

Natural Ability as Eco-Rhetorical Building

I argue that both Cicero's *De Oratore* and Vitruvius' *De Architectura* understand *ingenium* [natural ability; innate talent] as both a self-contained and dispersed rhetorical force, beyond mere human control and intent; *ingenium* thus straddles the boundaries of humanism and posthumanism. Crucially, for both Vitruvius and Cicero, *ingenium* is also inextricably tied to *natura* (nature), *imitabile* (imitation), and *inventio* (invention)—all three of which have implications for improving on the currently dominant building/dwelling dichotomy and the success of ecological rhetorics for environmental justice. In other words, *De Architectura* suggests building *with* specific, heterogenous environments—in nearly the same way that Cicero theorizes varieties of rhetorical situation in *De Oratore*. Both writers are attuned to the heterogeneity of rhetorical contexts (Cicero) and divergent climates (Vitruvius). Therefore, these works also show that *ingenium* offers theoretical formulae for rethinking the well-known dichotomies of humanism and posthumanism. Ultimately, I position Vitruvius as a committed theorist of ecological rhetoric—the Cicero of architecture. According to Vitruvius and Cicero, the crafts of both architecture and rhetoric are composed of disparate arts, enacted by continuous and grounded practice, carried out in the material world, and require *inventio* and *imitabile*. But *Ingenium* sits at the apex of this shifting chain of eco-rhetorical building.