

## The Enthymeme and the Example

Enthymeme and example are the main forms of reasoning in argument; the former is deductive, while the latter is inductive. On the one hand, an enthymeme is a statement in which deductive reasoning is used to argue an issue which is at best probable; on the other hand, an example is a statement in which inductive reasoning is used to argue an issue which is at best probable.

### The Enthymeme

The enthymeme is often called an abbreviated syllogism. This is because the syllogism is the main form of deductive reasoning in logic. Though not always, an enthymeme typically leaves out one or more of the premises. The main difference between the syllogism and the enthymeme is that the former deals with certain issues (things about which there is no debate), while the latter deals with probable issues (things about which there is debate).

Like the syllogism, the enthymeme is comprised of a major and minor premise, followed by a conclusion. For example:

- **Major premise:** Rogue nations with weapons of mass destruction are a threat to national security and should be invaded.
- **Minor premise:** Iraq is a rogue nation with weapons of mass destruction.
- **Conclusion:** Iraq is a threat to national security and should be invaded.

The major premise (or major premises, since there can be more than one) is typically a commonly held assumption, value, or belief, while the minor premise (or minor premises, since there can be more than one) is typically an example of the minor premise. The conclusion obviously follows from the conclusion.

Enthymemes can be refuted on a variety of levels; the rules of the syllogism apply to the enthymeme, so these rules can be used to test the reliability and validity of an enthymeme as well. Furthermore, one can reject the assumption, value, or belief being submitted in the major premise. One can also question whether the minor premise is a valid example of the major premise. And one can argue that the conclusion does not follow from the premises.

The most important part of an enthymeme, though, is often what is unstated. This is what Toulmin calls the warrant and if it is accepted by the audience, it is often unstated (it is also often unstated if an argument is *too* controversial). For example, using the above enthymeme, what is unstated is that rogue nations should not have weapons of mass destruction, that threats to national security are a justification for war, and that invasion (preemptive war) is the only suitable response.

Remember that the structure of an enthymeme follows the Toulmin System: claims, reasons, warrants, grounds, backing, rebuttal, and qualifier. Also, arguments rarely present themselves in the form of syllogisms and enthymemes, so they need not be presented as such.

### The Example

While the enthymeme works deductively (in which a conclusion is drawn by inference from general premises), the example works inductively (in which a conclusion is drawn by inference from particular instances). For example, one could argue, "Iraq should be invaded because Saddam Hussein is the Hitler of Baghdad." The argument implies a relationship

between the one thing and the other.

Examples are powerful rhetorical strategies because they are much more specific than enthymemes. However, they are more often invalid because they rarely account for all instances of the example. Hence examples can be refuted by rejecting the implicit relationship between the example and what it is being compared to.