

ETHOS

Ethos: refers to the character of an author/speaker/designer and their ethics (or moral behavior). Moreover, Ethos is the manifestation of the speaker's good sense (phronesis), good character (arete), and benevolence (eunoia).

The principle of Ethos is simple:
Good Ethos = Good Credibility/Trustworthiness.

Moreover, the more Ethos a person has or emits, the more credible they are.

Consider this:

When you go to a job interview for the first time, what do your parents or friends normally tell you? Dress nicely. Answer the questions appropriately. And, mind your manners.

Why? To convey the right impression....

In a sense, you do these things to establish a sense of Ethos or to show ethical character.

Moving away from the professional world, here is a more personal example:

When you meet a person you like for the first time, you normally play the "twenty questions" game, asking them:

What's your name?
Where are you from?
What do you do for fun?
Do you have any brothers or sisters?
What kind of movies do you watch?
What kinds of music do you listen to?
What do like to eat?

You usually ask these questions to determine that the person you are dating is a sound, intelligent, and sane person, and you ask questions also to decide if their disposition/personality is agreeable to you.

We often ask questions to evaluate a person's Ethos or to test their ethical character....

If you ask those questions and receive a response like:

Yes, my name is Lisa. I'm from a small town in Vermont. I like to babysit my nephews, and I walk regularly. I have two loving brothers and sisters, and I just love visiting them during holidays. And, I love a good comedy.

Then, you might have found someone with Good Will, Good Sense, and Good Virtue. These traits are evident if you consider the findings.

She comes from a small town + She babysits her nephews = Indicates the possibility of good values and good intentions.

She comes from a loving family and shows love towards them = Indicates good virtue and good will.

She walks regularly = Indicates good sense (she thinks about her health).

She likes comedy = Indicates that she is fairly light-hearted about things, which suggests good will in her relations with others.

We like to think of these traits as so:

Good Will = Good Intentions towards others

Good Sense = Good intelligence and sound reasoning abilities, even sane.

Good Virtue = Good mannerisms or things done as not to openly offend others.

Now, back to the effectiveness and importance of ethos....

For crimes of fraud, criminals will use ethos to take advantage of others. For example, we are all familiar with the "Wolf in sheep's clothing" example. If you have a bad person dress well or take on the shape/actions of a good person, then they might have enough Ethos to persuade you to do something you might regret.

The idea is similar to acting: A good actor can convince the audience that they are benevolent, when in reality they may be malicious.

And, conversely, what about the "boy who cried wolf"? If a person consequently has established bad ethos with a person, then the result is not having anyone listen to what they want/need to say, even at the expense of some sort of serious loss. In one sense, they lose what we call, Situated Ethos.

Situated Ethos refers to the personal dimension which contributes to the audience listening or avoiding a rhetor based on their assessment or their familiarity with the person. In addition, a person's propensity to tell the truth is also a factor.

The more familiar an audience is with the person -> The easier the task of persuading them.

The less familiar an audience is with the person -> The more difficult the task of persuading them.

RECOGNIZING ETHOS

Examples and/or Uses of Ethos include:

claiming to be an authority

recognizing the authority of others

autobiographical information

biographic information

discussing one's expertise, experiences, education

discussing one's authority