PANOS POLYCHRONOPOULOS
Dr. of Education

THE EPICHEIREME IN RHETORICAL DISCOURSE

In this short study, I shall briefly examine the nature of the epicheireme, trace its use in the history of rhetoric, compare it with the Toulmin model, and make some suggestions for alternative conceptions and applications. I hope it will aid the rhetor in his understanding of the nature and function of the epicheireme in rhetorical discourse.

A. The Nature of the Epicheireme

What is an e p i c h e i r e m e ? The epicheireme (Gr. ἐπιχείρημα, Lut. argumentum) is an attempted proof. The Greek term «epiheirema» is equivalent to the English term «argument» or «epicheirema». The epicheirema is a series of interrelated propositions – judgements intended to show the truth of a statement — assertion. To argue (ἐ π ι χ ε ι ρ η μ α τ ο λ ο γ ε ῖ ν) means to use a set of epicheiremes to induce belief in a certain claim. More precisely, to argue means t o a s s e r t (advance a position, thesis, claim) and to b a c k the assertion with evidence (provide supporting reasons).

What differentiates e p i c h e r e m a t i c or argumentative discourse from narrative, descriptive and expository, is the existence of a t h e s i s (claim), supported by e v i d e n c e, through appropriate r e a s o n i n g. The function of the epicheirema in rhetorical discourse is to induce belief in the minds of an andience by providing the kind of evidence of such belief. Epicheiremes are ways to induce belief in certain claims (mode of persuasion) whereas syllogisms and enthymemes are ways to p r o d u c e v a l i d o r i n v a l i d conclusions (mode of inference).

B. The Epicheireme in Historical Perspective

The exact origin of the epicheireme is not known. It is believed that it may have developed under the influence of the Stoics (out of eristic?)[1]. The earlier use of the term is in Aristotle's T o p i c a[2]. Among the autors to discussc epicheiremes are the writer of A d H e r e n n i u m, Cicero, Quintilian and Minucian (Μινουκιανός).

Epicheiremes meant different things to different rhetoricians in different periods of rhetorical history. Aristotle defined epicheiremes to mean dialectical reasoning (dialectical syllogism) bassed on probabilities[3], an attempted proof, something short of a demostrated conclusion.

The writer of A d Ilerennium called the epicheircme «the most complete and perfect argument.»[4] Cicero defined it as «deductic or syllogistic reasoning.»[5] Quintilian put together e n t h y m e m e s, e p i c h i r e m e s, and a p o d e i x i s

---

1. H. Caplan in R h e t o r i c a A d H e r e n n i u m, p. 107, footnote.
2. Aristotle, 1009, 27.
3. Aristotle, l o c. c i t.
4. A d H e r e n i u m, p. 107.
5. Cicero, D e I n v e n t i o n e, p. 99.

as having essentially the same meaning. He said that there is «no defference between the epicheireme and the syllogism except that the latter has a number of forms and infers truth from truth, whereas the epicheireme is frequently concerned with statements that are no more than credible.»[6] Hermogenes of Tarsus believed that epicheiremes are arguments themselves or proofs of the arguments (Hermagoras, O n I n v e n t i o n, V)[7]. Minucian (b. 230 A. D.), a Greek rhetor, defined epicheiremes as «prooft of the question under consideration based on (historical) examples or on (original) enthymemes regardless of form[8].

The form and the sense of the epicheireme have not been the same throughout the centuries. The fivefold arrangement grew out of Aristotle's syllogism and its nature ts syllogistic[9]. Followers of this conception of the epicheireme are Cicero[10] and Quintilian;[11] the former using the fivefold division, the latter preferring the threefold. The author of A d H e r e n n i u m developed the five part form in the sense of an argument, without particular emphasis on the syllogism[12]. Minucian defined epicheiremes as proofs (arguments) regardless of form, as already stated. After Minucian, the epicheiremes are treated as «either the general concept of 'proof' or an extension of the syllogism.»[13]

Why did the epicheireme develop as a rhetorical form? «The epicheireme was an attempt to accomodate the logical syllogism to the needs of rhetoric (like the enthymeme) but in practice it perverted the purposes and methods of rhetorical invention.»[14] I find this a rather perverted notion of the development of the epicheireme. J. Freezel offers a better explanation: «Rhetoricians may have developed the epicheireme 1) accidentally, from misconception of Aristotle's term, 2) purposely from a Stoic inspired opposition to Aristotelian logic (dialectical argument? From opposites? From definition?), 3) from a desire for sufficient support and development of an argument, 4) from a need to styllistically embellish an argument, or 5) from a concern for organization and clarity of presentation.»[15]

The epicheireme is not a well known argument form today, perhaps because Aristotle did not discuss it in his R h e t o r i c. He advocated the enthymematic form in oral discourse whereas the Greek Stoics as well as Cicero advocated the epicheirematic. One wonders if a Stoical rhetorical theory were developed, would epicheireme be the basic «mode of persuasion?»

C. **Form and Function of the Epicheireme**

The author of the very important book A d H e r e n n i u m, divided the epicheireme into five parts: The P r o p o s i t i o n and R e a s o n, the P r o o f

6. Quntilian, I n s t i t u t i o O r a t o r i a, p. 357.
7. P. A. Meador, «The Classical Epicheireme,» p. 155.
8. P. A. Meador, «Minucian, On Epicheiremes,» p. 58.
9. See G. Kennedy for the origin of the epicheireme.
10. Cicero, l o c. c i t., p. 351.
11. Quintilian, loc. cit., p. 351.
12. R h e t o r i c a A d H e r e n n i u m, p. 107.
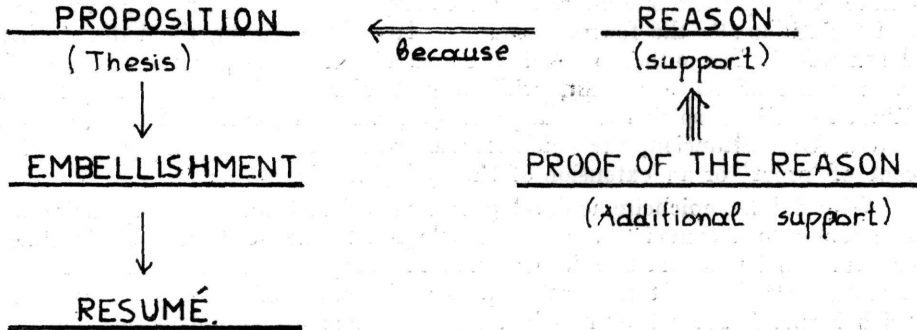13. J. Freezel, «The Mystery of the Epicheireme», p. 112.
14. D. Church, «Some Greek and Roman Concepts of the Epicheireme,» p. 144.
15. Freezel, p. 115.

of the Reason, the Embellisment, and the Resumé. Through the Proposition
we set forth summarily what we intend to prove. The Reason, by means of a brief explanation subjoined, sets forth the causal basis for the Proposition, establishing the truth of what we are urging. The Proof of the Reason corroborates, by means of additional arguments, the briefly presented Reason. Embellishment we use in order to adorn and to enrich the argument, after the proof has been established. The Resumé is a brief conclusion drawing together the parts of the argument [16].

Let us see the form (structure) of this epicheireme.

Here is a shortened example of this kind of epicheireme ginen by the author of Ad Herennium:

Proposition	«We shall show that Olysses had a motive in killing Ajax.»
Reason	«Indeed he wished to rid of his bitterest enemy, from whom, with good cause, he feared extreme danger to himself.»
Proof of the Reason	«He saw that, with Ajax alive, his own life would be unsafe; he hoped by the death of Ajax to secure his own safety...»
Empellishment	«Now not only do all men have a motive even in their least pecadillos, but certainly they are attracted by some reward when they enter upon crimes which are by far the most heinous./././.» Amplification and additional explanatory argouments are used to make the established argument vivid.
Resumé	«If, then, I have promised to give the motive which impelled Olysses to enter upon the crime, and if I have shown that the reckoning of a bitter enmity and the fear of danger were the factors, it must unquestionably be acknowledged that he had a motive for his crime.» [17]

These parts are very similar to the parts of the entire speech. Is then each epicheireme a speech in microcosm? If a speech a set of epicheiremes, an epicheireme in itself, a grand epicheireme? If not, what is a speech? Is it not a supported thesis?

Cicero had a fivefold division of the epicheireme but under different names and meanings: Major Premise, Proof, Minor Premise, Proof, and Conclusion.

_____

16. Rhetorica Ad Herennium, pp. 108—9.
17. Rhetorica Ad Herennium, pp. 109—113.

The major premise sets forth briefly the principle of the syllogism; the proof provides support for the major premise and makes it «plainer and more plausible»; the minor premise premises the point pertinent to proving the case; the proof provides support for the minor premise; the conclusion states briefly what is proven by the deduction (claim) [18].

Let us see the form of this epicheireme.

MAJOR PREMISE ←——————— PROOF
                 because

MINOR PREMISE ←——————— PROOF
                 because

CONCLUSION
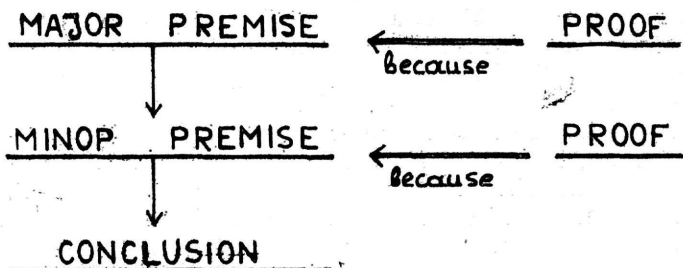
Here is an example of this kind of epicheireme used by Cicero in his Pro Milone speech : It is allowed to kill sameone who theatens your life; natural law and the system of justice of the nations teach that; Claudios threatened Milone's life; this can be proven and by the fact he quarded him; therefore, Milone was allowed to kill Claudios.

Quintilian preferred the three part arrangement: Major Premise, Minor Premise, and Conclusion. He defended his arrangement by stating that he followed the «majority of authorities» and by arguing that each premise with its proof forms «but one part. [19]» I don't think that Quintilian is denying use of proof to justify premises; I think he prefers a more rigorous or terse form.

The author of Ad Herennium, Cicero and Quitilian discused the occasions when the epicheireme should have two, three, four, or five parts. When the matter is brief, resumé or conclusion need not be used; when the matter is meagre, embellishment need not be there; and when the matter is self intelligible, proofs need not be used [20].

In Ad Herennium, the writer discussed defective arguments at length and in detail. He (she) examined the cases in which the proposition, the reason, the embellishment, and the resumé are defective and showed how to correct them. I have found in this work an abundance of practical advice for the orators that it is impossible to refer to it in this short paper. It is interesting to note though Quintilian's admonition to speakers : try not to make a «whole speech consist of or even be crowded with a mass of epicheiremes and enthymemes.» [21]

Epicheiremes were used in classical rhetoric quite extensively. Cicero and other Roman orators and authors were influenced by the Stoics and used the epicheirematic forms. The epicheireme was «the cornerstone of rhetorical argument for over fifteen centuries.» [22] As a reaction to scholasticism however, the epicheireme as a rhetorical form was neglected. The publication of the Toulmin model

18. Cicero, op. cit., p. 111.
19. Quintilian, op. cit. p. 351—2.
20. Rhedorica Ad Herennium, pp. 109—113.
21. Quintilian, op. cit., p. 365.
22. Church, op. cit., p. 147.

gave the epicheireme a modern form and at the same time led to the search for new epicheirematic forms.

D. The Epicheireme and the Toulmin Model

Having a mass of data is not enough for a speaker. He needs to know how to arrange the material, to put it into units of belief or disbelief, and try to elicit the desired response from his audience. Studies on how to structure the written and oral discourse are numerous; [23] yet not too many are both practical and imaginative. Stephen E. Toulmin managed to be both imaginative and practical in his book T h e U s e s o f A r g u m e n t [24].

In the discussion of the layout of arguments, Toulmin gives a model according to which arguments are to be arranged. The model contains six parts: CLAIM or CONCLUSION DATA or EVIDENCE, WARRANT, BACKING, REBUTTAL or RESERVATION, and QUALIFIER [25]. Let us see a form of the Toulmin model (not the one given by him):
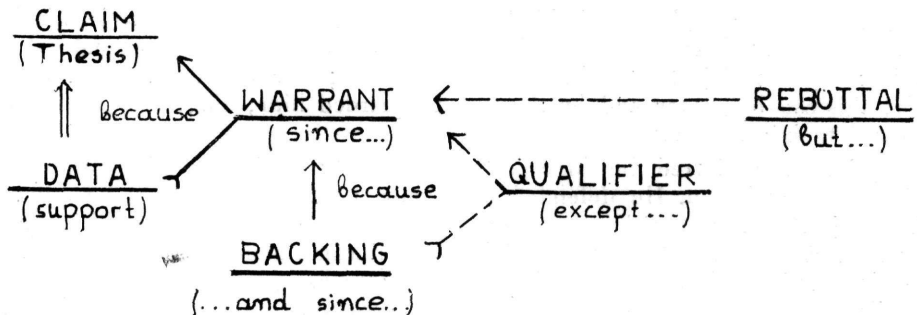
I shall now compare Toulmin's model with the form of the epicheireme described by the writer of A d H e r e n n i u m and propose a synthesis of these two forms.

Ad Herennium	Toulmin Model
Proposition	**Claim or Conclusion**
«We set forth summarily what we intend to prove.»	«Whose merits we are seeking to establish.»
Reason	**Data**
«Sets forth the causal basis for the proposition, establishing the truth of what we are urging.»	«The facts we appeal to as a foundation for the claim.»
	Warrants
	«Act as (a) bridge . . . to register explicitly the legitimacy of the step.»

23. See C. Hovland et. al., T h e O r d e r o f P r e s e n t a t i o n i n P e r-suation, G. Miller and Th. Nilsen, P e r s p e c t i v e s i n A r g u m e n t a t i o n, and D. Berlo, T h e P r o c e s s o f C o m m u n i c a t i o n.

24. This is one of the most influential books in modern rhetoric.

25. T h e U s e s o f A r g u m e n t, i b i d., p. 96.

Proof of the Reason

«Corroborates, by means of additional arguments, the briefly presented reason.»

Backing

«Standing behind our warrants . . . there will normally be other assurances, without which the warrants themselves would posseses neither authority nor currency.»

Qualifier

«Indicating the strength conferred by the warrant on this step.»

Rebuttal

«Indicating circumstances in which the general authority of the warrant would have to be set aside.» [26]

Embellishment

«We use in order to adorn and enrich the argument.»

Resumé

«Is a brief conclusion, drawing together the parts of the argument.» [26]

One can see the similarities of the proposition and the claim, the reason and the data and warrant, and the proof of the reason and the backing. One will experience difficulty in finding any similarities between the qualifier, rebuttal, embellishment and resume with any other part (except, possibly, the resumé and the claim).

A sythesis of this form of the epicheireme and Toulmin's model that would make a more rigorous epicheirematic form is, I think, possible. The new form of the epicheireme would have the following parts: CLAIM, DATA, WARRANT, and QUALIFIER.

I prefer claim over proposition because proposition implies uncertainty while claim implies certainty and immediacy ; I favor data and warrant over reason because reason is too inclusive ; [27] data describes the body of information and warrant autorises the step or leap from data to the claim. The backing or proof of the reason are I think superfluous because the backing or proof is already contained in the data and the step is made explicit through the warrant. The qualifier includes both the bases for rebuttal and exceptions. Resumé and embellishement are also superfluous because the resumé is simply a restatement and the embellishment is not adding much to a well established argument.

When the argument is complicated there may be a need for backing ; when the argument is long and/or complicated, there may be a need for embellishment and resume. When listeners have difficulty distinguishing data justifying a warrant and data justifying a conclusion, the rhetor must make clear these distinctions.

---

26. Rhetorica Ad Herennium, loc. cit., and The Uses of Argument, pp. 97—103.

27. The Uses of Argument, ibid., p. 96.

4

E. Reflections on Epicheiremes

We may conceive of rhetoric as swassory discourse, that is, a s y m b o l i c
r e a s o n i n g p r o c e s s w h e r e b y a c h a n g e in a s t a t e of m i n d
or of c o n d u c t is s o u g h t i n t e n t i o n a l l y [28]. We may also con-
ceive of the epicheireme as a s e t of s t a t e m e n t s t h a t a i m t o p r o v e,
t o d e m o s t r a t e, t o j u s t i f y, or t o e x p l a i n in d i s c o u r s e.
The function of the epicheireme in rhetoric is to prove / demostrate / justify /
explain the desirability of the intended change.

Reference was made earlier to argument forms without specifying their nature.
What is an argument form? An argument form is difined as a sequence of
symbols which upon substitution with statements becomes an argument [29]. For
example, «if p then q; p, therefore q» is an argument form. «If the lawyer
uses good arguments, he will sway the court; he used good arguments; there-
fore he will sway the court.

Minucian defined epicheiremes as proofs regardles of form; Hermogenes
believed that epicheiremes are arguments themselves, or proofs of the arguments;
Cicero and Quintilian described a syllogistic form of epicheiremes; the author
of A d H e r e n n i u m advocated a form closer to Toulmin's model. We can
therefore safely assume that the epicheireme is not a distinct argument form.
I suggest that all s t a t e m e n t s t h a t a r e u s e d i n d i s c o u r s e t o
s h o w t h e d e s i r a b i l i t y o f a c h a n c e i n a s t a t e o f m i n d
a n d / o r o f c o n d u c t b e c a l l e d e p i c h e i r e m e s, r e g a r d l e s s
o f t h e f o r m t h e y m a y t a k e.

Every epicheireme in rigorous form must have at least two elements: WHAT
(claim) and WHY (evidence, support). In a somewhat looser form, the epichei-
reme must have at least three elements: WHAT (claim), WHY (evidence), and
HOW (reasoning process). The evidence is the foundation that supports the claim,
while the reasoning process is the series of steps that leads to the claim.

We have briefly traced the epicheireme into the labyrinth of time and found
that its origin is not exactly known. The epicheireme was probably developed
by the Stoics in an attempt to restrain the widespread use of sophistry, by for-
cing the orator to support his assertions and thus, hopefully, come closer to truth.
The sense and the form of the epicheireme have not been the same throughout
the centuries. The most prevalent form was fivefond and the sense twofold.
I have suggested that the epicheireme can be cast in any form of proof, justifi-
cation and / or explanation in discourse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Anonymous, R h e t o r i c a A d H e r e n n i u m, Cambridge, Mass.,
   Harvard University Press, 1934; trans. by Harry Caplan.
2. Aristotle, T o p i c a, Cambridge, Mass., 1960; trans. by E. S. Forester.
3. Berlo, D. K., T h e P r o c e s s o f C o m m u n i c a t i o n, New York,
   Hold, Rinehart, & Winston, 1960.

28. This is an amoral definition of rhetoric distinct from concerns for definition,
data, or character. To defend this definition would require another study.

29. I. M. Copi, I n t r o d u c t i o n t o L o g i c, p. 255.

4. Black, M., C r i t i c a l T h i n k i n g, 2nd ed., New York, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1952.

5. Church, D. and R. Cathcart, «Some Greek and Roman Concepts of the Epicheireme,» W e s t e r n S p e e c h, Summer, 1965.

6. Cicero, D e I n v e n t i o n e, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1939; trans. by H. M. Hubbell.

7. Clark, D. L., R h e t o r i c i n G r e c o - R o m a n E d u c a t i o n, New York, Columbia University Press, 1957.

8. Copi, I. M., I n t r o d u c t i o n t o L o g i c, rev. ed., New York, The McMillan Co., 1961.

9. Freezel, J., «The Mistery of the Epicheireme,» W e s t e r n S p e e c h, Spring, 1967.

10. Hovland, C. I., et. al., T h e O r d e r o f P r e s e n t a t i o n i n P e r - s u a s i o n, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1957.

11. K e n n e d y, G., T h e A r t o f P e r s u a s i o n i n G r e e c e, Princeton, Univ. Press, 1963.

12. Meador, Γ. A., «Minucian, On Epicheiremes,» S p e e c h M o n o g r a p h s, March, 1964.

13. — — «The Classical Epicheireme : A re-examinnation,» W e s t e r n S r e e c h, Summer, 1966.

14. Quintilian, T h e I n s t i t u t i o O r a t o r i a, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1933; trans. by H.E. Bulter.

15. Miller, G. and Th. Nilsen, eds. P e r s p e c t i v e s o n A r g u m e n - t a t i o n, Chicago, Scott, Foresman and Co., 1966.

16. Sidwick, A., T h e U s e o f W o r d s i n R e a s o n i n g, London, A & D Black, 1901.

17. Toulmin, St., T h e U s e s o f A r g u m e n t, London, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1958.

Π Ε Ρ Ι Λ Η Ψ Ι Σ

Εἰς τὴν σύντομον αὐτὴν μελέτην ἐξητάσαμεν τὸ ἐπιχείρημα εἰς τὰς διαφόρους μορφάς του καθὼς καὶ τὴν λειτουργίαν του εἰς τὸν ῥητορικὸν λόγον κατὰ τὴν μα- κραίωνα ἱστορίαν του· τὸ ἐσυσχετίσαμεν μὲ τὸ πρότυπον τοῦ Toulmin καὶ δι- επιστώσαμεν ὡρισμένους στοχασμοὺς ἐπὶ τῆς φύσεως, τῆς μορφῆς καὶ τῆς χρή- σεώς του εἰς τὴν ῥητορικήν. Ἐπροτείναμεν ὅπως, κάθε πρότασις, ἡ ὁποία χρησι- μοποιεῖται εἰς τὸν ῥητορικὸν λόγον διὰ νὰ δείξῃ τὸ ἐπιθυμητὸν μιᾶς ἀλλαγῆς εἰς τὸν νοῦν ἢ τὴν συμπεριφορὰν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, θεωρηθῇ ἐπιχείρημα ἀσχέτως τῆς μορφῆς τὴν ὁποίαν δύναται νὰ λάβῃ.