# ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Quintilian And The Pedagogy Of Argument

This essay deals with a Sophistic approach to argumentation known to ancient Greeks as antilogic and to Romans as controversia. I will use the terms interchangeably, along with other cognates like controversial reasoning and "in utramque partem," or reasoning on both sides of a case. I will claim that controversia represents a major alternative to the Aristotelian tradition of argument. Broadly speaking, Aristotelian argument assumes an individual thinker who follows the dictates of deductive logic and who works to develop a sound proposition subsequently defended against all opposition. Controversia proceeds by placing multiple claims in juxtaposition and then negotiating the conflicts among them. It fully embraces the contingency of its setting, emphasizing dialogical interaction between specific parties, on a unique occasion, with a particular purpose. If Aristotelian argument is predicated on the drive towards formal validity and epistemological certainty, antilogic is based on the inevitable contention between probable opinions and the possibility of consensus among interlocutors. If Aristotelian argument proceeds in a linear, monological fashion, controversia approaches knowledge indirectly, tacking back-and-forth among opposing positions and assuming that "truth" is provisional and will reveal itself in mixed, ambigous form. Antilogic is thus dialogical, sceptical, contextual, and ultimately practical, all of which I will try to clarify as we proceed.

In previous work, I have traced the philosophic foundations of antilogic in the sceptical pragmatism of Protagoras and pursued the basic features of antilogical practice in a number of post-Periclean sources (Mendelson 1998). I have also explored Cicero's *De Oratore* as an exemplary model of controversia (Mendelson 1997). As many of you know, the *De Oratore* displays considerable interest in an appropriate pedagogy for rhetoric, operating often as a master-class in the protocols of "in utramque partem."**[i]** With the transition from Cicero to Quintilian, pedagogy takes center stage. The presence of controversial reasoning in Quintilian has, of course, been noted before (Bonner 1969, 1977; Clark 1957;

Kennedy 1969; Marrou 1956; Murphy 1990). In the present essay, I will argue, however, that controversial reasoning is not just an incidental element, one techne "inter pares" (among equals); it is, instead, the very heart of Quintilian's approach to rhetorical education. In other words, the *Institutio Oratoria* is principally involved in developing the concept of an "ideal orator;" and, as was the case with Cicero a century before, Quintilian is firmly committed to the notion that the "one and only true and perfect orator" is he who is able "to speak on both sides about every subject" (*De Oratore* 3.80). More specifically, I claim here that the pedagogy of controversia is ascendant in Quintilian because it fosters a sense of decorum (the ability to negotiate disagreement in ways appropriate to particular circumstances), while decorum, in turn, is essentially coordinate with prudence (the general ability to respond to controversy with dignity and common sense). Seen in this way, Quintilian articulates a syncretic vsion of argument, education, and culture, a vision of what Richard Lanham aptly describes as "the rhetorical paideia" (1993: 158; cf. 161).

In pursuit of this agenda, I will

1. briefly review the history of the controversial tradition,

2. explore Quintilian's own method of argumentation and inquiry,

3. focus on the role of the progymnasmata exercises and declamation in the "Institutio," and

4. extrapolate some general principles of controversial education from Quintilian and speculate on their potential contribution to a reconception of argument pedagogy today.

## 1. The History of Controversial Pedagogy

Quintilian is a neo-Sophist in the sense that his approach to education is pragmatic in focus and argumentative in nature (see Marrou 1956, Colson 1924, and Greer 1925). The first and, arguably, the most influential representative of Sophistic education was Protagoras, who declared himself "a Sophist and educator" and whose subject was the "proper care of [his students'] personal and public affairs," so as to help them succeed as speakers and citizens ("Protagoras" 317b-318e). Among Protagoras's many works, one book, the *Antilogiae*, appears to have been a textbook, and begins with the famous dictum that "on every issue there are two arguments (logoi) opposed to each other on everything" (Sprague 1972: 4). Marrou cites this concept as the core of Sophistic pedagogy and notes that Protagoras's own educational program was "astonishing in its practical effectiveness" (1956: 51). Naturally, antilogical practice and pedagogy undergo

significant transformation over time, most notably in the hands of the Academic sceptics.

In Book XII, Quintilian notes that the critical practices of the New Academy are particularly "useful" because their "habit of disputing both sides of the question approaches most nearly the actual practice of the courts" (12.2.25).**[ii]** In his commitment to Academic controversia, Quintilian is clearly following the lead of Cicero, who summarizes the Academic method this way: ". . . the only object of the Academics' discussions is by arguing both sides of a question to draw out and fashion something which is either true or which comes as close as possible to the truth" (*Academica* 2.8). Such a position is founded on the antithetical scepticism of Pyrrho of Elias (4C BCE) who advocated a suspension of judgment during the assessment of alternative arguments in any particular case. Sextus Empiricus describes Pyrrhonistic scepticism as the ability to set up antitheses which account for the "equal weight of opposing states of affairs and arguments" (1.8). The sceptical tradition – as A. A. Long makes clear – is given institutional status in the New Academy first by Arcesilaus, who denies the existence of universal criteria adequate to warrant any claims to absolute truth. Instead, he transfers his attention from universals to the discovery of probable explanations arrived at through arguments between pro and contra positions (Long 1974: 91). Carneades continues the tradition by rejecting any dogmatic claims to certain knowledge, honing the practice of "in utramque partem" as a tool of critical scepticism, and insisting that prudential judgment is always contingent, never necessary. Judgment, in other words, cannot be dictated by criteria laid down in advance (see 2.13.2-5).

The principles of the New Academy pass into the Roman tradition though Cicero, who is unquestionably the major source for Quintilian's own philosophical perspective. So while Quintilian may claim that it is unnecessary to "swear allegiance to any philosophical code" (12.2.26) and while his own philosophical interests tend in the direction of moral philosophy rather than epistemological speculation, his practice as a critic and educational theorist clearly reflect the traditions of the New Academy. In particular, he ascribes to the assumptions that all claims must be argued because more than one probable position exits, that judgment is best deferred as alternative logoi are weighed, and that criteria for judgment are developed out of the circumstances of the case. The pragmatism of his pedagogy is consequently grounded in a substantial philosophical tradition, a tradition that elevates the methods of argument themselves to the status of philosophical praxis.

I skip over here the interesting historical events that condition the adaptation of controversia in the Late Republic and Early Empire. I point out only that, as Chester Starr notes, "when one man became sovereign in Rome . . . the significance of political debate waned swiftly" (1965: 51). Indeed, the inevitable decline in oratory became a favorite subject for such first-century writers as Seneca the Elder, Petronius, and Tacitus. In this period of decline, says Grube, "rhetoric took refuge in the schools" (1965: 257), while much public oratory was given over to sententiousness and declamatory display. In such a climate, Quintilian is distinctly neo-Sophistic in his insistence on practical argument. Nowhere is this emphasis more emphatic than in his own methods of inquiry.

## 2. Quintilian's Critical Method

Quintilian opens the *Institutio Oratoria* this way: "I was asked by certain of my friends to write something on the art of speaking . . . [because] they urged that previous writers on the subject had expressed different and at times contradictory opinions, between which it was very difficult to choose" (1. Pr. 1-2). Several books later, in his discussion of rhetorical invention, he notes that his first task is to canvas "the infinite diversity of opinions among writers on this subject" (3.1.7; cf. 3.1.1). The initial step for Quintilian, then, is to survey the "multiplex ratio disputandi" (the multiple ideas in dispute) that make-up the landscape of opinion on any point at issue. In the process, he is distinctly non-dogmatic, remaining independent of the various schools that dominated the educational theory of his day and allowing his readers to exercise their own judgment in reviewing a controversy.

Instances of Quintilian's critical method are available at every turn in the *Institutio*. For example, after the reference to "contradictory opinions" that opens Bk. I, Quintilian immediately engages the question of whether or not it is better to educate a child at home or at public school (see 1.2.2-17). "Contradictory opinions," he repeats, fully condition this topic and must be acknowledged, for while "eminent authorities" favor the public schools, "(i)t would . . . be folly to shut our eyes to the fact that there are some who disagree" (2.2.2). These critics, he goes on, are "guided in the main by two principles," and he lays out each of these contra-arguments in significant detail. What is particularly interesting about this exercise in argumentation is that Quintilian begins with prolepsis, the anticipation of opposition, and in dealing with differences he avoids a simple claim/rebuttal structure, choosing instead to oscillate back and forth between contesting positions. The procedure as a whole operates, as Colson noted, more

like a "discussion" than a treatise, and this dialogic approach becomes standard practice throughout the *Institutio* (1924: xxxix).

Similar examples of controversia are everywhere. In Bk. II alone, Quintilian takes up such issues as the choice of an appropriate teacher, memorizing commonplaces, the controversy over declamation, and the place of rules in oratorical training. The protocol of inquiry, analysis, and invention in all cases is controversia: the author first surveys the diversity of opinion on the topic in order to weigh the probabilities on each side. In his discussion of declamation, he writes that "I now come to another point in which the practice of teachers has differed. Some have not been content with . . . . Others have merely suggested [that] . . . . Both practices have their advantages . . . . But if we must choose one . . . " (2.6.2). The dominant tropes of these supremely non-dogmatic inquiries are "on the contrary" and "on the other hand," as the rhetor works his way through the various nuances of an argument and models for his readers the actual practice of controversial reasoning.

In sum, controversial methodology is ubiquitous in the *Institutio* because for Quintilian every question involves an "infinite diversity of opinions" (cf. 3.11.2). In confronting this multiplicity, Quintilian would himself reflect the breadth of interest advocated by Cicero's Crassus and sample "all the available" arguments as a prelude to judgment. And while the argumentative exercises that fill out the *Institutio* may not always rise to the level of theoretical insight imagined by Crassus, there remains an admirable congruence between Quintilian's own critical method and the practice of argumentation that he would advocate for his students (see 2.2.8).

*3. The Progymnasmata, Declamation, and the Protocols of Argument*
Roman students began composition study with a grammaticus, a teacher responsible for both grammar and an introduction to literature and literary style. The grammaticus would initiate composition training with the progymnasmata, a series of increasingly complex exercises fully involved with argument from the outset (Marrou 1956: 274ff, Bonner 1977: 213-49). At about sixteen, the student progressed to the tutelage of the rhetor, moving to the more difficult exercises in which the protocols of argument become the explicit focus of study. The exercises begin with a retelling of fables in which students "feign" the speech of given characters addressing contentious topics, such as monkeys deliberating on the founding of a city (in Clark 1957: 182). Composition, therefore, begins with

imitation and impersonation, and in the context of mock-debate. Students pass next to "fictitious narratives" from literary sources and imitate the conversation of the people involved, like Medea justifying the theft of the Golden Fleece. These stories (called "argumentum") were followed by chreia, exercises based on well-known maxims, like "money is the root of all evil." In this case, the student was asked to provide the argumentative reasoning that supports the claim inherent in the maxim itself (see Hock and O'Neill). It is notable that even in these early exercises, the young rhetor is routinely given a specific character along with some situational data, so that invention always proceeds in relation to the requirements of a particular argumentative context. Moreover, rhetorical invention is, from the beginning, dialogical (always in response to previous speech) and practical (always generated with a particular occasion in mind).

While the early progymnasmata are often argumentative, argument itself comes to the foreground in the exercise of "refutation and confirmation." Quintilian suggests that in response to a literary episode, students "annex" a number of claims on both sides of the case, thereby establishing dialogue between competing logoi rather than propositional reasoning as the framework for argument (2.4.18-19). And because the students would recite their compositions aloud to the class, all were exposed not simply to binary oppositions but to highly varied perspectives on such subjects as whether or not Romulus could actually have been suckled by a she-wolf (2.4.18). In these exercises, says Quintilian, "the mind is exercised" by the variety and multiplicity inherent in the topics, as the rhetor must deal not simply with abstract conceptions of pro and con but with "degrees" of vice and virtue (2.4.21).

The increasingly subtle challenges in argumentation progress to "comparisons" between characters and to "impersonations," such as Priam pleading with Achilles for the return of Hector's body. Finally, the progymnasmata culminate in philosophical "theses" and in debates on the law, both of which tend to complicate a priori assumptions, subvert simple binaries, and remind students that controversiality suffuses philosophical as well as literary composition. Throughout the exercises, the pedagogical focus remains essentially the same: the rhetor, unlike the philosopher and dialectician, is operating in response to specific contingencies by calculating the relative merits of opposing positions and developing the skills of sceptical inquiry, rhetorical invention, and pragmatic judgment. At all points in the process, the student-orator is guided by the principles of "in utramque partem" and contemplates not simply what can be said in behalf of a proposition but also what can be said in favor of the other side.

Because each student must routinely compose orations that contradict each other, it is not so much the truth of one's claim as it is the process of argumentation that is the ultimate subject of the progymnasmata and its elegant continuum of exercises.

Two additional ideas deserve mention here. First, Quintilian allocates a pivotal role to stasis theory (3.6); and, as Michael Carter points out, stasis – the effort to define the specific point at issue in argument – originates in the contention of opposing forces (1988: 98-99). The very act of arriving at a stasis is an act of controversiality, a conversation among contrasting opinions in a shared conflict. Second, in Bk. X Quintilian digresses to emphasize the role of "facilitas," the resourcefulness and spontaneity acquired from continual interaction with other discourse. Such facility leads not only to a storehouse of materials appropriate to any argument, but also to the habit of easy exchange that allows orators to respond in accordance with all situations (10.1-2). Like sprezzatura, its Renaissance counterpart, "facilitas" is an element of character or ethos, a habit of mind to be nurtured by exposure to both opposition and variety. Both stasis theory and rhetorical "facilitas," therefore, assume the importance of opposing positions in argument.

We pass now to declamation, which Quintilian calls "the most useful of rhetorical exercises" (2.10.2). The exercises themselves are mock forensic or judicial debates on specific points of law or history in which the student orator takes on a persona and works within the confines of a situational narrative. Indeed, if declamation is presented effectively, it should mimic, says Quintilian, the "real contests" and messy debates the student will encounter in public life (10.1.4). By the first-century CE, declamation had been divided into two kinds: the suasoriae or deliberative speeches on questions of history or politics, and the controversiae or forensic speeches on specific legal cases. As for suasoria, Philostratus lists these examples: the Spartans debate whether or not to build a wall and fortify themselves from attack, and Isocrates attempts to dissuade Athenians from their dependence on the sea (1965: 514 & 584). In most cases, student-orators were asked not only to respond to historical circumstances they had studied in literary sources, but to impersonate a specific character and address a particular audience. Matters of ethos, audience, and decorum were therefore paramount. Before I take up these matters, it may help if we have some idea of the classroom practices that characterized instruction in declamation.

The procedure was as follows: the teacher would present a declamatory problem

and provide some introductory analysis ("divisio") of the case, addressing opposing perspectives and how these might be arranged and presented. The students were then assigned the same or a similar case and allowed to select a stand.

They would then write out and read their initial draft to the teacher, who would question all pupils carefully in order to "test their critical powers" (2.5.13). It was assumed that the young orator would deal with pertinent aspects on both sides of the case, not just those in favor of the chosen position. The student would next prepare a more polished composition for memorization and delivery before the class as a whole, and sometimes before the public at-large. A distinctive feature of the declamatory process, then, was that the speeches were constructed with a responsive audience in mind. Typically, all students would declaim either for or against the same case, so that each speech was subject to peer review and examined in the context of diverse opinion. Further, the public nature of individual performance tended, says Quintilian, to give these speeches the feel of "mimic combats" similar to "the actual strife and pitched battles of the law courts" (2.10.8). At the very least, students subjected to the arduous, confrontational, semi-public performance of declamation would quickly become aware that rhetorical argument is addressed to a critical audience, that argument itself was always at least dyadic, and that, under these circumstances, "the all-important gift of the orator" was a "wise adaptability" to "the most varied emergencies" (2.23.1).

Fanciful as they often were, the suasoriae (the declamatory impersonations of historical figures) nonetheless function as instruction in the principles of ethos and audience. The Roman student had been prepared for role-playing by earlier exercises, but suasoria evoke much greater depth of detail and a more specific question to be addressed. So, when faced with the case of Alexander debating with his generals over whether to ignore the oracles and enter Babylon (Seneca 1974: suasoria 4), the student was not simply acting "ex persona" (in the character of) and delivering a dramatic monologue like Browning's Andrea del Sarto; he was arguing in a specific historical context, with well-defined positions on either side, to an audience fully alert to the circumstantial data of the case.

Quintilian's refers to these exercises as "absolutely necessary" to the expansion of the pupil's understanding of human motive and response and notes that his own students assume as many different roles in their declamations as comic actors on stage (3.18.51). When we recall that students often declaim on both sides of a case and must regularly defend a position contrary to their initial inclinations, it is

easy to see how this variety of impersonation serves to break down one's natural egocentrism and open the mind to claims that might well have seemed alien. Impersonation, in other words, tends to liberalize one's allegiances and breed tolerance. In brief, declamation is a dramatic experience in occupying the space of the other, of giving voice to a person who speaks in a different key, of "identifying" to the point of consubstantiation. To act the part of someone else is to bring the theoretical concept of "in utramque partem" to life.

And then there is the matter of audience. At its best, suasoria goes beyond the notion of recognizing what is unique in an audience as a technique to effect persuasion. Such an effort remains monological to the extent that it does not admit the potential for difference that the audience always represents. When combined with the lessons of impersonation, the invocation of and address to the audience as persons in their own right serves to multiply the voices one responds to in controversy. If impersonation invites the dialogical extension of the argument beyond the orator's initial presumptions, the presence of an audience (which is seldom uniform) expands the conversation into "multiplex ratio disputandi" and invites a more comprehensive vision of the topic. In the process, the opposing parties in dialogue generate new possibilities for invention, as ideas shift, oscillate, and transform in the give-and-take of alternatives. Invention takes place, as Montaigne says, by "polishing our brains through contact with others" (1948: 112). As we turn from suasoria to controversia (the declamatory exercise devoted to forensic rather than deliberative cases), we turn also from the theatrical to the dialectical, for the controversiae represent a substantial increase in logical rigor. Seneca the Elder records this popular topic of school debate: "A young man captured by pirates writes his father for ransom. He is not ransomed. The daughter of the pirate chief urges him to swear that he will marry her if he escapes. He swears. Leaving her father, she follows the young man, who, upon his return to his home takes her to wife. A well-to-do orphan appears on the scene. The father orders his son to divorce the daughter of the pirate chief and marry the orphan. When the son refuses to obey, the father disowns him" (in Clark 1956: 231). Obviously, any defense of realism in the practice of such controversia could not be based on the events of the case itself. It was the verisimilitude of the argument rather than the case itself that Quintilian saw as essential to controversial reasoning.

Students would begin their analysis of the controversia by first identifying the stasis and the likely arguments in opposition (10.5.20). Quintilian notes that it is

simply not adequate in forensic argument to take up only accusation or defense, because "sufficient acquaintance with the other side of the case" is a prerequisite for effective persuasion (10.5.21). In the case of the pirate's daughter, the controversy was likely to turn on a question of law vs. equity: is this law universally binding, or is equity a higher virtue than the written statute? Strong cases could be made on either side, and careful reasoning would be required. In another case entitled "The Poor Man's Bees," there is a controversy between the rich owner of a flower garden and a poor neighbor whose bees invade that garden (Quintilian 1987: #13). The rich man spreads insecticide on his flowers, kills the bees, and the poor man brings suit. In his sample declamation, Quintilian fills out the poor man's speech in considerable detail, especially his refutation, which provides a comprehensive recapitulation of each point in the rich man's case before the poor man's detailed rebuttals (see Clark 1956: 247-50). What is interesting here is that the dialogue between opposing parties is incorporated into a single speech. As a result, declamatory orators become practiced not only in thinking "in utramque partem" as preparation for their own claims but also in providing what Bakhtin would call a "double-voice" within the boundaries of one's own utterance. When Quintilian treats "altercatio" or debate proper (6.4), he reiterates the point that careful consideration should always be paid to "the arguments of the opponent" (6.4.14). Even when students find themselves in agreement, he says, it is best for them to practice their skills in "altercatio" by taking different sides and testing their ideas through "mimic battle" (6.4.21). And because students are regularly arguing both sides, their classroom experience may well serve, says Quintilian, to reduce the eristic ill-will often directed "at those who hold opposite opinions" (3.8.69).

There are, admittedly, problems with declamation, especially as the genre came to dominate Silver Age Roman letters and gave way to theatrical excess. Professors of rhetoric began to invite the public more and more often to open recitations, first to impress the parents of their students and to attract additional clients, later to display their own brilliance before ever-expanding crowds. Quintilian is himself candid in noting that declamation became "so degenerated that the license and ignorance of declaimers may be numbered among the chief causes of the decline of eloquence in Rome" (2.10.3). Marrou complains that declamatory narratives became much too fantastic; but he points out that declamation can be defended as an isolated opportunity for the practice of public eloquence during a period of decline in political freedom (1956: 288). It is Quintilian's defense, however, that remains the strongest: for it is always

possible, he claims, "to make sound use of anything that it naturally sound" (2.10.3). His method for insuring the soundness of declamation was to insist that they remained "modeled on the forensic and deliberative oratory" for which they were intended as training (2.10.8). Seen from this perspective – as " foil(s) wherein to practice for the duels of the forum" – the progymnasmata and declamation represent a rite of passage, a transition from theory and exercise to a mature recognition of the requirements for successful advocacy in an environment conditioned by difference, disagreement, and change (5.12.17).

*4. A Contemporary Role for Controversial Pedagogy*

I would like to think that the presence and import of controversial reasoning in the "Institutio" has been sufficiently established to substantiate my principal claim that argument "in utramque partem" resides at the heart of Quintilian's pedagogy. I have also tried to indicate that Quintilian's pedagogy takes on its full resonance only when it is reassociated with its philosophical base, which is Sophistic in origin and sceptical in nature, which is firmly anchored in contingency and the unavoidable multiplicity that conditions all "res humana," which casts a wide net in its search for knowledge and accepts a vision of truth that compounds opposing views, and which finally is thoroughly practical in its drive towards application in the world at-large. Only when Quintilian's classroom protocols are placed in relation to their philosophical context can we begin to realize the rich possibilities that flow from the confluence of rhetorical theory and the pedagogical tradition.

The question before us now, however, is more pragmatic: i.e. what specific practices might be adapted from Quintilian's pedagogy that, "mutatis mutandi," can contribute to our rhetorical paideia? Thomas Sloane has recently noted that despite the revival of rhetorical studies, our conception of "inventio" remains "impoverished" and that, in general, rhetorical pedagogy has not kept pace with critical theory (1997: 127-28).**[iii]** To my mind, the study of Quintilian and the legacy of controversia puts us in a position to rectify this imbalance and reassert the connection between the rhetorical tradition and the classroom. The scope of the present essay, however, allows for only modest and provisional suggestions.

I begin with what Perelman might call "starting points," preconditions for argumentation extrapolated from the practice of controversial reasoning and intended for discussion by students, provocative ideas antithetical to the traditional assumptions of what Deborah Tannen calls "the Argument Culture" (1998). Starting point #1: Argument deals with probabilities but does not

preclude our ability to defend one position as stronger than others. On the contrary, controversia assumes (somewhat optimistically) that when "multiplex ratio" are weighed effectively, the preponderance of probability will favor one side over others. #2: All opening positions are partial in the dual sense that they are biased in favor of their own presumptions and they do not represent all that may be said about the subject. #3: If we accept our partiality, we must also accept the possibility that exchange with others could prompt us to change our minds. #4: If we accept our partiality, we should be inclined to suspend judgment until all positions have be addressed. And #5: the ground rules for judgment in the context of scepticism and probability cannot depend upon standards of certainty but will grow out of the exchange between parties engaged in conflict, what Blair and Johnson call the "epistemic standards of the audience" (1987: 49). Such are the preconditions for controversial argument that students might consider.

But what of practical methods, concrete extensions of Quintilian's own practice that could contribute to our teaching? I will mention two possibilities, both of which fall under the heading of invention. In the first place, Quintilian's curriculum identifies invention with dialogue and the process of symbolic exchange. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, of course, maintain that argument always develops "in terms of the audience" (1969: 5). The progymnasmata embraces and pragmatizes this essentially dialogical view by asking students to first imitate, then refute, then both agree and disagree with the claims of a text. Once this procedure of alternating support and critique has been established in the preliminary exercises, dialogical exchange is dramatized, as students first imagine, then (in declamation) actually confront other parties in controversy. Two implications follow from the primacy of dialogue: first, contact with other students in response to controversy should begin early and be repeated often. In other words, students need to come out from behind the keyboard and take their place in front of and face-to-face with other students and perspectives (cf. 1.11.9). For teachers of composition, this means an increased oral component in argument training. The second implication of dialogue's primacy is that we must work harder to stimulate the continuous give-and-take that constitutes real-world argument. Argument "in utramque partem" implies repeated reversals: first one side speaks, then the other, then the other again, and so on. Instead of single-exchanges or the statement/rebuttal procedures of forensic debate, argument pedagogy must seek to simulate the ongoing conversation of actual controversy (see Leff 1987: 3).

The second potential candidate for pedagogical adaptation falls under the heading of "imitatio." This subject is so vast and so diffused throughout Quintilian's curriculum that I can scarcely do more than add my voice to those of James Murphy and Dale Sullivan in calling for a reassessment of its once-esteemed pedagogical role (1990: 44-53; 1989, resp.; cf. 10.2.1-28). Suffice it to say that our neo-Romantic tendency to equate imitation with the surrender of identity runs counter to the classical tradition. "Mimesis," says Aristotle, is a natural part of the learning process ("Poetics" 1447a-b), but the degree of adhesion to the original source varies considerably. There is no reason to assume that imitation, as it "supplements, improves, and illustrates its ostensible models" is not a creative act (Russell 1981: 108). Within the general category of pedagogical "imitatio," I would identify two specific options for adaptation to our classrooms. The first is impersonation or role-playing. To impersonate is enter into dialogue with another perspective, to integrate into one's self what had been unfamiliar (cf. 6.2.26). Conversely, impersonation allows students to distance themselves from their own presumptions and explore unexamined partialities. Furthermore, role-playing is fun; it evokes the ludic impulse in the service of instruction. It can transcend the appeal to reason alone and motivate the student in special ways. My own efforts to encourage role-playing in class have done more than any other technique to loosen the grip of dogmatic assumptions and to prompt an appreciation for the many-sidedness of argument. The second possible adaptation comes with declamation and the promise of case-study as a vehicle for experiencing the full complexity of circumstantial argument. Case-study exercises have been popular for some time in professional writing and legal studies, but they run counter to the emphasis of most argumentation texts on propositional structure and the demands of logos over audience, ethos, and situation (Mendelson 1989). What declamatory exercises can provide is a dramatic evocation of the multiplicity, ambiguity, and contingency that characterize actual controversy. Michael Billig points out that the nuance of human affairs can never be reduced to method, so "finite laws [or rhetorical precepts] are likely to be embarrassed . . . by novel particulars" (1987: 62 and 68). As Quintilian recognized, the well-conceived declamatory exercise is the capstone of rhetorical training because it exposes the rhetor to the complexity of novel particulars and requires a full measure of "facilitas" and decorum in return.

Of course, any pedagogical theory or method only has value to the extent that it serves a larger purpose. For Quintilian, that purpose was the cultivation of oratorical excellence in the service of moral dignity and public virtue (12.1-2; see

Lanham). I would myself offer a variant rationale for the pedagogy of "in utramque partem." A controversial pedagogy seeks at all points to generate two or more positions in conflict and to stimulate a productive dialogue among these sides as the appropriate means for understanding and perhaps even resolving the problem at hand. Because of the contingent nature of the problems that rhetoric is designed to address, problems about which there are always multiple points of view, judgment cannot proceed along abstract, technical lines (cf. Kahn 1985: 30-36). According to Cicero, decorum is that facility ("facilitas") that allows one to comprehend what is appropriate in complex issues and to work expediently towards a viable resolution ("Orator" 71; Leff 1990). Decorum, therefore, is a "two-fold wisdom" which accommodates not only eloquence in an effort to articulate the issues but also persuasion in order to have an effect on the world. As such, decorum is ultimately cognate with prudence, the knowledge of appropriate action in response to specific situations ("De Oratore" 3.55 & 3.212). Classroom exercise in argument "in utramque partem" was, for Quintilian, the principle means of preparing students not only to respond to arguments with decorum but also to play their part in the public sphere with prudence.

In Aristophanes' "The Clouds," students go to the "thinking school" to learn to bicker with their parents and import corruption into the body politic. Quintilian reverses the moral orientation of advanced education, of "thinking schools," but he continues to place argument at the heart of the curriculum. Only through the prudent management of controversy can the student become what Quintilian terms a truly Roman "wise man;" i.e. one who reveals his virtue "in the actual practice and experience of life" (12.2.7). The methods of controversial reasoning, of "in utramque partem" at work throughout Quintilian's pedagogy are the tools that allow for the realization of this goal. For contemporary teachers, they are also the means by which we can invite the wisest of Roman teachers back into the classroom. I encourage you to welcome him.

NOTES

**i.** For a discussion of controversial reasoning in the De Oratore, see Thomas O. Sloane (1997: 28-53). The present paper was essentially completed before I could read Prof. Sloane's distinguished new book (On the Contrary), which deals with many of the same ideas as this paper. I would, however, acknowledge, the influence on my own thinking of Prof. Sloane's work and especially his earlier book (1985).

**ii.** All references to the Institutio Oratoria are to the Bulter edition and will

include passage references in parenthesis. Unless otherwise indicated, all numerical references are to Quintilian.

**iii.** For two modern adaptations of the progymnasmata, see Comprone (1985) and Hagaman (1986).

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