

Quintilian's Enthymeme: Logic and Emotions in *Institutio Oratoria*, Book V

This paper tracks Quintilian's use of the term 'enthymeme' in Book V of his *Institutio Oratoria* and shows how Quintilian's various definitions of the figure signal his departure from the then- and currently-popular Stoic notion of the enthymeme as an “elided syllogism.”

Most of Book V centers on the probative toolkit available to forensic orators – witnesses, oaths, rumors – and Quintilian thoroughly discusses the enthymeme, one type of *argumentum*, as an essential method of entechanical proof. He provides five definitions for it (V.10.1-3), which scholars have interpreted as “the Stoic, not the Aristotelian, notion of *sylogismus*” (Burnyeat, 1994). Even when scholars do not settle on a single, firm definition of the enthymeme, they conclude that Quintilian favors “the idea that it is an elided syllogism” (McBurney, 1936). Scholars have consistently read Quintilian's enthymeme as a logical, not a rhetorical, device.

But later in Book V, Quintilian claims that the enthymeme is “both the argument itself and the verbal expression of the argument” (*et argumentum ipsum...et argumenti elocutionem*, V.14.1), and that artful verbal expression, *eloquentia*, is responsible for avoiding the “scorn, hatred, bloat, and boredom” (*contemptum...odium...satietaem...fastidium*, V.14.30) inspired by a speech that includes only “firm, compact, and monotonously-patterned arguments” (*conclusionibus certis et crebris et in unam prope formam cadentibus*, *ibid.*). The enthymeme, through its ties with a speech's *verba*, not just the *argumentum*, becomes a term inextricably related to the emotional appeal of oratory.

Quintilian's reformulation of the enthymeme as a term of rhetoric and not merely dialectic constitutes a significant break from the tradition that precedes him. Cicero, for example, includes the enthymeme as the “third Stoic indemonstrable” within his “modes of inference' [which] turn out to be a set of different types of syllogisms, strictly speaking Stoic syllogisms” (Kraus, 2006). Cicero reports that this method of reasoning more closely concerns the philosophers

(*attingit...disputationes, sed philosophorum magis, Topica* 56) and that “teachers of rhetoric call it the ἐνθύμημα” (*a rhetoribus ἐνθύμημα dicitur, ibid.*). He treats the enthymeme as a rhetorician's label for a logician's tool.

Quintilian's refashioning of the enthymeme as a simultaneously rhetorical and logical tool, however, fits into his broader concerns in Book V with the relationship between emotional appeal and proof. The book begins with a brief discussion of the controversy surrounding the proper place of emotion in oratory. He presents two views that reject the inclusion of emotional appeal: some believe that “every disturbance of the mind is a vice” (*vitium esset omnis animi perturbatio, V.pr.1*), others believe that “it is not proper for the judge to be swayed from the truth by pity, charm, anger, or similar emotions” (*iudicem a veritate depelli misericordia gratia ira similibusque non oporteret, ibid.*). Quintilian gradually reveals his opposition to these objections through his complex views of the enthymeme. He shows that a strictly logical approach to rhetorical proof is not fit for orators and that even in the most rational, proof-centered components of speaking, there always remains the need for artful prose and emotional appeal.

Works Cited

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