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# Rhetoric and persuasion: understanding enthymemes in the public sphere

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The enthymeme has been used and analysed for over two millennia. It is one of the most powerful rhetorical instruments used for the purpose of persuasion, be it through the spoken or written word. This article explores the origins and complexities of the instrument and demonstrates its use and significance in the public sphere by analysing style and rhetorical content in the writings of St Paul, Dr Martin Luther King Jr and President George W Bush. The conclusions suggest that further research into this rhetorical instrument could uncover a layer of understanding of political discourse in the public sphere hitherto not undertaken by local scholars.

## Retoriek en oorrading: verstaan van entimeme in die openbare sfeer

Die entimeem (enthymeme) word reeds meer as twee millennia lank gebruik en ontleed. Dit is een van die kragtigste retoriese instrumente wat vir doeleindes van oorrading gebruik word, hetsy in die gesproke of die geskrewe woord. Hierdie artikel ondersoek die oorsprong en die komplekse aard van hierdie instrument en demonstreer die gebruik en belangrikheid daarvan deur die styl en retoriese inhoud in die geskrifte van Paulus, dr Martin Luther King Jr en president George W Bush te ontleed. Die gevolgtrekkings suggereer dat verdere navorsing oor die gebruik van hierdie retoriese instrument 'n vlak van begrip oor politieke diskoers in die openbare sfeer kan ontsluit wat tot nog toe nie deur plaaslike navorsers onderneem is nie.

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SUN MODIA  
BLOEMFONTEIN

... the word *enthymema* is *thymos*, 'heart', meaning the seat of emotions and desires, or of motive, of the sometimes uncontrollable forces of desire and wish that drive human intentionality. *Thymos* is, moreover, often linked to both the production and the reception of passionate thought and eloquent, persuasive discourse (Walker 1994: 48-9).

It is often suggested that politics should be a process of competing ideas instead of conflict between actors, and that what is right is more important than who is right, and that right is preferable to might as opposed to preferring might to right. Of course, politics can never be only the competition between ideas that claim to be right or the use of only might, but ideas, whatever they postulate, are certainly an indispensable element of political life. After all, ideas inform actors, their actions, leadership, manifestos, policies, decisions, electoral debates and the preferences of the electorate when votes are cast. While it may seem self-evident that the substantive content of ideas and claims will serve their support, success and use in the political process, this is not necessarily the case. The history of politics bears witness to many sound ideas that have fallen by the wayside, and simultaneously dangerous and fatal ideas that have gained widespread public support. What successful ideas claim is often also tied up with how they are enunciated and articulated, as well as the factors that facilitate their acceptance or rejection. Taken together the dynamics between these three elements, the idea, how and by whom it is communicated and the factors that constitute the level of receptivity and acceptance by the audience, represent the province in which rhetoric and persuasion may take effect and determine the success and support that ideas may engender.

One of the most widely used instruments of rhetoric and persuasion is the enthymeme. As an instrument of rhetoric and persuasion, the enthymeme has been used and analysed for at least 2 500 years since its attributes were first recognised and analysed in ancient Greece. Oral rhetoric originated as part of public life in Greece during the fifth century BC. The aim of this form of rhetoric, also known as primary rhetoric, is persuasion. It initially had no text, but subsequent capturing of such oral enunciations in text, as well as the use of written discursive rhetorical techniques, introduced what is often referred to as secondary

rhetoric. The classical enthymeme (εὐθύμημα), in particular Aristotle's rhetorical syllogism, was highly regarded by ancient rhetorical theorists not only for its persuasive potential and infusion of logic into a speech, but also for its aesthetic and stylistic qualities. In early Rome, it was regarded as a valued verbal ornament. For Cicero, for example, it was to other forms of expression what Homer was to other poets (cf Holloway 2001: 329). It has been used by countless orators and authors throughout history ranging, for example, from the public and legal debates in ancient Greece and Rome and the letters of St Paul to the writings of Martin Luther King, USA presidents justifying their actions, such as Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis, Nixon on the Vietnam War, Bush on the 9/11 attack, countless parliamentary and electoral debates, innumerable political speeches as well as the health and advertising campaigns of contemporary times.

This article explores the nature and role of enthymemes in rhetorical and discursive practices and demonstrates their use in the public sphere. The overview commences with an analysis of the nature of enthymemes by briefly reviewing their ancient origins and highlighting some of the approaches used to study this rhetorical instrument. This provides the background to the ensuing discussion of the problems relating to the definition of the concept. This conceptual section of the essay is then followed by a partial analysis of three well-known pieces of written rhetoric in which enthymemes are used with persuasive intent and effect. The examples selected for this purpose are taken from different contexts and historical periods. As is evident from the illustrations, enthymemes manifest themselves in the content, composition, style and mode of delivery and presentation of the different discursive practices. Enthymemes are mostly used in conjunction with other rhetorical instruments, and rhetorical analysis is not restricted to the use of enthymemes only. The conclusions drawn suggest that the role of rhetoric and its use of enthymemes is a key factor in understanding the dynamics of the public sphere, both locally and abroad. Further research focusing on the rhetorical use of enthymemes in the public sphere could uncover a layer of understanding various issues in public discourses that has hitherto not been undertaken in any significant manner in South Africa.

## 1. Enthymemes

There is an extensive volume of literature spanning more than two millennia that deals with the enthymeme. This literature covers the origin of the enthymeme from Homer onwards, its various forms, logical attributes and use by speakers and authors in various fields. However, despite this, there is no agreement on what could be regarded as a generally accepted definition of the concept. For the purposes of this article, one can distinguish at least four approaches in the literature towards the understanding of enthymemes (cf Scenters-Zapico 1994: 71). The first approach accords great significance, in fact almost paradigmatic status, to the classical authors, in particular Aristotle's analysis of the enthymeme as a rhetorical instrument in oral cultures. The second approach examines the logic of enthymemes as oral and written instruments or devices, but it does so outside the social practice in which enthymemes are used. The third approach examines enthymemes as rhetorical instruments, but without considering it extensively in the context of a print culture. The fourth approach emphasises the social construction of written discursive practices and how enthymematic understanding takes effect via the dialectics of social interaction and intertextuality. The fourth approach supplements the third approach, and for the purposes of this article, they can be grouped together, given the objective of rhetorical and persuasive intent that both approaches seek to understand, which is the main focus of this article.

It is necessary to first briefly orientate oneself towards these foci before moving on to operationally describe the attributes and use of enthymemes.

### 1.1 The Aristotelian enthymeme

Scholars using the first approach focus primarily on the use of the enthymeme in ancient Greece and, in particular, on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (350 BC) as a text that arguably contains the most significant theoretical statements in the history of rhetoric. Using a set of criteria that indicates significance, Benoit (1982: 2), for example, identified the most significant passage in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as one that explicates the enthymeme, namely:

With regard to the persuasion achieved by proof or apparent proof: just as in dialectic there is induction on the one hand and syllogism or apparent syllogism on the other, so it is in rhetoric. The example is an induction, the enthymeme is a syllogism, and the apparent enthymeme is an apparent syllogism. I call the enthymeme a rhetorical syllogism, and the example a rhetorical induction. Every one who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use either enthymemes or examples: there is no other way (cf also *The Internet Classics Archive*, Book I Part 2).

Orators, according to Aristotle, use enthymemes as demonstrations and proof as one of the most effective instruments of rhetoric and persuasion when they interact with an audience. Scholars in this tradition (cf Farrell 1993), following Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, view an enthymeme as a truncated syllogism, and together with syllogisms of all kinds, they represent the business of dialectic. Poster (1992: 7) citing Harper (1973: 309) explains the difference between these types of syllogisms:

Gramatically the enthymeme is a causal statement; the syllogism is a conditional statement. Substantively, the enthymeme is an argument containing a claim and reasons to support the claim; the syllogism is a demonstration. Formally, the enthymeme is a psychological, empirically based inference; the syllogism is a logical, analytically based inference.

Enthymemes have fewer propositions than syllogisms since orators purposefully omit some premises because the audience already shares this information. When auditors fail to supply the missing information, enthymemes will not be persuasive. Discourse between the orator and the audience itself becomes enthymematic and unifying when they share well-defined experiences, assumptions and associations (cf Scenters-Zapico 1994: 72). The Aristotelian enthymeme is recognised by scholars as "a complex structure of intuitive inference and affect that constitutes the substance of an argument" (Walker 1994: 63). Rhetorical arguments that use such enthymemes ultimately direct themselves to *pistis* (faith), to believe (*pistevo*), and this entails both the faculties of intellect and emotions requiring that enthymemes appeal to *ethos* (credibility), *logos* (logic) and *pathos* (emotion). In this way, the enthymeme becomes a holistic approach to persuasion (Scenters-Zapico 1994: 72; cf also Grimaldi 1972: 143-4, Walker 1994: 54). *Ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* as sources of persuasion, how-

ever, are not separate kinds of proof – they are simultaneous dimensions of the Aristotelian enthymeme (cf Walker 1994: 60). Viewed in this manner the enthymeme becomes the primary instrument for understanding “the power and resilience of practical reason in human affairs” in the classical Greek tradition of Aristotelian rhetoric (Farrell 1993: 11; cf also Enos 1996: 57).

Scenters-Zapico (1994: 73) and McBurney (1936: 69) claim that the enthymeme became confused with the syllogism at approximately 85 BC. Not only were there fewer opportunities for public oratory, but the enthymeme was increasingly treated as an ornamental technical device – it became known as an *epicheireme*, an amplifying feature of style instead of a syllogistic device. In practice, this amounted to an attempt to

... accommodate the logical syllogism to the needs of rhetoric, but in practice it tended to pervert the purposes and methods of rhetorical invention. It attempted to stylize rhetorical argument and make it independent of the speaker and the audience, but in practice it faltered as speakers were forced to adapt their materials to their audience and their audience to their materials (Church & Cathcart 1965: 147, as cited by Scenters-Zapico 1994: 73; cf also Fisher 1964: 37).

This development of treating enthymemes formally, divorced from its social context, is the early forerunner to the second approach as alluded to above.

## 1.2 The logic of enthymemes

The analysis of the logical and syllogistic features of enthymemes in the philosophy of science is an example of the second approach, in terms of which enthymemes can be understood. Research on these aspects of enthymemes is not restricted to philosophical inquiry only. It is a highly specialised field and technical by virtue of its focus on logical structures. Examples of work undertaken in this field, or that touch on this field of inquiry, are Grimaldi (1980), Montefusco (2004), Madden (1952), Raphael (1974), Green (1980), George (1972) and Nolt (1986).

Many of these modern logicians contrast the enthymeme with the syllogism on the basis of logical form – the enthymeme is a syllogism of which one or more premises are missing. By contrast, some modern rhetoricians with an interest in logic distinguish the enthymeme from a syllogism on the basis of its matter, its content – the enthymeme belongs to the dialectic syllogism whereas the syllogism belongs to a class of logically valid deductive structures. The logician's interest is the dichotomy of validity versus probability in syllogistic systems, and in this case, two types of syllogisms. The rhetorician, however, is interested in finding a logical unit that will fit into one or more missing patterns of controversy, the suppressed premises of enthymemes, and arguing its relevance. Neither of these is primarily interested in the enthymeme as conceived by Aristotle, namely a complex argumentative structure of practical reasoning soliciting intuitive affection aimed at persuasion (cf Simonson 1945: 303).

The interest of this approach in the logical and technical attributes of enthymemes divorces it from live oral and written discourse. Scenters-Zapico (1994: 74-5) argues that analysing enthymemes in terms of mathematical and logical equations and filling in hidden premises so that structures can become deductively valid may be an undertaking in its own right, but excising it from social context implies that the truth of the enthymeme holds for all:

These discussions emphasize that enthymematic understanding follows a set pattern for everyone all the time. Logicians writing on the enthymeme have consequently viewed it as a decontextualized economic syllogism, attempting to interpret it as some form of artificial construction and consequently failing to discuss the social milieu that a speaker and hearer already have as their base premises. In other words, they omit the social bases that establish the very premises of their arguments (Scenters-Zapico 1994: 75).

### 1.3 Oral and written enthymemes as rhetorical instruments

In contrast to the preceding approach, contemporary scholars who analyse the enthymeme as a rhetorical instrument, be it in the format of the spoken or written word, view it as a social and communicative process between speakers or authors, on the one hand, and listeners,

viewers and readers, on the other. The use and functioning of oral or primary rhetoric and secondary or written rhetoric share certain attributes, but also differ in certain respects. For both oral and written enthymemes, the implicit or explicit intention is to realise enthymematic understanding with their respective audiences, be it listeners, viewers or readers. This understanding develops through enthymematic closure when the listener or reader fills in the missing premises of a rhetorical syllogism. While the intention of closure is the same for oral and written enthymemes, the actual processes in which they occur may differ for the oral and the written enthymeme, respectively. This closure is not necessarily a single event of understanding, although the "immediacy of comprehension" may have been the intention of the speaker or author. Listeners in an audience that do not understand a speaker's argument may, for example, enquire from co-listeners what the speaker meant, thereby gaining immediate understanding, but readers of a text may acquire understanding of what an author meant only after reading other texts at a later stage and discussing it with readers of the same texts over a period of time (cf Scenters-Zapico 1994: 74-6).

In general, scholars who focus on the use of enthymemes in oral contexts rely heavily on the classical and, in particular, the Aristotelian notion of the enthymeme as a type of deductive rhetorical argument that the speaker adapts to the audience in order to accomplish the intention of persuasion and enthymematic understanding. This adaptation or manipulation of speech by the speaker exploits shared experiences of the speaker and the audience by appealing to the dispositional preferences of the listeners through the use of *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* (cf Scenters-Zapico 1994: 74-5). While the written enthymeme has retained many features of the classical one, our modern text-based culture requires a different understanding of how closure for written enthymemes is accomplished. Readers of texts engage in a form of social construction aimed at understanding written discourse. This need to understand is driven by one or more of the following convictions: the belief that one needs to know, that there is something out there, that something is missing, incomplete or misunderstood and that something needs clarification in the absence of which it will remain



a fabrication. The written enthymeme inscribes shared knowledge of the writer and the reader and this is the dynamic element which drives the search for meaning which may be sought in other texts and social contexts. The written enthymeme is therefore intertextual by its very nature. The process of initially being presented with knowledge and the conclusions drawn about meaning depends on the availability of other texts and sources to the reader. In fact it entails the entire process of socially constructing knowledge and deriving and giving meaning from such knowledge, in an attempt to fill in the missing premise (cf Scenters-Zapico 1994: 75-7). Bakhtin (1981: 69), as cited by Scenters-Zapico (1994: 78), subscribes to the notion that enthymematic understanding of oral speech and written texts is, in fact, a species of dialogical communication,

... one that argues for the infinite nature of oral and written acts to create and respond to each other. In this regard, Bakhtin believed a speaker, a listener, a writer, a reader, etc., are all respondents to greater or lesser degrees. The implication he makes is that there are so many ideas constantly being born and reinterpreted that it is impossible for us to understand without some form of mediation.

The infinite nature of communicative acts to respond to one another, of course, also implies that the closure brought about by enthymematic understanding is not necessarily final and everlasting. It is neither a cloning of meaning from speaker and writer to listener and reader. Such an understanding is one that “metamorphoses and jumps among the live social and the technologically social world of print, radio, television, e-mail, fax, etc., in order to become meaningful to its seeker-recipient” (cf Scenters-Zapico 1994: 82-3).

#### 1.4 Defining the enthymeme

After a brief review of some approaches to the study of enthymemes, the problems associated with defining the term can now be discussed. also It was mentioned earlier that there is no generally accepted definition of the enthymeme. Poster’s (1992: 1-24) article, “A historicist recontextualization of the enthymeme”, is an excellent analysis of problems associated with defining the enthymeme. Her main objective is to account for the multiple incommensurable accounts of the

enthymeme in the work of classical and contemporary scholars alike. Using various classical authors, she illustrates in great detail that the word “enthymeme” was widely and diversely used in Greek texts in the classical period spanning a period of 1 300 years from Homer to the Byzantium rhetoricians, and covering the entire circumference of the Mediterranean, including countries such as Greece, Italy, Spain, North Africa, Egypt and Turkey (Poster 1992: 9). Walker (1994: 49), following Miller & Bee (1972: 202), supplements this opinion in pointing out that the Greek verb *enthymeomai* has a field of different meanings including

... *lay to heart, consider well, reflect on, think deeply about, be hurt or angry at, form a plan, infer, conclude.* ‘Enthymeming’, then, would appear to include both the inference-making of the heart and the strategic intentionality of ‘forming plans.’ In the case of rhetoric, moreover, this strategic intentionality includes what I will call ‘kairotic inventiveness’ — that is, an inventiveness responsive to what ancient rhetoricians called *kairos*, ‘the opportune’ at any given moment in a particular rhetorical situation.

Apart from the range of semantic meanings associated with the etymology of the term “enthymeme”, it should also be noted that some classical authors who wrote extensively on the features and use of enthymemes, such as Isocrates (436-338 BC), for example, “will not give us the satisfaction of a rigidly precise or systematic account of the enthymeme, since in general he denies the possibility or usefulness of ‘exact knowledge’ and does not consider rhetoric reducible to *techné*” (Walker 1994: 49; on *kairos* cf also Montesamo 1995, Carter 1997).

On contemporary rhetorical scholarship’s attempts at defining the enthymeme, Poster extensively analyses five influential definitions of the enthymeme, which also incorporate interpretations of Homer and Aristotle’s use of the enthymeme (cf Poster 1992: 1-4). Her analysis yields what she describes as

... an embarrassment of riches with respect to definition of the enthymeme. The possibilities offered are: (a) abbreviated syllogism (one premise omitted) (b) syllogism of which at least one premise is probable (c) abbreviated syllogism of which one premise is probable (d) informal deductive reasoning (e) syllogism of which at least one premise is a sign (f) syllogism of which at least one term is a maxim (g) syllogism from premises in accord with audience’s world view (Poster 1992: 4).

To this she adds that these multiple meanings and inherent contradictions are “adumbrated, and that a rather farfetched conflation of such apparently disparate notions is so commonly accepted as to be rarely worthy of comment” (Poster 1992:4).

Poster’s (1992) diagnosis of the problems pertaining to the definition of the enthymeme is worthy of summary. She argues that the term “enthymeme” is not part of ordinary language but of secondary rhetoric which is a species of metadiscourse. Metadiscourse does not transcend itself in having extralinguistic reference – it is part of semiotics and not part of semantics. Citing Ricoeur (1977: 74), Poster (1992: 21) argues that the difference between semiotics and semantics is the same as that between sense and reference, a necessary but pervasive feature of the language of discourse:

In language itself there is no reference problem, only one of sense; signs refer to other signs within the same system. In the phenomenon of the sentence, language passes outside itself; reference is the mark of the self-transcendence of language. This trait, more than others perhaps, marks the fundamental difference between semantics and semiotics. Semiotics is aware only of intra-linguistic relationships, whereas semantics takes up the relationship between signs and things denoted ... (Poster 1992: 74).

According to Poster (1992), confusion pertaining to the definition of the enthymeme is therefore primarily attributable to the fact that a semiotic matter is addressed semantically. The term *enthymeme*, however, does not have an extra-linguistic reference. Enthymemes should not be defined inductively and applied or demonstrated *a posteriori*. They should be defined deductively and applied *a priori* (cf Poster 1993: 7, 21). The account of an enthymeme selected for the purposes of heuristic illustration in this article is one that follows Poster’s (1992: 21) cue that “rather than demanding definition, a term used by a rhetorician demands a listing of relationships and boundary conditions with respect to other terms used in the same writer, the same or other terms used in different writers of the same period, and antecedent and subsequent uses of the term”. Such an account is provided by Walker (1994: 53), and it reads as follows:

Between Anaximenes and Isocrates (469-399 BC), then, we might derive a reasonably full picture of a sophistic, non-Aristotelian

notion of the enthymeme that is pervasive in the Hellenistic rhetorical tradition: the enthymeme is a strategic, kairotic, argumentational turn that exploits a cluster of emotively charged, value-laden oppositions made available (usually) by an exetastic buildup, in order to generate in its audience a passional identification with or adherence to a particular stance, and that (ideally) will strike the audience as an 'abrupt' and decisive flash of insight. To be most effective, this enthymematic turn will exploit a range of stylistic schemes (antithesis, parallelism, and compactness in particular) to intensify its impact and enhance its presence and memorability in the audience's psyche. As such, the enthymematic turn is the rhetorical move *par excellence* for guiding an audience's inference-making and attitude-formation in a particular direction.

Walker's account of the enthymeme is non-Aristotelian, but it is not anti-Aristotelian. The enthymeme as a complex structure of intuitive inference and affect that constitutes the substance of an argument is what Aristotle, among others, analyses, by disclosing the different features of its syllogistic constituents. Anaximemes (380-320 BC) and Isocrates (436-338 BC), like Aristotle, recognise the enthymeme as being the body of persuasion and enthymematic skill as the heart of skill in rhetoric, but they describe it in use, emphasising the processes that lead to persuasion. For Anaximemes

... an enthymeme is, or is like, the argumentational cap that finishes an exetastic movement: a concise, emphatic statement of an emotionally charged opposition, one that serves not only to draw conclusions but also to foreground stance or attitude toward the subject under discussion and to motivate the audience to strongly identify with that stance (Walker 1994: 50).

#### For Isocrates

... the best and most effective enthymemes will in some sense come as a surprise and stand apart from or go beyond what precedes them. They will seize the *kairos* of the moment to move the audience to a decisive recognition that is or seems 'lofty and original', while at the same time 'cutting off' or shifting into the background other possible recognitions that maybe latent in the buildup (Walker 1994: 52).

Using the insights of both Anaximemes and Isocrates, Walker (1994: 63) explains the enthymeme as being more rich and flexible than the conventional view of the enthymeme, and also more in line with modern theories of persuasion and argument and actual

argumentational practice. With this view in mind, one can now move on to demonstrate the enthymeme's use in the public sphere.

## 2. Enthymemes in the public sphere

Public spheres differ widely from one another, both historically and spatially, ranging from those with a democratic nature to those which are authoritarian in nature. The use of rhetoric employing enthymemes can be found in all of these, their purpose being to evoke passion and persuasion, whatever the objective, be it honourable or questionable, given criteria that may be used to justify the purpose of employing them.

Since ancient times, thinkers have held that democracies, by their very nature, reward quantity over quality; they reward political actors with the largest support over those who may entertain truthful and rational ideas. According to Chambers (2009: 328), Socrates favoured dialogical conversations between citizens in which they “examine themselves, their values, and their politics” and that such discourse, which is guided by a common interest in truth as opposed to power, is preferable to rhetorical speeches in assemblies. Plato (428/7-348/7 BC) objected to the fact that democracy always suffered from too much rhetoric seeking persuasion and support and too little dialogue, and that the very nature of the former is that of a monologue. With regard to rhetoric,

Plato was not, in the first instance, concerned with the fiery demagogue or eloquence that tugged at a citizen's heartstrings. What concerned him was a strategic attitude toward speech in which words become the means to power rather than the path to truth (Chambers 2009: 327).

According to Chambers (2009: 335), Aristotle understood that truth and justice may not always win the day, given the risks of the nature of discourse in the public sphere of democracies. Instead of abandoning the public sphere, Aristotle, like Plato, favours a form of rhetoric, which includes enthymemes, as a way of realising what could be termed “deliberative rhetoric”, combining *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* as outlined earlier. The element of *logos* plays a key role in this instance, since it counters a total disregard for truth.

In many contemporary democracies, their respective public spheres are characterised by debates about the role of rhetoric that mainly reflect and address the positions of the classical scholars briefly outlined above, albeit in an entirely different context. There is, for example, a debate about the desirability of rhetorically laden speeches to large audiences versus the desirability of dialogical conversation in smaller audiences, also known as plebiscitary rhetoric and deliberative rhetoric residing in the centre and periphery of the public sphere, respectively. A critical issue in these debates is how exactly pandering and manipulating, by the use of rhetoric, can be minimised by way of small group interaction and can succeed, and how the latter can minimise the effect of the former, given the unavoidability of large-scale events such as the electoral requirements of democracies. In a way, the two positions on rhetoric are well reflected by the views on rhetoric of Aristotle and Immanuel Kant, respectively. As previously mentioned, Aristotle wrote as follows: “Everyone who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use either enthymemes or examples: there is no other way” (cf also *The Internet Classics Archive*, Book I Part 2). Kant, in turn, views rhetoric as the art “of deceiving by means of beautiful illusion”, stating that it would be beneath the dignity of reasonable men to “exhibit even a trace of the exuberance of wit and imagination, and still more, the art of talking men round and prejudicing them in favor of some proposal” (Kant 2000: 204, as cited in Chambers 2009: 325).

Whatever the nature of public spheres, it remains a fact that rhetoric is used in discourse on public issues and enthymemes in their various formats and styles are turned by orators and used by authors on a regular basis. Rhetors may use them without any formal knowledge or training in the art of argumentation, while others may consciously apply them with such knowledge in mind. Some of the best-known enthymemes of modern political discourse exhibit the features of the classical enthymeme, while others take on one of the many formats in which enthymemes can manifest themselves in discursive use. Walker (1994: 55) illustrates the classical use of enthymemes by pointing to “John F Kennedy’s famous ‘ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country’ as

an enthymematic turn of Isocratean elegance”, and “Lloyd Bentsen’s memorable gutting of Dan Quayle in the 1988 Vice Presidential debate - ‘I knew Jack Kennedy; Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine; and believe me, Senator, you’re no Jack Kennedy’ – as an enthymematic zinger worthy of Anaximenes.”

On the basis of the above discussion, three well-known pieces of written rhetoric are employed to illustrate the use of enthymemes in the public sphere. They differ considerably from one another in many respects, but it should be borne in mind, as Aristotle suggested, that “it is ultimately not any particular stylistic form that makes an enthymeme an enthymeme; enthymemes are eloquent pieces of speech or writing that foreground stance and reasons to identify with such a stance using emotively charged value-laden ideas as oppositions” (cf Walker 1994: 55).

## 2.1 Enthymemes as an element of style in St Paul

Emperor Constantine’s issuing of the Edict of Milan in 313 AD legalised Christianity, and its worship and sacred texts, as the official religion of the Roman Empire. This act placed the Christian Bible squarely in the public realm of the time. Against this background, Paul’s use of style as a suasive procedure in the Bible may be cited as an early example of textual enthymematic skill belonging to the public realm. The brief analysis that follows is in no way an exegesis of theological meaning but merely an illustration of how enthymemes constitute an element of persuasive style in one of the most significant documents of its time.

Holloway (2001: 329-35) traces the evolution of the enthymeme as an element of style from the late Hellenistic to the early Roman period in which it developed from a type of proof to a figure of aesthetic speech. He summarises the development during this period as follows:

On the basis of the [...] survey we may describe the figure of enthymeme as it took shape [...] as a brief and pointed argument drawn from contraries. Ideally, it was no longer than a single sentence. By the Republic it had come to be viewed primarily as a figure of speech and was almost always expressed in the form of a question. For further effect, enthymemes were sometimes employed in

series. Enthymemes were considered particularly appropriate for courtroom rhetoric, where they were used to attack or even ridicule an opponent by exposing logical or personal inconsistencies, though they could also be used, *mutatis mutandis*, for self-defense (Holloway 2001: 335).

It is against this background that St Paul wrote and used enthymemes, some of which shall be followed using Holloway's analysis.

The first use that Holloway (2001: 335-6) explains is from Galatians 2:14:

This is Paul's famous indictment of Peter at Antioch. Peter had joined Paul and Barnabas in eating with Gentile Christians until 'certain ones from James' arrived, at which point he separated himself. Paul saw in this retraction a perversion of the gospel, and he confronted Peter with the following question:<sup>1</sup>

But when I saw that they were not behaving consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, 'If you, although you are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you try to force the Gentiles to live like Jews?' (Net Bible).

OR

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? (The Bible, King James Version).

In this complex enthymeme Paul alleges as many as three contradictions in Peter's behavior: first, he is compelling Gentiles to live as Jews...; second, he is enforcing a standard from which he himself has just recently departed...; and third, he has not held to this standard even though he is himself a Jew (Holloway 2001: 336).

1 Holloway uses the original Greek text for the enthymemes that he illustrates. He does not provide an English translation. The English translations that are provided are offered in full awareness that they may not necessarily capture the stylistic attributes in exactly the same manner as the Greek text. It is, however, believed that the rhetorical and persuasive style contained in one language can be reflected in a translation to a greater or lesser degree, as is evident from the English texts provided and the use of Holloway's explanation of the Greek text to highlight the stylistic elements.



The second example that Holloway (2001: 336) explains comes from Galatians 3:3:

Here he indicts the Galatians themselves for a contradiction in their own behavior. The Galatians had been converted to Christianity by Paul's gospel and had therefore begun their Christian experience 'in the Spirit.' However, they have recently become law-observant, which, according to Paul, constitutes a reversion to the 'flesh' . . . . Paul thus asks":

Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort? (Net Bible, *human effort - Grk* "in/by [the] flesh.")

or

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (The Bible, King James Version).

For Holloway (2001: 336) the elegance of this enthymeme lies in its conciseness and succinctness. "In addition, it employs a twofold contrast: between beginning a process and bringing that process to completion [. . .] and between the Spirit and the flesh [. . .] It is made even more striking by its use of chiasmus".<sup>2</sup>

The last example from Holloway (2001: 339) comes from Romans 2:21-23, in which Paul uses a string of questions in quick succession to indict a Jew who imagines that he has escaped the wrath of God:

2:21 therefore you who teach someone else, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? 2:22 you who tell others not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 2:23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by transgressing the law! (Net Bible).

or

21: Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22: Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23: Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? (The Bible, King James Version).

2 "a rhetorical construction in which the order of the words in the second of two paired phrases is the reverse of the order in the first. An example is 'grey was the morn, all things were grey'" (Thesaurus MS Word 2003).

Holloway (2001) points out that Paul's enthymemes almost always argue from strict contrariety, are always brief, are almost always in the form of questions, and usually entail indictments and counter-indictments. The questions in Paul's enthymemes have their nearest parallel in Latin rhetoric of that time, while the use of indictments has a similar parallel in the legal repartee of the same period. Holloway (2001: 338-9) concludes that Paul's use of enthymemes and style as a rhetorical instrument is impressive and striking, even by contemporary standards.

## 2.2 Enthymemes turned in King's Letter from Birmingham jail

The civil rights movement in America and the revolution it caused in the race relations of that country are well-documented. While many factors such as the irrepressible political will and courage of numerous individuals with strong community roots and local resources provided the foundation of the movement, it has been suggested that persuasive speech and writing lay at the very core of the revolution. In this respect it is recognised that the Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr's charismatic presence and his skills in oratory and rhetorical firepower were an indispensable element in bringing the plight of African Americans to the top of the nation's political agenda. Combined with his virtuous reputation, these skills were brought to bear in his speeches and writings. In these he masterfully used the elements of *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*, while simultaneously exploiting deep emotional feelings in his audiences and readers such as shame, indignation, anger and pity to the advantage of his cause (cf Triadafilopoulos 1999: 752, Lischer 1995: 191).

His use of enthymemes is probably best exemplified in his famous *Letter from Birmingham jail* dated 16 April 1963 (cf King 1963: 77-100) and his *I have a dream* speech delivered on 28 August 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC (cf Eidenmuller 2001-10b). The letter is a response to Alabama clergymen who criticised King and fellow-protesters for breaking the law in participating in a non-violent protest against Birmingham's segregationist policies. In the letter, which will be briefly examined in this instance, King

likens his role in the civil rights movement to that of the early biblical prophets, Paul and Socrates, when he writes the following:

Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their 'thus saith the Lord' far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

and

I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

In the second citation above, King's use of a matrix of oppositions such as bondage and freedom, myth and creative analysis, half-truth and objective appraisal, dark depths and majestic heights, racism and brotherhood are strategically significant. He implicitly links these with the oppositional forces with which Paul and Socrates had to contend in the preceding section, thereby amplifying the injustices that characterise his own campaign. According to Walker (1994: 58), this enthymeme culminates in a "grand mythic narrative", it represents "a moment of high-spoken, impressive, and even aesthetically suasive eloquence" and it exploits "the *kairos* of its moment to present a stance with which the reader is given a complex chord of rational and passionate reasons to identify". The implied or suppressed major premise in this enthymeme is that if social gadflies irritate us for long enough, we change our views and thereby improve the lives of individuals. The minor premise is that King is a gadfly, generating the conclusion that his efforts will benefit the lives of individuals as well as society. The *ethos* in the enthymeme is represented by King's knowledge of classical philosophers to the extent that it warrants serious consideration to ascertain whether we

harbour half-truths, prejudice and feelings of racism. The *logos* is that in the same way as Socrates' cause was honourable and wise, so too is that of King. The *pathos* is reflected by the parallel between Socrates' attempts at enlightening his fellow citizens that eventually led to his imprisonment and death, and King's sacrifice in prison for living according to his convictions (cf Taylor 2003).

A second example taken from the letter is one in which King addresses the difference between just and unjust laws:

I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.' [...] A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an 'I-it' relationship for an 'I-thou' relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and awful. Paul Tillich said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression 'of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness?' Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

In this passage, King again invokes the intellectual and moral authority of philosophical thinkers in constructing an argumentative claim with syllogistic features. The claim "I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong" is couched in the deductive format of morally wrong laws should be disobeyed (major premise), segregationist ordinances are morally wrong (minor premise), and, therefore segregationist ordinances should not be obeyed (conclusion) (cf More 2010).

The last passages taken from King's letter are, according to Holloway (1994: 60), instances which "well exemplify the *kairotic* aspect of the enthymeme, its ability to seize the possibilities available at any given moment and give those possibilities a particular realization and

salience". The first passage is preceded by King's criticism of white moderates and the white church to support his cause, and is immediately followed by denouncing his white critics for commending the Birmingham police for restraint in dealing with the protestors. This is followed by the second passage, his concluding enthymeme:

If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

and

One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

These enthymemes at the end of King's letter can exploit the cumulative effect of argumentative claims and persuasive sentiment that the careful reader will have collected. Neither of the enthymemes summarises the preceding arguments; they take an almost unexpected turn. The first foreshadows an impending and inevitable victory, while the second reifies the ethical and noble cause of the demonstrators:

Each, in short, exploits a different *kairotic* possibility inherent in the structure of ideas that King has built, bringing the force of the adherences/identifications established earlier to bear in different ways (Holloway 1994: 60).

King's writing as well as his oratory represent some of the finest examples of how rhetorical skills can be employed to persuasively present claims for justice. He succeeds in combining his teaching of prophetic religion with the gospel of the Republic which converged to make him a symbol of the sacred American covenant (cf Triadafilopoulos 1999: 752, Lischer 1995: 191). His claims to justice appeal not only to rationality but also to the soul of the reader and the listener, suggesting that in politics rhetoric can exploit rationality, emotion and the good character of a writer or speaker to take advantage of the

shame and indignation of those to whom the message is addressed. His rhetoric simultaneously drew on and transcended the public morality of different Americans in order to bridge heterogeneous values and appeal to a set of collective similarities. King tapped into the particularities of the American creed and its ideals and on this basis he universalised and justified his normative arguments:

King challenged 1960's white America to enact the role of a trans-historical American 'people' guided in its contemporary social, political and economic practices by the founding commitment to 'equality' as the motivating term for its national constitution. Rather than [...] reject [...] the Anglo-American commitment to 'equality,' King crafted a verbal tapestry that invited a public (re)visioning of the term's usage in the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. [...] Thus instead of rejecting the prevailing narratives of American political culture, King amplified and redirected them so as to lead white Americans to envision their commitment to 'equality' in a more fulgent light (Lucaites & Condit 1993: 102 as cited in Triadafilopoulos 1999: 753-4).

It is worth noting that Triadafilopoulos (1993: 754) judges the Aristotelian notion of right conduct in the public sphere to be a more adequate theoretical justification for King's rhetorical tactics than rational/deliberative and agonistic models of the public sphere espoused by thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt. Walker (1994: 61) similarly regards King's use of enthymemes as being of the classical variety:

For [...] King [...] argumentative or suatory procedure is very much what it was for Anaximenes and Isocrates, that is, a matter of setting up and turning enthymemes — or, in a large and complex argument, a progression from enthymeme to enthymeme to enthymeme, building up an accumulated fund of value-laden, emotively significant ideas (oppositions, liaisons, etc.) that are variously brought to bear, forcefully and memorably, in the rhetor's final enthymematic turns. The enthymeme remains, in sum, a vital principle in modern discourse, even when an adequate conception of the enthymeme is unavailable. And indeed, as Aristotle says, it could hardly be otherwise (Rhetoric 1.1 [1354a], 1.2 [1356b]). Enthymeming is simply what people do, whether they think of themselves as doing so or not, whenever they attempt to persuade by means of discourse.

### 2.3 President Bush's "enthymeme of evil"

The enthymematic elements associated with the rhetorical style of George W Bush and his advisors differ significantly from the two examples above. Whereas Paul wrote in a time of limited texts and literacy, King wrote at the beginning of the modern age when television was in its infancy and written texts still enjoyed a prominent role as the format for the delivery mode of secondary rhetorical argument. Bush's rhetoric comes in the postmodern age where television is the primary mode of mass communication in developed and developing nations. With Bush, the conventional sphere of public argument is now supplemented by electronic media that incorporate ever larger and more diverse audiences. While Bush's speeches are text based, the conventional listener and reader of public discourse is now enlarged by audiences that increasingly rely on short visual images and sound bytes generated by various television transmissions covering the original rhetorical message or parts thereof, as well as commenting on it. Compared to the two previous examples, another major difference with Bush is that he does not literally turn the eloquent concise enthymemes as found in the texts of Paul and King. His rhetoric differs with regard to style and syllogistic rigour. Instead, his so-called "enthymeme of evil" seems to emerge indirectly from his rhetoric, the outlines and elements which were laid down by his 9/11 address and understood against the background of a particular period of his presidency. The persuasive effect of Bush's "enthymeme of evil" was remarkably successful, but transient in nature.

Despite these major differences with regard to presentation, style and audience, all three examples share a significant dimension. They are all either directly or indirectly grounded in the Christian faith as the ultimate source of justification for action. Whereas the persuasive intent of Paul could be described as evangelical, seeking the furtherance of the Christian faith associated with piety and righteousness, that of King was squarely directed at the attainment of political justice for his fellow African-Americans, but also ultimately grounded in principles of Christian morality. Bush's rhetoric is the rhetoric of crisis and war sparked by the 9/11 attack and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, of which the latter is

especially relevant in this instance. As will be demonstrated below, Bush's rhetoric and the "enthymeme of evil" associated with it are also based on religion, an apocalyptic crusade against evil and sin that aligns his nation with God's authority.

One of Bush's most important speeches will briefly illustrate some elements of his rhetorical style and the "enthymeme of evil" that indirectly emerged from it. This is Bush's 9/11 speech which could be viewed as an important example of crisis rhetoric (cf Eidenmuller 2001-2010a). As is well known, the period that followed Bush's 9/11 speech was characterised by ongoing rhetorical pronouncements by Bush on the crisis and the inevitability of invading Iraq because of its harbouring of WMD, among other things. References to some of these pronouncements will also be used in the analysis below. Following the attack on the twin towers of the WTC, Bush's 9/11 address to the American people as an example of crisis rhetoric finds historical parallels in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's address on 8 December 1941 after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour, President Reagan's speech after the Shuttle Challenger tragedy on 28 January 1986, and Prime Minister Tony Blair's address on 7 July 2005, following the London train bombings. The 9/11 address has been well researched. The general analysis of Smith (2005) and the excellent study of Arthur (2007) on the crisis and war rhetoric of Bush and Blair, respectively, will illustrate the constituents and the effect of Bush's "enthymeme of evil".

Arthur (2007: 21-7) uses, *inter alia*, the following sections from Bush's short 9/11 address to analyse and demonstrate its rhetorical content (cf Eidenmuller 2001-2010a):

Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge – huge structures collapsing have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong.



A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.

I have directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them. America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.

Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a Power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23:

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me.*

This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.

Thank you. Good night. And God bless America.

The above passages are loaded with rhetorical content, the first, according to Arthur (2007: 21), being the immediate combined use in the opening sentence of a three-part list as well as *anaphora*<sup>3</sup> by Bush. The three-part list is a powerful rhetorical tool that re-emphasises more or less the same issue (fellow citizens, way of life, freedom) from different perspectives, the last usually being the element that the rhetor wishes to accentuate. Arthur (2007: 21, citing Beard 2000: 51) uses the famous words of Mark Anthony in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "Friends, Romans, and countrymen", to demonstrate

3 "the use of the same word or phrase at the beginning of several successive clauses, sentences, lines, or verses, usually for emphasis or rhetorical effect. 'She didn't speak. She didn't stand. She didn't even look up when we came in' is an example of anaphora" (Thesaurus MS Word 2003).

a well-known example of this rhetorical instrument. *Anaphora*, in turn, is a rhetorical and poetic figure of speech using the same word (“our”) at the beginning of successive clauses in a sentence for the purposes of emphasis. For Arthur (2007: 21-2), the use of the words “our way of life, our very freedom” is Bush’s way of identifying with his audience via a shared set of more comprehensive categories such as a common historical heritage, Christianity and capitalism, among other things. This is in accordance with Aristotle’s notion of *ethos* whereby an orator identifies the shared values of the audience and constructs the discourse in such a way that it embodies and reflects the very same feelings, values and emotions as those of the audience. This is personalised into a family and peer group context when Bush empathises with the audience with his reference to the victims being “secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors” (cf Arthur 2007: 22). In the first passage cited above, Bush, like Roosevelt with reference to Pearl Harbour, also recalls the tragic events with images of what had happened, ascribes it to evil, but emphasises that the country is strong. Arthur (2007: 23-4), in referring to the work of Graham *et al* (2003) suggests that in this instance Bush is starting to lay the foundations for a call-to-arms discourse using four strategies, namely the identification of the legitimate victim, emphasising the historical importance of the home country’s culture, the identification of an “evil other” and an appeal to unify against the “evil other”. These four elements can be found in this opening passage of his speech.

In the second passage above, Bush uses metaphors (foundation of America, the steel of American resolve, beacon for freedom and that shining light) in support of an implied intention, namely “A great people has been moved to defend a great nation”. Arthur’s (2007: 24-5) research into the role of metaphors as spellbinding rhetorical instruments finds that, among other things, metaphors state resemblances between elements that are slightly incongruent and unexpected. Their effect is to evoke images, to process information efficiently, to promote thinking and curiosity, and to frame memorable events. His research also finds that messages containing metaphors lead to more attitudinal changes than similar messages that do not

contain metaphors. Arthur (2007: 26) explains the metaphorical use of the beacon of shining light as follows:

Reagan also used the metaphor of America as a beacon and it can be seen as part of a continuing discourse which views America as 'a shining city on a hill' – the idea of 'American exceptionalism' (Du Pont 2007). The origins of American exceptionalism can be traced back to the protestant puritans of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The new world was designated as a promised land, to be '*a moral example to the rest of the world*' (Du Pont 2007: 1).

The third passage above is significant in content since it contains an intention that is open to more than one interpretation. It could be interpreted that America would make no distinction between terrorists and countries that harbour them, or it could be interpreted as a message to countries or persons with mixed motives or divided loyalties on the acts of terror (cf Arthur 2007: 26). He further suggests that the section also alludes to the idea of a war for peace, a just war, as well as that of coalition-building by the use of words such as "justice", "our friends and allies", "all those who want peace", and "we stand together to win the war against terrorism" (cf Arthur 2007: 26).

In the remaining sections from Bush's 9/11 speech above, several themes with rhetorical import are invoked, namely the American Civil Christian religion (finding comfort in the words of Psalm 23), a further call to unification (all Americans . . . unite), an appeal to the history of the culture (America has stood down enemies before), the certainty of victory and triumph (we will do so this time), and for the second time, the notion of a just war (we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just), and the certain belief that God will support the war (God bless America). Arthur (2007: 27) interprets the last sentence of the speech as meaning: "God will support a war. By drawing on God's authority and aligning God with the nation, Bush is again legitimizing his discourse (Zarefsky 2004: 209). '*God defends liberty, America defends liberty, there is more liberty, and hence God blesses America*' (Du Pont 2007: 11)."

The rhetorical content outlined in Bush's 9/11 address above already contains all the elements of Bush's "enthymeme of evil", but it would be supplemented by various further pronouncements after the 9/11 address. One such a pronouncement is Bush's address to a

joint session of Congress on 9/20 in which he stated “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (Bush 2001a: 1142). The fact that it was supplemented by phrases in the same addresses such as: “This is not [...] just America’s fight, and what is at stake is not just America’s freedom. This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight” (Bush 2001a: 1142), did not prevent that the go-it-alone rhetoric “unnecessarily and unwisely excommunicated those who had a stake in the fight and who felt he needed to listen to a broader spectrum of opinion” (Smith 2005: 44). He argues that the course of events may have been quite different if Bush had premised America’s response to the attacks on a dictum such as: “If you are not against us you are with us”, following President Nixon’s approach with regard to the war in Vietnam (Smith 2005: 44).

Smith (2005: 42) argues that the rhetoric assumes the form of a presidential jeremiad<sup>4</sup> when Bush pronounces that owing to a commitment to a sacred mission, “America is a nation full of good fortune, with so much to be grateful for”, and “The world has produced enemies of human freedom. They have attacked America because we are freedom’s home and defender. And the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time” (Bush 2001b: 1109). A renewing of the sacred mission is thus called for:

Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger, we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us. Our Nation — this generation — will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire; we will not falter; and we will not fail (Bush 2001a: 1144 as cited by Smith 2005: 42).

Taken together, the foregoing rhetoric provided an “enthymeme of evil” that could readily be completed by Bush’s supporters to favour war on Iraq. “This enthymeme of evil could be breached neither by the Democrats’ policy rhetoric nor by their empirical proof or evidence precisely because those who believed in President Bush’s jeremiad believed in him and the need to be resolute in the face of

4 “a long recitation of mournful complaints” (Thesaurus MS Word 2003).

the temptations to disbelieve” (Smith 2005: 44). A report on policy attitudes published in 2004, asked, *inter alia*, the question whether the United States should have gone to war with Iraq if neither the country was attacked on 9/11 nor if Iraq had no WMD. Of Kerry supporters, 92% to 6% responded with “no”, while 58% of Bush supporters responded with a “no” and 37% supported the war anyway (cf Kull *et al* 2004 in Smith 2005: 33). Smith suggests that one possible explanation for the remarkable effect of Bush’s enthymeme can be found in the work of Rockeach (1960) on belief and disbelief systems. The disjunction between belief and disbelief systems becomes especially pronounced when an orator, in this case Bush as incumbent, sharpens and enhances “the values undergirding his or her authority, and to minimize dispassionate rational discussion of the facts of the case” (Smith 2005: 33). The fact that Rome, in the words of Archbishop Jean-Louis, denounced a unilateral military strike on Iraq as being a “crime against peace with no justification on grounds of self-defense”, the fact that the search for WMD was officially discontinued before the 2004 election, the fact that justice was brought to the enemy instead of bringing the enemy to justice and the fact that the war on Iraq was based on reasons that were later discredited, do not detract from the fact that the “enthymeme of evil” and its concomitant jeremiad succeeded in reconciling contradictions to the extent that empirical evidence was viewed as temptations by Bush supporters instead of disconfirming proof (cf Smith 2005, Note 1: 45-46 & 42, 45). In spite of the war on Iraq, Bush won the 2004 presidential election with a large majority.

Bush’s enthymeme illustrates rather strikingly that enthymemes as rhetorical instruments do not necessarily serve truth, even though they may; neither do they necessarily serve morality in terms of what is right or wrong, even though they may; nor is their effect necessarily long-lasting – it may be ephemeral. Bush’s rhetoric on “good” and “evil” graphically illustrates that the three foregoing features of enthymemes, that is, their truth claims, moral content, and lasting effect, are often subject to change. As a species of dialogical communication, enthymematic understanding is subject to the dialectics of social, political and religious interaction as well as meaning and understanding derived from an

ongoing intertextual debate about the issues at stake. As mentioned earlier, the infinite nature of communicative acts to respond to one another implies that the closure elicited by enthymematic understanding is not necessarily final and everlasting. It is not a cloning of meaning from speaker and writer to listener and reader. Such an understanding as has been noted before is one that “metamorphoses and jumps among the live social and the technologically social world of print, radio, television, e-mail, fax, etc, in order to become meaningful to its seeker-recipient” (cf Scenters-Zapico 1994: 82-3). The enthymematic closure which Bush accomplished so effectively prior to the 2004 presidential election was over-ridden and largely erased and supplanted by an alternative understanding of how to appraise and act on the events of 9/11 during his second term of office.

### 3. Conclusion

In the first place, it is worth noting that knowledge of the role of enthymemes as well as their use for more than two millennia is in no small way a testament to humankind understanding its own psyche. One should not overlook the fact that enthymemes are psychologically based empirical inferences containing claims and reasons to support the claims. The enthymeme also hints at the relative constancy of human nature when acting in the public sphere in spite of the different ways in which the latter has emerged from history at different times and in different locations. As indicated above, historically, the enthymeme has evolved into many forms and styles resulting in a variety of formats. Despite the differences of various public spheres, Martin Luther King, for example, could nevertheless easily bridge these when he used the classical Aristotelian enthymeme in modern times with great success, suggesting a psychological commonality in human nature that cuts through time and space.

Secondly, it should be evident from the foregoing overview that enthymemes are not a linguistic form of subliminal messaging, a view held in some circles. The latter may be described as the conscious use of hidden and imperceptible signs. Words and images influence the subconscious and ultimately the conscious mind for manipulative

purposes. Enthymemes have been used, *inter alia*, in television advertising, and such use is now widely restricted as an illegal practice in many countries. The use of enthymemes by a speaker or orator, however, may be either conscious or unconscious. Its possible persuasive or manipulative effect on auditors or readers may similarly be conscious or unconscious. However, unlike subliminal messaging, the use and presence of enthymemes in rhetorical communication, whether oral or written, is not by definition hidden with the intent that its persuasive effect remains hidden or secretive. While enthymemes may certainly be used for questionable and honourable and noble purposes, its form is that of an explicit argumentative structure of practical reasoning soliciting intuitive affection aimed at persuading an audience.

Thirdly, the actual persuasive impact and consequences of using enthymemes in the public sphere is important. While their rhetorical use and consequences are not restricted to the public sphere only, their effects in this sphere are not always readily apparent and, moreover, a matter that is often difficult to assess. The persuasive influence of the three well-known cases that were analysed in this essay speaks for itself, as do the countless famous instances of oratory and writing that permeate public matters throughout history. As for the influence of innumerable number of enthymemes that are turned on a daily basis, little is known. These range from those turned on pulpits, those turned at lesser-known electoral campaigns and those used, say, in advertising and marketing campaigns. These instances of enthymeming may not be like those conspicuous examples that are associated with turning points in history, but they remain “a vital principle in modern discourse and indeed, as Aristotle says, it could hardly be otherwise (Rhetoric 1.1 [1354a], 1.2 [1356b])”, enthymeming “is simply what people do, whether they think of themselves as doing so or not, whenever they attempt to persuade by means of discourse” (cf Walker 994: 61).

Finally, to the extent that rhetors can and should exploit the values of audiences to acquire enthymematic closure and persuasive effect, the rhetorical use of enthymemes in a globalising and ever-increasing multicultural world presents a whole range of interesting research questions. Can we, for example, speak of an emerging secular world culture that is acquiescent and accessible to the rhetorical exploitation

of enthymemes? Is there, for example, a simultaneous awakening of national and cultural identity in terms of common history and axiology, and, if this is true, does rhetoric, including the use of enthymemes, play any role here? Is there, somewhere between the general and particular of the aforementioned positions, something like a “civilisational identity” that is potentially open to rhetoric, or partly the result of it? In response to the first question, can the use of enthymematic rhetoric shed any or partial light on explaining the unparalleled popularity of President Obama in the rest of the world, and specifically in Western Europe? Can the use of enthymematic rhetoric shed any or partial light on explaining the rise of rightist politics in European states such as Belgium, Austria, France and the Netherlands, the last two instances having been spearheaded by Jean-Marie Le Pen and Pim Fortuin, respectively, in answering the second question above? To what extent can the use of enthymematic rhetoric with both political and religious overtones, such as that of presidents George Bush and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, for example, explaining the civilisational tension between the Christian West and the Muslim World, be used to answer the third question above? To what extent do the modern communication media contribute to all this?

Closer to home, a similar set of questions emerges. Is the old but now rapidly evolving notion of *Ubuntu*, against the backdrop of the African Renaissance, a product of or a basis for enthymematic rhetoric, or both, given the shared values of humanity denoted by this principle? Even closer to home, what is the enthymematic significance of President Jacob Zuma’s song which calls for “give me my machine gun” and Julius Malema’s pronouncement that he “will kill for Zuma”? Does the plural ethnic and linguistic and cultural political landscape of South Africa inhibit or lend itself to rhetoric, including the use of enthymemes? These are some of the questions which the study of enthymemes in the public sphere begs, and little research on these issues has been undertaken by our local political science fraternity.

To assume that rhetoric and the use of enthymemes play an insignificant role or no role at all in shaping the ever-changing character of our public spheres would indeed be short-sighted.



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