

## ABSTRACT

Recovering Purpose: Teaching the Common Topics of Invention

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This thesis considers the principles of persuasion that are at work in a wide variety of cultural contexts, from Super Bowl advertisements to ancient epics. The tradition of classical education offers a rich approach to rhetoric through the topics of invention. The topical approach is a way of discovering arguments and is presently being taught to some extent in modern, classical schools. I contend, however, that rhetorical educators need to improve their attention to the differing purposes of forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative arguments. The purposes provide a guiding framework for rhetorical invention and make understanding the topics of invention easier for the modern student. I present three important passages from Homer's *Odyssey* as examples of topical mastery. I demonstrate in this thesis how the topics of invention greatly aid the creation of arguments and, furthermore, how they can help the reader uncover the deeper meaning of a text.

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TEACHING THE COMMON TOPICS OF INVENTION

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments . . . . .	iii
Chapter One: Introduction . . . . .	1
Chapter Two: Definition . . . . .	13
Chapter Three: Comparison . . . . .	52
Chapter Four: Relationship . . . . .	78
Chapter Five: Conclusion . . . . .	101
Bibliography . . . . .	107

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All things come of thee, O LORD, and of thine own have we given thee.

1 *Chron.* xxix. 14.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Most educators would agree that reading and writing are some of the most important and fundamental skills that students can learn in school. While there are many approaches of teaching these skills, this thesis draws upon the resources of classical, liberal arts education. Teacher of high school students of 21<sup>st</sup> century classical schools are the ultimate audience of this project. In order to clarify the character of context in which this thesis is meant to be received, I will first describe what modern classical education typically involves. I will then explain the importance of rhetorical education within classical education. Then, I will show why classical rhetorical education presents a challenge specifically for modern students (Donnelly, Ch. 2). Finally, I will explain how this thesis addresses those difficulties, reveals the great benefit of the classical rhetorical approach, and makes it more accessible for students.

In keeping with classical tradition, I focus on Homer as my primary rhetorical exemplar. In his *Rhetoric* (*ρητορική*), Aristotle, the father of rhetorical study, quotes Homer 36 times, and he references him 11 more times (Mifsud 54). Four hundred years later, the great Roman teacher of rhetoric Quintilian praises Homer as most worthy of rhetorical study and imitation: “As Aratus, then, thinks that we ought to begin with Jupiter, so I think that I shall very properly commence with Homer, for as he says that the might of rivers and the courses of springs take their rise from the ocean, so has he himself given a model and an origin for every species of eloquence” (Quintilian Bk. 10, sect. 1, par. 46). Quintilian goes on for another page lauding Homer’s mastery and allots only a

few sentences for other rhetorical exemplars. Since the earliest days of rhetorical education, teachers have turned to Homer to provide examples of the best practice. Therefore, I hope my audience will both come to understand rhetoric better by studying his example as well as gaining a greater appreciation for the greatness of his epic works. Because I constructed this thesis so that teachers could easily convey the content to students with little interpretive work, I do not engage the extensive secondary literature on Homer's *Odyssey*. I instead attempt to use an accessible style that would illuminate the topic for students. I will use as little academic jargon as possible to avoid distracting my audience from the central lesson of the chapter. Although oriented toward a teacher of the topics, this thesis aims to address a specific need in contemporary classical education. Classical education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can take many different forms. However, there are some essential principles which are common to every species. In 21<sup>st</sup> century United States, the term, "classical education" refers to a type of education inherited from the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. Dr. Gene Edward Veith, Jr. and Andrew Kern, in their journalistic book *Classical Education: A Movement Sweeping America*, propose four essential elements of classical education:

1. A high view of man – *anthropology rooted in divine image*
2. Logocentrism – *reality is humanly intelligible to some degree*
3. Responsibility for the Western tradition – *responding to what has been given*
4. A pedagogy that sustains these commitments – *rooted in the practice of liberal arts*

Veith and Kern believe that classical education is aimed at cultivating human flourishing. Their high view of man comes rather from a belief that man has the ability to pursue a state of goodness, or flourishing, which includes a life of wisdom and virtue. All forms of classical education will affirm this. Logocentrism is the idea that the universe is orderly,

which makes the discovery and teaching of knowledge possible. Logocentrism implies that knowledge of the world is unified and integrated. This is why classical education pushes back against the modern tendency to categorize and strictly separate areas of knowledge. A classical education is acutely aware of its inheritance from the Western tradition. Different species of classical education may vary in attitudes that emphasize reverence toward or criticism of parts of the tradition, but all forms acknowledge that the Western intellectual tradition is not something we can escape. It forms the way we think, and a classical education teaches students to engage with that inheritance so that they can intellectually stand on the shoulders of giants. Students engage with the tradition by reading the most well-written, profound, and influential texts of the West.

Vieth and Kern clearly identify the liberal arts as the pedagogy of classical schools and argue that they are effective tools for teaching. However, in *Wisdom and Eloquence*, a more robust account of classical education, Robert Littlejohn and Charles T. Evans contest the view of the liberal arts as primarily a pedagogical method. Vieth and Kern are working with a popular interpretation of Dorothy Sayers' essay on the Trivium—the same interpretation which Littlejohn and Evans are quick to refute. They say, on the contrary, that the ancient and medieval schools which Sayers inherits stressed the Trivium not as a pedagogy but rather as a curriculum (Littlejohn and Evans 74). It was the content of these arts that they deemed essential to education. I believe that the liberal arts should be understood as both curriculum and pedagogy, for only by treating these arts as educational ends do they simultaneously serve as means for other and higher pedagogical goals such as wisdom, virtue, and the capacity for independent learning.



In their book *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain explain what a liberal art is. Unlike a “science” in the Aristotelian sense, which “can be in the mind alone and does not require any practice or the production of anything,” an art joins imitation with reason in order to produce something” (Clark and Jain 33). Imitation is only in the body, and science is only in the mind. An art is the nexus between the two (Clark and Jain 33). This emphasis on production is surprising since in the modern world, science is viewed primarily as instrumental while art is frankly considered useless or, in more benevolent terms, enjoyable for its own sake. However, “art” in the classical sense hinges on productivity. “This leaves the question,” Clark and Jain ask, “What is it then that the liberal arts are producing?” Aquinas gives us the answer: the liberal arts are used to produce the works of reason. The liberal arts are the tools of learning through which arguments, poems, and proofs are uncovered...He clarifies that these arts are not used to create any physical products for the body, but instead to create knowledge from the soul. Aquinas writes, “[they are] called...liberal arts, in order to distinguish them from those arts which are ordained to works done by the body, which arts are, in a fashion, servile, inasmuch as the body is in servile subjection to the soul, and man as regards his soul is free” (Clark and Jain 34). The modern reader could likely better understand “art” as “applied science.” However, the seven liberal arts: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy are valued in classical education not because they are merely interesting but because they result in powerful mental products. Dorothy Sayers referred to these arts as the “lost tools of learning.” Tools are valued because of what they help create. The study of liberal arts creates a mind that is able to think well, in fact, to pray well. The

liberal arts are instrumental to forming a good human being and all that results from such a being. The first three arts, the trivium, are language arts: grammar, logic (dialectic), and rhetoric. The last four are the quadrivium, the mathematical arts: arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy (Clark and Jain 52). While the language arts use words as signs, the mathematical arts use numbers and points as signs. Arithmetic is about discreet numbers. Music is about the proportions between numbers, ratio and harmony. Geometry uses points and does not rely on discreet numbers at all. Before the Cartesian coordinate, Euclidian geometry was not conceptualized as requiring particular values. All you needed was a straightedge and a compass. If arithmetic is about the discreet, then geometry is about the continuous. Astronomy is geometry in motion applied over time. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many breakthroughs were made that revealed the utility of math for the production of technology. Since then, educators have had difficulty appreciating mathematics as a liberal art. Contemporary classical schools understand the liberating power of the language arts well, which makes their pedagogy radically different from other contemporary schools that largely focus on technical production or exclusively economic ends. Many classical schools are still rediscovering how to teach math and physical science as a liberal art, though many scholars are currently directing their research to this problem, notably Ravi Scott Jain.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the language arts have been very well integrated into modern American classical education. In 1947, Dorothy Sayers' essay "The Lost Tools of Learning" articulated in clear and witty prose what the liberal language arts were and how they fulfilled a crucial and beautiful aspect of education, which had been largely

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<sup>1</sup> See Ravi Scott Jain's website [www.RecoveringNature.org](http://www.RecoveringNature.org).

neglected in the modern climate. Grammar, logic, and rhetoric make up the three stages of primary classical education. Grammar corresponds to the elementary level; logic the middle school level; and rhetoric the high school level. Sayers explained how these three language arts characterize every area of learning for the students in the particular stage. The learning of language simply provides the model of pedagogy which applies to every other subject in the same way. But what are grammar, logic, and rhetoric? We must first understand them as language arts, before we can understand them as stages of the learning process. The art of grammar involves the learning of the fundamentals of language. Grammar is vocabulary and morphology (Sayers 11). These are the building blocks that everyone needs to learn first. They are the fundamentals which are used in every more advanced use of language. There are analogous fundamentals for every subject of knowledge. Logic, or dialectic, is the piecing together of the building blocks acquired in the grammar stage. During this stage, syntax and analysis is the primary emphasis (Sayers 15).

Rhetoric is the third and final art of the trivium. It defines the ultimate stage of the primary level classical education. Aristotle was likely the first person to write an extensive treatise on rhetoric in the mid-fourth century B.C. He began a long tradition of the study of rhetoric that continued to develop in education over the course of hundreds of years. His definition of rhetoric is “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (*Rhe.* 1355b, line 26). The three modes of persuasion are ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is the communicated character of the speaker, which provides credibility. Pathos is the emotional aspect of persuasion. And logos is the power of logical argument. The three kinds of rhetoric Aristotle names are forensic, epideictic,

and political. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, written in 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. Rome is, after Aristotle's, the next most influential work on rhetoric. This work clearly relies on Hellenistic rhetorical teaching, which had made important changes to Aristotle, specifically by emphasizing the role of stasis theory. The unknown author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* begins his rhetoric manual with the same kinds of rhetoric as Aristotle; he calls them the causes of rhetoric, and by "cause", he probably means final cause or purpose (*Rhe. Her.* Bk. 1, sect. 2).

In this thesis, I will distinguish the kinds of rhetoric according to the goals, or purposes, of persuasion, and I will call them by their Latin names: forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative. These are the main types of reasons people use language. They are called kinds of rhetoric because the purpose or, in Aristotelian terms, the final cause of an argument has a direct effect on the way it is formed. An argument used for forensic purposes differs in character from an argument used for demonstrative purposes. The argument itself is powerfully influenced by its rhetorical purpose (Donnelly, Ch. 1, sect. "Final Cause"). After discussing the purposes, both Aristotle and the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* name the five tasks, or faculties, of the orator, otherwise known as the five canons of rhetoric. These are invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. A rhetorician must master all five of these tasks in order to master the art of persuasion. Both of these classic works on rhetoric are arranged so that the purposes come before the tasks of the orator, and I believe this arrangement is deliberate. These classical rhetorical experts understood that a speaker must begin with the end in mind. Therefore, the ends are what they teach first. Just like the saying goes: "If you don't know where you're going, then any road will get you there." A good rhetorician must

first know where he or she is going in order to be able to choose the right road. In other words, it is necessary to identify the rhetorical purpose first before you can choose the most suitable arguments. Topics of invention are the traditional sources for arguments, but the particular arguments one chooses in a given case will depend on the goal.

I propose that modern students have difficulty understanding the topics of invention because of a choice in modern approaches to teaching classical rhetoric. In particular, I believe the choice to teach invention unintegrated with the rhetorical purposes keeps students from fully grasping the classical approach. Often in the study of classical rhetoric, modern educators address these two parts of rhetoric out of order. In Edward Corbett and Robert Connors's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* the purposes are addressed in the section on invention but after the common topics and only in order to discuss the special topics particular to each purpose. The purposes are never discussed as a driving force in the common topics as well. In Alyssan Barnes' textbook *Rhetoric Alive!*, the purposes are not discussed in her section on invention. They are not addressed until every task of the orator has already been covered. The assumption behind such an arrangement is that the tasks of the orator can be learned if not without then at least before knowledge of rhetorical purpose. However, I argue that Aristotle and the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* teach a very purpose-conscious approach to rhetoric. Both authors teach the purposes before the tasks. Their choice of arrangement demonstrates the opinion that a rhetorician must first be able to answer the question: Why am I speaking? What is my purpose? This question must be answered prior to the construction of argument. Classical rhetoric assumes that no rhetoric is without purpose; rather, purpose is always present in rhetoric whether the speaker is conscious of it or not.

Therefore, the study of rhetoric gives a speaker the advantageous ability to identify his or her purpose and masterfully craft an argument that serves that purpose well.

Invention, in the classical rhetorical sense, means “discovery,” rather than the modern conception of invention as “fabrication.” There is great irony in the evolution of this word, for the modern word has come to mean something almost the opposite of the ancient meaning. Classical rhetorical invention assumes the rhetorician to be a recipient of knowledge from the tradition. The modern use of the word assumes the inventor to be the very *source* of creativity. The latter understanding raises several problems, one of which is the incredible amount of anxiety such an approach places on the aspiring rhetorician. However, in the classical sense, invention is about learning how to rummage through an established storehouse of types of arguments, finding the one that fits your rhetorical purpose, and applying it. The beauty of classical invention is that nothing has to come out of thin air. As Steven Lynn puts it in *Rhetoric and Composition*: “Just imagine how such a rhetorical philosopher’s stone, transforming ordinary thought into rich material for writing and speaking, would enable students to compose out of plentitude—rather than struggling to think of something to say, guiltily wondering if those new write-for-hire websites can deliver” (Lynn 37). Struggling to think of something to say is almost the universal plague of young writers, possibly all writers. Classical invention is a powerful approach that remedies this problem. The reader should know that the common topics are not the only topics of invention. There are many topics of invention that do not necessarily apply to every rhetorical purpose.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> However, not all topics are topics of invention, i.e. types of arguments. There are also topics of subject matter. This latter type of topic is much closer to the common modern use of the word (Donnelly, Ch. 4).

The classical rhetorician begins with a purpose (forensic, demonstrative, or deliberative), and he is then given the key to a treasury of ideas to help him or her accomplish that purpose. This treasury of invention does not consist of new ideas. The classical types of arguments are ones that humans naturally make all the time. However, the advantage to the study of classical invention is that being able to identify something natural and to name it brings great clarity. Clarity brings understanding, and understanding brings mastery. The traditional term for these types of arguments is “topics.” The Greek word is τόπος (*topos*). The Latin word is *locus*. Both mean “place.” The topics are “places” you can go to find pre-existing types of arguments. It is a physical metaphor that emphasizes that aid in the creative process originates from a reality outside of the self, even if retained in memory. Elizabeth Gilbert compares this ancient conception of creativity with the post-Renaissance approach:

And then the Renaissance came and everything changed...And it was the beginning of rational humanism, and people started to believe that creativity came completely from the self of the individual...I think that was a huge error. I think that allowing somebody, one mere person, to believe that he or she is the vessel, the font and the essence and the source of all divine, creative, knowable, eternal mystery is a smidge too much responsibility to put on one, fragile, human psyche. It's like asking someone to swallow the sun. It completely warps and distorts egos, and it creates all these unmanageable expectations about performance. (adapted TedTalk excerpt, “Your Elusive Creative Genius”)

The study of classical invention is one way that modern education can combat the damaging effects of such egocentric, rationalist humanism on the creative mind. Classical invention says, “it’s not all about you.” The individual rhetorician engages in a partnership with a grand rhetorical tradition. This partnership can help relieve the anxiety caused by a blinking cursor on a blank page. Some of the pressure to create *ex nihilo* is relieved. Humans were not designed to be able to create *ex nihilo*. Therefore, it is much

better—and mentally healthier—to subscribe to a philosophy of rhetorical invention that acknowledges the inherent teamwork of human, creative endeavors including the teamwork between generations and through time.

There are many different topics, but the ones on which I will focus in this thesis are the common topics, the τόποι κοινῶν (*topoi koinoi*) or *loci communi*. Also known as the “common places of invention,” these are sources of arguments common to all kinds of rhetoric. No matter what your rhetorical purpose is, the common topics are some of the most fundamental and therefore most applicable kinds of arguments to employ. They are definition, comparison, relationship, circumstance, and testimony. I will limit the scope of my thesis to the first three topics. I have arranged my thesis to reflect a classical teleology of rhetoric. My three chapters are on the first three common topics of invention: definition, comparison, and relationship. However, each chapter is sub-divided into three sections on the three rhetorical purposes: forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative. My arrangement shows how the skill of insightful reading can be improved by uniting the identification of a topic of invention with consideration of the purpose for which that topic is being used. These two aspects are, respectively, the means and end of a text. Knowledge of how an author accomplishes his end leads to greater knowledge and appreciation of the texts’ ends.

Educators often teach rhetoric so that their students can learn to write and speak better. This thesis encourages the development of these skills primary through the study of examples. In addition to writing and speaking well, the study of rhetoric teaches insightful reading as well. I will show how knowledge of the common topics of invention and the rhetorical purposes allow the reader to see more deeply into the meaning of a



well-written text. Students often struggle to understand what makes a truly good book and what distinguishes it from others of lesser quality. The study of rhetoric, as I will show in this thesis, is a means for students to gain greater understanding of the masterful skill employed by great authors they read. The study of rhetoric acts as an apologetic for classic literature that makes its importance self-evident. It prepares students to perceive the various kinds of excellence that texts present.

The first chapter focuses on the common topic of definition and will be divided into three sections of explanation, example, and construction, in which I will respectively introduce the topic, present the topic at use in Homer's *Odyssey* and in pop culture examples; the final section provides a way for students to practice using the topic in their own writing. In the example section, I show a Homeric and pop culture example for each rhetorical purpose: forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative. The same arrangement will also apply to the following chapters on the common topics of comparison and relationship. The purpose of these chapters is demonstrative as I show to students what each topic is, what it looks like in literature and culture, how it helps to reveal insight, and how to practice using it. Because the concept of topics of invention presents challenges to the modern student, I hope that my thesis, just as the researching and writing helped my understanding, helps to clarify these ideas for others and so aids the teaching of rhetoric in classical education.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Definition

Quintilian describes the common topics of invention as “the seats of arguments in which they lie concealed and from which they must be drawn forth” (Quintilian Bk. 5, Ch. 10, Sect. 20). Their concealment is the cause of this thesis. Good arguments are hard to find, but this thesis attempts to clear the path to the source. Once that path is well trod, then the work of invention will become less ominous. I will first provide an explanation of the topic of definition. Then, I will demonstrate how to discern the topic of definition at work in serving each of the three main kinds of rhetorical purposes: forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative. I will consider one example from classic literature, Homer’s *Odyssey*, and one from popular culture for each kind of rhetorical end. This section aims to show students how to both identify the topic in operation and to implement the knowledge of the topic to gain insight regarding a given text. The final section of the chapter will focus on construction by providing several ways for a student to practice using definition in his or her own writing. This chapter helps students to understand what the three rhetorical purposes are, what the topic of definition is, and how definition functions differently when used for each purpose. Ultimately, the goal of this chapter is to show how to help students become more insightful and persuasive by enriching their storehouse of rhetorical tools through the topic of definition, strengthening their ability to employ definitions in a variety of texts and to recognize how it operates in the discourses they encounter. Before we get into the means of persuasion (the topics),

we must be able to answer the question: why persuade? A clear sense of purpose will help the student to understand the task of invention, so that is where we will begin.

There are three commonly recognized rhetorical species that are distinguished by their goals: forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative. Aristotle defined the art of rhetoric as the ability to find in any given case the best available means of persuasion (*Rhet.* I.2, 1355b26f.). All persuasion has a purpose. Therefore, all rhetoric has a purpose. Aristotle along with much of the classical rhetorical tradition identifies three overarching rhetorical purposes into which every kind of utterance can be grouped. The three purposes correspond to the three aspects of time. Forensic rhetoric concerns particular events in the past, demonstrative seeks to show the character of action or entities, and deliberative rhetoric concerns the future. There are topics which are special to each rhetorical purpose, but there are also topics common to all. This thesis will focus on three of the common topics of invention: definition, comparison, and relationship.<sup>3</sup>

The rhetorical purposes are the primary guides to using the common topics of invention. The topics are means. They are good insofar as they help to accomplish a given rhetorical end. Therefore, it is essential that the rhetorician know his rhetorical purpose before he turns to the topics of invention for help. It may be the case that certain topics are better suited for a particular rhetorical end, and it is up to the discretion of the speaker to determine the available means of persuasion. There are many names for the purposes partly due to the fact that the tradition has passed through several languages. The term forensic comes from the Latin word meaning “pertaining to the forum,” a place of public discourse. It was later used to refer to things specifically related to legal trials.

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<sup>3</sup> The last two common topics of invention typically included are circumstance and testimony, but they will not be addressed in this thesis.

Another term used for forensic rhetoric is “legal rhetoric.” However, courtroom subject matter is not the only type of forensic subject matter. Put simply, forensic rhetoric is concerned with the truth of the past: what happened? Stasis theory is a forensic system used to answer that question, and it is a term that refers to three sub-topics that are particular to forensic rhetoric: conjecture, definition, and quality. “Conjecture” is about whether something happened; “definition” is about what it is; and “quality” is about the motives or causes of action (Corbett 125). “Definition” is an interesting topic of stasis theory because it is also a topic of invention common to all types of rhetoric. Later in this chapter, we will see how definition operates in a forensic setting as well as for other rhetorical purposes.

The second rhetorical purpose is demonstrative. Other terms for demonstrative and “epideictic” and “ceremonial.” Demonstrative comes from the Latin word *demonstrare*, which means “to show.” Epideictic comes from the Greek word ἐπιδείκνυμι (epideiknumi), which also means to show. Aristotle calls this type of rhetoric “ceremonial” because it is often used in ceremonies to show or reveal a person’s character through praise or blame. There is a question over whether all demonstrative rhetoric is praise or blame, or whether there is a third option without value. Can demonstrative rhetoric merely describe without ascribing value? Along with Aristotle, I do not think so, but this is a very difficult concept to reconcile with the modern disjunction of fact and value, which claims the inherent neutrality of facts. Leaving aside the debate about inherent value, I argue that claims about facts incarnated in language, which is the concern of rhetoric, are all value-laden. Language always involves a speaker, an audience, setting, and historical inheritance. All of these elements root language is

particulars: particular people with particular histories with particular ends. These particulars tie language to value. People often try to deny this by saying things like “I’m just saying.” They equate “just saying” to not praising or blaming anything but merely showing the way things objectively are. However, as audiences we can usually detect this rhetorical ploy as a defense mechanism once the speaker’s purpose of praise or blame has already been suspected. You can’t “just say.”

The name deliberative comes from the Latin verb *deliberare*, which means “to consider carefully.” Deliberative rhetoric is about considering future action and making choices among possibilities. Another term for deliberative is “political” because politics is concerned with these sorts of things: Should we build this road? Should we pass this bill? Should we go to war? However, deliberative subject matter is not limited to public debate. A common deliberative subject is ethics: Should I tell this white lie? Forensic and demonstrative rhetoric deal with actualized reality, but deliberative deals with the future—what could and ought to happen. The past and present are complete, but the future contains a plethora of possibilities. It has a quality of back and forth to it, of weighing pros and cons, but they are options regarding particulars.

#### *Explanation of Definition*

The common topics of invention are useful to anyone for whom making a persuasive argument is a challenge, and that tends to be most of us. We call them “topics” because that is the traditional name for them, not because it is the clearest word in modern English. They are not topics as we normally think of them, such as “Christianity and politics” or “how to drive a boat.” Modern topics consist of content. Classical topics of invention, on the other hand, provide a framework for finding content. They direct you

to think about your content in a certain way. The English word topic comes from the ancient Greek word *topos*, meaning “place.” Alyssan Barnes compares consulting the topics to knocking on doors (Barnes 120; Quintilian Bk. 5, Ch. 10, Sect. 22). Consulting the common topic of definition is like knocking on a door to see if any helpful answers lie in the room behind it. There are different ways to knock on the definition door, and we call those sub-topics. Aristotle lists two different kinds of definition sub-topics: genus (by which he means genus/species) and division. A definition using the sub-topic of genus/species situates a thing as a certain member (species) of a group (genus). For example, a possible genus of *house* is building. Because there are many types of buildings, the genus is obviously not enough to satisfy a definition of house. A qualifier must be included to distinguish the species of house from other species of buildings. One such qualifier could be residential. A proper genus/species definition of house is a “residential building.” However, the species “residence” may also be a genus which includes other species of residencies like “apartment,” “duplex,” etc. “Residential building” is therefore not an essential definition of *house* in the strict sense. Nevertheless, it may be a helpful definition in the context of a certain argument. In *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, Edward P.J. Corbett says: “An essential definition is one that designates that which makes a thing what it is and distinguishes that thing from all other things; in other words, it is one that spells out a thing’s fundamental nature” (Corbett 33). The topic of “definition” can be used without necessarily relying on an essential definition, in the Aristotelian sense. Indeed a genus/species definition need not always be an essential definition to be persuasive. There are many types of nonessential definitions that employ other sub-topics such as division, etymology, example, etc. These

nonessential definitions still have great persuasive power. However, the sub-topic of genus/species is best at accomplishing an essential definition, which we will keep in mind as we further examine this sub-topic.

The sub-topic of “genus” concerns the grouping of things that go together. An understanding of the world in terms of genera fights against the modern tendency to split things apart. When moderns define things, we tend to focus on their *differentiae*, what sets them apart from each other, what makes each thing unique. By contrast, Aristotle’s first question of definition seeks to situate a thing in unity. Only once he discerns how a thing relates to the rest of reality does he seek to understand its specific differences. Uniqueness can be understood only in relation to the whole.

The next step to an essential definition is distinguishing the one thing you are defining from other things in the same genus. This sub-topic is called division. The distinguishing factors are called *differentiae* or specific differences (Corbett 34). A classic example of an essential definition is: Man is a rational animal. Animal is the genus, and rational is the differentia. Nothing else could claim this definition. It is exclusive to man. This genus- method of defining is consistent with Aristotelian methodology. It is very logic-oriented and only takes into account the denotations of words. However, the connotations of words are extremely important to the rhetorician as well. While denotations appeal to *logos*, connotations appeal to *ethos* and *pathos*. An appeal to *ethos* considers the history of a word. Who has used that word? In what context? Is that word associated with a particular person, event, debate, field of study, political party, etc.? The primary question, however, is whether those connotations establish credibility or not. An appeal to *pathos* is concerned with all the same questions

but for the sake of determining how those connotations make the audience feel. In the modern academic climate, “man” is often not accepted as a gender-neutral word though it may have traditionally been synonymous with “human being.” The connotations of that word are frequently now male instead of equally male and female. Therefore, in an argument, depending on who my audience is, I may choose to say “human being” instead. Additionally, if my audience is well versed in philosophy, they may understand that by “animal” I do not mean brute but rather a living body capable of self-motion. Another type of audience, however, could be very misled by that term. At the same time, the connotations of the word “rational” could also possibly cause confusion. A certain audience, or reader, might think rational means “smart,” but what we really mean is *logistikon*, which includes more than just calculation. It is the ability to make complex decisions and judgments as the ruling faculty of a multi-partite soul. Connotations of words are developed through usage over time. A definition that arises from these usage-based considerations we may call *historical*, but philosophers, like Aristotle, often build their own essential definitions of a word to fit their argument because a historical definition may not be essential. This kind of definition, which cares much less about historical use, we will call *stipulative*. Both kinds of definition can be helpful for making your argument depending on whether your persuasive purpose is historical or philosophical.

### *Forensic Examples of Definition*

Examining the topic of definition in an example of classic literature will help us to better understand how orators can use it to convey meaning. I also intend this example section to demonstrate how readers can use the topics to discover the deep yet subtle



meaning within a text. In Book 22 of *The Odyssey*, Odysseus undertakes a forensic argument of definition. The forensic goal of this argument is to prove the guilt of the suitors. I will argue that the definition which acts as the crutch of his argument is the definition of their crime, which is, in short, murder. How is this definition acting as an argument and not merely an isolated statement? First of all, this definition of the crime is not immediately apparent though it is operative. Odysseus uses this definition to accomplish his forensic goal even if he does not explicitly articulate it in Book 22. In order to discover the particular definition at work in the text, the reader must use this common topic of invention as an interpretive lens. Using the lens does not ensure that you will find the topic at work. If that is the case, then move on to the next common topic. However, when reading Homer, a rhetorical master, it is very likely that many topics will be at work at the same time. The common topic of definition, in this passage of *The Odyssey*, happens to reveal a very important insight into the scene.

At this point in the book Odysseus says that he has concluded his test of their guilt. He has come to a conclusion and begins to issue their lethal sentence by first killing Antinous, the suitor's leader. Antinous' lethal punishment can be explained by Odysseus' operative definition of the crime. Odysseus' answer to the question "What did the suitors do?" is a particular definition with an appropriate response.

Early in *The Odyssey*, Homer reveals that the suitors' action amounted to the intended murder of Odysseus. In Book 2, a suitor named Leocritus threatens:

“Even if Odysseus of Ithaca did arrive in person,  
To find us well-bred suitors feasting in his halls,  
And the man were hell-bent on routing us from the palace—

Little joy would his wife derive from his return,  
For all her yearning. Here on the spot he'd meet  
A humiliating end if he fought against such odds" (*Od.* Bk. 2, lines 277-  
282).

Leocritus voices this threat in the context of a public assembly. All the leaders of Ithaca are present including Telemachus, Odysseus' son. Everyone knows now that as long as the suitors continue their pursuit of Penelope in Odysseus' palace, this threat stands. But speed forward to Odysseus' return. How would Odysseus know that such a threat of murder has been issued by the suitors? We must first ask why Leocritus voiced it in the first place. When he said: "Here on the spot he'd meet a humiliating end if he fought against such odds," the threat is worded so as to imply that a fight was already assumed to happen. Leocritus and his audience in the assembly know that if Odysseus returned, he would fight the suitors. The only new information that Leocritus is attempting to convey (which is not at all obvious to his audience) is that against such odds he would lose. The prediction of Odysseus' defeat is an ambitious claim, but I argue that the real insight that Homer wants us to see is that everyone already knows that the suitors' actions will result in violence. The nature of their crime illicit it. And what is their crime? Their name describes it. They are suitors, and for that they are guilty. Why is the punishment for being a suitor of Penelope death? Because in order to marry Penelope, Odysseus must be declared dead. Therefore, the action of the suitors, the very essence of their crime is the murder—both legally and actually upon his return—of Odysseus. The suitors courted Penelope *because* they never imagined Odysseus would return from Troy (*Od.* Bk. 22, lines 36-42). Their courtship was a public assertion of Odysseus' death. If one of them

were to marry Penelope, then Odysseus would necessarily have an official legal status of deceased. This declaration is a species under the genus of capital offense equivalent to the hypothetical death threat that Leocritus voiced at the public assembly back in Book 2. Additionally, as we will learn in the section on demonstrative rhetoric, Odysseus presents a definition of *kleos* in Book 11, which adds significant gravity to the crime of the suitors. *Kleos* is the ancient Greek word for glory or fame; it is the glory a man obtains through his actions. Odysseus will show that the nature of a man's *kleos* depends upon the status of his living descendants. Therefore, when the suitors disgrace Telemachus, they are disgracing Odysseus murder Odysseus, and without *kleos*, Odysseus will lose his only chance of joy in the afterlife.

So how is this definition at work in Book 22? We see Odysseus' argument of definition clearly defined when it is compared to the arguments of self-defense of several suitors, which we will examine more in depth in the chapter on comparison. Odysseus, having entered the palace in disguise, gives the suitors several opportunities to exhibit proper behavior. Odysseus's disguise is crucial to his test. For if the suitors had been able to recognize Odysseus, he would not have been able to test their true character. The first suitor that Odysseus executes is Antinous (*Od.* Bk. 22, lines 10-20). He is the leader of the suitors, and Eurymachus will attempt to (*Od.* Bk. 22, line 22).

Following Antinous' execution, Eurymachus is the first suitor to plead for mercy. Eurymachus responds with a defense:

You're right to accuse these men of what they've done—  
So much reckless outrage here in your palace,  
So much on your lands. But here he lies,

Suite dead, and he incited it all—Antinous—  
Look, the man who drove us all to crime!  
Not that he needed marriage, craved it so;  
He'd bigger game in mind—though Zeus barred his way—  
He'd lord it over Ithaca's handsome country, king himself,  
Once he'd lain in wait for your son and cut him down!  
But now he's received the death that he deserved.  
So spare your own people! Later we'll recoup  
Your costs with a tax laid down upon the land,  
Covering all we ate and drank inside your halls,  
And each of us here will pay full measure too—  
Twenty oxen in value, bronze and gold we'll give  
Until we melt your heart. Before we've settled,  
Who on earth could blame you for your rage?" (*Od.* Bk 22, lines 47-63)

As we learned earlier, the three sub-topics specific to forensic discourse in order of persuasive power are conjecture, definition (which is also a common topic), and quality. Eurymachus does not contest the question of conjecture or definition. His appeal for innocence is on the weakest grounds of forensic stasis theory: quality. He does not dispute the occurrence of courtship nor how those actions are defined. Rather, he defends himself by pointing to the *quality* of the actions committed. Eurymachus grants that the first sub-topic special to forensic discourse, conjecture, is not the issue of stasis. He does not deny that crimes have been committed. He skips over the question of definition, the second sub-topic of forensic discourse, acknowledging the definition of the crimes as

recklessness in Odysseus' palace, courtship for the sake of seizing power, and the planned murder of Telemachus. Eurymachus does not acknowledge that the definition of the crime included declaring Odysseus to be dead as well as the hypothetical threat to kill him if he returned. Eurymachus only argues from the third sub-topic of stasis theory: quality. The quality of Antinous' crime is different from the rest of the suitors because Antinous was the ring-leader. Antinous incited the crimes whereas Eurymachus only followed suit. Eurymachus argues that this difference in quality is enough for him to be acquitted of the death sentence. He argues that difference in quality calls for difference in punishment and proposes that his and the rest of the suitors' punishment be monetary.

The crime was essentially a plot to murder both Telemachus and Odysseus. It does not matter who came up with the plan. Eurymachus admits to knowing about the plan. It may not have even originally been Antinous' idea given that Leocritus made the threat to kill Odysseus in Book 2. Furthermore, Leocritus said on behalf of all the suitors that their joint force would bring Odysseus to his end. Therefore, by being a suitor, Eurymachus consented to the plot to kill. The definition of the crime including its efficient cause (the suitors) is the point of stasis upon which Odysseus issues his damning judgment. The penalty for plotting to murder is death. He says that no compensation could change his judgment. Furthermore, Odysseus rejects Eurymachus' attempt to deny responsibility. Odysseus holds that all of the suitors freely chose to follow Antinous' example and are therefore just as responsible for their actions and just as deserving of capital punishment.

Odysseus, on the other hand, refutes his appeal on the question of definition, a higher ground of stasis. He claims that the nature of the action committed—its very

definition—is the cause of Eurymachus’ guilt. Therefore, no argument based on quality can compete with Odysseus’ definition argument. Though Eurymachus and Leodes fail in their appeals for innocence, Phemius succeeds, and his success depends upon differentiating his actions from the definition of the suitors’ crime. The definition of Phemius’ act included coercion whereas the other suitors acted out of freedom. Freedom of the will is a necessary part of Odysseus’ definition of the suitors’ crime. I will now briefly recount the details of this Homeric episode.

Another case of appeal is Leodes the priest. Leodes tells Odysseus that he did not commit any of the physical crimes of the other suitors:

“I hug your knees, Odysseus—mercy! Spare my life!  
Never, I swear, did I harass any woman in your house—  
Never a word, a gesture—nothing, no, I tried  
To restrain the suitors, whoever did such things.  
They wouldn’t listen, keep their hands to themselves—  
So reckless, so they earn their shameful fate.  
But I was just their prophet—  
My hands are clean—and I’m to die their death!

Look at the thanks I get for years of service” (*Od.* Bk. 22, lines 327-335).

Therefore, he pleads innocence. However, Leodes has failed to understand Odysseus’ definition of the crime. The physical crimes that laid waste to Odysseus’ palace, resources, and servant women are not the ultimate concern of his charge. Odysseus points out to Leodes that though he did nothing physically, he probably prayed for the actualization of every crime, which was ultimately a prayer for Odysseus’ death,

and for that Odysseus holds him just as responsible. Odysseus makes this assumption based off of the free choice Leodes makes to string the bow (*Od.* Bk. 21, lines 132-4). Odysseus accuses him: “How hard you must have prayed in my own house that the heady day of my return would never dawn—my dear wife would be yours, would bear your children! For that there’s no escape from grueling death—you die” (*Od.* Bk. 22, lines 338-41)! The definition of Leodes’ crime as participation in the plot to murder is what condemns him to the equivalent capital punishment.

On the other hand, Phemius the bard escapes punishment by proving that the suitors forced their servitude against their will. Phemius says: “never of my own will, never for any gain did I perform in your house, singing after the suitors had their feasts...they forced me to come and sing—I had no choice!” (*Od.* Bk. 22, lines 370-3). Telemachus testified on behalf of Phemius. He attests that he was truly forced by the suitors to serve them. Though he committed deeds which assisted the damage caused by the suitors, Phemius is judged to be not morally guilty because he did not assent to the actions of the suitors. Odysseus does not hold him culpable for the actions of his body but rather pardons him for the resiliency of his will. Odysseus says in Phemius’ praise: “clearly doing good puts doing bad to shame” (*Od.* Bk. 22, line 496). Odysseus’ operative definition of the crime includes willing assent, in which Phemius did not participate.

When we are looking for examples of forensic rhetoric in popular culture, the news is the best place to find it. The three questions of stasis theory provide an accurate framework for the content of the news: conjecture, definition, and quality. When we think about the types of the things you hear news sources talk about, the subjects are usually

one of these three types of things. These topics of stasis theory are special to forensic rhetoric, except for definition. Definition is a common topic to all types of rhetoric. However, definition has a special twist when it is being used as a topic in forensic rhetoric. Edward Corbett gives us several example questions of forensic definition as it would relate to a legal case:

1. What specifically is the charge being made?
2. What is the legal definition of the alleged injustice?
3. What law is supposedly violated?
  - a. A written, promulgated law?
  - b. An unwritten, natural law?
4. Who was harmed by the alleged injustice?
  - c. An individual?
  - d. The community?
5. Did the victim suffer the harm against his or her will?
6. What was the extent of the harm (Corbett 125)?

Though forensic rhetoric is often associated with the courtroom, journalism is another common setting. Forensic questions that a journalist might ask could be: regarding the report of a past event, what are people calling the event? Is there a legal, political, or commonly assumed definition of this type of event? Where did it happen? When? Who was involved? Why did the event occur? Was there an intended outcome? We will notice that the rhetoric of the news is not limited to forensic. In fact, C. Sommerville highlights that the periodicity of modern news is an essential factor for its



ultimately commercial end: “Essentially, daily publication cuts things out of a larger reality in order to dispose of them and clear the decks for tomorrow’s edition...Much of the population shares a sort of addiction to this process, which is what new industry profits depend on...Periodicity is about economics. There can be news without its being daily, but if it were not daily, a news industry could never develop...Periodicity is a marketing strategy, a way of holding property in information...Obviously, it is necessary to do certain things to knowledge in order to commodify it in this way” (Sommerville 4). The commercial factor adds an underlying deliberative end (i.e. to keep buying the paper) to the evident forensic end of modern news. Under the cover of forensic rhetoric, however, the news is at root demonstrative; it is an entertainment industry under the guise of serious reporting of the past, and it is the entertainment value of the news that keeps so many people interested. It is important to recognize the multiplicity of rhetorical ends in a news article.

Reporter Nicholas Kristof wrote in the New York Times of his October 2017 trip to North Korea to assess international conflict with the United States. His article is primarily forensic because he is relating a series of past events: what happened on his trip. However, the beginning of his article likely accomplishes a commercially-inspired deliberative goal as well. Watch for the conflation of the two goals: “To fly into North Korea on an old Russian aircraft is to step into an alternate universe, one in which the Supreme Leader defeats craven American imperialists, in which triplets are taken from parents to be raised by the state, in which nuclear war is imminent but survivable — and in which there is zero sympathy for American detainees like Otto Warmbier” (Kristof par. 1). This introductory sentence is a strong appeal to *pathos* by stirring the wrath of

American readers. Such an appeal does not deter readers, as Sommerville would note, but rather encourages them to keep reading and, importantly for the deliberative goal, keep up with the ongoing narrative. Such an article prompts the reader to ask: what atrocity will North Korea commit next? However, the explicit forensic goal of the article is to convey the truth of past events. Kristof went to North Korea in order to assess their perspective on war with America. The events which he records in his article contribute to a definition of such a war. He uses the sub-topic of division by saying that “a war here [in North Korea] would be not just a regional disaster but a nuclear cataclysm.” Further, he includes the testimony of a common North Korean citizen, who conveys her country’s popular understanding of how the war would go for America. She said: “If we have to go to war, we won’t hesitate to totally destroy the United States.” North Korea’s definition of a nuclear war with the U.S. implies their willingness to attempt its obliteration. Though this article primarily consists of past events, upon close examination it becomes clear that the concern of the author is not the past but the future. It is demonstrative in the sense that Kristof is trying to reveal North Korean opinions, but it also has an inferred deliberative purposes because we can assume—based off of the nature of periodical news, which Sommerville describes—that Kristoff wants his readers to become interested in the narrative enough to buy tomorrow’s paper. This article is a prime example of how all three rhetorical goals can be present, simultaneously harnessing the persuasive power of the text.

### *Demonstrative Examples of Definition*

We will transition to examine demonstrative rhetoric in *The Odyssey*. Most of the stories that we think of when we think of the *Odyssey* are actually part of a long speech

by Odysseus to the Phaeacians (*Od.* Bk. 9-12). On Odysseus' journey home, he meets these people, who quickly promise to escort him back to Ithaca (*Od.* Bk. 8, lines 226-8). Before they depart, however, they invite Odysseus to participate in festivities consisting of games and storytelling. It is during this period of storytelling that Odysseus relates the long record of his adventures—one of which is his journey to the Land of the Dead. What is his rhetorical goal at this point? It cannot be deliberative because he had no need to persuade them to future action, for they have already agreed to take him home (*Od.* Bk. 8, lines 226-8). It is not primarily forensic because he is not trying to persuade them of the truth of his stories. They are not in a courtroom; they are telling stories at a party. Nobody is judging whether his story is perfectly accurate. Odysseus' goal is demonstrative in the sense that he is revealing to the Phaeacians something about the way things are, specifically about his own character. His goal is to show them just what kind of man they have invited into their home. This is Odysseus' goal, but the stories themselves have their own rhetorical goals. For instance, the story of Odysseus' conversation with Achilles is demonstrative of the nature of *kleos*, or glory. Odysseus speaks first:

“... ‘But you, Achilles,  
there’s not a man in the world more blest than you—  
there never has been, nor will be one.  
Time was, when you were alive, we Argives  
Honored you as a god, and now down here, I see,  
You lord it over the dead in all your power.  
So grieve no more at dying, great Achilles.’

I reassured the ghost, but he broke out, protesting,  
‘No winning words about death to me, shining Odysseus!  
By God, I’d rather slave on earth for another man—  
Some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive—  
Than rule down here over all the breathless dead.  
But come, tell me the news about my gallant son...’ (Od. Bk. 11, lines  
547-59).

After Odysseus’ lengthy praise of Neoptolemos, Odysseus narrates Achilles’ response:

“off he went, the ghost of the great runner, Aeacus’ grandson  
loping with long strides across the fields of asphodel,  
triumphant in all I had told him of his son,  
his gallant, glorious son” (Od. Bk. 11, lines 614-17).

We will first concentrate on the demonstrative goal within the story itself.

Odysseus gives Achilles a salutary greeting and says that death for Achilles is good because he is lord among the dead. Odysseus seems to think that honor gives Achilles power even in death and implies that he should not regard dying as something to grieve. However, one may assume that Odysseus is implying that death is something to grieve without honor. Achilles’ response comes unexpectedly to Odysseus. He says that honor does nothing to soften the evil of death. He bitterly laments that he would rather be alive with no honor than the most honored of the dead. The story’s treatment of *kleos*, however, does not end there. Achilles immediately inquires about his still living son, Neoptolemos. After hearing about the glory Neoptolemos has gained on earth, Achilles

reacts triumphantly. This is puzzling. Just lines before, Achilles has bemoaned his state in the Land of the Dead, and now he is loping victoriously through fields of asphodel. What changed? What does this story show about the nature of *kleos*? At least as Odysseus understands it, the difference between Achilles and his son is that his son is still alive. Therefore, no matter how great Achilles' *kleos* was when he was living, in death he believes it has all gone to waste. However, as long as Neoptolemos is living, his *kleos* is almost synonymous with his father's *kleos* in the Land of the Dead because he is Achilleides, son of Achilles. Therefore, the story reveals an aspect of a definition of *kleos*—that it is a source of joy to those in the afterlife depending on the status of their descendants. Achilles asserts that *kleos* does not come to the Land of the Dead. Any *kleos* obtained in life dies along with the person. However, *kleos* still possessed by the living (e.g. Neoptolemos) can provide joy to the dead.

Odysseus is using the story in a personal way. He is revealing his own character to the Phaeacians and using the definition of *kleos* revealed by the story. First of all, the story shows that Odysseus is the type of man who has traveled to the Land of the Dead, that is a hero. He has also shown that he is friends with all of the prominent figures he saw there, most notably Achilles, but also Agamemnon and Heracles. To be a personal friend of Achilles is like being friends with a god. It makes you extraordinary. All of these things are adding to Odysseus' *kleos* in the eyes of the Phaeacians, and yet the definition of *kleos* proposed by the story emphasizes its fleeting worth. Why would Odysseus want to downplay the importance of *kleos* at the same time he is building his own? We learn from the story that *kleos* is not completely worthless, rather as long as you are living, it is a good and useful thing. However, the most important objective

should really be to stay alive and ensure the future well-being of your family because as soon as you are dead, all the honor that you have acquired will go to naught unless it can somehow benefit your descendants. Because Odysseus understands this, his ultimate purpose throughout the entire *Odyssey* is to get home to his wife and son. Remember that, Odysseus is not telling his story to the Phaeacians in order to deliberately persuade them to take him to Ithaca. They have already promised they would do so. His story does deserve honor, but that honor will be good to him only as long as he is alive and heading home. However, he also needs wealth for his *nosto*, his homecoming, to be complete, and that is what the Phaeacians give in response to his story. The difference between telling and showing is a key element of interpretation in this passage. Odysseus uses the definition of *kleos* to tell us one thing for Achilles, but the story shows something else for Odysseus. It shows Odysseus' true character to the Phaeacians and shows to the reader what Odysseus' homecoming will be like, i.e. gloriously laden with Phaeacian gifts and wealth. The study of the topics of invention and the three rhetorical ends not only help students learn how to discover arguments for their own writing but also how to become insightful readers. Knowledge of the topics allows the student to see into the architecture of good rhetoric, take it apart, and closely examine the beauty of its composition and how certain goods can be achieved.

How do we see definition at work in a popular example of demonstrative rhetoric? For those who haven't already seen and fallen in love with this classic film, *Forrest Gump* is a story of a good man, who lives an extraordinary life of triumph. On the other hand, when Jenny, Forrest's love, sadly turns on the stairway to face him as he makes an earnest proposal of marriage, disaster seems to overwhelm him. Rudyard

Kipling wrote in his poem *If* that you will be a man... “If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two impostors just the same” (Kipling line 11). Forrest has a mental handicap that somehow seems to help him to encapsulate perfectly this quality of manhood. Triumph and Disaster look like imposters in Forrest’s life. Many people would regard a mentally handicapped man as not fulfilling the ideal of manhood, and yet it seems to be because of his handicap that Forrest is so successful as dealing with the tumultuousness of life. The topic of invention of definition is hard at work here in a demonstrative setting. The story of Forrest’s life shows, or reveals, a proposed definition of what it is to be a man. The power of the story comes from setting up a starkly different definition from the one that viewers would normally assume.

Another theme which the movie treats in a demonstrative manner using the topic of definition is love. Forrest and Jenny grew up together, and their friendship has always been one of the dearest and most central things in Forrest’s life. Jenny, however, chose to live a life full of darkness and wandering. When Forrest asks her to marry him he says, “I’d make a good husband.” Jenny turns to him with eyes heavy with a lost soul saying, “You would, Forrest.” He knows that she won’t marry him then but in defense of himself he proclaims, “I’m not a smart man, but I know what love is.” This moment is a heart-wrenching clash of definitions of love. *What is love?* Forrest is telling us that it does not require an advanced intellect to understand and participate in love. He is not defining it as a thing to be perceived through mere calculation. It is more deeply rooted in the faculties of the soul—in faculties that are not affected by his mental handicap. This definition is not obvious, but it is compelling and makes a strong appeal to pathos. However, you characterize Forrest’s mental ability, the film proposes that he does know what love is.

Above all, the movie implies that such knowledge of love is what makes a man. The movie thus reveals a definition of manhood which is doing crucial work in the story.

*Deliberative Examples of Definition*

By turning again to Homer, we find examples of definition at work in deliberative rhetoric. In Book 18 of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus arrives home in the guise of a beggar. He finds his home overrun by Queen Penelope's suitors. He enters his own house only to be mocked and mistreated. The suitors propose that, if he wins a fight against one of them, he can earn the right to some of the meat being cooked. Odysseus shocks the company by easily defeating the unsuspecting Irus in a fist fight and then earning the congratulations of Amphinomous. After Amphinomous offers a toast to the beggar-king's future luck, Odysseus responds in the midst of the jollity with a gravely foreboding speech:

“Amphinomous, you seem like a man of good sense to me  
Just like your father—at least I've heard his praises,  
Nisus of Dulichion, a righteous man, and rich.  
You're his son, they say, you seem well-spoken, too.  
So I will tell you something. Listen. Listen closely.  
Of all that breathes and crawls across the earth,  
Our mother earth breeds nothing feebler than a man.  
So long as the gods grant him power, spring in his knees,  
He thinks he will never suffer affliction down the years.  
But then, when the happy gods bring on the long hard times,  
Bear them he must, against his will, and steel his heart.



Our lives, our mood and mind as we pass across the earth,  
Turn as the days turn...  
As the father of men and gods makes each day dawn.  
I too seemed destined to be a man of fortune once  
and a wild wicked swath I cut, indulged my lust for violence,  
Staking all on my father and brothers.

Look at me now.

And so, I say, let no man ever be lawless all his life,  
Just take in peace what gifts the god will send.

True,

But here I see you suitors plotting your reckless work,  
Carving away at the wealth, affronting the loyal wife  
Of a man who won't be gone from kin and country long.  
I say he's right at hand—and may some power save you,  
Spirit you home before you meet him face-to-face  
The moment he returns to native ground!  
Once under his own roof, he and your friends,  
Believe you me, won't part till blood has flowed" (Homer, Bk. 18, lines  
145-171).

Before analyzing the rhetoric of this speech we must first carefully identify the speaker and the audience. There are always several purposes to consider in such imaginative writing. In this case, there is the purpose of Odysseus in his role as a pretend beggar, the purpose of the true Odysseus, the purpose of the author. Each of these agents

have different purposes, and we must take each into consideration in order to understand the effects of the speech. The goal of the beggar is to demonstrate to Amphinomous that a lawless life brings the same kind of ruin that made him a beggar. The deliberative goal of the true Odysseus is to show Amphinomous mercy by giving him a chance to leave before the bloodshed begins. The goal of the narrator is to demonstrate the merciful character of Odysseus and the way in which Amphinomous has permanently turned away from a virtuous life. The goal of the text as a whole is to warn readers of the main narrative against walking the same road which Amphinomous walked which inevitably leads to destruction. The text teaches readers of the inevitability of Amphinomous' doom in the lines that follow the quotes above. Amphinomous walks away from Odysseus deeply distressed. He is obviously moved by Odysseus' speech. He no longer feels comfortable continuing to live life the way that he has, and yet divine action prohibits him from acting in accord with Odysseus' deliberative goal. Athena had already "bound him fast to death" (Homer, Bk. 18, line 179). Whether Athena's intervention deprives Amphinomous of free will is unclear. However, her action can be interpreted as merely reinsuring that the punishment of Amphinomous' previously free choices is brought to fruition. Strictly speaking, Odysseus' speech fails to achieve his deliberative end. We should ask, however, about Homer's rhetorical goal in showing us a failed deliberative attempt. The answer may be to show us that Amphinomous chose a way of living from which there is no redemption, which is indeed a highly effective way to discourage Homer's audience not to pursue the same path of lawlessness.

The audience has only two dimensions as far as I can tell: Amphinomous and the reader. Amphinomous is the object of two deliberative goals: to mend his lawless life and

to leave Odysseus' house. The audience is the object of two demonstrative goals: to understand the moral character of Odysseus and Amphinomous, and to reveal the consequences of living a life like Amphinomous'. We could also speculate that beyond Homer's demonstrative goal is a deliberative goal to convince readers not choose a life like Amphinomous'. After he sweetens his audience by complimenting the fame of Amphinomous' family and his character, Odysseus sets out to accomplish a goal. What is his persuasive goal? If the speaker is attempting to persuade the audience to think about the past a certain way, the issue is likely forensic. If the speaker is persuading his audience to praise, blame, or describe something, then the primary issue is demonstrative. However, it seems that Odysseus's ultimate goal is deliberative. He is trying to persuade Amphinomous to make a decision about the future, i.e. to choose to leave. However, he does make forensic and demonstrative claims in support of this ultimately deliberative purpose.

In order to accomplish his deliberative goal, he uses the topic of definition including both sub-topics of genus and division. Odysseus, in his role as the beggar, defines the human condition in order to show the truth of a universal principle to Amphinomous. This argument attempts to establish the demonstrative conclusion: no man should be lawless but should rather take in peace what the gods will send. The ultimate deliberative goal of Odysseus, which is implied by the demonstrative claim of the beggar, is that in order to keep these two statutes, Amphinomous should leave the palace. How does Odysseus go about persuading Amphinomous of these conclusions? He uses the topic of definition by defining the human condition (i.e. what it is like to be human). First, he uses the sub-topic of genus by claiming that humans belong to the

category of things that “breathe and crawl across the earth.” He uses the sub-topic of division by distinguishing humans from other members of that genus: “mother earth breeds nothing feebler than a man.” This superlative description of man’s feebleness is very likely a hyperbole, by which he simply means “man is very feeble” or rather, “man’s feebleness is the most important thing about him.” At this point, the definition of man is in effect, “the feeblest of earth-dwelling creatures.” Odysseus goes on to build on this definition of the human condition with a description of the way human life normally goes. He says three things about the quality of the human condition: (1) that man is the type of being that “so long as the gods bless him, he thinks he will never suffer”, (2) despite his false expectations, he must bear affliction, and, (3) man is incapable of stopping time and thus also the unceasing onslaught of pain and trouble.

One important way to use definition to support deliberative argument is to compare the general to the specific.<sup>4</sup> Quintilian, whose work is foundational to the teaching of rhetoric in the West, discusses the use of these two types of questions in definitions. A general question, also known as indefinite, can be argued for or against without reference to any particular person, time, place, or other special circumstance (Quintilian Bk. 3, 3, 5). An example of such a general question would be “How should man respond to suffering?” By contrast, a special question, also known as definite, makes reference to particulars. A special form of the above-mentioned question could be “How should Amphinomus respond to suffering?” Quintilian explains that while it is easier to see the immediate application of the special question, its usefulness is derived from the assumed answer to the general question. We cannot know what a particular man should

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<sup>4</sup> These categories are referred to by the Greeks as thesis and hypothesis.

do in a particular situation until we know how the situation resembles what all men should do.

Here, I must pause to acknowledge that classical rhetoric and therefore also moral deliberation also assumes a classical approach to morality. Josef Pieper, following Aquinas, describes Christian metaphysics: “That structure is built thus: that Being precedes Truth, and that Truth precedes the Good” (Pieper 4). Being is the way things are. Truth is the knowledge of that reality. And the Good is the realization of the Truth. In other words, Truth is the concern of philosophy and general questions about Being. And the Good is the concern of morality and special questions derived from the Truth. The comparison of the True to the Good is the work of a good definition. It is also the work of prudence. Pieper, in his book on *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, explains how Christians have classically understood prudence to be the bridge between the general questions of Truth and the special questions of Goodness: “The prudent decisions, which when realized, shape our free action, are fed from two sources: ‘It is necessary for the prudent man to know both the universal principles of reason and the singulars with which ethical action is concerned’” (Pieper 10). Pieper later helpfully re-terms prudence “situation conscience” (Pieper 11). Prudence is knowing how universal ideas apply in particular situations. This is exactly the virtue that Odysseus is exhibiting by using the topic of definition. There are four moving parts to his argument: the universal principle, the particular circumstances, the connection between the universal and the particulars, and the conclusion. The universal principal is a general definition of mankind: that is, the feeblest of creatures which crawl on the earth. The philosophical knowledge of this truth does nothing for us until we compare it to the “singulars with which ethical action is

concerned.” In Odysseus’s argument there are two sets of singulars or particulars: those of Odysseus the beggar’s life and those of Amphinomous’ life. The singulars are the qualities of Odysseus’ supposed life as a beggar: reckless, thankless, and wrought with affliction. Prudence is used to make the connection between the universal and the particular, so it therefore requires knowledge of both.

Once Odysseus has defined the human condition as feeble and subject to the punishment of the gods and given himself as an example of the truth of that definition, he then proposes the demonstrative conclusions that “no man ever be lawless” and should “take in peace what the gods will send.” These claims form the explicit premises of an enthymeme. The enthymeme has been regarded since Aristotle as one of the most effective rhetorical tools. On the surface, one would not expect so; it is only a syllogism with a suppressed premise. A syllogism usually has two or more premises, which lead to the conclusion. An enthymeme leaves one premise unstated based on a judgment that the audience would grant it because either it is obvious, the speaker wishes to hide the premise, or for other reasons. The key principle behind the enthymeme is: “show, don’t tell.” Oftentimes, what you leave unsaid is just as rhetorically effective as what you do. A teacher of mine once told me: “A good writer can say something in a hundred words what a bad writer must say in a thousand.” Less can be more in rhetoric, and the accomplishment of a good enthymeme is knowing just what not to say. The suppressed premise of Odysseus’ enthymeme is: “You, Amphinomous, are human.” Odysseus rightly leaves this premise unspoken because it is obvious. However, it is very illuminating for the student of rhetorical invention to recognize because it provides the necessary bridge from the universal to the specific. The universal statement of “no man

should be lawless” will accomplish no deliberative goal until Amphinomous understands that this precept directly applies to him. Once he understands the direct implication of this universal, he may be moved to do something about it. The challenge of all deliberative discourse is building a solid bridge from universal to specific because it is the slothfulness of human nature to apply difficult moral precepts to everyone but one’s self.

To prove the relevance of this claim, Odysseus demonstrates the guiltiness of the suitors. As a final push towards Odysseus’ deliberative goal, he threatens Amphinomous with the assurance that the king of the palace is close at hand and will bring destruction upon the suitors for their lawlessness. Odysseus, however, does not successfully accomplish his deliberative goal. Though Amphinomous leaves the discussion with forebodings, Athena does not allow him to repent. He is under divine judgment for his actions, and no amount of human persuasion can rescue him for the punishment he is about to receive (*Od.* Bk. 18, lines 177-9).

Our final example of definition will be a deliberative instance in pop culture. One of the most common ways we see deliberative rhetoric employed today is through advertising. Wrigley’s Extra Gum’s “Sarah and Juan” was one of the most effective YouTube commercials ever. John Starkey, Wrigley’s vice president of gums and mints remarked, “In 20 years in marketing, I’ve never seen the consumer reaction I’ve seen this early with any piece of advertising I’ve been affiliated with.” It earned over seven million YouTube views, more than 78 million Facebook views, and over 1.1 million shares within a week of its digital release on October 8, 2015 (Cobo, 2015). What made this minute and 57-second-long video so powerfully moving for so many people?

First of all, deliberative rhetoric is often most effective when it is hidden under the guise of demonstrative rhetoric. Once your audience figures out that you are trying to influence their decision, they will be more likely to resist. However, if your audience believes they are discovering the truth for themselves, then you may accomplish your deliberative goal indirectly. The indirect method is more effective because most humans do not like to be told what to do. They would rather be shown what to do. Desire is a much more motivating factor than force. The deliberative goal of the “Sarah and Juan” commercial is to get people to buy Extra gum, but this goal is achieved by means of an endearing story, that the audience connects the idea of merely buying gum to higher ideals of love, happiness, giving, and more.

The story unfolds without dialogue. The only sound heard is the sweet voice of Haley Reinhart singing “I Can’t Help Falling in Love with You.” The story begins with Sarah, an American high school girl, dropping her books in the hallway. Juan rushes to the rescue, and she offers him a smile and a piece of Extra gum. Then, as they sit fidgeting in the car on a first date, she extends her offer again, and they kiss. The story shows a series of scenes in which the giving and receiving of a stick of gum, though seemingly small, plays a part in overcoming uncertainty, trial, and separation. Throughout the story, Juan records their sweet moments together in little drawings on the inside of the gum wrappers that Sarah gives him. In the ultimate scene, he displays them for her to see, framing each gum wrapper drawing, hanging them on the wall in a beautiful room, and presenting them in the form of an art gallery. As she takes in each drawing, we watch her flashback to the important memories they represent. The final drawing is of a future event: a proposal, and at that moment she turns around to find Juan



on one knee holding a ring. They embrace, and the final frame is of the Extra motto: “Give EXTRA, get EXTRA.” So many definitions are at work in this story, but all in very subtle ways. It is indeed the subtlety that makes the story’s argument so effective. A definition of reciprocity: giving something with meaning attached to it and receiving something transformed in return, all done for the good of a relationship. A definition of love: an attraction between people that is fun, but endures hardship, that is other-oriented, that involves reciprocity, that grows and finds fulfillment in marriage. A definition of visual art: it is inspired by deep, emotional experiences and is used to prompt the viewer’s memory. A definition of memory: the human faculty by which one can mentally re-live past moment and experience their emotional weight in both old and new ways with perspective. All of these definitions and more are doing persuasive work in this story, emotionally tying the viewer to Extra gum and forming a preference based off of important ideas. This is how definition as a topic of invention can be used to accomplish a deliberative goal.

### *Constructing with Definition*

In this chapter, we have learned what the topic of definition is and how to recognize its operation in both classic works of literature and popular culture. In this final section, we will practice constructing persuasive discourse using definition as a tool of invention. We have already discussed the sub-topic of genus/species and how this sub-topic is emphasized in the tradition because it allows one to construct an essential definition. However, there are many ways to define things other than the essential method. Other common sub-topics of definition include etymology, synonym/antonym, description, and example. Before we attempt a few exercises of constructing definitions,

we will implement the sub-topic of example by looking at a few of each of the sub-topics. Let's consider definitions for music.

Genus: Music is an aural art. Division: Music consists of rhythm, pattern, melody, instrumentation, and lyrics, but not all of these parts are simultaneously necessary for music to exist. Etymology: Music comes from the Greek word  $\mu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$  (mousa), which means muse. The muses are the divine mouthpieces of memory. They are women, who sing to remind poets of stories. They are a source of inspiration, the beginning of all artistic creation. Description: Music transports the listener into a new world. It can make a place holy or lead a person into vice. It has the power to change minds, start dances, and enrage mobs. Music can even express theological truths. Example: An example of music is Tchaikovsky's "Symphony No. 6." Another example is "Mr. Brightside" by The Killers. Though radically different genres, both are examples of the powerful effect of great music. Notice that I did not give an example of the sub-topic of synonym/antonym. Why not? I left it out because I think trying to find a synonym and antonym for music would be silly and unhelpful. Remember, the topics are tools and just as with physical tools, it is hardly ever necessary that one use all the tools in your toolbox at the same time. In fact, such an endeavor would be unhelpful and would likely produce humorous results. Not every topic fits every subject. The rhetorician need only find the best "available means of persuasion," which implies that not all means will always be available. However, it takes prudence to discern what to use when. Good rhetoric is not a matter of memorization. It takes prudence to choose which topics you are going to use in an argument in order to accomplish the most beautiful presentation. You have to be well-versed in the ways of the world, how people respond to certain phrases, certain rhetorical

appeals, how you must adjust for the setting and time of day. All of these aspects are critical to good speech. Writing, of course, takes a narrower consideration of audience but still remains a very influential factor.

To practice constructing arguments from definition, try asking topical questions about any subject: football, poetry, campfires, worship. All of these questions can be treated as sub-topics of the question: what is it? One tried and true way of approaching answers to these questions is by consulting Aristotle's four causes, which Phillip Donnelly refers to in *The Lost Seeds of Learning* as "verbal renderings of reality." He writes that "the four causes offer a simple and insightful way to use words to get at some aspect of a given reality. They are practical for anyone seeking insight or seeking to share insight" (Donnelly 11). Thus, the causes are types of sub-topics that can be used to construct definitions and, as Donnelly argues, like interpretive lenses which can lead to understanding of a text. The four causes are material (matter), efficient (effector) formal (form), and final (purpose) (Donnelly 10). Alyssan Barnes uses the following list of definition sub-topics:

*Genus/species:* To what general class does it belong? What are its specific, defining characteristics?

*Division:* What are its parts?

*Etymology:* What are its root word(s)? What do they mean? Is it a near direct translation of a word? How has the word changed in meaning over time? What linguistic metaphors are revealed by the etymology?

*Synonym/Antonym:* What other words have a similar meaning? What words mean the opposite?

*Description:* How would you describe it? What does it do? What does it look like? What is it known for? What is it good for?

*Example:* What is an example?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> These questions are an adaptation of questions from Alyssan Barnes' textbook *Rhetoric Alive!*

One cannot always answer these questions in a sentence. Definition as a topic of invention is a form of argument. It is a way of approaching an entire speech or essay. “Man is a rational animal” is an example of a single sentence, essential definition. However, Aristotle spends a much longer time providing philosophical proof for that claim. While not all of his proofs are in themselves definitions, they are determined according to the reigning topic of definition. Most of the sentences in this essay are not definitions. However, the shape of the whole is governed by the topic of definition. It is a large-scale definition of the topic of definition. My argument in a nutshell is to show you what the topic of definition is, though I use various means of enriching my argument.

Therefore, in order to practice constructing an argument of definition, first use genre to establish whether your end is forensic, demonstrative, or deliberative. It is important to have a clear sense of purpose as you construct an argument. Then, try writing a short essay using all the available means of persuasion. Use every sub-topic of definition that is helpful. Use Aristotle’s four causes to find good answers to the sub-topics. You can use the topic of definition to defend an original definition or another thinker’s definition. Keep in mind, most of your academic career you will spend your time studying the definitions proposed or assumed by others.

The topics of invention are not only to be found in prose. All forms of rhetoric use them. Since students often find poetry harder to understand at first, it is even more crucial to remember to use the topics as means of interpretation when reading poetry. The topics of invention can provide a way into a poem that may otherwise be obscure. Before attempting a complete interpretation, however, a more basic step in considering a poem’s form is imitation. Actually doing it yourself is a much more efficient way at learning the

intricacies of a concept then trying to interpret someone else's work. A common misperception of imitation exercises is that they suppress creativity. Some argue that because aspects of the poem are not completely original to the writer that his or her creative horizon is limited. Actually, I argue that the opposite is true. When faced with the daunting task of being original, we often resort to

Therefore, try to write an imitation of a poem using the topic of definition. This may be confusing at first, but remember that definition is acting as the governing principle of the poem as a whole. To test what the reigning topic is of your poem ask someone to describe to you in a single question what it is about. If they say something like: What is love? or What is happiness?, then your poem is using the topic of definition. If instead they say it is asking: "How do men and women think about romance differently?", then your poem is probably using the topic of comparison more than definition. A classic example of a poem of definition is "Prayer (I)" by George Herbert, which answers the question: What is prayer?

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,  
God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth

Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,  
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
The six-days world transposing in an hour,  
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;

Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,

Exalted manna, gladness of the best,

Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,

The milky way, the bird of Paradise,

Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,

The land of spices; something understood.

The following is an imitation of "Prayer (1)" answering the question: What is art?

Art the human stage of earth's own age

God's action in mortal imitation

The hand in movement, heart across the page

From chaos blooms sweet organization

Hammer against the seething, troubled deep

Anvil upon all ugliness expelled

When crop is reared and tools are primed to reap

The harvest beauty lovingly beheld

Freedom and glory, incarnational pow'r

Exalted crafting out of what is given

Preparation for the Sabbath hour

When man presents his offerings unto heaven

Art the mining of a jeweled cave

Revealing blessed light that shines to save

There are many types of imitation at work in this particular example. The types can be categorized according to Aristotle's causes: imitation of matter, form, effector, and purpose. When attempting an imitation, the easiest thing to imitate is matter. However, if this form of imitation governs the entire project, then the popular critique of imitation exercises will indeed prove true. The words themselves should not merely be copied. The first line of "Art" imitates "Prayer (I)" in matter, form, and purpose. Some of the matter is the same—like the word "age." The form is very similar beginning with the title of the poem as the first word then followed by two phrases which allude to a metaphorical definition and a time reference. The rhetorical purpose of both of these lines is demonstrative as are the entire poems, and specifically they define their subjects using metaphysical imagery. Both of their goals are to show the way something is, a definition.

An imitation need not be strict. In your own writing, you can imitate another poem according to one or several of the four causes. It is often the case, however, that when you are imitating a master's work, it can act as a springboard, and all of the sudden, you can have a whole new world of ideas open up to you. By submitting your creativity to the apprenticeship of a rhetorical model, you can learn how to discover new ideas for yourself, which you never would have dreamed of finding before. By attempting an imitation, the student will deeply enrich the ability to identify the topic of definition, understand the work that the topic is doing, and then practice employing the topic in a similar but new way. The topics are not novel ways of thinking. Humans naturally tend to

discuss things in terms of definition, comparison, and relationship. The study of the topical method only helps the student to hone and organize their thought processes so that they can approach thinking, writing, and speaking with not only ease but also mastery.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Comparison

This second chapter will follow the same arrangement as the first. We will begin the example section of this chapter by looking at Homer's use of the topic of comparison in the previously examined passages of *The Odyssey* according to the three rhetorical purposes of forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative. Then, we will analyze uses of comparison in modern culture to see the topic in current application. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a section focusing on construction and practice.

#### *Explanation of Comparison*

The classical topic of comparison is not equivalent to the common conception of a “compare/contrast” essay. The common (-ly dreaded) “compare/contrast” essay consists of a list of similarities and differences of two items. The final cause of the essay is merely to observe the qualities of two things in question. Thing A and thing B are different in some ways and similar in others. The classical rhetorician looks on with horror and cries, “So what?” Similarities and differences in themselves are not interesting. The audience wants to know why this particular set of differences or similarities is significant. The topics should not be understood as ends in themselves. They are not the final causes of an argument. Comparison is not the ultimate purpose of an argument. The topics are the formal causes of arguments. They lay the blueprint and provide a layout. However, the topic that you choose to use is determined by your rhetorical purpose: forensic, demonstrative, or deliberative.

Three classical sub-topics of comparison are “similarity,” “difference,” and “degree.” Corbett writes that: “Similarity is the basic principle behind all inductive argument and all analogy. In induction, we note similarity among a number of instances and make an inference about a further unobserved or unconfirmed instance. Analogy argues that if two things are alike in one or two characteristics, they are probably alike in other characteristics” (Corbett 93).

Because comparison cannot occur between identical entities, the topic of comparison always simultaneously involves elements of similarity and difference. However, one or other of these topics will carry the persuasive force of the argument. An argument built on the sub-topic of “difference” relies on the importance of a difference between two or more objects in order to prove its point. The third and final sub-topic of comparison is called “degree.” Aristotle refers to this topic as “more or less.” Degree is a type of difference in which the difference is not qualitative but rather quantitative. There is a difference in amount between two or more things, which is significant to the persuasive power of the argument. The comparison of the shape of pancakes and waffles is a qualitative difference. The comparison of a serving of one pancake to a more desirable five is a quantitative difference, i.e. a comparison of “degree.”

#### *Forensic Examples of Comparison*

In Book 22 of *The Odyssey*, comparison is used by several characters during Odysseus’ judgment of the guilt of the suitors. Every argument in this passage has a primarily forensic goal: that of proving whether a past action warrants guilt or not. First, Eurymachus uses the sub-topic of difference to compare himself to Antinous in order to prove his innocence. Then, Odysseus compares Eurymachus’ offer to satisfy his debt to a

theoretical offer of a higher degree. This act of comparison proves Eurymachus' guilt. Then, Leodes, the priest of the suitors, uses difference to compare himself to the other suitors in defense of his innocence, and Odysseus responds with a comparison of similarity between the same subjects to prove his guilt. Finally, Phemius, the bard, differentiates himself from the suitors and successfully proves his innocence. To briefly recap the context of the situation, Odysseus has returned home to Ithaca after twenty years abroad, and he has found a clan of suitors occupying his palace, depleting his property, ousting his son from power, and courting his wife. He enters his palace under the guise of a beggar in order to scope out the situation. In the deliberative sections of each chapter, we examine his attempt—still in disguise—to warn one of the suitors, Amphinomous, of his impending punishment. However, in this forensic section, we are analyzing a later scene in which Odysseus has shed his disguise and has begun to issue judgment and punishment upon the suitors for their crimes. We will use the topic of comparison in this chapter to help us gain insight into what is at stake in these conversations.

Eurymachus compares Antinous to himself and the rest of the suitors with the sub-topic of difference. Eurymachus points out that Antinous was the first suitor and leader of the rest of them. He thereby distinguishes himself from Antinous. He claims that Antinous deserved punishment because he instigated the suitors' actions. Whereas the other suitors do not deserve an equal punishment because they as mere followers of Antinous are less culpable. The substance of the comparison is the manner in which each party's sinful action was initiated. Antinous began courting Penelope and plundering of Odysseus' resources without the persuasive influence of any persuasion by other people.

His decision originated from himself. On the other hand, Eurymachus, along with the rest of the suitors, merely followed his leadership. This distinction of initiation versus cooperation does not have an impact on Odysseus' judgment. He views both kinds of suitors as equally culpable for the wrongs committed. At the least, the distinction is not sufficient to excuse Eurymachus from equal punishment to Antinous'.

The second argument that Eurymachus attempts is to offer compensation for the property damages. He assumes a type of justice, which can be satisfied by monetary compensation. As we will see, Odysseus scorns this attempt. The operative justice system that Odysseus is using cannot be satisfied with material wealth. Is this so because the crime which was committed did not primarily involve material wealth, or is it because no manner of crime can be satisfied by monetary compensation? Odysseus says in response to Eurymachus' plea: "No, Eurymachus! Not if you paid me all your father's wealth—all you possess now, and all that could pour in from the world's end—no, not even then would I stay my hands from slaughter till all you suitors had paid for all your crimes!" (*Od.* XXII.65-8). The only possible payment that Odysseus will accept for the crimes of the suitors is their lives.

Why is monetary compensation not enough? The comparison of this scene with a story told earlier in *The Odyssey* reveals an aspect of Odysseus' working definition of mortal justice. In Book 8, Demodocus, a Phaeacian bard, sings the song "The Love of Ares and Aphrodite Crowned with Flowers" (*Od.* Bk. 8, lines 300-410). Aphrodite is the wife of Hephaestus, but Ares, the god of War, sneaks into their home while Hephaestus is away. Ares, possessing all of the physical beauty that Hephaestus lacks, seduces Aphrodite, but cunning Hephaestus sets a trap. And the adulterous couple is ensnared in

bed. Hephaestus returns in rage to see them and invites all the gods to witness the shamefulness of his wife. Poseidon pleads with Hephaestus to let Ares go, but Hephaestus will not until the god of the sea promises to pay Ares fine should he try to escape it.

In an analogous way, the consequences of war have been despoiling Penelope in Odysseus' absence. And like Hephaestus, he sets a trap for the suitors by showing up in disguise. There are many comparisons to draw from these two stories, but the most relevant one now is the difference between Hephaestus' justice and Odysseus'. Hephaestus insists on monetary compensation for Ares' crime against his wife. Eurymachus attempts the exact thing, but Odysseus denies him. On what grounds is Odysseus' justice different than Hephaestus'? One thing Odysseus has that Hephaestus does not is mortality. Mortality is typically seen as a weakness. However, because gods cannot die, their justice is limited. Even if Ares deserved death for his crime, Hephaestus could not sentence him to it. Hephaestus has to settle for monetary compensation, but Odysseus has no such limit. Odysseus believes the suitors deserve death for their crimes and adequate punishment is only possible because of their mortality. One would suspect Hephaestus would be jealous of this luxury Odysseus has to inflict just punishment on his enemies. Homer uses the comparative sub-topic of difference to show that Odysseus refuses payment because he is mortal.

In order to demonstrate the insufficiency of Eurymachus' offer of monetary compensation, Odysseus uses the sub-topic of similarity. He compares Eurymachus's offer of a small monetary compensation to an incomprehensibly enormous monetary compensation and says that they are similar in the fact that they would both be

insufficient to pay for the crimes of the suitors. This comparison reveals to Eurymachus that the insufficiency of his offer does not lie with the quantity of his offer but rather with the quality. It is the quality of monetary compensation that cannot satisfy mortal justice. He is assuming that Odysseus' loss is in property: slaughtered livestock and other spoiled possessions. These physical possessions have monetary value, and Eurymachus assumes that if he recoups Odysseus with the ability to replace those lost goods, that the score will be settled. He thus further distinguishes his crime from Antinous. He says that Antinous is morally responsible for something more than loss of property. Lost property can be replaced, but a crime of dishonor cannot be repaid monetarily. Odysseus scorns Eurymachus' attempt to pay him back with physical goods.

The debt of Eurymachus' sin cannot be paid monetarily. Odysseus determines that the only acceptable payment is his life. In order to demonstrate this, he uses the sub-topic of similarity to liken Eurymachus' finite monetary offer to an infinite one saying showing that the quantity of the offer does not determine its acceptability. Rather, the quality of it being monetary is what makes it unacceptable. In this way, Odysseus' argument in rejecting Eurymachus' offer relies specifically on the comparative sub-topic of "quality."

The next suitor to plead for mercy is Leodes, the suitor's priest. Leodes also employs the comparative sub-topic of "difference" by calling Odysseus' attention to a difference in type of action. He says that he is unlike the other suitors because while they harassed the women, he acted only as their prophet. Leodes claims that because he did not commit any crimes in the flesh and that he is therefore not culpable. However, Odysseus counters Leodes' argument with the sub-topic of similarity saying that crimes committed in spirit are morally equivalent to crimes committed in the flesh. Odysseus

says: “How hard you must have prayed in my own house that the heady day of my return would never dawn—my dear wife would be yours, would bear you children!” (*Od.* XXII.338-40). Odysseus draws attention to the similarity of intention behind both acts, and he makes clear that the intention is the damning principle for both. The root issue of the disagreement between the Leodes’ and Odysseus’ arguments is where they locate the difference and similarity. The topic of comparison guides our reading so that we can discover that both arguments rely on comparison as their driving persuasive factor. Knowing what type of argument, or form, is being used, helps us better understand the content, or matter, of the text in a deeper way.

Phemius, the bard, also employs the sub-topic of difference to defend his life against the wrath of Odysseus. Phemius argues that he is not guilty because he was forced against his will to sing for the suitors. Phemius is the only one out of the three men’s cases who makes a successful plea. Telemachus defends Phemius as well. Odysseus determines that one is only responsible for acts done under one’s own power. Because Phemius had no control over his actions, being forced into submission by the reckless suitors, he cannot be held accountable for his acts of service to the suitors. Therefore, his is declared innocent, and his life is spared.

To find a forensic use of the topic of comparison in pop culture, the most obvious place to look is the News. An article in the Wall Street Journal published By Yaroslav Trofimov on November 16, 2017 compares two military threats: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the country of Iran. The common assumption was that ISIS was the true threat and that defeating it would make progress in peace in the area. However, Trofimov makes the surprising comparison of similarity that once ISIS is defeated, Iran

military forces will fill the vacuum and cause similar threats. He says, “Like Islamic State, Iran and Hezbollah call for Israel’s destruction.” ISIS has been a clear military enemy and cause of fear for Israel, so when Trofimov goes on to claim this subsequent difference between it and Iran forces, he shocks his audience: “But unlike Islamic State,” he writes, “they [Iran] have the military capability to pursue that goal [the destruction of Israel].” Because ISIS already has earned serious military consideration, this difference strongly emphasizes the greater threat posed by Iran. The result of this use of the sub-topic of difference is proof that Iran also deserves serious military consideration. It also poses the question: Has military policy regarding these two groups been heretofore effective? And what policy changes need to be implemented? By first drawing a comparison of similarity, Trofimov allows his audience to situate their new knowledge of Iran with respect to another entity with which they are more familiar. Then, by pointing out the dramatic difference between ISIS and Iran, he effectively raises his audience’s concern. The first comparison establishes a reference point, which gives the second point much more persuasive power. In this way, combining different sub-topics can intensify rhetorical effects.

#### *Demonstrative Examples of Comparison*

In Book 11 of *The Odyssey*, Odysseus makes a demonstrative use of the topic of comparison. His initial word of praise to Achilles uses the sub-topic of degree: “there’s not a man in the world more blest than you—there never has been, never will be one” (*Od.* XI.548-9). Odysseus is making a doubly layered comparison. His first comparison is of Achilles to all other men. The second layer of the comparison still refers to other men, but it emphasizes differences of time, comparing the present to the past and the future.



The immediate demonstrative purpose of this twofold comparison is to reveal the glory of Achilles.

The sub-topic of degree is a comparison of more or less. Degree is not similarity because though the two things being compared have a similar quality, the topic highlights the difference in amount of that quality. However, degree is not equivalent to difference because difference implies a difference in quality, whereas degree only implies a difference in quantity.

The way in which the sub-topic of degree works to glorify Achilles is by emphasizing the superlative quantity of blessedness that he possesses. Odysseus assumes that many men are blest, but none are blest to the degree that Achilles is. There are two types of comparison of degree, which are distinguished in grammar textbooks as “comparative” and “superlative.” The comparative is formed by preceding an adjective with the word “more” or adding the suffix “-er.” It is a vague comparison of quantity that only identifies the relation of two subjects or groups of subjects to each other but not the relationship of a single species to the rest of its genus. The superlative is formed by preceding an adjective with the word “most” or adding the suffix “-est.” The superlative is a special type of comparison because it compares a single subject to its entire genus.

Before we examine the effectiveness of Odysseus’ use of the superlative comparison, we will examine the significance of comparison in general over mere declaration of quality. If Odysseus had used a declaration of quality, it might be something like: “Achilles is blest,” or even an intensified version “Achilles is very blest.” These statements convey the quality of Odysseus’ praise but fail to convey the quantity. The assumption is that many men are blest, so the fact that Achilles is also blest has little

significance beyond revealing that Achilles is similar to other men to some unknown extent. The natural follow-up question would be “how blest?” The way Odysseus anticipates the question is by using superlative comparison. His comparison calls to mind the entire human race. The comparison forces the listener to situate Achilles in relation to knowledge the listener already has. This aspect of comparison is fundamental to all learning. Learning is always the process of moving from the known to the unknown. Every time you are taught something new, you compare it to the knowledge you already possess. If the new piece of information is consistent with what you already hold to be true, then you will likely accept it as true also. If it is inconsistent, then one of three things must happen. You will probably deem the new piece of information to be untrue because it is simpler to deny the truth of a single thing than the truth of many things, which are themselves internally consistent. The second option would be to accept the new piece of information because there is enough of a convincing argument and then reevaluating everything else. The third option would be to accept the truth of the old and the new simultaneously and settle for inconsistency. Inconsistency can be deeply troubling intellectually, but sometimes an honest thinker must acknowledge and allow for inconsistency in his beliefs until it can legitimately be resolved. Thus, the comparison of known to unknown is something we do constantly. Furthermore, it is the basis for the rhetorical canon of invention. Invention works by comparing an unknown subject with common topics. The result of this comparison is new knowledge about the subject. The topics are productive in this way. They join with subject matter to create new offspring in the form of insights, or discoveries.

The listener is challenged to think of every blest man he can think of and then place Achilles above them all. The strength of comparison is the life of all competition. Whenever someone has talent, the obvious next step is competition. If someone is fast, people see that and immediately encourage that person to run track. If someone has a good voice, then people say she should go on American Idol. If someone can throw far, then they encourage him to try out for the football team. Our natural instinct when we see a good thing is to compare it. Competition is a means by which people compare themselves to one another. But comparison is not the end goal. Comparison is the means by which we attempt to accomplish a demonstrative goal. We want competition to reveal certain things for us, like who the best is. We care who the best is because victory is evidence of the truth. The problem is that some people love victory more than truth. Glory is the revealing of a virtuous truth. Glory is what happens when praise is given to whom praise is due. The act of winning confirms a person's right to glory. People desire glory for many reasons, but one reason is that people desire efficacy of truth. Winning is glorious because it is a revealing of the truth. The work of comparison in this passage is to reveal the glory of Achilles. We will return to this effective demonstrative power of comparison when we examine Odysseus' speech to Amphinomous in Book 18. In that context, the demonstrative purpose of comparison is subservient to the deliberative purpose of persuading Amphinomous to leave the palace. However, a deeper understanding of the demonstrative power of competition will be pursued as it plays a formidable role in all comparative rhetoric.

Comparison is an extremely powerful topic to use in stories. It tends to be the very stuff of romantic comedies which have two main characters. There are many types

of comparisons that can be made. In the romantic comedy *The Proposal*, starring Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds, the opening scene uses the topic of comparison. Before the two main characters come together, they are shown apart performing their morning routines. The difference of each of their mornings is demonstrative of the types of people they are and the types of circumstances that surround them. The first frame of the movie is a movement through a running trail in a forest. After a few seconds, the camera pans out to reveal that the forest was actually an animated screen. It pans out further to show Margaret in front of the screen riding her stationary bicycle, reading a manuscript at the same time. The first comparison we encounter is that between appearances and reality: the appearance of a forest and the reality of an urban apartment. The comparison has the demonstrative purpose of showing that things are not always what they seem at first glance, and the theme will continue throughout the movie. Of course, it is still a movie, even after this revelation. By including a comparison of appearances and reality within the movie, the reality of the movie itself is strengthened. The movie is itself an illusion just like the virtual forest of Margaret's television screen. However, by juxtaposing the reality of the film to another virtual reality, we are given the impression that the movie is what is real. The purpose of this comparison then is not merely to establish a theme to be carried out through the movie but also to give the movie credibility. If the viewer thinks of the plot of the movie as the "true reality," then the viewer is more likely to be persuaded by the story. The next comparison is between characters. Margaret seems to have it all together. She is in no rush performing her routine. She is right on schedule, confident, preoccupied by her work. Her routine is full of self-care. She exercises, tends to her physical appearance, and eats a quick breakfast. All the while, she is alone. However,

being alone is not a problem for her because her attention is almost always monopolized by her work. Margaret's opening sequence demonstrates that she is for all intents and purposes married to her work. She has the appearance of being very established in her way of life, her singleness, the dedication to her career. She seems very content. This sequence is periodically interrupted by clips of Andrew Paxton's morning. The format of this whole opening few minutes compares the separate lives of Margaret and Andrew as they occur simultaneously.

Andrew's morning is obviously much different than Margaret's. He wakes up late because his alarm did not go off, so then he has to rush to get to work on time. He barges into Starbucks to pick up two cups of coffee. Fortunately, the barista clearly has a crush on him, so he gets his coffee quickly. Andrew does not respond to the barista's flirty actions with any sign of acknowledgement or interest, which demonstrates that though he is an object of desire for others, he has his mind set on other things. He barely makes the closing elevator doors, making a sarcastic remark, which reveals how he feels that the misfortunes of his circumstances are indifferent towards his feelings. Already, the audience knows that Andrew is a mistreated individual and that he is used to abuse. He is used to the necessity of putting aside his feelings in order to accomplish the task set before him. In other words, he is a doormat for the sake of his career. Just when he thinks his morning could not get worse, he crashes into someone, spilling coffee all over his white dress shirt. Out of desperation, Andrew bargains with a co-worker for his clean shirt and makes it into Margaret Tate's office just before she does. It is at this moment, that we realize that he is her secretary, i.e. her personal slave.

The comparison of Margaret and Andrew shows us both differences and similarities. A main difference between the two is power. Margaret has power, and Andrew does not. Her power is demonstrated by her confident external appearance, and Andrew's lack of it is shown by seeming rather disheveled. Their similarities are that they both seem to care about their jobs more than people. We already have hints, however, from the opening frame, that appearances are not always as they seem. The purpose of the difference comparison leads us to believe that they could never fall in love. This purpose is supported by their own description of themselves in the movie as "two people who were never supposed to fall in love." Margaret and Andrew's similarities show the audience that they are starting from similar places in the course of their internal journey. The audience views these two characters as protagonists, which from the start have obvious room to grow and change as the story develops. They will, in fact, both learn to love another person again as they fall in love with each other.

Before we transition into the deliberative use of comparison, let us review some uses of comparison so far. We have already discussed the use of the common topic of definition in this passage. Inherent in the use of a genus/species definition is also the common topic of comparison because it compares the two ideas of genus and species and also because genus and species are both established by an act of comparison. Members of the same genus are compared to each other to reveal that they are similar and belong to the same genus. Species are established by differentiating between members of the same genus. The comparison between the genus and species reveals the nature of the thing defined. Even more fundamental to the topic of definition is the comparison of the speaker's proposed definition to the audience's understanding of the thing. Comparison is

inherent to the act of defining because one compares the thing, or one's conception of the thing, to the proposed definition. This kind of fundamental comparison is common to all thought regarding new ideas. The comparison of the known to the unknown helps the individual make judgements regarding the truth of new ideas. Before judgment, there is also the simple intelligibility that requires comparison of known to unknown. As we have already discovered earlier in this chapter, the common topics are frequently used together in good arguments. The combination of topics is not necessarily intentional. Overlap can easily happen unintentionally because the topics are natural. By natural, I mean that they are descriptive of ordinary human ways of thinking. Everyone uses definition, comparison, relationship, etc. in their daily lives without realizing it. The common topics are common not because they are commonly taught in rhetoric classes. They are "common" because they are shared by all three kinds of persuasion. No matter what kind of discourse in which you engage, these topics are equally applicable. They occur organically in all types of human speech. However, studying each of the topics of invention in turn allows one to isolate each one and improve its use through detailed, focused attention.

#### *Deliberative Examples of Comparison*

In Book 18, Odysseus makes a deliberative argument to Amphinomous, which we have already discussed in light of definition. The full context of the passage is as follows:

Of all that breathes and crawls across the earth,  
Our mother earth breeds nothing feebler than a man.  
So long as the gods grant him power, spring in his knees,  
He thinks he will never suffer affliction down the years.

But then, when the happy gods bring on the long hard times,  
Bear them he must, against his will, and steel his heart.  
Our lives, our mood and mind as we pass across the earth,  
Turn as the days turn...  
As the father of men and gods makes each day dawn.  
I too seemed destined to be a man of fortune once  
And a wild wiked swath I cut, indulged my lust for violence,  
Staking all on my father and my brothers.

Look at me now.

And so, I say, let no man ever be lawless all his life,  
Just take in peace what gifts the gods will send.

True,

But here I see you suitors plotting your reckless work,  
Carving away at the wealth, affronting the loyal wife  
Of a man who won't be gone from kin and country long.  
I say he's right at hand—and may some power save you,  
Spirit you home before you meet him face-to-face  
The moment he returns to native ground!  
Once under his own roof, he and your friends,  
Believe you men, won't part till blood has flowed. (*Od.* Bk. XVIII, lines  
150-71)

In chapter one, we discussed how Odysseus defines man as the feeblest “of all that breathes and crawls across the earth” (*Od.* XVIII.150-1). This definition has an



inherent comparison between the species of man and all other members of the genus of things that breath and crawl across the earth. In comparison to the rest of the genus, he is the feeblest species. In the demonstrative example of comparison of Book 11, Odysseus used a superlative comparison by calling Achilles the most blest of men. Achilles refutes this superlative comparison by comparing himself to the lowliest of all living human beings: “a poor tenant-farmer that scrapes to stay alive.” Achilles disagrees with Odysseus’ words of praise saying that no matter how glorious his life was on earth, that glory has no significant effect on the goodness of his existence in the Land of the Dead. In Book 18, Odysseus defines man with a negative superlative comparison: the feeblest of creatures. Both of these comparisons serve demonstrative ends. The demonstrative end of the Book 11 example is so that Odysseus, when relaying the story to the Phaeacians, might reveal the nature of *kleos* obtained on earth. By the end of Achilles’ and Odysseus’ conversation, Odysseus the narrator has revealed to the Phaeacians the important link between *kleos* and the life of one’s descendants, especially the father-son relationship. This revelation is important for the Phaeacans to see because Odysseus is like Achilles in that he also has obtained *kleos* in this life, and he also depends on the *kleos* of his son for happiness in the afterlife. In the Book 18 example, the demonstrative end of Odysseus’ definition of man is subservient to the deliberative end of persuading Amphinomous to leave the palace and to quit being a suitor. By revealing the frailty of human life, Odysseus intends to deliberately persuade Amphinomous to take on a position of humility, which would convince him to disassociate himself from Penelope’s suitors and leave the palace.

We will now more deeply examine the persuasive work that the topic of comparison does in Odysseus' speech to Amphinomous and how it attempts (but ultimately fails) to accomplish this deliberative end. In Book 11, Achilles' superlative invokes praise, while Odysseus' definition invokes the opposite. In the rhetorical tradition, the negative counterpart to praise is blame. However, the word blame in English often implies guilt regarding a particular action, but the traditional use of the word "blame" has a broader meaning that extends to faulty general qualities as well as particular actions. Another word to describe this kind of negative demonstrative goal is "criticism." Criticism involves bringing attention to a fault or shortcoming, while praise is bringing attention to a good characteristic. In order to be consistent with tradition, we will continue to use the term "blame", but keep in mind this specific rhetorical use. Odysseus' definition of man invokes blame. Both the praise of Achilles and the blame of man are superlatives. If every member of their respective genera were organized into pyramids, they would each make up the single capstones. They both get the most press, so to speak, because they are at the top, though the type of attention they get is very different. In Book 11, Odysseus is trying to give Achilles good press. In Book 18, on the other hand, Odysseus shines the spotlight on man in order to reveal something blameworthy. Superlative comparison is effective because it is isolating. A thing can sometimes be seen clearer when it is set apart from the crowd. Superlative comparison sets a thing apart from the crowd of its genus (but also species in the case of an individual). A common trait of every other member is that they are lesser in a particular way to the subject. The superlative comparison contributes to Odysseus' definition of man because it emphasizes the particularity of the species of man within the genus of

earthly creatures. The superlative comparison is meant to draw Amphinomous' attention to the significance of the frailty of human life. This attention is meant to drive Amphinomous to make a radical decision to leave the suitors. If Amphinomous could only fully grasp what it means to be human, then his actions would change, and he might escape punishment. Comparison can strengthen definitions, and Odysseus' speech assumes that definitions have the power to affect change in human decisions.

Odysseus' next comparison in his speech to Amphinomous supports his initial shocking claim. This second comparison is between man's expectations of his life and the reality. The expectation is that "so long as the gods grant him power, spring in his knees, he thinks he will never suffer affliction down the years" (*Od.* XVIII.152-3). When men are in good circumstances, when they have control over their lives, they believe that their life will continue in good fortune. The law of inertia applies to human life expectations. Change tends to come as a surprise. Odysseus is claiming that humans have a false impression of what their lives are like. Life takes on a deceptive appearance of stable good fortune, when in fact the reality of life is different. Odysseus uses the sub-topic of difference here. The reality of life is this: "But then, when the happy gods bring on the long hard times, bear them he must, against his will, and steel his heart" (*Od.* XVIII.154-5). The difference is that, in fact, hard times will come, and Odysseus affirms this fact.

After Odysseus uses comparison to explain the nature of the human condition, he inserts his own experience into the paradigm. He says: "I too seemed destined to be a man of fortune once and a wild wicked swath I cut, indulged my lust for violence, staking all on my father and my brothers. Look at me now" (*Od.* Bk. XVIII, lines 159-62). This comparison of his own experience to the theoretical description already offered makes the

truth of the description seem more real to Amphinomous and the reader. And finally, when Odysseus inserts Amphinomous' own actions into the first part of the equation, comparison makes recognition possible for Amphinomous and the reader. However, Odysseus cannot do the work of recognition for Amphinomous or the reader.

Amphinomous must recognize for himself that his actions are comparable to the paradigm Odysseus has offered and that he, in the same way, will be the victim of divine judgment for his crimes. Additionally, if the reader wishing to avoid making the same mistake as Amphinomous, he or she must also do the work of recognition for his or herself and be solely responsible for the necessarily implied amendment of life.

We will now examine the topic's deliberative use in modern advertising. The sub-topic of difference is hard at work in the Chrysler Super Bowl commercial from 2011. The deliberative goal of the commercial is to get you to buy a Chrysler 200, but the comparison in use is much subtler than, for example, a comparison to other types of cars. Many companies compare their product to the competitors to prove its superiority, and this is a very straightforward method. There are countless examples of comparison advertising: AT&T vs. Verizon, Apple vs. Samsung, Coke vs. Pepsi. These rivalries can be compelling tools for marketing, but there are some issues that people care more about than companies. The 2011 Chrysler Super Bowl commercial takes the approach of appealing to more compelling issues.

The commercial opens with rough shots of Detroit industry. The weather is grim. It looks cold and unwelcoming at first. The setting is a tough, urban metropolis. The first thing we hear is the accented, confrontational voice of Eminem. Eminem is a world-renowned, white rapper, who grew up in a working class, primarily black, Detroit

neighborhood. He is a perfect personification of the “rags to riches” story. He built his career out of a love for the music. He came from nothing, very little resources, stability, familial support, or education, and a history of abuse. He has been through Hell and back, which makes him the perfect representative for the city of Detroit, which Eminem describes the same way in the opening lines of the commercial. The topic of comparison comes into play when he begins with the question: “What does this city know about luxury?” Right off the bat, the comparison between the rugged appearance of Detroit and luxury comes into question. The audience of the commercial is expected to note the difference between the two. The commercial is setting up the apparent incompatibility between the two ideas only to dismantle the deceptive nature of appearances. The type of comparison between Detroit and luxury is actually a type of relationship, a topic which will be discussed in the next chapter. However, there are actual comparisons that work towards proving the compatible relationship between Detroit and luxury. Eminem answers his own question by saying hard work, conviction, and the know-how of generations defines the story of Detroit. He uses the sub-topic of difference by comparing that story to the story of Detroit proliferated by the media. He characterizes the opposing narrative as determined by people who lack *ethos*. He discredits their testimony by saying they have no first-hand experience of Detroit: “They have never even been here—don’t know what we’re capable of.”

The persuasive power behind this Chrysler commercial comes from making it a symbol of a city and not just a city but a hometown, a place with a narrative. The word “Chrysler” is never said throughout the whole commercial because, as was addressed in the discussion on on the Extra Gum commercial, deliberative purposes are most

effectively nested beneath demonstrative ones. People do not like being told what to do (or buy). Therefore, the commercial equates the Chrysler 200, a product for purchase, with the city of Detroit, a home to be loved. People are willingly persuaded to support the heroic story of a city which perseveres through hard times. People will not care much about a machine unless it stands for something more.

In order to emphasize the centrality of Detroit to the identity of Chrysler, Eminem uses the topic of difference again to distinguish Detroit from other American cities: “This isn’t New York City or the Windy City or Sin City. And we’re certainly no one’s Emerald City.” Detroit is not important because it is in America. Eminem wants to draw attention to the difference between Detroit and other American cities. The first half of commercial only reveals a couple brief hints that a car is the subject of the advertisement: a side mirror, a highway exit, a fast-moving camera shot, a rearview mirror, a hand on a steering wheel. It is not until halfway through does the camera momentarily reveal the winged Chrysler logo on the hood of a luxury vehicle. For thirty seconds, the commercial shows the Chrysler 200 on the streets of Detroit, but the whole time, a voiceover of Eminem, the driver, is talking about the city. He then, gets out of the car, mounts the stage of the Fox Theatre, Detroit’s “crown jewel” of performing arts, and pointing defiantly at the camera he says: “This is the Motor City, and this is what we do.” The demonstrative goal of associating the Chrysler 200 with the city of American grit and ingenuity has been accomplished. The audience leaves the advertisement with a renewed passion for high ideals. However, the ruling rhetorical purpose has also been accomplished indirectly. The audience has subtly been persuaded that buying the

Chrysler 200 is a means of supporting those high ideals thereby accomplishing its deliberative purpose.

### *Constructing with Comparison*

By now we should be familiar with the common topic of comparison and its three main sub-topics: similarity, difference, and degree. We have examined examples in the Odyssey and pop culture. To begin an attempt at construction, let's continue with the subject of music from the last chapter and use the topic of comparison to try to come up with arguments. Remember, that classical rhetoricians always acknowledged the topical method to be the method for people struggling to find arguments. If you already know what you want to say, then there is no reason to try and force your argument into a topic. But if you do, you could also use the common topics to recognize and improve the argument. The topics are meant to help you when you are stumped. Let's say I am trying to make a demonstrative argument that all music has theological meaning. That is a very controversial claim. Many people would contest that statement saying that the only meaning music has is emotional or mathematical or maybe no meaning at all. The topic of comparison can help me think about arguments that might persuade my objectors of my claim.

I will begin with the first sub-topic of similarity. The persuasive purpose of the topic is to prove that music has theological meaning. Therefore, I want the comparison of music to something else to reveal this truth. In order to accomplish this, I will compare music to something that more obviously has theological meaning. The more similar the thing is to music, the stronger the use of comparison will be. Music is like storytelling. Stories have a strong ability to move human emotions just like music does. A story has a

beginning, middle, and end as does a musical composition. Most stories have rising and falling action as does most music. Both stories and music have composers. Stories can only exist by means of words or images. They require a medium and thereby assume an audience even if the audience is only theoretical or only the author. Music can only exist by means of vibrations in air or the memory of it in the mind. Stories and music both require time to unfold. I have shown ways in which stories and music are similar. It is obvious to many that stories have the ability to have theological meaning. The inference that I would ultimately want to prove to my audience is that because music is similar to story, music also has the ability to have theological meaning. This is the beginning of an argument by comparison, but there would be much more work to do in order to fully prove this point.

Let's look at a simpler example using the sub-topic of difference. Let's say I am trying to make a deliberative argument against white lies. I want to prove to my audience that they should not tell a white lie. Choosing the sub-topic of difference in this situation is strategically effective because a common argument of refutation is the opposite sub-topic of similarity. People often liken a white lie to kindness by pointing out that a white lie can make someone happy, which kindness does as well. However, a white lie is different from true kindness because the happiness that dishonesty produces is false. There can be no true happiness in deception. Happiness is not equivalent to contentedness. Therefore, it is wrong to assume that honesty, which may offend, also necessarily disrupts happiness. On the other hand, kindness is honest and is most concerned with ultimate happiness of a person than with the current emotional tranquility of that person. True happiness can endure the offense of honesty; it surely must not



require the support of dishonesty in order to survive. A white lie does not truly promote happiness whereas kindness does. If it is minor enough, a white lie may promote tranquility, but I argue that tranquility is not a good worth the evil of dishonesty. By emphasizing the difference between a white lie and kindness, I can make a persuasive case against telling a white lie.

We have so far referred to forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative as rhetorical purposes or goals, but we can also speak of them in Aristotelian terms as the final causes of arguments. You call upon the common topic of comparison to serve a given rhetorical final cause. To review, the proper steps for determining your rhetorical course of action are as follows:

Step One: Determine rhetorical purpose (final cause).

(What are you trying to accomplish by speaking?)

Step Two: Determine form of argument (formal cause).

(a): If an obvious argument comes naturally, go with that.

(i): Use the topics to improve and refine your argument.

(b): If no natural form comes to mind, go to the topics for help.

(i): Pick a topic that works well with your rhetorical purpose.

The difference between (a) and (b) is improving arguments and discovering arguments. The topics are helpful for both tasks. Before you try writing a complete argument by comparison, break it down into its skeletal format. Making analogies is a good way to make comparisons with an eye towards their ultimate persuasive goal. For example,

It takes a lot of work and consistency to get in physical shape.

The intellectual life works the same way.

I have just made an analogy between the physical life and the intellectual life. I used the sub-topic of similarity by pointing out the specific way in which the two subjects are alike. The persuasive goal of this analogy could be both demonstrative and deliberative. The demonstrative goal could be simply to explain the nature of the intellectual life as requiring practice and patience. The deliberative goal could be to encourage students to be industrious and to treat the education of their mind with the same vigor that they treat the education of their bodies in athletic activity. The two short sentences of this analogy can be expanded into a persuasive essay to accomplish either of the proposed rhetorical goals. Try coming up with a two-sentence analogy on the basis of similarity or a comparison of degree or difference. Then, expand that comparison into a full argument.

The topic of comparison alerts the reader to important instances of otherness and sameness in a text. What significance does a difference have? What is the significance of things being similar? Comparison can do a lot of persuasive work to accomplish a rhetorical goal be it forensic, demonstrative, or deliberative. As readers, we should train our eyes to notice these comparisons and seek to understand how they contribute to the ultimate goal of the text. As writers, we should never divorce the act of comparing from our rhetorical goal. For though we can have the impression that such a thing is possible, no rhetoric is purposeless. Therefore, through study of this topic of invention, we can learn to use comparison in effectively persuasive ways.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Relationship

As in previous chapters, I will first explain the common topic of relationship. I will then show the topic of relationship at use in Homer's *Odyssey*. I will consider this topic of invention through the lens of each of the three rhetorical purposes: forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative. At the end of my Homeric analysis of each purpose, I will also interject a short analysis of an example from pop culture. Finally, I will conclude by providing means of practicing the topic.

#### *Explanation of Relationship*

Relationship is a particular term as a common topic of invention. In popular usage, we often use “relationship” as a general word used to describe any kind of connection between two or more things. However, the classical meaning of the word as a common topic of invention is more precise than our customary usage. At this point, I cannot avoid discussing how the common topics impinge on each other. We have already discussed the way in which comparison is at work within the topic of definition, through the comparison of genus to species, the noting similarities among members within a genus, and the differences between species. “Relationship” may also often overlap with the other common topics. The four main sub-topics of relationship are antecedent and consequent, contraries, contradictions, and cause and effect. Cause and effect is the most common sub-topic. Therefore, we will spend the most time discussing it. What is a

cause? Moderns typically think of a cause as the agent—whether animate or inanimate—that is the source of a thing or action. However, there is more than one type of cause. According to Aristotle, there are four types of causes: formal, material, efficient, and final. A cause is an answer to the question of why a thing is. There are four ways to answer that kind of question. However, the sub-topic of cause and effect is usually only using the word cause to refer to the agent responsible for an action. Therefore, when we talk about the sub-topic of cause and effect, what we really mean is efficient cause and effect.

### *Forensic Examples of Relationship*

In Book 22 of *The Odyssey*, the episode of Odysseus' judgment of the suitors is an example of the common topic of relationship being put to use in forensic rhetoric. We have already discussed the use of both definition and comparison in this passage, and lest you think we have exhausted it, looking at the passage through the lens of "relationship" will reveal that yet another common topic of invention is at use. The layering of topics can contribute to a depth of meaning. The topic of definition acted as an aid to interpreting the passage, for once we discovered that Odysseus was defining the crime of the suitors as murder, then we could understand why he punished them in the manner he did. The topic of comparison revealed several different things. First, the mortality of humans allows for a more complete justice than that between gods because humans can apply capital punishment, and this is why Odysseus refuses monetary payment from Eurymachus. Second, Odysseus holds Leodes responsible for his intention, not his action. Third, Odysseus does not blame Phemius for actions in which he was forced to participate against his will. Relationship, specifically the sub-topic of cause-effect, puts

the Book 22 passage in a new light. There can be multiple cause and effect relationships cited or arguments in any given passage. However, because the forensic purpose of this passage is our primary lens of interpretation, we will want to identify the cause-effect relationships that contribute to the persuasive power of this example as forensic discourse.

What is the forensic purpose of this passage? The passage includes speeches by Odysseus, Eurymachus, Leodes, and Phemius (*Od. Bk. 22*, lines 5-373). Each of these characters engages in their own forensic purpose: Odysseus to prove that the crime the suitors committed was the intention to murder, and the others to prove that the quality of their actions free them of guilt. We already established in Chapter 1 how Odysseus operated with an assumed definition of their crime as murder. Now, we will delve further into the cause-effect relationship that supports that definition. Odysseus identifies courtship as the cause and murder as the effect. The topic of relationship is crucial to identify in this passage because it prompts us to search for the suppressed premise. Murder as effect is the suppressed premise, which is why the definition of the crime as murder revealed such an insight into the passage. We could not understand Odysseus subsequent actions toward the suitors unless we uncovered this suppressed premise because Odysseus never explicitly accuses the suitors of plotting to kill him. As analytical readers, when trying to discover the reason for the suitor's guilty sentence, we must examine the deed closely. The topic of relationship prompts us to ask of the suitors' deed of courtship: what are its effects? What does human law say about it? Courtship can only occur between unmarried persons or widows. Penelope continued to persevere in hope that her husband would return home safely. However, the possibility that his

extremely prolonged absence was due to death was likely. There was no way to absolutely confirm Odysseus' death or survival. If a suitor were to marry Penelope, Odysseus would have to be publicly declared to be legally dead. If Odysseus were to return after Penelope's remarriage, her new husband would have to commit to killing him. In this case, Odysseus' murder would be the only way to defend Penelope's new marriage, for a woman cannot continue to have two living husbands. One of them must die. Therefore, by courting Penelope, the suitors were legally declaring Odysseus to be dead and threatening to kill him if he happened to return again. Leocritus, on behalf of all the suitors, voices this threat in Book 2 at a public assembly in Ithaca and in the presence of Telemachus. Though we already discussed this in Chapter 1, I will reproduce the quotation here again:

Even if Odysseus of Ithaca did arrive in person,  
To find us well-bred suitors feasting in his halls,  
And the man were hell-bent on routing us from the palace—  
Little joy would his wife derive from his return,  
For all her yearning. Here on the spot he'd meet  
A humiliating end if he fought against such odds. (*Od.* Bk. 2, lines 277-  
82)

The topic of relationship prompts us to connect the cause of the suitors' courtship to the effect of murder, which was threatened by Leocritus. Now that the topic of cause-effect relationship has revealed the murder threat implied by the suitors' deeds, we can understand Odysseus' response and sentencing. This cause-effect relationship is the deeper foundation for the definition of the crime that we already discovered in Chapter 1.

Before, you may have asked why Odysseus was so harsh on the suitors. Why did he have to kill them all? Was he overreacting? But when you take into account the effect of the suitors' courtship, then everything changes. It was not just courtship and trashing Odysseus' house. Their deed was more like a declaration of war. It was a threat of murder, not only of Odysseus but of Telemachus too. In Book 15, Athena tells Telemachus of the suitors' intent to kill him: "Picked men of the suitors lie in ambush, grim-set in the straights between Ithaca and rocky Same, poised to kill you before you can reach home..." (*Od.* Bk 15, lines 32-4).

Eurymachus interpreted his own actions as a suitor very differently of course. He declares his actions to be merely the effect of Antinous' leadership. He attempts to claim that the cause-effect relationship between Antinous and himself deprives him of responsibility for his actions. But leadership does not deprive others of the freedom to choose. It does influence others, but Homer implies that Odysseus believes that Eurymachus, in following Antinous' example, still chose courtship under his own free will. Therefore, Eurymachus is just as guilty of threatening Odysseus' murder as Antinous was.

Leodes also proposed a different interpretation of his deed. Leodes does not propose a new cause-effect relationship to prove his innocence but rather denies the causal efficacy of his actions to produce the effects of the actions of the other suitors. As we have already established, Leodes was the suitors' priest. However, in Book 21, Odysseus (still undercover as a beggar) and Telemachus scheme to test the suitors by challenging them to string Odysseus' bow. Telemachus proposes that if they successfully string the bow, then, he says: "I'd worry less if my noble mother left our house with

another man and left me here behind—man enough at last to win my father’s splendid prizes” (*Od.* Bk. 21, lines 132-4). If they accept, they are deliberately engaging in courtship and, therefore, the implied murder of Odysseus. So, though Leodes claims that he did not participate in the courtship of Penelope, Odysseus knows that Leodes’ attempt to string the bow is evidence that he indeed wished to marry Penelope. Therefore, the explicit public consequence of this wish is Odysseus’ murder (*Od.* Bk. 2, lines 277-82), which means that Leodes was guilty of the same intention as the rest of the suitors. And Odysseus holds them culpable for their intention over their particular action.

Phemius, however, made a legitimate argument for his innocence. He pointed to the coercion of the suitors as the cause for his singing. He sang for the suitors but only because he was forced. Another implied effect of force is lack of freedom, and if Phemius did not have the freedom to refuse to sing, then he cannot be held accountable for his actions.

We have so far consulted the News as a primary example of the use of forensic rhetoric in pop culture, but movies are also prominent sources of forensic rhetoric. Because movies are foremost entertainment, their forensic purposes are nested within ultimately demonstrative purposes. *Dunkirk* (2017) is a historic film that portrays the British evacuation of the British army from the beach of Dunkirk, France. The story is of a past event, which is a clue that the rhetoric will be forensic. But what could the possible types of forensic purposes be? To review, the special topics of forensic discourse are conjecture (did it happen?), definition (what happened?), and quality (what were the motives or causes of action?). Conjecture is a very straightforward sub-topic, and we have discussed definition much because it is both a common topic and a special topic to



forensic rhetoric. Quality, on the other hand, warrants more explanation, and it happens to be one of the more important issues at stake in the movie *Dunkirk*. Operation Dynamo was the name given by Winston Churchill to the initiative to rescue the British army from Dunkirk by means of commandeered English private boats and others with the capability to navigate the shallow waters of the English Channel. The film portrayed the operation as a race against time to safely transport over 300,000 troops from the clutches of the enclosing German army. The film does not argue the question: did this happen? That question goes undisputed, and the definition of what happened also seems to be very clear. It was an evacuation. However, the quality of Operation Dynamo is the subject of argument. Quality addresses the motives or causes of action. The sub-topic of cause-effect relationship is closely associated with the question of quality. In the final scene of the movie, a British soldier on a train returning him home expresses his despair at the thought of the disdain which his countrymen will have for him. He assumes that his return will be regarded as defeat. However, his companion begins to read an excerpt from a historical speech given by Winston Churchill on the quality of Operation Dynamo. Churchill acknowledges that the quality can be interpreted very differently depending by what cause or motive the action is judged. The evacuation was a defeat with respect to the immediate goal of military victory at Dunkirk. However, with respect to the cause of the rescue and preservation of the British army, the operation was a success. A person seeking to understand Operation Dynamo may use the topic of cause-effect relationship and, in doing so, would be prompted to ask: what was the cause of this operation? Churchill tells us that there were two causes. One was the intent to save the lives of British soldiers. The effect was successful in this regard. Another cause was the

inferiority of the British military to the German military. This cause reveals a failure. The topic of relationship helps to reveal the complexity of the quality of the Dunkirk operation.

### *Demonstrative Examples of Relationship*

Cause-effect relationship can also provide arguments for demonstrative persuasion. In Book 11, Odysseus is speaking to the Phaeacians. It is in this context that we must interpret the rhetorical purpose of Odysseus' story of his trip to the Land of the Dead. I will show that his purpose is demonstrative, which affects our understanding of passage. His purpose with the Phaeacians is not deliberative because they have already decided to take him home (*Od. Bk. 7*, lines 363-8). Odysseus is not trying to secure transportation. Rather, he wants to reveal something about his character and the nature of his trip home to his Phaeacian audience. Therefore, we must remember as we are interpreting the dialogue between Odysseus and Achilles in the Land of the Dead that Odysseus is relaying this story because he has a demonstrative purpose with the Phaeacians. The goal of his storytelling is to reveal his identity, which will have implications for the gifts that his audience gives him. Odysseus' story begins at the beginning of Book 9 because at the end of Book 8, Alcinous, the Phaeacian king, asks Odysseus to tell his story (*Od. Bk. 8*, lines 642-3). Already the Phaeacians have offered hospitality to Odysseus, but they do not yet know his name. At the beginning of his speech, Odysseus finally reveals his name, and immediately after he reveals his identity, he begins showing the Phaeacians the nature of his character—that he is the kind of man from whom it is good to be owed something. He is a man of great fame and influence: “known to the world for every kind of craft—my fame has reached the skies” (*Od. Bk. 9*,

lines 21-22). He has the ability to return their hospitality. He promises, “if I can escape the fatal day, [I] will be your host, your sworn friend, though my home is far from here” (*Od.* Bk. 9, lines 19-20). The story he will relay of his past journey to the Land of the Dead will reveal something else about the nature of his fame, his *kleos*—that in order for it to live on beyond the span of his own life, it must live on in his son, Telemachus. Therefore, he must get home to his son to ensure that his own *kleos* can continue in the *kleos* of his son. If Telemachus fails to live a life worthy of glory, there is reason to believe that Odysseus will suffer the consequences in the Land of the Dead.

This chapter is focusing on the common topic of relationship and specifically the sub-topic of cause and effect. We must remember that Odysseus is not giving a primarily forensic account his past travels with a topic of conjecture. His point is not to prove that these things happened. Rather, he is making decisions about which details to include and which ones not to include based on what he is trying to reveal about himself to the Phaeacians. His demonstrative purpose governs every minute storytelling decision that he makes.

Why did Odysseus go to the Land of the Dead in the first place? He is there to consult the dead seer Tiresias, who could help him continue his voyage home (*Od.* Bk. 11, lines 544-5). Tiresias would tell him how to get home, which is to say Odysseus goes for knowledge that is essential to *nostos*, homecoming. He happens upon many other famous, dead, Homeric figures, who speak to him before he finally finds Tiresias. Therefore, we know that Odysseus’ ultimate end driving his actions during this episode in Hades is to find the way to get home. Achilles is one of the figures that Odysseus happens to speak to in the Land of the Dead, but he did not plan the conversation like he

did his later one with Tiresias. The conversation with Tiresias is a deliberative one on Odysseus' end. Odysseus was trying to persuade Tiresias to make the decision to tell him how to get home; future action was the objective. Odysseus has no future action in mind when he begins his dialogue with Achilles.

Achilles addresses Odysseus first and asks him what brought him to the Land of the Dead. Odysseus responds and tells Achilles that he is trying to find the way home to Ithaca (*Od.* Bk. 11, lines 541-6). He then compares Achilles' fate in the Land of the Dead to his own in order to praise Achilles. He says that unlike his own life of "endless trouble" (*Od.* Bk. 11, line 547), Achilles' existence in the Land of the Dead is most blest (*Od.* Bk. 11, lines 549). Achilles' response to Odysseus' praise reveals a great part of what Odysseus is trying to show the Phaeacians through this story.

Achilles refutes Odysseus' characterization of the Land of the Dead, saying that all of Achilles' glory which he earned in his past life is no comfort to him now. Even the worst life is better than the most exalted existence in the Land of the Dead (*Od.* Bk. 11, lines 555-8). In order to see the importance of this statement for the Phaeacians, we must keep reading. Immediately after Achilles' sharp criticism of the afterlife, he asks for news of his son: "Did he make his way to the wars did the boy become a champion—yes or no" (*Od.* Bk. 11, lines 560-1). Before Odysseus can answer this question, however, Achilles asks also of his father, Peleus, and his condition. He laments that he is no longer able to fight alongside his father and defend him:

For I no longer stand in the light of day—  
the man I was—comrade-in-arms to help my father  
as once I helped our armies, killing the best fighters

Troy could field in the wide world up there...  
Oh to arrive at father's house—the man I was,  
For one brief day—I'd make my fury and my hands  
Invincible hands, a thing of terror to all those men  
Who abuse the king with force and wrest away his honor! (*Od.* Bk. 11,  
lines 566-573)

Why does Achilles inquire about his son and father? And why does Odysseus the narrator want his Phaeacian audience to know that Achilles is so concerned about them? I will show that Odysseus is making a revealing analogy between Peleus, Achilles, and Neoptolomous and Laertes, himself, and Telemachus. Agency is customarily connected to the act of parenting: making it a particular instance of cause-effect relationship. Achilles, being dead, is deprived of parental and filial agency, which detracts from his *kleos*. Odysseus is demonstrating through this story to the Phaeacians why it is so important that he return home so that he may not suffer the same fate as Achilles. First, let us seek to further understand the implications of Achilles' speech.

From a position of distress, Achilles inquires about the *kleos* of his son. Achilles does not ask about Neoptolomous' health, happiness, or financial security. He wants to know whether Neoptolomous has acquired the kind of *kleos*, which he had during his own life. This *kleos* comes from military courage and prowess. Subsequently in the text, Achilles asks about the state of Peleus, his father (*Od.* Bk. 11, lines 562-5). At first, it seems like Achilles is merely interested in their condition. Why wouldn't he be? However, we must remember that every detail of this story is being included purposefully. What does Odysseus want the Phaeacians to learn from this account of

Achilles in the Land of the Dead—merely that Achilles cares about his family? A closer look at the rest of Achilles’ speech reveals more. He asks about the state of Peleus’ *kleos* as well. The “pride of place among his Myrmidon hordes” is a way of talking about his *kleos*—the honor that his people award him. Achilles is concerned about the state of Peleus’ health but only insofar as it detracts from Peleus’ *kleos*. If old age had weakened his arms and legs, but Hellas and Phthia did not despise him, then it seems as though Achilles would be content. However, the loss of his father’s *kleos* deeply bothers him because in Peleus’ old age, Achilles should have been responsible for defending him. Death has deprived him of the ability to fulfill his duty as a son.

When Achilles asks Odysseus about his father Peleus, Achilles begins to mourn in a way that reveals that he believes his death has caused great trouble for his father. Achilles’ speech shows that he believes that the son has a duty to protect his father and protect his father’s *kleos* by fighting alongside him. He is also responsible for defending his father from dishonor and attack by his enemies. Achilles’ death has prevented him from fulfilling his duty as a son. The reason that Achilles understands so intensely the importance of the duty a son has to his father is because Achilles is himself a father whose *kleos* is on the line. Just as old age likely prevents Peleus from defending his own *kleos*, so death prevents Achilles. Achilles is helpless in the Land of the Dead. He has no efficacy, no control over what damage the living world may choose to do to his legacy. His son, his heir, is the only one who can do anything about it.

Odysseus reassures him by telling him that Neoptolomous has lived a life of great *kleos* (*Od.* Bk. 11, 576-611). Though Achilles’ words tell us that there is no joy to be found in the afterlife, his actions tell us otherwise. After he hears about the *kleos* of

Neoptolomous, Odysseus says to the Phaeacians: “off he went, the ghost of the great runner, Aeacus’ grandson loping with long strides across the fields of asphodel, triumphant in all [Odysseus] had told him of his son, his gallant, glorious son” (*Od.* Bk. 11, lines 614-17).

Now let us relate Achilles’ speech to Odysseus’ demonstrative purpose. What does this story reveal to the Phaeacians about the character of Odysseus, his need to get home, and the nature of *kleos*? First of all, Odysseus has revealed himself to be the kind of man who travels to the Land of the Dead, making him a heroic figure. His own *kleos* is further shown to the Phaeacians as they discover that he is friends with other Greek heroes of the Trojan War.

The cause-effect relationship between homecoming and protecting both the honor of ancestors and *kleos* of sons allows Odysseus to show the cause-effect relationship between the Phaeacians getting him home and the eternal benefits that actions will have. Therefore, the Phaeacians have a greater understanding of the significance of their hospitality towards Odysseus now that they know that their services will be the cause of such goodness.

The topic of cause-effect relationship is hard at work in the 2017 film *Wonder*. A central theme in the movie is compassion. The movie demonstrates why compassion is good by revealing the cause-effect relationships in people’s lives. The beginning of the movie introduces the audience to many different children, some who are kind and some who are mean. As the story goes on, the audience naturally develops a perception of each character without realizing the perception is incomplete. The movie delves into the secret lives of the characters, and we see that their actions do not exist in isolation. Rather, the

way that each person acts is a result of many unknown causes in their life. For example, Julian is an antagonist in *Wonder*. He bullies the main character Auggie and makes fun of his facial deformity. The audience is lead to have a negative understanding of Julian, but this perception changes upon meeting Julian's parents in a later scene. The parents are called to the principal's office along with Julian after a particularly notable incident of bullying. Instead of repenting, Julian's parents oppose the principal's punishment. They are bitter, heartless, entitled jerks. The film clearly shows that his parents are the direct cause of Julian's mean character. This cause-effect relationship very persuasively evokes compassion on the part of the audience because it shows that Julian has hardly had a chance to learn kindness. The most influential people in his life have been models of self-centeredness. However, the movie does not impose a deterministic view of morality upon Julian. He is shown to have the potential to change in a moment of hesitation after his parents leave the room. It is obvious he has regret about his actions. Therefore, he is simultaneously affirmed to have both free will and personal responsibility. The demonstrative purpose of this aspect of the movie is to reveal to the audience the complex causes of people's character. *Wonder* exemplifies how the cause-effect relationship is a very effective topic for evoking compassion.

#### *Deliberative Examples of Relationship*

In Book 18 of *The Odyssey*, we have already discussed how Odysseus proposes a definition of the human condition in Chapter 1:

Of all that breathes and crawls across the earth,  
Our mother earth breeds nothing feebler than a man.  
So long as the gods grant him power, spring in his knees,



He thinks he will never suffer affliction down the years.

But then, when the happy gods bring on the long hard times,

Bear them he must, against his will, and steel his heart.

Our lives, our mood and mind as we pass across the earth,

Turn as the days turn...

As the father of men and gods makes each day dawn. (*Od.* Bk. 18, lines 150-8)

Embedded within the discussion of definition of what it means to be human is a cause and effect relationship: the gods are the cause and both the power and affliction in human life are the effects (*Od.* Bk. 18, lines 152-4). Odysseus proposes a definition of man that is fundamentally in relationship to the gods. The way in which man relates to the gods is inherently relevant to Odysseus' deliberative rhetorical purpose for his speech to Amphinomous, which is to move Amphinomous to abandon the suitor's way of life and leave the palace. We have noted that Odysseus does not successfully accomplish this rhetorical goal to make Amphinomous leave though he does succeed in causing "grave forebodings" in Amphinomous (*Od.* Bk. 18, line 177). Therefore, in addition to the cause and effect relationship embedded within Odysseus' speech, the speech itself is also a cause with an effect on Amphinomous. There is also a third cause involved in this scene, which is the divine cause of Athena. Therefore, there are two different literary levels of cause and effect involved in this passage. The first is within Odysseus' use of definition in his speech. The second is the relationships that Odysseus and Athena have with Amphinomous.

Let us first discuss the use of cause and effect within Odysseus' speech. There are two different causes that act upon man in Odysseus' definition of man. The first is the

cause of mother earth, who breeds man. Mother earth is man's cause of origin. Because Mother earth does not physically breed man, we can infer that this statement is an analogy. Therefore, there is something similar about the relationship between a human and his biological human parents, specifically mother, and his relationship with "Mother earth." Mother earth is the cause of human existence. Therefore, human beings are the type of being that is not responsible for their own existence. Their very being is inherently dependent on outside forces. Man cannot overcome the limitations of place and time which earth breeds into the fabric of human nature. This fundamental dependency makes human beings feeble. However, man is also feeble because he is at the mercy of the gods. The gods are the cause of both power and affliction in human life. Although these do not account for all human actions, the two causes provide the context for human deliberations. However, even Odysseus acknowledges that neither mother earth nor the gods are not sufficient causes of man's condition. Another cause is human agency which assumes a non-determinist moral world. Odysseus as beggar admits that man is free and morally responsible for his response to the external forces of his environment or else he would not warn Amphinomous against acting lawlessly:

I too seemed destined to be a man of fortune once  
And a wild wicked swath I cut, indulged my lust for violence,  
Staking all on my father and my brothers.

Look at me now,

And so, I say, let no man ever be lawless all his life,  
Just take in peace what gifts the gods will send. (*Od.* Bk. 18, lines 159-64)

In this way, Odysseus categorizes man into a genus of many things whose natures are influenced by their earthly environment. The topics of definition and relationship overlap here as they often do, both contributing to the deliberative goal of persuading Amphinomous to give up his role as a suitor of Penelope. Odysseus use the topic of definition to define the human condition as subject to divine law and judgement. He then showed how Amphinomous' actions as a suitor offended the divine justice to which he was subject. The persuasive work which a definition does is that it presents an objective truth that applies universally to all the relevant subjects of the proposed definition.

However, the persuasive difficulty in definition is that if the subject is the addressee, he or she must make the mental jump from general to particular, that is he must recognize himself in the definition. Furthermore, the listener must recognize that the same consequences that apply to the defined apply to him personally. This act of recognition can be difficult. The leap from the general rule to self-application is often costly in that it may require an amendment of life. Intellectual knowledge of general ideals may cause anguish like that which Amphinomous suffered as a direct response to Odysseus' speech (*Od.* Bk. 18, line 176). However, to apply that intellectual knowledge would demand an even greater cost. Applied knowledge demands consistency between the general ideals and the particular life of the individual. Only the recognition of the link between general and particular will result in amendment of life. In order for the deliberative goal of Odysseus' speech to be accomplished, Amphinomous must recognize and fulfill the logical connection between himself and other members of the same genus and species.

The use of the topic of cause-effect relationship requires the addressee to employ a slightly different kind of recognition. The general-particular relationship is not the focus as in the case of definition. Rather, relationship emphasizes the connection between particulars.

Another cause-effect relationship used in Odysseus' speech is divine cause upon the human condition: "So long as the gods grant him power, spring in his knees, he thinks he will never suffer affliction down the years. But then, when the happy gods bring on the long hard times, bear them he must..." (*Od.* Bk. 18, lines 152-5). The gods are the cause of two effects in the human condition: human power and health but also affliction. These cause-effect relationships are themselves the respective causes of the false human assumption that good times will continue and the development of human resiliency in the face of trial. I am showing that the definition of humans discussed in Chapter 1 actually relies upon two more basic relationships: the relation of earth to humans and the relation of humans to god (who bring hard times). But neither the earth's gift of existence nor the gods' gifts of hardships explain the whole of human action, even if they do gesture to the whole of the human condition. There remains the cause of free human will. Odysseus intends these cause-effect relationships to teach Amphinomous of the dependency of human power on divine will and the necessity of human cooperation with the gods. This intent is the deliberative rhetorical purpose of Odysseus' speech, which leads us to the second type of cause-effect relationship in the passage.

Odysseus demonstrates the cause-effect relationships of Mother nature and the gods upon humankind. Homer uses Odysseus' speech itself as a cause that creates an effect in the character of Amphinomous. Odysseus' intended effect is Amphinomous'

repentance of his actions as a suitor. Ideally, Amphinomous would recognize himself as a member of the genus of mankind and thus act as if he too is subject to divine judgment. However, Odysseus' speech is not quite successful. Amphinomous leaves with a "heart sick with anguish, shaking his head, fraught with grave forebodings" (*Od.* Bk. 18, lines 176-7). Odysseus' speech is the cause of these forebodings, but they are not enough to deliver Amphinomous. He has another cause acting upon him, a divine agent.

Though Amphinomous did have feelings of remorse, "but not even so could he escape his fate. Even then Athena bound him fast to death at the hands of Prince Telemachus and his spear. Now back he went to the seat that he'd left empty" (*Od.* Bk.18, line 177-80). Athena binds Amphinomous to his fate. She has determined that he must suffer capital punishment for his crimes as a suitor, his crime being his joining a group declared willing to kill Odysseus if he arrives home (*Od.* Bk. 2, lines 277-82). His remorseful feelings come to nothing, and he reclaims his place at the table of suitors. Thus, the deliberative purpose of Odysseus' speech ultimately fails because Amphinomous is already under divine judgment. What might be Homer's purpose in demonstrating a failed persuasive attempt at repentance? The passage as a whole shows Amphinomous to be an example of what not to do. Odysseus' speech teaches the Homeric audience why Amphinomous' actions are condemnable and also the divine force that ensures his punishment. The audience should be persuaded by this account to choose a life unlike that of the suitors. It shows that such a life warrants inescapable punishment. And just how do we as Homer's audience avoid making the mistake that Amphinomous made? Before it is too late, recognize yourself as a member of the human genus, subject to natural and divine law. Understand that the consequences of a reckless

life apply directly to you. This is the deliberative persuasive goal of the passage as a whole. For the reader, the end will always be ultimately demonstrative with the further potential for deliberative recognition. But the passage is not directly oriented towards the readers particular circumstances so thus, not explicitly deliberative.

Coca-Cola has a successful history of advertisement. In 1979, Coca-cola released a television commercial featuring Mean Joe Green, one of the best defensive tackles to play in the NFL. In the commercial, Green is hobbling to the locker room in an obviously bad mood. A boy of nine or so years calls out to him asking if he needs any help. Green brushes him off. The boy persists saying: "I just want you to know I think you're the best ever." Green apathetically responds: "Yeah. Sure." In a final attempt at kindness, the boy offers Green his bottle of Coca-cola. After a little persisting, Green says: "Okay, thanks," and he proceeds to drink the entire bottle. At the same time, an uplifting song begins with the lyrics: "A coke and a smile makes me feel good, makes me feel nice. It's the way it should be, and I'd like to see the whole world smiling with me. Coca-Cola adds life. Have a Coke and a smile." The young boy begins to skulk away, but as Mean Joe Green finishes his coke, his mood changes. Green calls out to the boy and tosses him his towel as a souvenir. A great smile comes over the boy's face, and as the camera returns to Green's beaming, happy face, text appears on the screen, which reads "Have a Coke and a smile. Coke adds life."

This advertisement uses the cause and effect relationship to accomplish the deliberative goal of persuading the audience to buy Coca-Cola. At one level, it seems that the cause is Coke, and the effect is a smile. The slogan "Have a coke and a smile" hides the cause-effect relationship, which is implied, by equating the two things as

simultaneous. The argument is, in effect, the smile caused by coke is so tightly connected and so inevitable that it should be assumed that having a coke is equivalent to having a smile. However, there are two slightly different relationships at issue here. First, if you are like the boy and want to make others smile, you will give a coke. Second, if you have a coke, you will smile. Therefore, both giving and receiving a coke, causes a sign of happiness. The relationship between the two elevates Coke from a bottle of soda to a bottle of happiness, that is “happiness” understood as a cheery feeling rather than a good life. Still, this relationship is persuasive because happiness is the good that everyone cares about. People are much less likely to care about Coke for its own sake. If Coke is a means to something greater, then people will be willing to buy it. Attending to the cause-effect relationships at work allows viewers to be more discerning about the power of this ad and others like it. In this way, the topics of invention not only lead to deeper insight but also protect the viewer from manipulation. In the case of the Coke commercial, the viewer could identify the cause-effect relationship between a Coke and determine two things: 1) a Coke may not be a sufficient cause of a smile, and 2) a smile and a cheery feeling may not be enough for true happiness. The deliberative effect of this understanding could lower the expectations that a consumer has for the effect of giving and receiving a Coke, and a viewer may choose to search for true happiness someplace else.

### *Constructing with Relationship*

In the construction section of this chapter, I provide ways of practicing each of the sub-topics of relationship, and I rely heavily on Edward Corbett and Robert Connors’ presentation in *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* of the *progymnasmata*. The

progymnasmata is a teaching method of the classical rhetorical tradition that persevered in popularity from the fourth century B.C. through the Renaissance (Corbett 484). It consisted of a series of assignments that escalated in complexity (Corbett 484). One of the most famous sets of exercises was made in 400 A.D. by Aphthonius of Antioch.

Corbett recreates this list, and I have included it below:

1. *Fable*, or retelling of a folk tale
2. *Narrative*, either fiction or nonfiction.
3. *Chreia* or *Anecdote*, a story based on amplification of a famous statement or action.
4. *Proverb*, which asked students to amplify by arguing for or against some maxim or adage.
5. *Refutation*, which disproved the persuasive point of a narrative.
6. *Confirmation*, which proved the persuasive point of a narrative.
7. *Commonplace*, which amplified on the moral qualities of some virtue or vice, often as exemplified in some common phrase of advice.
8. *Encomium* or *Praise*, which expanded on the virtues of some person or thing.
9. *Invective*, which censured some evil person or thing.
10. *Comparison*, which compared two people or things and explored their comparative merits and shortcomings.
11. *Personification*, the characterization of some fictional person by the use of appropriate language.
12. *Description*, which created intense and graphic depictions of a subject.
13. *Argument*, which created and supported a thesis on some general question, such as, “Is town life superior to country life?”
14. *Legislation*, in which the student argued for or against the goodness of a law (Corbett 484-5).

The progymnasmata provides material for practicing good rhetoric in general, but it can also be used to practice particular topics of invention. To practice the topic of relationship, students could write a narrative and use a cause-effect relationship to accomplish their demonstrative goals. The other sub-topics of relationship—antecedent and consequence, contraries, and contradictions—could be practiced here as well. A form of narrative that Corbett proposes is “the beginning of an important friendship” (485). Where to start? A student could consider the causes of the friendship. The antecedents to



the friendship could also make interesting material for the story. What were both friends experiencing prior to their friendship? What happened after they became friends?

In an exercise of praise or blame, a student could examine the life of a saint, politician, or personal mentor. The topic of relationship could help provide material by prompting the student to see how that person caused certain things to happen. This approach could be applied to every exercise of the progymnasmata. Through practice, the student will be accustomed to looking to the topics of invention for inspiration as they tackle a rhetorical challenge. It is important for students both to be able to recognize the topic of relationship at work and how to recognize the need for one in their own arguments. The progymnasmata are a means of developing familiarity with the process of invention by providing the student with the rhetorical purpose and the particular format. The student can then use the topics of invention to create the material to accomplish the given rhetorical purpose.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to teach students how to understand and use the common topics of invention and in doing so, also to show to a scholarly audience the importance of such pedagogical work. I have shown how the three rhetorical purposes play an integral role in the understanding and use of the topics. Outside of classical education, modern approaches to the teaching of rhetoric are starkly different. There is strong opposition to the claim that all rhetoric has purpose. Moderns are inclined to say that there is a type of rhetoric that is neutral; it has no end in mind but rather simply is. The classical understanding emphasizes the inevitability of purpose. Persuasive activity will tend to have either a forensic, demonstrative, or deliberative end. I believe that moderns have such difficulty with this concept is because of a weakened understanding of purpose. They can only imagine purpose to mean deliberative purpose. If this were so, then I could not contest the modern complaint. But not all rhetoric is attempting to make its audience make a decision about the future. Nobody wants stories to be viewed as mere propaganda. Can we not just enjoy a good story and not worry about the author's agenda? I sympathize with this objection. However, a good story accomplishes good demonstrative goals by revealing truth, goodness, and beauty through narrative. A story can reveal character, show the nature of glory, make a claim about who God is. All of these things are demonstrative ends. These demonstrative purposes, though implicit and deeply embedded in the story, are important to recognize, for they shape all of the

arguments in their service. My readership may have been surprised that the classical rhetorical tradition turned to Homer as the exemplar of argument. Homer wrote stories, and people usually associate arguments with lawyers, scholars, or politicians. However, it was obvious to classical authors that storytellers made arguments just as much as other rhetoricians did though in a different way. All styles of rhetoric can accomplish all of the types of rhetorical purpose though they may be ordered differently by importance, for the rhetorical purposes can and often are nested within one another. While a lawyer's argument is meant to be analyzed quickly and easily, a storyteller's argument is meant to be inhabited. He develops a world that operates on a certain principle; the reader lives in that world and comes to know that principle through experience rather than cold analysis. Both the "inhabitation" and the analysis of arguments can lead to persuasion.

In addition to the teleology of rhetoric, I have endeavored to show how the topics of invention not only aid the student in writing and speaking but very significantly in reading. Students often struggle without the aid of their teachers to see beyond a surface level of meaning in rich texts. After their teacher reveals an insight to them, students often complain that they were incapable of discovering it on their own. Students may feel like they are not prepared to uncover the deeper meaning of a text. The topics of invention are lenses through which students can consider a text. They give students something to look for. After identifying a topic at use, they must then think about how that topic serves the rhetorical purpose of the text. Being able to identify the purpose of the text is also a gateway to important insight. When reading a text, students often brush over what they do not understand with the expectation that it will be made clear as they continue to read. However, in order to uncover the purpose of a text the student may have

to do a series of close readings and cross references. Students are told to read closely, but this instruction can be frustrating for the student when he or she does not know what to look for. The rhetorical purposes and the topics of invention are the hidden treasures which can be uncovered by close reading. Ideally, a student should be able to identify the purpose of every paragraph, sentence, and word. For a good writer even superfluous language is seemingly superfluous for some purpose, making it rhetorically essential. Everything should be included only because it is necessary to accomplish a given rhetorical goal. This strict economy of rhetoric does not exclude extravagant style. An extravagant style may be very necessary depending on the circumstances.

My thesis has modeled a process of learning, which I want to impart to students. In order to learn about the common topics of invention, I consulted a few of the great, ancient teachers of rhetoric: Aristotle, the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian. I studied their explanations, and then I turned to one of the greatest ancient rhetoricians to see it in action. Homer has been a model for the art of rhetoric since before the time of Aristotle, and his example has been lauded throughout the centuries. Therefore, any smart student of rhetoric would seek to study him, which is why the majority of my example section consisted of Homeric examples. As we analyzed Homer's use of the topics, our analysis not only increased our understanding of the topic at use but brought us to a real insight about the text. The topics were a gateway to greater understanding of the meaning behind Homer's *Odyssey*. I then sought to apply the knowledge that we gained from Homer to a modern example in pop culture, which brought the relevance of the topics to the forefront. In my examination of definition, comparison, and relationship, I addressed each in light of the three rhetorical purposes. In

doing so, I wanted to demonstrate to students that the purposes are an integral part of rhetoric. The topics will not help students to gain insight on their own. They must be analyzed in relation to a particular purpose. It is the space between topic (or tool of invention in general) and purpose where the deeper meaning is discovered. A good rhetorician can pack much between these lines, as we have seen. After studying the topics at use, I then proposed means of construction for students to try using them in their own writing.

I have already mentioned several very good modern presentations of classical rhetoric including Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors' *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* and Alyssan Barnes' *Rhetoric Alive!* Another textbook on the common topics of invention is *The Argument Builder* by Shelly Johnson, who does not include the rhetorical purposes in her discussion of invention at all. Both Corbett and Barnes introduce the tasks of the orator (invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery) before the rhetorical purposes, also known as the three kinds of persuasive discourse. As I noted in the introduction, Corbett and Barnes have chosen, for some reason, to alter the traditional arrangement, which is to present the purposes first and the topics of invention after. In Corbett's initial introduction of the classical rhetoric, the purposes are last (Corbett 23). Later, when he writes on the topics of invention with greater depth, he addresses the most of the common topics without reference to the purposes. After the common topics, he writes on the topics of invention that are particular to one rhetorical purpose (special topics). In doing so, Corbett is communicating that the rhetorical purposes are only relevant to the topics special to each purpose. The claim of my thesis, on the contrary, is that it is crucial to identify and understand the way that the rhetorical

purposes relate even to the common topics. My thesis, therefore, also disagrees with Barnes' arrangement, which addresses the purposes in the final section of her textbook (Barnes 238). She discusses invention without reference to the purposes. Given that the classical topical approach often presents difficulties for the modern student, I believe that reinstating an acute awareness of purpose will greatly help the learning of classical rhetoric. Means and end must be reunited in the mind of the modern rhetorician; this reunion has been the project of this thesis. It is relatively easy to see how an awareness of purpose makes rhetoric better, but how does it make the learning of rhetoric *easier* for students? While the rhetorical purposes may be a difficult concept for the student to grasp initially, once fully understood the purposes become a rule or standard that makes the subsequent tasks of the orator fall into place. When the rhetorician knows where he needs to go, he can identify which roads will get him there and which will not. The topics of invention are not intrinsically good. They are only good insofar as they help to accomplish the purpose of the orator. Additionally, the ability to identify the topics at use in literature is good because it helps the reader to better understand the meaning of a text.

Dante helps the Christian to understand the significance of classical rhetoric in Canto 24 of the *Purgatorio*. Describing himself as rhetorician, he says: "I'm one who takes the pen when Love breathes wisdom into me, and go finding the signs for what he speaks within" (*Purg.* Canto 24, lines 52-4). Humility is the virtue that allows Dante to submit himself to the inspiration of divine Love. His job is to cooperate with that inspiration. He must find, that is *invent* the signs that most honestly and accurately represent the goodness, truth, and beauty that God has revealed to him. The topics of

invention provide an abundance of material for those signs and thus help the rhetorician to do justice to the truth of his speech.

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