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REVOLUTIONS OF VIRTUES: REVISITING THE UNDERPINNINGS OF
RHETORICAL EDUCATION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design

by
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May 2021

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation concerns the prevalent disconnect between writing instruction and moral education in modern university settings. The project calls for integrating the progymnasmata as informed through Aristotelian virtue ethics to enable rhetorical flourishing. I examine the need for explicit ethical frameworks in writing instruction, evaluating multiple approaches and advocating virtue ethics. All fourteen exercises of the progymnasmata, according to the system popularized by Aphthonius of Antioch, will be detailed and updated for the contemporary classroom. Quintilian's pedagogical scholarship and practice will serve as a model for application. The specific virtues of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness will be promoted as central values of the rhetorical tradition uniquely suited for bridging the gap between composition training and ethical development.

DEDICATION

To *the* Logos.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am eternally grateful for all those who have taught me both inside and outside the classroom the past four years of this program. I would like to thank Dr. Kelly Smith and Dr. Brygg Ullmer for serving on my committee. I would like to thank Dr. Cynthia Haynes for keeping me inspired and motivated to tackle the ‘Q Question,’ for going above and beyond with support, and for serving on my committee as well. I would like to thank Dr. David Blakesley for serving as chair, always providing invaluable and brilliant guidance, and keeping me motivated to accomplish this task.

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CHAPTER ONE

BEGGING THE QUESTION: AN INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLINARY FISSURES

The most important and compelling academic articles are those that inspire further inquiry. That article for me is Richard Lanham's "Q Question," serving as the impetus for the entirety of this endeavor. The 'Q' refers to the ancient Roman orator Quintilian, whose famous description of rhetoric as "the good man speaking well" is founded on the premise that to be a good speaker, one must also be a good person (*Institutio Oratoria*, bk. 12, ch. 1, sec. 1). Lanham asserts that this premise has "underwritten, and plagued, Western humanism from first to last" since "no one has ever been able to prove that" the teaching of communication "does conduce to virtue more than to vice" (654). If persuaded by Lanham's depiction of the field(s), one is urged to grapple with the controversy of whether or not writing studies—and the entire humanities endeavor, for that matter—has been successful in shaping virtuous students.

Providing an adequate and universally agreed upon answer to this question is a burdensome task, even for the most ambitious of dissertations. Nevertheless, we can begin to respond to this call by peeling back the foundational layers of our pedagogical enterprises, dissecting and re-examining the guiding principles that have led us to where we are, as a field, discipline, and mode of instruction. While Quintilian will play an important role in this investigation, I have also treated Lanham's article as a playful heuristic with the pun 'Queue Question,' in the sense of it being an inquiry that has promoted a line of further questions in the queue. If Lanham is correct regarding the

current disconnect between teaching communication and developing virtue, how might we go about bridging these two aspects?

The seeds of our current disconnect have been planted by the competing standards of the Athenian versus the German approaches to teaching, and Gerard Hauser has offered an invaluable and focused overview of their differences spanning history. Building from David Kelsey's theoretical foundation, which takes an explicitly theological approach in *Between Athens and Berlin*, Hauser extends these insights to a wider and secular audience by applying this lens explicitly to rhetorical pedagogy. In "Teaching Rhetoric: Or Why Rhetoric Isn't Just Another Kind of Philosophy or Literary Criticism," he distinguishes the Athenian *paideia* in which "The teacher's efforts were focused on 'capacitating' the individual student to lead the life of an active and responsible citizen" from the now prevalent German model of *Wissenschaft* that emphasizes "orderly, disciplined critical research...and professional education" (40). The *Wissenschaft* model resulted in a shift from instructors as well as instruction being concerned with the students' "personal growth" to that of focusing solely on "discovering new knowledge" (40). He reiterates this distinction in his chapter from the collection *Rhetoric and Writing Studies in the New Century*, by articulating the *paideia* as being concerned with "the formation of young students by developing their capacity to function as responsible citizens" whereas the Berlin model "establishes a relationship of the student to knowledge and to the teacher based on an apprenticeship that is not focused on the student's personal growth but on the discovery of knowledge" (139). In essence, the

pedagogical imperative of the modern university has had a complete paradigm shift from that of its ancient forebears.

Despite this trend, these competing prioritizations do not need to be mutually exclusive. As Hauser posits, “The dilemma is not one of displacing Berlin within the framework of Berlin, but to restore Athenian values in a way that they can survive in Berlin” (140). Therefore, the next questions in the ‘queue’ for my research include: how might we remain true to the Athenian ideals within the modern university? In what ways might we have our cake and ‘teach’ it too, in the sense of making rhetoric palatable for research institutions while preserving the ancient ingredients that have been experimented with throughout the centuries to form thoughtful and virtuous students?

Ancient conceptions of rhetorical education can illuminate contemporary composition pedagogy. Two meta-critiques of that pedagogy form the foundation for the review and critique of writing studies in Chapter Two. These surveys demonstrate how the discipline of composition studies, from its modern inception, has remained in a state of constant dialogue regarding what it is exactly that it seeks to do and teach. In the 1982 article, “Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories,” James Berlin takes a rhetorical theory perspective to provide a meta-analysis on the evolution of composition studies by breaking up the four main approaches into 1. Neo-Aristotelians / Classicists, 2. Positivists / Current-Traditionalists, 3. Neo-Platonists / Expressionists, and 4. New Rhetoricians. He illustrates the ways in which “writer, reality, audience, and language,” according to each of these approaches, “have been defined and related so as to form a distinct world construct with distinct rules for discovering and communicating

knowledge”—particularly in terms of hermeneutics and epistemologies (766). In addition to illustrating the field’s incoherency through this meta-analysis, he articulates near the end of his study the underlying exigence: “In teaching writing, we are not simply offering training in a useful technical skill that is meant as a simple complement to the more important studies of other areas,” but rather “we are teaching a way of experiencing the world, a way of ordering and making sense of it” (776). Berlin’s analysis showcases that despite these pedagogical approaches being different in their implementations, a source of unity rests in the fact that instructors—whether they intend to or not—are playing a unique part in the formation of students’ worldviews.

Over twenty years later, Richard Fulkerson provides a similar diagnostic of grappling conceptions of instructors in “Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century,” and the incoherence of the field has continued, if not intensified. Pulling from Timothy Donovan and Ben McClelland’s *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition* as well as Gary Tate and Amy Rupiper’s *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* as the two collections serving as artifacts for his study, he designates the three prevailing schools of composition as 1. Critical / Cultural Studies, 2. Expressivism, and 3. Procedural Rhetoric—with the latter being broken up into the three smaller subgroups of A. Argumentation, B. Genre Analysis, and C. Preparation for Writing for the Academy. Similarly to Berlin, this all adds up to being emblematic of the continuing controversy over what the goal of teaching writing should be. According to Fulkerson, the “major divide” is most pronounced between “postmodern, cultural studies” approaches compared to those that incorporate “a broadly conceived rhetoric of genres and discourse forums”

(679). At the end of his meta-analysis, Fulkerson takes a somewhat polemical stance by contending that “even though we disagree among ourselves, those outside of English—including the public who pay tuition and taxes, the deans, presidents, and politicians who demand accountability, and the students themselves—in general hold a still different view of what we should be up to than we do” (680). This accountability is a very real concern that often gets lost in the more granular debates of composition theory. Building from that premise, and most important for my argument that is unfolding throughout this introduction, is his assertion that “if a university or a department is serious about seeing writing courses as constituting a ‘program’ or some portion of a larger scheme of ‘general education,’ some degree of commonality is likely to be required” (680). Without some degree of a unifying vision, this entire loosely defined organization of writing studies has built its enterprise on sand—a teetering citadel that can be knocked over and consumed by the next pedagogical approach that happens to be in vogue.

This project is not calling for a singular, totalizing approach to all writing studies, but rather is simply recognizing the usefulness of establishing a commonality among scholars and instructors who are *working toward* a unified vision. Put another way: there should always remain a rigorous inquiry into what we attempt to do within this field, with the major distinction that we’re building on one another’s approach dialectically to develop insights and practices that can be carried out and performed by those within the discipline, at large—as opposed to splitting hairs according to methods that are merely deconstructive for the sake of being deconstructive. What this might look like in an academic sense is articulated in John Dewey’s definition of *meliorism*:

The belief that the specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered. It encourages intelligence to study the positive means of good and the obstructions to their realization, and to put forth endeavor for the improvement of conditions.

(Reconstruction in Philosophy 170)

While this dissertation is not necessarily situating itself within the philosophical tradition of pragmatism, which Dewey is classified under, there will be a pragmatic undercurrent throughout, particularly in the sense of believing that the “comparatively good” aspects of writing studies may be “bettered.”

Paradoxically, inquiry is the necessary building block in this process of *working toward* a unified vision. In fact, the very act of questioning has been argued by many as being one of, if not *the*, defining features of the entire humanities tradition, going back to its inception. As Sitze et al. assert in “The Humanities in Question,” the term *humanities* “serves as a name for a set of inquiries characterized by [its] commitment to self-questioning and self-critique” (192). Moving from the genus of humanities toward the species of rhetoric, Dave Tell posits that “rhetoric itself remains unchanged, an engine of inquiry rather than a subject of inquiry” (“Critique and Investigation” 117). Tell’s pronouncement might be seen as slightly reductive in the sense of leaving out the necessary qualification that rhetoric is a theoretical discipline in its own right; however, his view highlights rhetoric’s capability for application across nearly any discipline, making its defining subject matter nearly limitless. Additionally, Steven Mailloux, applying what he deems as a “rhetorical hermeneutics,” contends that “any new

humanism” is built on “defending humanistic traditions by reinterpreting them in light of contemporary attacks” (*Rhetoric’s Pragmatism: Essays in Rhetorical Hermeneutics* 36). Therefore, instead of letting incessant inquiries serve as sources of paralysis, stifling any and all opportunity for cohesion, these aspects of the humanities tradition should be treated as strengths—functioning as guided inquiries within a method of checks and balances to further enhance this dynamic and evolving system.

To build from these principles and return to notions of accountability as well as unity in the modern university, there remains a need for some sense of a guiding principle for the sake of both students and instructors—particularly within the competing Athenian and German frameworks. The official ‘Outcomes Statement’ by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (hereafter referred to as the ‘WPA Outcomes’) is a useful precedent for what a unified approach looks like, one that builds from both groundings within the humanities tradition. As the document states (last updated in 2014), it is intended to “identif[y] outcomes for first-year composition programs in U.S. postsecondary education,” and “describes the writing knowledge, practices, and attitudes that undergraduate students develop” within this “required general education course or sequence of courses,” all of which are organized within the three subsections of ‘Rhetorical Knowledge,’ ‘Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing,’ and ‘Processes’ (CWPA Website). The PDF of the document is barely three pages, making it a succinct and accessible source for writing teachers along with administrators to reference when devising their syllabi and other course documents.

The WPA Outcomes display what is currently the most unified approach to writing studies, and exposing its shortcomings demonstrates why the field needs a more encompassing framework. On the positive end, as Kathleen Blake Yancey points out, “Through thinking about what it is that we want students *to know, to understand, and to do* at the conclusion of a course, a program, a major, we begin to articulate our expectations: or, *outcomes*” (21). It should be clarified that although this is a unified approach, it is not a ‘standard.’ The document makes this distinction explicit by stating that these outcomes are “types of results, and not ‘standards,’ or precise levels of achievement.” As Susanmarie Harrington mentions in the introduction of the collection *The Outcomes Book: Debate and Consensus after the WPA Outcomes Statement*, “For departments, programs, and individuals, the Outcomes Statement encourages engagement with fundamentals.” The current manifestation of the outcomes is a step *toward* a guiding framework, but a far cry from a fully fleshed-out pedagogy. As Maid and D’Angelo point out in “The WPA Outcomes, Information Literacy, and the Challenges of Outcomes-Based Curricular Design,” “although these outcomes work for a Program, individual courses and projects within that program must necessarily have more defined outcomes” (107).

To incorporate a unified aim that meets the needs of the contemporary university while remaining true to its humanistic roots, there needs to be a pedagogical approach to writing studies that is concerned with the guiding and implementation of composition skills along with the ‘formation’ of the student, in terms of character development, ethics, and mindfulness. What this would look like in practice—and what this entire dissertation

will be centered around—is the implementation of the progymnasmata along with virtue ethics within the writing classroom, focusing on the development of the specific virtues of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness as a means for attaining ‘rhetorical eudaimonia’.

The progymnasmata is a series of fourteen composition exercises utilized by Quintilian in his teaching and detailed throughout his seminal work *Institutio Oratoria*. These scaffolded exercises served as a bridge between the stages of grammar and declamation whereby students built from their elementary lessons and moved toward preparation for their professional careers, grounded in writing and speaking competencies. One could not successfully engage in political life without a proper grounding in oration, making the progymnasmata a crucial building block in the formation of future citizens. Embedded within the rigorous practice in writing, reading, and speaking, students were required to actively consider whether or not the writers and speakers whose materials they were assigned to read and sometimes emulate demonstrated virtues or vices. In turn, students were encouraged to decipher what virtuous traits and ideals should be promoted, and through the process of completing all fourteen exercises, each with a variety of requirements on a practical and theoretical level, students would begin embodying these principles—a process known as habituation.

While there are multiple variations of the progymnasmata, the system most closely aligned with Quintilian’s instruction is from Aphthonius, whose translations came to be established as the canonical versions up through the medieval period. Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to the system within the last century on both

a scholarly and pedagogical level. Renewing this framework will greatly benefit students and instructors alike by offering a guided approach to composition with exercises promoting practical and ethical readiness; one that is open enough to allow everyone involved enough latitude and encouragement to explore, develop, and fine tune their own values.

Through analyzing Quintilian's pedagogy and his personal life, the three virtues of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness are uncovered. These virtues further connect his work with Aristotle's ethical theory and provide cohesion to an otherwise disjointed discipline by returning the field to its Athenian roots. Adaptability focuses on how an individual and her work might be best suited for a variety of situations—or rather, how to make the best use of the available means of persuasion. Experimentation emphasizes play and exploration as students test out different approaches while deciphering which paths are best suited for particular situations. Mindfulness promotes practical wisdom (*phronesis*) as they learn from their instructions, assignments, and experiences not only what paths and approaches are most beneficial, but also how to know when they are making successful and virtuous choices. In other words, there are only so many possibilities within the timespan of their education that students can be presented with before they enter their public life. Sooner or later, they will face choices that haven't been covered in examples for imitation and will have to practice mindfulness when making decisions while incorporating their rhetorical training. This ability to continuously prosper in a variety of situations will help students reach and maintain eudaimonia ('flourishing') throughout their lives.

Although the progymnasmata will serve as the concrete framework by which the writing exercises will take place, and virtue ethics will serve as the ethical and theoretical grounding, these are not always clearly delineated endeavors; after all, it wouldn't be a very fluid pedagogical approach if that were the case. It is the overlap between the two that provides its true value. Rather than viewing the progymnasmata as ushering in the 'skills' and virtue ethics as 'forming' the student, both of these aspects will interconnect and serve to inform one another. As will be discussed in the pedagogy chapter, instead of constantly distinguishing between skill and character as separate enterprises in the curriculum, a term that better illustrates this overlap is that of 'craft,' being a practice the student is partaking in that both shapes her writing as well as herself in the process.

Chapter two will explore what others have said about ethics in relation to rhetoric and composition and why the conversation between these disciplines is not merely an academic exercise but emblematic of the exigence of writing studies' need for a more defined approach to pedagogy as a means of returning to the humanistic tradition—or, more precisely, making space for an Athenian approach within the modern university. The term *ethics*, itself, remains a floating signifier within the field of writing studies. There is rarely a clearly defined school of ethics, or, at the very least, even a mentioning of what ethical tradition(s) the instructor is pulling from when incorporating 'ethics' within one's instruction and practice. Unfortunately, this makes the usage of 'ethics' in relation to writing studies scholarship and pedagogy a concept that is readily available to be manipulated and arbitrarily employed at the discretion of whomever happens to be utilizing it. Rhetoric has a unique ability to put differing ethical approaches in

conversation with one another in the writing classroom; however, it becomes important, and far more productive, for these traditions to be explicitly referenced. If left without a clear sense of what ethical tradition(s) students and instructors are pulling from when making, writing about, and justifying ethical decisions, the term *ethics* becomes meaningless and ends up functioning as a euphemism for arbitrary rationalizations.

After providing an overview of major ethical schools—including consequentialism, deontology, and emotivism—I will explain why virtue ethics is best suited for the unique needs of a writing studies classroom. The concept of virtue ethics will be traced back to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and placed in conversation with existing scholarship on that particular school. Additionally, as expanded on throughout the dissertation, it will be important to help clarify what 'virtue' means according to the Aristotelian tradition in relation to eudaimonia. With an overview of competing notions of virtue(s), the term's meaning has grown wildly different from its inception, which my approach seeks to correct.

Additional attention will be given to the preliminary work that has been done on virtue ethics within writing studies recently, demonstrating a growing interest and need for it within the field. Currently, there exists just enough grounding to build from in order for the real work to commence—being the establishing of further guidance and frameworks, which will also distinguish my own approach.

Chapter three will bring the argument to the surface by detailing how the progymnasmata is the ideal framework for bridging the gap between character development and communication prowess within writing studies. Quintilian will function

as a model instructor and practitioner of rhetoric, who anticipated the tectonic shifts beginning to move, creating a chasm between concerns with the formations of students' character to that of knowledge dissemination, and he explicitly sought to close the distance. As the previously mentioned 'Q Question' article mentions, we still have yet to 'answer' this controversy of whether or not rhetorical teaching leads to virtue rather than to vice; therefore, it naturally follows that we should return to the writings of, and about, Quintilian for insights to build from. While Quintilian's teaching will serve as a guide by emblematically detailing a rhetorical practice that incorporates both the person and the teachings in a very Athenian tradition, he is far from *the* answer to, ironically, the very question that Lanham posits him as presenting. Rather, Quintilian's teaching and practice will function as a catalyst from which to incorporate further inquiries in our continued pursuits toward fostering both communication capacities alongside virtues.

All fourteen exercises will be expounded upon with details relating to their functional and theoretical implications. While chapter four will be the most explicit in application of this system, chapter three will help to set the theoretical stage for why such a system would be useful within the contemporary composition classroom—particularly within the nearly universal requirement of 'First-Year Composition' in American universities.

Remaining true to the Aristotelian foundation, this chapter will also help to clarify how the progymnasmata can foster virtues. The specific virtues my project seeks to promote within the writing classroom are those of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness, which together will lead toward a rhetorical eudaimonia. It will be

demonstrated how these virtues are called upon and strengthened throughout the exercises of the progymnasmata, and justifications will be provided for why these particular traits should be considered virtues within the rhetorical tradition.

Chapter four will serve as the ‘pedagogy chapter’ by describing in detail how the progymnasmata could be applied in the composition classroom in conjunction with virtue ethics. Notably, composition will be viewed as a ‘craft,’ being capacities that are shaped by the student and, in turn, shape the student throughout the process. There will be descriptions of how these exercises can be completed through traditional modes (strictly alphabetic text [e.g., conventional writing prompts]) as well as by way of digital technologies—such as visual, audio, video, text, etc. and any and all combinations thereof.

In regards to how this will shape and contribute to rhetoric and composition pedagogies within the field, little has been done with inclusion of the progymnasmata. Even less so have all fourteen exercises been assigned in full, linear order—with the few notable examples of scholarship even referencing the system being the mere inclusion of a select handful of exercises, void of any ethical school informing the theoretical foundation. As will be evidenced throughout the chapter, the inclusion of *all* fourteen exercises through both traditional and digital technology is paramount in terms of moving students toward a rhetorical eudaimonia.

Chapter five will be a call for further contributions within the field in regard to both virtue ethics and the progymnasmata. The ‘Q Question’ will be revisited in light of my input, as a reminder for the reader of the exigence for serious scholarly engagement in

terms of how ethics are considered and applied within the writing classroom. As such, incorporating classical rhetoric should not be seen as merely an intellectual exercise or a flashy ‘additive’ to modern writing, but it should be approached head-on as the foundational apparatus that continues to inform current classroom practices. My humble offering certainly doesn’t have to be *the* shared vision, but it provides a framework for *a* shared vision.

CHAPTER TWO

SURVEYING VIRTUE: A DEFENSE OF ETHICS IN COMPOSITION

Rhetoric and Reason

Rhetoric certainly has no shortage of definitions, ranging from the precise to open-ended, but for the sake of providing a grounding and stasis, it is important to refer to Aristotle's definition in his *Rhetoric* as the ultimate foundation: "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (bk.1, ch. 2, sec. 1356a). This term *rhetoric* is a force that can be both used and analyzed. Depending on the "given case," there will be particular communicative moves that will be more persuasive than others, and one must be mindful of those that are "available." The context, audience, and speaker will inevitably influence which of these moves will be more successful (Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation"). To study rhetoric is therefore to become versed in its application from the role of participant and observant.

Leading up to this definition, Aristotle warns us:

It is absurd to hold that [humans] ought to be ashamed of being unable to defend [themselves] with [their] limbs, but not of being unable to defend [themselves] with speech and reason, when the use of rational speech is more distinctive of a human being than the use of [their] limbs. And if it be objected that one who uses such power of speech unjustly might do great harm, that is a charge which may be made in common against all good things except virtue, and above all against the things that are most useful, as strength, health, wealth, generalship. A [person]

can confer the greatest of benefits by a right use of these, and inflict the greatest of injuries by using them wrongly. (*Rhetoric*, bk. 1, ch. 1, sec. 1355b)

Speech and reason are the qualities that make *Homo sapiens* distinct from all other species (or, at least, *distinctive* as a particular species), and humans use rhetorical methods that have tremendous power for either positive or negative ends. “Man is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal,” Kenneth Burke maintains, “separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order), and rotten with perfection” (*Language as Symbolic Action* 16). This “classical ratiocentrism,” as Kelly Smith points out, “[is] the view that the possession of reason is the primary means by which we differentiate entities having moral value in and of themselves from those having moral value merely by virtue of the uses to which they can be put” (“Manifest Complexity” 209). Additionally, in reference to the second half of Aristotle’s quote dealing with the repercussions, the post-structuralist critic Jacques Derrida, in “Plato’s Pharmacy,” references *pharmakon*—described as “the drug: the medicine and/or poison”—from Plato’s *Phaedrus* to illustrate how language might be used for good or evil; once language enters any situation, “This charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination, can be—alternately or simultaneously—beneficent or maleficent” (70). Through this lens, one would be subscribing to Lanham’s “weak defense,” which “argues that there are two kinds of rhetoric, good and bad. The good kind is used in good causes; the bad kind in bad...This was Plato’s solution, and Isocrates’, and it has been enthusiastically embraced by humanists ever since” (155).

A Fabricated Separation

This emphasis on the ethical repercussions of language are simultaneously deeply embedded yet ignored, debauched, or entirely forgotten in contemporary composition. “Ethical or moral concerns are not new to the teaching of rhetoric, writing, and literature” as James N. Comas attests in *Between Politics and Ethics: Toward a Vocative History of English Studies*. After all, “the etymology of *pedagogy* shows that the perceived need for moral guidance (a need historically inseparable from the interests of the state) is central to the Western tradition of public education, beginning with the ancient Greek ideal of *aretê* (traditionally but inadequately translated as ‘virtue’)” (75). Comas reminds educators that “our modern word for the art of teaching is rooted not in the idea of conveying knowledge or skills but in the concept of moral training, an idea at the core of Socrates’ critique of the political ramifications of the sophistic *paideia*” (75). This *paideia*, according to Plato’s conception, is “the soul’s life-long struggle to free itself from ignorance of the greatest goods, which bars its way to its true welfare” (Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture. Vol. II*, 153). The *paideia* is a vehicle toward *areté*, “the perfection of his character, in accordance with his nature...Areté is the soul’s health; so it is man’s normal state, his true nature” (133-134).

Despite the humanities’ insistence on preserving a focus on morality across specific disciplines, it has splintered drastically away from the Platonic *paideia*. According to Lanham, the specialized *departures* of separate departments throughout the academic institutions are responsible for the separation between intellectual pursuits and character development. He explains: “The rhetorical *paideia*, as Quintilian described it,

existed to hold rhetoric and philosophy together. Ramus rips them apart. He thus makes possible a kind of secularity in education which, for all the Platonic objections to it, the rhetorical *paideia* never permitted” (657). Lanham views Ramus’ *Arguments in Rhetoric Against Quintilian* as having an irreversible influence on contemporary educational systems by “dividing the seamless web of learning into self-standing and self-sealing divisions, divisions which later became academic *disciplines*” (657). It’s no wonder that ‘ethics’ has become a separate entity that pedagogues choose whether or not to consciously include within their composition classes since the otherwise natural overlap of communication and morality has been separated throughout the centuries.

Ethics Is ‘Critical’

Since nearly every contemporary composition class places a value on critical inquiry (whether that be critical *reading*, critical *analysis*, etc.) embedded within writing instruction, Teresa Henning views the inclusion of ethics within composition classrooms as a bridge between these separated camps. According to Henning, “Put simply, ethical inquiry is one type of inquiry required to think critically” by contending that ethical thinking requires a dynamic process of flexibility and invention (34). She cites the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC&U) definition of critical thinking: “a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion” (34). Henning demonstrates that to write well requires critical engagement with the material at hand throughout the entire composing process. In the same way that ethics requires one to weigh a variety of approaches and decisions in the name of morality,

writing depends on making particular decisions among a nearly infinite list of options. In essence, both ethics and writing require making decisions. This axiom helps to narrow the gap between ethics and composition; however, the action of making decisions as a precept could be applied to an assortment of other areas and leaves the matter exceedingly vague in terms of application and guidance.

John Duffy has been instrumental in connecting the inherent action of decision-making in writing classes with that of the need for exploring and referencing ethical traditions in the discipline of composition studies. As he asserts in “The Good Writer: Virtue Ethics and the Teaching of Writing”: “To write is to make choices, and to teach writing is to teach rationales for making such choices” (229). In the same manner that the student is required to make judgments when writing, the instructor is given a tremendous amount of responsibility for providing an environment that fosters and encourages ethical judgments. Kathleen Welch clarifies in “Ethics, Rhetorical Action, and a Neoliberal Arts” that “All writing practices, including writing pedagogy, involve the transmission of value systems. All writing practices are embedded in ideology. For these and other reasons, even skills and drills writing practices and pedagogy derive from and in turn promote value systems, or ethics” (137). Heidi McKee and James E. Porter point out, “As rhetoric/composition teachers, scholars, and researchers, we have much to contribute to discussions of ethical approaches” (712-713) by asking “What does rhetoric have to do with ethics, the art of moral reasoning?” For McKee and Porter, “The art of rhetoric provides a procedural mechanism—an inventional approach or inquiry strategy for making ethical decisions” (“The Ethics of Digital Writing” 720). Duffy illustrates how

this process is inescapable by adding, “We are always already engaged in the teaching of rhetorical ethics and that the teaching of writing necessarily and inevitably moves us into ethical reflections and decision-making” (“Good Writer” 230).

Reinscribing Ethics

One can pretend that ethics and writing are in separate camps; however, this is merely avoiding the issue, and by avoiding it altogether, writing studies remains perpetually fragmented, often unintentionally manifesting in a directionless relativism. In “Ethical Dispositions: A Discourse for Rhetoric and Composition,” Duffy illustrates that this evasion is “symptomatic of a greater disciplinary problem: our failure to explain to the general public, to colleagues in other disciplines, to our students, and perhaps even to ourselves what we do, why our work matters, and what is at stake in the teaching of writing” (212). In his book-length exploration, *Provocations of Virtue: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Teaching of Writing*, he demonstrates how this positionality has resulted in “a postmodern ethos” that is “primarily one of fragmentation, irony, positionality, and contingency” (Chapter 2). In a similar vein, Jonathan Doner defines the postmodern mindset as being composed of “relativism, plurality, and secularity,” suggesting that although these are “nonetheless critical characteristics of the growth of a free, democratic, harmoniously functioning, global society,” they have transgressed to a point in which “our post-modern world seems to render [these traits] virtually meaningless” (“Rebirth of Paideia” 721-722). While there is nothing inherently unethical about contingency itself, Duffy and Doner emphasize how the postmodern mindsight might lend itself to a lack of ethical scrutiny that might otherwise be applied through other

ethical traditions; or, at the very least, urge instructors to place multiple ethical traditions in conversation with the postmodern approach as opposed to automatically treating it as the only option—that is to say, urging pluralism to be a bit more pluralistic. Furthermore, Duffy advises that in order to preserve the “democratic commitments and conceptions of civic good” that have been “undermined by a corrosive, post-truth, market-driven public discourse that disdains evidence and fact-based argument generally” it becomes paramount to “provide students with another kind of ethics and another language for deliberating over ethical choice” (Chapter 2).

Writing instructors should repair the divisions between rhetoric and ethics—as opposed to further widening them. As Covino and Jolliffe point out, “rhetoric is not a content area that contains a definite body of knowledge, like physics; instead, rhetoric might be understood as the study and practice of shaping content” (*Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, Boundaries* 4). Thomas Sloane echoes this meta characteristic of rhetoric by asserting that the discipline “has come to be understood less as a body of theory or as certain types of artificial techniques and more as an integral component of all human discourse,” and even though “rhetoric is to be found in every use of language, only Westerners have attempted to divide its precepts discretely from the great body of ethical, moral, or religious precepts that condition the very nature of a culture” (808). This reverberates with Lanham’s explication of the Ramus split and shows the utter irony of those trying to sequester a discipline that is inherently transdisciplinary. Cynthia Haynes also points out this estrangement by clarifying that rhetoric “has evolved only insofar as it shifted its role in the conflict with philosophy. But above the fray it is not, and in the fray

is where it has survived” (“Postconflict Pedagogy” 148). As such, writing scholars and pedagogues should lean into this generative fissure.

Hiding in Plain Sight

In *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, Richard Weaver has been instrumental in demonstrating how the gap between ethics and rhetoric doesn’t actually exist. In fact, as opposed to applying ethics *to* rhetoric, Weaver makes a compelling case that rhetoric is always already inherently ethical since language can never be entirely neutral.

“Semantically purified speech,” meaning “the kind of speech approaching pure notation” is unattainable since the selection of certain words over others and their arrangement are decided by, and reflective of, the speaker’s motivation (7). Obvious examples of this include adjectives and other qualifiers intended to alter the audience’s evaluation of the subject matter. More surreptitiously, even the writer’s decision to format a sentence as a dependent clause followed by an independent clause in a complex sentence suggests a hierarchical relationship between the two subjects as opposed to a compound sentence that would indicate equivalence (121-127).

Weaver also bridges the divide between rhetoric and philosophy by suggesting that “there is no honest rhetoric without a preceding dialectic” (25). As such, instead of arguing from circumstance, Weaver believes rhetoricians should always argue from definition, which “includes all arguments from the nature of the thing. Whether the genus is an already recognized convention, or whether it is defined at the moment by the orator, or whether it is left to be inferred from the aggregate of its species, the argument has a single postulate. The postulate is that there exist classes which are determinate and

therefore predicable” (86). This genus to species dialectical system lends itself to a focus on defining principles as opposed to remaining contingent upon ever-changing arguments from circumstance that are “grounded in the nature of a situation rather than in the nature of things” (83). Therefore, this process of “honest rhetoric,” as Weaver details, could be applied to the search for a solid foundation that logically progresses when applying ethics to composition.

What Ethics Is (and Is Not)

Since, unfortunately, the gap between ethics and rhetoric continues to exist, in terms of locating scholarship most rigorously applied to the study of ethics, one would need to venture to the discipline of philosophy for clarity. In *An Introduction to Ethics*, John Deigh defines the matter as follows:

Ethics is the philosophical study of morality. It is a study of what are good and bad ends to pursue in life and what it is right and wrong to do in the conduct of life. It is therefore, above all, a practical discipline. Its primary aim is to determine how one ought to live and what actions one ought to do in the conduct of one’s life. (7)

If the subject matter of ethics deals with notions of morality, then morality must be clearly outlined—especially since the two terms are often used interchangeably.

According to Deigh, there are two distinct notions of morality: ethical and conventional. The ethical is a conception of morality as a “universal ideal grounded in reason,” whereas the conventional, being a view of morality as merely an “existing institution of a

particular society,” would be relegated to “anthropology and sociology” and elsewhere; hence, morality becomes an ethical enterprise when it is rooted in reason (8).

However, these conceptions of ethics are not always clearly delineated, with philosophers often using such terms to signify differing, sometimes competing, treatments of morality. For instance, George Matthews places ethical study within three containers according to their moral conceptions: descriptive, normative, and meta-ethical. The descriptive approach would resemble Deigh’s view of ‘conventional morality’ in the sense that it is “concerned with describing and explaining the workings of moral deliberation as it actually takes place in the minds of real people” (*Introduction to Philosophy: Ethics 2*). The ‘ethicist’ in such a camp would be taking a purely observant role by studying differing conceptions of ethics, without necessarily placing a value judgement or emphasis on a particular set of morals. Conversely, the normative approach would “examine various philosophical arguments as to why some particular approach to ethics should in fact be the one we accept as opposed to its theoretical rivals” and then prescribes a particular ethical approach and set of morals building from “rational ethical deliberation” (2). The meta-ethical approach is an amalgamation of both descriptive and normative because “it addresses the place of ethics in our larger mental lives” and “also as a way of addressing concerns that seem to get in the way of the normative approaches” (2).

Relativism & Doxa

Paul Rezkella’s breakdown of relativism provides an additional layer of understanding by taking the distinction between descriptive and normative ethics to a

more granular level with his overview of moral realism, moral anti-realism, and normative relativism. Moral realists assert there are “mind-independent facts about ethics that are true and binding even if we have beliefs to the contrary” (“On Moral Relativism and Subjectivism” 6-7). According to the view, objective morals exist regardless of an individual or culture’s perception. The “moral anti-realist,” as the name suggests, takes the exact opposite view with the belief that “there are no mind-independent facts about morality; morality can be constructed or is merely relative to culture.” Taking this disagreement one step further are the normative relativists who believe that not only is there “no objective, independent standpoint from which to evaluate ethical codes,” but as a result of this view, “no culture can justifiably say that its morality is objectively superior” (8). For instance, when it comes to the topic of veganism, a moral realist would take the stance that there exists an objective morality in terms of whether or not people should consume animal products—or, possibly, *when* it would be okay to do so; a moral anti-realist would suggest that it’s up to a culture to construct their own decisions relating to the consumption of animal products; and a normative relativist would believe that since some cultures and individuals consume animal products and others do not—or only do so in particular situations—then no individual or culture should decide and/or suggest what others should do in terms of consuming animal products. It’s important to note that *normative* relativism is distinct from other forms of relativism in that it takes the extra *normative* step. Building from a view that all standards are contingent upon their particular moral frameworks, a normative relativist would then place a singular value

judgement toward all ethical matters—with the judgement being that all standards of morality are therefore inherently equal.

Rezkella astutely points out the embedded contradiction in normative relativism, which will be important to keep in mind when it comes to how rhetoric should handle ethics. As Rezkella illustrates, “relativists deny moral objectivity” by suggesting “the implausibility of the existence of universal values and moral facts that we can come to know,” which, again, is rooted in the perception that since different cultures have different values, all morality must be entirely subjective. Rezkella clarifies, “if the normative relativist believes that no culture should criticize the morality of another culture (and that this principle holds true for all cultures), then this is exactly the kind of universal moral fact that the relativist denies” (8). So, in terms of veganism, if the normative relativist believes that since some cultures consume animal products while others do not (or only in particular situations), all approaches to the consumption of animal products are equal; therefore, no individual or culture should dictate whether or not others should consume animal products. The contradiction is, of course, rooted in the fact that by asserting no individual or culture has the right to dictate what others should do, that assertion privileges a morality of its own. In other words, one cannot claim that all morality is equal while also dictating that normative relativism should be the ultimate morality.

Rhetoric’s conception of doxa sheds light on how the discipline’s view of socially constructed values might easily lend itself to a widespread form of relativism. Doxa, which comes from ancient Greece, is defined as “the received idea, the prejudice, the

cultural commonplace” (Brooks and Schor 434). Roland Barthes characterizes the term as “Public Opinion, the mind of the majority, petit bourgeois Consensus, the Voice of Nature, the Violence of Prejudice...any way of speaking adapted to appearance, to opinion, or to practice” (*Barthes on Barthes* 47). Sharon Crowley, in *Toward A Civil Discourse*, acknowledges that “rhetorical arguments circulate within *doxa*” as a result of being “thrown up by the circumstances of communal life” (47). Judy Holiday views *doxa* as subscribing to both “a postmodern view of knowledge” and “ancient rhetorical theory” since it “firmly situates rhetoric in the realm of the social” through its ability to “generate social norms through language and practice” (390-391). While *doxa* demonstrates the process of how values are often shaped by the collective, which would be classified as ‘conventional morality’ according to Deigh’s taxonomy, it is a far cry from offering any type of rigorous ethical study.

To acknowledge the communal aspect of rhetoric’s ability to shape public opinion does *not* mean that one must subscribe to the view that all knowledge and, as a result, morality is merely a relativistic social construct, entirely contingent upon a culture’s value systems at a particular historical period. W.K. Clifford’s *The Ethics of Belief* details how one can recognize beliefs’ profound impact on shaping morality while retaining the option of pursuing a normative ethical system. In fact, he views this ability as a “universal duty of questioning all that we believe” because “every time we let ourselves believe for unworthy reasons, we weaken our powers of self-control, of doubting, of judicially and fairly weighing evidence,” and “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence” (74-75, 77). Just because groups

of people tend to collaboratively shape values, does not mean those values are morally sound. Furthermore, contending values across differing cultures does not suggest that all morality is equal. One does not have to look far to see examples of immoral institutional values (or ‘doxas’) existing in some cultures but not others—or even within the same country. The U.S. Civil War over slavery serves as a prime example of competing moralities. After all, as Rezkella posits, “Why should we assume that if morality is objective people will not disagree?” Clifford reiterates, “The danger to society is not merely that it should believe wrong things, though that is great enough; but that it should become credulous, and lose the habit of testing things and inquiring into them” (76). Again, what makes morality an ethical concern is when values—or, in this case, beliefs—are analyzed through rational inquiry.

A Menu of Ethical Approaches

Once a composition instructor becomes aware of ethics as an integral component to rhetoric, she must then decide what ethical school/tradition she will be pulling from. Whether the instructor chooses to *explicitly* reference ethics in her classroom or not, it still becomes important for her to be aware of what tradition she is pulling from. In the same way composition instructors expect their students to look inward to engage with and develop their own value systems and modes of analysis, pedagogues that skip over applying this process to themselves will have a trickle-down system of naive examination. Sitze et al. detail the threat this poses to instructors and their students: “To defend the practices of self-critique and self-questioning without also practicing either self-critique or self-questioning in one’s defense” results in an “internal threat that is just

as serious as any of the very real ‘external’ dangers that today conspire against the idea of a future for the humanities” (“The Humanities in Question” 192).

The four prevalent schools of ethics an instructor would be most poised to pull from are deontology, consequentialism, emotivism, and virtue ethics. The etymology of deontology comes from the Greek “duty”—standing in contrast to *telos*, translated from Greek as “end” or “purpose” (Deigh 14). For instance, in the case of honesty, a deontological view would argue for or against the act of lying on universal grounds by analyzing whether or not an individual has a *duty* to be honest, regardless of the situation and/or their personal motivations. Conversely, a teleological approach would view honesty through a more individualistic lens by which the morality of lying would be analyzed according to the situation at hand and/or an individual’s *purpose* for doing so. These terms closely align with the concepts of intrinsic value compared to instrumental value. According to a deontological view, honesty would have an intrinsic value, whereas the teleological approach would focus on the instrumental aspect of honesty as a *means* to some end. Kelly Smith iterates this distinction with his defense of humanity’s value as being rooted in its ability to reason and asserts from a deontological viewpoint: “reason is said to afford an entity moral value in and of itself (intrinsically) as opposed to in virtue of the uses to which it can be put (instrumentally)” (210).

When deontology does happen to be referenced in composition studies, seldomly, scholars usually depict the tradition as promoting strict obedience to established decrees. Jared S. Colton and Steve Holmes, in *Rhetoric, Technology, and the Virtues*, expound, “A deontological approach to ethics measures ethical behavior by how closely one

adheres to a given ethical rule” (25). Duffy posits that all ethics can fit within the “two preeminent moral theories in Western moral philosophy, “the so-called “‘Big Two’—deontology, the ethics of rules and obligations, and consequentialism, the ethics of outcomes and results” (“The Good Writer” 230). When depicted as nothing more than the adherence to rules, it’s no wonder that a purely deontological approach hasn’t taken root in composition classes, considering such spaces tend to avoid universalisms—or, at least, attempt to avoid explicitly promoting them; however, these definitions don’t fully depict the intricacies of deontology.

Duffy provides a more nuanced representation in *Provocations* by incorporating Immanuel Kant, “the most famous proponent of deontological ethics,” and spelling out:

Since we are incapable of understanding transcendent reality to which we have no access, Kant argued, the source of our moral principles must come within ourselves, from our status as rational agents possessed of free will. These principles of reason, once we have established them, are binding and absolute on all people in all circumstances. Kant called such principles “categorical imperatives,” which represent the supreme principles of morality. (Chapter 2)

Any strict adherence to established universals are often viewed in contemporary writing classrooms as a result of naiveté or ignorance, but deontological ethics complicates this assumption considering that the categorical imperatives are products of rigorous philosophical reasoning.

A deontological approach would be difficult, but not impossible, to impose on a composition classroom. The notion of promoting universal values that all students should

subscribe to would be challenging to defend to one's colleagues and might be seen as even biased or fanatical if one's entire department is not also in complete unanimous agreement regarding the universal values one is attempting to uphold and bestow to her students. An instructor working within the structures of an English department will soon realize that lively competing theories of morality are the norm, and the assumption that faculty might uncover universal values, reach ultimate concession, and encourage one another to uphold these in their classrooms is a difficult assumption to make.

Consequentialism is often brought up alongside deontology for contrast. At its core, consequentialism is concerned with *what will result from* a particular action. Moral value is derived from the impacts of decisions, unlike a Kantian view of a priori, transcendent values that are uncovered. Considering this emphasis on outcomes, utilitarianism has become the most prominent subfield within this approach, and Deigh explicates it as:

Utilitarianism, like egoism and eudaimonism, is a teleological theory. The prescriptions it grounds are judgments of what one ought to do in the sense of what one would be well-advised to do in view of one's ends and interests. The end in view of which utilitarianism grounds the prescriptions of ethics is the general good, understood either as the good of humankind or, more comprehensively, the good of all animals capable of experiences with which human beings can sympathize. (94)

This ‘utility principle’ was made prominent by Jeremy Bentham in which whatever brings about the least pain, most goodness, and justice for the largest amount of people in any given population becomes the source of moral value (*A Fragment on Government*).

While an instructor should certainly remain mindful of the utility of her writing classroom, a purely consequentialist point of view may result in too much emphasis on the collective and not enough attention on the individual student. At worst, a type of groupthink might arise in which students begin to anticipate what will be most palatable to the wants of the classroom before sharing their voices in discussions and/or writing honestly for assignments. Obviously, a degree of utility should always remain present, particularly in terms of making sure that incendiary, racist, misogynistic, sexist, xenophobic, and other intentionally harmful and problematic messages have no place within the classroom. Paradoxically, though, too much emphasis on the comfort and well-being of the majority might result in marginalized voices being pushed to the periphery.

Emotivism also plays a prominent role when navigating through prevalent ethical traditions. In reference to Alfred Jules Ayer, emotivism is the viewpoint in which:

Moral judgments are neither logical truths nor statements of fact. They are, instead, merely emotional expressions of one’s approval or disapproval of some action or person. As expressions of approval or disapproval, they can be neither true nor false, any more than a tone of reverence (indicating approval) or a tone of abhorrence (indicating disapproval) can be true or false. (*The History of Western Ethics* 111)

What some might view as a thoughtful response to positivism, others would perceive as pure subjectivism, and a fair depiction of emotivism rests somewhere in between. Values arise from individuals' predispositions, ones that might be out of their conscious control.

A composition classroom ceases to be an academic space when personal preference becomes the ultimate mediator and source of value. For instance, from a rigid emotivist stance, any student that has a preference for writing and/or speaking a certain way should be valued equally with any other. While this might sound encouraging on the surface, the devil is truly in the details and its enactment. Such a view of preference being the ultimate guiding principle opens the door to harm—whether physical or emotional—toward others if the perpetrator just happens to have a preference for acting in a harmful fashion. After all, if student A feels like screaming obscenities at student B during a class discussion, an instructor ardently subscribing emotivism wouldn't be able to 'ethically' defend why it is that student A shouldn't be able to do so. Even though it is an extreme example, it sheds light on the implications for what emotivism entails when put into practice. Alasdair MacIntyre has also pointed out that emotivism, when taken to the extreme, ends up making any and all distinctions between psychological motivation and rationality "illusory," suggesting that there is no difference between "manipulative and non-manipulative social relations" if one doesn't have the ability to influence their own decision-making (23-24).

Obviously, a student's subjectivity should always be valued. After all, emotivism is a compelling approach precisely because it rightfully challenges those claiming that humans are purely rational creatures with the ability to shut off emotions and personal

preferences entirely for the sake of intellectual pursuits. The debate rambles on as to where exact the line is between conscious decision-making and subconscious reflexes, and the irony is particularly paramount in impassioned discussions regarding the dangers of emotivism. Additionally, students should be encouraged by instructors to be mindful of their subjectivities and positionalities—not merely in the hopes of squelching these human traits but rather to use them as momentum alongside their reasoning.

Virtue Ethics εισαγωγή (Introduction)

Virtue ethics is often defined in *contrast* to the prevalent schools of ethics, which should be expected within academic discourse, but it could also be just as accurate to view the tradition as one that *combines* many existing elements from other approaches. Rosalind Hursthouse provides the following overview of virtue ethics as one that is:

'Agent-centred' rather than 'act-centred'; (2.) as concerned with Being rather than Doing; (3) as addressing itself to the question, 'What sort of person should I be?' rather than to the question, 'What sorts of action should I do?'; (4) as taking certain areteic concepts (good, excellence, virtue) as basic rather than deontic ones (right, duty, obligation); (5) as rejecting the idea that ethics is codifiable in rules or principles that can provide specific action guidance. (25)

Whereas a deontological approach establishes duties an individual has to follow regardless of the situation, virtue ethics focuses instead on particular character traits that should be promoted, and these characteristics may lend themselves to different actions depending on the given situation. Douglas Giles, in “How Can I Be a Better Person? On Virtue Ethics,” iterates:

Rather than an emphasis on following rules, the emphasis is on developing oneself as a good person. It is not that following rules is not important; it is more the sense that being ethical means more than simply following the rules

Virtue ethicists place more importance on being a person who is honest, trustworthy, generous and other virtues that lead to a good life, and place less importance on one's ethical duty or obligations. (26)

The virtues are the driving force guiding the decisions of the individual, which will result in an ethical action—as opposed to the action being dictated in advance, whereby the individual must abide. For instance, if one were to promote the virtue of patience, there would not be a set limit of time in which an individual would have to wait in order to achieve their requirement for being an ethical individual, but rather the individual would seek to have the trait of patience guide their actions in situations where it might be tested. In essence, the virtue ethicist focuses their ethical explorations on what characteristics should be promoted and how those traits can be internalized over time.

To define virtue ethics requires an immediate response to the inevitable objection of it being far too vague and/or relativistic. Giles, again, points to the matter of honesty as an example to bring some clarity: “We could say definitively, ‘You should not lie’ and ‘you should not steal,’” which would be taking a purely deontological approach, “But what are those prohibitions based on? A virtue ethicist could respond by arguing that both are based on the ethical principle of honesty and that if that is so, then cultivating the virtue of honesty will lead one not to lie or steal from others” (34). Similarly, if a consequentialist contends that dishonesty results in negative outcomes for the largest

group of people within a population, a virtue ethicist would simply maintain that the focus should then be placed on developing the virtue of honesty. In this manner, it becomes evident that virtue ethics is not in *contrast* to the prevailing schools of deontology and consequentialism. There is a tremendous amount of overlap.

As for the objections to relativism, not only do all cultures promote virtues, but many of the same virtues have existed across time throughout differing periods. In fact, the drive toward developing and promoting virtue might be an inclination that makes us uniquely human. As André Comte-Sponville, in *A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues*, “Virtue thus represents an encounter between biological evolution and cultural development; it is our way of being and acting humanly, in other words (since humanity, in this sense, is a value), our power to act well” (2). Kelly Smith also points out that reason, sociality and culture “all tend to arise in evolution as a co-evolutionary ‘package deal’” (209). Giles adds, “If ethics means anything, it has to have some objective basis and cannot be left entirely up to arbitrary whim The virtues are manifestations of how things are, or should be Different cultures differ on how ethical virtues should be applied, but every culture values fundamental virtues” (35). Peterson and Seligman took an anthropological and psychological review of cultures throughout differing periods and located “instances in which the similarities across cultures outweighed the differences” and found “a surprising amount of similarity across culture [that] strongly indicates a historical and cross-cultural convergence of six core virtues: courage, justice, humanity, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom” (*Character Strengths and Virtues* 35). As to whether these are the ultimate six universal virtues, the matter remains open;

however, the process of people being drawn toward promoting particular virtues remains an objective aspect across all cultures. Virtue ethics goes against relativism with its insistence that there are universal virtues, ones that are not merely contingent upon a particular culture.

What Is a Virtue?

Despite contemporary parlance's use of *virtue* as simply an admirable quality, the Aristotelian conception is far more technical and nuanced, which is paramount to understanding and incorporating virtue ethics. A virtue is a means to a desired outcome; one might theorize a virtue as a vehicle. As Comte-Sponville explains:

It is a force that has or can have an effect. Hence the virtue of a plant or a medication, which is to cure, or of a knife, which is to cut, or of a human being, which is to will and to act in a human way. These examples, which come from the Greeks, say more or less what is essential: virtue is a capacity or power, and always a specific one The virtue of a thing or being is what constitutes its value, in other words, its distinctive excellence: the good knife is the one that excels at cutting, the good medicine at curing, the good poison at killing. (2)

Virtue ethics seeks to understand the nature of a thing, and as a result, promotes characteristics that will serve to reach its fulfillment. Put another way, Michael Pakaluk illustrates, "An electric coffee maker is an appliance which, we may say, has the function of brewing coffee. If such a coffee maker brews coffee well, then there is something about it which makes it such that it brews coffee well" (88). He adds, "We can gesture in a general way at what this is, by referring to it as the 'virtue' of the coffee maker" (88).

Specifically, virtues might include whether or not the appliance can heat up water, avoid getting clogged up, etc. If one does not understand the nature of the thing, then they cannot decipher the virtues that will bring it to its fulfillment.

Mean Middle Ground

A virtue exists in its proper location within two extreme points. Aristotle specifies that it is “a mean with respect to two vices, the one vice related to excess, the other to deficiency; and further, it is a mean because some vices fall short of and others exceed what should be the case in both passions and actions, whereas virtue discovers and chooses the middle term” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2, ch. 6, 1107a). It should be specified that a virtue, being a “middle term,” does not necessarily exist *directly* in the middle of two vices, and it is often defined by the situation. For instance, the virtue of courage rests between the vices of cowardice and rashness. If an intruder were to break into a house, a parent might act closer to the rash end of the spectrum by putting themselves in physical danger in order to protect their family; in contrast, in another situation, that same parent might act closer to the cowardice end of the spectrum by avoiding unnecessarily dangerous activities out of a sense of responsibility to remain healthy and therefore available and supportive to their family. According to Aristotle, the virtues are from two sources: intellectual and moral. Intellectual virtue will “result mostly from teaching—hence it requires experience and time—whereas moral virtue is the result of habit, and so it is that moral virtue got its name [ēthikē] by a slight alteration of the term habit [ethos]” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 1, ch. 1, 1103a-b). As Peterson and Seligman point out, “virtue is an acquired skill learned through trial and error One

encounters a situation and, basing the decision on reason, experience, and context, picks a course of action from between two extremes of disposition, those of deficiency or excess” (46). Virtue is a thoughtful and continuous practice.

Reasoning Virtue

For humans, virtue requires a conscious decision rooted in rationality. According to Aristotle, virtue is “a characteristic marked by choice . . . a characteristic defined by reason and as the prudent person would define it” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2, ch. 6, 1107a). Johnstone references Aristotle’s term *proairesis* as the necessary “rational act” that “proceeds from assessment of the rightness or wrongness of prospective courses of conduct, and thus implies the application of some standard of judgment, however valid or correct this standard might be,” and clarifying that “choice is a particular sort of rational act” (3). Within a classroom space, Giles mentions, “What unites the various forms of virtue ethics is the focus on moral education to cultivate moral wisdom, discernment, and character in the belief that ethical virtue will manifest in ethical actions” (27). Through experience and reason, one is able to continue to refine and implement their virtuous response to the world around them.

Phronesis, being practical wisdom, is the foundation from which all virtues are enacted. John T. Gage, in “What Is Rhetorical *Phronesis*? Can It Be Taught?” illustrates: “since action requires the presence of other virtues, phronesis acts on them but not independently from them,” and “it is what connects various virtues to each other. It is the virtue without which other virtues cannot be enacted, and yet it cannot be exercised in

their absence,” even going so far as to call it “the meta-virtue without which other virtues may not be able to be acquired or practiced” (328).

The ultimate telos (end goal) for humans is to reach *eudaimonia* (life-long flourishing). Since virtues are precisely the attributes that are necessary for a property to serve its purpose, *eudaimonia* should remain at the forefront. All virtues are means by which to reach this flourishing. Giles exemplifies *eudaimonia* as “not momentary pleasure but enduring contentment—not just a good day but a good life” (27). The end goal of *eudaimonia* is not a destination at one endpoint of a linear trajectory; rather, it is a continuous pursuit that should guide the characteristics people seek to value and uphold.

Being Situated within Ethos

Aristotle outlined in *Rhetoric*, under the genus of ‘artistic proofs,’ those available for the speaker to “construct by means of the principles of rhetoric”—as opposed to inartistic proofs: “such things as are not supplied by the speaker but are there at the outset,” for instance, “witnesses, evidence given under torture, written contracts,” etc. (bk. 1, ch. 2, sec. 1356a). Within these artistic proofs are three kinds, most often referred to as ‘rhetorical appeals’ in today’s usage. At its most basic level, according to Aristotle, the first is that of *ethos*, which “depends on the personal character of the speaker” and considers the “speaker’s character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses,” which can be utilized to “understand human character and goodness in their various forms.” The second appeal is *pathos*, which involves “putting the audience into a certain frame of mind,” and is used to “understand the emotions—that is, to name them and describe them.” The third is *logos*, being the “proof, or apparent

proof, provided by the words of the speech itself” and requires the speaker’s ability to “reason logically” (bk. 1, ch. 2, sec. 1356a-b).

Similar to the manner in which ethics has grown to become somewhat of a floating signifier within writing classrooms, ethos has taken on a variety of meanings and implications in both pedagogy and composition scholarship. According to *Envision in Depth*, the assigned textbook for students of ‘Composition and Rhetoric,’ the first-year composition requirement at Clemson University, ethos “functions as an appeal to the authority or credibility of a person’s character” (51). Instructors usually introduce this concept along with the other two appeals in preparation for the genre of the rhetorical analysis essay—most often their first major project of the semester—in which students are required to locate a piece of visual imagery and make a case for what modes of persuasion the creator of the artifact is implementing as a means of engaging with their audience. Regarding ethos, specifically, O’Brien et al. clarify that “although we call this third mode of persuasion the ‘ethical appeal,’ it does not strictly mean the use of ethics or ethical reasoning. Rather, *ethos* is the deliberate use of the speaker’s character as a mode of persuasion” (51). Despite O’Brien et al.’s clarification that ethos is not a synonym for ethics, the two camps naturally inform one another and can be better suited by putting them in conversation as opposed to keeping them sequestered. Focusing on the speaker’s character in order to better understand persuasive elements sets the grounding for what can later be more rigorous ethical examination, and this process serves as a connective tissue between writing studies and ethics.

Furthermore, ethos can be viewed as a role the student chooses to play in her writing, whether that be understood as “method acting,” “persona,” or “mask-wearing.” Priscilla Perkins references Andrea Lunsford and John Ruszkiewicz’s *Everything’s an Argument* as providing two meanings for character. In addition to the more elemental understanding of ethos as “the inherent complex of attributes that determine a person’s moral and ethical actions and reactions,” the appeal might also be explained as “an imaginary person represented in a work of framing arguments directly and confidently, as if you really mean them. (And it helps if you do)” (75). Accordingly, Perkins views this “representation [of] the effective rhetor” as being that of a “method actor,” and adds, “Such a teetery concept of *ethos* is, well, an ethical problem in the teaching” (75). Admittedly, this approach is grounded in the view that humans have some essential identity standing in contrast to a persona they choose to perform as and through, which lends itself to infinite metaphysical and epistemological debates regarding personhood. Nevertheless, the point remains that when teaching the appeal of ethos, there exists a tension between authenticity and performance on the part of the student. For instance, some instructors choose to privilege honesty from their students, whether that be framed within more academic language or more casual discourse (often as a means of pushing against hegemonic institutions). Other teachers avoid explicitly mentioning this distinction between authenticity and performance—intentionally or otherwise. However, more often than not, regardless of the instructor’s pedagogical decisions in relation to the handling of ethos, there is always a pragmatic pressure on the students to perform to a

certain degree when making sure that their produced materials meet the requirements for specific assignments along with the course at large.

Ethos as Primordial ‘Dwelling’

Contemporary scholarship dealing with classical conceptions of ethos begins to reestablish the bond between rhetoric and philosophy. As Nan Johnson points out in “Ethos and the Aims of Rhetoric,” “When we trace the status of ethos in rhetorical theories of the classical period and our own contemporary discipline, we see that variations in definitions of ethos correspond to different views of the relationship between rhetorical practice, philosophy, and ethics” (98). Charles E. Scott travels back further than Aristotle in “The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger” by tracing ethos to Homer’s use of the term *éthea* in *Iliad* “to name the places where animals belong. The animal’s ethos is the place to which it returns, its dwelling place. If the animal cannot return to its ethos, a violation of its particular order occurs, as when a wild horse is hobbled in a stall and cannot return to its own environment” (143). This “dwelling place” of ethos is seen as the true nature of a living creature, and Scott points out Herodotus’s use of the term around that period to distinguish the civilized populace of Greece from the “*éthea* of barbarians [and] places to which the various non-Greeks belong” (143).

In “From Haunts to Character in the Meaning of Ethos and Its Relation to Ethics,” Charles Chamberlain analyzes the treatment of ethos from Homer’s poetic usage to Thucydides’ referencing in political speeches. Similar to Scott, Chamberlain highlights Homer’s conception of the term as depicting a “haunt . . . an arena or range in which the

animal naturally belongs” (97). The illustration of a horse breaking free from a stable to return to the natural, unconstrained world is invoked. More than merely a location, the ethos is also seen as a force within the creature that is able to will itself and drive the actions of its possessor (or, rather, possession—depending on the metaphysical viewpoint). As Chamberlain mentions, “Human beings try unsuccessfully to change the innate nature of an animal. In both cases, the ethos reasserts itself” (99). Thucydides’ usage of the term takes on a more political connotation as “peculiarities” that “people of a certain polis acquire as a result of being brought up under its particular laws and customs” (101). According to such a view, the city as stable has constrained the will of the ethos and reshaped it into norms and customs, and the educational system of the “paideia” along with “socialization” has a profound influence on this fashioning of one’s character and persona (102).

The *State of Being*

Education’s ability to influence and socialize the ethos—and in turn, ethical foundation—for individuals can be most readily explained by viewing Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Politics* as formulating a trilogy. Christopher Lyle Johnstone points out that for Aristotle, “the political life of the human Community” is the means “by which individual moral visions are tested, clarified, and shared” and give “rise to the particular moral truths [that] ground individual conduct and social policy” and “guide the development of individual character life” (2). According to the Aristotelian formation, the development of citizens begins with the ethical foundation established in *Nicomachean Ethics*; then, the ability to communicate persuasively and analyze the

persuasion of others matures throughout the *Rhetoric*; and the organization of the state and activities of citizens within gets expounded fully throughout the *Politics*. It should be clarified that although the *Politics* is viewed as the unofficial sequel to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, considering that the two texts flow almost seamlessly together, for the sake of identifying the progress of students within the current academic institution, this trilogy might otherwise be put into the order previously listed: 1. *Ethics* 2. *Rhetoric* 3. *Politics*. The reasoning for this particular ordering will be made clear throughout Chapter 3, dealing more explicitly with the linkage between composition pedagogy and ethical decision-making. Additionally, as rhetoric is a meta-discipline in its own right, one could easily rearrange the order of these texts on a syllabus, or otherwise, depending on the hermeneutic lens and goals one has in referencing them—but the ‘natural’ segue from *Ethics* to *Politics* should certainly be pointed out throughout the process of studying them.

Habituating Ethos

The main reason for having *Nicomachean Ethics* directly influence one’s understanding of *Rhetoric*—before moving onto the eventual political implications of deliberation—rests on the distinctive opening for an interrelationship between the concept of habituation according to ethos and how that ends up falling neatly within virtue ethics. Returning to the classical depiction of the horse being confined to a stable and wanting to escape, Homer illustrates “the power of habituation” in which “the horse longs to be in his ethea, feels pain at being locked at the manger and joy upon breaking free” (98). According to Chamberlain, Homer is illustrating the point that “these habits

are difficult, though perhaps not impossible to change” by “showing us in the horse what the effects of habituation are on a living creature.” Despite the imposition of the stable, the horse has already been accustomed to drinking from the river prior to being domesticated, and it cannot quite shake that desire off. As Crowley points out, it’s no accident that the “Latin *habitus* signifies a stable condition or situation, but the word is also related to terms meaning ‘aptitude’ and ‘dwelling,’ both of which uses survive in English as ‘habit,’ ‘inhabit,’ and ‘habitation”” (62). As such, the *stable*—or rather, *stability*—becomes the perfect metaphor for the influence that the imposed structures of the barn have on the ethos of the horse. Further, this deep-seated accustomed desire of the horse is a trait that can certainly be extended back to human psychology: “Homer is using the horse as a symbol of something both rational and irrational; more precisely, of a basically irrational creature in which some principle of order, some *logos*, is present” (98).

The etymology of this classical terminology from Greek, in particular, continues to make this otherwise opaque logic through analogy a bit more concrete. Ethos is “derived from another, closely related Greek word (*ἥθος*), meaning ‘custom or habit”” along with “(*ἠθικὴ*), the Greek term for moral or ethical virtue, which shares the same stem as ethos” (Cherry 387). This concoction of terms leads up toward *arete*, “the disposition or character that results from the exercise of moral and intellectual virtues, as well as the virtues of style” (388). Accordingly, continuous action and thoughts contribute to one’s disposition, which impacts their ethos and ethical decision-making. Outside influences and the decisions made in relation to them repeatedly shape an

individual's disposition. As Cherry outlines, "the use of the word *arete* to designate one of the components of ethos is intended to unite both senses of *arete*—both the exercise of virtue and the morally good character that results from habituation. Hence the frequent rendering of ethos as 'moral character'" (388). Therefore, virtue ethics becomes the natural and logical framework to place upon ethos within rhetorical education; in fact, it is already embedded within it, whether or not the instructor decides to trace their use of the term ethos back to its classical roots. One could say, instructors in the field already have a *predisposition* toward its inclusion. Comte-Sponville echoes this interpretation by asserting, "Virtue, it has been said ever since Aristotle, is an acquired disposition to do what is good" (3).

Structuring Collective Habituation

Ethos has been progressively understood as a shared construction throughout composition scholarship, which both complicates and clarifies this connection between habituation and ethics. Cordova refers back to "the notion of ethos as dwelling place" by interlacing it with "the ethics of dwelling" and applying it to "the spaces that not only we inhabit but can craft together," in which "an emergent pedagogy of multiliteracies stands to be enhanced" (147). In reference to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Michael J. Hyde connects these viewpoints of a shared "dwelling place" to the acknowledgment of others, which "opens a place for us to be and to feel at home with others so that we might know together the truth of matters of importance" ("Acknowledgment, Conscience, Rhetoric, and Teaching" 29). The classroom, as such, becomes a shared habitus considering that students are collectively navigating through ideas via class discussions, writing

assignments, and feedback—from both the instructor and their peers. The classroom serves as a microcosm for the larger population they will be entering into fully after graduation in their professional lives. The process of students learning about and analyzing with rhetoric, as well as practicing and building upon their rhetorical prowess, as a segue toward their lives within the public sphere follows the Aristotelian trilogy of *Rhetoric* in relation to the *Nicomachean Ethics* and its recognized sequel *Politics*.

Extending a bit further outward, Pierre Bourdieu and Manuell Castells help delineate the manner in which systemic structures influence habituation, on an individual and collective level. Bourdieu, who popularized the notion “habitation” within sociology, explains:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (*Outline of a Theory of Practice* 72)

Individuals are normalized by their surrounding structures and act accordingly without the need of a controlling body explicitly directing them toward specific action. Bourdieu

adds, “At a deeper level, the unconscious principles of the *ethos* which, being the product of a learning process dominated by a determinate type of objective regularities, determines ‘reasonable’ and ‘unreasonable’ conduct for every agent subjected to those regularities” (77). The outside influences that inform one’s *ethos* build up to construct the habituation in which one lives. Once a normativity is *embodied*, it is then reflected in the actions of individuals that perpetuates the collective habituation. Castells defines this process as “social morphology” by claiming that “We are networks connected to a world of networks” (*Communication Power* 181). The perpetuation of the “habituation”—or “social morphology”—manifests at the material level, in which “the new social morphology of our societies and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in the processes of production, experience, power and culture” (469). Castells extends this viewpoint to the current digital age by suggesting that “while the networking form of social organization has existed in other times and spaces, the new information technology paradigm provides the basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure” (469). As such, the classroom space provides a particularly vulnerable context for the internalization and production of a virtuous habituation (‘disposition’), which will be elucidated on both the theoretical and practical level throughout Chapter 3 and 4.

Initiating Virtue

Although virtue ethics, by and large, have been overlooked or entirely forgotten within composition studies, there have been a few notable scholars and works that have begun to open up the conversation by including the tradition. Significantly, *Rhetoric*

Review published a symposium on virtue ethics in their September, 2018 journal. As Duffy, Gallagher, and Holmes note in the introduction to the symposium “Outside of a few stray and lonely efforts in the last several decades, the concept of virtue—never mind virtue ethics—has been mostly absent from major scholarship of the field” (323).

Considering that explicit references to specific ethical traditions have been ignored for much of the field, this continues to be the case. As opposed to merely calling for the inclusion of more philosophically informed approaches to ethics in writing studies, a specific tradition needs to be promoted, and virtue ethics would be the most fitting.

Within the symposium, the scholars that were invited to share offered particular virtues that they believe should be supported within the field. John Schilb argues for nuance as a virtue to be endorsed, with its ability to “undercut dogmatism” (342). That particular virtue would fit nicely within composition’s insistence to promote critical inquiry by challenging both extreme and established viewpoints that might otherwise go undetected. Additionally, in reference to ethos, Schilb proclaims that the “text’s presiding sensibility” should reflect “a kind of mind for students to imagine and strive for, especially in a writing class” (345). Lois Angew advocates for “intellectual humility” as a virtue within the classroom by referencing rhetoric’s long history and insistence on an “engagement with probability” and “thoughtful consideration of alternative perspectives” (336). Richard White is also quoted in the symposium: “the ambiguity of virtue is a creative ambiguity that helps us to think about virtue in a more authentic manner” (*Radical Virtues* 7)” (324). This demonstrates how rhetorical education offers a place in

which to not only promote virtues, but to use the concept of virtue, itself, as a generative vehicle for writing, thought, and discussion.

Outside of Duffy, the most intensive contribution to applying virtue ethics within writing studies has been the scholarship of Jared S. Colton and Steve Holmes—specifically, their book-length exploration, *Rhetoric, Technology, and the Virtues*. In addition to providing a thorough grounding for why virtue ethics deserves a respectable position within the parlor of composition studies, they offer particular virtues that are well-suited for the field—similarly to the symposium, which Holmes helped to edit. Their book includes chapters dedicated to the virtues of equality, care, generosity, and patience. Notably, their approach to composition is significantly focused around digital rhetoric and writing with, and through, digital means, which is certainly relevant and useful as writing classes continue to incorporate more technology and open up the parameters of what types of composition fit within ‘academic’ conventions.

While these initial offerings of virtue ethics in composition studies are extremely beneficial for all those within the field, there continues to be a major lack in *how* exactly virtues might be incorporated. Discussions and writing assignments provide a natural platform for this exploration, but there needs to be a bit more direction in regard to its application. However, one also needs to be mindful of avoiding any prescriptive, overly constraining systems since that would go against the crucial components of rhetoric, and the humanities at large, being that of critical thinking and engagement. Therefore, what the field needs most in terms of including virtue ethics within writing classrooms is a framework, and as the next chapter will demonstrate, the progymnasmata fits these needs

perfectly. Additionally, within the framework, there will be a call for the three specific virtues of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness to inform the implementation and reception of the progymnasmata's fourteen exercises.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPING VIRTUE: QUINTILIAN'S MODEL OF COMPOSITION

LET the orator whom I propose to form, then, be such a one as is characterized by the definition of Marcus Cato, a good man skilled in speaking For it would have been better for us to have been born dumb and to have been left destitute of reasoning powers than to have received endowments from providence only to turn them to the destruction of one another. (*Institutio Oratoria*, bk. 12, ch. 1, sec. 1-2)

Queue Questions

Few proclamations throughout the history of rhetoric have garnered as much attention and controversy as Quintilian's concept of the "good man speaking well," which is rooted in the belief that in order to be a skilled speaker, one must also be a virtuous person. As to whether or not goodness is always a requisite has kept scholars busy, and the semantics surrounding this reasoning has prompted much debate. More than anything, it demonstrates the continued controversy of whether or not knowledge gained within a humanities classroom fosters morality and betters the students, or as Lanham phrases: "no one has ever been able to prove that it does conduce to virtue more than to vice" ("The 'Q' Question" 654). Lanham labels Quintilian as the "famous nonanswerer" to this question. This lack of resolution surrounding the controversy can be viewed as a generative tension, one that is able to *queue* further lines of inquiry. To fully probe the investigation requires returning to Quintilian's text along with the context in

which this proclamation originated—as a means of uncovering the motivations of the famed Roman rhetor, including his surroundings, philosophy, and pedagogy.

Vir Bonus

The full statement taken from the longer Latin phrase *vir bonus dicendi peritus* continues to remain ripe with implications for scholars to analyze. As Richard Enos points out:

We nonetheless do a disservice to Quintilian if we do not explore more deeply into the famous expression of ‘the good man skilled in speaking.’ The notion of the ‘good’ is not only an obvious ethical proposition but also a philosophical orientation. Exploring Quintilian’s philosophical orientation will not only enrich our understanding of this central dictum but also provide a fuller appreciation for the grounding of Quintilian’s rhetoric. (“Quintilian’s Message, Again: His Philosophy of Education” 117)

We cannot translate the meaning of the statement into its proper connotation without also framing Quintilian and the language, itself, within a particular philosophical and ethical approach—or combinations thereof. Quintilian admits throughout his discussion of previous views on the art of speaking, “For I shall say not what I shall invent, but what I shall approve, as, for instance, that oratory is the art of speaking well, since when the best definition is found, he who seeks for another must seek for a worse” (*Institutio Oratoria*, bk. 2, ch. 15, sec. 38). His note on referencing demonstrates that the philosophical, ethical, and practical underpinnings go beyond mere influence, but rather are directly incorporated throughout his explicit formulations. Not only is Quintilian’s honesty and

humility noteworthy in regard to fairly citing his progenitors, but it also provides a great deal more insight when attempting to place his *vir bonus* in its proper theoretical and historical context. Notably, two particularly compelling hermeneutical approaches that help to unravel the meanings interlaced within the famed passage are those rooted in Platonic and Stoic interpretations.

Plato's Caution

Choosing to be a 'good person speaking well' requires a clear conception of what precisely *good* entails. According to Alan Brinton, in "Quintilian, Plato, and the 'Vir Bonus'," Quintilian's notion of *good* is rooted in Plato's formulation, taken from *Gorgias*, that "[i]t is therefore necessary that the orator be a just man and that the just man should wish to do just things" (*Institutio Oratoria*, bk. 2, ch.15, sec. 27). Brinton uses Plato's conception of goodness to base his analysis on the placement of *vir bonus* since "the emphasis for Quintilian is on its moral aspect" (167). In reference to the opening passage of this chapter, Quintilian avoids any ambiguity by making clear that "[m]y judgment carries me still further, for I not only say that he who would answer my idea of an orator must be a good man, but that no man, unless he be good, can ever be an orator" (*Institutio Oratoria*, bk. 12, ch. 1, sec. 3). As such, the link between goodness and ability in oration is a causal one—as opposed to correlative. Quintilian states earlier, during his overview of differing philosophical and ethical schools of thought: "oratory was not considered by Plato an evil, but that he thought true oratory could not be attained by any but a just and good man," and adds, "In the *Phaedrus* he sets forth still more

clearly that the art cannot be fully acquired without a knowledge of justice, an opinion to which I also assent” (bk. 2, ch. 15, sec. 28-29).

In *Protagoras*, Socrates brings up the argument (though Plato is not promoting it) that vice is merely the result of ignorance. As Brinton quotes: “Socrates says that ‘none of the wise men considers that anybody ever willingly errs or willingly does base and evil deeds; they are well aware that all who do base and evil things do them unwillingly’” (170). According to the view, knowledge would be the simple remedy, leading to goodness. Nobody would do ill intentionally, meaning that people are naturally drawn to virtuous action and just need to be exposed to the correct information in order to think and act accordingly. The argument that morality is the natural product of knowledge begins to fall apart when extended to the conclusion that speaking well is contingent upon being a good person. Socrates’ reference gets to the heart of Lanham’s ‘Q Question’ and has fundamental implications. If vice is merely the result of ignorance, then the ‘Q Question’ has been answered, and every student can become a virtuous person by simply gaining knowledge. Lanham presents the following formulation: “Great Text + Right Reading = Moral Truth equation” as a means of combining the “methodical with the morally sound” (663). Although Lanham offers this methodology systematically with tongue in cheek, he succinctly distills the rationale from which the entire humanities institution operates. The ‘Great Text’ would be the canon within a particular discipline that has been established (or continues to be re-established by active scholars throughout the field) along with the ‘Right Reading,’ being the pedagogy, hermeneutics, coursework, etc. that are offered alongside it. The hope is that as a result of this process ‘Moral

Truths' will arise, and students will become more virtuous; however, each component of that formulation remains vague and contentious within Writing Studies (and essentially all humanities disciplines, for that matter), ranging from what texts should be assigned to how they should be taught and what moral truths should be sought, promoted, and embodied.

Plato demonstrates, however, that knowledge can just as easily lead to vice; in fact, knowledge is the bedrock for both virtue *and* vice. Brinton points out that in Book I of the *Republic*, "Socrates reasons with Thrasymachus that the person who knows best how to cure diseases will be the best able to cause them, that the person best at defending a camp will be the best at penetrating one, and the person best at safeguarding money will be best at stealing it (333E-334A)" (171). Brinton also cites *Lesser Hippias*, with Plato again using the mouthpiece of Socrates: "the wise person is better not only at speaking the truth, but also at telling lies." In order to provide some clarity for these seemingly contradictory viewpoints of Plato's, Brinton provides the following example: "For instance, in matters of calculation the person who is able to calculate truly or falsely at will (that is, the one who is wise in such matters, the arithmetician) is better as a calculator than the person who confusedly and unintentionally calculates falsely" (171). This concept could just as easily be applied to students. The more adept a student writer becomes at incorporating pathos (or any rhetorical appeal, for that matter) within her writing, the more power she can wield over her audiences. Plato's brilliance rests on the insight that to be truly virtuous, one must also have the capacity to be thoughtfully and purposely immoral. As a result, a great deal of responsibility attends rhetorical practice.

This dilemma ushers in Lanham's 'weak defense,' which he rightly places under the heading of Plato's influence, being that rhetoric has the ability to be used for good or bad ends. Lanham states, "Plato allows as 'good rhetoric' only the kind that enhances an argument we already know, from a priori grounds, to be true" whereby "reason is one thing and primary; rhetoric is another, derivative and cosmetic. Permitted in the service of truth, [rhetoric] is otherwise an abomination" (660). In other words, the weak defense suggests that the truth can be discerned through the dialectical process and then delivered through rhetorical means. As such, rhetoric would be a tool, or 'cosmetic,' in the service of dialectic; however, this opposition suggests that dialectical truths are also free from the influence of rhetoric. After all, Plato's entire system of thought is built on dramatic exchanges between interlocutors, and although these exchanges often fit neatly in accordance with the dialectical framework, they are nonetheless organized in a rhetorical manner. Whether the dialogues between interlocutors are accurate depictions of real conversations (e.g., did Socrates really say exactly that?) or if they are filtered through Plato's viewpoint and possibly fictionalized in order to get a certain point across, the persuasive mode of organization and presentation qualifies as rhetoric.

Stoic Virtue

Viewing the *vir bonus* passage through the lens of Stoicism sheds light on the influence Cato the Elder had on Quintilian's philosophical and pedagogical theory. Considering that Quintilian explicitly cites Marcus Cato ('Cato the Elder') as providing the direct basis for the theory of the 'good man speaking well,' it's necessary to understand what Cato intended when providing the adage. According to Arthur E.

Walzer, in “Quintilian’s ‘Vir Bonus’ and the Stoic Wise Man”: “Cato the Elder is distinguished in Roman history and lore as the epitome of the ‘mos maiorum,’ Ancient morals, in Quintilian’s time thought to be in decline” (26). The concept of ‘mos maiorum’ is understood as an “ancestral custom” or code (“Mos Maiorum”). Walzer adds, “In invoking Cato, Quintilian is recalling the Roman tradition of rigorous moral discipline and public service.” Walzer argues that Quintilian adopts Cato’s particular worldview. However, throughout the entirety of *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian continuously cites from others and then reworks their ideas within his own amalgamation of approaches, constituting his multifaceted pedagogical theory. To place Quintilian neatly within the Stoic framework would inevitably reduce him to merely one aspect of his bountiful teaching, even if the citation of this particular predecessor happens to be within Quintilian’s most famed passage. Nevertheless, Walzer’s analysis of Quintilian provides tremendous insight toward the historical period: “Cato lived before Stoicism had taken hold at Rome. But he was said to have pre-figured the Stoics, whose moral discipline, commitment to the nation, and acceptance of fate would have appealed to Romans” (26). Prentice A. Meador contends that “Quintilian is no Stoic,” but agrees with Walzer’s concession that Quintilian “does not wholly escape the persuasive influence of the Stoics” (“Quintilian’s ‘Vir Bonus’” 162-163).

A general understanding of Stoic philosophy provides insight into the values of that historical period, particularly those of rationality and social-responsibility, which inevitably shaped the manner in which oration was taught. Stoicism holds that “the moral life involved living in conformity with nature; that for humans this meant using our

unique gifts of reason and speech to achieve self-preservation and offer help to others in consistent with our selfish and social instincts” (Walzer 29). The view that rationality and speech are essential aspects of human life, granted by nature, ushers in the claim that “Sciences are virtues . . . because they are indispensable to living wisely [and] living in accordance with nature” (30). Knowledge, therefore, is more than an exercise or commodity, but a fundamental characteristic of navigating through life. Meador extends this by stating, “Rational thought, claim the Stoics, can only be said to exist when the conduct of the individual is in harmony with general law; this is the same for all rational beings” (167). This “general law” is not distinguished between societal regulations and scientific facts (e.g., what laws the city-state creates compared to biological facts relating to existence), but rather the social constructs of society are just as *real* as anything beyond the city walls, since the philosophy holds that civilization is a *natural* aspect of human life. Clearly, this is quite the deterministic view of humanity, and notions of natural law have been influenced by centuries of controversy. One does not need to be a Stoic to support Quintilian’s pedagogy; after all, he didn’t even fit neatly within that particular school. Nevertheless, the Stoic approach does shed light on the Roman inclination to value rationality as a mechanism for navigating through existence. Meador demonstrates how this worldview extends toward valuing social responsibility when he says that “all rational beings must therefore aim at the same end and recognize themselves as subject to the same law. All must feel themselves parts of one connected whole. Man must not live for himself, but for society. The wise man, as a Stoic expresses it, is never a private Man” (167).

It's no wonder that the philosophy found prominence in Ancient Rome—as both a catalyst and means of support—within that society's distinct emphasis on public life. Continuing down the reasoning upholding the deterministic approach of Stoicism, Walzer points out how “Participation in politics is an obligation of the Wise Man, because nature has endowed humans with a social instinct and the Wise have an obligation to bring others to love virtue,” with the ‘Wise Man’ in this context being one living in harmony with nature according to the Stoic view, and it is “on this basis [that] rhetoric is essential to the Wise Man's living the virtuous life” (30). In addition to disrupting the contemporary binary of nature and society, Stoicism during this period also dismissed the distinction between the public and private self, as Brinton acknowledges: “character for the classical Greeks and Romans is not generally regarded as separable from public image or public behavior. Individuals are what they are partly in relation to society. There is not the modern preoccupation with hidden inner feelings and intentions” (174). To reiterate, the logic of this philosophy during the time period posited that society is the natural state of being for humans, and rationality is the distinct attribute endowed by nature as a means for survival and flourishing; therefore, communication abilities to become a successful orator would be highly valued on both a practical and philosophical level. In their textbook *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, Debra Hawhee and Sharon Crowley remind readers, “Quintilian was a careful scholar, and his discussions of the competing theories of this or that ancient rhetorician often give us the best (and sometimes the only) information we have about them.” They connect this view to its function within the state by adding, “Quintilian's theory of rhetoric was thoroughly

indebted to Roman practical ethics,” in which “the education he prescribed for young citizens was aimed at producing speakers and writers who had the best aims of their community at heart. Many of the practices he recommended were used in Roman schools at least until the collapse of the Empire, and probably beyond” (15). So, what exactly were these practices, and could they be applied today?

Situating the Progymnasmata

A major practice Quintilian utilized within his education system is the framework of the progymnasmata, which consisted of “a series of preliminary exercises in composition which were a prelude to the study of rhetoric” (Webb 289). As Gibson points out, the “fourteen prose composition exercises, graded in difficulty” were “intended to teach particular compositional forms and skills needed for declamation” (3). It’s important to clarify that when Quintilian discusses the progymnasmata within *Institutio Oratoria*, he refers to the components of that system as grammarian exercises—in contrast to those for teachers of oratory; for instance, he writes, “Let us add, however, to the business of the grammarian some rudiments of the art of speaking in which they may initiate their pupils while still too young for the teacher of rhetoric” (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 4, sec. 1). While the precise naming, numbering, and collection of these exercises have variation from instructors across time, scholars most often refer to the structure attributed to Aphthonius, “whose handbook exerted the greatest influence on later European education,” and this is the one that most resembles Quintilian’s usage (Fleming 110). In fact, according to Kennedy, Quintilian’s text remains “the only Latin account of the exercises from the classical period” (*Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks* ix). All 14 of

“the standard sequence of exercises, essentially fixed by the time of Quintilian,” consist of: 1. fable (mythos), 2. tale (diêgêma), 3. saying (chreia), 4. proverb (gnômê), 5. refutation (anaskeuê), 6. confirmation (kataskeuê), 7. commonplace (koinos topos), 8. encomium (enkômion), 9. invective (psogos), 10. comparison (synkrisis), 11. characterization (êthopoeia), 12. description (ekphrasis), 13. thesis (thesis), and 14. law (nomou eisphora) (Flemming 110). John Hagam provides a relatively succinct yet fully representative summary of the entire enterprise as follows:

In effect, the progymnasmata is a general heuristic that trains students to view their subjects from multiple perspectives. It is a structured system, but one that allows various freedoms along the way. Even more important, it is sequenced to guide the student through several patterns of thinking. (25)

The progymnasmata was a crucial instrument in the development of young individuals as they transitioned from grammar to declamation, which is a synecdoche of their larger progression from the role of student to that of a functioning and successful public citizen. As Christy Friend notes, students were inundated in “elementary argumentation through the progymnasmata and before they would begin specialized legal training or be expected to speak as adult citizens in the public forum” (302). The exercises “formed the transition from the study of grammar and the reading of texts—the domain of the grammarian—to writing and speaking” (289). Webb illustrates that they “were therefore crucial in laying the foundations for elite discourse and must have helped to inculcate certain modes of thinking about language, about the classical texts which served as models, and about the relation of the individual to those texts and to language

in general” (289-290). Again, the classical view defined composition as a set of exercises in contrast to declamation/oration under the province of rhetoric. Gibson suggests that “written composition was taught not primarily for its own sake, but as a step toward spoken rhetoric, the moral challenges and ambiguities of which had been debated since at least the time of the early Greek sophists” (2). Accordingly, the academic institution mirrors the structure of the development of the citizen of the state, whereby grammar is the raw material, composition is the capacity to utilize it, and declamation is the product. What the student is able to learn and practice in the classroom will be later used directly in the exercise of oration in public life.

Quintilian’s emphasis on combining rhetoric with philosophy and remaining true to the formation of the “good man speaking well” motivated his decision to use the progymnasmata to develop composition skills and moral training simultaneously. As Gibson indicates, “No one in ancient Greece and Rome would have doubted the claim that literary-rhetorical education was intended to make the student better in both an intellectual and a moral sense” (1). Quintilian took full advantage of the zeitgeist by explicitly referencing this cultural belief throughout *Institutio Oratoria* and managed to maintain a system that would bring it to fruition. The progymnasmata was able to “connect intellectual and moral training, attending to both the methods of public discourse and the beliefs and values expressed therein” (“The Very Idea” 117). Fleming adds elsewhere, “It was infused with both high ideals and the kind of scaffolding that helps students actually meet those ideals” (138).

In essence, the progymnasmata's exercises are structured and ordered around the principle of moving from imitation to creation. Nearly every assignment requires selecting outside material and assigning a value to it. This process of having students transition from imitation to creation certainly isn't unique to this particular system, as Fleming, referencing Aristotle's *Poetics*, mentions that many "ancient rhetoric educators brought this natural imitative impulse . . . into focal attention, essentially giving students permission to mimic well-regarded others, the course in production being also a site for consumption: reading, analysis, memorization, paraphrase, and modeling" (108). Quintilian himself is the first to admit in his "Address to Marcellus Victorious" that when imbued with the task "not of inventing new precepts," he wants to "at least" have the ability of "pronouncing judgment concerning the old" (2). Within a later section of his book, Quintilian explains the value of this progression from imitation to creation as follows:

Let them learn, too, to take to pieces the verses of the poets and then to express them in different words, and afterwards to represent them, somewhat boldly, in a paraphrase, in which it is allowable to abbreviate or embellish certain parts, provided that the sense of the poet be preserved. He who shall successfully perform this exercise, which is difficult even for accomplished professors, will be able to learn anything. (*IO*, bk. 1, ch. 9. sec. 2-3)

The skills developed through the practice of imitation become strengths the students are able to utilize throughout their educational and professional careers. Additionally, in "Reproducing Virtue: Quintilian, Imitation, and Rhetorical Education," Terrill contends

that the progymnasmata—specifically in Quintilian’s hands—has the unique capacity to foster an environment in which virtues are analyzed and developed throughout this process. The students are tasked with this same responsibility as well throughout all of their assignments. Terrill adds that “[i]mitation is able to teach what the teacher cannot, namely the variation, nuance, and sensitivity to rhetorical situations that are among the most fundamental attributes of the ideal orator,” which can “be absorbed by the student” (163). Accordingly, imitation in this context should not be seen as merely copying, but rather as a vehicle for imparting nuanced strategies of composition that need to be experienced and internalized through this process. Virtues need to be practiced as opposed to merely referenced.

This aspect of internalization as a result of direct practice fits nicely within Aristotle’s concept of *hexeis*, which provides another bridge for connecting virtue ethics to the progymnasmata. As Colton and Holmes identify in *Rhetoric, Technology, and the Virtues*, “Aristotle posits that virtuous *hexeis*—such as patience, courage, temperance, and liberality—are developed not solely through reason or by learning rules but through practice of the emotional and social skills that enable us to work toward *eudaimonia*—human flourishing and general well-being within a community” (32). Therefore, if one chooses to use virtue ethics as the ethical foundation from which their pedagogical decisions are made, the progymnasmata is a vehicle for supporting the internalization of these virtues. It’s important to point out that the selection of *what* virtues an instructor chooses to support—whether explicitly or indirectly—becomes the next logical decision that is paramount for the student’s overarching progress toward *eudaimonia*, which will

be elucidated more thoroughly in the sections dedicated to the three virtues of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness later in this chapter. Colton and Holmes extend their description of hexeis by noting that it must “be learned through repeated practice and requires the kinds of material conditions that enable this repetition,” which “requires witnessing and then recognizing such virtuous expressions in others” (33). They additionally point out that “no expression of one ethical hexis will ever look identical to another expression of that same hexis from the same individual” (33). Subsequently, Quintilian’s rationale supporting the importance of imitation as an instrument for the imparting of nuance conforms to this Aristotelian aim.

Deciphering the Exercises

When instructors decide to incorporate the progymnasmata within their classrooms, they often select only a few to assign their students, which is certainly forgivable and to be expected. There’s only so much time within the span of a course. However, there is a reason why so many others have sought to protect the *entirety* of the progymnasmata—with Aphthonius’s version as the ideal. As Gibson contends, “The importance of moral pedagogy to ancient teachers and theorists is seen not only in the themes and contents of the exercises, but also in their sequencing and justification” (1). While each exercise has a tremendous amount of intrinsic merit, they were not intended to exist in isolation. Hagaman quotes: “Donald Clark believes the progymnasmata [exercises] build [on] what the boys have learned from previous exercises; they repeat something from the previous exercise, yet each exercise adds something new’ (260)” (26). Therefore, to skip around, or avoid entirely, large portions of the progymnasmata

will end up weakening the compounding value of each ensuing exercise. To fully understand the benefits of the framework requires an introduction to each exercise, following the order in which they were traditionally assigned.

There will be three main primary sources used for the deciphering of these exercises. The first, of course, will be from Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria*, with the exercises scattered from different sections. The other two are housed within George Kennedy's collection, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. These include Hugo Rabe's translation of "The Preliminary Exercises of Aphthonius the Sophist" and the commentary "Selections on the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius Attributed to John of Sardis." According to Kennedy, the reason why the version attributed to Aphthonius "is preferred to the works by Hermogenes and others" and came to be the canonical form of the exercises, surviving throughout the medieval period and most often cited when referenced today, is because "it is clearer than the others and more easily learned" (94). Kennedy adds, "Aphthonius has not only described the methods as clearly and distinctly as possible, but in desiring to illuminate what he says with examples he has made his work more adapted and appropriate to the needs of the young" (94-95).

1. Fable

According to Aphthonius, the fable is "a fictive statement, imagining truth," one that "originated with poets but has come to be used also by orators for the sake of the moral" (96). As they did originally and do now, fables most often include the use of animals in a brief story that illustrates some life lesson—for instance, the fable of the

tortoise and the hare. The inclusion of animals, in particular, as a defining feature of this genre stems from the timeless popularity of particular fables attributed to Aesop; however, this credit might be apocryphal. As Quintilian mentions, “Those moral fables, too, which, though they were not the invention of Aesop (for Hesiod appears to have been the original inventor of them), are most frequently mentioned under the name of Aesop” (*IO*, bk. 5, ch. 11, sec. 19). Nevertheless, in addition to providing a moral example, it serves a mechanistic function regarding the students beginning their writing, as he demonstrates, “Let boys learn, then, to relate orally the fables of Aesop, which follow next after the nurse’s stories, in plain language, not rising at all above mediocrity, and afterwards to express the same simplicity in writing” (*IO*, bk. 1, ch. 9, sec. 2). From the very first exercise, students become immersed in the overarching theme of shifting from imitation to creation.

Sardis reads the fable as functioning, paradoxically, because of its apparent inconsistency, being a truth arising from a falsehood: “Fable has an image of truth since it would not do its proper job unless it had some similarity to truth. It becomes similar to truth from the credibility of its invention; thus, false in nature, credible in principle” (177-178). Nobody truly believes that a tortoise and hare were put in a race, with each animal acting in an anthropomorphic manner, and yet, the impact of the lesson contained within that parable would presumably be lessened if presented as two humans racing one another. Sardis also brilliantly identifies that since the fable is built on a falsehood but conveys truth, it is an excellent starting point for students to become situated in rhetoric—considering that training in rhetoric requires being able to disentangle fact from

fiction, and, even more importantly, understanding that an element of falsity within a statement or speaker does not necessarily erase the capability for the presence of truth.

2. Narrative

A narrative, as defined by Aphthonius, is “an exposition of an action that has happened or as though it has happened” (96). From a technical standpoint, Aphthonius advocates for the following six attributes: the person, the action, the time, location, manner of the action, and the cause for it (96-97). On a granular level, Sardis insists that the attributes *of* each attribute should be explicated, for instance, details relating to the person, location, etc. The student should be mindful of the audience when determining just how detailed and long the narrative might be. Quintilian reminds his students, “We must then study, by every art in our power, to take something from the length and something from the tediousness of our narrative,” whereby “some particulars, too, may be set aside” (*IO* bk. 4, ch. 2, sec. 48-49). Similarly, Aphthonius maintains that a narrative should contain—and therefore, convey—the virtues of “clarity, brevity, [and] persuasiveness” (97).

Regardless of the narrative, ethical exploration can always be applied and gained. The individuals and their actions within the narrative can serve as examples (or cautions) for the audience of what to do (or avoid) in their own lives. As Gibson exhibits, “Pursuit of the good and active avoidance of evil are always commendable So morality can easily be explored in a narrative in which there is a person committing an action deemed bad” or vice versa (17-18).

While a narrative can be either factual or imagined, Quintilian contends that “since we have consigned poetic narratives to the grammarians, let the commencement of study under the rhetorician be the historical form, a kind of narrative which, as it has more of truth, has also more of substance” (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 4, sec. 2). The container in which the progymnasmata most often gets placed ends up complicating the matter. For instance, labelling the progymnasmata as strictly under the province of grammarians or instructors of oration was a distinction Quintilian finds faulty in countless other places of *IO*. An instructor could certainly be open to assigning either imaged or factual narratives for her students to write, particularly if the course is centered around incorporating both composition and rhetorical training.

The writer of the narrative has a tremendous amount of responsibility in terms of representation, considering that the individual(s) presented in the narrative will be judged by the audience. If the narrative is based on a real event—or is presented as such—the person’s character can be either complicated or tarnished depending on the handling of the author. It’s only the second exercise out of the sequence of fourteen, and the student is already faced with the dilemma of how true to the accuracy of an event, idea, etc. they want to maintain when communicating it to another—a quandary that will only be intensified as they, presumably, gain greater rhetorical skill throughout their schooling.

3. Anecdote

The anecdote is the recollection of, and judgement toward, a statement or action carried out by another individual. For instance, recalling Socrates’ quote that “the only thing I know is that I know nothing” would be ripe for analysis in terms of judging

Socrates' character, motivations, etc. and placing a value judgement on him in relation to the statement (Plato, *Apology* 21b). Furthermore, as Fleming cites Theon's usage of the exercise, "training through the *chreia* [anecdote] not only produces a certain power of speech but also a good and useful character since we are being trained in the aphorisms of wise men' [254]" ("The Very Idea" 117). According to Aphthonius, the proper organization for constructing an anecdote should be as followed: "Praise, paraphrase, cause, contrary, comparison, example, testimony, and epilogue" (97). The precise format of an anecdote can take on many variations as long as the essence remains, which entails providing an explicit value judgement toward the characters referenced by using their actions, words, or combinations thereof as evidence of the praise or blame being afforded.

Taking a step back, Sardis mentions that the progression of the exercises are already beginning to mirror the conventional template for parts of speech in oration. According to Quintilian, the parts of speech are as follows: "The divisions of it, as most authors are of opinion, are five: the exordium, the statement of facts, the proof of what we advance, the refutation of our adversary, and the peroration" (bk. 3, ch. 9, sec. 1-3). It's important to note that Quintilian chooses to remove *partitio* ('division') as a separate component, one that is often placed third in the popularized sixfold division of the parts of speech promoted in Cicero's *De Inventione* and the uncredited *Ad Herennium* (Clark, *Rhetoric at Rome: A Historical Survey* 24-25). Quintilian chooses instead to incorporate the *partitio*, being a "statement of the point at issue and what the author seeks to prove," within the third part of proof in his five-step system. As such, Sardis views the first three

exercises of the progymnasmata as mirroring the progression of the parts of speech by equating the fable with exordium since it introduces the student to rhetoric and modes of establishing scene and interaction through representation; the narrative with statement of facts, which fits perfectly considering the Roman title for that part of speech is *narratio*; and anecdote with proof because the student has begun the process of explicitly asserting whether the person whom the anecdote is connected to deserves to be praised or blamed (194-195).

4. Proverb

The proverb is a saying that represents a prevailing value of a particular culture. An example of this would be: “You reap what you sow.” The proverb exercise is similar to the preceding exercise, but Aphthonius distinguishing that an anecdote can be an action or a saying, “whereas a maxim [proverb] is always a saying; as well, an anecdote “needs to indicate a person (as speaker or doer),” whereas a proverb is “uttered impersonally” (101). As a result of these similarities, Aphthonius believed they should both follow the same structure, though it is certainly not necessary.

Sardis emphasizes that although instructors have been tempted to remove the proverb altogether or lump it within the anecdote, there is a reason for their separation as well as the order in which they’re assigned. The main distinction from a pedagogical standpoint rests on the transition from the particulars required within the anecdote to the abstraction and universality required of a successful proverb. He details that the proverb “in its perfect form requires greater thought and skill, since it is more general and in that respect more complete” (196).

To excite laughter in the audience and raising the overall mood of reception, Quintilian views proverbs within the camp of “most agreeable of all such pleasantries, [being] those good-natured and, so to speak, easy of digestion” (*IO* bk. 6, ch. 3, sec. 93-98). Practicing what he preaches, Quintilian demonstrates the use of proverbs in his writing as a means of further illustrating selected points and promoting cultural values: “For men’s speech is generally an indication of their disposition and lays open the secrets of their minds. It is not without reason that the Greeks have made it a proverb that ‘As a man lives, so also he speaks’” (*IO* bk. 11, ch. 1, sec. 30).

5. Refutation

Refutation, according to Aphthonius, is “an overturning of some matter at hand” (101). As Quintilian notes, “for proof establishes, while refutation overthrows” (*IO*, bk. 3, ch. 1, sec. 5). When challenging the claim of another, Aphthonius pushes for students to structure their refutations into the following three subarguments: reasons as to why the opposing position is 1. unclear, 2. impossible / illogical, and 3. inexpedient. As is the case with Aphthonius’s suggestions regarding structure throughout the exercises, each minute aspect does not need to be followed to a tee; nonetheless, these pedantic approaches can be helpful for students overwhelmed, needing additional support, and/or those considering themselves as being uncreative or having exceptionally technical approaches. When actively challenging the claims of another, Quintilian suggests that “in refutation, the force of our questions ought always to increase and to proceed from the weakest to the strongest, whether they be of the same or a different kind” (*IO*, bk. 7, ch. 1, sec. 17). Doing so manages to simultaneously pick apart the weaknesses of the opposition while

progressively uncovering and establishing a clear position throughout the process. When assigning this exercise, students could be required to select an outside source and then refute the position being presented as well as the speaker, with the precise expectations related to structure, etc. left to the instructor's preferences and pedagogical goals.

6. Confirmation

According to Aphthonius, confirmation involves the “corroboration of some matter at hand” (103). Quintilian delineates, “In the order of things, the confirmation follows the statement, for we must prove what we stated only that it might be proved” (*IO*, bk. 4, ch. 3, sec. 1). Aphthonius urges speakers to select issues in a “middle ground” as a topic for confirmation—therefore, making it movable to the side of the person confirming the position (103). To preemptively protect against the critiques of the opposing side (by anticipating the conventional structure of a refutation), Quintilian encourages speakers to organize the subpoints of their position as follows: proofs as to why the confirmation is 1. clear, 2. credible/logical, and 3. expedient (104). As nearly a direct antithesis to the structure of the refutation, when assigning this exercise, students could be required to select an outside source and then confirm the position being presented as well as the speaker, with particular expectations left to the instructor's preferences and pedagogical intentions.

7. Commonplace

Aphthonius defines the commonplace as “language amplifying evils that are attached to something. It is so called from fitting all in common who take part in the same

deed” (105). In order to provide a bit more clarity to this often misunderstood ancient rhetorical concept, James Murphy spells out, “Commonplace[:] In this exercise the student is given an established fact and asked to ‘color’ or— in contemporary terms—to ‘spin’ it, casting an either positive or negative light on the fact” (*Quintilian on the Teaching of Speaking & Writing* xxiii). Thus, while Aphthonius uses the term *evil* in his definition and Murphy uses *fact*, a more accurate representation of the exercise as it was carried out involves rejecting or supporting a prevailing doxa. For instance, if a student chose the commonplace that “anyone who works hard enough can become successful,” there would be plenty of opportunity for the student to either correct or support the commonplace depending on the reasoning and evidence they might incorporate when backing up their position.

Quintilian indicates that in practice, the use of commonplaces is often a response to a contingency: “There is scarcely any commonplace so common which can incorporate well with any pleading unless it be bound by some link to the peculiar question under consideration, and which will not show that it is not so much inserted as attached” (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 4, sec. 30-31). Therefore, the most persuasive uses of commonplaces are responses to exigencies generated (or rather, *revealed*) by the other speakers, audiences, and/or situations. It should also be noted that Sardis believes the best location for a commonplace in a speech should be the epilogue. While this is optional, the suggestion for it to be utilized in a conclusion further iterates Quintilian’s notion of the commonplace as a response—even if, in such a case, it is merely a response to the preceding sections of a larger position.

8. Encomium

At its core, encomium is simply the elegant and thoughtful praise toward something. The options available for what should be praised are nearly limitless, and Aphthonius includes the following examples as possible topics: persons, occasions, places, animals, plants, concepts, emotions, etc. (108). In his usual granular approach, Aphthonius suggests that if a person is the subject selected for praise, the subpoints of the encomium should be broken up and divided as follows: the person's origin, habits, principles, deeds, appearance, finances, etc. (108). If choosing a subject other than a person, in a similar fashion, it's important to mention attributes that make the subject praiseworthy. Quintilian also supports the idea of offering praise toward subjects other than people: "Encomiums may also be bestowed on public works, in respect to which magnificence, utility, beauty, and the architect of them are commonly considered—magnificence, as in temples; utility, as in walls; beauty and the architect, in both" (*IO*, bk. 3, ch. 7, sec. 27).

Sardis praises the encomium, if you will, by claiming: "The exercises described up to this point preserve a partial image of complete cases, but encomium is complete in itself and contains a full hypothesis" (206). Depending on perspective, a case could be made that all of the progymnasmata exercises are incomplete since the total is greater than the sum of its parts throughout the student's development. Another approach might be the exact opposite view: that each exercise is complete since there is a focus on a topic with specific instructions. Regardless, Sardis is rightly pointing out that this exercise in particular requires a *full* hypothesis, in the conventional understanding of that period,

since it necessitates a complete case as to why the person or thing under focus should be praised. Sardis adds that it is also a great opportunity for students to fully immerse themselves within epideictic oration—a branch often overlooked by the more prevalent forensic and deliberative.

9. Invective

Invective is essentially the exact opposite of encomium in that it applies a condemnation (or rather, negative critique) as opposed to praise toward something. Aphthonius points out that this is often in relation to a judgement on vice: “Language expressive of inherent evils” (111). Knowledge toward evils harkens back to the view that to be a good rhetor requires being aware of both virtues and vices as a means of being both a successful orator and noble in character (which, again, Quintilian sees as inherently tied). As such, similar to the encomium, the subject matter selected for critique can range from persons to nearly anything, and Aphthonius clarifies that “one applies invective both in general and to a particular” (111).

As Sardis points out, the invective also falls under the often overlooked branch of epideictic. In fact, the invective is often “called ‘encomion’ generically” as a result of falling under the same genus, but as Sardis astutely notes, “A thing does not always have the same nature because it illegitimately shares the same name,” which is a lesson that could be applied far and wide when dealing with rhetorical matters (211).

Quintilian provides some thoughtful caution for the emerging orator considering the use of this rhetorical device in practice. He refers to it as “a kind of bitter force” (*IO*, bk. 8, ch. 3, sec. 89) and expounds that invective:

Also springs that stronger appeal to the feelings, adapted to draw the dislike of the judge on an overbearing adversary, when, by feigning submission to him, we imply a quiet censure on his presumption. For the very fact that we yield to him proves him to be arrogant and insupportable, and orators who are fond of invective or affect liberty of speech are not aware how much more effective it is thus to throw odium on an opponent than to reproach him, since that kind of treatment renders him disliked, while reproach would bring dislike on ourselves.

(*IO*, bk. 6, ch. 2, sec. 16-17)

This demonstrates how meeting an opponent with an invective can often end up hurting the speaker's own ethos, since it would be better to feign temporary submission to the opposing side in order to appear gracious and gain the support of the judge (or outside of a courtroom, whatever audience happens to be present). Therefore, while students should certainly engage with the exercise of invective, they must be mindful of how it might end up hurting their characters when used inappropriately. The insight is considerably valuable when using the invective, particularly if attempting to do the exact opposite.

10. Comparison

The comparison, according to Aphthonius, is “made by setting things side-by-side, bringing the greater together with what is compared to it” (111). Similarly to the preceding two exercises, the subject matter(s) selected for judgment can be nearly anything, and Aphthonius further clarifies that the type of materials can be two good things side by side, two bad things, or a contrast of one of each (111). Depending on the types of matters the student selects for judgment and their relational dynamic (e.g., good

compared to another good), the exercise can be seen as a combination of two encomiums, two invectives, or one of each (112). On a pedagogical level, this provides an opportunity for additional practice in the techniques mandated by the two preceding exercises. In terms of virtue ethics, Quintilian points out how this exercise amplifies the two preceding ones because it “both doubles the topics and treats not only of the nature but of the degrees of virtues and of vices” (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 4, sec. 21).

Despite classifying the two preceding exercises under the branch of epideictic when they are used in isolation (e.g., a single encomium or invective), Quintilian observes that when they are combined through comparison, the best use is in deliberative rhetoric. Since deliberative rhetoric is used when persuading an audience to take (or avoid) some further action, the comparison can be utilized for applying value judgements toward the available options (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 4, sec. 24). For instance, if a student is unsure of what major to select, she could make constructive use of her time in a composition classroom by using the comparison exercise to list the routes she is considering in her educational career. After collecting evidence and reflecting on the options when making the cases for praise or blame of each major, hopefully the student would have more clarity toward her ultimate decision.

11. Characterization

Characterization is the personification of a real or imagined person—or even, in some rare cases as Aphthonius indicates, it can be toward an inanimate object (116). The student is required to emulate the characteristic of their selection (most often a real person) by paying close attention to the nuances in personality and modes of

communication applied by the individual she strives to mimic. As Sardis notes, “It makes the language alive and moves the hearer to share the emotion of the speaker by presenting his character” (213). Students might be able to better understand this exercise as a form of parody, considering that it should mimic the attributes of the person or thing selected and make clear to the audience whom or what is being characterized; however, a true characterization would attempt to avoid hyper exaggeration by striving for as accurate of a representation as is possible based on the information available. The student has tremendous creative liberties when selecting the situations and/or actions they decide to place their selected person (or thing) within. They might choose to emulate a famous person and put the individual in a dialogue with someone else from another time period in a situation that famous person might not otherwise have found her or himself. For example, they could personify Socrates in a fierce debate with Nietzsche arguing over the last available frozen turkey in a grocery store the night before thanksgiving.

Sardis also points out that an element of characterization is present in all of the progymnasmata exercises, and this can certainly be demonstrated by the overarching process of moving from imitation to that of creation, as is evidenced synecdochally in each exercise and when viewing the system at large. Returning to the statement that prompted this undertaking, it’s important to highlight the use of ‘characterized’ in the *vir bonus*: “Let the orator whom I propose to form, then, be such a one as is characterized by the definition of Marcus Cato, a good man skilled in speaking” (*IO*, bk. 12, ch. 1, sec. 1-2). Quintilian’s entire educational system might be seen as an exercise in

characterization, considering it functions through the use of emulating the virtuous qualities of ‘good people, speaking well.’

12. Description

Description, according to Aphthonius, is “descriptive language, bringing what is shown clearly before the eyes,” and can be applied to nearly any topic or entity (117). This exercise might seem rather inconsequential to students, but it should be taken quite seriously since the act of describing a matter fully and accurately will impact their writing and speaking in countless situations. Sardis indicates that all three branches of rhetoric rely heavily on the use of description (218). Epideictic requires describing the thing in order to demonstrate why it should be praised or blamed. Forensic depends on description to accurately convey information pertaining to what transpired. Deliberation also hinges on description as a means of illustrating the current situation and what future action(s) should be carried out in response.

Quintilian’s section on the excellences of vivid clarity in the use of description further illustrates the importance of this device and spells out how to obtain it in relation to eloquence: “To the attainment of this excellence, (an excellence, in my opinion, of the highest order,) the way is very easy. We must look to nature, and follow her,” while adding that “all eloquence relates to the transactions of human life; every man refers what he hears to himself; and the mind easily admits what it recognizes as true to nature” (*IO*, bk. 8, ch. 3, sec. 71). This excellence of vivid clarity might be seen as a virtue, in itself, since virtue ethics, as understood by Aristotle, relies heavily on description in order to truly understand a thing’s function. As Aristotle explains, “virtue will be further manifest

also as follows—if we contemplate what sort of thing its nature is” and clarifies, “so it must be stated that every virtue both brings that of which it is the virtue into a good condition and causes the work belonging to that thing to be done well” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2, ch. 6, sec. 13-14). Sardis’ reading of Aphthonius echoes this notion of description as being central to understanding something’s true essence and, as a result, its function. He posits that all successful description must provide “reasons why the thing described takes the form it does or has a particular placement,” and therefore, “you will draw these reasons from considering what results from the things being as they are” (218).

13. Thesis

Aphthonius defines the thesis as “a logical examination of any matter under inspection. Some theses are political, some theoretical” (120). In addition to examination, Aphthonius also clarifies that the thesis is “the first progymnasmata to include . . . [a] solution of the question” (121). While Sardis claims that thesis should be classified under the deliberative species on account of it being tied to decision-making, it should also be mentioned that the exercise equally prepares the student for forensic practice. As Quintilian notes: “Theses, which are drawn from the comparison of things, as whether a country or city life is more desirable, and whether the merit of a lawyer or a soldier is the greater, are eminently proper and copious subjects for exercise in speaking and contribute greatly to improvement, both in the province of persuasion and in discussions on trial” (IO, bk. 2, ch. 4, sec. 24-45). Therefore, in addition to being capable of application in

multiple branches of rhetoric, the mention of comparison sheds light on it building from previous exercises.

As the progression of the progymnasmata nears its completion, Mendelson highlights how the last two culminating exercises of thesis and law serve to complicate “a priori assumptions, subvert simple binaries, and remind students that controversiality suffuses theoretical as well as literary discourse” (283). If the progymnasmata has been a successful tool in aiding a student’s transition from grammar to declamation, the last two exercises might be viewed as segues toward this next branch of schooling. Declamation, as Enos defines, involves “critical problem-solving for questions of value and the effective expression of those issues” (119). As such, thesis and law might be seen as both wrapping up the progymnasmata and habituating students toward their next camp of schooling.

14. Law

The law exercise, according to Quintilian, involves “the praise or censure of laws” and “requires more mature powers, such as may almost suffice for the very highest efforts (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 4, sec. 33). Quintilian adds that the three types of justification for defending or attacking a law are rooted in notions pertaining to the “sacred, public, or private rights.” As the final step in the progymnasmata and ultimate transition toward declamation, Aphthonius notes how the law exercise “is almost a complete hypothesis without preserving all the features of a hypothesis; a person is introduced but not one known in all respects. As a result, it is more than a thesis but less than an hypothesis” (124). A full hypothesis, in this case, is what will soon be expected when the student

transitions fully to declamation. In “Good People Declaiming Well: Quintilian and the Ethics of Ethical Flexibility,” Wiese Cleave defines declamation as “composing and delivering speeches based on themes or scenarios in the form of either fictional legal cases (*controversiae*) or scenarios drawn from history or literature (*suasoriae*)” (144). Therefore, it makes sense to have the students get a taste for this type of oration as the final exercise in their current system. Their training in declamation will prepare them for activity in legal and political spheres. As Quintilian notes, Roman society placed a particular value on public oration: “Among the Greeks the proposer of laws was called to plead before the judge; among the Romans it was customary to recommend or disparage a law before the public assembly” (*IO* bk. 2, ch. 4, sec. 34). Upon completion, students will have become further equipped to be successful citizens in Roman society—a culture that placed a particular value on declamation abilities with its emphasis on public life.

‘Good’ Habits

Throughout the process of completing the progymnasmata, the students build habits that are incorporated within themselves, ones that will, in turn, continue to shape their characters. As Fleming acknowledges, the progymnasmata is “a rigorous program of drill and exercise meant to internalize the art and make it part of the student’s very ethos” (107). While notions of ethos along with what shapes disposition range far and wide, Quintilian is fairly straightforward in terms of what conception he draws from. As he notes, “But these precepts of oratory, though necessary to know, are yet insufficient to produce the full power of eloquence unless they are united with a certain efficient readiness that among the Greeks is called *hexis*, ‘habit’” (*IO*, bk. 10, ch. 1, sec. 1).

Crowley and Hawhee illustrate the Greek view of ethos being connected to hexis as follows:

The ancient Greeks, in contrast, thought that character was constructed not by what happened to people but by the moral practices in which they habitually engaged. An *ethos* was not finally given by nature, but was developed by habit (*hexis*). Thus it was important for parents and teachers not only to provide children with examples of good behavior but to insist that young persons practice habits that imprinted their characters with virtues rather than vices. The notion that character was formed through habitual practices endured throughout antiquity. (167)

Students are actively shaping their character through their actions, which is why Quintilian earnestly defended the use of the progymnasmata because of its profound opportunity to help habituate students during these pivotal times of their lives. These are the years their dispositions begin taking their fuller shapes, thereby strengthening the foundations of the ethos they will be taking with them, and be operating according to, throughout their public lives.

The progymnasmata's ability to shape constitutions helps to dissolve the skill / virtue binary by bringing those two crucial components of rhetorical education back together in harmony. In terms of contemporary usage, Fleming explains:

An alternative to all three of these paradigms—process, product, and WAC—is an ethical approach to the teaching of writing, one in which the target of instruction is neither a general skill of writing nor a diverse repertoire of situated writing

practices but rather the student's very character (ethos) as a writer, that collection of traits, derived in part from "nature" but developed mainly through training and habit, which makes someone the sort of discursive agent he or she is. From this point of view, the goal of the writing class is not the papers that students produce or the skills they master or even the knowledge they gain but the deep-seated, intellectually powerful, and socially valuable habits of discourse that they acquire.

(106)

While Fleming helpfully iterates the value of the progymnasmata as a framework for an ethical approach to teaching composition, he could still be read by some as inadvertently maintaining the skill / virtue binary by pushing for what he deems "socially valuable habits of discourse" to be the ultimate aim of the writing class. In other words, the privileging of these more "valuable" aspects of the writing course over those of "general skill" or developing a "diverse repertoire" is still operating by the skill / virtue binary. Understandably, his somewhat polemical stance is motivated by the danger of composition courses solely valuing the transmission of skills as their ultimate aim—whether that jeopardy comes from personal pedagogical decisions of instructors or, as is far more likely, from institutional pressures related to outcomes and funding. Nevertheless, there may be a way to have our skill and virtue too. In reference to "Murphy's distinction between the active acquisition of skill and the passive acquisition of virtue," located in "The Key Role of Habit," Gibson disagrees and suggests instead, "I would collapse this active/passive distinction even further: learning to think and write and speak about subjects in the moral terms valued by one's community is an active,

constructive process that unites skill and virtue, each in the service of the other” (9). The progymnasmata would certainly provide a framework for an “active, constructive process” that unites the two. Within the upcoming pedagogy chapter that will more thoroughly delineate the application of the progymnasmata in the contemporary writing classroom, an argument will be made for viewing composition as a *craft* in order to further dissolve the distinction between skill and virtue—a binary that only serves to distance these two crucial components of rhetorical education.

Translating Values (into Latin)

When viewing the progymnasmata through the lens of Aristotelian virtue ethics as a framework for the transmission and embodiment of values, it becomes necessary to decide—or rather, uncover—what types of virtues this system affords. If using both Quintilian and his systems as models for rhetorical education, it would follow naturally that the initial starting point for locating these virtues would be the values that were promoted within Roman society. It becomes paramount to reference the historical context along with historiographical interpretations in order to provide a source of stasis from which to build an approach that most genuinely reflects the tenets of Quintilian’s pedagogy.

Because the progymnasmata is a vehicle from grammar to declamation, and the results of the exercises serve to embody the students with lifelong habits, it becomes necessary to understand what a Roman virtue would look like in relation to the standards and values of that particular society. As Quintilian notes, “I should desire the orator, whom I am trying to form, to be a kind of Roman wise man who may prove himself a

true statesman, not by discussions in retirement, but by personal experience and exertions in public life” (*IO*, bk. 12, ch. 2, sec. 7). The emphasis should be placed on possibilities for real-world usage as students learn practical modes of communication during their schooling. In fact, even the distinctions between a personal and public self were nonexistent during this period, demonstrating the interconnectedness of formal education and public participation. Crowley and Hawhee explain, “Roman rhetoricians who relied on Greek rhetorical theory sometimes confused *ethos* with *pathos* . . . because there was no satisfactory term for *ethos* in Latin,” adding that “Cicero occasionally used the Latin term *persona* (‘mask’), and Quintilian simply borrowed from the Greek term. This lack of a technical term is not surprising, because the requirement of having a respectable character was built into the very fabric of Roman oratory” (167). This view is also quite consistent with Aristotle’s virtue ethics. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, “The modern contrast between the sphere of morality on the one hand and the sphere of the human sciences on the other is quite alien to Aristotelianism because, as we have already seen, the modern fact-value distinction is also alien to it” (82). MacIntyre adds that the symbiotic nature of Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Politics* is “concerned with how human action is to be explained and understood as with what acts are to be done” since “one task cannot be discharged without discharging the other” (82).

Within Roman society, particular actions and modes of behavior within the public sphere can be classified as virtues carrying the same weight (if not more) as abstract, internal states of mind. Traits regarded as virtues within Roman culture only derive their value in relation to how they can be applied within political life. Prentice Meador offers

an incredibly helpful table that clearly spells out particular virtues stemming from the concept of *vir bonus* throughout Quintilian's text, and even categorizes them according to attributes vs actions. Table 1.1 shows how the attributes and actions are contingent upon one another—for instance, the 'actions' of studying "equity, justice, truth, and the good" as being informed through being "virtuous," having a "sense of duty," etc. In the following passage, Quintilian mentions a handful of the virtues from Meador's table and further illustrates the process of hexis throughout a student's development:

Will not an orator have to speak much of justice, fortitude, abstinence, temperance, and piety? Yet the good man, who has a knowledge of these virtues, not by sound and name only, not as heard merely by the ear to be repeated by the tongue, but who has embraced them in his heart and thinks in conformity with them, will have no difficulty in conceiving proper notions about them and will express sincerely what he thinks. (*IO*, bk. 12, ch. 2, sec. 17)

Through repeated and thoughtful writing exercises in topics with practical applications, a student will be able to more genuinely perform their future oratorical duties in the political and judicial arenas.

TABLE NO. 1			
Attributes of the <i>Vir Bonus</i>			
respect for public opinion	XII. i. 12	informed	XII. i. 25
integrity	XII. i. 16	sincere	XII. i. 29
fortitude	XII. i. 17	sense of duty	XII. i. 29
eloquent	XII. i. 21	common sense	XII. i. 30
brave	XII. i. 23	virtuous	XII. i. 31
honorable	XII. i. 24	just	XII. i. 35
responsible	XII. i. 26		

TABLE NO. 2	
Actions of the <i>Vir Bonus</i>	
advocates noble policies	XII. i. 15 XII. i. 25
studies philosophy and logic	XII. ii. 4
studies history, religion, law	XII. ii. 27 XII. iii. 1
studies oratory	XII. 5
defends guilty as well as innocent	XII. i. 33f
imitates great speakers	XII. ii. 27
may conceal truth from judge	XII. i. 41
may use methods close to fraud	XII. i. 41
may tell a lie even for trivial reasons	XII. i. 38
studies equity, justice, truth, and the good	XII. ii. 1
engages in all activities which develop character	XII. ii. 1
may speak in defense of falsehoods and injustice	XII. i. 34
secures release of the guilty	XII. i. 42
modifies pleading to suit circumstances	XII. i. 45

¹¹ Ibid. xii. 2. 7. Italics are mine.

Table 1.1: Attributes/Actions of the *Vir Bonus*
Meador Jr, Prentice A. "Quintilian's 'Vir Bonus'." *Western Speech*, vo. 34, no. 3. 1970, p. 164.

The cultural values proposed in ancient Rome have often been seen as problematic according to modern interpretations. Compelling cases have been made for the virtues promoted as being built on, and used to justify, ancient Rome's overarching

aim of conquest and control. As Robert Kaster mentions, “Control, finally, is what the schools of rhetoric were about. Through their lessons, the elite males who frequented the schools learned to control their own speech so that they might one day control the opinions of others, in the law courts, in their correspondence, or in conversation” (335). Subsequently, the Roman schools might be viewed as nothing more than indoctrination camps molding students to carry out the whims of the larger empire. Martin Heidegger points out that the entire Roman language was built on a sense of imperialism and conquest, in which “the Roman *veritas*” became a “justice” (or rather, justification) in service to the empire’s “will to power” (*Parmenides* 42). He also goes as far as to say that the long-lasting impact of Latinization continues to impact our perception of history, in which, “We today still see the Greek world with Roman eyes” (Heidegger 43). Walter Ong echoes concerns toward the enduring adverse effects of the West’s embrace of this language, tainted by the culture of conquest and control, by contending, “Learned Latin had certain advantages in keeping the human lifeworld at a distance. As a male-polarized language developed with the aid of writing and always controlled by writing.” He adds, “Between early modern science, in its need to hold at arm’s length the human lifeworld with its passionate, rhetorical, practical concerns, and Learned Latin as a tongue which had been isolated” and had been “given instead an artificial base in writing” (35).

While the shift from Greek to Latin might have resulted in a language that both mirrored and supported values of conquest if taken at large, Quintilian’s treatment of the differences and similarities of the two languages challenge such a tidy analysis: “He who requires from Latin the graces of the Attic tongue must give it a similar sweetness of tone

and a similar abundance of words,” and in order to do this, “we must adapt our thoughts to the words which we have and not clothe extremely delicate matter in phraseology which is too strong, not to say too gross, for it, lest the excellences of both be diminished by the union” (*IO*, bk. 12, ch. 10, sec. 35). While Ong and Heidegger demonstrate the overall tectonic shift of Latinization privilege more distanced and isolated understanding of concepts that mirror a nation’s disposition of conquest, Quintilian is taking the exact opposite approach in his desire for more ornamentation when left without the Greek Attic affordances that he views as superior in many ways. He adds:

The less able our language is to assist us, the more efforts we must make in the production of thought Every feeling must be excited, and our speech illumined by the splendor of metaphor We cannot be so plain as the Greeks; let us be more forcible. We are excelled by them in refinement; let us surpass them in weight. Exactness of expression is more surely attained by them; let us go beyond them in fullness. (*IO*, bk. 12, ch. 10, sec. 35-37)

Even if modern historiographic interpretations view the process of Latinization as one built by, and for the purpose of, conquest and domination, it is clear that Quintilian—in his usual manner of incorporating multiple viewpoints—did not fall neatly into the epistemes retroactively applied to the period he lived in. Yes, he was a man of his time, but upon careful examination of his pedagogical system at large, it is evident that there are virtues being promoted throughout his writing that would be missed entirely if attempting to reduce him and his work to a singular view of all Roman orators.

Updating the Antiquated: Three Composition Virtues for *Renewal*

There are three virtues throughout Quintilian's work that encompass the pedagogical mission of the *vir bonus* and progymnasmata, which find increased clarity when viewed through the lens of Aristotelian virtue ethics. These three are adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness. The ordering of these virtues illustrates the progression of the student from imitation to creation in composition exercises as they journey on to the next steps in their life-long mission of gaining eudaimonia. Though Quintilian does not always articulate these three virtues as such, they can be implicitly drawn from his writings, pedagogy, and personal life. These three terms serve as containers to organize the often eclectic, even overwhelming (yet nevertheless brilliant), combinations of approaches throughout his work in order for scholars and instructors to better understand Quintilian's message and, hopefully, consider applying his process and virtues within their own work and classrooms. How to promote these virtues on a practical level in a contemporary composition classroom will be elucidated in the next chapter focused on pedagogy.

Adaptability

The virtue of adaptability should be understood and embodied on two, sometimes overlapping, levels: the personal and the productive. The personal comprises how the individual is able to adjust to a variety of conditions. The productive details how the individual's work can become suitable for an assortment of purposes. These will inevitably overlap, and if Quintilian has taught anything, it's that there is no use in protecting rigid distinctions when the more practical option suggests an overlap. In fact,

the process of dissolving binaries when necessary would be an example of the virtue of adaptability in action.

The ability to adapt to differing situations requires an emphasis on the practical along with flexibility. Mendelson acknowledges that in Quintilian's approach, "rhetorical invention is both dialogical (always in response to previous speech) and practical (always generated with a particular occasion in mind)" (282-283). Terrill points out that for Quintilian "civic virtue appears to rely on a flexible adaptability rather than on a rigid moral code. The capacity to speak well, as acquired by the ideal rhetorician, entails an ability to improvise and to adjust to the demands and expectations of particular rhetorical situations" (159). These components of the adaptability virtue iterate Aristotle's aim of rhetoric as discovering available means for persuasion. Terrill indicates that Quintilian's educational program is built on a conception of rhetoric "as a faculty, capacity, or dynamis, rather than as a mere practice or artifact" (168). Terrill adds that "the goal of his rhetorical *paideia*" is "the formation of an ethical person who would be recognized through the production of ethical speech" (168)—a view that practice and disposition continuously inform ethical decisions, which corresponds perfectly with Aristotle's conception of virtue ethics.

Quintilian embodied the virtue of adaptability in his pedagogy by utilizing wisdom drawn from personal experience, imitating virtuous speakers, and incorporating the insights of countless thinkers. Enos mentions how "it was from his knowledge and experience as an advocate that Quintilian realized the problem-solving benefits of declamation" (113). He was able to take the knowledge gained from trial and error (no

pun intended) from his professional life and apply it within his classroom. Cicero is undoubtedly the major model for Quintilian for his *vir bonus* pedagogy, and Quintilian is able to continuously adapt multiple pieces from Cicero's life and teachings within his praxis.

Adaptability as a virtue, itself, has been passed down and adapted through imitation leading up to Quintilian's time. As Enos details, "one of the reasons why Quintilian so admired his predecessor Cicero is because Cicero devoted his career—actually his very life—to taking to heart Isocrates' orientation of using rhetoric in the service of society" (116). It's a continuous circuit of adaptability, and just to further demonstrate the chain, Flanagan acknowledges that "Quintilian added a particularly Socratic priority to the Sophist curriculum" (54). Since Isocrates was a Sophist, not only was Quintilian continuing the lineage of adaptability, but he was also anachronistically adapting particular concepts and philosophies throughout this genealogy. The entire process could be seen as emblematic of Darwin's observations relating to variation and adaptation through natural selection, with the most successful trait for the survival of rhetorical education being that of adaptability.

Experimentation

Building from the previous virtue, deciding on the best suited path requires testing out and experimenting with different approaches. In other words, a student cannot possess the virtue of adaptability without knowing the options available as a means of adjusting to new conditions. She should consider how the work might be modified while maintaining functionality. Thus, experimentation becomes the grounding for innovation.

The student has a special time in which to test approaches with practical ends in mind without having to yet face the consequences of a real-world public—and this is especially important for those preparing for careers in legislation and/or judicial environments, roles that will enable them to have direct and profound impact on the lives of others based on their decisions. Also, the cornerstone of education is built on offering students exposure to different ways of thinking. As the famous quote apocryphally attributed to Aristotle declares: “It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.” In terms of the progymnasmata as a point of hexis for the student, it would become a form of fascistic programming if the student wasn’t introduced to a variety of differing viewpoints and given the opportunity to select from them. It would hinder the student’s success and weaken the educational institution at large. Again, to pull from Darwin, diversity is the requisite trait for progression.

Play is a crucial component to experimentation, and Quintilian explicitly encouraged it in his students. Flanagan explains that for Quintilian, “The learning of the young child should always be enjoyable, akin to a diversion or game rather than to a task. Parents and teachers should be careful that the boy does not come to hate his studies” (57). After all, if the student’s disposition forms with a hatred toward school at a young age, there is a danger of it continuing on throughout her progression—and possibly compounding with each level of education. A revulsion to learning will make attaining the virtues of adaptability and experimentation infinitely more difficult. Quintilian encouraged experimentation by giving his students “ivory letters to play with” when learning composition, whereby “handling, examining and naming them will be a pleasure

and be more beneficial than simply learning the names and order of the letters. He approves of any approach that may ‘delight the very young’ and so promote learning” (57).

This sense of play wasn’t isolated solely to younger years of schooling, but rather just took on more sophisticated forms throughout the student’s progression. Even during the final stages of declamation, students are encouraged to play around with different positions on issues (similar to many of the progymnasmata exercises) through “inquiry, analysis, and invention follow the protocols of *controversia*: the author first surveys the diversity of opinion on the topic in order to weigh the probabilities on each side” (Mendelson 281). Though the subject matter will be more serious and consequential in public life, hopefully the sense of delight in discourse remains preserved and continues to provide motivation in embracing the dynamic nature of discourse.

Mindfulness

As the culminating virtue, mindfulness rests on the ability to choose the proper path(s) from available options from which to adapt and thrive. It is being able to both *observe* the available means of persuasion and *select* the one (or multiple) most fitting; a selection that will be both practical and ethical—in essence: the wise choice(s). Through the lens of Aristotelian virtue ethics, it is the connective tissue between *phronesis* and *eudaimonia*. As Johnston posits, “The exercise of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in choosing conduct manifests the human capacity for deliberation and self-conscious action” (2). Johnstone also adds that it serves as a source of stability: “This conception of moral virtue, moreover, centering as it does upon the power of deliberation and reasoned

choice, provides for fundamental connections between ethics and rhetoric” (2). Johnstone also recounts that rhetoric is inherently a practical art: “It is a tool that guides us in matters we deliberate upon without the aid of a definite science, and in matters that present us with the necessity for deciding or choosing . . . Aristotle proposes first, therefore, that rhetoric, like ethics, finds its end in the determination of practice” (5). Rhetoric, itself, is contingent upon the virtue of mindfulness and functions as a connective tissue for placing this meta discipline in conversation with others.

While *phronesis* is the closest to mindfulness in ancient Greece, *prudentia* is a parallel in Rome. Comte-Sponville explains, “We know that the Romans translated the Greek *phronesis* as *prudentia*, particularly in their translations of Aristotle and the Stoics” (31). This term, which most closely translates to prudence in English usage prudence, being that of “applied morality,” and Comte-Sponville rightly discerns “what should one make of a morality that cannot be applied? Without prudence, the other virtues are merely good intentions that pave the way to hell” (31). Therefore, prudence is “the precondition for all the other virtues; without it, we cannot know what use to make of the other virtues or how to attain the goal (the good) they put before us” (31-32).

Quintilian embodies the virtue of mindfulness in the following optimistic defense: “Yet the conclusions to which my judgment has led me must not be withheld. I think that among all the authors who have stood the test of time, few, or indeed, scarcely a single one, can be found who would not contribute some profit to those who read them with judgment” (*IO*, bk. 10, ch. 1, sec. 40). He allows himself to be exposed to nearly any

ideas out there, considers them thoughtfully, and utilizes the ones useful for his lifelong pursuit of wisdom.

Phronesis is central to all virtues, serving as the foundation from which to choose the proper middle-ground resting between two vices. Giles details: “The better you are at finding and acting on the mean, the more you have phronesis (‘practical wisdom’). This form of practical reason helps a writer recognize which features of a situation are morally relevant and how one can do the right thing in practice. Practical reason is rational because it is open to rational influence” (29). Peterson and Seligman further delineate the Aristotelian framework as follows: “For Aristotle, virtue is an acquired skill learned through trial and error,” and add that “Related to this is his characterization of virtue known as the doctrine of the mean: One encounters a situation and, basing the decision on reason, experience, and context, picks a course of action from between two extremes of disposition, those of deficiency or excess” (46). The true ‘middle-ground’ is not the precise center but rather the most virtuous position within two ends. In a sense, phronesis involves *adapting* within the confines of morality through reason.

Mindfulness draws us toward the goal of human life: flourishing. Again, according to Aristotle’s framework, a virtue is an entity’s purpose. Therefore, as Giles outlines “to understand something we need to understand its nature and proper function,” and Aristotle “also believed that everything has an end, or goal, toward which it naturally moves. For example, a seed grows into a tree because the purpose and function of the seed is to grow into a tree” (27). The function that our nature drives us to fulfill (*telos*) is eudaimonia, “which is best understood as human flourishing or living well. Eudaimonia

is not momentary pleasure but enduring contentment—not just a good day but a good life” (27). Again, “It is human nature to move toward eudaimonia and this is the purpose, function, or final goal (telos) of all human activity” (27). Therefore, in addition to teaching students how to analyze and practice persuasion, the virtue of mindfulness stemming from rhetorical education can provide the meaning to life—not bad for a bunch of ‘cookery.’

CHAPTER FOUR

CRAFTING A COURSE: APPLYING THE PROGYMNASMATA IN THE MODERN

WRITING CLASSROOM

Applying the progymnasmata through the lens of virtue ethics in the contemporary writing classroom is certainly doable, and an instructor considering its inclusion does not need to fret or fall victim to paralysis of analysis. Since the progymnasmata and Aristotle's ethical philosophy are inherently practical systems, they find their natural footing and are further revealed when put into practice; the momentum calls for it. Nevertheless, in order for this pedagogical approach to reach fruition, it needs to be conceptualized, organized, and strategically applied with an awareness of its aim at each step of its development and inclusion. As the system fosters the virtues on the part of the students, it similarly requires the instructor to embody and employ those principles for the operation to be a success.

Contemporary Relevance of Classical Approaches

Initially, a writing studies instructor might wonder what relevance classical rhetoric affords in terms of practical engagement with her students and, if considering the progymnasmata, what this otherwise esoteric, often ignored system offers in particular. Corbett and Connors urge instructors to build on the centuries of rhetorical study, through a process of trial and error, in an effort to equip students with rhetorical prowess on the level of it being both a *synthetic* ("building up," "composing") and *analytic* ("breaking

down,” observing, studying) art (25). It additionally serves as a means of offering a “*positive* approach” to teaching students how to write through models and exercises—in contrast to a *negative* approach, being the mere avoidance of conventional and grammatical errors. However, they caution: “Indeed, some exercises that students in Greek and Roman schools were subjected to are totally dispensable. Practices and principles should not be retained simply because they are venerable with age,” but rather, “They should be retained only if they prove relevant and useful” (24). A writing instructor should include classical rhetoric within her classroom with a focus on how it will help her students become better writers and overall communicators. She should always be mindfully avoiding the risks of spending unnecessary time and energy by assigning readings and exercises that do not actively promote this goal. Ultimately, any course using readings and exercises that don’t further the aim of teaching writing are not writing courses. A writing classroom—particularly, first-year composition—only has so much time afforded within the constraints of the semester or two duration, so instructors have a responsibility to use time wisely for the sake of their students, particularly when the practical knowledge being offered within the course will serve as a foundation for their continuing educational and professional careers. What approaches have stood the test of time and/or been momentarily forgotten and might be worthy of inclusion in the contemporary writing classroom?

Fleming offers a defense for the progymnasmata as being a tool that is simultaneously traditional and innovative for instructors looking to refine their approaches. He rightly points out how an “ethical approach to the teaching of writing”

provides an “alternative to all three [writing pedagogy] paradigms—process, product, and WAC” (“The Very Idea” 106). His posited approach focuses on “the student’s very character” as “a writer, that collection of traits, derived in part from ‘nature’ but developed mainly through training and habit, which makes someone the sort of discursive agent he or she is” (“The Very Idea” 106). The emphasis on character formation certainly draws connections to Aristotelian virtue ethics—particularly in terms of habituation. As for the progymnasmata’s continued relevance, he defends, “The best model for such an approach, I believe, is still classical rhetoric, an umbrella term for various pedagogical programs focused on spoken and written eloquence that dominated secondary education in Classical Greece and Republican and Imperial Rome” and promotes, specifically, the inclusion of the progymnasmata to fulfill these goals (106).

John Hagaman, in “Modern Use of the Progymnasmata in Teaching Rhetorical Invention,” argues for the merits of incorporating the progymnasmata in contemporary classrooms as a framework that offers a balance of structured guidance and inventive freedom. He confirms, “the progymnasmata is a general heuristic that trains students to view their subjects from multiple perspectives. It is a structured system, but one that allows various freedoms along the way,” thereby demonstrating that although there are systematic forms in place, these serve as productive vehicles for students in their inventive processes of developing material (25). He also acknowledges that “it is sequenced to guide the student through several patterns of thinking” by progressing “from concrete, narrative tasks to abstract, persuasive ones; from addressing the class and teacher to addressing a public audience such as the law court; from developing a single

prescribed point of view to examining several and arguing for a self-determined thesis” (25). In the same way that the system requires the student to write *from* a variety of viewpoints throughout the progression of exercises, it also demands they write *for* a diversity of audiences. Students need to practice and become fully equipped with these valuable competencies as they prepare for careers in an increasingly interconnected and cosmopolitan world.

Understandably, instructors might worry that their students will be automatically turned off from the progymnasmata and become disengaged with the entire course as a result. After all, the name alone, with its variations of pronunciations from those few still referencing it, could be enough to dissuade an individual from choosing to be engaged. However, if introduced strategically, students have been shown to be surprisingly receptive toward a program that gives them the tools to disambiguate the writing process and opportunities to practice with relatively low-stake assignments. Based on his experiences including the system in his classrooms, Fleming has noted how his students “hunger, I believe, for a language-arts education that can help them be less afraid of speech, less intimidated by writing, that can help them be more resourceful, more articulate, and lead more fulfilling public lives” (131). After the expected shock and suspicion from students when first introduced to the progymnasmata, I have also been pleasantly surprised by the receptiveness they begin to show and voluntarily promote even after just the first few exercises have been completed.

For reference purposes, here are the fourteen steps of the progymnasmata, briefly, with more elaborate discussion to follow later in this chapter:

1. Fable
2. Narrative
3. Anecdote
4. Proverb
5. Refutation
6. Confirmation
7. Commonplace
8. Encomium
9. Invective
10. Comparison
11. Characterization
12. Description
13. Thesis
14. Law

Always Practical

Quintilian's focus on making education practical continues to be one of his biggest strengths. His approach is especially compelling for writing instructors in search of a functional method ready for application. As Crowley and Hawhee recognize, "Quintilian's theory of rhetoric was thoroughly indebted to Roman practical ethics," in which "The education he prescribed for young citizens was aimed at producing speakers and writers who had the best aims of their community at heart" (15). Since the Roman culture valued oration, it was only natural that it would find eminence in the educational

systems of the period. However, he didn't mindlessly carry out the standards of the time by serving as a mere vehicle for the transmission of Roman ideals. His focus on practicality was rooted in his personal experiences, critiques of over abstraction, and pedagogical theorizations—all of which are attributes that can serve as foundational models for contemporary instructors.

Quintilian's support for knowledge gained first-hand and continuously applied stems from his brief and scattered forays in oration and consultation at the professional level. As Kennedy describes in *Quintilian: A Roman Educator and his Quest for the Perfect Orator*, during the "central period" of Quintilian's career, under Vespasian and partially under Domitian, he "appeared regularly in the law courts as a patron for clients" (16). Kennedy clarifies that "lawyer is not quite the word," but rather, "his job was to organize the case and deliver a set speech for plaintiff or defendant, and to examine, or cross-examine, the witnesses" (16). Even though he didn't work within the role as an official attorney, he unequivocally found a practical application for his knowledge by providing it to clients who would utilize it directly. Additionally, Quintilian didn't hesitate to turn for "technical legal advice if necessary to a jurisconsult" to provide his clients with accurate and useful information (16). He demonstrates humility and responsibility in his desire to provide accurate and useful information for his clients, a trait all instructors can learn from and uphold. Enos expounds: "It was from his knowledge and experience as an advocate that Quintilian realized the problem-solving benefits of declamation" (113). Flanagan adds that Quintilian's pedagogical approach "was not arrived at as a result of an a priori educational theory: on the contrary, it derives

from Quintilian's knowledge of the practical outcomes that people want. He has lived the life he teaches" (62). Students are eager to attain knowledge that can be used directly in their personal and professional lives. Quintilian demonstrates the value of building from personal experiences and continuing to do so throughout a career dedicated to teaching.

His critique of many prevalent philosophers and educators of the day also contributed to his focus on providing students with practical knowledge. He viewed many of his contemporary philosophers as detached from practical knowledge. According to Flanagan, Quintilian "castigated them because they had excluded themselves from the realities of public life. They were without practical experience of the matters on which they presumed to lecture others" (55). Furthermore, "the name of philosopher in his own time sometimes cloaked vices. These pseudo-philosophers," in Quintilian's view, "did not pursue wisdom" and even "attempted to conceal their moral depravity" through their over abstraction of issues to the point of misdirection (55). Having rhetoric understood and utilized as a practical art helped to bring issues to the surface of everyday life through its application. In contrast, treating rhetoric as purely theoretical through over abstraction posed the danger of causing the subject matter to become misguided by philosophers—if not altogether readily available for manipulation. The 'Q Question' becomes more difficult to answer when the results of rhetorical training remain detached from instruction. As Kennedy notes, Quintilian viewed the orator as "a practical man ready to appear in the law courts and to hold office," free from the "shame of a wandering cynic, of something analogous to the oratorical, philosophical, political, and cultural goals of a Greek sophist" (158). Kennedy delineates that the prevailing Roman view and

stereotypes of the sophists were certainly reductive and left out countless examples of Greek rhetoricians who applied their training directly within the functions of everyday life. Nevertheless, the Roman emphasis was distinct in its view of constructing and preserving rhetorical training purely as a means of practical application. Ironically, Quintilian justifies rhetoric as a practical discipline through a certain amount of abstraction and theorization, but his defense is never entirely detached from its application, thus performing the principles he's advocating throughout the process of defending it.

Sorting through Practice

Referencing Quintilian and Aristotle's conceptions of rhetoric and their terminologies associated with 'practical' demonstrates how the progymnasmata and virtue ethics are functionally related. Their corresponding systems help instructors to have, what Flannagan refers to as, "an educational program with both high ideals and a lesson plan" (137). While some of the terminology might border on the esoteric (and even, paradoxically, viewed as an over abstraction), understanding a few keywords and conceptions provides the necessary grounding for instructors to fall back on when choosing to incorporate this pedagogical approach. At the ground level, Mendelson highlights that for Quintilian, "rhetorical invention is both dialogical (always in response to previous speech) and practical (always generated with a particular occasion in mind)" (282-83). Quintilian, himself, delineates the three types of art as follows:

Some arts consist merely in an insight into things, that is, knowledge of them and judgment [theoretical]. . . . Others consist of action, the object of which lies in the

act and is fulfilled in it, leaving nothing produced from it [practical]. . . . Others consist in production, which attain their end in the execution of the work which is submitted to the eye [productive]. . . . We may pretty safely determine that oratory consists in act, for it accomplishes in the act all that it has to do. Such indeed has been the judgment pronounced upon it by everyone. (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 18, sec. 1-2)

He immediately qualifies the claim of rhetoric being a ‘practical art’ by clarifying that it also “appears to partake greatly of the other sort of arts” (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 18, sec. 3).

Specifically, he points out how rhetoric dabbles in the theoretical through “contemplation” and “retired meditation” and can at times be considered a productive art through “written speeches and historical composition” (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 18, sec. 4).

Nevertheless, he contends that rhetoric is most significantly a practical art because its “performance consists chiefly in the mere act” and “is most frequently exhibited in act” (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 18, sec. 5). Instructors interested in applying the progymnasmata through the lens of virtue ethics should know that while rhetoric lends itself to theory and production, Quintilian emphasized its nature as a practical art.

When Quintilian ends his summation of the three types of art with “Such indeed has been the judgment pronounced upon it by everyone,” the unanimous decision might just as easily have been explicitly referenced to Aristotle, considering that *Nicomachean Ethics* provided the initial conceptualization for these categorizations. Reference to a few more terms from Aristotle helps provide an additional foundation for the upcoming section detailing the importance of viewing student participation in the progymnasmata as a *craft*. Aristotle distinguishes the two types of knowledge as *techne*

(art/skill/contingent) versus *episteme* (scientific/necessary) (bk. 6, ch. 1, sec. 1139a). In terms of contingency, Aristotle further distinguishes *praxis* (action, doing) versus *poiesis* (production, making) (bk. 6, ch. 4, sec. 1140a). On a simplistic level, the practical wisdom of *phronesis* as an action relates to *praxis*, and the productive wisdom of *poiesis* as a process of making correlates with *techne*. However, these distinctions become progressively nuanced and, at times, overlap when considering their functions in the development of habituation by viewing student writing as a craft.

Composition Carpentry

Viewing composition as a craft helps shift the focus onto its true nature as an action, and instructors taking this viewpoint will begin to actively bridge the gap between instruction and virtue. According to Richard Sennet in the *The Craftsman*: “Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake” (Prologue). To *do* a job for its own sake places the focus onto the *doing* of writing as opposed to the *knowing* and *making*. Within the focus on *doing*, “All craftsmanship is quality-driven work,” whereby “the aspiration for quality will drive a craftsman to improve, to get better rather than get by” (Prologue). However, since *knowing* and *making* are inherently connected within the process of *doing*, these terms naturally overlap; therefore, as opposed to splitting hairs on terminology for the sake of dogmatic classification, instructors should embrace the overlap. Conceptualizing the process of writing as all three types of art, but nevertheless privileging action, provides a more conceptual, productive, and ultimately most practical way for instructors to foster student engagement with the progymnasmata.

Scott Newstok, in *How to Think Like Shakespeare: Lessons from a Renaissance Education*, demonstrates the inherent overlap of the three types of art. “What’s a better way to talk about vibrant habits of mind?” he posits; “I propose that craft more accurately describes (and celebrates) thinking,” and “Craft reminds us of the writer-in-process,” in which writers become “a product of [their] practice” (25). He also adds, “making is thinking” whereby the “mind and hand [go] together,” and “this kind of mindful making applies to everything from a physical object to a philosophical argument” (28). Newstok’s insights demonstrate *doing* as the constant and most important process, serving as the connective tissue that brings all three categories of art together.

The mutually informative relationship of craftsmanship, between the writer and her work, connects to Aristotle’s habituation as a means of developing virtue through habitual practice. As Newstok shows, “Craft require[s] discipline, enforced by people as well as by the object itself” through which “practitioners habituat[e] themselves into ever-evolving patterns” (27). Once the process commences, Sennett adds, “Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; this dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding” (Prologue). The “rhythm,” in this case, would be the connection between *knowing*, *doing*, and *making*. Newstok demonstrates, “There’s an intimate, immersive relationship to material, whether physical or conceptual. The material resists, pushes back, in a kind of dialogue with the materials and means of execution,” whereby “making an exchange with materials—what you give to a material, and what it gives back” (29-30). In order for the flow to continue, the student needs to be

actively engaged in her process of writing. For instance, when given instructions for a particular progymnasmata exercise, the student obviously needs to understand what the assignment requires ('knowing'); similarly, the student should be pleased with the product of her work after completing the assignment ('making'). Nevertheless, it is the process of writing, itself, through the exercises that prompts the habituation process ('doing'). As Aristotle outlined, "moral virtue is the result of habit, and so it is that moral virtue got its name [*ēthikē*] by a slight alteration of the term *habit* [*ethos*]" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2, ch. 1, sec. 1103a).

Habits require a consistent and extended *doing*. Continuous practice prompts the habituation process, in which students develop dispositions with internalized virtues. Therefore, students should be given the opportunity to *practice* compositions as frequently as possible in a *mindful* and *productive* fashion. Assigning all fourteen of the progymnasmata exercises gives students the opportunity to regularly and actively practice their writing, which will also serve to shape their virtuous dispositions. Crowley recognizes that "In Latin *habitus* signifies a stable condition or situation, but the word is also related to terms meaning 'aptitude' and 'dwelling,' both of which uses survive in English as 'habit,' 'inhabit,' and 'habitation'" (62). Each exercise serves as a space of 'dwelling' for the student to build upon their composition 'aptitude' through the 'habit' of writing. Cherry iterates that *ethos* designates "both the exercise of virtue and the morally good character" that "results from habituation. Hence the frequent rendering "ethos [as] 'moral character'" (388). The connective glue throughout these overlapping processes is the view of writing as a practical art, rooted in *doing*. Comte-Sponville helps

to summarize: “Virtue, it has been said ever since Aristotle, is an acquired disposition to do what is good Good is not something to contemplate; it is something to be done. And so with virtue, too: it is the effort to act well and in that very effort itself virtue defines the good” (3).

Continuous Readings

For a composition course utilizing the progymnasmata, the readings should be diverse, accessible, and selected by both the students and instructor. The students should not be required to purchase any textbook or other materials for the course. Considering the boundless options for online material available that’s open-source and/or freely permissible for educational use, there’s no reason for students to pay any additional money for their writing course.

Some exercises will have the instructor select specific readings for the students. More often than not, however, students will be given the opportunity to select readings of their choice that correspond with the principles and subject matter of the respective exercise. The instructor might suggest certain readings for the assignment (serving as a modern *topoi*, of sorts) or leave the decision entirely open to the student’s discretion. As Quintilian demonstrates, “For my part, I consider, and not without authorities to support me, that the material of oratory is everything that may come before an orator for discussion” (*IO*, bk. 2, ch. 21, sec. 4). Thus, while instructors might be drawn to offer suggestions for readings that correspond with particular pedagogical goals, the options are essentially limitless. Having the students select their own readings each semester also maintains a system of continual updated material within the dynamic process of

learning—after all, most students will be drawn to pull from current events to base many of their exercises on, which makes whatever material they happen to be drawn toward that much more practical. Having students search for and select their own readings makes even the relatively passive activity of reading that much more of a *doing*.

Additionally, many of the readings provide models of virtuous behavior. As Quintilian declares, “tender minds, which will imbibe deeply whatever has entered them while rude and ignorant of everything, may learn not only what is eloquent, but, still more, what is morally good” (*IO*, bk. 1, ch. 8, sec. 4). While it’s debatable as to whether or not the minds of college-age students are still “tender” for forming, the undertaking of all fourteen exercises will nevertheless promote habituation, which serves the same benefit of shaping their dispositions. The readings will also serve as models of communicative excellencies. Quintilian reasons, “To understand words thoroughly, to learn not only their signification, but their forms and measures, and to be able to judge whether they are adapted to the places to which they are assigned” requires “assiduous reading and hearing, since we receive all language first of all by the ear” (*IO*, bk. 10, ch. 1, sec. 10). Even though Quintilian references the mode of spoken communication most prominently in the training of the orator, the same principles of modeling apply to writing and reflect the progression from imitation to creation throughout the scaffolding of the progymnasmata exercises.

A Renaissance of Modes

The students should be given the opportunity to compose (or deliver, perform, etc.) their progymnasmata exercises through a variety of modes. As with the readings, the

instructor should decide what exercises might be best fitted for particular modes, but again, the students will benefit most by deciding themselves what mode (or combination) is best suited for their rhetorical aims. It should be noted that ‘multimodality’ is nothing new in writing instruction, which isn’t to diminish the exciting work of digital rhetoric scholarship and pedagogy; rather, it’s important to realize that different rhetorical situations have always prompted a variety of modes for audience engagement. Lanham, this time in “What’s Next for Text,” clarifies that although “text is being put back into three-dimensional space” through particular technological advancements, “It is also being put back into time” (28). He uses “medieval manuscript illuminations [that] look like stills from an animation in progress,” along with countless other historical examples, to demonstrate that audiences have “always craved rich, mixed, competitive, antiphonal signals” (21).

Quintilian frequently notes how the available modes of his day were interconnected, whereby the use and study of a variety of mediums contributed to the student’s overall rhetorical expertise:

I know it is an ordinary subject of inquiry whether more is contributed by writing, reading, or speaking. This question we should have to examine with careful attention, if we could confine ourselves to any one of those exercises. But they are all so connected, so inseparably linked with one another that if any one of them is neglected, we labor in vain in the other two, for our speech will never become forcible and energetic unless it acquires strength from great practice in writing. The labor of writing, if left destitute of models from reading, passes away without

effect, as having no director. He who knows how everything ought to be said, but does not have his eloquence ready and prepared for all emergencies, will merely brood, as it were, over locked up treasure. (*IO*, bk. 10, ch. 1, sec. 1-2)

A lack of exposure to different modes results in students having less available means of persuasion. The same principle continues to exist; further, the progression in technology has merely prompted more options and opportunities for communication as available means of persuasion. Lanham points out that selecting one mode (or combination) over another is a “stylistic choice,” leaving rhetors with, what he designates this time as, the “middle-sex question”: “Whether to communicate information in words, images, or sounds. How do I decide this?” (17). Students should be ready to defend why they selected a particular mode over another for their exercises, which provides an excellent opportunity for further habituation of the virtue of mindfulness.

Implementing the Progymnasmata

The following section will provide practical guidance for carrying out all fourteen progymnasmata exercises in a writing classroom. While the focus will be most geared toward including the system in a first-year composition course, there are countless deviations that a creative instructor could develop for an upper-division course (e.g., technical writing, writing in the disciplines). Direct information on (optional) ways to assign each exercise is provided along with clarification, commentary, parallel activities, and other information where applicable.

1. Fable

A fable involves the anthropomorphization of non-human elements in order to provide a moral lesson. For instance, the turtle and the hare demonstrates the dangers of overconfidence in positions of temporary advantage, etc. By presenting the issue through non-human elements (most often, animals), the reader becomes more receptive to the lesson. In essence, a serious message regarding an ethical issue becomes far more palatable when exemplified through otherwise innocent characters—and usually in a humorous, lighthearted manner. Modern examples of fables include *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, which continues to be taught in compulsory education across the country to teach 20th century history and political science. Another example would be the film *Toy Story*, which provides numerous moral lessons involving loyalty, motivation, acceptance, etc. through the depiction of anthropomorphized toys—and, intriguingly, alongside human interaction with the items. The anthropomorphic nature of fables provides a comfortable entry point for young children to begin meditating on ethical issues; nevertheless, the continued prevalence and popularity of the genre for vast audiences illustrates its timeless value for multiple age groups and environments.

Students will select a fable—most often drawing from Aesop’s collection; however, they are more than welcome to find one elsewhere. The assigned readings for the first week of class include an article specifying what a fable is; another presenting five of Aesop’s most popular fables (e.g., the wolf and the sheep), which they are required to read all of; and a link with an archive of more than 35 of Aesop’s fables—purely for reference purposes, as a sort of *topoi* for them to peruse if needing ideas for selection.

The assignment is housed within their first discussion post of the semester. Within the post, students are required to introduce themselves with photos and background information. Then, they provide either a link or transcript of their selected fable along with a summary. The summary proves they did the readings and understand the fable's message (or can at least offer a compelling interpretation). Most importantly, the students need to defend why they selected that particular fable and specify its merits: was it humorous, profound, entertaining, etc.? They need to justify why people should hear/view (and *understand*) the fable, regardless of the audience's age or historical period.

From the standpoint of ethos, the selection and defense of the fable gives students the opportunity to introduce and present themselves in a manner that's simultaneously lighthearted yet deeply reflective. The fable highlights values the student holds dear (e.g., humor, courage, loyalty, skepticism), which might not otherwise be shown through conventional class introductions. The exercise offers a relatively low-stakes entry point into college-writing and resembles the progymnasmata's location in ancient schooling as a bridge between grammar and declamation. While the assignment might seem somewhat infantile to the now worldly and sophisticated college students, the responses always contain a litany of comments from students admitting how their selected fable remains surprisingly relevant in current times. Students regularly mention 'hidden messages' and 'layers of meaning' they were able to decipher now, further proving the use of mindfully engaging with the genre, regardless of age.

2. Narrative

Generally, narratives consist of five basic elements: plot, setting, characters, conflict, and theme. Similarly, the rhetorical device of narration requires the relation (or construction) of stories with a focus on description. The instructor should clarify what defines a narrative through lecture, discussion and assigned expository readings that delineate attributes of the convention. Students will compose a first-hand narrative of any meaningful life experience they feel comfortable sharing—whether it be to the instructor or class, at large. For the first time, a word count minimum is prescribed at 250 words. The students are given free reign regarding the setting, characters, etc., they want to portray. While the responses are quite diverse, students generally narrate a breakup, parent helping them, moment of success on a sports team or club, a rough day at school, or some other moment in which they're worldview transformed (usually for the better) in order to adapt and succeed in their surroundings.

The exercise is useful for the student's writing development on a mechanical and ethical level. The newly incorporated word count minimum might seem daunting; however, having students write about a topic they are already knowledgeable of (considering it's about their personal life) makes generating enough material to fulfill the assignment's constraints that much more manageable. The exercise helps scaffold the student's capacity to produce a required amount of material, and this skill will be required to greater degrees for later assignments necessitating outside research. Though it is not required, students nearly always provide a 'life lesson' that was gained or reinforced through the experience being narrated. Whereas the fable offered a life lesson through anthropomorphic elements, the lesson is now depicted by humans—specifically,

themselves in past events. The fable offers up a ready-made moral lesson (or two) with agreed upon interpretations (or, at least, popular interpretations), but the narrative obliges the students to interpret their own lives. The life-lesson is revealed by portraying the dynamics and outcomes of their decisions in past situations. Additionally, while the fable might have seemed like an antiquated exercise to the students still skeptical of the progymnasmata's contemporary value, the narrative proves the usefulness of these genres for today on a timely and personal level.

Instructors utilizing online message boards should consider whether or not to make the exercise public to the other students or private for the instructor's viewing only. Instructors choosing to make the responses public might benefit by viewing the activity through Cordova's conception of ethos construction in new media. Cordova defends online message boards and related media as "spaces that not only we inhabit but can craft together," whereby "an emergent pedagogy of multiliteracies stands to be enhanced by a direct engagement with the notion of ethos as dwelling place, with the ethics of dwelling" (147). If narratives are the relation of stories, then online spaces become sites for the *collective* and *participatory* relation of stories that contribute toward larger, interconnected, and dynamic narratives. Instructors going this route should nevertheless still give students the option of keeping their posts private (and any post for that matter, throughout the semester) if the student doesn't feel comfortable sharing their responses.

3. Anecdote

An anecdote is a short depiction of an incident involving a real person, which is usually humorous and entertaining. The anecdote either further supports the recognized

character of the person being portrayed or sheds light on an overlooked or otherwise secret aspect of the individual. Rarely, if ever, is the anecdote backed up by empirical evidence; thus, the creator (and/or reciter) can construct the anecdote in whatever manner best meets her goals. For example, if the best man at a wedding wants to playfully tease the groom during a speech, there might be a plethora of hyperbole or outright fantasy at moments intended solely for entertaining the audience. Somewhat similar to the fable, popular anecdotes might also portray a didactic ethical message, such as the fictional anecdote of George Washington chopping down the cherry tree that cautions against the dangers of lying.

After making their way through assigned readings regarding anecdotes along with examples, students will select an anecdote of a person from any time period. They will have to explain how this anecdote provides insight toward the person's personality and character. Then, the student will give a value judgement toward the person *and* the anecdote, itself, by defending whether or not the person should be praised or blamed because of (or in spite of) the anecdote.

In the responses, students most often provide anecdotes of famous people or family members whom they admire. Though many selections are humorous, oddly enough, students nearly always provide their interpretation of a notable lesson that can be gained from the anecdote. Technically, the inclusion of the noteworthy lesson goes beyond the minimum requirements of praising the person and/or the anecdote, itself. Students are beginning to take the initiative, through habit, of naturally searching for life

lessons within the progymnasmata exercises, which exemplifies Aristotelian virtue ethics—specifically, the process of habituation.

4. Proverb

A proverb is a common saying that expresses a basic truth within a specific culture. Since this is the fourth exercise—still early in the semester—it’s important the instructor continues to make clear the defining principles of each genre. One of the assigned readings for that week is a document that clearly outlines the basic distinctions between an anecdote and a proverb. Whereas anecdotes pertain to specific individuals, proverbs detail general moral lessons that are not contingent upon a single individual or occurrence.

Students are instructed to select any existing proverb and quote it directly or paraphrase. They will then create a ‘flyer’ with the proverb included in it. Students are encouraged to treat the rhetorical situation as an opportunity for them to ‘advertise’ their proverb to the public. Students can include images, assortments of fonts, shapes, etc. Essentially, they can make whatever design decisions they would like as long as the material remains legible. The instructor should clarify that the term ‘advertise’ is being used loosely. Students are not selling a product *per se*; instead, they must strive to make the proverb fashionable/popular/etc. for their intended audience(s). In essence, the basic truth (or rather, piece of wisdom) contained within the proverb comprises the product being advertised.

In terms of design, students are encouraged to imitate current depictions of proverbs in digital environments. After all, the progymnasmata centers around the

student's progression from imitation to creation throughout the scaffolded exercises. Many social media spaces, in particular, follow a similar pattern of promoting proverbs, even though the audiences and even producers might not otherwise be familiar with the genre. For instance, countless Instagram posts contain familiar moral sayings/messages in the captions under photographs, if not pasted directly onto the images.

The multimodal exercise offers students the opportunity to compose beyond traditional modes of solely text-based communication. It necessitates digital design competency—skills which are becoming increasingly important, if not required, for their success as communicators throughout the remainder of the college education and into their professional and personal lives. Additionally, the exercise encourages students to be more mindful of the values being promoted across social media from others as well as the values they themselves choose to promote within digital environments.

5. Refutation

A refutation challenges an opposing argument and seeks to disprove the claim(s) offered by the opposition. In order for a refutation to be compelling, the author must have a solid grasp of the adverse position. It might seem strange to have the refutation *before* the confirmation in the order of exercises; however, the arrangement makes sense considering the progymnasmata progresses from assignments focused on imitation to that of creation. In order for a student to make compelling arguments of their own, they need to know what a good (and bad) argument looks like. Students can learn from the mistakes of others by picking apart weak arguments as well as what moves and lines of reasoning (or lack thereof) to avoid.

Students will select a real-world argument from a popular source and refute it. The instructor might provide a list of sources and/or particular pieces to select from. The list of encouraged sources will be housed within the required readings for the week. Instructors might want to update these sources each semester in order to make the exercise more relevant and engaging for the students. Alternatively, the student can select their own if a link to the source is provided. Students wanting to find their own are encouraged to select a source related to a topic they're considering for an upcoming larger project within the writing class, another course, or associated with their aspiring careers. For instance, a biology major might select a source that discusses gene editing for her refutation. A business major could locate an article on investing through a traditional IRA as opposed to a Roth IRA. Since the possibilities are nearly endless, students should be encouraged to locate sources related to their career goals or ones they're at least genuinely passionate about.

At a minimum of 250 words, students will provide a refutation by summarizing the article, citing at least one direct quote, and addressing any and/or all of the following points: The argument is vague, obscure or uncertain; illogical and impossible; improper or unfitting; leads to something unprofitable or inexpedient; and/or some other aspect the student finds fault with. Instructors should clarify that students don't have to necessarily disagree with the *entire* message of their selected sources; rather, they're more than welcome to focus on a specific aspect or two. Concentrating on particular claims can be exceptionally helpful for students choosing the same source for their confirmation, which will be discussed in the following exercise.

6. Confirmation

A confirmation supports a position by backing up the claims. It is essentially the opposite of the previous refutation exercise. The topic for the confirmation must be debatable; otherwise, there wouldn't be a position on the issue to support in the first place by backing up the claims. This exercise naturally builds on the previous assignment because many thoughtful positions in debates incorporate critiques of the opposing side(s) within their arguments. For instance, arguments in support of universal healthcare could be strengthened by including refutations of popular contentions against it. Since academic research contributes to larger conversations and debates, an ability to apply refutation and confirmation becomes a useful asset, especially when the two devices overlap to create richer and more compelling positions.

Similar to the previous exercise, students will again select a real-world argument but this time confirm it. Once more, instructors might provide a list of sources and/or particular pieces for students to select from. The list of encouraged sources will be housed within the required readings for the week. Students can also locate their own sources to provide confirmations of if a link to the source is provided. Students with a particularly polemical disposition might want to embrace the challenge of using the same source from their previous exercise and then confirm it—essentially, arguing from the opposing side of their earlier position. For instance, the previously mentioned biology major might utilize the same source that discusses gene editing for her refutation but this time supporting the author's overall argument or particular aspects of the piece. Just as well, the student could find another article on the topic to confirm that argues against the

source from the refutation, which would be especially productive for the student looking to compile resources for an upcoming larger project. Many composition classes require ‘argumentative papers’ or related genres without offering smaller low-stake exercises to practice the skills of taking positions on issues. Students can use the exercises of refutation and confirmation to test out ideas and positions that they may choose to build upon, alter, or altogether abandon in preparation for their larger projects.

In at least 250 words, students will provide a confirmation by summarizing the article, citing at least one direct quote, and addressing any and/or all of the following points: The argument is clear, manifest, obvious, probable, logical, coherent; fitting and proper, leads to something beneficial; and/or some other aspect the student finds compelling. Instructors should clarify that students don’t have to necessarily agree with the *entire* message of their selected sources; rather, they’re more than welcome to focus on a specific aspect or two.

7. Commonplace

A commonplace is any commonly held belief from communities and/or audiences on a particular topic. The belief is usually false and merely perpetuated through problematic stereotypes that have only managed to survive across certain groups as a result of ignorance, fear, and irrationality. The assignment should be set up to prompt students to analyze conventional understandings on topics by offering logical and ethical critiques.

Students will select a commonplace from the field of business/study they plan on pursuing and place it in bold at the top of their exercise. They will need to explain how

this commonplace arose and why it continues to exist; then, they will critique the commonplace. Instructors might benefit from offering their students the following optional framework to complete the activity: ‘The public tends to view (profession) as (adjective).’ For example: ‘The public tends to view communication majors as lazy’—followed by a critique of that commonplace in at least 250 words.

Responses frequently challenge stereotypes regarding majors, particular in terms of gender. For instance, students often write commonplaces resembling the following outline: ‘Men are more analytical engineers’ or ‘Women make more compassionate teachers.’ Students providing commonplaces along those lines nearly always explain why the public narrative has been distorted for years leading up to the stereotype, why it isn’t true, and what strides are being made in order to correct the misconceptions. For many, the assignment encourages students to compose a clear defense of their chosen career paths in the face of misunderstandings from the wider public. At the very least, the exercise prompts students to analyze problematic commonplaces and how to amend them through rational and ethical lines of thinking.

8. Encomium

Encomium is the expression of praise. This exercise and the following invective are the two assignments that fit most neatly within the generally overlooked rhetoric office of epideictic (i.e., praise/blame) compared to the pervasive branches of judicial (i.e., exposition of what happened) and deliberation (i.e., judgements pertaining to what should be done for future benefits). Examples of encomium in popular culture include eulogies, toasts, honorary ceremonies, etc.

Simply put, students will choose something to praise, and the word count minimum of 250 remains. At this point in the scaffolding and progression of the progymnasmata, instructors should allow a great deal of freedom for their students to select essentially anything to praise. Suggested topics of focus could be a person (real or fictional), animal, place, concept (general or specific), type of weather, etc. While the most popular topic students choose is a parent for the exercise, a surprising amount of responses are focused on weather and/or seasons, which demonstrates a willingness on their part to engage with topics they might not have otherwise written on in academic spaces. Students will not only gain the benefit of creating thoughtful encomia, but will also realize the difficulty of producing a piece of composition when the constraints have been almost entirely lifted.

9. Invective

Invective is the opposite of an encomium because it casts blame toward something. In popular culture, a *rant* comes closest to the genre's vernacular equivalent. Within the progymnasmata, placing a negative after a positive might seem inconsistent when compared to the earlier ordering of the refutation preceding confirmation; however, students become more comfortable composing an invective within the branch of epideictic after having the opportunity to write a piece of praise. Notably, many students confess that they've never previously had an assignment in school where they were able to (in their verbiage:) 'just complain about something.' Having to work through the previous exercise gives them the experience of organizing a thoughtful a piece of composition geared toward denunciation.

Students will choose something to blame/denounce, and the word count minimum of 250 remains. Again, instructors should allow a great deal of freedom for their students to select essentially anything to blame/denounce. Suggested topics of focus could be a person (real or fictional), animal, place, concept (general or specific), type of weather, etc. Similar to the confirmation/refutation dynamic, particularly motivated students might provide an invective on the same topic as their encomium.

Even though students should be encouraged to select topics related to their fields and/or upcoming larger projects, many take the opportunity to have some fun within the peculiar exercise by selecting topics ranging from pizza toppings they find unappetizing to pop songs they can't stand. Having fun should be promoted (within reason) since, after all, Quintilian always advocated for playful yet thoughtful attitudes throughout schooling. Ironically, choosing an otherwise silly topic can make reaching the word count rather difficult, which further increases the student's writing capacities.

10. Comparison

The comparison can be understood as a sort of combination of the previous two exercises. Whereas the encomium and invective praised or blamed a single topic, the comparison measures two topics and the relation of qualities (or lack thereof) between them. Therefore, a formula for generating a comparison could be any of the following variations: encomium + encomium; encomium + invective; invective + encomium; or invective + invective. Thinking about the exercise through this lens also thoroughly illustrates how the preceding assignments directly build from one another.

Students will be required to compare two topics of focus, and they have tremendous freedom with their selections. Students can combine their encomium and invective exercises as long as they're not simply copying and pasting them to fulfill the assignment. If choosing the combination path, students are instructed to focus on the correlations and/or varying degrees of differences pertaining to specific aspects of each topic in relation to one another. For instance, if a student wrote her encomium on python coding and invective on java programming, then the comparison might be focused on attributes concerning functionality, ease of use, compliance, etc. Regardless, as long as certain qualities of the selected topics are defended and/or critiqued, the student will receive full credit for the assignment (or, at minimum, close to it). The exercise gets students to break the habit of merely saying 'I like it' as a form of justifying preferences; instead, students are required to defend their comparisons through rational and detailed presentations of the topics.

11. Characterization

Characterization involves imitating the character of another person. Imitation requires an ability to closely analyze the outward attributes and practices of the selected individual. Through a literary lens, it necessitates an understanding of form. Imitation also necessitates deeply understanding the inward motivates of the selected individual in order to envision what actions and mannerisms the person would most likely perform within hypothetical situations. Placing oneself in another's shoes is an extremely important ability for both ethical and rhetorical matters. Furthermore, shifting from

mimicry to envisioning hypothetical circumstances represents the progymnasmata's progression from imitation to creation.

Students will select a real person from any point in history and write a piece of composition from that individual's perspective. Essentially, the student will be *inhabiting* the ethos of another individual. The student will be entirely responsible for devising what rhetorical situation the individual is in. For instance, the student might compose a public statement from the point of view of Elon Musk the day after the Cybertruck unveiling, explaining why exactly it was a good idea to throw an additional steel ball at another window after breaking the first one, which simply replicated and intensified the disaster.

Instructors wanting to provide an engaging follow-up activity might anonymously showcase a few examples of the characterizations in the next class meeting. Students will be encouraged to guess what person the characterization is written on, without the student author revealing it until afterwards. The instructor will require the student guesses to be backed up by evidence at the level of both form and content. For instance, the instructor might ask what word choices, behavior, and/or style suggests the piece was written by that particular person. For instructors who have decided to make the exercises public, they should, of course, make online posts private (if only temporary) until after the in-class activity.

12. Description

The description presents a topic as clearly and detailed as possible with the goal of making the subject matter perfectly coherent for the intended audience. For the exercise, students will describe in extreme detail some process, element, concept, or item

of their choosing. Students might view this assignment as a regression with its seeming lack of creativity; however, the instructor should remind them it is building on the principles that have been developed up throughout the progression of exercises. In essence, students will need to transfer information from a preexisting source and package it in a manner that maintains accuracy, clarity, and captivates their audience. The ability to present complex information clearly is a skill that will undoubtedly benefit the students throughout the remainder of their schooling and into professional careers. In fact, the exercise could just as easily find its way in a technical, scientific, or business writing course at the upper-division level.

In at least 250 words, the student will select a topic of focus from their prospective fields of work/study and compose a description for an audience that is completely ignorant of, and removed from, that field. The few preceding exercises have been relatively unconstrained in terms of topics for selection; nonetheless, requiring students to select something directly applicable to an upcoming project provides a necessary added responsibility to their writing as they near the completion of the progymnasmata. Also, on a purely functional level, making the students gear topics toward larger (presumably higher graded) assignments prompts them to more thoroughly focus on the subject matter, which is a crucial component of the exercise. For instance, a student planning to compose an argumentative paper discussing the dangers of vaping might describe the process of liquid nicotine juice turning into smoke through a popular device. The exercise serves as a final opportunity for students to describe a topic on a

purely objective level before transition to argumentation and onto contemporary rhetorical situations mirroring the ancient schooling of declamation.

13. Thesis

The thesis involves a thorough examination of a debatable issue. If the previous description exercise resembled a technical document, the thesis could be viewed as a form of journalism covering a widespread controversy. For instance, a thesis might report the different approaches to combatting the Covid-19 epidemic. The student would maintain a somewhat objective role by analyzing how different sides of the controversy attempt to solve the issue. In this case, the student might describe the arguments related to social distancing, vaccine effectiveness and distribution, etc. Whereas the description exercise focused on a specific aspect of a larger system, the thesis extends the purview to interactions of contending approaches through a more analytic framework. It should be noted that many of the approaches discussed might overlap at times, which is certainly allowed and should be represented fairly. In other words, students do not have to find polar opposite ends of the spectrum for the issue they're covering in order to locate differing approaches. For example, a student might focus their thesis on differing vaccines, in which much of the research informing the variety of medicines overlap yet the execution and/or ingredients might vary. In that case, the student would accurately portray the pros and cons of each primary vaccine currently being distributed.

Instructors might decide to treat this exercise as a major project of the semester, similar to the genre of an informative/expository essay. Instructors have the option of allowing their students to make a multimodal thesis (e.g., podcast covering universal

basic income). Regardless of the medium, students will need to examine both sides of the controversial issue in a balanced manner, backed up by credible sources. For instance, the student covering controversies related to Covid-19 would locate scientific research and media coverage from a variety of viewpoints; additionally, the sources would need to be cited according to the instructor's preferred formatting (e.g., MLA, APA). In essence, students conduct mindful surveys of contemporary issue without entering the debate, themselves.

14. Law

Similar to the previous exercise, students will this time examine a law, regulation, plan of action, etc. related to a controversial issue. Students are more than welcome, and encouraged, to build from the same topic as their previous exercise. For instance, the student covering Covid-19 vaccines would this time focus on how the particular medicines should be distributed. Students should also be encouraged to compose their law through a multimodal container. An example would be a website covering the student's preferred Covid-19 vaccine with pages centered around subtopics pertaining to the chemistry, scientific research, detailed blueprints and plans for distribution, and possibly even direct links to sites with registration and insurance information in order for the audience to make plans for receiving the vaccine after reading through the exercise.

While the traditional handling of the law exercise required students to maintain the role of observer with objective coverage, similar to the previous exercise, instructors might be compelled to push the boundaries a bit for this final assignment, and they definitely should. If an instructor's university department requires an argumentative essay

at some point in the semester, this exercise could certainly fulfill the role. As well, considering the risk of some students not having additional writing-centered classes throughout their educational career, having the law exercise take the shape of an argumentative ‘paper’ (or alternative medium) provides a parallel to the classical tradition of progressing to declamation.

Reflection

Students will be required to provide a reflection on the progymnasmata in whatever style, genre, and medium they deem best. The student should mention their favorite and least favorite exercise and explain why. They will then detail what *writing processes* gained and/or exercised throughout the progymnasmata they plan on taking forward in their academic, professional, and personal lives, and they will explain why. Additionally, and most importantly, they will need to detail what *lessons* they plan on taking with them in their academic, professional, and personal lives.

Returning Inward

It’s important for instructors to remember that they have their own semester-long assignment, which is to model the virtues they want to promote. As Enos mentions, “The teacher can educate with exercises and assignments but indirectly, Quintilian notes, students will also learn from the teacher who serves as a model” (119). An instructor acting in a manner inconsistent with the material they espouse only further widens the chasm between knowledge and behavior. It would answer the ‘Q Question’ in the negative, considering the instructor contains the most knowledge of communication

practices in the room. From that view, any knowledge the students gain throughout the semester would be contributing toward future vice. Since virtue ethics grounds the implementation of the progymnasmata, the instructor must embody and reinforce the principles through their actions. It is the *doing* of teaching—nothing more, nothing less.

Scenarios in Practice

The following two scenarios illustrate on a practical level some before and after results of students engaging with the progymnasmata. For the sake of specificity, the students within each scenario complete the same exercise, “Characterization”—the eleventh step of the progymnasmata. The goal of these scenarios is to showcase how the system functions in a typical writing class. The verbiage of these descriptions is intentionally colloquial to make the sketches as clear and accessible for as wide of an audience as possible—ranging from administrators already familiar with the disciplinary vocabulary of rhetoric and composition, to those from other disciplines, as well as the everyday student and practitioner.

For the characterization exercise, students select a real person from any point in history and write a piece of composition from that individual’s perspective. The student is entirely responsible for creating the situation that their selected individual encounters. Students receive full credit if their characterizations manage to accurately depict their selected individuals. The word choices, writing style, and content must reflect their selected individual. Essentially, the student must be fair in their depiction by creating and writing within a situation that reflects the character of their selected individual. Regardless of the audience, a compelling case must be made for why their

characterization is an accurate depiction of the selected individual. As with the entire progymnasmata, this exercise helps students internalize specific virtues to shape their ethical dispositions.

Scenario One

Enter Jonathan, a nineteen-year-old male from a lower-middle-class neighborhood. He is a first-year, political science major with plans of entering law school after graduation. While he is extremely talkative during class discussions, his responses to the progymnasmata exercises have been inconsistent. For particular assignments, he goes above and beyond, but for others, he does the bare minimum. His pronounced passion and argumentation skills are recognized as above average by his instructor; however, Jonathan often pays little attention to grammar and punctuation in his writing, even for final drafts of assignments.

For his upcoming final project in the course, the argumentative essay, Jonathan has selected the topic of social media censorship. He plans on arguing for more regulations from governmental agencies in terms of preventing hate speech in online environments. A major requirement of the upcoming project is to include opposing viewpoints, but Jonathan has struggled to motivate himself to research sources with ideas he disagrees with. Unfortunately, as is evident in class discussions and his writing, Jonathan regularly has difficulty fairly representing other viewpoints. He even has trouble understanding the value of including opposing sides, let alone incorporating them into larger discussions. He may have already made up his mind on an issue, so why challenge

that? He believes including the claims of opposing viewpoints will do nothing but weaken his argument.

After receiving encouragement from his instructor to make the latter half of the progymnasmata exercises directly related to upcoming projects, Jonathan has decided to look for someone in popular culture whom he ardently disagrees with. Since the argumentative project is due in three weeks and he still hasn't located a single opposing source, he listens to his instructor's repeated suggestions that "you can make the assignments both fun *and* productive by using the exercises to locate and develop material for larger assignments."

He's selected Ben Shapiro for his characterization exercise, an individual he finds disagreeable on a personal and intellectual level. The situation he's developed involves Shapiro presenting before Congress. As such, the form of the characterization exercise will be written testimony that explains to Congress why there should not be regulations related to speech in online environments—composed from the perspective of Shapiro.

Jonathan has certainly heard bits and pieces of Shapiro's work—after all, there is a reason why he finds him so disagreeable; nonetheless, he is now forced to confront Shapiro's material on a deeper level. To make the characterization as believable as possible, Jonathan takes time to ingest clips of Shapiro debating at college campuses and on news channels, and even reads through articles from Shapiro that deal with issues related to censorship and popular technology companies. To make the characterization accurate, he needs to replicate the argumentative moves Shapiro makes. Since the phrase "freedom of speech" remains a central component of the debate surrounding online

copyright, Jonathan knows that he must define that concept using Shapiro’s terms. On a practical level, he realizes the need to brush up on the precise policies of corporations involved within the debate. He also needs to make sure the writing style resembles Shapiro’s on both a written and spoken level—since the format is a written testimony intended to be presented before Congress. The ability to closely analyze and develop material that can be persuasive, whether read or spoken aloud, is surely a skill that will benefit him in his aspiring legal career.

For Jonathan, the exercise manages to be the most difficult on a personal level yet productive in terms of developing capacities that will serve him for the remainder of his academic and professional career. As a result of momentarily mirroring a person he dislikes¹, he has been pushed to better understand the motivations of those from opposing viewpoints. Since he had to develop material written from the adversary’s perspective, he has begun to see the merits of including counter-arguments and other sides of issues within debates. Having to define freedom of speech from Shapiro’s perspective has provided tremendous insight toward how a lot of individuals in opposing political camps regard it. Specifically, it has shown Jonathan the inconsistencies surrounding argumentation when discussing online censorship. Jonathan is now better able to define his terms, anticipate push-back, and remain focused on the issues at hand. The exercise has helped him locate an outside source for inclusion within the upcoming argumentative

¹ It is worth noting that Shapiro has been the subject of antipathy both from moderate and left-leaning individuals, as well as alt-right individuals. Some of the alt-right pushback has been characterized as anti-Semitic in tone [examples include the following [Washington Post article](#) and [ADL Report](#)]. Our scenario, while engaging a controversial political figure, is in no respects intended as anti-Semitic.

paper. He has been able to gain more experience in researching and locating material, which he realizes can be quite engaging when developing one's argument. He now realizes that incorporating a variety of sources within both the research and production process strengthens one's argument and not weaken it.

The ability to thoroughly engage with a variety of sources, understand their positions without necessarily accepting them, and framing one's argument in an educated and balanced manner all become virtues Jonathan has begun to internalize, virtues can be taken with him throughout the remainder of his educational and professional career. Jonathan has become further habituated with the virtue of adaptability through mirroring the moves of Shapiro and constructing the composition in a format entirely new to him: a testimony ready to be read or spoken aloud; he's again internalized experimentation, whereby he's tested out different moves that Shapiro would feasible make in order to make the characterization believable. Specifically, within Aristotelian virtue ethics, he has exercised truthfulness (*alētheia*), existing between the two vices of boastfulness and irony, by making a characterization of Shapiro that is accurate, creative, but not parodic. Further, he's exemplified truthfulness by having to more properly define the term "freedom of speech" in order to refer back to it accurately along with the precise policies of technology corporations involved in the issue of online censorship. An additional Aristotelian virtue he's practiced is wittiness (*eutrapelia*), existing between the two vices of buffoonery (*bōmolochia*) and boorishness (*agroikia*), by creating a testimony that would be persuasive to congress in a realistic scenario while not erroring on an indulgent performance or awkward depictions of his selected individual. Finally, he's exercised the

Aristotelian virtue of justice (*dikaiosunē*) by working within a legal and political framework in hopes of moving toward fair testimony and deliberation. Again, by working through the persona of Shapiro in the constructed situation, Jonathan has a greater awareness of both the moves and content provided within these legal and political environments. Notably, justice is the one virtue Aristotle does not provide explicit vices on opposing ends, furthering the importance of Jonathan having to adapt and experiment throughout his future career as a means of reaching justice, thereby exemplifying mindfulness in a continuous and dynamic fashion, which would constitute a form of *eudaimonia* (flourishing).

Scenario Two

Enter Teresa, an eighteen-year-old female from an upper-middle-class family. She is a second-year, chemical engineering major with plans of working for a therapeutics biotechnology company after graduation. She has received As on all previous assignments in the course and is able to follow instructions closely, fulfill requirements for each progymnasmata, but views the exercises as just another thing to accomplish throughout her studies—a box that needs to be checked off on the daily to-do list. She remains relatively impartial to the field of rhetoric and composition and sees little value in working on her writing and persuasive abilities for success in her career.

For her upcoming final project in the course, the argumentative essay, Teresa has selected the topic of gene-editing. She plans on arguing for the merits of genetic modification—specifically, the use of CRISPR technologies for embryos. Teresa has already located a tremendous number of outside sources and data backing up her claims

from a scientific viewpoint. She has also organized opposing viewpoints and sees the value of incorporating them within her larger project to correct and clarify what CRISPR actually entails and why it should be promoted as opposed to feared.

Since gene-editing is an extremely new field and is still technically illegal, she has had trouble finding an individual to select for her characterization, considering nobody who's had the procedure has been able to speak openly about it. After careful research, she has found a pair of twin girls, born in Shenzhen, China, who have apparently been the first babies born after having their genomes edited. The scientist, He Jiankui, edited genomes in the twins to prevent HIV from being passed down by their parents. Teresa, always the close reader, particularly when examining instructions, knows that the characterization can be a depiction of a real individual from *any time period*. As such, she decided to write her characterization of Lulu, a pseudonym given to one of the twins, from her perspective forty years in the future.

Teresa's characterization is a letter written by Lulu in 2061 to her son on his graduation day of college. By depicting a moment in Lulu's future that will be presumably nostalgic, Teresa is compelled to write the note in a sentimental tone—a style of writing she usually tries avoiding at all costs. The nostalgic atmosphere prompts Teresa to have Lulu reflect on the fact that a monumental transition has happened. In the letter, Lulu tells her son that she hopes a chain has been broken with new beginnings. In the same way that the scientist helped prevent HIV from being passed down to her, she reminds her son that hopefully his adulthood will no longer be impacted by the media coverage their family received as a result of Lulu and her twin being the first recognized

CRISPR patients. Now that Teresa has given in fully to the assignment by allowing herself to focus on the sentimental, she also includes a dramatic conclusion. Lulu ends the letter by congratulating her son with his entrance into medical school, where he plans on getting the credentials to further research a treatment for a prevalent illness that has been met with a controversial reception in 2061.

Upon completing the exercise, Teresa is shocked by how much time has passed since beginning the assignment. She usually allots a specific amount of time within her planner to complete assignments for each course, but this has been the first exercise where she became fully immersed in the writing process. While she knows there is a practical aspect to time management for the majority of assignments, she also can't help but admit that this seemingly simple assignment has been a rare opportunity to become entirely consumed in the task. Plus, she rationalizes that since the characterization activity is directly connected to her upcoming project, she has saved time in the future sections of her planner allotted to the research and outlining process for the argumentative essay.

The exercise has fostered greater rhetorical awareness for Teresa. While the majority of her coursework in the STEM disciplines will continue to enable her with the ability to present research for scientific and technical audiences, she's been reminded yet again of the urgency for translating material for wider audiences. After all, scientific research often gets misunderstood by the general public. The field of genome editing is met with particular resistance, and Teresa's eager practice of converting scientific

information through a sentimental lens will be useful in her future plans of working for a therapeutics biotechnology company.

She has been able to better empathize with patients and outside audiences, which are not only virtues Teresa has begun to internalize to help her own career but continue to be essential assets for the continuation of scientific and technological advancement at large. Teresa has become further habituated with the virtue of adaptability by managing to organize scientific insights within the format of a personal letter; she's again internalized experimentation, whereby she's tested out different hypothetical futures and statements of Lulu while making the document believable. Specifically, within Aristotelian virtue ethics, she's exercised friendliness (*philia*), existing between the two vices of overly obedient obsequiousness (*areskos*) and quarrelsomeness (*duseris*), by making a characterization of Lulu told through a form of an affectionate letter to her future son. Taking a step back, since friendliness can only be internalized through continuous practice of engaging with a variety of audiences, Teresa is better able to convey this virtue as she gains more experience presenting scientific material to those she might not otherwise interact with in the confines of her discipline. An additional Aristotelian virtue she's exemplified is gentleness (*praotēs*), existing between the two vices of irritability (*orgilotēs*) and spiritlessness (*aorgēsia*), by creating a document to persuade audiences of the merits of genome-editing by appealing to emotion in a gentle yet spirited fashion. Finally, she's exercised the Aristotelian virtue of greatness of soul/balanced pride, existing between the vices of vanity/overly prideful (*orgilotēs*) and smallness of soul/overly humble (*mikropsuchia*), by stepping outside her comfort zone to

write within a framework and from an individual she hasn't yet managed to master within her academic career. The balance of pride exemplifies mindfulness, which will be an important disposition to continue habituating herself within in terms of engaging with patients, politicians, and others in a variety of contexts, thereby constituting a form of eudaimonia (flourishing).

CHAPTER FIVE

PERPETUAL REVOLUTIONS: CIRCLING BACK TO FUNDAMENTAL INQUIRIES

What if a demon crept after you into your loneliest loneliness some day or night, and said to you: “This life, as you live it at present, and have lived it, you must live it once more, and also innumerable times; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh, and all the unspeakably small and great in thy life must come to you again, and all in the same series and sequence” Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth, and curse the demon that so spoke? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment in which you would answer him: “You are a God, and never did I hear anything so divine!” If that thought acquired power over you as you are, it would transform you, and perhaps crush you; the question with regard to all and everything: “Do you want this once more, and also for innumerable times?” would lie as the heaviest burden upon your activity! (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*)

Eternal Return

Nietzsche’s aphorism, titled “The Heaviest Burden,” illustrates a view of history, thought, and action as repeating indefinitely throughout time. The aphorism’s cyclical depiction leaves interpretations relatively open and often conflicting in relation to determinism. According to the view, if every action an individual makes will be repeated in future lives, as a type of metaphysical reincarnation, then how much control does that individual actually have when making decisions—if the cycle has already been

determined from previous, and in accordance to, past and present actions? Nietzsche's thought experiment demonstrates the profound impact that an awareness of the process (taken literally or metaphorically) would have on an individual's decision making and view toward history.

In "Affirmation and Mortal Life: Nietzsche's Eternal Return and the Death of Zarathustra," Melanie Shepherd provides a practical reading of the aphorism: "It has been widely acknowledged that Nietzsche never presents the eternal return as a single formula or unified doctrine, and this complicates considerably efforts to understand its affirmative potential" (22). Nietzsche's writing is characteristically difficult to comprehend, making Shepherd's guidance that much more valuable. After all, Nietzsche proclaims, "The fortunate thing about my existence, perhaps its unique feature, is its fatefulness," leaving the bewildered reader guessing at how literally to interpret the thought experiment (*Ecce Homo* 7). Shepherd classifies the two predominant academic hermeneutics as the 'cosmological' and the 'practical.' The cosmological approach posits that all material, movement, and even the universe, itself, recurs indefinitely. The practical view takes a more agnostic approach to the metaphysical components of whether or not the process happens in that manner; instead, the 'practical' readers focus on how engaging with the thought experiment might impact their understanding of cyclical processes and perceptions toward agency.

Combining the cosmological view (albeit somewhat skeptically) with a practical reading elicits how an individual's affirmation of the thought experiment is a transformative and cyclical process, in itself. If an individual truly grapples with the idea

of everything repeating in perpetuity, then “the question lies on all action as the greatest weight because it undermines the perceived significance of each and every action” (25-26). Even the most minute decisions suddenly take on the greatest magnitude. The worry of making even a single wrong choice becomes a profound sense of anxiety, and attempting to fight against it only contributes to the burden. However, Shepherd references *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to show that leaning into the idea of ceaseless recurrences might, oddly enough, be the only way to overcome and break from the cycle: “deep affirmation is that tremendous and ecstatic moment in which the thought of life as an eternity of moments over which the subject has no power overwhelms one with joy” (26). Assent toward the cycles frees that person from the weight of determinism. More importantly though, the practical reading specifies how affirming the eternal return is a choice, in itself.

Specifically, the practical reading demonstrates how a genuine engagement with the eternal return as a concept does not clarify whether or not all occurrences indefinitely repeat; rather, pondering the theory brings to light the nature of thinking, itself. As Shepherd spells out, “the thought is presented as a test for the will” (32). In other words, what impact do thoughts have on decision-making, and where is the line drawn between the two? Is thought, as an action, a decision that can be willed? Throughout the test, the eternal return “cannot be committed to or willed in any real sense as long it is a thought, and willing is a mere cognitive, hypothetical sort of assent, unless it actually fragments the individual and brings about an irreversible change in lived experience” (32). Shepherd goes on to assert that this “irreversible change in lived experience” does

happen, in fact, simply by engaging with the concept: “The thought disrupts and challenges identity, yet in thinking it, the thinker is also reconstituted in her identity” (33).

The reconstitution of identity within seemingly repetitious cycles parallels Heraclitus’s famous fragment: “You cannot step twice into the same rivers; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you” (*On the E at Delphi*, Fr. 392b). It’s no wonder that Nietzsche admits in *Ecce Homo*: “The doctrine of the ‘eternal recurrence’, in other words of the unconditional and infinitely repeated circulation of all things—ultimately this doctrine of Zarathustra’s could also have been taught already by Heraclitus” (*Ecce Homo* 48). The connection to Heraclitus shows the impact that engaging with the concept has on an individual’s reconstitution; additionally, Nietzsche’s use of Heraclitus’s thought experiment—and also writing in the format of fragments, no less—illustrates the cyclical process of incorporating ideas from previous thinkers. Oddly enough, the process of becoming reconstituted eternally recurs.

The entire engagement leads up to the insight that thought, itself, is a cyclical process, and this understanding can be used as a frame of reference to analyze countless other processes relating to history and time. Shepherd establishes that an individual’s handling of the eternal return results in an affirmation, an overcoming, and reconstitution that can be repeated indefinitely. As she articulates:

Thus, in bringing themselves to conscious articulation, the impulses allow the force of life to be thought under the sign of a circle. The movement of self-overcoming is circular; life becomes new in the return of the impulses. The

circularity of the possibility of self-overcoming announced in and by Nietzsche's physiology reveals a continuity and an isomorphism between the impulses of the living being and the thought of the eternal return. (24)

A Pervasive Dialectic

On a macro level, the cyclical nature of thought manifests in continuous revivals of preceding knowledge and practices. Put simply, civilizations and cultures are continuously borrowing from and adapting the work of previous periods (from both within and outside of their current societies). The incorporation of past principles follows the same process of an individual's engagement with the eternal return, whereby cultures affirm (or rather integrate, even if temporarily), then overcome (through critique/push back), and become reconstituted (proceeding onward after being altered by the inclusion).

The frame of reference resembles Marx's use of the Hegelian Dialectic in *Das Kapital*, which suggests that history is a series of the status quos (proposition/thesis) meeting resistances (contradiction/antithesis) that manifest in updated status quos (resolution/synthesis). Avoiding the endless distinctions pertaining to Marx's use of the dialectic ('dialectical materialism') compared to Hegel's conception—not to mention, Engels' usage toward nature—for the sake of relating the Hegelian dialectic back to Nietzsche's eternal return: the propositions, contradictions, and reconciliations of the dialectic mirror the affirmation, overcoming, and reconstitution process. In essence, history is the collective extension of individuals' thought processes. An individual's engagement with information, critique, and eventual utilization of it (even if simply in

contrast to the recently received information) is a synecdoche of civilizations promoting values, challenging them, and then advancing (or nonetheless moving forward).

The cyclical nature of history at large along with recursive human thought, as a process, provides greater understanding toward the current humanities within the university and writing instruction in particular. In fact, it provides a hermeneutic for returning to the ‘Q Question’ and facing the inquiry directly. As to whether or not the ‘Q Question’ can be truly answered is currently unknown although that doesn’t relinquish responsibility toward attempting to provide provisional yet thoughtful answers. Similar to the treatment of Nietzsche’s eternal return, the *cosmological* answer remains absent whereas a ‘practical’ reading and approach would instead focus on the act of answering it. In the same vein as virtue ethics, it is a continual process that further habituates the individual.

The ‘Q Question’ Perpetually Answered

An instructor’s specific answer to the ‘Q Question’ might change each decade (or even year), but that doesn’t weaken the importance of the inquiry. Rather, the true strength and utility rests in continual engagement with the query, whereby the instructor perpetually tinkers with and incorporates answers within each pedagogical decision. For example, an instructor might believe that focusing on digital media’s handling of political material provides the best path toward virtue in relation to composition training—and that might just be, in fact, the correct answer for the instructor, in terms of context for that particular semester. The same instructor may end up using a wildly alternative approach the next year if that happens to be what she deems best. The fluidity of approaches does

not suggest the pedagogical decisions be made arbitrarily. Rather, the approach for each class/semester must be rooted in deeply ethical and practical concerns toward how to best teach writing as a means of conducting virtue.

The instructor should apply the three virtues of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness in their answering of the ‘Q Question’ in order keep the engagement genuine and dynamic. Accordingly, the virtues also parallel the eternal return dialectic as detailed: adaptability (affirmation/thesis), experimentation (overcoming/antithesis), and mindfulness (reconstitution/synthesis). Lanham proclaims with a tone of calculated pessimism, “Whether we like it or not, we still live with the dilemma of late humanism: we can only live in hope, and practise the humanities” (665). However, an instructor’s hope for accomplishing the tumultuous task of teaching can be viewed in a positive, even necessary, light. It takes optimism and fortitude on the instructor’s part to continue engaging with the ‘Q Question’ throughout her career. It’s necessary to remain motivated so that the process of adapting, experimenting, and practicing mindfulness continues. Without the incentive, it becomes easy on the instructor’s part to rest on the laurels of past practices by justifying that if the pedagogical choices worked during a specific time period, then the same decisions are bound to work in perpetuity. Although the same issues tend to arise in cycles, it requires genuine engagement in order to bring them to a resolution (if only provisionally as a means of anticipating the next cycle).

Directed yet Empowered

A prime example of a recurring issue throughout writing studies that will no doubt find its way into discussions surrounding the progymnasmata rests on the

prescriptive versus creative debate. Many instructors emphasizing ‘process’ approaches to writing or other similar pedagogical camps (e.g., expressivist) might be skeptical toward the inclusion of yet another guideline to writing. They may contend that a system of fourteen exercises, scaffolded in a particular order, will inevitably hinder the creativity and inventiveness of both students and instructors. In *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, Corbett and Connors concede, “Students may fear that an elaborately systematized approach to composition will inhibit rather than facilitate writing” although “to admit that formula *can* inhibit writers is not to admit that it invariably does” (26). They justify that nearly every great writer of the renaissance and up through the modern era (Chaucer, Shakespeare, Swift, etc.) “had been subjective to an intensive rhetoric course in their grammar school or university” in which a framework was applied to the teaching of writing; therefore, writing instruction informed by classical rhetoric “did not prevent them from becoming great writers and might even have made them better writers than they would have been on genius alone” (26).

The framework of the progymnasmata provides the necessary constraints and structure in order to, paradoxically, invent and compose more fully. As Newstok points out, “We work by having something to push off of, not by eliminating all friction” (120). In his own classroom practices, he details, “Sometimes I point out the more obvious ways in which creation emerges because of constraint, not in spite of it: the agreed-upon time limit for a sports game, or the restricted ingredients in a cooking competition; something as banal as a project’s budget and deadline; something as profound as life’s finitude.” He sums up, “There’s an artistry in “making do” with what we’re allotted,” which certainly

connects with the three major virtues of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness (120). Even Roland Barthes, who remains a figurehead of post-structuralism, admits, “Structure at least affords me two terms, one of which I can deliberately choose and the other dismiss” (*Barthes on Barthes* 117). Structure’s ability to incite decisions—whether for, against, or alongside—remains a central impetus throughout the progymnasmata.

The progression from imitation to creation throughout the fourteen exercises demonstrates the value of having students return to the basic elements of writing as they advance to more sophisticated usage. Jordan Loveridge asserts, “At its core, the progymnasmatic tradition is based in the idea that simpler exercises should precede the more complex” (“How Do You Want to be Wise?” 81). Corresponding to the development from simple to complex assignments, instructors utilizing the progymnasmata should not shy away from integrating grammar and punctuation review in their writing courses, particularly for lower-division classes. If instructors assume that grammar and mechanics have already been perfected on the part of their students and jump straight to higher order concerns, it can result in the danger of putting the cart before the horse, having both form and content suffer as a result. Countless students have told me how helpful sprinkling grammar reviews and sentence-level instruction throughout the semester has been for their development and confidence. So many have admitted that they would have otherwise been too afraid to ask, which certainly doesn’t help empower them as communicators for the remainder of their academic and professional careers. Plus, on a practical level, the so-called low-order concerns associated with grammar and punctuation are not that difficult to incorporate within a

lesson plan, and can be thoroughly accomplished by dedicating a mere 10% of each week's allotted class time toward instruction and review—if not less. The more abstract concerns of argumentation, overall flow, etc. do not have to fall victim to the false binary of high-order versus low-order concerns as an either/or decision. The progymnasmata makes the holistic totality of student writing greater than the sum of form and content as isolated parts.

Lingering Fragments

There have been strides within the composition field to incorporate the progymnasmata in contemporary composition classes—though inclusion remains few and far between. Jordan Loveridge and Eric Detweiler have both published their experiences incorporating a handful of exercises within their writing classes. In “How Do You Want to be Wise?": The Influence of the Progymnasmata on Ælfrīc's Colloquy," Loveridge connects the progymnasmata to “Ælfrīc's Colloquy, an Anglo-Saxon model educational text written between 987 and 996” because of its insistence on “textual evidence of theory guided action” from the classical period (72). Specifically, Loveridge models the fable, characterization, and thesis exercises through the colloquy, serving as an ancient “form of dialogue” involving hypothetical situations for the students to compose (73). In “Sounding Out the Progymnasmata,” Eric Detweiler uses a handful of the progymnasmata exercises to help guide students in the creation of podcasts. He views podcasts as operating similarly to the progymnasmata, in which “As an established but flexible medium, podcasts consist of various sonic components that, while analytically distinguishable, ultimately function together” (208). Although Loveridge and Detweiler

have accomplished creative and helpful strides in bringing the progymnasmata back to the modern classroom, their decisions to only include a handful of exercises leaves out the crucial component of thoroughly scaffolding from imitation to creation that's inherent within the traditional fourteen assignment system.

There have also been textbooks with large sections dedicated to the inclusion of the progymnasmata in modern classrooms—containing instruction and even material for instructors to build from. George Kennedy's *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* provides (nearly) full translations of four prominent progymnasmata instructors stemming back to ancient times, which include Aelius Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus the Sophist along with commentary from John of Sardis. Kennedy's translations provide a rich, scholarly overview of the exercises; however, the collection should be treated as more of a scholarly resource to inform teaching practices as opposed to a ready-made textbook for undergraduates to abide by. Frank D'Angelo's *Composition in the Classical Tradition* makes great use of the progymnasmata for guiding contemporary writing instruction although a great deal of commentary and examples might be distracting or even inappropriate for writing classrooms informed through Aristotelian virtue ethics. Connor and Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* contributes a more mechanical approach to writing instruction, with a few sections offering an overview of the progymnasmata exercises and historical context, serving as a brief yet calculated introduction for instructors to build from. Adam Muller's *Classical Rhetoric through Structure and Style: Writing Lessons based on the Progymnasmata* most closely resembles and promotes the tenets covered

throughout this dissertation. Unfortunately, the textbook is geared toward a lower age group than college students. Additionally, the work has religious leanings throughout and is published by a Christian press. Nevertheless, instructors should consider reading through the textbook, themselves, in order to gain insight toward constructing their own exercises. While all of the textbooks containing progymnasmata sections help instructors on a practical and inventive level to develop material, they leave out Aristotle's conception of virtue ethics as the driving force.

Returning Forward: A Foreword in Succession

Through Aristotelian virtue ethics, the virtues of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness have been promoted because of their natural dwelling place within composition studies. The particular virtues can certainly be refined and geared toward more specific intended outcomes for specific writing courses—based on the goals of the instructor and/or theme of the class. For instance, a writing class centered around political coverage through digital media might emphasize the virtues of skepticism (via fact-checking, journalistic credibility, etc.). Nevertheless, those more narrowly focused virtues would still fit under the umbrella of adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness. In other words, the three major virtues that have been promoted throughout this dissertation can serve as *genuses* with the specific species to be refined by the goals of individual instructors.

Instructors would benefit by inhabiting the major three virtues themselves as they refine specific sub-virtues each semester. It would require adaptability and experimentation to develop and apply a distinct value, such as *clarity* within a technical

writing course. Based on the instructor's experiences teaching the course throughout ensuing semesters, she will perpetually define and refine what exactly *clarity* constitutes within evolving analog and digital spaces on practical and theoretical levels. Therefore, not only does virtue ethics afford a productive aim for students throughout their writing progression, but the ethical framework also directs instructors to remain focused yet flexible during the whole of their careers. The dynamic nature of communicative practices and conventions requires continuous adaptability, experimentation, and mindfulness as a means of keeping the material and instruction relevant and engaging each semester.

The field seems to be at the pivotal point in the eternal return dialectic. Within the antithesis/overcoming/experimentation stage, it is eager though reluctant for guidance in terms of writing approaches that seem to check off every box, placating administrators, departments, students, scholarly publications, etc. The list gets longer every year as more variables arise throughout the state of universities on an individual and institutional level. While the progymnasmata does *not* provide the remedy for any and all ailments relating to writing instruction, it is uniquely structured though flexible for widespread inclusion. More importantly, the fourteen exercises provide a system for students to foster both their composition skills and virtues in accordance with a classical system. The framework remains indefinitely ripe for dynamic integration, whereby instructors and students alike can adapt, experiment with, and mindfully incorporate the system as they simultaneously become habituated with those virtues throughout their engagement. As Quintilian wisely concluded in his treatise, "Attention to what I have said, if it does not bring great

advantage to studious youth, will at least excite in them what I desire even more—a love for doing well” (*IO* bk. 12, ch. 11, sec. 31). After all, isn’t that the entire point?

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