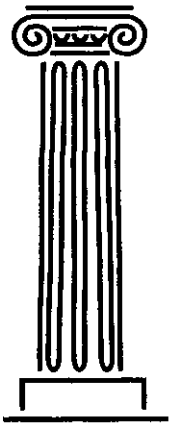


CHAPTER 5

LOGICAL PROOF: REASONING IN RHETORIC

In some oratorical styles examples prevail, in others enthymemes; and in like manner, some orators are better at the former and some at the latter. Speeches that rely on examples are as persuasive as the other kind, but those which rely on enthymemes excite the louder applause.

—Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I ii 20

ARISTOTLE TAUGHT THAT three kinds of arguments or proofs are convincing in rhetoric: arguments found in the issue itself, arguments based on the rhetor's character and reputation, and arguments that appeal to the emotions (*Rhetoric* I i 2). He called these three sorts of arguments *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. We discuss *ethos* and *pathos* in the next two chapters. Here we are concerned with arguments from *logos*, the logical or rational proofs that can be found by examining issues. The Greek word *logos* gives us the English words *logic* and *logical*. *Logos* meant "voice" or "speech" in archaic Greek. Later it came to refer to "reason" as well, and it carries this sense in English in words such as *logic*. When someone says "Be logical," she means "Think things through—be rational." However, the Greek word's early reference to speaking or language also appears in English words such as *ideology* and *psychology*, where the suffix *-logy* means "words about" or, more loosely, "study of." Hence *ideology* literally means "words about ideas" or "study of ideas"; psychology is "words about the mind" (Greek *psyche*) or "study of the mind."

In his methodology (literally, "ways of reasoning") Aristotle developed four logical methods to help people argue their way through complex issues. The four methods were scientific demonstration, dialectic, rhetoric, and false or contentious reasoning. Aristotle taught that in each of these kinds of reasoning the arguer began with a statement called a premise. This word is derived from Latin words which mean "to send before." Thus a **premise** is any statement laid down, supposed, or assumed before the argument begins. Premises are then combined with other premises in order to reach conclusions. Arguers can ensure that their arguments are valid (that is, correctly reasoned), if they observe certain formal rules of arrangement for the premises. Conclusions reached by this means of reasoning are true only if their premises are true.

In scientific demonstration, according to Aristotle, argument began from premises that are true or that experts accept as true. The premises of scientific argument or demonstration must be able to command belief without further argument to support them. For example: "Water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit" and "The moon orbits the earth" are simple scientific premises. In dialectical reasoning, the arguers are less certain about the truth of the premises; here the premises are accepted by people who are supposed to be especially wise. For example, Socrates' dictum that "the unexamined life is not worth living" is a dialectical premise, as is Jesus's teaching that human beings ought to love each other. In rhetorical reasoning, premises are drawn from beliefs accepted by all or most members of a community. According to Aristotle, false or contentious reasoning differs from scientific, dialectical, and rhetorical reasoning because it relies on premises that only appear to be widely accepted. False reasoning also uses premises that are mistakes or lies.

The premises in rhetorical reasoning always involve human action or belief. Cicero's arguments in Roman courts and in the Senate, for example, usually involved premises about human action—whether Milo actually murdered someone or whether Caesar should be allowed to become a dictator. "Our town should adopt a dark-sky ordinance," "Hateful speech is a harmful practice within a university community," and "Abortion is murder" are rhetorical arguments, rather than scientific or dialectical ones, because they deal with human action and/or beliefs.

Some rhetorical premises are commonplaces; that is, they are widely accepted by the relevant community. When the premises of rhetorical arguments draw on commonplaces, rhetorical reasoning can be called ideological, the name we gave to such reasoning in the previous chapter, on the commonplaces. "Convicted criminals should be punished" and "Anyone can become president of the United States" are commonplace premises. Many Americans take commonplace premises for granted, accepting arguments and conclusions that follow from them as forceful and persuasive. Their taken-for-grantedness qualifies them as commonplaces in American ideology, and that in turn qualifies them as premises in ideologic, a kind of rhetorical reasoning.

PROBABILITIES

For our purposes the salient difference among scientific, dialectical, and rhetorical premises has nothing to do with some external criterion for truth. Rather, the difference among them depends upon the degree of belief awarded them by the people who are arguing about them. Ancient teachers of rhetoric began the reasoning process with premises that were widely accepted as certain, and moved to those that were less certain. In fact, Quintilian defined arguments in rhetoric and logic as methods "of proving what is not certain by means of what is certain" (V x 8). Thus, such arguments enable "one thing to be inferred from another"; they also confirm "facts which are uncertain by reference to facts which are certain" (11). Without some way of moving from the certain to the uncertain, Quintilian argued, we'd have no way of proving anything.

Greek rhetoricians called any kind of statement that predicts something about human behavior a statement of probability (*eikos*). Probabilities are not as reliable as certainties, but they are more reliable than chance. Furthermore, rhetorical probabilities differ from mathematical probabilities in that they are both more predictable and less easy to calculate. Compare, for example, the relative probability that you will draw a winning poker hand to the relative probability that your parents, spouse, or partner will be upset if you get home late from the game. The chances of drawing to an inside straight are relatively remote, although they can be mathematically calculated. The chance that parents or a spouse or partner will be upset if you arrive home later than you promised are relatively greater than your chance at drawing to an inside straight, but this chance cannot be calculated by mathematical means. If you want to estimate the probability of their reaction, you need to know something about their attitudes toward promise keeping, the quality of their relationship to you, and the record of promise keeping you have built up over the years.

The reason for the relative certainty of statements about probable human action is that human behavior in general is predictable to some extent. Aristotle wrote that people can reason about things that happen "as a rule." As a rule, family members become upset when promises made to them are broken. Moreover, people cannot reason about things that happen by chance, like drawing to an inside straight. Since rhetorical statements of probability represent the common opinion of humankind, we ought to place a certain degree of trust in them. Thus statements of probability are pieces of knowledge, and as such they provide suitable premises for rhetorical proofs.

Plato credited the legendary Tisias with the invention of the argument from probability (*Phaedrus* 273b). Whether this attribution is correct or not, probability must have been a sophistic tactic, given its emphasis on human behavior rather than human nature (which is what Plato would have preferred). Since the premises used in rhetoric deal with human action, they

are only usually or contingently true. In antiquity the most famous argument from probability was this one:

> A small weak person will not physically attack a large strong person.

This is a rhetorical premise, since it articulates some common sense about the way people generally behave. In this case, it is not certain that a weaker person will leave a stronger one alone; it is only probable. The smaller person could hire others to act for him, or he could be so driven by desperation or anger that he attacks a man who is sure to injure him, anyway. A sophist would likely argue from probability in the other direction as well: a small weak person might attack a larger more powerful one, even though she was bound to be injured, since no one would suspect that she had done such a dangerous thing. Her doing so, in other words, was not probable. Our pronoun gender switch may alert you to a probability that is a commonplace in American discourse: we assume that an assailant is probably male.

> Quintilian named four kinds of premises that could be regarded as certain:
> those which involved things perceived by the senses;
> those which involved things about which there is general agreement, such as children's duty to love their parents;
> those which involved things that exist in law or in custom, such as the custom of punishing convicted criminals;
> those which are admitted by either party to the argument. (V x 12–14)

A sophist might have disagreed with Quintilian about this, however. As we noted earlier, things perceived by the senses are not always certain, since our senses may not be functioning properly: when someone has a cold, it is difficult for him to smell the roses. Moreover, an observer may not be in a position to use her senses properly, or she might not be paying attention. Nor is it true that things existing in law always have certain outcomes; these days, even if someone is convicted of a heinous crime, it is not certain that he will serve the designated sentence. Executions are even more uncertain. The outgoing governor of Illinois in 2003 pardoned or commuted the sentences of several people on death row, a few of whom had been there for many years, because of his uneasiness over the methods used to convict them. Customs are not always certainly adhered to, either, because they change quite rapidly. Men no longer open doors for women, as a rule; women may now ask men for a date, as a rule. Neither of these was a probability thirty years ago. Last, parties to an argument may have extrinsic reasons for accepting a premise as a given: they may have been bribed, or they may think that a premise is irrelevant to their case. In insanity defenses, for example, the defense attorneys sometimes admit that their clients are guilty of the crime they have been charged with. This admission has no bearing on the certainty or likelihood that a client did indeed commit a crime.

In short, very little is certain in the realm of human action. Quintilian regarded three sorts of statements as probable:

> those which involved what usually happens (children are usually loved by their parents);
> those which were highly likely (a person who is healthy today will be alive tomorrow);
> those in which nothing worked against their probability (a household theft was committed by some resident of the household). (16–17)

These sorts of premises are suitable for use in rhetoric, because they are statements about the probable conduct of human beings.

ARISTOTLE ON REASONING IN RHETORIC

For Aristotle, argument took place in language. Arguers placed premises in sequence in order to determine what could be learned from the procedure. He wrote that "a statement is persuasive and credible either because it is directly self-evident or because it appears to be proved from other statements that are so" (I ii 11). Aristotle taught his students how to reason from knowledge that was already given to that which needed to be discovered. People who wished to discover knowledge in any field did so by placing premises in useful relations to one another.

Deduction

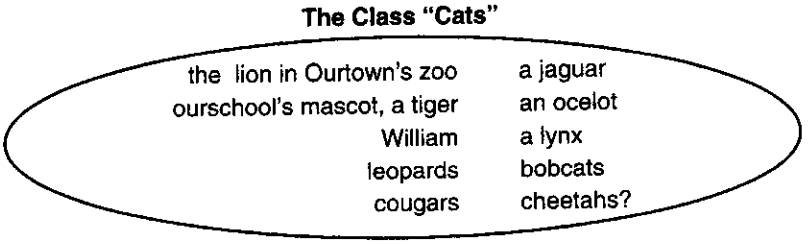
In rhetoric, as well as in dialectic and science, the discovery process moves in two directions. Aristotle called these directions **reasoning** (*syllogismos*) and **induction** (*epagoge*). He defined reasoning (also called **deduction**, from a Latin word meaning "to lead down") as "a discussion in which, certain things having been laid down, something other than these things necessarily results through them" (*Topics* I i). The most famous example of this sort of reasoning goes as follows:

1. All people are mortal.
2. Socrates is a person.
3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

The first statement is a general premise accepted by everyone. This premise is general because it makes an observation about an entire class: all people. In **syllogisms** set up like the example about Socrates, the first general premise is called the major premise. The second statement is a particular premise accepted by everyone. This premise is particular because it refers to only one person out of the class of people. This premise is called the **minor premise**. The last statement is a **conclusion**, arrived at by comparing the premises: if Socrates fits in the class "people," he also fits in the class

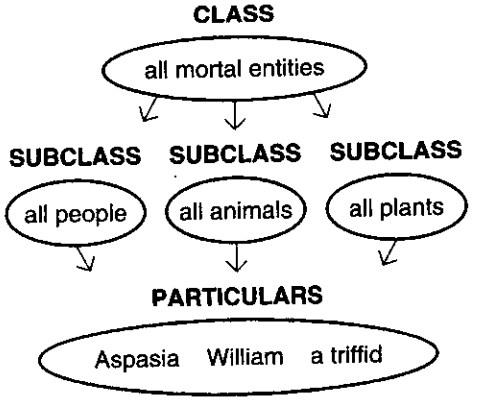
"mortal," and thus his death is inevitable. The reasoner has moved down from a generalization ("All people are mortal") to statements concerning a particular person, Socrates.

Aristotle assumed that premises did two kinds of work: they named classes of things (**generalizations** or classifications) and they named **particulars** (one instance of a thing). A **class** is any number of people or things grouped together because of certain likenesses or common traits.

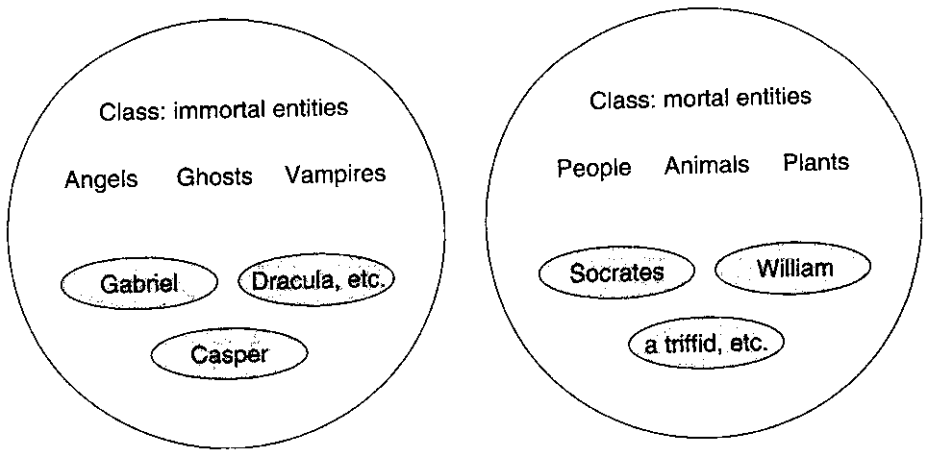


All members of this class share certain traits: they are predatory flesh-eating mammals, usually having soft fur whiskers, four legs each with five toes, and so on. The cheetah has many feline (catlike) characteristics but many doglike characteristics as well. So it is a marginal member of the class "cats."

When logicians make classes or categories, they like to know how completely its members have been enumerated. So any premise beginning with the word *all* must designate a class for which all the members are known or can be found. When a complete class is put into a premise in logic, whatever is predicated of it should be true of every member of the class, as well, as in "All people are mortal." Classes can be divided into subclasses, which indicate groups within a class; members of a subclass should all have the characteristic or characteristics that define the class, but they may differ in some characteristics from members of other subclasses. Individual members of classes or subclasses are called "particulars." For example, the class of "all mortal entities" includes people, animals, and plants.



Syllogisms worked in ancient logic because logicians thought that the relations between classes and the particulars were a fundamental element of human thinking. So they often began by naming classes, groups that belonged to those classes, and individuals that belonged to those groups:



Rhetors are not so concerned as logicians are that the members of classes be completely enumerated, since rhetorical classes are intended to be persuasive rather than mathematically or dialectically accurate. Complete enumeration of every item in a class would soon put audiences to sleep (*Rhetoric* I i 1357a). For persuasive purposes, almost any items can be grouped together to be made into a class, depending on the rhetorical situation. The class "politicians" logically includes anyone who runs for public office; but a rhetor might want to include campaign managers or spin doctors in this class, as well, in order to make a more sweeping judgment about the whole group. Here are some examples of complete deductions:

Major Premise: Ghosts and vampires are immortal creatures.

Minor Premise: Casper and Dracula are a ghost and a vampire, respectively.

Conclusion: Casper and Dracula are immortal creatures.

Major Premise: No politician can be trusted.

Minor Premise: John is a politician.

Conclusion: John can't be trusted.

Major Premise: The death penalty cannot be justified if innocent people are sentenced to death.

Minor Premise: Governor Ryan of Illinois discovered that innocent people are in fact sentenced to death.

Conclusion: The death penalty cannot be justified.

Induction

Aristotle recognized another movement between premises, and he defined it as "the progress from particulars to universals." Later logicians called this movement induction (Latin *inducere*, "to lead into." Induction leads away from particulars and into a general conclusion). A particular is any individual that can be put into a class. Particulars are also called "**instances**" or "examples." Aristotle supplied this example of inductive reasoning:

> If the skilled pilot is the best pilot [particular premise]
> and if the skilled charioteer the best charioteer [particular premise]
> then the skilled person is the best person in any particular sphere [conclusion].
> (*Topics* I 12)

The inductive reasoner can continue to pile up particulars that reinforce the conclusion by naming skilled athletes, weavers, flute players, engineers, and so on. Induction provides certainty only when all the particulars that belong to a class have been enumerated—something that would be difficult to do in this example, which would require a rhetor to name every sphere of human work. However, rhetoricians do not require complete enumeration of particulars, since a piece of inductive reasoning may be persuasive if enough particulars have been named to convince most people to accept the conclusion drawn from them.

Here is an example of inductive argument from Samuel Walker, who is an authority on hateful speech:

> The 1920s are remembered as a decade of intolerance. Bigotry was as much a symbol of the period as Prohibition, flappers, the stock market boom, and Calvin Coolidge. It was the only time when the Ku Klux Klan paraded en masse through the nation's capital. In 1921 Congress restricted immigration for the first time in American history, drastically reducing the influx of Catholics and Jews from southern and eastern Europe, and the nation's leading universities adopted admission quotas to restrict the number of Jewish students. The Sacco and Vanzetti case, in which two Italian American anarchists were executed for robbery and murder in a highly questionable prosecution, has always been one of the symbols of the anti-immigrant tenor of the period. (1994, 17)

Walker begins this paragraph with a conclusion about the high level of bigotry and intolerance in America during the 1920s and then, working inductively, cites a series of examples—the Klan and restrictions on immigration—to support it.

Aristotle had a good deal more to say about reasoning in rhetoric, all centered on the relation of general premises to particular ones. Using this scheme, he invented four types of reasoning that are special to rhetoric: enthymemes, examples, signs, and maxims.

Enthymemes

The premises used in constructing rhetorical proofs differ from those used in dialectic and science only in the degree of certainty we can attach to

them. In dialectic and science, deductive arguments are called syllogisms. In rhetoric, they are called enthymemes. The word *enthymeme* comes from the Greek *thymos*, "spirit," the capacity whereby people think and feel. Ancient Greeks located the *thymos* in the midsection of the body. Quite literally, then, an enthymematic proof was a visceral appeal.

Rhetors ordinarily use some widely held community belief as the major premise of their argument. Then they apply that premise to the particular case in which they are interested. Here, for example, is an enthymeme that could be used to develop the argument about hateful speech:

Major Premise: Racist slurs directed against innocent people are offensive and ought to be punished.

Minor Premise: Members of Gamma Delta Iota wore Klan outfits, stood on the commons, and shouted racist epithets at people passing by.

Conclusion: Members of Gamma Delta Iota engaged in offensive behavior and ought to be punished.

Here the major premise is a rhetorical probability, since it is not certain that everyone is offended by the use of racist slurs. The rhetor counts on the fact that most people accept this premise. Those who do not accept it may be reluctant to admit as much; if so, the rhetor's major premise has a greater chance of winning acceptance by an audience. In this case the conclusion also turns on a probability, given the rhetor's assumption that her audience probably agrees that wearing Klan garb and shouting racist epithets is offensive.

There are many sorts of relations that may obtain among premises. Sometimes, a minor premise is an example of the major premise, as it is in the enthymeme about offensive behavior. Sometimes, though, the minor premise states a reason for acceptance of the conclusion:

Major Premise: Secondhand smoke can cause lung cancer.

Minor Premise: Because people are allowed to smoke in our workplace, secondhand smoke is present there.

Conclusion: Smoking should be banned from our workplace.

The relations between major and minor premises, then, often take one of these two forms:

a. Y (minor premise) is an example of X (major premise).
b. Y (minor premise) is a reason for X (major premise).

And, as is the case in our examples about hateful speech and smoking, the conclusion of an enthymeme often has the relation of "thus it follows that," a relation that can by indicated by "therefore."

Standard Enthymematic Patterns

Y is an example of X.

Therefore, it follows that Z.

Or

Y is a reason for X.

Therefore, it follows that Z.

Here is an argument built on the first pattern, arguing from a single example:

> My brother-in-law spends his unemployment check on booze.
> All welfare recipients cheat.

This inductive argument is neither logical nor convincing, because there is a large gap between the minor and major premises. The rhetor has assumed that what is true of one particular, "my brother-in-law," is true of the class of "all welfare recipients." The only audiences who will accept this argument are those who are already convinced of its worthiness. Despite its flaws, people make arguments similar to this one every day.

Here is an instance of an argument built on the second pattern, arguing from a reason:

> Men have the power in Hollywood.
> That's why there are so few good roles for actresses.

The first and major premise generalizes about the gender of all powerful people in Hollywood, while the rhetor draws the conclusion that there are few good roles for actresses from a suppressed middle premise. Can you figure out what it is? It goes something like this:

> Men aren't interested in finding good roles for women.

In order to determine whether this argument from a reason is accurate or convincing, the middle premise must be articulated; once it is articulated, a rhetor who wants to be convincing can determine whether or not it can or needs to be supported by evidence. Such an examination in this case shows that at least a few examples should be assembled in order to shore up both the major and the minor premise.

The enthymematic patterns of example and reason are not and need not be followed slavishly. Sometimes an enthymematic argument begins with its conclusion:

> Because alternative music usually finds its way into pop culture, suburban dwellers like hip-hop and Johnny Cash songs can be heard on the streets of New York City.

The pattern here, then, is

> Because Z, X and Y.

The conclusion (Z), that alternative music becomes part of popular culture, is supported by two examples (X and Y) about the crossover popularity of hip-hop and country music. Whether this argument is convincing depends upon whether audiences think the examples are actually particulars that fit into the class asserted in the conclusion.

The advertisement for Apple products—"Think different"—is a highly truncated enthymeme in which only the conclusion is stated. The other premises are presented in various ways, including images of animated computer hardware, as well as images of historical figures made famous by their innovative approaches and unique messages: Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King Jr., John Lennon, Mohammad Ali, Ghandi, and Sarah Bernhardt, among others. Nonetheless, the entire enthymeme can be articulated in language:

All geniuses are different from regular people.

Apple products are different from other computer products.

Apple is the genius of computers.

But that's not all: in urging the broader public to "think different," Apple is suggesting that its products may well be the first step toward innovative thinking. "Think different" therefore becomes a first premise, with the conclusion taking the form of an image of a shiny new Apple computer. The longer version goes something like this:

Think different.

Apple is different.

Think Apple.

This enthymeme depends for its impact on a number of American commonplaces and attitudes: our reverence for novelty, for athletes and inspirational leaders, for creativity, assertiveness, and self-reliance. All of these commonplaces could be adduced as a chain of major premises that underlie the Apple ads. If we replace the word *think* with the word *buy*, then we have the kernel of the message: buy our product. This is the implicit or explicit conclusion offered by most advertising.

Presidential rhetoric is often a good place to look for enthymemes. Rhetorician Craig Allen Smith offers a helpful analysis of the speeches delivered by President George W. Bush in the wake of 9/11 and also in the 2004 presidential campaign. These speeches show President Bush creating an "enthymeme of evil" that allows a country like Iraq to be included in the sweeping post-9/11 condemnations. Smith shows how quickly Bush's enthymeme developed by offering this timeline:

> Transcendence of the attacks evolved quickly. At 9:30 a.m., Bush announced that "our country" had been attacked; at 2:30 p.m., that "freedom itself" had been attacked; and by 9:30 p.m., it was "our way of life, our very freedom" that had been attacked. In a similar manner, the attacks attributed at 2:30 p.m. to "a faceless coward" had by 9:30 p.m. been perpetrated by "evil." On the night of September 11, our response would be to "go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world"; but at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service held on September 13, we would "rid the world of evil."

> The rhetorical transformation from a coward's attack on our country to a mission to rid the world of evil had taken barely 48 hours. . . .
>
> Rhetorically, the most effective path toward justification of a two-stage offensive against unspecified enemies who may or may not have had anything to do with the attacks of 9/11 was a rapid transformation of our response from *an attack on our country* to *ridding the world of evil*. From the outset, President Bush had characterized the acts as *evil*. By early October, he was talking about *evildoers* rather than the attackers. At his October 11 press conference, Bush said, "After all, on our TV screens the other day, we saw the evil one threatening—calling for more destruction and death in America." By *the evil one*, did the president mean bin Laden or was he invoking memories of the 9/11 photographs that purported to show Satan's face in the smoke and fire above the Twin Towers? Or perhaps he meant Saddam Hussein, of whom Bush had said earlier in the same press conference, "There's no question that the leader of Iraq is an evil man. After all, he gassed his own people. We know he's been developing weapons of mass destruction. And I think it's in his advantage to allow inspectors back in his country. . . . We're watching him carefully."
>
> On November 2, Bush reiterated that "our war that we now fight is against terror and evil. It's not against Muslims. . . . Our struggle is going to be long and difficult, but we will prevail. We will win. Good will overcome evil." Bush went on to say that "we are fighting evil, and we will continue to fight evil, and we will not stop until we defeat evil." (2005, 38–39)

What Smith means by "enthymeme of evil" can be made clear by drawing out Bush's premises even further, like this:

Major premise: Evil ought to be defeated.

Minor premise: The perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks are evil.

Conclusion: The perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks ought to be defeated.

The first statement is a general premise, drawn from common-sense beliefs held by the community. The minor premises are particular premises, since they refer to individuals—the perpetrators of 9/11. The third statement is a conclusion derived from comparing the premises.

The frequent suppression of a minor premise allows for other minor premises, such as one that names other countries that Bush placed along the "axis of evil" in a speech delivered on January 29, 2002. The above enthymeme can be informed by a number of other enthymemes, which, when charted would look like this:

Major Premise: Anyone who would stockpile weapons of mass destruction and gas his own people must be evil.

Minor Premise: Saddam Hussein has stockpiled weapons of mass destruction and has gassed his own people.

Conclusion: Saddam Hussein is evil.

When the second enthymeme joins with the first one, an invasion of Iraq would be the conclusion Bush expected his audience to draw. Still other

conclusions could be drawn from the premises of this enthymeme: that defeating evil requires support from the American people, and that they should do what they can to support the nation's response. Obviously, Bush and his speechwriters hoped that voters would draw these further conclusions.

As is apparent from this example, the placement of premises in rhetoric does not require the rigorous formal analysis that is necessary in logic. Nor are rhetors obligated to offer only two premises and a conclusion, as logicians are. Rather, an enthymeme may contain as many premises as are needed to secure the audience's belief in the conclusion. Furthermore, some premises might not hold up under scrutiny. For example, the *9/11 Commission Report*, as well as other sources, have since argued that the claim about weapons of mass destruction was unfounded.

Ordinarily, rhetors do not state all of the premises and conclusions of an enthymematic argument. Bush's "enthymeme of evil" was carefully constructed so it was ambiguous, allowing room for a host of premises. From the administration's point of view, the argument about Saddam Hussein was a very successful argument, because Congress backed a plan to invade Iraq and remove its leadership. From a rhetorician's point of view, however, it is an example of what Aristotle called "false reasoning," because its premises were not true. Rhetoricians are ethically obligated to avoid using premises that are not true.

Enthymemes are powerful because they are based in community beliefs. Because of this, whether the reasoning in an enthymeme is sound or whether the statements it contains are true or not, sadly enough, often makes little difference to the community's acceptance of the argument. Enthymemes work best when listeners or readers participate in constructing the argument—that is, if their prior knowledge is part of the argument, they are inclined to accept the entire argument if they are willing to accept the rhetorician's use of their common, prior knowledge. Bush's use of "we" in the statement "We know he's been developing weapons of mass destruction" marks the knowledge as specialized, obtained perhaps by national intelligence. And yet enough common sentiment in favor of going to war persisted at the time so that this remark was allowed to pass without much comment. Immediately after 9/11, certain common-sense responses and beliefs were heightened: fear of future attacks, mourning from loss, the need for national protection, a sense of moral outrage on behalf of the victims and their families—all of which funneled into the major premise about the need to defeat "evil."

Enthymematic arguments do not have to be spelled out completely, either. The rhetorician may even omit premises or conclusions. The audience will enjoy supplying the missing premises for themselves, and may be more readily persuaded by the argument because they have participated in its construction.

Take this enthymeme, for example: "Good people do not commit murder; Ethica is a good person; therefore Ethica did not commit murder."

While delivering this argument, the rhetor might omit the minor premise, saying only this: "Since good people do not commit murder, obviously Ethica is not guilty." Or he might omit the conclusion: "Good people do not commit murder, and Ethica is a good person." It is easy for the audience to supply the implied conclusion. As is true of all rhetorical premises, the major premise of this enthymeme is a probability rather than a certainty, and thus exceptions to it do exist.

The placement of premises in rhetoric does not require the rigorous formal analysis that is necessary in logic. And ordinarily, rhetors do not state all of the premises and conclusions of an enthymematic argument. Nor are rhetors obligated to offer only two premises and a conclusion, as logicians are. Rather, an enthymeme may contain as many premises as are needed to secure the audience's belief in the conclusion.

Cicero pointed out that while experienced rhetoricians know how to trace out all the arguments that appear in enthymemes, they do not present them according to the strict arrangement of their premises developed during invention. Rather, when it came to arrangement and delivery, a rhetor should chain premises together in the most effective way. The important thing, for Cicero, was to take a variety of approaches to laying out arguments for audiences. He counseled that a rhetor should

> use induction at one time and deduction at another; and again, in the deductive argument not always employ all . . . possible parts nor embellish the parts in the same fashion, but sometimes to begin with the minor premise, sometimes use one of the . . . proofs, sometimes both, and finally, use now this and now that form of conclusion (*De Inventione* I xli 76).

In other words, enthymemes may begin sometimes with premises or conclusions, depending on which is most effective in a given rhetorical situation. Furthermore, rhetors may omit premises that are self-evident to an audience. Cicero maintained that a few practice sessions would demonstrate just how easy it is to compose effective enthymemes.

Rhetorical Examples

Aristotle's word for example was *paradeigma* ("model"). A rhetorical example is any particular that can be fitted under the heading of a class and that represents the distinguishing features of that class. One of us lives with a cat named Margaret, who is an example of the class "cat" because she bears the distinguishing characteristics of this class. Lions and tigers (but not bears) are also examples of this class.

As Quintilian defined it, an example adduces "some past action real or assumed which may serve to persuade the audience of the truth of the point which we are trying to make" (V xi 6). If, for instance, a rhetor wants to convince her neighbor that he should keep his dog inside the fence that surrounds his property, she can remind him of a past instance when another neighbor's dog, running free, spread another neighbor's garbage

all over both front yards. Rhetorical examples should not be confused with the particulars used in inductive reasoning. This rhetor has no interest in generalizing about all dogs in the neighborhood but is only concerned to compare the actual behavior of one dog running free to the probable behavior of another in similar circumstances. A rhetor who uses examples is reasoning only from part to part, or like to like, or like to unlike, and not from a particular to a generalization as he does in induction.

Rhetorical examples are persuasive because they are specific. Since they are specific, they call up vivid memories of something the audience has experienced. This effect works well if the rhetor gives details that evoke sensory impressions, that mention familiar sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or tactile sensations. In the following passage, Victor Villanueva, a teacher himself, gives us a portrait of a teacher who influenced him:

> An appreciation for literacy comes from Mr. Del Maestro. He teaches drama, though he ventures into poetry on occasion. A Robert Culp-like fellow, square jawed, thin but not skinny, reading glasses halfway down his nose, thin brown hair combed straight back, large hands. He had been a makeup man in Hollywood, he says. Brings movie-making to life. And for me, he brings Julius Caesar to life, removes the mist from "Chack-es-piri," as *abuela* would say it. And for those in the room not as fascinated by Julius Caesar or Prince Hamlet or poor Willy Loman as I am, those who are—in teacher talk—disruptive, Mr. D forgoes the pink slip to the principal, meets the disrupter downstairs, in the gym, twelve-ounce gloves, the matter settled. He has a broad definition of art. He knows the world—and he understands the block, *el bloque*, what kids today call "the hood." Mr. D was as close to color as any teacher I had known in school. (1993, 1–2)

Notice how the details in this example evoke readers' memory of their own teachers.

Examples also work well when they evoke memories of specific historical events that are fresh in the memories of members of the audience. Here is an exerpt from Nancy Gibbs's report on the events of the Virginia Tech shootings in April of 2007, written for *Time*:

> The winds were April cruel in Blacksburg on Monday: too strong for helicopters to evacuate the most badly wounded that morning, too strong for candles that night. The vigils would have to wait; the students grieved in the privacy of their dorms. The stately, sprawling campus of Virginia Tech was littered with broken branches; yellow police tape ribboned through a tree as if the gusts had tied it there, mourning those who would not be coming back. The locals said the winds rose to carry the angels down so they could take the children home.
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> Hindsight blows just as strong through events like this. It's the nature of tragedy that it comes packaged in irony, sharp little stabs of coincidence that make it hurt even more: there was the Holocaust survivor who died trying to save his students from a mass murder committed on Holocaust Remembrance Day. There was the international-studies student who had seen the carnage at the Pentagon on 9/11 and wanted to be a peacemaker; he died in French class.

> There was the killer who signed into English class with a question mark, known by the few who knew him at all as one who hardly ever said a word to anyone—until the day he chose to start screaming and ended by shooting himself in the face, a final act of deletion. (2007)

Notice how Gibbs specifies and gives life to the generalization in the middle of this passage—"It's the nature of tragedy that it comes packaged in irony"—by listing example after example of sad coincidences.

When a rhetor reasons by means of example, she ordinarily uses a well-known instance to illuminate or explain one that is less well known. Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian all use this illustration of reasoning from example:

> To prove that Dionysius is aiming at a tyranny, because he asks for a bodyguard, one might say that Pisistratus before him and Theagenes of Megara did the same, and when they obtained what they asked for, made themselves tyrants. All the other tyrants known may serve as an example of Dionysius, whose reason, however, for asking for a bodyguard we do not yet know. (*Rhetoric* I ii 1357b)

If a rhetor wishes to turn this argument from example into an inductive argument, he can mention as many examples as he needs to be convincing, and then assemble them under a universal proposition: "One who is aiming at a tyranny asks for a bodyguard." He could immediately apply this generalization to new particulars if he wished: "We should beware, then, when Pericles asks for a bodyguard."

Historical Examples—Brief and Extended

Aristotle pointed out that successful examples may be drawn from history. For instance, people who opposed the Persian Gulf War in 1991 used the historical example of Vietnam to argue that America should not become involved again in a localized quarrel in which America had no direct involvement. Later, presidents Bush and Clinton both used the example of Vietnam as a reason for their hesitation to intervene in a local war between ethnic groups in Bosnia. People who opposed George W. Bush's plan to invade Iraq have also called on the example of Vietnam to caution against unilateral involvement in the affairs of other nations. Or, if a rhetorician were interested in arguing that politicians ought not to be trusted, she could briefly mention a number of examples taken from history—Nathan Hale, Benedict Arnold, or Richard Nixon, who, whether fairly or not, was called "Tricky Dick." The brief argument from example works because people respond to the specificity of examples. It works best when the examples selected (Hale, Arnold, Nixon) seem to squarely represent the class (politicians who were traitors).

Using a procedure called "extended example," a rhetor mentions only one of these figures and establishes his untrustworthiness by naming and describing several instances of it. For instance, Nixon lied to the American

people on at least two occasions, he broke several laws, and he destroyed evidence that would implicate him in illegal acts. A rhetor can give as many vivid details as possible in order to evoke the audience's memory of the incident and thus to induce their sympathy with his argument. In the following passage, taken from the first chapter of *The Footnote*, Anthony Grafton has fun with the point he wants to make by citing extensively from the example set by the great eighteenth-century historian Edward Gibbon:

> In the eighteenth century, the historical footnote was a high form of literary art. No Enlightenment historian achieved a work of more epic scale or more classic style than Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. And nothing in that work did more than its footnotes to amuse his friends or enrage his enemies.[1] Their religious and sexual irreverence became justly famous. In his *Meditations*, says Gibbon the historian of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, husband of the notoriously gallant Faustina, he thanks the gods, who had bestowed on him a wife, so faithful, so gentle, and of such a wonderful simplicity of manners.[2] The world, urbanely reflects Gibbon the annotator, has laughed at the credulity of Marcus; but Madam Dacier assures us (and we may credit a lady) that the husband will always be deceived, if the wife condescends to dissemble.[3] The duty of an historian, remarks Gibbon in his ostensibly earnest inquiry into the miracles of the primitive church, does not call upon him to interpose his private judgment in this nice and important controversy.[4] It may seem somewhat remarkable, comments Gibbon in a footnote which drops all pretense of decorum, that Bernard of Clairvaux, who records so many miracles of his friend St. Malachi, never takes any notice of his own, which, in their turn, however, are carefully related by his companions and disciples.[5] The learned Origen and a few others, so Gibbon explains in his analysis of the ability of the early Christians to remain chaste, judged it the most prudent to disarm the tempter.[6] Only the footnote makes clear that the theologian had avoided temptation by the drastic means of castrating himself—and reveals how Gibbon viewed this operation: As it was his general practice to allegorize scripture; it seems unfortunate that, in this instance only, he should have adopted the literal sense.[7] Such cheerfully sarcastic comments stuck like burrs in orthodox memories and reappeared to haunt their author in the innumerable pamphlets written by his critics.[8]
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> Gibbon's artistry served scholarly as well as polemical ends—just as his footnotes not only subverted, but supported, the magnificent arch of his history.[9] He could invest a bibliographical citation with the grave symmetry of a Ciceronian peroration: In the account of the Gnostics of the second and third centuries, Mosheim is ingenious and candid; Le Clerc dull, but exact; Beausobre almost always an apologist; and it is much to be feared that the primitive fathers are very frequently calumniators.[10] He could supply a comic parallel with a gravity usually reserved for the commendation or condemnation of a major historical figure: "For the enumeration of the Syrian and Arabian deities, it may be observed, that Milton has comprised, in one hundred and thirty very beautiful lines, the two large and learned syntagmas, which Selden had composed on that abstruse subject."[11] And he could salute the earlier scholars, good Christians all, whose works he drew upon for a thousand curious details, with a unique combination of amused dismissal of their beliefs and genuine respect

for their learning.[12] Gibbon was certainly right to think that comprehensive account of his sources, written in the same style, would have been susceptible of entertainment as well as information.[13] Though his footnotes were not yet Romantic, they had all the romance high style can provide. Their instructive abundance attracted the praise of the brilliant nineteenth-century classical scholar Jacob Bernays as well as that of his brother, the Germanist Michael Bernays, whose pioneering essay on the history of the footnote still affords more information and insight than most of its competitors.[14]

1. See in general G. W. Bowersock, "The Art of the Footnote," *American Scholar*, 53 (1983–84), 54–62. For the wider context, see the remarkable older study by M. Bernays, "Zur Lehre von den Citaten and Noten," *Schriften zur Kritik und Litteraturgeschtchte*, IV (Berlin, 1899), 255–347 at 302–322.
2. E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 4; ed. D. B. Womersley (London, 1994), I, 108–109.
3. Chap. 4, n. 4; ibid., 109.
4. Ibid., chap. 15; I, 473.
5. Chap. 15, n. 81, ibid., 474.
6. Ibid., 480.
7. Chap. 15, n. 96, ibid. For a recent critical discussion of the story of Origen's self-castration, see p. Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988), 168 and n. 44.
8. This point is well made by Bernays. For more recent studies along the same lines, see F. Palmeri, "The Satiric Footnotes of Swift and Gibbon," *The Eighteenth Century*, 31 (1990), 245–262, and P. W. Cosgrove, "Undermining the Footnote: Edward Gibbon, Alexander Pope, and the Anti-Authenticating Footnote," *Annotation and Its Texts*, ed. S. Barney (Oxford, 1991), 130–151.
9. For two helpful case studies see J. D. Garrison, "Gibbon and the 'Treacherous Language of Panegyrics,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, i 1 (1977–78), 4062; Garrison, Lively and Laborious: Characterization in Gibbon's Metahistory, *Modern Philology*, 76 (1978–79), 163–178.
10. Chap. 15, n. 32; I, 458.
11. Chap. 15, n. 9, ibid., 449.
12. See e.g. n. 98 to chap. 70, in which Gibbon expertly reviews and assesses the work of the indefatigable historian and editor of texts Ludovico Antonio Muratori, "my guide and master in the history of Italy." "In all his works," Gibbon comments, "Muratori approves himself a diligent and laborious writer, who aspires above the prejudices of a Catholic priest" (Muratori himself would have claimed that writing accurate history lay within a good priest's duties); ed. Womersley, III, 1061. On Muratori himself see S. Bertelli, *Erudizione a storia in Ludovico Antonio Muratori* (Naples, 1960).
13. "Advertisement," I, 5 (this text first appears, under the same title, on the verso of the half title to the endnotes in the first edition of the first volume of the *Decline and Fall* ([London, 1776]).
14. The phrase "lehreiche Fulle" is Jacob Bernays', as quoted with approval by Michael Bernays (305, n. 34). The relationship between the two deserves a study. Jacob mourned his brother as dead when he converted to Christianity: but Michael nonetheless emulated Jacob's analysis of the

> manuscript tradition of Lecretius in his own geneological treatment of the editions of Goethe. For Jacob, see A. Momigliano, "Jacob Bernays," *Quinto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome, 1975), 127–158; for his work on Lucretius, see S. Timpanaro, *la genesi del metodo del Lachmann*, 2nd ed. (Padua, 1985). For Michael Bernays, see W. Rehm, *Spate Studien* (Bern and Munich, 1964), 359–458, and H. Weigel, *Nur was du nie gesehn wird ewig dauern* (Freiburg, 1989). So far as I know, the third brother, Freud's father-in-law Berman, did not venture an opinion on Gibbon's footnotes. (1997, 1–4)

Notice how Grafton peppered his text with learned footnotes of his own, in order to reinforce the message conveyed by his extended example: "historians' arguments must still stride forward or totter backward on their footnotes" (4).

Fictional Example

Aristotle pointed out that successful examples can also be found in fiction. He drew his fictional examples from Aesop:

> A horse was in sole occupation of a meadow. A stag having come and done much damage to the pasture, the horse, wishing to avenge himself on the stag, asked a man whether he could help him to punish the stag. That man consented, on condition that the horse submitted to the bit and allowed him to mount him javelins in hand. The horse agreed to the terms and the man mounted him, but instead of obtaining vengeance on the stag, the horse from that time became the man's slave. (*Rhetoric* II xx 1393b)

According to Aristotle, Aesop used this fictional example to warn people that they should not give power to a dictator simply because they wished to take revenge on an enemy.

Fictional examples include fables and analogies (*paraboge*, "comparisons"). Fables may be drawn from literature or film, or a rhetor may compose her own stories for illustrative purposes (see the *progymnasmata* at the end of Chapter 1 for help in composing fables). Aristotle wrote that fables are easier to use than historical examples, because fables may be invented when no historical parallels are available which fit the rhetor's case. Advertisers often use animals or fabulous human beings to sell their products. One has only to recall Mr. Peanut or the Keebler Elves to realize how effective these fabulous images can become. Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man were used to sell cigarettes in the days when cigarette smoking was more fashionable than it is today. There is a good deal of argument over whether these fictional examples actually caused people to buy cigarettes, but certainly they did contribute to name recognition of the products they represent.

Fabulous examples work best if the narratives from which they are drawn are well known and liked by the audience. A rhetorician, on one hand, who is interested in establishing the possibility that UFOs are piloted by friendly extraterrestrials, for example, might revive his audience's memory

of the vivid scenes of such visitations portrayed in popular films such as *E.T.* or *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*; rhetors who want to portray aliens as hostile, on the other hand, can turn to the vivid depictions of this scenario in *Signs*, *Alien*, or *The X-Files*. Fables are most effective when morals, or generalizations, can be drawn from them. So the rhetor who utilizes the movie fables mentioned here should point out exactly how these fictions reinforce the notions that the intentions of extraterrestrial visitors are friendly or hostile. He should also directly connect the lessons taught by the films with the point of his argument.

Analogy

In an **analogy** a rhetor places one hypothetical example beside another for the purposes of comparison. Aristotle borrowed his illustration of analogy from Socrates:

> It is as silly to argue that leaders should be chosen by balloting as it would be to argue that Olympic athletes or the pilots of ships should be chosen by lot.

By means of this comparison with examples, wherein choosing by ballot could produce disastrous results, the rhetor implies the conclusion that when leaders are chosen by ballot, there is no assurance that they will possess the skills requisite to leadership. He also manages to imply that leaders must have skill levels comparable to those of athletes and pilots of ships.

In a simple analogy like this one, a rhetor simply compares two or more things or events. President Lyndon Baines Johnson, in a commencement address delivered at Howard University in 1965, used the following simple analogy to underscore the need for affirmative action:

> You do not take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, "you're free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. . . . We seek not . . . just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.

Here President Johnson compared those who could benefit from affirmative action to a runner unable to exercise. This analogy became so popular among advocates of affirmative action programs and policies that it assumed the status of a commonplace in that discourse.

In complex analogies, in contrast, two examples exhibit a similar relation among their elements. The physician William Hervey, who is credited with discovering the circulation of the blood in human beings, used a complex analogy to do so. He reasoned that if sap circulates in vegetables and keeps them alive, it was reasonable to assume that blood circulates in animals and performs a similar function for them. Here the similarity lies in the

relationship of circulation, rather than between the items mentioned—sap and blood, vegetables and animals.

Cicero included an example of complex analogical reasoning in the *De Inventione*. He told a story about an ancient rhetor named Aspasia who used a series of complex analogies to convince a couple to be satisfied with their marriage. First Aspasia prompted the wife to admit that, while she would prefer to have the gold ornaments and fine dresses possessed by a neighboring woman if they were better than her own, she would not covet that woman's husband, even though he be a better husband. In other words, since ornaments and fine dresses do not bear the same relation to happiness as does marriage to a fine husband, they do not bear the same relation to a woman's well-being or happiness. Aspasia then used a complex analogy to demonstrate to the husband that, while he might prefer to own the better horses and the better farm possessed by a neighboring man, he would not prefer the man's wife, even though she be a better wife than his own. Aspasia concluded:

> You, madam, wish to have the best husband, and you, Xenophon, desire above all things to have the finest wife. Therefore unless you can contrive that there be no better man or finer woman on earth, you will certainly always be in dire want of what you consider best, namely, that you be the husband of the very best of wives, and that she be wedded to the very best of men. (II xxxi 52)

The reasoning in this complex analogy goes like this:

> Any spouse who wants the best spouse must also become the best spouse because part of being wedded to "the best spouse" is being the "best spouse there is."

Because of the mutual relation of spouses to one another, each can be only as good a spouse as the other. The complex analogy resides, then, in the relationship of spouseness itself, rather than in the qualities of either husband or wife. Cicero thought that the force of this conclusion is undeniable, since it is very like the undisputed conclusions about jewelry and livestock that preceded it. He noted further that Socrates used this method "because he wished to present no arguments himself, but preferred to get a result from the material which the interlocutor had given him—a result which the interlocutor was bound to approve as following necessarily from what he had already granted" (53).

Here is an example of a complex analogy, put forward by columnist Maureen Dowd.

HOW WE'RE ANIMALISTIC—IN GOOD WAYS AND BAD

> The odd thing is that conservatives wear pinstriped suits. They love the ancients so much that they really should be walking around in togas. The main contribution of the Greeks to modern American politics may have been Michael Dukakis, who once climbed the Acropolis in wingtips.

But that doesn't stop conservatives—especially the Straussians who pushed for going into Iraq—from being obsessed with ancient Greece, and from believing that they are the successors to Plato and Homer in terms of the lofty ideals and nobility and character in American politics—while Democrats merely muck about with policies for the needy.

Harvey Mansfield, a leading Straussian who taught political science at Harvard and who wrote a book called "Manliness" (he's for it), gave the Jefferson lecture recently at the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington.

It was an ode, as his book is, to "thumos," the Greek word that means spiritedness, with flavors of ambition, pride and brute willfulness. Thumos, as Philip Kennicott wrote in *The Washington Post*, "is a word reinvented by conservative academics who need to put a fancy name on a political philosophy that boils down to 'boys will be boys.' "

In his prepared remarks, Mr. Mansfield did not mention the war, which is a downer at conclaves of neocons and thumos worshippers. But he explained that thumos is "the bristling reaction of an animal in face of a threat or a possible threat." In thumos, he added, "we see the animality of man, for men (and especially males) often behave like dogs barking, snakes hissing, birds flapping. But precisely here we also see the humanity of the human animal" because it is reacting for "a reason, even for a principle, a cause. Only human beings get angry."

The professor used an example, naturally, from ancient Greece to explain why politics should be about revolution rather than equilibrium: "What did Achilles do when his ruler Agamemnon stole his slave girl? He raised the stakes. He asserted that the trouble was not in this loss alone but in the fact that the wrong sort of man was ruling the Greeks. Heroes, or at least he-men like Achilles, should be in charge rather than lesser beings like Agamemnon who have mainly their lineage to recommend them and who therefore do not give he-men the honors they deserve. Achilles elevated a civil complaint concerning a private wrong to a demand for a change of regime, a revolution in politics." Mr. Mansfield concluded: "To complain of an injustice is an implicit claim to rule."

The most recent example of the Hellenization of the Bush administration is the president's choice for war czar, Army Lt. Gen. Douglas Lute, who says he loves the Greek military historian Thucydides.

Other Thucydides aficionados include Victor Davis Hanson, who was a war-guru to Dick Cheney when the vice president went into the bunker after 9/11 and got into his gloomy Hobbesian phase. (Hobbes's biggest influence was also Thucydides.)

Donald Kagan, a respected Yale historian who has written authoritatively on the Peloponnesian War, is the father of Robert Kagan, a neocon who pushed for the Iraq invasion, and Frederick Kagan, a military historian who urged the surge.

I called Professor Kagan to ask him if Thucydides, the master at chronicling hubris and imperial overreaching, might provide the new war czar with any wisdom that can help America sort through the morass of Iraq.

Very much his sons' father, the classicist said he was disgusted that the White House, after a fiasco of an occupation designed by Rummy, "is still

doing one dumb thing after another" by appointing General Lute, a chief skeptic of the surge.

Professor Kagan said that one reason the Athenians ended up losing the war was because in the Battle of Mantinea in 418 B.C. against the Spartans, they sent "a very inferior force" and had a general in command who was associated with the faction that was against the aggressive policy against the Spartans.

"Kind of like President Bush appointing this guy to run the war whose strategy is opposed to the surge," he said dryly.

With cold realism, Thucydides captured the Athenian philosophy in the 27-year war that led to its downfall as a golden democracy: "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

What message can we take away from Thucydides for modern times?

"To me," Professor Kagan said, "the deepest message, the most tragic, is his picture of civilization as a very thin veneer. When you punch a hole in it, what you find underneath is hollow, the precivilized characteristics of the human race—animalistic in the worst possible way." (2007)

Compared to Iraq, the Peloponnesian War was a cakewalk. Dowd cleverly begins the analogy between conservative leaders and the ancients by pretending to be perplexed at the different fashion choices—pinstripe suits and wingtips aren't quite togas. But her analogy becomes more complex as she explores the main analogy: that between the Iraq War and the Peloponnesian War. She begins by examining the ancient anecdote made by the conservative political theorist Harvey Mansfield, which, according to Dowd points to a hypermasculine model of power. While Dowd doesn't mention it, her analysis hearkens back to California Governor's Arnold Schwarzenegger's favorite epithet for Democrats: "girlie men." Digging more deeply into ancient history, she contacts a Yale historian known for his four-volume work on the Peloponnesian War who also happens to be the father of two highly ranking military officials. Throughout, Dowd hints at the conservative desire for empire, and with the last line suggests that the "Road to Empire" might well be more complicated now compared to what it was in ancient times.

Similar and Contrary Examples

Quintilian distinguished between examples that work by comparing two like instances, which he called "**simile**," and those that work by comparing unlike cases or "**contraries**." His example of simile was "Saturninus was justly killed, as were the Gracchi" (V xi 7). The Gracchi were famous brothers, Tiberius and Gaius, who led revolts against constituted Roman authority. Quintilian's comparison implied that the lesser-known and less respected Saturninus belonged in the class of persons who are important enough to pose a threat; it also implied that even though he was a lesser person, he nevertheless deserved a punishment similar to that meted out to the members of the famous Gracchus family.

A contemporary rhetorician might argue from simile as follows: *Survivor* and *American Idol* were rigged. So don't expect me to watch *America's Next Top Model*. The argument implied by the comparison among these examples of so-called "reality TV" is that if two were rigged, others will be, as well, and are hence not worth watching. A contemporary rhetorician who is skeptical about official explanations of the assassinations of public figures might make a more complex argument from comparative possibility as follows: "If it was possible to capture and imprison the assassin of Robert Kennedy, it ought to be possible to capture and imprison the assassins of Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy as well." The comparison suggests that even though suspects were captured and imprisoned in the latter two cases, neither was the actual assassin.

To argue from example by contrary is trickier but nevertheless effective. Quintilian's illustration of contrary example was this: "Marcellus restored the works of art which had been taken from the Syracusans who were our enemies, while Verres took the same works of art from our allies" (V xi 6). This example reflects very negatively on the character of Verres, who, in contrast to Marcellus's generosity to former enemies, stole from friends. One of us recently saw a bumper sticker that argues through contrary example in the form of an intricate enthymeme: "Nobody died when Clinton lied." The implied subject here is the Bush administration's mistruths about weapons of mass destruction, which led to deaths of U.S. soldiers, allied troops, as well as Iraqi citizens. The lie Clinton told about his sexual activity, by comparison, seems less objectionable—at least to the driver who bought the bumper sticker.

USING EXAMPLES

Aristotle preferred enthymemes to examples as a kind of proof, no doubt because enthymemes were similar to the fundamental unit of proof in his logical system—the syllogism. However, he wrote that if no enthymemes are available to a rhetor, she must use examples since they do produce conviction (II xx 9). If enthymemes are available, he recommended that a rhetor support them with examples and that she put the examples last since they are likely to induce belief. If a rhetor must begin with examples, she should include several; however, if she uses them last, in support of an enthymeme, one example will do.

Aristotle's preference for logical reasoning seems to have overtaken his usual good sense at this point. Modern audiences are ordinarily impressed by examples. The argument from example is certainly a favorite of advertisers—think, for instance, of the ads for beer that show people drinking beer and having a good time. Many contemporary journalists and writers of nonfiction also begin their arguments with extended examples. Here are

the opening paragraphs from an article about global warming written by Chad Harbach for the magazine *n+1*:

> Over the course of the past century, mean global temperatures increased by 0.6°C. This change seems slight but it isn't: in the winter of 1905 my great-grandfather, a coppersmith, installed the roof on a new reef-point lighthouse two miles from Lake Michigan's shore. Each morning he drove out across the open ice in a horse and buggy laden with his copperworking tools; today the water that far from the shore never freezes, much less to a depth that could support a horse's weight.
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> Well into the 1990s, such changes had happened gradually enough to seem salubrious, at least in the Upper Midwest—a karmic or godly reward, perhaps, for hard work and good behavior. No snow in October! Another fifty-degree day in February! It was as if the weather, too, partook of the national feeling of post-WWII progress: the economy would expand, technology would advance, the fusty mores of a black-and-white era would relax, and the climate, like some index or celebration of all this, would slowly become more mild. This was America. Our children would not only have bigger cars, smaller stereos, a few extra years to themselves—they'd have better weather, too.
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> Now we know what we've done. (2006, 1)

Notice how Harbach uses an extended example here to dramatize events in his narrative, events that he could not have witnessed personally but that he nevertheless knows about through stories passed down through generations in his family. This use of extended example creates a stark picture of climate change, providing a suitable frame for his argument that global warming is "worse than you think," which entices the reader to read further into the narrative.

If well chosen, examples cause audiences to recall similar circumstances in which they have participated or in which they would like to participate. The rhetorician can hope that the vividness of the comparison will also cause his audience to draw the conclusions at which he has only hinted. The rhetors who design beer ads obviously hope that viewers will connect use of the product with the fun shown in the ad.

Maxims

Maxims are wise sayings or proverbs that are generally accepted by the rhetorician's community. Ancient maxims were often drawn from poetry or history, as with Aristotle's "There is no man who is happy in everything," by the playwright—Euripides, or "The best of omens is to defend one's country" from the poet Homer (II 21 2 and 11). But maxims also arise from the common wisdom of the people: the proverb "Birds of a feather flock together" was old even when Quintilian cited it two thousand years ago (V xi 41). Modern examples of maxims include such hoary sayings as "A stitch in time saves nine," "Better late than never," "Rolling stones gather no moss."

In ancient times, when literacy was not widespread, much popular wisdom was contained in oral sayings. Many of these were drawn from lines composed by respected poets, especially Homer. A rhetorician could utter a line from Homer and his audience would immediately recognize the context and the point of the quotation. This is still possible to a certain extent, although modern audiences are not as well acquainted with lines from poetry as people once were. However, many of us do know maxims taken from the Christian Bible such as "an eye for an eye," and most of us have heard the line "To be or not to be" at least once in our lives, although fewer people know that it is the first line of a speech uttered by a character created by Shakespeare named Hamlet. This phrase could well serve as the opening line of a defense attorney's opening speech; in fact a rhetor could use it to organize a list of options in any discourse urging that some action be taken. We do remember lines from speeches, such as Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" or John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you" or George W. Bush's "axis of evil." Such lines serve subsequent rhetors as a rhetorical shorthand that can evoke whole political philosophies.

According to Aristotle, maxims are general statements which deal with human actions that should be chosen or avoided (II xxi 2). The first two modern maxims listed earlier recommend actions: "A stitch in time saves nine" counsels us to be as well prepared as possible in order to save ourselves extra trouble. "Better late than never" implies that doing something too late is better than never doing it at all. The "rolling stones" maxim implies that people who submit to wanderlust don't pile up responsibilities; since wanderlust as a way of life might be either appealing or repulsive to a given audience, the action recommended here is culturally ambiguous. A rhetor who relies on the persuasive power of this maxim would do well to clarify whether she approves of wanderlust and why.

Maxims can be found in dictionaries of proverbs or collections of quotations. Their rhetorical force derives from their commonness. Since they are commonly held, they seem to be true. As Quintilian pointed out, "sayings such as these would not have acquired immortality had they not carried conviction of their truth to all mankind" (V xi 41). And as Aristotle noted, somewhat cynically, maxims are especially convincing to audiences who like to hear their beliefs confirmed. Aristotle's example is this: a person who happened to have bad neighbors or children would welcome anyone's statement that nothing is worse than having neighbors or more stupid than to beget children (II xxi 15). This feature of maxims provides a clue as to how to hunt for appropriate ones: a rhetor should try to determine whether his audience has any preconceived opinions that are relevant to his point. If so, he should find an appropriate maxim that generalizes these preconceived opinions. For example, the maxim "Rolling stones gather no moss" would be appropriate for an older audience who disapproves of the way younger Americans tend to move frequently from community to community and from job to job. Their very general nature makes maxims applicable to a wide variety of situations. In fact, part of their persuasive force lies in their generality—when applied to a specific case, a

maxim can impart its own persuasive force to that case. For example, Marine officers use the motto of the corps, *Semper fidelis* ("Always faithful"), to breed camaraderie among their troops and to convince them to go into battle. The motto is an abbreviated reference to the entire history of the Marine Corps—it reminds Marines of the corps's martial history and of its tradition of brotherhood under fire. Thus, though general, the motto can be effectively used in any specific situation when the troops need to be urged forward. Its use is such a commonplace among Marines and ex-Marines that saying "*Semper fi*" establishes an immediate relation of trust between even recent acquaintances.

Aristotle noted that maxims are often the premises or conclusions of an enthymeme. Here is an argument from a news editorial using an enthymeme that employs the maxim "Better late than never" as its conclusion:

> Last year Mr. Bush finally conceded that global warming existed. This year he conceded that human beings were to blame, and the damage was going to be severe. At this rate, next year he'll start to champion policies that will begin to put a dent in climate change—such basic steps as higher gas-mileage standards for American cars and trucks, more research into renewable energy, and tougher enforcement of the Clean Air Act instead of Mr. Bush's attempts to weaken it.
>
> Better late than never. But for an administration that views energy conservation as nothing more than a personal virtue, you probably shouldn't count on it. ('Get Used to It')

Maxims can serve effectively as the major premises of enthymemes, as well, since they represent the common wisdom of a community. Here is an example:

Major Premise: A stitch in time saves nine.

Minor Premise: There is a small crack in the windshield of Felix's car.

Conclusion: Felix should have the crack buffed out, or else it will spread and he will have to replace the entire windshield.

Note how, in this case, the maxim predicts the particular conclusion so readily that the rhetorician could safely omit the conclusion when she presents the argument.

One cautionary note about maxims is in order: Aristotle warned that maxims should not be used by young people, who run the risk of appearing to espouse something in a maxim that they have not learned through experience.

Signs

Signs are physical facts or real events that inevitably or usually accompany some other state of affairs. For example, if someone has a fever, this is a sign that he is ill; if someone bears a physical scar, this is a sign that he was once injured. If, as in these examples, the connection between the

sign and the inferred state of affairs always exists, we have what Aristotle called an infallible sign (*tekmerion*) (I ii 16). But not all signs are infallibly connected to some state of affairs. We can argue, for instance, that a defendant's bloody clothing is a sign that she committed the murder for which she is being tried. However, the defense attorney could plausibly argue that the defendant suffers from frequent nosebleeds and thus that the bloodied clothing is a sign of that problem, rather than her participation in a murder.

The argument from sign can be very effective in an argument for the same reason that examples are effective. Arguments from sign appeal to the daily experiences that we share with members of our audience. The trick for a rhetor who uses the argument from sign is to convince an audience that the sign in question is (or is not) inevitably connected to the state of affairs he is trying to establish. Because of this difficulty, Quintilian recommended that the argument from sign be accompanied by other support (V ix 9). If the prosecuting attorney can prove that the defendant was an enemy of the murdered man, had threatened his life, and was in his house at the time of the murder, then all of these strengthen the connection of the bloody clothing to murder, rather than to a bloody nose.

We rely on arguments from sign more than we perhaps realize. We take a cloudy sky as a sign of an impending storm; if a friend is listless and uninterested in his surroundings, we take that as a sign of depression; when the pilot of an airplane in flight turns off the light that says "Fasten seat belt," we take that as a sign that it is safe to get out of our seats. But as these examples suggest, it is not always safe to rely on signs as though they were infallible. A darkened sky may result from pollution; our listless friend may be coming down with the flu; sudden unexpected turbulence may make us wish we hadn't taken the pilot's message so casually. If someone who is accused of making hateful remarks has made them on previous occasions, this may or may not be a sign that she harbors racist or sexist attitudes.

The argument from sign has a *kairotic* element, insofar as signs change over time. In the 1960s, a man's long hair was taken as a sign that he was a hippie who believed in free love and using drugs. These days, however, the length of a man's hair does not reliably signify much of anything. Indeed, an important part of contemporary rhetorical argument involves the disassociation of signs from their commonplace referents. Today, rhetors are at pains to point out that tattoos or body piercings are not necessarily a sign of rebelliousness, or that being on welfare is not necessarily a sign of laziness or unwillingness to work. Some extremely conservative groups are trying to establish that refusing to pay one's taxes is a sign of patriotism. Signs differ from place to place as well. In the midwestern and southern states, people ask strangers about their parents and family as a sign of friendliness. In western states, however, such curiosity may be taken as a sign of nosiness or even of very bad manners. And there are cases in which we turn things or events into signs even though we have no idea what they signify. For example, cattle mutilations and the large designs that have

appeared in crop fields all over the world have been taken as signs of something, but no one is exactly sure what.

RHETORICAL ACTIVITIES

1. Find an article from a popular magazine or newspaper and examine its use of enthymemes, examples, maxims, or signs. How effectively are these proofs used?
2. Create an enthymeme to use in some composition you are currently working on. Find a maxim that supports your proposition and work out the argument that connects the maxim to your position. Find a historical example that supports your position and include it. Find or invent a fictional example that supports your position and include it (see Chapter 15, on the *progymnasmata*, for advice about writing fictions). Find an argument from sign that supports some conclusion in your argument.
3. Some popular slogans are conclusions or premises of enthymemes. The statement that "Elvis has left the building" is part of a long enthymematic argument whose other premises are never stated. Can you articulate them?

PROGYMNASMATA V: ENCOMIUM AND INVECTIVE

While commonplace engaged students in composing discourses that examined general vices or virtues, the next two exercises of the *progymnasmata* asked students to compose discourses in which they either praised or abused some specific person or thing. Greek rhetors called a discourse of praise "panegyric," but it is still known in English by its Latin name, *encomium*. A discourse that blames or abuses something or someone, on the other hand, is called "invective." Both kinds allow students to practice composing epideictic rhetoric. Rhetors have many opportunities both to praise good actions or persons and to heap blame on less honorable persons and activities, and so these exercises provide excellent practice for real rhetorical situations. Quintilian observed that such compositions are often imposed on us, as when we are asked to give eulogies at funerals (a discourse of praise) or when we are asked to serve as character witnesses in court, in which case we may be asked either to praise or to blame an accused person (III vii 2).

Encomium and invective were commonly practiced by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Encomiums were featured in many religious and cultural celebrations in both cultures, and famous rhetors often gave speeches of praise or denunciation to large audiences in order to display their oratorical abilities. Isocrates' *Panegyricus* and *Panathenaicus* are encomiums of

the city of Athens. Gorgias and Isocrates, among others, composed encomiums about Helen, whose abduction by Paris initiated the Trojan War. Popular interpretations of Homer's account of that war suggested that Helen was responsible for starting it. But these famous sophists argued the opposite case in their speeches of praise for her.

Encomiums and invective are still being composed today, although we don't call them that. Most Fourth of July speeches are encomiums to the United States, while speeches and editorials composed for Memorial Day praise those killed in war. Mothers' Day inspires endless essays about the virtues of motherhood, which are examples of encomiums to an abstract ideal. Obituaries are encomiums to deceased persons, and letters of reference may praise the character of the person being recommended. Toasts at weddings and retirement parties usually offer praise for the guests of honor. Invective, which exposes evils or heaps blame on someone who has done wrong, is used in political campaigns when candidates heap blame on one another even more frequently than they praise their own efforts.

Invective is also a regular feature of letters written to the editors of newspapers and magazines. Political leaders sometimes use invective when trying to incite people in their area to unite against another person or group of people. President George W. Bush, with the help of his speechwriters, issued an invective when he used the phrase "axis of evil" to refer to different areas in the Middle East and Asia. Sometimes biographies, histories, and journalistic books are extended encomia or invectives. For example, Al Franken's *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them: A Fair and Balanced Look at the Right* (2003) is an invective about the American Right, especially the Bush administration's 2000 campaign and the so-called War on Terror. Unauthorized biographies of famous people are popular precisely because they contain large doses of invective.

Aphthonius, on one hand, defined an encomium as "a composition expository of inherent excellences." He listed its proper subjects as "persons, things, times, places, animals, and also plants: persons like Thucydides or Demosthenes, things like justice or moderation, times like spring or summer, places like harbors or gardens, animals like a horse or an ox, and plants like an olive or a vine." Hermogenes, on the other hand, suggested that students compose encomiums about a race (such as the Greeks), a city, or a family.

Ancient teachers defined an elaborate set of directions for composing encomiums and invectives: Theon, for example, listed thirty-six possible encomiastic headings for amplification. The standard list of headings for an encomium of a person was as follows: a prologue; announcement of the class of person or thing to be praised or blamed; consideration of the person's origins (nationality, native city, ancestors, parents); education and interests; achievements (virtue, judgement, beauty, speed or strength, power, wealth, friends); comparison; and epilogue. Both Apthonius and Nicolaus the Sophist note that encomia should be both extensive and exhaustive; an encomium, according to Nicolaus, "is developed through an account of all the virtues and all the excellences of what is being praised" (155). The same

topics can be used to compose invectives. Here is Aphthonius's encomium on the ancient historian Thucydides:

> To honor the inventors of useful things for their very fine contributions is just, and just it is that the light coming forth from those men be turned with good reason upon those who displayed it. Accordingly, I shall laud Thucydides by choosing to honor him with the history of the man himself. Moreover, it is a good thing that honor be given to all benefactors, but especially to Thucydides about others, because he invented the finest of all things. For it is neither possible to find anything superior to history in these circumstances, nor is it possible to find one more skillful in history than Thucydides.
>
> Accordingly, Thucydides came from a land that gave him both life and a profession. For he was not born from an indifferent quarter but from whence history came, and by gaining Athens as his mother of life, he had kings for ancestors, and the stronger part of his good fortune proceeded from his earlier ancestry. By gaining both force of ancestry and democratic government, the advantage from one supplied a check upon the other, preventing his being rich unjustly through political equality and concealing public poverty through the affluence of his descent.
>
> Having come upon the scene with such advantages, he was reared under a civil polity and laws that are by nature better than others. Knowing how to live both under arms and under law, he determined to be in one and the same person both a philosopher and a general, neither depriving history of military experience nor placing battles in the class of intellectual virtue. Further, by combining things that were naturally separate, he made a single career in things for which he had no single set of rules.
>
> As he arrived at manhood, he kept seeking an opportunity for the display of those qualities in which he had been well disciplined. And fortune soon produced the war, and he made the actions of all the Greeks his personal concern. He became the custodian of the things that the war brought to pass, for he did not allow time to erase the deeds separately accomplished. Among these, the capture of Plataea is famous, the ravages of Attica were made known, the Athenian circumnavigation of the Poloponnesus was described, and Naupactus was a witness to sea battles. By collecting these things in writing, Thucydides did not allow them to escape notice. Lesbos was won, and the fact is proclaimed to this day; a battle was fought against the Ambraciotes, and time has not obscured the event; the unjust decree of the Lacedaemonians is not unknown. Sphacteria and Pylos, the great achievement of the Athenians, has not escaped unseen.
>
> Where the Corcyraeans speak in the assembly at Athens, the Corinthians present answers to them. The Aeginetans go to Lacedaemon with accusations. Archidamus is discreet before the assembly, but Sthenelaides is urging them on to war. And to these examples, add Pericles, holding a Spartan embassy in no esteem and not allowing the Athenians to make trouble when they were suffering. Once and for all, these things are preserved for all time by Thucydides' book.
>
> Does anyone really compare Herodotus with him? But Herodotus narrates for pleasure, whereas this man utters all things for the sake of truth. To the extent that entertainment is less worthy than a regard for the truth, to that degree does Herodotus fall short of the virtues of Thucydides.

> There would be many other points to mention about Thucydides, if the great number of his praises did not prevent the enumeration of all of them. (Matsen, Rollinson, and Sousa 1990 276–77)

A careful reading of this encomium will show that Aphthonius included a prologue, stated the kind of encomium he has composed (praise of a single person), and commented on his subject's birth and upbringing as well as his studies and achievements. The encomium concludes with a comparison and a summarizing epilogue.

Thomas L. Friedman composed an encomium on the class of 2007 that reflects on a kind of quiet courage he sees in recent college graduates. We include an excerpt of it here.

THE QUIET AMERICANS

> Since my daughter is graduating from college today, I am thinking a lot about the class of 2007 and the world they are about to enter. I'm not sure what they call this generation. Is it generation "X" or "Y" or "Zero" or "Me"? Having taken part in two other commencements this season, though, and knowing enough about what my own daughter's friends are doing, I can say that there is something quietly impressive about this cohort. In fact, if I were giving them a label I'd call them the "Quiet Americans"—not in the cynical way Graham Greene meant it, but in a very positive sense.
>
> They are young people who are quietly determined not to let this age of terrorism curtail their lives, take away their hopes or steal the America they are about to inherit. They don't take to the streets much—in part, I suspect, because they do a lot of their political venting online. But it seems to me that they go off and volunteer for public service or for military service with as much conviction as any generation, if not more.
>
> Four years ago, when my wife and I dropped our daughter off at college, I wrote that I was troubled that I was dropping her off into a world that was so much more dangerous than the one she had been born into—and I worried that she would not be able to travel in the carefree way that I had when I was her age. Her two summers teaching and researching in India have cured me of that misapprehension. Now I know how my mother felt.
>
> "I don't know where these kids find lepers, but they find them and they read to them," said Stephen J. Trachtenberg, the departing president of George Washington University.
>
> "I've been a college president for 30 years, and these kids are more optimistic about the future than any I have seen—maybe more than they have reason to be," he said. "They still believe that the world is their oyster and go abroad with abandon. Notwithstanding everything, they remain optimistic." (2007 p. 11)

Friedman provides a brief history of this year's graduating class, praises their strengths, and marvels at the futures they have planned. In addition, he supports his generalizations with testimony from a university president.

Quintilian suggested that praise of persons include praise of place of birth, parents, and ancestry (III viii 10). This may be handled in two ways: the rhetor may show that someone lived up to the high standards of her place of birth or that her deeds have made her place of birth even more praiseworthy. Someone's character, physical endowments such as beauty and strength, or deeds and achievements can furnish topics for praise (or abuse). Accidental advantages, such as wealth or power, should not be praised for themselves but only if the person put such advantages to honorable use. The only deeds deserving of praise are those that were done for the sake of others, not on the person's own behalf. Sometimes reputations increase (or decrease) after persons have died; in this case, Quintilian says, it is appropriate to point out that "children reflect glory on their parents, cities on their founders, laws on those who made them, arts on their inventors and institutions on those that first introduced them" (18).

The same topics can be used in denunciations of persons. People who came from privileged backgrounds can be blamed if they squandered those resources or if they used them to engage in vice. While we no longer approve of denouncing persons because of their physical appearance, we can blame someone who demonstrates an immoral character or who engages in reprehensible acts. Quintilian pointed out that the reputations of bad or immoral persons redounds upon their children and their homelands as well (21). We may not like to admit this, but we (the authors) think it is still true that we condemn innocent people who are associated by birth or circumstance with individuals who commit immoral acts.

Cities are praised or blamed in the same way. A city's founder can be made responsible for the habits of its citizens in the same way that parents are responsible for their children. Quintilian remarked that great age usually brings fame to a city, as do their settings, public works, and buildings or fortifications. Buildings should be praised for their "magnificence, utility, beauty and the architect or artist must be given due consideration" (27). As an example of an encomium on a place, Quintilian cited Cicero's praises of Sicily in his Verrine orations:

> When Sicily was at the height of its prosperity, and abounded in wealth and resources, there were many fine workshops on the island. For, before Verres' tenure as governor, there was not a home somewhat well off in which there could not be found such things as silver dishes with decorative medallions and figures of the gods, silver bowls used by the women in performing rituals, and a censer, even though there may not have been much else in the way of silver plate. These things were, moreover, executed in a classic style of exquisite craftsmanship; one would be led to believe that the Sicilians had, at one time, owned many other things of equal value, but, that incurring their loss through changed fortunes, they still retained the objects associated with religious worship. (IV, 21)

Notice how skillfully Cicero managed to praise the Sicilians at the same time as he blamed Verres for their impoverished condition.

In his remarks on the composition of encomiums, Aristotle made a subtle point that does not appear in ancient textbooks: discourses of praise or

blame must be carefully suited to their audiences (*Rhetoric* I 9). He quoted Socrates, who is supposed to have said that "it is not difficult to praise Athenians in Athens" (1367b). What is considered honorable in Athens can be an object of blame among Scythians or Laconians. Of course, the same point holds true today. To praise Americans in America is easy enough to do; such a composition would be received quite differently elsewhere in the world. The same holds true for invective; it is easy to blame Americans when writing for other audiences. During the Persian Gulf War, Judith Williamson wrote the following passage for a British publication called *The Guardian:*

> It is the unreality of anywhere outside the US, in the eyes of its citizens, which must frighten any foreigner. Like an infant who has yet to learn there are other centres of self, this culture sees others merely as fodder for its dreams and nightmares. . . . The hyped-up concern over US children's fears ("Will Saddam kill me Mommy?") is obscene when you consider that American bombs are right now killing Iraqi children. It isn't that Americans don't care (God knows they care) but that for most of them, other lands and people cannot be imagined as real. (1991, 21)

Americans who accept the accuracy of Williamson's invective may nevertheless be put off by her criticism.

Distinct groups of persons also hold differing sets of values. Quintilian observed that "much depends on the character of the audience and the generally received opinion, if they are to believe that the virtues of which they approve are preeminently characteristic of the person praised and the vices which they hate of the person denounced" (III vii 23). The boundaries between virtue and vice are also notoriously hard to define; acceptable behavior in one setting may be utterly unacceptable in another (25). The wise rhetor will keep these differences in mind as he composes encomiums or invective.

The composition of encomiums and invective was a popular exercise among educated persons during late antiquity and throughout the Renaissance. Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (in Latin, *Encomium Moriae*, 1509) is a satiric encomium about foolishness. John Milton composed paired poems called "Joy" and "Thoughtfulness" when he was quite young. The poem about joy contains an invective about melancholy, or sadness, that connects its origins with death:

> Hence loathed Melancholy
> Of Cerberus, and blackest midnight born,
> In Stygian Cave forlorn.
> 'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy,
> Find out some uncouth cell,
> Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous wings,
> And the night-Raven sings;
> There under Ebon shades, and low-brow'd Rocks,
> As ragged as thy Locks,
> In darks Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
>
> —John Milton, "L'Allegro"

The poem about thoughtfulness, in contrast, contains a lengthy encomium to melancholy. We quote only its opening lines:

> But hail thou Goddess, sage and holy,
> Hail divinest Melancholy,
> Whose Saintly visage is too bright
> To hit the Sense of human sight;
> And therefore to our weaker view,
> Ore laid with black staid Wisdoms' hue.
>
> —John Milton, "Il Penseroso"

Once again, Milton's performance suggests that arguments can be found to attack or defend anything or anybody, depending on the situation.

Rhetors can adapt Aphthonius's suggestions to any contemporary topic: you can practice writing discourses that praise or blame nations, cities, families, persons, animals, or things. For a relatively simple exercise, choose a favorite relative, a favorite pet, or even a plant and use Aphthonius's topics to develop a discourse raising it. This exercise does not have to be serious; funny essays can be written in praise or blame of inanimate objects. Isocrates complained about rhetors who composed encomiums to salt and bumblebees ("Helen" 12).

Lighthearted encomia and invective are still popular. Erma Bombeck, the columnist, often composed very funny encomiums or invectives about household objects such as vacuum cleaners and garage door openers. Here's a contemporary encomium, this time on a cookbook, written by Lloyd Fonvielle. It appeared in the online magazine salon.com.

ODE TO "JOY"

On the Internet recently I tracked down a mint copy of "The Joy Of Cooking" from the early '50s—the edition I remember as a fixture in my family's kitchen in those times.

Its resonance as an object is oddly powerful to someone of my generation—deeper even than reruns of "The Mickey Mouse Club"—one of those artifacts of civilization that becomes invisible through familiarity and hard to collect because of use. You have to pay a premium for a vintage copy of the book that isn't splattered and stained with food or split open at the entry for meatloaf.

I was moved to own a copy because the title was recently included on one of those lists of the 100 most important books of the 20th century.

This struck me as a brilliant insight, and a deeply logical one. This is a book that moved with women as they left their old communities, and served in loco parentis in the kitchen, as Dr. Spock served them in the nursery.

It also introduced an ambition for sophistication and a kind of defensive professionalism into domestic cooking at a time when all things domestic were being devalued in the culture at large.

In my mind now, it serves as an emblem of my mother's time in the kitchen, the unrecorded epic of her domestic labor, which in childhood was the clearest expression I knew of absolute love and absolute security.

> We dismiss the almost mystical reverence for such labor by the Victorians as insincere sentimentality, a sop to the oppressed, but any child knows differently.
>
> The book remains useful. I recently consulted it for instruction on how long to boil hardboiled eggs. The awesome ignorance this revealed was touching to me, as it also revealed the awesome knowledge of those who don't need it for such things and the bewilderment of those who found that knowledge suddenly underappreciated.
>
> The book is really about the sacredness of cooking. Not cuisine, but cooking—the invisible work done in the kitchen on any ordinary Wednesday. (2000)

In his encomium on the best-selling *Joy of Cooking*, Fonvielle offers an account that situates the book personally as well as culturally—diagnosing its long-standing appeal. Who knew a cookbook could mean so much to someone?

No subject is off limits in this exercise. In fact, its versatility is one of its strengths. Quintilian remarked that compositions of praise or blame were "profitable in more than one respect. The mind is exercised by the variety and multiplicity of the subject matter, while the character is molded by the contemplation of virtue and vice" (IV iv 20).

PROGYMNASMATA: ENCOMIUM AND INVECTIVE

1. Develop an encomium or an invective about the city council or other leaders of your town or state.
2. A United States senator has been accused of sexual harassment: write an invective that denounces him for this behavior, or compose an encomium that excuses him from these charges on the basis of his origin, character, or achievements.
3. Compose an encomium or an invective about abstract ideas or issues: how about an encomium to rhetoric?

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