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Introduction

Welcome! This year's instruction is about argumentation—making a case for a particular position on a disputable issue, in hopes of effectively persuading others to adopt that position.

Live a life worthy of the
calling you have received.
Be completely humble and gentle;
be patient, bearing with one
another in love.

Ephesians 4:1-2

Introduction

Overview

The Purpose of Language

This Book

Progymnasmata

Herodotus

How to Use This Book

Reference Works

Commonplace Book

Student Guide

Answer Key

Purpose of Language

In this book, we will talk about persuasion. The term ‘persuasion’ can be loaded. When I try to persuade someone, my persuasion may be loaded with *my* agenda, with *my* goals, and with *my* opinions—and that is a danger. It is a danger because I am a flawed human being. I make mistakes in my beliefs, in my thinking, and in my actions. Furthermore, life is not all about ‘me and my opinions’—not even if I happen to get everything right. Not even if I go to the right church, have the right political opinions, live a virtuous life, etc.

Getting it Right

But then the bigger picture is this—that life is not about ‘getting it all right’.

So ‘what is persuasion all about?’ you may ask.

1. What is our aim?

and

2. Why write a book about argumentation and proofs if ‘being right’ does not matter?

Communication

What are we trying to effect when we communicate—be it with humans, God, self, animals, plants, or any other object or place in creation? What is the purpose of communication?

To get what you want? To influence people for good? To love others?

Rhetoric and Communication

All communication is done by use of rhetoric, whether we are aware of it or not. And it is not just in the way we use language. Language is just one part of communication. (It so happens that language generally is the most precise vehicle for communicating complex concepts.)

Facial expressions and body language are also critical for communication, especially in the appeals of ethos and pathos. But when you and I discuss the role of material logic as related to the canon of invention, body language will not get us far.

Introduction

Words

There is a time and a place in our world for words, even critical, harsh words and brutal debate. Civilization, after all, exists because men often decide to argue rather than to come to blows over issues. But are our argumentative skills are weapons we wield in self-service to prove to other men that we are right? What is the best use of our rhetorical skills?

This Book

In this book you will learn to use the rhetorical techniques of the ancient Greeks and Romans to improve your writing. Towards the end of this book you will apply what you learned in the ancient models to modern argumentative essay writing.

But first, let us discuss ancient education.

Progymnasmata

Ancient classical education arose after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC. The Hellenistic monarchies that arose after Alexander's death needed to be unified by a common language—Greek—to rule the vast territories conquered by him. The ensuing system of “classical education” persisted largely unchanged century after century despite the rise of Rome and later of Christianity and ended only with the rise of industrialism, with its need for scientists and engineers rather than literate and rhetorically trained leaders.

Ancient Writing Instruction

Writing instruction was done by the use of a set of exercises, the progymnasmata, developed in the late fourth century BC. Instruction began with short and simple literary selections: fables, narratives, encomia, descriptions, and comparisons. Progymnasmata means pre-rhetorical exercises in composition. The progymnasmata handbooks of four ancient authors are extant: Aelius Theon of Alexandria (late first century AD), Hermogenes of Tarsus (late second century AD), Aphthonius of Antioch (late fourth century AD), and Nicolaus of Myra (fifth century AD).

Aphthonius' Handbook

Aphthonius' progymnasmata are best known because he provided complete samples of all the exercises. His handbook remained in use in European education through the

early modern period. In the Classical Writing series we draw on all four authors as sources for our treatment of these exercises.

The progymnasmata are

- A set of rudimentary exercises intended to prepare students of rhetoric for the creation and performance of complete practice orations (*gymnasmata* or declamations). They are a crucial component of classical and renaissance rhetorical pedagogy.
- A series of exercises which introduced students of rhetoric to a variety of techniques and concepts which would be fundamental in more advanced work, and gave them the opportunity to practice separately skills that would have to be combined when doing more advanced exercises and composing real speeches.

The ancient progymnasmata handbooks typically contain fourteen assignments ranked by degree of complexity. You have already studied fable, narrative, maxim, and chreia, which are all concerned with deliberative rhetoric. In this book we are going to examine the progymnasmata of refutation, confirmation, and commonplace.

Refutation

A refutation is the overturning of an assumed fact. One should use refutation not on things that are perfectly obvious, nor on those that are completely impossible, but on matters that are debatable. A refutation is an attack on an opposite view, typically attacking the credibility of a myth or legend. The student will attack the narrative as being

Obscure, unclear, incredible, impossible, implausible, illogical, inconsistent, improper, unfitting, and unprofitable.

Confirmation

A confirmation is the securing of an assumed fact. One should use confirmation not on things that are perfectly obvious, nor on those that are completely impossible, but, again, on matters that are debatable. Confirmation, the opposite of refutation, is the attempt to prove that a narrative is

Clear, credible, possible, plausible, logical, consistent, proper, fitting, and profitable.

Introduction

Commonplace

Commonplace as an essay is different from commonplacing as a recording of a favorite passage in a composition notebook.

While refutation and confirmation concentrate on arguing for the truth or falsity of a given narrative account, commonplace is an exercise in the amplification of a virtue or a vice. The commonplace would be used as an epilogue of judicial speeches: having proved that defendant committed a terrible crime (a vice), we now try to reinforce the jury's sense that this vice should be punished severely.

The exercises of refutation, confirmation, and commonplace deal with narratives, wherefore our mascot for this book is Herodotus who is widely considered the 'Father of History'.

Herodotus

Herodotus is our fifth mascot in the Classical Writing series.

Herodotus was from Halicarnassus (Ἡρωδοτὸς Ἡλικαρνασσεύς). He was a Dorian Greek historian who lived from 484 to 418 BC. *The Histories*, a collection of travel narratives from his trips around the Mediterranean, is his most famous work

It is widely believed that Herodotus was exiled from Halicarnassus after his involvement in an unsuccessful coup d'état against the ruling dynasty. After that event, he moved to the island of Samos. At this point he also began to travel. He is our first source of the histories of Egypt, the Ukraine, and Italy.

The Histories

Herodotus' work was originally presented orally. His subject matter included battles, political incidents of note, and the wonders he encountered in strange and foreign lands. As part of his livelihood, Herodotus toured Greece, performed and was paid for his talks. When the Peloponnesian War broke out in 431 BC, Herodotus collected his stories into a continuous narrative.

The Histories were later divided into nine books, each named after one of the nine Muses.

Herodotus' goal was to "prevent the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians (the Persians) from being forgotten"; and also to record the causes of

Classical Writing - Herodotus - Preview

the Greco-Persian Wars, the Persian invasions of the Greek mainland in 490 BC and 480-479 BC. During both invasions, the allied Greek city states successfully repelled the Persians.

In addition, Herodotus traveled in Egypt and devoted a whole book to the history of Egypt.

Accuracy of The Histories

There is great debate concerning the accuracy of Herodotus' tales, and, more importantly, concerning Herodotus' own knowledge as to what was fact and what was fiction. For this reason—because the veracity of these tales are under dispute—Herodotus' tales lend themselves beautifully to the exercises of refutation and confirmation.

Our aim is not that the student should learn that knowledge is ambiguous and that truth cannot be found. Truth is available, it is both precious and costly, but it is sometimes difficult to unearth because human hearts are flawed and human wills are tainted with self-interest.

As humans, we are our own biggest obstacles to seeing truth, wherefore we have to proceed with caution, lest we deceive ourselves.

Our aim with this book is that the student should look at narratives carefully, so he can argue both about their strong points and about their weak points.

How to Use This Book

Overview of Book

This book is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter 1 discusses confirmation and refutation of narratives.

Chapter 2 discusses judicial rhetoric.

Chapter 3 discusses the canon of invention.

Chapter 4 discusses the argumentative essay.

Chapter 5 discusses the application of logic to the writing process.

Chapter 6 contains instructions for the essays you will write every other week.

Introduction

And finally Chapter 7, the appendix, contains a review of basic skills from our previous books: how to write a summary, précis, and paraphrase.

Weekly Work

Your weekly work is divided into two parts.

1. A daily lesson from chapters 1-5
2. An essay assignment from chapter 6.

Your student guide provides you with weekly assignment checklists to ease the organization of your work.

This book should be studied straight through from beginning to end. That is, start the lessons in the first chapter with the first lesson and work your way through until you get to the last lesson of Chapter 5.

Chapter 1: Refutation and Confirmation

In Chapter 1 you will study the ancient Roman teacher Aphthonius' directions on how to write refutations and confirmations of narratives.

Argumentative essays are rooted in confirmation and refutation of arguments. This chapter presents the first step towards writing argumentative essays.

Chapter 2: Judicial Rhetoric

In this chapter you will study the ancient Greek trilogy by Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*. This is a series of plays about how justice came to the Greeks, how the judicial system was established as a means of providing peace and justice amongst the citizens of Athens when they had grievances against each other.

Judicial rhetoric deals with the past. It evaluates the past as noble or base. Such evaluations are critical skills to acquire for the writing of argumentative essays where you need to take a stand on an issue and condemn or affirm a particular course of action which has transpired in the past.

Chapter 3: The Canon of Invention

In this chapter you will study the canon of invention, the rhetorical tools you need to use to invent arguments in support of your thesis statements.

This chapter will start by defining the canon of invention, the topics of invention, and the difference between special and common topics. After that, each common topic is covered individually: definition, division, comparison, relationship, circumstance, and testimony.

The canon of invention carries within it the content of the persuasive force of rhetoric. One may say that the canon of invention is the substance of rhetoric.

Chapter 4: Argumentative Essay

In Chapter 4 you are given the tools you need to write a modern argumentative essay. This chapter shows you how to use the ancient canon of invention to write a modern essay. We start by planning the essay, then teach paragraph writing, and then we go into detail on writing the important paragraphs of introduction and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Logic

Logic is the structure behind our reasoning. All students should be familiar with the basic rules of logic.

You will start by discussing how logic relates to language. Then you will learn the rules of logic. You apply those in your analysis work as you work with models from literature and history. Finally you will discuss the limitations of formal logic.

Chapter 6: Essays

Steps for planning, drafting, and editing essays are included in this chapter.

The essays are presented in order of what you have learned. Every other week, choose a new essay prompt. For each essay type we have noted what lessons you need to have completed before beginning the essay.

Generally, we expect that a student in 9th grade or higher would finish this book in a year, but take as long as you need to do a good job. The amount of repetition of any lesson is up to student and teacher. Our suggestion is that you take a minimum of one hour per day to work through these lessons and an additional thirty minutes for the essays.

Reference Works

For working through this book, we recommend the following reference works:

- A grammar and diagramming reference
- A dictionary (preferably one that lists word etymology and Greek and Latin roots)
- A thesaurus
- A basic logic text for standard syllogistic logic

Commonplace Book

A **COMMONPLACE BOOK** is a book in which 'commonplaces' or passages important for reference are collected, usually under general headings; a book in which one records passages or matters to be especially remembered or referred to, with or without arrangement.

Oxford English Dictionary

Who

Commonplace books are hand-written compilations of striking passages garnered from one's reading. Keeping a commonplace book was a fashionable habit among educated men and women during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We recommend that both student and teacher keep a commonplace book.

What

'Commonplacings' is the act or art of selecting important phrases, lines, and/or passages from texts and writing them down. The commonplace book is the notebook in which a reader has collected quotations from works he has read. They are frequently indexed so the reader can locate quotations related to particular topics or authors.

Similar to copybook, the act of copying selected passages into a commonplace book, albeit laborious and at times tedious, is time well spent interacting with that author's ideas and expressions; it is a time to note choices of words, turns of phrases and sentences, use of rhyme and meter, as well as the spatial arrangement of a piece of writing. A commonplace book will help you retain a storehouse of internalized phrases and sentence constructions which will

be useful when you attempt your own compositions of poetry or prose.

When

You are expected to record all definitions from this book in your commonplace book. Your student guide will instruct you as to when to do this. In addition, the student guide will prompt you to record certain passages in your commonplace book. Any time you find a passage or poem you would like to record in the commonplace book, do so.

How

The structure of a commonplace book varies depending on the interests and purpose of its writer. For the purposes of this curriculum we recommend dividing your commonplace book into two sections: 'Theory and Definitions' and 'Favorite Passages'. Specific instructions for keeping a commonplace book are in the student guide.

Student Guide

This book can be completed in twenty-five weeks. All your work is listed in the weekly overviews in your student guide which is your road map for covering this material in one school year.

Optional Reading Assignments

Optional reading assignments are scheduled in the student guide. It is possible to complete the assignments in this book without following along with the reading assignments; however, we recommend that you read as much of the assigned reading as you can. It will help you be familiar with the broader context of the models that we use for analysis and imitation. If your school already has a scheduled Great Books reading program that demands your time, you may choose not to follow our reading assignments.

Answer Key

The answer key to this book can be obtained through our web site. We provide answers to all the exercises which have exact answers, such as the logic and grammar exercises. For exercises where there can be no exact answer, look at the examples in the lesson.

Checking Your Answers

Use your judgment when you read our answers. Language arts is rarely an exact science. It is more important that you understand how your answer and our answers differ. Be sure to study the answers carefully when ours differ from yours, and if you are in doubt, visit our message boards (www.classicalwriting.com) and post your questions. We welcome dialogue about any part of this book.

The canon of invention is at the core of writing because it deals with the content of your writing. It helps you gather the support you need for your thesis statements. Through invention you generate many different types of supports: examples, quotations, arguments of cause, relationship, definition, and so forth. It leaves you with more arguments than you need for one short essay and so, you will later choose the strongest points to write as supports in your essays.

Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody else has thought.

~ Jonathan Swift

Chapter 3 - Facts

Canon of Invention

Who

In this chapter we study the canon of invention, the rhetorical tools used to invent arguments.

What

The canon of invention helps you figure out what to say. It is a tool for brainstorming different topics to find arguments for your essay.

When

Week 9 - Canon and Topics of Invention
Week 10 - Definition
Week 11 - Division and Comparison
Week 12 - Relationship, Circumstance, Testimony

Where

This chapter shows you where to find the support you need for your essay.

How

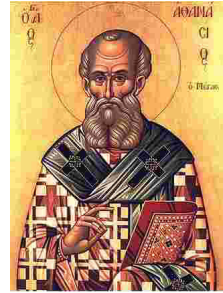
This chapter starts by defining the canon of invention, the topics of invention, and the difference between special and common topics. After that each common topic is covered one at a time: definition, division, comparison, relationship, circumstance, and testimony.

Why

The canon of invention carries within it the content of the persuasive force of rhetoric. One may say that the canon of invention is the substance of rhetoric. The canons of style and arrangement are important, but without invention, you have nothing to say.

Goal

Gain a basic familiarity with the background of Athanasius and his treatise *On the Incarnation* (Latin original: *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*).



Introduction

- Read Athanasius' *On the Incarnation* over the next five weeks. We have proposed a reading schedule below. Either get the book from your local library or a book store or read it on-line from one of the links* listed below:

www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm

www.orthodoxonline.com/incarnation.pdf

Translated into English by a Religious of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Sacred Th. D.

- Research the background for St. Athanasius in an encyclopedia or on the Internet, and write a paragraph about the occasion that prompted Athanasius to write *On the Incarnation*.

A reading schedule for this book can be found in the student guide.

* The links we provide above for *On the Incarnation* are with an introduction by C. S. Lewis. His introduction is excellent. If you choose to read a different translation of Athanasius' text, we still recommend that you read Lewis' introduction on-line.

Week 9 Overview

Canon and Topics of Invention

Objectives

1. Understand what the five canons of rhetoric are.
2. Understand what the canon of invention is.
3. Understand what the topics of invention are.
4. List the topics of invention.
5. Understand the first topic of invention, 'definition'.

Model

Cicero: *On Definition*

Vocabulary

Canons of rhetoric
Invention
Arrangement
Style
Memory
Delivery
Canon of Invention
Three Appeals
Special Topics
Topics of Invention
Stasis Theory

Lesson 3.1 Canon of Invention and Rhetoric

Goal

Understand the canon of invention and how it relates to the larger subject of rhetoric.

Introduction

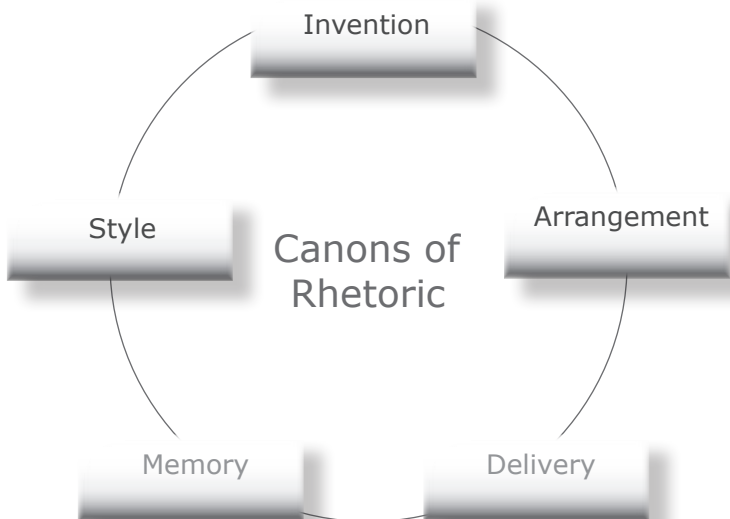
The overall goal in the Classical Writing series is to teach you, the student, the subject of rhetoric and how to apply it to your writing. Aristotle defines the term 'rhetoric' as follows,

RHETORIC is the ability of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.

Rhetoric is a broad subject (genus), which is divided into five canons (species).

Canons of Rhetoric

What is a canon? A canon is a body of rules or principles in an established field of study. The five canons of rhetoric are all part of the bigger genus of rhetoric proper, like this:



Note - The canons of memory and delivery are not included in this book because they do not concern the subject of writing.

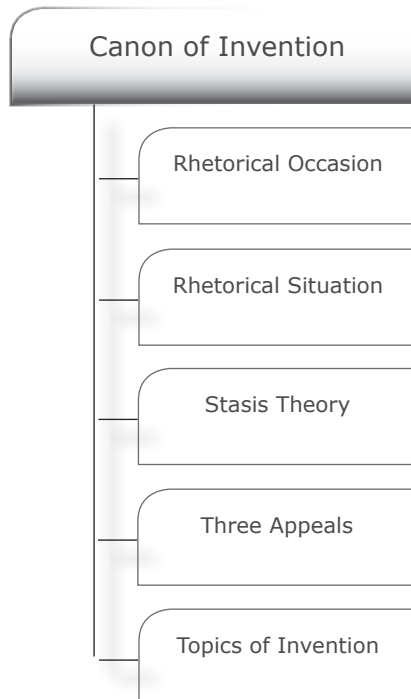
Each canon's rules and principles guide you through one aspect of writing or speech making:

- The canon of invention helps you discover what to say.
- The canon of arrangement helps you organize your thoughts.
- The canon of style helps you say what you want to say in words, phrases, and sentences that are appropriate for the occasion.
- The canon of memory helps you memorize your speech.
- The canon of delivery helps you deliver your speech with the gestures, facial expression, and body language appropriate for the occasion.

Canon of Invention

First of all, what is 'invention'? The Latin 'invenire' means 'to find' or 'to discover'. Invention proposes different sets of questions, which help you discover the occasion, the reader, and the message of your essay.

Just as rhetoric can be divided into five canons, so can the canon of invention be subdivided further into five components:



These components of the canon of invention will be discussed separately in this lesson and in future lessons. But we need to pause to make something clear. Of these components, one group tends to create confusion, and that is the group called 'the topics of invention'.

Canon or Topics of Invention?

Let us summarize what was just said.

1. There is a *canon of invention*, which is just *one* of the five canons of rhetoric. It is defined as follows:

The **CANON OF INVENTION** is the set of rules and principles which guide all of rhetorical invention.

2. The topics of invention are part of the canon of invention:

The **TOPICS OF INVENTION** are 'places' to look for arguments to support an argument.

You need to keep the two distinct. There is a *canon of invention*, and there are *topics of invention*.

Exercise

1. Record the definitions from this lesson in your commonplace book.
2. Read and discuss the definitions in this lesson with your teacher.

Lesson 3.2

The Canon of Invention

Goal

Learn the components of the canon of invention.

Introduction

The canon of invention, as discussed in the last lesson, consists of five components: rhetorical occasion, rhetorical

situation, three appeals, stasis theory, and the topics of invention.

Rhetorical Occasion

First consider the rhetorical occasion for which you need to write an essay or a speech. Your rhetorical occasion is the reason you are writing at all. It could be a political speech, a funeral oration, a courtroom sentencing speech, or it could be that you are forced to write an essay for a class. Once you know why you are writing, next you need to know to whom you are writing. Who is your audience or reader? What sorts of people are involved in your rhetorical situation?

Rhetorical Situation

There are two types of people involved in any rhetorical situation: you—the writer (or speaker) and your reader or your audience. Your reader is the person(s) you are writing to address.

Well, you know yourself, of course, but your audience may not. Also, as you go through the canon of invention you will learn to take a closer look at yourself, who you are, and how you present yourself to your reader.

What about your reader? Who is he? What state of mind is he in? What does he already believe about the topic you are writing about? What level of education, religious background, political predispositions does he have? How might you best convince him of what you are about to say?

What you are to write about, we term your ‘message’. Your message is the position you take on the issue you are writing about. In this book, your message is your response to an essay prompt. (More about essay prompts later.)

The Three Appeals: Ethos, Logos, or Pathos

You have defined who your reader is and you know roughly what your message is going to be about. Now, you are going to tackle your essay. How are you going to engage your readers’ minds and hearts?

Do you want to show your reader that you are an intelligent, thoughtful, and sympathetic writer (appeal to ethos)? Do you want to engage his mind with clear and persuasive arguments that will convince him (appeal to logos)? Or are you trying to evoke his sympathies for a particularly difficult and perhaps outrageous situation (appeal to pathos)?

It is true, you will use all three appeals when you write anything, but most essays contain one dominant means of persuasion.

You may wish to persuade your reader that something is true; to this end, logical arguments (appeal to *logos*) may be employed. However, it is usually not enough that your reader should agree with you. Often a writer will want to stir his readers into action: *Vote for me; don't buy this product; demonstrate against this or that bill in Congress.* To this end, the writer may seek to arouse the reader's emotions (appeal to *pathos*). But no amount of emotional appeal is successful unless the reader trusts the writer. Before a reader will allow his emotions to be engaged, he must believe that you—the writer—are a man of intelligence and good will. Therefore, you must appear intelligent, knowledgeable, and trustworthy (appeal to *ethos*).

Stasis Theory

You have defined an occasion, a reader, a message, a purpose, and a dominant appeal. The last step before we get into the specific topics of rhetorical invention (the common topics) is stasis theory.

If your essay involves judicial or deliberative rhetoric, stasis theory is a useful tool to employ. Stasis theory clarifies the nature of the argument and defines the specific issue that people are in disagreement about.

Stasis theory can be used in the courtroom where the job of both the prosecuting and the defense attorney is to tell the jury what it is that has brought the defendant to court. What is he accused of doing? How far do both parties agree on what happened, and where is the exact point (stasis) where they violently disagree on what happened?

Let us say John Smith is accused of murder. Then—first of all—what does the word 'murder' mean? Define it carefully without reference to John Smith or anything specific that he is accused of doing. Once the word 'murder' has been defined, it is the job of a lawyer to establish whether or not John Smith did in fact commit this murder. Of course, the prosecutor is arguing that John Smith did commit the murder, the defense attorney is arguing that John Smith did not commit the murder. Sometimes.

Sometimes both attorneys agree that John Smith did commit murder, but what kind of murder did he commit? Did he do it in self-defense? Was it an accident? Did he lose his temper, or did he plan this act for months in advance?

Stasis theory includes four steps you must go through in order to judge an event of the past.

1. Definition (What specifically was the event?)
2. Conjecture (What happened and who did it?)
3. Quality or degree (What kind was it?)
4. Procedure (What shall we do about it?)

Stasis theory can be particularly powerful in helping you generate thesis statements for your judicial or deliberative essay.

Exercise

1. Read the passage above about the canon of invention.
2. What are the five canons of rhetoric? Describe each of their functions in speech-writing.
3. What is the canon of invention? What components does it consist of?
4. Record these definitions in your commonplace book: Five canons of rhetoric, rhetorical situation, rhetorical occasion, three appeals, and stasis theory.

Lesson 3.3

Invention: Special Topics

Goal

Memorize the components of the canon of invention and the special topics.

Introduction

In the last lesson we discussed the canon of invention. We talked about how it consisted of five components, and in this lesson we will focus particularly on the topics of invention.

Topics of Invention

The division of the canon of invention into its five components is shown in the diagram on the next page.