzzling concept, as it is something which appears to appear true. Put differently, that which appears true is, at least potentially, a belief of some kind, as it is assumed to appear true to someone, and while a proposition can be apparently true, it is harder to see how it can be apparently believed, as Fait (1998) 43 observes. Now if the superficiality of the appearance of truth which the φαίνόμενον ἔνδοξος exhibits has nothing to do with confusion about one’s mental states, or a tenuous hold on one’s beliefs, it will be tempting to adopt Fait’s suggestion (1998) 43 that the ἔνδοξος is not just a proposition which appears true, but one which has a justified claim to appearing true, while the φαίνόμενον ἔνδοξος merely appears to have such a justified claim.

## 6.

I now turn briefly to the *Rhetoric* with two quite specific questions in mind, namely whether it adds anything regarding Aristotle’s conception of the ἔνδοξος in dialectical (sc. as the term has been used throughout this paper) contexts, and how the ἔνδοξος and the πιθανόν are related to each other.<sup>26</sup> It would tell against the interpretation of the ἔνδοξος proposed here if it and the πιθανά-

25) Δεῖ δὲ προτείνειν ὅσα ἐπὶ πολλῶν μὲν οὕτως ἔχει, ἔνστασις δὲ ἢ ὅλως μὴ ἔστιν ἢ μὴ ἐπιπολῆς τὸ συνιδεῖν· μὴ δυνάμενοι γὰρ συνορᾶν ἐφ’ ὧν οὐχ οὕτως, ὡς ἀληθεῖς ὄν τιθέασιν.

26) Allen (2014) argues for an interpretation of the πιθανόν in *Rhet.* which is very similar to mine and goes on to show that such a reading can be sustained beyond the in some ways peculiar introductory chapters of Book 1.

νόν came apart. That familiarity with *Top.* is presupposed in *Rhet.* is well recognised, as is the fact that Aristotle sees substantial methodological overlap between the two fields. Indeed, Aristotle famously opens the *Rhet.* with the statement that rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic and likens asking questions and giving answers to rhetorical attack and defence.<sup>27</sup> The Platonic background to all this is widely appreciated, too.

In *Rhet.* 1,1,1355b15–17 we find the following statement:

πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ὅτι τῆς αὐτῆς τό τε πιθανὸν καὶ τὸ φαινόμενον ἰδεῖν πιθανόν, ὡσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς συλλογισμὸν τε καὶ φαινόμενον συλλογισμὸν.

Moreover, (it is plain) that it is a matter of the same ability to see the persuasive and the apparently persuasive, as in the field of dialectic (it is a matter of the same ability to see) the syllogism and the apparent syllogism.

This is relevant for two reasons: first, the contrast between what is persuasive and what is apparently persuasive, by itself and against the background of the distinction drawn between the ἔνδοξον and the apparent ἔνδοξον in *Top.* (see above), imposes constraints on what the persuasive can be; second, the comparison appears to be skewed: one might have thought that it is a matter for the same ability to see the persuasive and the apparently persuasive, just as it is a matter for the same ability to see the ἔνδοξον and the apparent ἔνδοξον (cf. *Top.* 1,1,100b23–101a1 above), but being able to see the persuasive and the unpersuasive is here being likened to being able to see a συλλογισμὸς and an apparent συλλογισμὸς. The apparently persuasive cannot be what is persuasive to some but not to all, because, although Aristotle says a little later that what is persuasive has to be persuasive to someone (1,2,1356b26–7), there is always a domain and context specificity to public speeches (so even the persuasive will only ever be persuasive to some). Moreover, the wider context of the passage, which states optimistically that what is true will always be more persuasive than what is not, would on this reading align what is persuasive to everyone, i. e. unqualifiedly, with what is true in an undesirable way. Nor can the apparently persuasive be what seems to be persuasive to an inept practitioner of the art. While Aristotle is famously dismissive of contemporary rhetoricians in

27) Chiastically, in 1,1,1354a4–6: πάντες γὰρ μέχρι τινὸς καὶ ἐξετάζειν καὶ ὑπέχειν λόγον καὶ ἀπολογεῖσθαι καὶ κατηγορεῖν ἐγχειροῦσιν.

*Rhet.*, he does not view them as people who operate some low-grade form of the art of rhetoric as he expounds it.

Rather, the parallelism with the ἔνδοξον and the immediate context here suggest that the πιθανόν is persuasive on rational grounds, because of its relationship with other propositions. Rapp (2002) 104 puts it like this:

Das nur scheinbar Überzeugende wäre demnach am ehesten das, das zwar auf den ersten Blick überzeugt, den Charakter des Überzeugenden aber verliert, sobald man es näher betrachtet. Und das kann heißen, dass es sich als inkonsistent mit anderen oder längerfristigen Überzeugungen erweist oder dass sich der Grund, aus dem man es für überzeugend gehalten hat, als trügerisch herausstellt, etwa weil die Ähnlichkeit mit tatsächlich überzeugenden Sätzen irreführend oder das entsprechende Argument ein Fehlschluss war.

On such an understanding of the πιθανόν, it is also possible to see how Aristotle can shift from evaluating propositions to evaluating arguments in 1355b15–17.

In *Rhet.* 1,1,1355a14–18 Aristotle says:

τό τε γὰρ ἀληθές καὶ τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ἀληθεὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστὶ δυνάμει ἰδεῖν, ἅμα δὲ καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι πρὸς τὸ ἀληθές πεφύκασιν ἰκανῶς καὶ τὰ πλείω τυγχάνουσι τῆς ἀληθείας· διὸ πρὸς τὰ ἔνδοξα στοχαστικῶς ἔχειν τοῦ ὁμοίως ἔχοντος καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειάν ἐστιν.

To see what is true and what is similar to what is true is a matter of the same ability, but at the same time human beings are by nature sufficiently disposed towards what is true and hit the truth most of the time. Therefore being skilful in aiming at *endoxa* is the gift of someone who is in a similar way skilful in aiming at the truth.

This passage could be integrated into my discussion in various ways, but I will only observe that being skilful in aiming at (or hitting) ἔνδοξα is, through the choice of expression, characterised as a rational but not absolutely rigorous procedure. If making a judgement about the endoxality of a proposition was a matter of establishing how much *de facto* support it enjoys, then it is hard to see how one could call this ability πρὸς τὰ ἔνδοξα στοχαστικῶς ἔχειν. If it is a matter of evaluating, using appropriate procedures, how much support it ought to enjoy (and therefore may actually enjoy), given its intrinsic merits, then the description is more applicable.<sup>28</sup>

28) At the end of 8,5 (159b33–5) Aristotle briefly describes a debate in which the two dialecticians swap their positions (θέσεις). In such a case ‘they aim at what

## 7.

In *Top.*, then, ἔνδοξα are views and secondarily propositions which owe their status to an inherent quality, i. e. their consistency with instantiations one can think of which appear true as well as the absence of objections. The persuasiveness of Aristotelian *πιθανά* in *Rhet.* is accounted for in the same way.<sup>29</sup> Crucially, when it comes to evaluating and using propositions in a dialectical exchange of question and answer, it is this inherent quality which matters:<sup>30</sup> the dialectical game is envisaged to be played and can only be played with plausible propositions. There is no question that Aristotle addresses such views and propositions by means of a term which signifies actual support, but even here one has to assume that he regarded the support enjoyed by such views and propositions as due to inherent qualities, and did not think that this support was their making. The so-called definition of the ἔνδοξον in *Top.* 1,1,100b21–3 (quoted above, n. 1) thus names an accident of ἔνδοξα, albeit one that is privileged in some ways: if, e. g., the dialectician is tasked with collecting ἔνδοξα as per *Top.* 1,14, he will collect opinions actually held and use endorsement as a heuristic device. It is by extension that Aristotle can call propositions ἔνδοξα which have the inherent quality which normally accounts for a proposition's good repute even in situations where he is not entitled to assume *de facto* support. Aristotelian

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the original proponent of the claim would say' (στοχάζονται γὰρ ὡς ἂν εἴπειεν ὁ θέμενος), which is a matter of gauging from which premisses the opponent would likely have argued for his intended conclusion.

29) One might think that a weaker conception of plausibility might be employed in rhetorical contexts, e. g. involving the stipulation that the audience should be able to think merely of some true instantiations for claims advanced, but Aristotle, as we saw, seems to envisage the same role for ἐνστάσεις in *Rhet.* as he does in *Top.* (cf. *Rhet.* 2,25). The situation is different in *Poet.* 25,1461b11–12, with its stipulation that a tragic plot should involve 'what is persuasive and impossible' rather than 'what is unpersuasive and possible'. Here the requirement is weaker, i. e. that the sequence of events should be intelligible as a plot development irrespective of whether it is actually impossible (and thus open to objections); see, e. g., Kloss (2003) 176.

30) When Aristotle comes to characterise the dialectician epigrammatically at the end of *Top.* (8,14,164b2–4), he calls him a 'fashioner of premisses and maker of objections' (ἔστι γὰρ ὡς ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν διαλεκτικός ὁ προτατικός καὶ ἐνστατικός). Objections, as we saw, are in *Top.* logical objections to a proposition. They are used against simple propositions or against compound propositions. In the latter case their unavailability is supposed to secure, to the satisfaction of the participants, the truth of the conditionals which characterise dialectical τόποι; see Smith (1989) 122 on A.Pr. 1,9,30a25–8.

ἔνδοξα are not like modern-day celebrities – ἔνδοξοι in Greek – who are famous solely for being famous.

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