“WHERE IS THE VOICE COMING FROM?”

QUERYING THE EVIDENCE FOR PAUL’S RHETORICAL EDUCATION

IN 2 CORINTHIANS 10–13

by

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ABSTRACT

Although it would be an exaggeration to speak of a consensus, a majority of scholars now sees Paul as a man of relatively high social status. Most often cited as evidence for such status is Paul’s putative education in formal rhetorical theory. The prevailing logic consists of two propositions: First, Paul’s letters can be analyzed according to the dictates of Greco-Roman rhetoric; therefore, Paul must have been well educated in rhetoric. Second, rhetorical education was available only among the wealthy elite; therefore, Paul must have been brought up in such circles.

A number of scholars have observed that such argumentation fails to consider the extent to which rhetorical ability exists independently of formal education. But despite this general observation, there has been no attempt to determine whether the specific rhetorical competencies to which Paul’s letters attest admit of informal acquisition. In this study, I use insights from comparative rhetoric and sociolinguistics to get methodological leverage on this problem and thus to reevaluate the evidence for Paul’s rhetorical education. Using 2 Cor 10–13 as a test case, I demonstrate that Paul’s use of rhetoric provides no evidence of formal education; on the contrary, his persuasive strategies are instances of informal rhetoric.

After undertaking a history of scholarship in part 1, in part 2 I reassess recent claims of Paul’s conformity with formal rhetorical conventions in 2 Cor 10–13. Here I demonstrate
that many alleged parallels derive from misleading treatment of the rhetorical sources and cannot be sustained. Convincing parallels are few—I isolate four—and rather general; nevertheless, they do merit further explanation. I seek to provide such explanation in part 3 by offering a basic theory of informal rhetoric and its acquisition, and demonstrating the use, by speakers with no knowledge of formal rhetorical theory, of precisely those rhetorical features found both in Paul and in the ancient rhetorical sources. Finally, in part 4, I begin a redescription of Paul’s persuasive voice: Paul’s prose style, his self-description in 2 Cor 10:10 and 11:6, and his “foolish boasting” reveal him to be a speaker at once abject and defiant.
What governs the inflections that make any utterance unmistakably the words of one speaker in this whole language-saturated world?

—Marilynne Robinson, *Absence of Mind*
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ABBREVIATIONS


ESEC    Emory Studies in Early Christianity
HTKNTSup Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament Supplementband
LNTS    Library of New Testament Studies
PaSt    Pauline Studies
Colloquy Protocol of the Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture
SGLG    Sammlung grieschischer und lateinsicher Grammatiker
SNTW    Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SSCFL   Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language
TCH     Transformation of the Classical Heritage
UTB     Uni-Taschenbüch für Wissenschaft
WGRW    Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WGRWSup Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series
ZKNT    Zahn-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
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INTRODUCTION

A century ago now, Adolf Deissmann observed, “The older study of Paul with its one-sided interest in its bloodless, timeless paragraphs of the ‘Doctrine’ or the ‘Theology’ of Paul did not trouble itself about the problem of the social class of Paul.”\(^1\) Since that time, social-scientific methods have become standard fare in the guild, and study of the social history of early Christianity has proliferated: we have Malina and we have Meeks;\(^2\) we have the Context Group; we cite the likes of Geertz, Bourdieu, and Mary Douglas. So what have we done with Paul?

In one sense, we have made significant progress. Recent studies of 1 Thessalonians and especially the Corinthian correspondence have highlighted the specific social and religious contexts addressed by Paul in each instance.\(^3\) Paul’s letters, such research emphasizes, are not disinterested theology; they represent instead his rhetorical engagement of particular social realities. Indeed, the last decade or two of Pauline scholarship generally could be characterized as the study of Paul’s rhetoric in its social context.

But in one key respect it appears we are right where Deissmann left us: We have not sufficiently troubled ourselves about the problem of Paul’s “social class”—or, to use language with less ideological baggage, Paul’s place in ancient society. That is, although

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what we have learned about life in the cities of first-century Achaia and Asia Minor has certainly enriched our understanding of the so-called “Pauline communities,” it has not in fact had much influence on our conception of Paul himself. Paul now speaks into a social context, but the exigencies of his own existence are seldom explored.

Paradoxically, it seems the study of Paul’s social rhetoric is complicit in our failure to attend more carefully to his social location. Just as Deissmann bemoaned how Paul the human being was obscured by scholarly constructions of Paul the theologian, now it seems Paul the rhetorician cloaks whatever of the man himself might yet be uncovered. Indeed, it is not Paul, but Paul’s rhetorical strategy that such criticism generally seeks. And so, in the absence of any explicitly articulated portrait, the man behind the text becomes, by default, a strategist, carefully selecting persuasive words in order to manage his converts from afar.⁴

“In no other of the Apostle’s Epistles,” said F. C. Baur of 2 Corinthians, “are we allowed to look deeper into the pure humanity of his character.”⁵ Yes, until the recent rise of rhetorical criticism, 2 Corinthians—and especially the “letter of tears” in 2 Cor 10–13—was read as an outburst of profound emotion.⁶ Paul was dismayed and distraught, it was agreed, and the striking rhetorical features of 2 Cor 10–13 were considered artifacts of affect, the fossilized record of Paul’s subjectivity at this one moment in time.

In contrast, recent treatments of the passage tend to leave the nature of Paul’s own investment in the Corinthian community unremarked, focusing instead on his apparently

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⁶ See further pp. 77–78 below.
dispassionate use of rhetorical strategies. Now Paul does not boast, he “uses boasting”; he does not plead, he “uses many of the means rhetoricians recognized as ways to affect the πόθος of his hearers.” Curiously, what such readings accomplish is precisely the erasure of the “humanity” that so fascinated Baur. Paul is reduced to the sum of his rhetorical intentions, which are typically described in language that renders Paul a sort of unmoved mover: he effects change, but is not himself changed.

The deficiency of such an approach is evident from its apparently effortless evasion of a whole set of questions concerning the nature of Pauline discourse—namely, all those questions that concern Paul himself as a human subject. Thus, in his analysis of Gal 4:19, where Paul appears to express anguished concern for his Galatian converts (“My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you”), Troy Martin gives no consideration at all to Paul’s experience of his relationship with the Galatian community or what it might tell us about Paul’s social and religious subjectivity. No, Martin’s apparently dispassionate Paul chooses “pathetic persuasion” as a “strategy” that allows him “to achieve his ends.” Certainly this is one way to account for such a text, but it represents an interpretive decision—specifically, the decision to read Pauline discourse as a series of tactical maneuvers—that surely cannot go unexamined.

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In short, then, with the rise of rhetorical criticism Paul has gone from being a mind to being a mouth; we still pay scant attention to the rest of him.\textsuperscript{10} Indeed, despite all our effort at understanding Paul’s rhetoric, too often we ignore the fundamental problem: Who speaks?—or, if I may borrow the evocative question posed by Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe, “Where is the voice coming from?”\textsuperscript{11}

* * *

Although he used the language of “social class,” it was something akin to this question of voice that fascinated Deissmann: When we read the letters of Paul, he asked, do we find the sort of discourse we would expect from the likes of “Origin, Thomas Aquinas, and Schleiermacher,” or do we rather hear a voice akin to “the herdman of Tekoa, the shoemaker of Görlitz, and the ribbon-weaver of Müllheim”?\textsuperscript{12} For Deissmann, the answer was clear: “St. Paul’s mission was the mission of an artisan, not the mission of a scholar.”\textsuperscript{13}

In contrast, the bulk of current scholarship argues—and often simply assumes—that Paul’s discourse is most aptly compared to that of ancient philosophers and rhetors—a point adequately illustrated by a quick survey of titles currently on my bookshelf: \textit{Philo and Paul among the Sophists, Paul and the Popular Philosophers, Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation, Paul and Pathos, The Diatribe and Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Ancient Rhetoric and Paul’s Apology}, etc. Implicit
in such comparative studies is the notion that Paul’s letters are, in essence, intellectual
discourse.\textsuperscript{14}

Bolstering this perspective—or perhaps deriving from it\textsuperscript{15}—are recent claims that
Paul was the beneficiary of formal education in classical rhetoric. Indeed, it is his putative
rhetorical education that now sponsors most assertions that Paul came from relatively high-
status origins. Dale Martin’s verdict illustrates the logic:

The best evidence for Paul’s class background comes from his letters themselves. In
the past several years, study after study has shown that Paul’s letters follow common
rhetorical conventions, certain rhetorical topoi, figures, and techniques, and are
readily analyzable as pieces of Greco-Roman rhetoric. To more and more scholars . . .
it is inconceivable that Paul’s letters could have been written by someone uneducated
in the rhetorical systems of his day. Paul’s rhetorical education is evident on every
page, and that education is one piece of evidence that he came from a family of
relatively high status.\textsuperscript{16}

As we will see in part 1 of this study, a conventional, if somewhat argumentative
\textit{Forschungsbericht}, this conception of Paul’s rhetorical ability represents a break with
previous scholarly consensus. As Mark Edwards has quipped, “Commentators from the
patristic era to the present have acknowledged that the New Testament teems with literary
devices; only in recent years has it been customary to argue that the authors must have
acquired these arts at school.”\textsuperscript{17} Paul’s earliest exegetes simply could not imagine a
tentmaker with rhetorical training. And although for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century
scholars Paul’s tentmaking was overshadowed by his prestigious Roman citizenship, still his

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] The extent to which this is a reflection of our own discursive context is surely worthy of
consideration. When Albert Schweitzer, for example, calls Paul “the patron saint of thought,” one suspects that
Paul has become—despite Schweitzer’s own oft-cited warning against such projection in historical Jesus
research—a cipher for his own self-understanding. \textit{The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle}, trans. William
\item[15] The circular nature of the implicit argument is noted by C. J. Classen: “Es wird vom Text
ausgegangen, um auf die Bildung zu schließen, und dann das erschlossene Bildungsniveau genutzt, um den Text
tzu interpretieren.” “Kann die rhetorische Theorie helfen, das Neue Testament, vor allem die Briefe des Paulus,
besser zu verstehen?,” \textit{ZNW} 100 (2009): 155.
\item[16] Martin, \textit{The Corinthian Body}, 52.
Brian McGing and Judith Mossman (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 51.
\end{footnotes}
letters sounded more like “rhetoric of the heart” than the careful compositions of an educated orator. Only in the last few decades have we seen confident claims that Paul was the recipient of a formal rhetorical education.

An initial problem with such claims is that the very evidence cited by their proponents turns out, on closer examination, to undermine them. Using as a test case 2 Cor 10–13, a text that is widely lauded for its creative manipulation of rhetorical conventions, in part 2 of this study I take recent rhetorical criticism on its own terms and examine the credibility of its proposals. Here I demonstrate that many of the alleged parallels between Paul and the rhetoricians derive from superficial or misleading treatments of the rhetorical manuals and exemplars, and, further, do not adequately describe what we find in Paul. Those parallels that remain are few—I isolate four—and rather general; nevertheless, they do merit further explanation.

I seek to provide such explanation in part 3, where I examine the possibility that such figures, tropes, and rhetorical strategies as are found in Paul's letters derive not from formal education but from informal socialization. I am not the first to raise this possibility; indeed, its proponents represent a substantial minority among Pauline scholars. But it has not been examined critically, and thus assertions to this effect have amounted simply to that: assertions.

I get methodological leverage on this problem by using George Kennedy's work on comparative rhetoric as a starting point for a discussion of what he calls “general rhetoric”—that is, the basic human propensity for persuasive communication—and a description of its instantiation as an aspect of informal social practice. Important here is the sociolinguistic insight that it is not only or even primarily formal training that instills in speakers
conventional patterns of language use. On the contrary, participation in particular speech communities necessarily involves and indeed inculcates competence in conventional “ways of speaking,”¹⁸ that is, the ability appropriately to use established genres, forms, tropes, and figures. “Communicative competence,” therefore, requires mastery not only of grammar but also of “a repertoire of speech acts”¹⁹—in other words, the ability to utilize what I will refer to as informal rhetoric.

This repertoire differs, of course, from one speech community to another. Nevertheless, as the work of Kennedy and others makes clear, there are a number of informal rhetorical features that are, if not universal, at least ubiquitous, recurring, albeit with local variation in usage and meaning, across a range of societies. Importantly, among these aspects of general rhetoric we find many of the same tropes and figures as those codified in the classical rhetorical tradition. Indeed, using diverse comparators from a variety of cultures, I demonstrate that the four rhetorical features identified in part 2 as being common to 2 Cor 10–13 and the formal classical tradition in fact belong to the domain of general rhetoric. Sensitivity to the inappropriateness of self-praise (what Plutarch called περιαυτολογία), use of warnings or disclaimers prior to potentially offensive speech (what the classical rhetorical tradition knows as προδιόρθωσις), strategic use of an interlocutor's voice (the broader strategy of which προσωποποίησις is a single instance), and the use of figures associated with “catalogue-style” (figures known to rhetorical theorists as anaphora, isocolon, asyndeton, etc.) all are found in speakers who demonstrably have no formal rhetorical training. Accordingly, lacking specific indicators in the mode or manner of their

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use, their appearance in Paul's letters does not constitute evidence of formal rhetorical education. Yes, this is rhetoric, but there is no evidence that it is formal rhetoric.

There are, further, a number of positive indicators in 2 Cor 10–13 that Paul's voice should be located elsewhere—not least his own confession to that effect in 2 Cor 10:10 and 11:6. In addition to providing a detailed exegesis of these contested verses, part 4 addresses two key indicators that are often ignored in current scholarship. First, as patristic readers already recognized, Paul’s train of thought frequently must be read into the text, and his usage is sometimes suspect. Indeed, until the recent rise of rhetorical criticism, it was all but universally acknowledged that Paul's letters lacked rhetorical polish. Analysis of Paul’s syntax in 2 Cor 10–13 shows why.

Second, Paul’s “voice,” his rhetorical comportment, differs tellingly from that cultivated amongst recipients of formal rhetorical education. Here I revisit a number of the comparators introduced in parts 2 and 3, attending to the way each voice negotiates his or her particular social location. In this regard, Paul does not resemble self-possessed aristocrats like Plutarch, Quintilian, or Demosthenes—nor, for that matter, the Iroquois orator Red Jacket, who, though he received no formal education, occupied what was in one key way an analogous social location: he was accustomed to deference. Paul, on the contrary, speaks as one accustomed to ridicule, derision, and subjugation. His is an abject rhetoric, characterized by insecurity and self-abasement—and vigorous bursts of defiance.

* * *

I expect it will already be evident that in pursuing the argument outlined above I make a number of moves uncommon in New Testament scholarship, thus it may be useful to clarify from the outset precisely what it is I think I am doing. Parts 1 and 2 of this study are,
although perhaps contrarian in content, perfectly conventional in their mode of argumentation: I take recent scholarship on Paul’s rhetoric on its own terms, examining the viability of its claims by reassessing the very pool of evidence upon which it relies, namely, ancient rhetorical manuals and exemplars. My argument is historiographical, or, more precisely, philological and literary-critical, in the most traditional sense. On these grounds I demonstrate that the bulk of what has been taken as evidence in 2 Cor 10–13 for Paul’s rhetorical education has in fact been misconstrued as such.

It is, then, in parts 3 and 4 that I seek to develop my own proposal for evaluating Paul’s rhetorical “voice” and thus leave the conventional methodological domain of rhetorical criticism. Here I conspicuously and intentionally press beyond the mode of argumentation that has been prevalent in New Testament rhetorical scholarship.

First, and most basically, I expand the pool of evidence by adducing rhetorical performances that have no historical connection to the Greco-Roman tradition. This sort of move demands an explanation, since it runs counter to what is often considered a basic precept of rhetorical criticism as a historical discipline: If we intend to make historical claims about Paul’s rhetoric, says Margaret Mitchell, we must study his letters “in the light of theGreco-Roman rhetorical tradition which was operative and pervasive at the time of the letter’s composition.”20 Synchronic studies of Paul’s rhetoric may be legitimate in their own right, but they are by definition ahistorical, and thus, Mitchell insists, should not be confused with historical criticism.21 On what grounds, then, do I justify comparing Paul with the likes of Red Jacket, and, what is more, basing historical conclusions on such a comparison?

21 Ibid., 7.
Mitchell’s method represents the historiographical approach conventional among New Testament scholars, and certainly it has the appearance of rigour. In my view, however, the lacunae in our evidence finally make such an approach untenable. The rhetorical exemplars that have been preserved represent but a minute fragment of the rhetorical discourse of the ancient world, and belong almost exclusively to one rarefied corner thereof. We simply do not have the data we should need to construct a full taxonomy of ancient rhetorical practice; indeed, there are entire domains of human speech that elude the grasp of traditional philology. Therefore, we lack the comparative perspective that would allow us confidently to locate and describe the rhetoric of Paul’s letters. Attempting to do so without acknowledging the inadequacy of our evidence is a dangerous procedure indeed. If we had no knowledge of other insects, it would not be surprising if we were to mistake a butterfly for a peculiar species of bird. We are apt to make a similar mistake, I suggest, if all we have with which to compare Paul’s rhetoric are the performances of the Greco-Roman aristocracy and their cultural retainers. In other words, given the state of the evidence, Mitchell’s model provides no way of knowing what is particular to the formal Greco-Roman tradition; and, until we know what is particular to this tradition, we are in no position to determine the manner and extent of Paul’s indebtedness to it.

Put another way, what confronts us here is a question of comparative method. As is adequately demonstrated by a glance at the studies listed above—Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition et al.—the attempt to locate Paul’s place in the ancient world necessarily involves comparison. But what, exactly, is the descriptive work such comparison accomplishes? And what are the theoretical assumptions that underlie it?
These questions seldom rise to the surface of the discussion, but it seems to be taken for granted in much New Testament scholarship, as in ancient historiography more generally, that a significant comparison is one that establishes a relationship of historical dependence. In other words, what we find probative is the mode of comparison Jonathan Z. Smith, following Deissmann, calls genealogical.\textsuperscript{22} It is on account of this methodological presupposition that, whereas my comparison of Paul with Red Jacket is sure to be deemed idiosyncratic and thus demanding of an explanation, comparison of Paul with Plutarch, say, is seldom thought to require theoretical justification. Of course, this is not because Plutarch is thought to have influenced Paul directly; rather, the underlying logic is that similarities between Paul and Plutarch can be attributed to shared intellectual inheritance. In other words, both are located on the same branch of a history-of-ideas family tree, and we can establish the precise nature of their kinship by means of comparison.

But there is a fundamental problem with this genealogical mode of comparison, at least as it usually practiced in the study of ancient history and the New Testament, for embedded within it are unstated anthropological presuppositions that govern our conceptualization of the relationship between the extant sources and the ancient lives to which they attest—presuppositions which, being unexamined, inevitably do so anachronistically. In particular, we have failed to interrogate our conception of the role of literary activity in human societies, and to reflect on the specific social space it occupies.

within the broader phenomenon of human communication. We tend to operate with the assumption that this one realm of discourse serves as an adequate proxy for the whole. But what do we actually know when we know the literary sources of societies like those of the ancient Mediterranean? In a discipline such as ours, the question surely merits consideration; and, to address it, we should need to undertake not genealogical but what Smith calls analogical comparison. That is, we should need comparisons that enable us to establish adequate theoretical categories for conceptualizing those realms of human communication to which our sources do not directly attest.

What I am advocating, then, and attempting to instantiate in this study, is an anthropologically informed extension of traditional historiographical methods. The particular oversight I seek to rectify concerns our conceptualization of the relationship between persuasive speech in Greco-Roman antiquity—the vast majority of which disappeared from the historical record immediately after it was uttered—and the formal rhetorical tradition to which most of our sources attest. Until we have some notion of the relationship between these two domains, arguments regarding the nature of Paul’s rhetoric proceed in anthropological—and therefore also historiographical—ignorance.

Within the confines of this study, it is not possible to provide a complete theorization of the problem I have named in the preceding paragraph. That would demand a much fuller discussion than can be attempted here. What I will offer, however, informed by recent work in sociolinguistics and comparative rhetoric, is a theoretical overview that provides a sufficient foundation for the more specific comparative task that constitutes the bulk of part 3—namely, a set of (analogical) comparisons that illuminate four specific rhetorical practices Pauline scholars otherwise have located in 2 Cor 10–13.

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The comparators I introduce here have been selected on the basis of three simple criteria: Each speaker is persuasive, in her or his own way; each lacks formal rhetorical education; and each makes at least one of the rhetorical moves Pauline scholars have identified in 2 Cor 10–13. But how, exactly, do these comparisons function? I understand them to accomplish three distinct but related tasks.

First, they falsify the logic by which scholars have inferred formal education from the resemblance between Paul’s letters and ancient rhetorical theory and practice. To illustrate with an example, if Red Jacket, who demonstrably had no formal education in the classical rhetorical tradition, used *prodiorthōsis* as clearly as did Paul, then its appearance in Paul’s letters cannot in itself serve as evidence of his formal rhetorical education. Since the resemblance between Red Jacket and formal Greco-Roman rhetoric in this regard evidently derives not from genealogy but from analogy—specifically, from an analogous response to a similar social exigency—we cannot deduce from Paul’s use of *prodiorthōsis* the direct influence of rhetorical theory unless first we rule out the possibility that it too represents an analogical similarity—in other words, that it too derives from what Kennedy would call general rhetoric—as well the possibility that it attests to Paul’s familiarity with an *informal* rhetorical tradition.⁴⁴ Therefore, in order to conclude that Paul was directly dependent on formal rhetorical theory, it is not sufficient for us to observe that he uses *prodiorthōsis*; no, we should need also to identify specific indicators of formal education in the *manner* of Paul’s use thereof. At the very least, his rhetorical usage would have to resemble the ancient exemplars more closely than does that of Red Jacket.⁴⁵

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⁴⁴ On the distinction between general, informal, and formal rhetoric see p. 220 below.
⁴⁵ On the comparative logic here, see further pp. 228–229 below.
But this set of comparisons does more than falsify the prevailing mode of argumentation; it also has a second and constructive role, providing an alternative context within which to conceptualize Paul’s rhetoric. More precisely, having demonstrated the untenability of locating Paul’s rhetoric within a particular genealogical context—namely, the formal tradition of classical rhetoric—I use comparison to establish for it an analogical context and thus to sponsor its redescription by means of the theoretical category of informal rhetoric.

These comparisons shed indirect light, then, as if by refraction, on that for which we have little direct evidence—namely, the informal rhetoric of the ancient world. Or perhaps a better metaphor is that of triangulation: If individual rhetorical tropes and figures are found in our ancient sources and are also ubiquitous in other societies—and specifically those societies uninfluenced by the classical tradition—then we can deduce that they were characteristic not only of the formal rhetorical tradition but also of the informal rhetoric of the Greco-Roman world. Lacking direct evidence, we may be unable to describe with precision their use in Greco-Roman antiquity; however, our analogical data allow us to observe a range of informal usages and thus to map the possibilities. Since, again, we lack direct evidence, it is only thus, I submit, that we can locate the rhetoric of Paul.

Third, the comparisons I undertake in this study undergird my effort to describe what I will call Paul’s “voice.” Before elaborating on the nature of this final mode of comparison, it will be useful briefly to explain what I intend “voice” to indicate.26 Here Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of *habitus* provides a useful starting point: Like other modes of comportment, speech is structured by what Bourdieu refers to as “systems of durable, transposable

26 For further discussion see pp. 354–358 below.
dispositions” that represent the embodiment of social history. Bourdieu refuses to ascribe significance to the comportment of individual subjects, preferring instead to speak of “structural variants,” but of course he cannot deny the existence of individual difference: If comportment is, as Bourdieu insists, the embodiment of the history of social relations, and if, as he acknowledges, “it is impossible for all members of the same class (or even two of them) to have had the same experiences, in the same order,” then no two individuals will comport themselves identically. Therefore, even after sociology (thus conceived) has done its explanatory work, during the process of which such individual difference is, as a matter of principle, ignored, we are left with a remainder of human behaviour—a remainder that I, for one, find interesting, and think it worthwhile to describe, if not to explain.

Thus, by speaking of Paul’s voice I mean to indicate the discursive dispositions, correlative of his social location but also distinctly his own, that characterize his letters as artifacts of social practice. Paul’s voice comes from Paul’s body; Paul’s body inhabits a particular social location, and it does so in its own peculiar way.

Those speakers selected as comparators in this study have a range of voices—as, of course, do the ancient rhetorical theorists and practitioners discussed in part 2. As I note below, each of these speakers seeks room to maneuver within the constraints of a given social location; each adopts a persuasive ethos that is available within those bounds. I use these diverse voices as a comparative sounding board, noting particular similarities and differences, in order to highlight specific characteristics of Paul’s voice that tend otherwise to escape notice. What I undertake here, then, is the sort of “kaleidoscope-like” comparison

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28 Ibid., 86.
29 Ibid., 85.
which, says Smith, “gives the scholar a shifting set of characteristics with which to negotiate the relations between his or her theoretical interests and data stipulated as exemplary.”

Of course, my group of comparators by no means provides me with an exhaustive catalogue of rhetorical dispositions, nor do I attempt a thorough taxonomy. Instead, I attend to a few salient characteristics that arise from the comparisons themselves. Clearly, then, I cannot claim fully to describe Paul’s voice; nevertheless, in the light of rhetorical criticism and using comparison as a lens, I do highlight significant aspects thereof.

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30 Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 53.
PART ONE

A HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION
Chapter One
Rhetoric of the Heart

For patristic interpreters, Paul’s social location was uncontroversial: He was a
tentmaker. Paul was not “distinguished by great ancestors,” observed Chrysostom, “for how
could he be, having such a trade?” Moreover, Chrysostom and his peers had no difficulty
inferring from Paul’s trade his paideia—or, rather, his lack thereof: Paul was a
“leatherworker (σκυτωτόμος), a poor labourer (πένης), ignorant (ἀπειρος) of outer
wisdom” (Hom. 2 Tim. 4.3 [PG 62:622]); he was ἴδιωτης καὶ πένης καὶ ἀσήμως (Laud.
Paul. 4.13). Indeed, in the social imagination of Paul’s early readers, to be a manual labour
was, by definition, to be devoid of learned culture (cf. Celsus 3.55).

Modern scholarship has rejected this straightforward inferral from Paul’s trade of his
social location and attendant education. For nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars,
it was above all Paul’s purported Roman citizenship that sponsored the argument—or, more
often, the assumption—that he possessed significantly higher status. Still, as we will see,
these scholars generally concurred with patristic exegetes that Paul’s letters did not display
the marks of a formal education in rhetoric.

1 Chrysostom, (Laud. Paul. 4.10 [trans. Mitchell]). See also Chrysostom, Scand. 20.10; Hom. 1 Cor.
15.5 (PG 61:128); Hom. 2 Cor. 3.4 (PG 61:28); Hom. Heb. 1.2 (PG 63:16); Stat. 5.6 (PG 49:71); Hom. 2 Tim.
4.4 (PG 62:624); 5.2 (PG 62:626); Ps.-Chrysostom, Hom. 2 Cor 12:9 1 (PG 59:509); Gregory of Nyssa, Ep.
17.11; Theodoret, Affect. 5.67. Although I disagree with her conclusion regarding the implications for
evaluating Paul’s social location, I am heavily indebted to Margaret Mitchell’s excellent treatment of
Chrysostom on Paul’s labour in The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation,
“No Mere Tentmaker”

As Deissmann complained, the scholarship of his time had little to say about Paul’s social location. But since these scholars were interested in Paul’s upbringing for other reasons—primarily as a means of gaining leverage on the pressing Jewish Paul versus Hellenistic Paul debate—they often included a short evaluation of the evidence for the social level of his family. Though often frustratingly vague,² these paragraphs ran along consistent lines; indeed, the same argument appears almost invariably until at least the 1950s: Although his work as an artisan might seem to suggest a life of poverty, Paul was a Roman citizen, and thus must have come from a notable family.³

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship generally acknowledged that Paul’s labour appeared to indicate low-status origins, but avoided this conclusion in one of two ways: First, scholars adduced rabbinic texts that commended the learning of a trade—either as a child (cf. t. Qidd. 1.11) or combined with study of Torah (cf. m. ’Abot 2.2)—and

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concluded that a well-to-do Pharisee learning to make tents was simply abiding by typical Jewish practice. F. W. Farrar’s treatment is typical:

As the making of these *cilicia* was unskilled labour of the commonest sort, the trade of tentmaker was one both lightly esteemed and miserably paid. It must not, however, be inferred from this that the family of St. Paul were people of low position. The learning of a trade was a duty enjoined by the Rabbis on the parents of every Jewish boy.  

Building on Jacob Neusner’s reevaluation of the rabbinic traditions, Ronald Hock discredited this line of interpretation as retrojection of second-century ideals onto the pre-70 Judean world. It generally, and rightly, has been discarded.

A second way of ameliorating the status implications of Paul’s manual labour was subtler: Paul’s father was portrayed not as a labourer, but rather as the owner of the shop—a “well-to-do cloth merchant and tentmaker.” Thus Paul’s knowledge of the trade could be easily explained: “There is nothing improbable if his father were wealthy, that the son should

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7. Hock, *Social Context*, 22–23. See also Wolfgang Stegemann, “War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?,” *ZNW* 78 (1987): 228. Indeed, not only the notion of combining Torah study with labour, but the whole construct of “rabbinic education” that fuels the notion of Paul as a budding young Torah scholar has been shown by Catherine Hezser to result from “uncritical understanding of later Talmudic texts which are . . . anachronistic in associating the educational institutions of the amoraic period with pre-70 times.” *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 39.


learn the practical part of the business.”

Although such argumentation persists, it is obviously fueled not by its inherent probability but rather by scholars’ prior conclusion on other grounds that Paul was not brought up a “mere artisan.”

One factor here is surely Luke’s portrait of Paul the citizen of Rome and Tarsus (Acts 21:39; 22:25–29; 23:27). Luke’s Paul is evidently a man of elevated status, he is always aristocratically self-possessed; he comfortably converses with the likes of Felix and Festus; he capably addresses the Athenians in the Areopagus (Acts 17:16–34). Such a man could only have been a tentmaker incidentally. And, indeed, this is precisely how Luke, like many subsequent biographers, deals with Paul’s labour: he mentions it in passing (Acts 18:3).

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10 Foakes-Jackson, Acts, 170.
12 The phrase is from Foakes-Jackson, Acts, 169.
16 Although the accuracy of Luke’s portrait has been vigorously defended (e.g. F. F. Bruce, “Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?” BJRL 58 [1976]: 282–305; Stanley E. Porter, Paul in Acts, Library of Pauline Studies [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001], 187–206), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Luke’s Paul is, as John C. Lentz concludes, “too good to be true” (Luke’s Portrait of Paul, 171). First, to quote Ernst Haenchen, “there is a discrepancy between the ‘Lucan’ Paul and the Paul of the Epistles” (Acts, 113 [emphasis removed]). Can we imagine, for example, Luke’s Paul being treated by his converts with anything other than unwavering deference? Luke, at least, does not. Second, Luke’s honourable Paul is part of the apologetic—or, better, “propagandistic” (Pervo, Profit with Delight, 79)—fabric of his narrative, which portrays Christianity as a respectable religion with ancient roots. Paul’s elevated status is a means to this end. Indeed, Paul functions as a metonym for Luke’s idealistic depiction of Christianity in Luke’s own time: his accusers are either envious
What was ultimately at stake in the marginalization of Paul’s labour—in nineteenth-century discussions and perhaps in Luke’s portrait as well—is apparent in the telling evaluation of Conybeare and Howson, who remain unusually agnostic as to the economic status of Paul’s family of origin, but leave no doubt as to its “respectability”:

Whatever might be the station and employment of his father or his kinsmen, whether they were elevated by wealth above, or depressed by poverty below, the average of the Jews of Asia Minor and Italy, we are disposed to believe that this family were possessed of that highest respectability which is worthy of deliberate esteem.17

We will do well to watch for signs of this subtext—the need for a respectable Paul—in current scholarship as well.

**“Kein Klassiker, kein Hellenist hat so geschrieben”**

Along with an honourable family, a respectable education was almost universally assumed in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies. Thus any debate concerned not whether Paul was well educated, but whether his education was Jewish or Hellenistic in orientation:18 for advocates of a “Hebraist” Paul like F. W. Farrar, Paul spent his formative years as a rabbinical student;19 for those, like Hans Böhlig, who emphasized Hellenistic influences, Paul had eagerly imbibed the Greek learning for which Tarsus was famous.20

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17 W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, new ed. (London: Longmans & Green, 1870), 39–40. Note here the more recent suggestion of Martin Hengel: “Here we may with justification speak of ‘lay nobility by birth,’ even if his family was not very rich.” *Pre-Christian Paul*, 17.

18 This is evident from even the title of an early treatment of the question: Christian Wilhelm Thalemann, “De eruditione Pauli apostoli Iudaica, non Graeca” (diss., Leipzig, 1708).


W. C. van Unnik’s *Tarsus or Jerusalem* stands as a fitting testament to this discussion: the assumption throughout is that Paul was a budding young scholar; the only question is where he studied.\(^{21}\)

Nevertheless, the possibility of a specifically *rhetorical* education was seldom raised\(^{22}\)—and, given the prevailing evaluation of Paul’s compositional style, this is perhaps not surprising. Throughout this period, there was wide agreement among biblical scholars and classicists alike that Paul’s prose was not sophisticated. Eduard Norden’s famous formulation—“der Rhetorik des Herzens in ungefeilter Sprache”—expressed the prevailing judgement.\(^{23}\) Indeed, even Johannes Weiss and C. F. G. Heinrici, cited by advocates of rhetorical criticism as forebears of the method, were well aware of the peculiarity of Paul’s diction.

Weiss concurred with his predecessors that Paul had an “eminently personal style,” notable above all for its “directness.”\(^{24}\) However, he questioned the consensus that Paul’s writings therefore represented a wholly artless outpouring of powerful emotions—a view, he suggested, that was based solely on impressionistic sketches.\(^{25}\) Weiss himself was fascinated


\(^{23}\) Cf. Farrar, *St. Paul*, 1:625–30. Also worth noting is a 1961 article by Robert M. Grant wherein he seeks to trace Hellenistic influences in 1 Cor. Commenting on 1 Cor 13, Grant concludes with a prelese of the argument that would become prominent in coming decades: “The rhetorical skill with which Paul has worked out his clauses and sentences in this chapter is by no means spontaneous. It reflects a careful study either of rhetorical manuals or of some literary model or models.” “Hellenistic Elements in 1 Corinthians,” in *Early Christian Origins: Studies in Honor of Harold R. Willoughby*, ed. Allen Paul Wikgren (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961), 65.


by the rhythmic properties of Paul’s letters, which, he asserted, must be read “mit dem Ohre.” So although he could not deny that Paul’s prose lacked the elegant periodic structure of the Greek classics, Weiss insisted that it nevertheless had artistic qualities: “Was dem Paulus so an Kunstprosa fehlt, ersetzt er, wenigstens in den sorgfältiger geschriebene Briefen, durch eine gewisse rhetorische Bewegung, die entschieden packend und häufig durch Symmetrie, Rhythmus, Schwung und Vollklang nicht unkünstlerisch wirkt.”

Weiss sought to demonstrate that Paul’s particular style derived from two well-balanced influences, the “Cynic-Stoic diatribe” on the one hand and the Jewish Scriptures on the other. To account for this, he posited that Paul received instruction from “a Jewish rhetorician with a Hellenistic education.” Tellingly, though, Weiss made the jump from observation of stylistic affinities to assertion of formal education not by carefully comparing Paul with the rhetorical sources—something he advocated but never undertook—but rather on the basis of his general incredulity that an uneducated person could write such compelling letters: “More than an elementary education is needed for the simplest English essay that will be readable; how much more then is needed for works of permanent spiritual and literary importance.” But surely this is the sort of assertion that needs to be tested; otherwise, despite all his commendable sensitivity to the characteristics of Paul’s style, Weiss’s argument concerning Paul’s education reduces to a Western academic conceit.

work of art came into existence as a result of the deepest reflection and through the impetus of an almost unconscious feeling for form and literary style” (Weiss, Earliest Christianity, 2:407).  
26 Weiss, “Beiträge zur Paulinischen Rhetorik,” 166.  
27 Ibid., 167.  
28 Ibid., 167–68.  
31 Weiss, Earliest Christianity, 183.
Heinrici was not persuaded by Weiss’s argument. Although he agreed that various rhetorical devices could be detected in Paul’s letters, for Heinrici the assumption that Paul employed them self-consciously was unwarranted. Moreover, he felt that Weiss told only one side of the story, and thus produced superficial and misleading analogies. Weiss neglected, for example, to observe the striking difference between what Heinrici considered Paul’s volkstümlich use of the chreia and the formal usage recommended by the teachers of rhetoric.

Like Weiss, Heinrici did assert the relevance of an understanding of ancient rhetoric for interpreting Paul’s epistles, but this was not because Paul was rhetorically trained. Rather, he suggested that a scholar sensitive to ancient speech patterns would be better equipped to recognize Paul’s Congenialität or Wahlverwandschaft with the Hellenistic milieu in which he lived. So, after providing a summary of the rhetorical devices and Klangfiguren in 2 Cor 10–13, Heinrici concluded: “Aber all’ diese Momente geben dem Abschnitte nicht den Eindruck einer abgecirkelten Prunkrede; der Fluss ist natürlich, mancher Ausdruck verletzend und gewöhnlich. . . . Sie erwächst ihm aus der Sache, aus der inneren Ergriffenheit von seiner Aufgabe.” In the end, then, Heinrici’s evaluation of Paul’s style is not unlike Norden’s:

Des Paulus Stil ist individuell und packend. . . . Kein Klassiker, kein Hellenist hat so geschrieben, auch kein Kirchenvater. Der von seinem Herrn überwältigte

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33 Ibid., 442.
34 Ibid., 39: “Ich . . . sonst aufmerksam gemacht, ohne ein Missverständnis darüber offen zu lassen, dass ich P. nicht als studirten Gerichts-, Prunk- oder Lehr rhetor fasse.”
35 Ibid., 39–41, 314, 437. Note Heinrici’s awareness that rhetorical sensitivity is something the scholar brings to the table: “Wer die virtuos ausgebildeten Methoden und die technisch festgelegten Ueberzeugungsmittel (κοινα πίστεις) der antiken Rhetorik kennt, wird sowohl durch das ganze, wie auch im einzelnen vielfach an sie erinnert, so fern auch des P[aulus]. Weise von jeder schulmässigen Entlehnung oder Nachahmung ist” (p. 39).
36 Ibid., 314.
hellenistische Jude steht für sich da. Seine Ausdrucksweise ist nicht durch Nachahmung (μιμησία) bedingt, sondern durch die ursprüngliche plastische Kraft seiner Gedankenbildung.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 453. See also Heinrici, Der litterarische Charakter der neustamentlichen Schriften (Leipzig: Dürr, 1908), 65–66.
Chapter Two
Paul, the Educated Rhetor

It would be an exaggeration to say that current scholarship has reached a consensus on Paul’s social location. Still, the pattern is clear, and, despite our greater sophistication in social-scientific theory, our conclusions differ little from those reached in the nineteenth century: Paul is still of “relatively high status,”¹ and we continue to insist that his manual labour is not indicative of his social standing.² However, whereas for older scholarship it was


Paul’s putative Roman citizenship that sponsored such arguments, it is now Paul’s rhetorical education that is seen as the key to understanding his social location.

In its basic form, the argument consists of two propositions:

1) Paul’s letters can be analyzed according to the dictates of Greco-Roman rhetoric; therefore, Paul was well educated in rhetoric.

2) Rhetorical education was available only among the wealthy elite; therefore, Paul was brought up among the elite.\(^3\)

Clearly, this argument presupposes a very different assessment of Paul’s rhetoric from that of earlier scholars. It will be worth asking, then, how we got here. What has fueled this reevaluation of Paul’s rhetorical competence?

**Soundings: E. A. Judge**

The work of E. A. Judge marks a turning point in Pauline scholarship, not so much because of his conclusions—in fact, few of his specific proposals have been widely accepted—as because of the new questions he posed. Informed by a detailed knowledge of the Roman world, Judge sought to uncover what he referred to in the title of his groundbreaking 1960 study as *The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century*.\(^4\) His forays into the social description of the early Christian assemblies were harbingers of the explosion of social-historical study of the New Testament that began in the 1970s and 1980s, and they continue to shape the discipline. Indeed, many ongoing debates owe their existence to questions first formulated or re-formulated by Judge: At what social

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level or levels do we find the first Christian communities? On what social models were the early assemblies structured? What contemporary analogies illuminate the role of Paul?

In answer to this latter question, Judge famously proposed that Paul was a “sophist.” Since he has been accused of imprecision on this point, it is worth considering to whom, precisely, Judge thought he was thereby comparing Paul:

We may for our present purposes safely lump [Aelius Aristides and Dio Chrysostom] together with the philosophers, ranging from the Stoic Epictetus to the vagabond Cynic preachers, and the more religious teachers from the neo-Pythagorean sage Apollonius of Tyana to the charlatan Peregrinus, call them all sophists, and say that this is the class to which St Paul belonged.5

This is, as has been noted, a rather diverse group of peers,6 and we would certainly like to know whether Paul was more like Dio or Epictetus, Apollonius or Peregrinus. Still, although Pauline scholars have not found the term “sophist” palatable, Judge’s suggestion has become the starting point for all further discussion of Paul’s social location. Abraham Malherbe, Ronald Hock, and Stanley Stowers have all acknowledged their debt to his work; indeed, each has sought to describe with more specificity how to locate Paul among the analogues Judge proposed.7

Judge himself continued to ruminate on the question of Paul’s social location for decades. Two collections of articles have appeared recently, and, reading his essays in turn, it is interesting to watch him grapple with the problem of where Paul fit in the ancient world.8

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Paul’s education and literary level play a prominent role as Judge seeks to carve out a space for Paul somewhere between the “metropolitan aristocracy” and the uneducated urban poor.9 Perhaps the clearest statement comes in a 1974 essay:

He was familiar in the ordinary educated way with a range of ideas that circulated in Hellenic society. But at the same time he was altogether removed from any tight professional involvement with the classical method of discussion, which was very much the special province of philosophy and the literary élite. He would never have been recognized as a man of letters or a philosopher in the technical sense within the Greek tradition. Yet he remains very securely placed amongst the ordinary educated classes, the Hellenized rabbi, freely using the full resources of standard, technical Greek for his own purposes.10

Paul, then, was well educated, though he did not belong among the elite literati. But how are we to describe this middle ground? Who are these “ordinary educated classes”? On the specific question of Paul’s rhetorical education—a question to which he is among the first to give serious consideration—Judge points, tentatively, not to the gymnasion but to the school of hard knocks. In an early essay, he admits, “Whether or not Paul was given a rhetorical education at Tarsus cannot be determined”; still, he deems it most likely that “for Paul the art was acquired by hard experience rather than by training.”11

He sounds the same tone in his influential article on Paul’s boasting in 2 Cor 10–13: The arguments concerning Paul’s rhetorical education are “inconclusive,” but “it is beyond doubt that Paul was, in practice at least, familiar with the rhetorical fashions of his time.”12

Notably, Judge’s influential reconstruction of Paul’s contentious relationship with the

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Corinthians is predicated on this conclusion: Paul “had not in fact had the full classical training himself,” but his rivals were “fully trained professionals, and Paul was ridiculed by them for his poor performance.”

In later work, Judge is less certain on this point, and begins to consider the possibility that Paul’s refusal to engage in “platform rhetoric” was not a matter of his competence but rather of his principles: It is “not clear” whether or not Paul had a rhetorical education, but “it is certain that he refused absolutely to practice it if he did.” So Paul is either untrained or unwilling. In 2001, Judge was still equivocating:

The language and style of St Paul annoyed even his own converts. His being “an amateur” in speech (idiotes 2 Cor 11:6) was part of the problem. His “bodily presence” was “weak” and his speech “contemptible”, yet (strangely) his letters were “weighty and strong” (bareiai kai ischyrai 2 Cor 10:10). I take this to mean that he knew well how to make a rhetorical impact, but refused to impose himself in the desired manner when actually present. His admirers were embarrassed and his critics dismissed him as professionally incompetent. Presumably he had not had a formal tertiary education before leaving Tarsus.

The Rise of Rhetorical Criticism: Hans Dieter Betz and George A. Kennedy

While for Judge it was social-historical questions that prompted an inquiry into Paul’s rhetorical education, it would soon become a pressing issue from the perspective of form criticism as well. This was due, above all, to Hans Dieter Betz’s treatment of 2 Cor 10–13 and especially Galatians as “apologetic letters” that could be analyzed according to the

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13 Judge, “Educational Aims,” 700.
rhetorical dictates of Quintilian and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. What Betz initially conceived as a form-critical exercise quickly took on a life of its own as New Testament scholars eagerly explored the possibility that more precise knowledge of Paul’s rhetorical toolbox could illuminate the exegesis of his letters.

Betz posited for Paul a considerable degree of rhetorical sophistication: Yes, *Galatians* was composed in accordance with the handbooks’ recommendations for forensic rhetoric, but, he insisted, “the letter does more than simply conform to convention.” Noting the difficulty of clarifying the rhetorical disposition of chapters 3 and 4, Betz suggested that Paul was clever enough to hide his tracks: “One might say that Paul has been very successful—as a skilled rhetorician would be expected to be—in disguising his rhetorical strategy. . . . In fact, for the rhetoricians of Paul’s time there could be nothing more boring than a perfect product of rhetorical technology.”

Betz himself showed no real interest in the question where Paul may have acquired these skills, but reviewers were quick to notice the need for an explanation. For the method to be tenable it was necessary to provide a credible account of Paul’s exposure either to the handbooks themselves or at least to the rhetorical tradition they exemplify. In an early

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20 Ibid., 369.
rhetorical-critical study of Philemon, F. Forrester Church was content simply to assert, “Whether [Paul] was trained in school or acquired his talent through a natural course of observation and imitation, Paul was a master of persuasion.”23 Reviewing Betz’s Galatians, David Aune emphasized the latter possibility, highlighting Paul’s “exposure to the structures and styles of trained rhetoricians” and his “ample opportunity to make speeches.” For Aune, Paul’s use of rhetoric could be explained as the result of a rhetorical trickle-down effect: “In spite of the sophistication of speeches and speakers trained in traditional Greco-Roman rhetorical schools, many shared features and structures must have linked high rhetoric with its more vulgar counterpart.”24

George Kennedy argued similarly in his foray into New Testament rhetoric. To Kennedy’s mind, the evidence for Paul’s education was “ambivalent”; but, so far as the legitimacy of the method was concerned, the question was immaterial:

Even if he had not studied in a Greek school, there were many handbooks of rhetoric in common circulation which he could have seen. He and the evangelists as well would, indeed, have been hard put to escape an awareness of rhetoric as practised in the culture around them, for the rhetorical theory of the schools found its immediate application in almost every form of oral and written communication.25

The notion that Paul’s letters reflect the conventions of Greek rhetoric because rhetoric was, to use Bruce Longenecker’s phrase, “in the air” was for a time the prevailing view, and it continues to command influence.26 But the implications of Kennedy’s next assertion have largely gone unnoticed:

24 Aune, review of Betz, 326.
Though rhetoric is colored by the traditions and conventions of the society in which it is applied, it is also a universal phenomenon which is conditioned by basic workings of the human mind and heart and by the nature of all human society. . . . What is unique about Greek rhetoric, and what makes it useful for criticism, is the degree to which it was conceptualized. The Greeks gave names to rhetorical techniques, many of which are found all over the world.\textsuperscript{27}

This universal dimension of rhetoric continued to fascinate Kennedy, as we will see in more detail below. Among New Testament scholars, however, it has not been allowed to disrupt the neat logic that Paul’s use of rhetorical techniques is straightforward evidence of his rhetorical education.

\textbf{“Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony”: Christopher Forbes}

Second Corinthians 10–13 has played a particularly significant role in the discussion concerning Paul’s rhetorical education, and not only because of the contested evaluations of Paul’s speech reported in 2 Cor 10:10 and 11:6. For Judge, these chapters in particular attested to Paul’s role as an unwilling participant in a battle of rhetorical wits. And it was an evaluation of their conformity to Hellenistic rhetorical conventions that prompted his student Christopher Forbes to inquire, more directly than previous scholars, into the implications of rhetorical criticism for our conception of Paul’s education.


\textsuperscript{27} Kennedy, \textit{New Testament Interpretation}, 10–11.
Forbes, “the key to the whole ‘boasting’ passage” lies in Paul’s ostensible refusal in 2 Cor 10:12 to classify (ἐγκρίνω) or compare (συγκρίνω) himself with his rivals.\(^{28}\) Comparison (συγκρίσεις), Forbes notes, was a topic of frequent discussion among Greek rhetorical theorists, eventually appearing in the Progymnasmata of Aelius Theon as well as that of Hermogenes. Moreover, authors such as Plutarch went to great lengths, Forbes explains, to describe how the sort of self-praise (περιαυτολογία) undertaken by Paul could be accomplished without causing offence. Finally, Forbes suggests that Paul used irony—another technique frequently discussed by the rhetoricians—to avoid unseemly self-promotion and to parody the sort of rhetorical comparisons (συγκρίσεις) apparently being undertaken by his rivals.\(^{29}\)

At this point Forbes moves from literary criticism to biographical inquiry: “If my analysis of Paul’s rhetoric is correct, we must ask where he acquired the subtlety and skill which he here displays.”\(^{30}\) Although he acknowledges the possibility that Paul simply learned from experience, Forbes’s real interest is to consider an alternative explanation, namely, that Paul received “a full education in formal Greek rhetoric.”\(^{31}\) As Forbes correctly argues, the assumption that Paul’s Judean background rules out Hellenistic education is insupportable.\(^{32}\)

\(^{28}\) Christopher Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony: Paul’s Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 1. Forbes (p. 25n4) acknowledges his debt for this observation to the work of his fellow student Peter Marshall, whose then forthcoming work also treats Paul’s use of synkrisis and other rhetorical devices and also concludes, tentatively, that Paul “may have been trained in rhetoric but had deliberately set it aside.” *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians*, WUNT 2/23 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987), 390.

\(^{29}\) Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 2–22. For an extended evaluation of this interpretation of Paul’s boasting, see chs. 5, 8, and 9 below.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 22–23.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 23.

\(^{32}\) The inviability of such an assumption has been demonstrated most thoroughly by Martin Hengel, who insists that Jerusalem, like other Hellenized provincial cities, provided opportunities for Greek education (*Pre-Christian Paul*, 54–62). Hengel, however, fails to justify his assumption that Paul was a well-off “young scholar” (p. 60) and therefore could and would have availed himself of such opportunities. Cf. Pitts, “Hellenistic Schools in Jerusalem,” 48–50.
Thus, on the grounds of Paul’s rhetorical prowess, Forbes suggests: “His education reached at least beyond the level of the grammatici, and into rhetorical school.”

Notably, Forbes is quick to draw the attendant conclusion that such education “bespeaks a certain social standing.” Paul’s manual labour, therefore, should not be considered indicative of his social status; rather, it should be understood as voluntary self-abnegation. This is a well-worn argument, as we have seen, but now with one key modification: Paul’s rhetorical education has neatly stepped into the argumentative role long filled by his Roman citizenship, mitigating the apparent status implications of Paul’s labour and thus ensuring that Paul is respectably insulated from the ignominy of (involuntary) poverty.

A Developing Consensus (I): Martin, Murphy-O’Connor, and Witherington

Subsequent treatments of Paul’s rhetorical education have followed the basic contours of Forbes’s argument. Although prior to 2003 there had been no full-length study dedicated to the subject, scholars asserted with growing confidence that Paul’s rhetorical ability must have been acquired through formal training.

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The decisive role of rhetoric in evaluating Paul’s social location is particularly evident in Dale Martin’s *The Corinthian Body*. Building on Gerd Theissen’s pioneering work, Martin argues that the various body-oriented conflicts that characterize the relationship between the “strong” and the “weak” in Corinth—divisions at the Lord’s Supper, and disputes regarding meat offered to idols, the use of civil courts, Paul’s acceptance of financial support, glossolalia, and the resurrection of the body—reflect the different social locations of the two groups. In other words, each group’s beliefs about the body correlate to that group’s social status and level of education: the strong claim to possess esoteric knowledge and assert their indifference toward the physical body; the weak fear bodily and social pollution and are thus concerned to maintain “firm corporal and social boundaries.”

Martin identifies a consistent pattern in Paul’s response to these disputes: Although initially he rhetorically identifies himself with the strong, in each case Paul finally sides with the weak. So, for example, although Paul at first concedes, with the strong, that “no idol in the world really exists” (1 Cor 8:4), he ultimately shares the more popular view that “what pagans sacrifice [to idols], they sacrifice to demons and not to God” (10:20). In sum, Paul does not subscribe to the upper-class moral-philosophical understanding of the body; no, “for whatever reason, [Paul’s] view of the body is more in harmony with views generally held by lower-class, less-educated members of Greco-Roman society.”

But Martin does not draw what would seem to be the obvious conclusion, namely, that Paul was one of the lower-class, less-educated members of Greco-Roman society. On the
contrary, Martin is convinced that Paul “grew up in a relatively privileged milieu and viewed his manual labor as voluntary self-abasement for the sake of his ministry.”

Why? Because of Paul’s rhetorical competence. For Martin, “Paul’s rhetorical education is evident on every page [of his letters], and that education is one piece of evidence that he came from a family of relatively high status.”

Likewise, Jerome Murphy-O’Connor posits upper-class origins for Paul on the grounds of “[his] educational attainments, which suggest a background infinitely superior to that of the average artisan.” There is some circularity in Murphy-O’Connor’s argument here, for when he comes to treat Paul’s education itself in more detail, it is Paul’s “social position” that bears the weight of the argument and justifies the assumption that Paul would have had the opportunity to benefit from Tarsus’s educational opportunities. Murphy-O’Connor is finally rescued from this vicious circle by “the evidence of rhetorical arrangement” in Paul’s letters, which provides independent internal evidence to support his interdependent biographical claims.

The apologetic potential of such an argument—specifically, its usefulness in asserting Paul’s respectability and serious intellectual credentials—becomes explicit in the work of Ben Witherington. For Witherington, Paul’s elevated social status as attested by his knowledge of rhetoric provides the primary justification for accepting Luke’s assertion that Paul was a Roman citizen. Although he does not speculate further regarding the precise nature of Paul’s education, Witherington argues that the rhetorical features of Galatians,

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40 Ibid., xv–xvi.
41 Ibid., 52.
42 Murphy-O’Connor, A Critical Life, 40.
43 Ibid., 50.
44 Ibid.
45 Witherington, The Paul Quest, 70.
Philippians, and 1 and 2 Corinthians “reflect significant learning, skill, organization and preparation.”\textsuperscript{46} In Witherington’s hands, this underlying rhetorical training becomes a means of asserting the intellectual significance of Pauline discourse: “Paul,” he assures us, “was no rustic backwoods preacher rattling off whatever exhortations came to mind.”\textsuperscript{47}

\section*{A Developing Consensus (II): Jerome H. Neyrey and Ronald F. Hock}

In 2003, two independent studies of Paul’s rhetorical education appeared, both arriving at the conclusion already anticipated by scholars such as Martin, Murphy-O’Connor, and Witherington. The basic thrust of Jerome Neyrey’s article is readily discernable from its title: “The Social Location of Paul: Education as the Key.” As one would expect, the argument is an elaboration of the proposal of Forbes: Paul knows rhetoric; rhetorical education is available only among the elite; Paul must therefore belong among the elite.\textsuperscript{48}

The bulk of Neyrey’s article consists of a summary of the findings of the previous few decades of rhetorical criticism, with the implications for Paul’s education appended to each section: Scholars have found that Paul’s letters can be classified according to the letter types described by Pseudo-Demetrius, therefore Paul must have been educated in epistolary composition.\textsuperscript{49} Scholars have described the rhetorical arrangement of various Pauline letters and letter sections according to the canons of ancient rhetoric, therefore Paul “knew sophisticated rhetorical theory.”\textsuperscript{50} Scholars have identified “progymnastic genres” such as comparison, encomium, and speech-in-character (\textit{êthopoilia}) in Paul’s letters, therefore Paul must have been “educated in progymnastic learning.”\textsuperscript{51} Scholars have found in Paul’s letters

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 126.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 130–33.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 140.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 141, 148.
various philosophical themes, styles, and topoi, therefore Paul must have had “an education beyond that of progymnastic rhetoric, even some training in popular philosophy.”

Neyrey then proceeds to correlate this portrait of Paul with Gerhard Lenski’s model of social stratification in advanced agrarian societies. Since Paul’s letters evince familiarity with aspects of the Greek curriculum which were “exclusively the prerogative of the wealthy and elites . . . it seems that the minimum level at which we might locate Paul is in the retainer class.” In other words, Neyrey concludes, Luke got it right: Paul is “an elite who was educated for a life of leisure and who learned the art and craft of rhetoric and philosophy.”

Ronald Hock’s article on Paul’s education takes much the same shape. He begins with a survey of recent scholarship on Greco-Roman education, describing the standard schema of primary, secondary, and tertiary curricula. He then superimposes Paul’s literary capacities onto this schema: His primary education is attested by his basic literacy and his use of poetic maxims. His interaction with literary texts—in this case, the Septuagint—provides evidence of his secondary education. Finally, Paul’s eloquent letters “clearly point to an author who had received sustained training in composition and rhetoric, and it was only during the tertiary curriculum that such instruction was given.” Therefore, “it is hard not to draw the conclusion that Paul had formal rhetorical training.”

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52 Ibid., 150.
53 Ibid., 160.
54 Ibid., 161.
55 Ibid., 198–208. On the inadequacy of this model of ancient education, see pp. 117–120 below.
56 Ibid., 208.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 209. Hock elaborates this latter claim by describing Paul’s use of the forms of the progymnasmata, particularly ùthopoia, and the rhetorical arrangement of Galatians.
59 Ibid., 215.
Like Neyrey, Hock readily infers Paul’s elevated social standing from his rhetorical education. But it is worth noting the circularity of Hock’s argument here: He begins by asserting that Paul’s “status as an aristocrat makes education a given,” then goes on to argue that his “educational achievement . . . put Paul into a very tiny elite indeed.”\(^{60}\) Moreover, it is worth noting that this description of a well-educated Paul conveniently vindicates the portrait of an aristocratic Paul Hock himself had outlined in his previous work.\(^{61}\) What we have here, it seems, is the elaboration of a paradigm, not a deductive argument demonstrating Paul’s education. That does not in itself invalidate Hock’s proposal—his paradigm may indeed be accurate—but it is important to see that his assertions of Paul’s elite status and elite education are in fact interdependent.

This becomes particularly evident in a 2008 article wherein he revisits the question of Paul’s social status. Although Hock’s earlier work is often cited as the last word on Paul’s manual labour, critics had noted an apparent contradiction: on the one hand, Hock claims that Paul had an aristocratic upbringing that taught him to despise manual labour; on the other, he argues that Paul learned his trade the way most other labourers did—from his father.\(^{62}\) Hock attempts to resolve this tension by correcting his earlier assertion: Paul did not learn his trade from his father, but rather acquired it after his conversion in order to address his newly “reduced economic circumstances.”\(^{63}\)

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 198, 215.

\(^{61}\) See Hock, “Paul’s Tentmaking”; Hock, Social Context, 35.


\(^{63}\) Hock, “Paul’s Social Class,” 16.
Hock attempts to demonstrate that Paul’s decision to learn a trade when faced with social marginalization was “consistent with aristocratic conventions,” but he manages to cite only one case of an adult learning a τέχνη, and that a fictional one (Xenophon, Eph. 5.1.4–5.1.11). The other texts cited by Hock demonstrate, as he himself admits, that portrayals of down-and-out aristocrats generally have them fall back on unskilled labour or even brigandry, a pattern that would seem to suggest a lack of appetite or opportunity for mid-life apprenticeships. Perhaps Hock has shown that it is possible for Paul to have learned his trade post-conversion; he has by no means demonstrated that it is probable.

What Hock falls back on to bolster his argument is, in fact, Paul’s schooling: Paul must have learned his trade after his conversion, since as a boy he was far too busy pursuing his literate education. In the end, then, we may summarize the structure of Hock’s argument thus: Paul was an aristocrat, so he spent his youth in school; Paul was busy in school during his youth, so he can only have learned his trade as an adult; learning a trade as an adult is something aristocrats do, therefore—and now we have come full circle—Paul was an aristocrat.

Hock seeks to ground exegetically this otherwise circular argument for Paul’s elite status in three ways: first, he reiterates his claim that Paul betrays an aristocratic attitude toward manual labour; second, he cites his own work on Paul’s education; third, he bookends the discussion with brief but allusive references to Paul’s citizenship. Restricting ourselves to evidence from the Pauline corpus itself, that leaves Hock’s argument with two pillars: Paul’s disdain for labour and his rhetorical prowess.

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64 Ibid., 17.
65 Ibid., 15–16.
66 Ibid., 8, 18.
Hock first argued that Paul had an aristocrat’s disdain for manual labour in his 1978 “Paul’s Tentmaking and the Problem of His Social Class.” Paul, Hock noted, referred to his engagement in manual labour in terms that were hardly positive: “I enslaved myself” (ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα [1 Cor 9:19]); “I demeaned myself” (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινώμενον [2 Cor 11:7]). Moreover, Paul included labour in his hardship catalogues alongside beatings, homelessness, and hunger (1 Cor 4:12). In sum, Hock concluded, “Paul experienced his working as we should expect an aristocrat to have done, namely, as something slavish and demeaning.”

Hock’s exegesis has recently been challenged by Todd Still, who denies that Paul had such a negative view of his trade. But even if Hock is correct and Paul considered his labour slavish, the conclusion that Paul was an aristocrat does not follow, for it surely does not require an aristocratic upbringing to resent hard work. Hock adduces a few inscriptions that highlight the pride of artisans in their work, but this is not sufficient to justify his sweeping claim that, unlike Paul, “those who practiced trades had positive attitudes about their prospects and reputations.” As Justin Meggitt notes, the reality was rather more complex: “Both the disparagement of physical work, and unabashed pride in it, can be found in élite and non-élite Graeco-Roman and Jewish sources.” There simply is no reason to imagine that the elite had a monopoly on resenting the drudgery of hard labour. And this

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67 Hock, “Paul’s Tentmaking,” 562. Hock’s argument has been taken up by Sanders, Paul, 11; Murphy-O’Connor, A Critical Life, 40; Dale B. Martin, Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), 123.
70 Meggitt, Paul, Poverty and Survival, 88. For an excellent recent treatment, see Catharina Lis, “Perceptions of Work in Classical Antiquity: A Polyphonic Heritage,” in The Idea of Work in Europe from Antiquity to Modern Times, ed. Josef Ehmer and Catharina Lis (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), 33–68. Note especially Lis’s emphasis on stratification among manual labourers, and thus the impossibility of identifying the attitude of ancient labourers toward their work (pp. 50–56).
leaves Hock with only Paul’s putative education, as evidenced by his rhetorical prowess, upon which to ground his portrait of an aristocratic apostle.

**Paul and the Diatribe: Stanley K. Stowers**

Like Neyrey and Hock, Stanley Stowers sees the characteristics of Paul’s prose as evidence for his education, but he comes to a different conclusion. For Stowers, the key is Paul’s long-noted stylistic affinity to the diatribe. Unlike Rudolf Bultmann, who sought the diatribe’s *Sitz im Leben* in street-corner moral preaching, Stowers argues that it represents the schoolroom discourse of various popularizing philosophers.\(^{71}\) The diatribe-like style of Paul’s letters, then, suggests that his ministry too had a schoolroom setting—“an audience of disciples, taught privately.”\(^{72}\) Indeed, for Stowers, the common notion that Paul was a public preacher is untenable, since Paul lacked the requisite status for public speaking: “Paul was a Jew and a leather-worker. It is doubtful that he could have overcome the stigma of these roles even if he had sought to do so.”\(^{73}\)

In his early work, Stowers did not address the question of Paul’s social background in any depth, nor speculate on where he might have learned the philosophical discourse of the diatribe. But, like Neyrey and Hock, he weighed in on the question of Paul’s education in 2003. Stowers resists the notion that Paul belonged among the tiny fraction of the population that constituted the elite: Paul’s prose simply lacks the aesthetic sophistication sought by


\(^{72}\) Stowers, “Social Status,” 63.

\(^{73}\) Ibid., 74. Admittedly, some Cynics managed to command a public audience, but, according to Stowers, “the hit-and-run tactics of the Cynic do not fit [Paul]” (p. 80). Although he does not cite Theissen at this point, it appears to be the notion of Paul as a “community organizer” (see *Social Setting,* 27–67) that, for Stowers, distinguishes him from such Cynics.
Cicero or Quintilian. But neither are his letters completely devoid of rhetoric. No, they occupy a middle ground; and, for Stowers, it is study of the diatribe that “illuminate[s] just such an alternative tradition of rhetoric nourished by moral teachers and philosophers who may or may not have had high rhetorical educations.”

Stowers describes Paul’s education accordingly, quoting his own *Rereading of Romans*:

“Paul's Greek educational level roughly equals that of someone who had primary instruction with a *grammaticus*, or teacher of letters, and then studied letter writing and some elementary rhetorical exercises.” This clearly excludes higher rhetorical theory... The same teacher who taught him the skills in letter writing that make his letters literarily and rhetorically far above the common papyrus letters may also have trained him in some progymnastic exercises useful to letter writers.

I am in wholehearted agreement with the thrust of Stowers’s argument: Paul’s letters may be illuminated in various ways by the documentary papyri, but they certainly stand out in that crowd. And they clearly lack the niceties of elite epistles. A map of the middle ground would be welcome indeed. But is the diatribe the answer?

As Stowers is aware, there has been considerable debate over the years regarding whether or not the diatribe existed as an identifiable *Gattung*, and, if so, which authors are most representative of it. But even if we side with Stowers on this point, still it is clear that

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74 Elsewhere, Stowers rightly remarks: “Such aestheticism belonged to an extremely small group of writers, who lived in a rarefied world of elite sensitivities. It was the study of rhetoric which developed these sensitivities, and it was the cultivation of these classical aesthetic interests that most distinguishes the letter writing of certain later Christian authors... from Paul or Ignatius.” *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, LEC 5 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 34.


the stylistic features we generally consider “diatribal” were not restricted to that genre.\textsuperscript{78}

Why then should we assume that they were restricted to a single social setting? Even H. B. Gottschalk, arguing that the ancients did indeed call certain books diatribes, must conclude:

These tricks of style are not confined to “diatribes”; they are found, for example, in Seneca's letters, in Lucretius, in Horace's \textit{Satires} and many other kinds of later literature . . . The evidence is very slender, but such as it is, it suggests that this style predominated in the things called diatribes, while other genres might make use of it as one among a larger repertory of styles.\textsuperscript{79}

If “diatrical style” is so amorphous that it can show up in the poetry of Lucretius and find echoes in rabbinic midrash,\textsuperscript{80} it seems rather adventurous to infer from its appearance in Paul that he belongs in the moral-philosophical classroom.

\textit{Paulus und das antike Schulwesen: Tor Vegge}

By far the most substantial study of Paul’s education to date is Tor Vegge’s \textit{Paulus und das antike Schulwesen}, a dissertation completed under David Hellholm in 2004 and published in \textit{Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neuestamentliche Wissenschaft} in 2006. Despite its length—575 pages—and its broad scope, the basic structure of Vegge’s argument is by now familiar: “Seine Texte zeigen . . . daß er Form und Stil so beherrscht, wie sie in

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{79} Gottschalk, “Diatribe Again,” 92. Paul’s letters, we might note, are clearly among those texts that make use of “diatrical style” as one of a larger repertory of styles. See Stowers, \textit{Diatribe}, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Wallach, \textit{Lucretius and the Diatribe}; Rivka Ulmer, “The Advancement of Arguments in Exegetical Midrash Compared to that of the Greek ΔΙΑΤΡΙΒΗ,” \textit{JSJ} 28 (1997): 48–91. Stowers critiques Wallach for allowing her understanding of the genre to be unduly swayed by sources that are “atypical of the diatribe” (\textit{Diatribe}, 36), but the fact that such borderline texts even exist makes the point. Such texts may not be evidence for what the ancient diatribe—if there was such a thing—was like, but that does not render them irrelevant for understanding the stylistic features with which we are concerned.
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‘grieschich-hellenistischen’ Rhetorikschulen unterrichtet wurden”; therefore, Paul must have come from a high-status family.\(^8^1\)

Vegge begins with an almost encyclopedic study of education in the Hellenistic world, addressing everything from the structure of schools, the role of teachers, and the various curricula to the sociological function of literate education. Both rhetorical and philosophical education receive detailed treatment; both will be of significance when Vegge gets to Paul. But what Vegge tends to overlook, as Thomas Kraus notes, is the value of documentary papyri for illuminating the sort of pedestrian educational practices that Quintilian and his ilk surely would have considered hopelessly provincial but which were, nevertheless, likely quite representative outside elite circles.\(^8^2\) This amounts, unfortunately, to stacking the deck: By the time Vegge begins to address Paul—on page 341—we are liable to have forgotten that a world outside that of budding elite orators and philosophers exists. And if the only mode of education we can imagine is elite formal education, we simply have nowhere else to place Paul.

It is no surprise, then, when Vegge unreservedly locates Paul among the educated elite, insisting “daß Paulus eine literarische Ausbildung in ihrer allgemeinen griechisch-hellenistischen Form erhielt und daß er danach bei einem Redelehrer die Progymnasmata durchlief, wodurch er sich die Grundlage seiner literarischen Virtuosität verschaffte.”\(^8^3\) The grounds for this conclusion are twofold: first, Paul’s letters feature the sort of rhetoric that

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\(^8^1\) Vegge, *Paulus und das antike Schulwesen*, 357, 455.


\(^8^3\) Vegge, *Paulus und das antike Schulwesen*, 462.
could only have been learned in school; second, what we know of Paul’s origins makes his
exposure to rhetorical education probable.

The latter argument centres on Tarsus’s reputation as a seat of higher learning. Vegge
argues, contra van Unnik, that Paul was a Tarsan through and through, since Luke’s
emphasis on Paul’s time in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 22:3) can be ascribed to his own theological
and literary interests.84 And, if it was in Tarsus that Paul went to school, Paul must have
benefited from the unparalleled educational environment to which Strabo famously attests
(\textit{Geogr.} 14.5.13).85

But even if we grant, as most are inclined to do, that Luke had accurate information
regarding Paul’s city of origin and that Strabo’s hyperbolic description possesses a kernel of
truth, the relevance of Tarsus’s academic life to Paul is by no means self-evident. As Richard
Wallace and Wynne Williams wryly observe:

\begin{quote}
Although Paul’s city Tarsus was famous for its philosophers, there is no reason to
suppose that a Jewish tentmaker born in Tarsus would therefore have a better than
average knowledge of philosophical ideas, any more than we would expect someone
who worked in a car factory in Oxford to have for that reason a better knowledge of
Wittgenstein than one whose workplace was in Coventry.86
\end{quote}

That is, in order for Tarsus’s famed rhetorical schools to be at all relevant, Paul must have
had the requisite social status to attend them. Vegge insists that he did, but his argument for
Paul’s status rests on precisely the issue that is at stake here, namely, Paul’s education.87 In
the end, then, we know Paul was elite because of his education, which in turn we can infer
from his elite status. Vegge’s biographical argument, like that of Hock, is beset by

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\item[84] Ibid., 425–41. Likewise Murphy-O’Connor, \textit{A Critical Life}, 32–33. Cf. Van Unnik, \textit{Tarsus or Jerusalem}.
\item[85] Vegge, \textit{Paulus und das antike Schulwesen}, 458.
\item[87] Vegge, \textit{Paulus und das antike Schulwesen}, 455.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
circularity. Thus the whole structure finally rests upon Vegge’s assertion that Paul’s letters contain indisputable marks of formal education in rhetoric.

Aware of claims that Paul could have learned his persuasive speech informally, Vegge is eager to clarify that, for the purposes of his study, rhetoric means school rhetoric—“die schulisch erlernten Formen der Sprache.”88 And he adduces two texts as evidence of this unambiguously schulische rhetoric: 1 Cor 7 and 2 Cor 10–13. I will address them in turn.

According to Vegge, Paul in 1 Cor 7 elaborates a thesis as recommended by Aelius Theon (Progymn. 11 [RG 2:120–128]).89 In his treatment of the exercise, Theon had listed the various topoi—fourteen in all, by Vegge’s count—which could be used in such elaboration (RG 2:121–122). Vegge finds eleven of these in Paul’s discussion of marriage. To Vegge it seems clear, then, that Paul composed 1 Cor 7 as a thesis; “und wenn an dieser Stelle glaubhaft gemacht werden kann, daß Paulus die Gymnasmataform der Thesis in seinem Unterricht verwendet und in seinen Schriften eingesetzt hat, ist darin ein Indiz für die von ihm genossene literarische Bildung zu sehen.”90

It cannot be denied that certain aspects of this text are reminiscent, at least, of some of the topoi described by Theon. Paul’s assertion that the unmarried woman is fully attentive to the Lord and therefore holy (ἁγία [1 Cor 7:34]) perhaps accords with Theon’s advice to argue from the topos “that [the proposed course of action] is reverent (ὀσιος),” or, more specifically, that it is “pleasing to gods.”91 Theon suggests arguing that a proposed action is beneficial (λυσιτελές) and establishes security (πρὸς ἀσφαλείαν... ἐπιτήδειον

88 Ibid., 365. And cf. p. 357.
89 Ibid., 389–406.
90 Ibid., 405.
91 Theon, Progymn. 11 (RG 2:122): ὃτι ὁσίου διττῶν δὲ τοῦτον ἡ γὰρ θείας κεχαρισμένον ἡ τετελευτηκόσιν). I use Patillon’s Budé edition here and throughout this study, and provide numbering from Spengel’s Rhetores Graeci only for ease of reference.
Paul writes, “Those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that. . . I say this for your own benefit” (7:28b, 35a).

But others of Vegge’s instances are less persuasive. I do not see how Paul’s “concession” in 1 Cor 7:2–4—“Because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her husband”—can be construed as an argument that restraining from sexual intercourse “entspricht . . . nicht der Physis und dem allen Menschen gemeinsamen Ethos und den gemeinsamen Gesetzen.”

It may be that this is what Paul thinks, that such an assumption lies behind his brief διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας, but if so he does not tell us. In fact, although Paul does argue from “nature” elsewhere when discussing sexual mores (cf. 1 Cor 11:14), here the emphasis is not on what is natural or customary but rather on the vulnerability of the Corinthians’ self-control to the tempting of Satan (v. 5). And although the logic of vv. 3–4 does involve an implicit appeal to what is customary—note especially the language of conjugal “duty” (οὐφειλή)—if our goal is to uncover unambiguous evidence of rhetorical education, it simply will not do to equate an implicit appeal to custom with the use of a progymnastic topos. Implicit appeals to custom can be found far from the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, and we clearly would not want to ascribe a progymnastic education to every orator who employed one.

Verses 2–5 highlight another problem with Vegge’s formal analysis: We do not have a proof here at all, as we would expect if Paul were elaborating a thesis, but rather paranesis, as the use of the imperative throughout the passage indicates. It is difficult to see how Paul’s direct instruction accords with Theon’s definition of a thesis as “a verbal inquiry admitting

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controversy without specifying any persons and circumstance; for example, whether one should marry, whether one should have children; whether the gods exist” (RG 2:120 [trans. Kennedy]). No, Paul has very specific persons in view—namely, his Corinthian readers—and he enumerates a whole series of specific situations regarding which he provides concrete instructions.

Vegge seeks to avoid the problem this creates by suggesting that Paul alternates between “thetical” speech, which is generally applicable, and “hypothetical” speech, which addresses a particular situation.⁹⁴ But this is still a mischaracterization of the passage, which in fact consists of a series of thematically interrelated instructions to which the sort of argumentative topoi described by Vegge are occasionally appended as ad hoc justifications. And this brings us to the truly fatal problem with Vegge’s analysis: How can this be the elaboration of a thesis when there is no thesis to elaborate?

Vegge himself takes 1 Cor 7:1b—“It is well for a man not to touch a woman”—as Paul’s thesis. But this simply does not work, for, as scholars have long noted, “the principle contained in this statement does not serve to further Paul’s argument in 1 Cor. 7.1–24.”⁹⁵ Rather, the bulk of the chapter takes the form of what H. Chadwick called “qualifying footnotes” that explain why such a thesis is impracticable.⁹⁶ In fact, as such diverse interpreters as Dale Martin and Gordon Fee agree, what we have here is not Paul’s own statement at all; this is a citation from the Corinthians’ letter.⁹⁷ As elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, Paul expresses agreement in principal with the (“strong”) Corinthians’ slogan,

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⁹⁶ H. Chadwick, “‘All Things to All Men’ (1 Cor. IX. 22),” NTS 1 (1955): 265.
but in fact undermines their position by counseling concession to the “weak.” Clearly, this rhetorical procedure has little in common with the elaboration of a thesis as described in the Progymnasmata.

Vegge himself recognizes that what Paul does here is different from what Theon and Hermogenes recommend; like Betz, however, he takes Paul’s deviation from the standard as evidence that Paul is not composing trite schoolboy prose:

Stellt der Teiltext . . . keine Thesis dar, die den straff gehaltenen Übungsbedingungen eines schulischen Progymnasmas entspräche, denn bei Texten, die nicht innerhalb schulischer Disziplin erstellt wurden, galt für geschickte Autoren die freie Handhabung der Formmerkmale als Ideal.

But this sort of statement in fact undermines the whole argument, for what Vegge has been claiming is that Paul’s rhetoric is so clearly informed by formal schooling that no other explanation of its source is adequate. If it now turns out that 1 Cor 7 doesn’t look much like a progymnastic thesis after all, what are the grounds for asserting that this is in fact educated rhetoric? It is possible, of course, that Paul was trained in the elaboration of a thesis but chose to do something more complex here; it is also possible that 1 Cor 7 doesn’t look like a thesis simply because it isn’t one. Jazz players trained at Juilliard may be excellent improvisers, but that does not mean that deviation from the score is evidence of a Juilliard education. If our goal is to isolate educated discourse, we will clearly need sharper tools.

Vegge’s second example of Paul’s educated rhetoric is 2 Cor 10–13, a passage with which we will be concerned at length in subsequent chapters. Much of this section simply lists the rhetorical features others have identified in the passage; I treat these arguments in

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part 2 below. In addition, though, Vegge follows his teacher David Hellholm in emphasizing Paul’s use of enthymemes, which, for Vegge, attests to his philosophical education.

The logic of Vegge’s argument, stated syllogistically, is as follows: Philosophically trained writers (like Seneca and Plutarch) use enthymemes; Paul’s letter contains enthymemes; ergo, Paul was philosophically trained. But this is fallacious, for Vegge has not inquired whether such enthymemic argumentation as Paul’s can be found in non-philosophical texts as well. It can. In fact, it is generally accepted that the use of enthymemes is a ubiquitous element of human communication. Jesse Delia argues that this results from the basic nature of human cognition: People seek in general to avoid cognitive dissonance, and the enthymeme persuades by activating that instinct—that is, by encouraging people to accept the implications of their presuppositions.

Vegge’s ability to locate enthymemes in Paul is therefore hardly evidence that he was educated in philosophical rhetoric. In order for this argument to be at all persuasive, Vegge would need to identify the particular stylistic features of enthymeme use in Hellenistic philosophical texts, and then demonstrate similarities in Paul’s usage. As it stands, his observation that Paul used enthymemes tells us nothing more than that Paul was making an argument.

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101 Vegge, Paulus und das antike Schulwesen, 413, 423.
Paul’s Rhetorical Terminology: Carl Joachim Classen

Perhaps the most serious problem with assertions that Paul received a formal rhetorical education is the lack of a compelling model for distinguishing between what he could have learned informally and what could only be learned in school. This makes it impossible to isolate evidence of Paul’s formal education, and therefore calls into question conclusions regarding Paul’s social status that adduce his use of rhetoric as evidence. To my knowledge, the only sustained attempt to resolve this problem is Carl Joachim Classen’s “Paul and the Terminology of Ancient Greek Rhetoric.”

Classen acknowledges from the outset that our ability to find rhetorical figures, tropes, and strategies in the letters of Paul does not in itself imply that Paul had formal rhetorical education. Nevertheless, he proposes a method for demonstrating that Paul does indeed possess at least indirect knowledge of rhetorical theory: “If Paul himself could be shown to have made use of some technical terms of rhetoric . . . [that] would at least allow us to conclude that he learned them from others who were familiar with rhetorical theory.” Classen finds six such terms: ἀνακεφαλαίονθαι (Rom 13:9), ἀλληγορεῖν (Gal 4:24), βεβαιώσις (Phil 1:7), ἀποδεῖξις (1 Cor 2:4), μετασχηματίζειν (1 Cor 4:6), and μακαρισμός (Rom 4:6, 9; Gal 4:15).

Classen himself acknowledges that μακαρισμός is not necessarily a rhetorical terminus technicus. Although the word (or its cognate verb) does occur in two rhetorical treatises (Aristotle, Rhet. 1.9.34; Rhet. Alex. 35.4), it also appears rather frequently, he notes,
“in authors with some philosophical or rhetorical interest, e.g. Philodemus, Philo, Dio Chrysostom and Plutarch, once also in Josephus.”\textsuperscript{108} It is difficult to see how such broad usage attests to anything more specific than the word’s general currency in Hellenistic Greek.

In both Aristotle and the \textit{Rhetorica ad Alexandrum}, \textit{μάκαρισμός} is set in opposition to true \textit{ἐγκόμιον}, the latter being praise earned by virtue, whereas the former designates congratulations given on account of mere good fortune. Although the distinction is not taken up by later rhetorical theorists, this is the nearest we come to a technical sense of the word. In the texts cited by Classen, the word’s usage sometimes is consistent with such a distinction (Plutarch, \textit{Sol.} 27.7; Josephus, \textit{B.J.} 6.213; Philo, \textit{Somn.} 2.35 [but cf. Num 30:13]), and occasionally demands it (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, \textit{Ant. rom.} 4.25.3);\textsuperscript{109} however, there is nothing in any of these texts to suggest that such a distinction is rhetorical in essence. The most we can say, then, is that in Rom 4 Paul uses the word, in accordance with its general usage, to refer to unmerited “blessedness.” (What Paul means in Gal 4:15 remains unclear.)\textsuperscript{110}

Paul uses the word \textit{μετασχηματίζω} five times (1 Cor 4:6; 2 Cor 11:13, 14, 15; Phil 3:21). Four times, according to Classen, it has its ordinary, nontechnical meaning—namely, to change the form of something. In 1 Cor 4:6, however, Classen finds a technical rhetorical sense:

\begin{quote}
In handbooks of rhetorical theory the common meaning . . . is “to rearrange the form of a speech,” i.e. either the individual words by changing the sequence of the letters, the gender, the number, or the case, or by replacing one word by another or several
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{108} Classen, \textit{Rhetorical Criticism}, 38.
\textsuperscript{109} Contrast Plutarch, \textit{Tim.} 39.2, also cited by Classen, where the word clearly cannot be taken in this sense.
\textsuperscript{110} On the difficulty of the phrase, see Betz, \textit{Galatians}, 226–27. My own preferred solution, given the context, and attempting to retain the natural meaning of \textit{μακαρισμός}—“a pronouncing happy, blessing” (LSJ, s.v.)—is to read the genitive as subjective with Paul as the implied object: “You once considered me blessed; what happened?”
others or a phrase by adding something, or a whole sentence by switching around and reorganizing its parts or addressing one person instead of another.¹¹¹

Classen has described here a rather diverse set of literary transformations; none of them, however, quite explains the paraphrase he proposes:

This . . . I have transformed (or reorganized) with view to myself and to Apollos for your benefit, in order that you may learn with the help of us (through us as examples, from particular cases the general) the meaning of “not beyond what has been written.”¹¹²

Classen’s rendering makes sense, to whatever extent it does make sense, only because of his second parenthetical explanation (“from particular cases the general”). Such a reading is common enough,¹¹³ and may be correct, but I cannot see how it follows from his comments on the meaning of μετασχηματίζω. Indeed, it remains far from clear precisely what he means by saying that Paul has reorganized or transformed his speech. Transformed it from what to what?

In any case, most of the rhetorical texts Classen adduces are simply irrelevant. Pseudo-Hermogenes, for example, uses μετασχηματίζω in commenting on the potential iterations of a tetracolic period, in which it is possible to rearrange the sentence by reformulating the protases as apodoses and vice versa (Inv. 4.3; cf. 4.4). So, it appears that μετασχηματίζω could be used as a technical term to describe grammatical transformations.¹¹⁴ That is hardly what Paul is talking about here.

Classen does cite one rhetorical text that seems to illuminate Paul’s usage; the difficulty, however, is that here μετασχηματίζω is not used as a technical term. In Alexander Numenius’s discussion of apostrophe (Fig. 1.20 [RG 3:24]), a figure wherein one

¹¹¹ Classen, Rhetorical Criticism, 35.
¹¹² Ibid., 36.
addresses someone other than the intended audience of one’s speech, he provides an example from Homer: Odysseus, piqued with the Achaeans, does not complain against the Achaeans directly, but instead expresses his disapproval covertly by refiguring his speech as an address to Agamemnon himself (μετασχημάτισε τὸν λόγον πρὸς αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀγαμεμνόνα). Any connection here to the technical grammatical usage described above is extremely remote. It is much easier to see how Alexander’s usage could derive from the ordinary meaning of the word: Odysseus “changes the form” of his speech—changes it, that is, from a form it never had but might have been expected to have—to make it a complaint against Agamemnon. The figure in question here is not μετασχηματισμός but apostrophe, and μετασχηματίζω is used in a non-technical sense to describe one instance thereof.

Perhaps Paul uses the word in a way analogous to Alexander. He has, on this reading, reformulated the principles articulated in the previous verses into words concerning himself and Apollos (ταῦτα . . . μετασχημάτισα εἰς ἐμαυτὸν καὶ Ἀπόλλων), but their true import is to teach the Corinthians themselves (ἵνα ἡμῖν μάθητε . . .). As in Alexander’s example above, the speech was not really changed from one form to another, but simply presented in a form different from what one might have expected. This makes as much sense as any reading of this difficult verse, but it does not evince technical usage.\footnote{For an indication of the trouble interpreters have had clarifying Paul’s precise meaning, see the thorough inventory of interpretive proposals in Anthony C. Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 346–51. One would hardly expect such difficulty if Paul had accurately used a terminus technicus; after all, the whole point of technical terminology is to enable precision. Cf. David Hall’s lucid discussion of the word in “A Disguise for the Wise: ΜΕΤΑΣΧΗΜΑΤΙΣΜΟΣ in 1 Corinthians 4.6,” NTS 40 (1994): 143–44. I do not follow Hall, however, in seeing unnamed antagonists lurking in the background, for reasons that will become clear below (see pp. 92–93). Two recent articles assert that μετασχηματίζω refers to figured speech in general: “covert allusion” or “[hinting] at something in a disguised speech.” (Benjamin Fiore, “ ‘Covert Allusion’ in 1 Corinthians 1–4,” CBQ 47 [1985]: 93; Peter Lampe, “Theological Wisdom and the ‘Word About the Cross’: The Rhetorical Scheme in 1 Corinthians 1–4,” Int 44 [1990]: 129n15). Neither, however, actually adduces instances of μετασχηματίζω being used in this way. Instead, both rely on Quintilian’s discussion of figured speech—what he calls ἐσχηματισμένος λόγος (Inst. 9.1.13)—and assume that Paul’s μετασχηματίζω can be understood on
The same may be said of Paul’s use of ἐπιβεβαιωσις in Phil 1:7. The word is very common in the general sense of “confirmation.” It also, as Classen acknowledges, acquired a technical sense in legal and commercial contexts. What interests Classen, however, is its alleged appearance in rhetorical treatises to refer to “a kind of confirmation of a statement by means of proofs or additional considerations or of a whole speech in the epilogue.” For Classen, this is what Paul refers to in Phil 1:7. The Philippians, says Paul, share in his chains and also in the ἀπολογία καὶ ἐπιβεβαιωσις τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. According to Classen, “he is thinking here of the [forensic] justification or defence, as it were, of the gospel and a supporting supplementary confirmation; and I assume he was familiar with ἐπιβεβαιωσις as [a] technical term of rhetoric for one of the functions of an epilogue, not least of the final part of a judicial speech.”

Such an inference is hardly necessary, and in fact only results in confusion. In the first place, if Paul were thinking in terms of rhetorical theory, it would be a rather odd turn of phrase thus to pair a whole (ἀπολογία) with one of its constituent parts (ἐπιβεβαιωσις). One talks of highways and byways, but not highways and turning lanes. Further, Classen’s explanation of the technical sense of ἐπιβεβαιωσις is misleading at best. The word certainly is technical in the Rhetorica ad Alexandrum (32.1; 36.17, 19), where it denotes a discrete section of a speech that follows the statement of facts and provides confirmation thereof. But this is not a particularly apt vehicle for the metaphor Classen thinks Paul is using, which

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118 Classen, Rhetorical Criticism, 33.
119 Ibid.
120 The term is used differently—and equally irrelevantly, by my judgement—in a few late treatises. See Ps.-Hermogenes, Progymn. 5 (Rabe 11); Meth. 20 (Rabe 435–436); 28 (Rabe 445). Also διαἐπιβεβαιωσις in Ps.-Herodian, Fig. 25 (RG 3:94), 36 (RG 3:96).
is presumably why he focuses instead on βεβαιώσις as one function of an epilogue. The
trouble is, he is only able to adduce one instance of this usage, and it is not a particularly
compelling one: The word does occur in a discussion of the epilogue in the *Ars rhetorica*
falsely attributed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, but its meaning is quite clearly nontechnical:
ωσπερ τὸ προοίμιον διοίκησις τοῦ παντὸς ἁγώνος, οὕτω καὶ ὁ ἐπίλογος βεβαιώσις
ἡ ἐπανάμηνης τῶν προαποδειγμένων πραγμάτων (10.18). Here βεβαιώσις is no
more of a technical term than διοίκησις. In both clauses the author is reaching for
metaphors, not technical terms: Just as a proem functions, metaphorically speaking, to
govern the whole speech, so also an epilogue is akin to a pledge that guarantees what has
been said. In sum, then, there is no coherent—let alone compelling—reason to conclude from
Paul’s use of this common noun that he was familiar with technical rhetorical terminology.

Paul uses the word ἀλληγορέω once, in Gal 4:22, with reference to his reading of the
story of Hagar and Sarah. Classen identifies two groups of texts wherein the word and its
cognates occur: first, rhetorical texts, and, second, “authors who concern themselves with the
interpretation of earlier writers”—namely, Philo, Heraclitus, Josephus, Plutarch, Sextus, and
Athenaeus. What Classen does not do is examine how each of these groups uses the word,
not, therefore, consider whether Paul’s usage is in fact comparable to that of either.

The usage of the rhetoricians is largely restricted to the noun ἀλληγορία. A
general definition is provided by Tryphon: ἀλληγορία ἐστὶ λόγος ἑτέρου μὲν τι κυρίως
dηλῶν, ἑτέρου δὲ ἐννοιαν παριστάνων (Trop 1.3 [RG 3:193]; cf. Rhet. Her. 4.46). But
such a definition fails to distinguish allegory from figures like metonymy or metaphor, thus it

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121 Classen, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 32.
1.164; “Longinus,” *Subl.* 9.7; Theon, *Progymn.* 5 (RG 2:81); Alexander Numenius, *Fig.* (RG 3:13); Anonymous
Seguerianus 2.85; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.44–59; 9.1.5; 9.2.46. For ἀλληγορέω in rhetorical contexts, see only
Demetrius, *Eloc.* 151, 285; Ps.-Hermogenes, Περί ἔκθεσιν, 1.6; 2.4.
is necessary to consider what sort of examples Tryphon and his peers adduce. What we find, typically, are, as Dean Anderson notes, “short comments couched in metaphorical language.”\textsuperscript{123} So, for example, Quintilian cites as an “allegory” a comment he attributes to Cicero: “What I marvel at and complain of is this, that there should exist any man so set on destroying the enemy as to scuttle the ship on which he himself is sailing” (\textit{Inst. 8.6.47} [Butler, LCL]; cf. Demetrius, \textit{Eloc. 285; Rhet. Her. 4.46}). What appears to be characteristic of allegory is that comparison is made is not to a static object, but rather to a dynamic or narrative process.\textsuperscript{124}

However, what is important for our purposes is not so much what rhetorical \\textalpha\textlambda\textnu\gamma\omicron\omicron\rho\upsilon\omicron\iota\omicron\alpha was as what it was not. As Anderson explains, “The discussions of the theoreticians do not often extend to the use of a mythical story deliberately told as an allegory.”\textsuperscript{125} In other words, allegory was not fable. And this means that the tradition of allegorical \textit{interpretation} of texts—the familiar strategy whereby extended narratives are treated precisely as fables, with multiple points of correspondence between story and interpretation—is something quite different from the elucidation of rhetorical “allegories.” In other words, what the rhetoricians discuss cannot simply be identified with the sort of allegorical interpretation practiced by Classen’s list of “authors who concern themselves with the interpretation of earlier writers,” or by Paul in Gal 4.

\textsuperscript{125} Anderson, \textit{Ancient Rhetorical Theory}, 173.
What Paul says, precisely, is that features of the story of Hagar and Sarah—or perhaps Hagar and Sarah themselves—"εστιν ἀλληγορούμενα." It is worth noting here that if the verb occurs only rarely in rhetorical contexts, the participle never does. Where we do find usage similar to that of Paul’s is among those who indulge in allegorical interpretation—Heraclitus in his reading of Homer (καθόλου δὲ τὴν Ὄδυσσεως πλάνην, εἰ τις ἀκριβῶς ἐθέλει σκοπεῖν, ἡλληγοριμένην εὑρήσει [All. 70.1]), and Philo on Moses (πέντε Σαλπαδθυγατέρες, ὡς ἀλληγοροῦντες αἰσθήσεις ἐνστάη φαμεν [Migr. 205]), to note two prominent examples. In short, then, the rhetoricians’ discussion of ἀλληγορία hardly provides the most compelling background for Paul’s usage. Rather, what appears to be attested here is Paul’s familiarity with an interpretive strategy widespread among Greeks and Hellenistic Judeans alike. This is not evidence of formal education, let alone rhetorical education, but simply of participation in a community that engaged in such interpretive practices.

In Rom 13:8–10, Paul urges his addressees to love one another, explaining that love is the fulfillment of the law: “The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall...”

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126 It remains disputed whether the phrase means “are spoken allegorically” or “are interpreted allegorically.” The former option has been ably defended by Steven Di Mattei, “Paul’s Allegory of the Two Covenants (Gal 4.21-31) in Light of First-Century Hellenistic Rhetoric and Jewish Hermeneutics,” NTS 52 (2006): 106–9; Anderson, Ancient Rhetorical Theory, 177–78. But on what grounds do we assume that Paul conceptualized the distinction between allegory that inheres in the text and allegory that inheres in the reader?

127 Cf. Heraclitus, All. 5.5, 12; 6.2; 22.1; 42.1; 43.1; 70.13; Philo, Contemp. 28; 29; Leg. 1.269; 3.60; Agr. 27; 157; Mut. 67; Somn. 2.31, 207; Post. 51; Abr. 99; Josephus, A.J. 1.24; Strabo, Geogr. 1.2.7; and a host of patristic exeges.

not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up (ἀνακεφαλαίωσθαι) in this word, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ ” (v. 9). The basic meaning is clear enough, but Classen avers that appreciation of the meaning of ἀνακεφαλαίωσθαι as a rhetorical terminus technicus provides a more specific nuance: In the command to love one’s neighbour, all the commandments “are summed up as would be done in the epilogue of a speech in which all individual arguments with their main points are brought back to the hearers’ mind.”

This suggestion depends for its force on Classen’s assertion that both the verb and its cognate noun are “used almost exclusively in works of rhetoric.” But this is misleading. In fact the word is very sparsely attested prior to Paul, and, of the handful of occurrences that do exist, no more than half can be characterized as rhetorical.

The verb may first have been used by Theodectes, a fourth-century Athenian rhetor and friend of Aristotle’s, in precisely the sense in which it is employed by later rhetorical theorists, but this is doubtful. Use of the noun is attributed to the fourth-century orator Alcidamas (fr. 14). Then, centuries later, Dionysius of Halicarnassus uses it twice as a rhetorical term (Lys. 9, 19). But Dionysius also uses it with a more general sense (Ant. rom. 1.90.2), as does Apollonius of Citium (6, 32). Finally, if Mullach’s emendation is correct, Arius Didymus makes it an adjective that describes the ability of circumspection (εὐλογιστικά) to gain summary knowledge (2.64b). This hardly constitutes decisive evidence.

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129 Classen, Rhetorical Criticism, 31.
130 Ibid., 30.
131 According to Aristotle, as reported by the mediaeval scholar Joannes Doxopater: ἔργα δὲ ῥητορικὴς κατὰ Θεοδέκτην προσιμίασθαι πρὸς εὐνοίαν, διαγησάσθαι πρὸς πίστιν, ἀγωνίασθαι πρὸς ἀποδείξειν, ἀνακεφαλαίωσθαι πρὸς ἀνάμησιν (Rose 3.22 fr. 133). However, another attestation of the fragment has ἐπιλογισάσθαι instead of ἀνακεφαλαίωσθαι, and, since this would be a very unusual use of ἐπιλογιζομαι, this is certainly the lectio difficilior. Moreover, lacking evidence of intervening usage, the very congruity of Theodectes’s reported usage with what became the widespread meaning of ἀνακεφαλαίωσθαι centuries later is suspect.
132 ἈΝΑΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΩΤΙΚΗΝ for the incoherent ΜΗ ΚΕΦΑΛΙΩΤΙΚΗΝ.
It is true that by the end of the first century the word appears more often as a rhetorical *terminus technicus*, attested first in Quintilian (*Inst. 6.1.1*) and Aelius Theon (*Progymn. 4 [RG 2:78]*)], and then more frequently in second- and third-century rhetorical theorists.\(^{133}\) By this time, however, the word has become more common in its general sense too, appearing in technical writers like Galen (*Hipp. Epid. [Kühn 17a.83]*) and Nicomachus (*Arithm. 1.3.5*), and, perhaps most tellingly, the *Epistle of Barnabas*: “Therefore, the Son of God came in the flesh for this reason, that he might total up (*ἀνακεφαλαίωση*) all the sins of those who persecuted his prophets to death” (5.11 [Ehrman, LCL]; cf. Eph 1:10).

It is important to notice here that Barnabas’s usage does not in fact make much sense as a metaphorical reference to the rhetorical practice of recapitulation. More to the point, as Ehrman’s translation suggests, is the notion of summing up in the mathematical sense—aggregation, if you will. Such usage is not previously attested for *ἀνακεφαλαίωση*, but *κεφαλαίω* without the prefix can be used this way (e.g. Strabo, *Geogr. 2.1.39*). In other words, the prefix *ἀνα*- is pleonastic here, simply providing added emphasis. It certainly does not prove that Barnabas was familiar with rhetorical terminology.

Finally, Classen argues, with a number of recent interpreters,\(^{134}\) that Paul uses a cluster of technical rhetorical terms in 1 Cor 2:4: *ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν


The word πειθώ, Classen notes, occurs frequently in rhetorical contexts, and ἀποδείξεις he deems a technical term. Together, he suggests, they attest to Paul’s familiarity with rhetorical terminology. But both πειθώ and ἀποδείξεις are very common words, used in wide variety of non-rhetorical and non-technical contexts as well—and, notably, they are neither set in apposition nor in opposition prior to Paul.

There is no doubt that πειθώ refers to persuasion, and hence often, in a general sense, to rhetoric. But presumably even those with no knowledge of rhetorical theory had observed the social phenomenon of persuasion, and found it useful to have a name for it. This seems to be the sort of vocabulary with which we are dealing here, for the word and its cognates refer to other modes of persuasion as well—gifts, bribes, amorous charms, etc. Its connotations were shaped to a significant extent by a commonplace opposition in Greek thought between persuasion and compulsion as opposing modes of behaviour and, especially, governance:

One could lead the people by persuasion (πειθώ), or one could lead by force (βία or ἀνάγκη).

As Classen notes, πειθώ appears in Plato’s definition of rhetoric in the Gorgias, but that hardly makes it a rhetorical term per se. Gorgias defines rhetoric using the common and

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135 I provide here the reading Classen prefers. NA²⁷ prints ἐν πειθοί[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις]. The omission of λόγοις has support from p⁹⁶ F G. Only a few patristic citations read πειθοί, and these are as likely to be early emendations of the otherwise unattested πειθοί—which can only be read as a barbarism for πιθοίνοις—as witnesses to an early, uncorrupted text. They may, however, nevertheless be correct early emendations, since, as G. Zuntz explains, the doubling of an initial sigma in such a context was a common scribal error. The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 23–25. Still, if Paul did write πειθοί, this would not be his only redundant neologism: e.g. ἀνακαίνοσ (2 Cor 4:16); πεισμονή (Gal 5:8); συζητήτης (1 Cor 1:20).

136 Classen, Rhetorical Criticism, 34.

137 On the very rare occasions when they do appear together prior to the influence of 1 Cor 2, they are, in a general sense, complementary: Philo, Legat. 37; Lucian, Pisc. 22; Clement, Strom. 8.3.7.


139 E.g., Plato, Crito 49–51; Herodotus, Hist. 8.111; Josephus, B.J. 2.8; 2.562; Plutarch, Dem. 8.4; Per. 15.3. See further Buxton, Persuasion in Greek Tragedy, 58–63.
demonstrably nontechnical verb: τὸ πείθειν . . . τοῖς λόγοις (452e). And Socrates echoes his definition with the equally nontechnical noun: πειθοῦς δημιουργός ἐστιν ἢ ῥητορική (453a). Rhetoric is the technical term in this discussion, and Plato’s Gorgias and Socrates use quite ordinary vocabulary to describe it.

Significantly, although it was a common way to refer to persuasion in general, the word πειθω was seldom used by rhetorical theorists. Particularly telling is the noun’s sole appearance in the Rhetorica ad Alexandrum. Absent throughout the technical discussion, it turns up only in the moralizing miscellany—“unquestionably a spurious addition,” according to Rackham—that concludes the treatise. And here it has no technical signification, but refers to something even more general than “rhetoric”: αἱ γὰρ πράξεις ἐπιτελοῦνται πᾶσαι ἡ διὰ βίας ἢ διὰ πειθοῦς (38.21).

Classen correctly observes that the word does turn up in the rhetorical works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. But what he does not do is examine how it is used there. In fact, it invariably occurs as a nontechnical complement to other general stylistic descriptors: ἰδιωτή, τέρψις, χάρις, κράτος. Lysias’s oratory, for example, he deems persuasive and charming, a judgement he articulates by means of allusive reference to Peitho and Aphrodite, two goddesses who can often be found walking side by side (τοσούτην ἔχει πειθω καὶ ἀφροδίτην τὰ λεγόμενα [Lys. 18]). Certainly persuasiveness and charm are stylistic virtues here, but that hardly makes them technical terms (cf. Diodorus Siculus 10.3.2). And, in any case, such stylistic description sheds little light on Paul’s usage in 1 Cor 2:4.

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141 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Dem. 13, 24; Thuc. 23; Comp. 2; Pomp. 3. An exception is Comp. 3, where πειθω stands alone, signifying “persuasive power.”
142 On the frequent association of Peitho and Aphrodite, see Buxton, Persuasion in Greek Tragedy, 29–48.
What, then, does Paul mean by ἐν πειθοὶ σοφίας? This is not the place for a full exegesis of this passage. Clearly it is significant, though, that he provides us with four slightly different articulations of the phrase: οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου (1:17); οὐκ καθ' ὑπεροχήν λόγου ἡ σοφία (2:1); οὐκ ἐν πειθοὶ σοφίας (2:4); οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἄνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις (2:13). Although his interpreters have found it irresistible to attempt to designate with more specificity what Paul means here,¹⁴³ he himself points to no particular form of σοφία—and note that it is σοφία, which appears sixteen times in 1 Cor 1–4, that is the controlling idea here—but simply waves his hand in the general direction of the allure of human power and paideia (cf. 1:20, 26–29).¹⁴⁴ There is no justification for imputing to him a more specific signification, for the passage targets neither rhetoric nor philosophy nor any other specific body of knowledge but rather the whole enterprise of human learning, which is referred to in terms that suggest he is making apocalyptic, not philosophical or rhetorical, distinctions: ἡ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου (1:20); σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα (1:26); σοφία ἄνθρωπων (2:5); σοφία . . . τοῦ άιώνος τούτου (2:6).

What Paul sets over against such human pretensions to wisdom is divine power (1:24–25; 2:5; 4:19–20), and it is in this context that he speaks of his ἀποδείξεις πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως. Certainly ἀποδείξεις is a term used by rhetorical theorists, but their discussions thereof have little to do with Paul’s usage. At the outset of the Rhetoric, Aristotle

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¹⁴⁴ This is not to deny that it may prove possible to reconstruct various aspects of the beliefs and practices of his rivals in Corinth. But that will need to be done on other grounds, for Paul’s vocabulary here provides only the vaguest of clues. Even Bruce Winter must admit that this vocabulary itself is not specific enough to suggest a particular semantic domain; therefore, he suggests, our interpretation must arise from the context of Paul’s remarks. *Philo and Paul*, 160–63. Cf. Timothy Brookins, “Rhetoric and Philosophy in the First Century: Their Relation with Respect to 1 Corinthians 1–4,” *Neot* 45 (2011): 232–39, 244–47. Winter has his own reconstruction of the historical context, according to which the chief difficulty in Corinth was caused by competing “sophists.” I will explain in ch. 8 below why such a reconstruction is unpersuasive.
describes the enthymeme as an ἀποδεικτική (1.1.11); indeed, he all but equates enthymeme with ἀποδεικτική throughout the book, thereby emphasizing the relative certainty that results from syllogistic reasoning. This is, however, only relative certainty: Elsewhere Aristotle cuts a finer distinction between ἀποδεικτική, now defined as syllogistic demonstration from first principles, which results in certain knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), and διαλεκτικός, syllogistic reasoning based on (mere) ἐνδοξή, which results only in probable knowledge (Top. 1.1; cf. Eth. nic. 6.5.3; Plato, Tim. 40e). So, Aristotle creates two different (and logically contradictory) technical senses for ἀποδεικτική, neither of which is relevant to 1 Cor 2. Note, however, that both technical senses depend on the word’s well-known nontechnical connotation of certainty (LSJ, s.v. I.3).

Quintilian thinks ἀποδεικτική is a term adequately significant to preserve in Greek, but he does not preserve the Aristotelian connotations. For him, ἐνδοξήματα, ἐπιχειρήματα, and ἀποδεικτικά all “have much the same meaning” (5.10.1 [Butler, LCL]); specifically, all amount to methods of “proving what is not certain by means of what is certain” (5.10.8; cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.45). Cicero provides much the same definition; notably, though, he does so not in a discussion of rhetoric but of logic (Acad. 2.8; cf. Epictetus, Diatr. 2.25). Perhaps this is not surprising: According to the rhetorical theorist Anonymous Seguerianus, “apodeixis is more appropriate for philosophers, pistis for orators” (3.144 [RG 1:445; trans. Dilts and Kennedy]; cf. Epictetus, Diatr. 1.25.8).146

145 See Aristotle, Rhet. 1.9.40; 2.20.9; 2.21.3–6; 3.17.5–12. Contra Winter—and Solmsen, on whom he relies here—ἀποδεικτική is not one of Aristotle’s three proofs, which are clearly designated (1.2.3–6) as the character of the speaker (ἡθος), the disposition of the listeners (παθος), and the speech itself (λόγος). The confusion arises, perhaps, from the fact that Aristotle designates (rhetorical) ἀποδεικτική, i.e. ἐνδοξήματα, κυριώτατον τῶν πίστεων (1.1.11; cf. 3.17.1). But λόγος is broader than ἀποδεικτική, comprising both enthymemes and examples (1.2.8).

146 The distinction, for Anonymous Seguerianus, is reminiscent of the one made by Aristotle in Top. 1.1 (but not that in Rhet.): “apodeixis has true premises and a valid conclusion, while pistis is neither always true nor persuasive and seems to lead to a conclusion but does not (always do so)” (3.144). Again, notice that
Importantly, though, we need not be anywhere near the world of orators nor philosophers to find ἀποδείξεις used to designate a sure proof. The word is very common in the papyri, where it denotes documentary evidence of birth, ownership, and the like. A typical inscription from the second century BCE honours one Publius Apustius for having given, in urgent times, πολλά ἀποδείξεις . . . τῆς πρὸς τὸν δήμου εὐνοίας (I. Aeg. Thrace 10.8). In a more literary but equally non-technical context, Dionysius of Halicarnassus uses it to refer to hard evidence of a seditious conspiracy (Ant. rom. 12.2.1; cf. 12.1.13). Plutarch uses it often in the ordinary sense of confirmation or demonstration (e.g. Fab. 10.2; Comp. Phil. Flam. 2.2; Brut. 13.4). And Diodorus of Siculus frequently uses the word to speak of historical evidence (1.25.4; 1.29.6; 3.74.6; 15.78.2). Such examples could be multiplied ad nauseam: a TLG search locates 15,454 occurrences of the noun alone.

Only by means of a drastic and unaccountable truncation of the body of evidence is it possible to sustain the argument that Paul’s use of the word evinces his knowledge of philosophical or rhetorical terminology.

In sum, then, we must conclude that even Classen’s rather modest claim—that “Paul was at least indirectly familiar with or influenced by rhetorical theory”—rests on very thin shreds of evidence.

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147 E.g. BGU I 82.6; BGU II 367.20; BGU II 368.27; BGU XIII 2216.3; P.Bodl. I 40.4; P.Tebt. II 291.42; P.Haun. III 58.v. Other examples at MM 60–61.
148 Such usage is extremely common: e.g. Nysa 4.10; Miletos 45.10; Agora 16 310[1].15; IK Perge 11.5; 12.26; MDAI(A) 32 (1907) 257,8.49; ID 1517.6; Teos 26.4; SEG 30:1051.5; IGLSyr 3,1 718.88; FD III 2:94.7; IK Kyme 13.105. Notice here that ἀποδείξεις invariably takes the objective genitive (cf. LSJ, s.v. I.3; Anderson, Ancient Rhetorical Theory, 266), which is, despite the theological qualms of a number of interpreters, also how it should be taken in 1 Cor 2.
149 Sometimes misconstrual of evidence is also involved: BDAG (s.v. ἀποδείξεις) suggests as a parallel Philo, Mos. 1.95, a passage which contrasts the clarity of ἀποδείξεις διὰ σημείων καὶ τεράτων with the ambiguity of oracles (χρησμῶν) given merely διὰ τῶν λόγων. But by omitting the reference to oracles and noting only that Philo sets “δ. σημείων κ. τεράτων in contrast to διὰ τ. λόγων,” BDAG facilitates the erroneous assumption that Philo is contrasting thaumaturgic display with either argumentation or rhetoric.
Dissenting Voices: Justin J. Meggitt and R. Dean Anderson

Not all are persuaded by the line of argument traced by Forbes and elaborated by Neyrey, Hock, and Vegge, but opposing views, though frequently expressed, have seldom been carefully argued. Two exceptions are worthy of note.

Justin Meggitt has generated considerable discussion with his *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*, a frontal attack on the “new consensus” in which Meggitt unhesitatingly places the first urban Christians in the context of ancient urban poverty.150 By Meggitt’s account, the reality of the ancient world was such that “the non-élite, over 99% of the Empire’s population, could expect little more than abject poverty.”151 For Meggitt, that includes Paul. As a manual labourer, Paul would have “suffered the . . . long hours of labour (and the . . . feelings of hunger) that characterised artisan life.”152 And Meggitt is not at all convinced by arguments that Paul had a privileged childhood but later, as a result of his conversion and newfound calling, voluntarily subjected himself to poverty. Although he accepts both Paul’s Roman and Tarsan citizenship, he considers neither to be evidence of elite status, and, to his mind, Hock’s notion that Paul had an aristocratic attitude toward manual labour is “extremely ill thought out.”153


152 Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 76.

153 Ibid., 80–83, 88.
Likewise, for Meggitt the claim that Paul received an elite education is founded on a false presupposition, namely, the idea “that education and wealth are immutably bound together.”154 This assumption, though accurate with regard to the formal ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, neglects to consider the opportunities for informal education in the ancient city. According to Meggitt: “Graeco-Roman culture was widely disseminated and displayed (it was not solely the preserve of the élite): quotations from authors such as Virgil, Ovid, Lucretius, much more complex than the one example we have from Paul, were found scratched on walls in Pompeii.”155 In short, the assumption that “only the formally educated can display signs of learning,” like the idea that “only the rich consider work slavish,” reveals only “the prejudices, biases, and perhaps, the socio-economic contexts of the scholars themselves”; it does not help us understand Paul.156

Whereas Meggitt addresses the question of Paul’s education from the perspective of social history, R. Dean Anderson challenges the assertion that Paul’s letters are shaped by first-hand knowledge of rhetorical theory.157 Reviewing a large swath of rhetorical-critical treatments of Paul’s letters, Anderson concludes that Paul’s alleged conformity to the dictates of ancient rhetorical theory evaporates upon careful investigation.

First, with regard to form—what Quintilian would call dispositio—Anderson argues that Paul’s letters do not in fact contain the expected divisions of a speech, a conclusion that seems to be borne out by the difficulty of arriving at anything like a consensus regarding

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154 Ibid., 84.
156 Meggitt, Paul, Poverty and Survival, 96. See also Roetzel, Paul, 23.
their rhetorical structures.\textsuperscript{158} For Anderson, any structural features that Paul’s letters do share with works of formal rhetoric can be attributed to what I will later call “general rhetoric,” the basic capacity of humans to persuade:

The fact that we have been able to make some remarks drawn from the rhetorical theory connected with the \textit{partes orationis} has more to do with the fact that most literary productions have a beginning, middle and an end, than that Paul was thinking in terms of specifically rhetorical \textit{προσόμιον, πίστεις} and \textit{ἐπίλογος}.	extsuperscript{159}

With regard to argumentation—Quintilian’s \textit{inventio}—Anderson draws a similar conclusion: Yes, Paul occasionally uses \textit{παραδείγματα} in his argumentation, but they often function differently from what rhetorical theorists would prescribe; moreover, “the use of examples is common in all literate societies.”\textsuperscript{160} There is no evidence here of the influence of rhetorical education.

Finally, Paul’s style—\textit{elocutio}—does not resemble that of a formal orator. In addition to being paratactic rather than periodic or hypotactic,\textsuperscript{161} it lacks the fundamental rhetorical virtue of clarity (\textit{σαφείᾳ}).\textsuperscript{162} In short, then, “it seems highly unlikely that Paul received any formal training in rhetorical theory.”\textsuperscript{163}


\textsuperscript{161} Anderson, \textit{Ancient Rhetorical Theory}, 281.


\textsuperscript{163} Anderson, \textit{Ancient Rhetorical Theory}, 277. E. Randolph Richards comes to a similar conclusion on the basis of Paul’s frequent anacolutha and uneven grammar. \textit{Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection} (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 139.
Conclusion

In reaching the conclusion that Paul did not have the benefit of a rhetorical education, Anderson is now in the minority; however, until a few decades ago, his would have been an uncontroversial assertion. Patristic exegetes, responding to the ridicule of Celsus and his ilk, conceded that Paul’s prose did not satisfy the aesthetic criteria of the Greco-Roman literati. And modern critical scholars, until recently, concurred: Paul’s manner of expression was perhaps passionate and personal, but it certainly was not cultured.

Despite this agreement, patristic and modern interpreters parted ways in the explanations they put forward for the peculiar forcefulness of Paul’s letters. For Origen, Chrysostom, and Augustine, it was the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that explained the treasure of divine wisdom hidden in the clay vessel of Paul’s diction. Modern critical scholarship could not countenance this conception of inspiration, but was long enamoured of the romantic idea of natural eloquence: Paul, it was argued, escaped the empty formalism of the rhetorical schools; his was the unruly but authentic rhetoric of the heart.

Current scholarship is wary of both explanations. Inspiration is generally considered a matter of private belief to which no explanatory value should be attributed, and appeal to the “natural” looks suspiciously like a way to sneak inspiration in the back door, to insist that Paul’s letters are not “mere rhetoric,” or to keep him safely insulated from “pagan” influence. So, faced with a growing mountain of literature highlighting the rhetorical dimensions of Paul’s letters, recent scholars have now put forward their own explanation: Paul writes persuasively because he learned how to do so at school.

164 See esp. Chrysostom, Laud. Paul. 4.13; Hom. 1 Cor. 3.4 (PG 61:27–28); Augustine, Doct. chr. 4.7.11. Cf. Origen, Comm. Jo. 4.2. See further pp. 293–297 below.
Part 2 of this study will examine the adequacy of this hypothesis for explaining the nature of Paul’s prose. What lends this task particular urgency is the role Paul’s putative education currently plays in discussions concerning his social location. As we have seen, although Paul’s alleged Roman citizenship and his ostensibly aristocratic attitude toward labour continue to exert influence, above all it is the conviction that Paul demonstrates the sort of rhetorical prowess that can only have derived from elite education that sponsors the current consensus, namely, that Paul was a man of relatively high social status, and that his manual labour is not decisive for determining his social location. If it can be demonstrated that what Paul knows of persuasion need not have been learned in school, then we evidently must revisit this consensus.
PART TWO

QUERYING RHETORICAL CRITICISM OF 2 CORINTHIANS 10–13
Chapter Three
A Historical and Literary Introduction

As we saw in part 1, in recent decades interpreters of Paul have concluded with increasing confidence that his letters attest to the sort of rhetorical sophistication that can only have been learned in school. This is, we noted, a reversal of what had been the dominant view until well into the twentieth century. Prior to the recent rise of rhetorical criticism, critics were all but agreed that Paul’s letters, though forceful in their own peculiar way, differed markedly from those of the rhetorically trained literati, and thus that their persuasive force, such as it was, must be explained on grounds other than rhetorical education.

The burden of part 2 of this study, then, is to examine the evidence that has sponsored the overthrow of this long-held consensus. As the review of recent scholarship above has demonstrated, arguments for Paul’s rhetorical education—and thus his elevated social status—depend all but exclusively on alleged correspondence between Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions and various rhetorical features in Paul’s letters. What, then, is the nature of this correspondence? Do Paul’s letters in fact evince familiarity with this formal rhetorical tradition? Or, to put the question another way, does formal rhetorical education provide an adequate explanation for the nature of Paul’s persuasive voice?

Second Corinthians 10–13 and Recent Evaluations of Paul’s Rhetoric

As C. J. Classen observes, since the work of Betz and Kennedy, “wächst die Flut von rhetorisch-kritischen Publikationen so rasch und ständig, dass sich selbst Fachleute
gezwungen sehen, jeweils nur eine Auswahl zu zitieren.”1 Clearly, then, it would not be practicable to attempt to evaluate all the evidence scholars have adduced of Paul’s knowledge of classical rhetoric. Instead, I will use 2 Cor 10–13—a text widely considered emblematic of Paul’s rhetorical prowess—as a test case.

Those familiar with the history of rhetorical criticism of Paul’s letters may be surprised by this selection. It was, after all, Hans Dieter Betz’s commentary on Galatians that sparked the recent resurgence of interest in the relationship between Paul’s letters and ancient rhetorical theory. But Betz’s legacy here is a odd one: Although many scholars have enthusiastically endorsed Betz’s premise—Galatians is best understood by comparison with ancient rhetorical theory—they have been unable to agree with Betz, or with one another, regarding the sort of rhetoric of which Galatians consists.2 Significantly, this lack of agreement concerns not only the finer details of rhetorical analysis, but the basic matters of rhetorical species and arrangement.

Betz himself recognized that the relationship between classically prescribed rhetorical ταξις and the arrangement of Galatians was far from self-evident. He admitted that the paranetic material in Gal 5–6 could not be explained on the basis of rhetorical theory.3 And, when faced with the difficulty of wrestling the disparate material of Gal 3–4 into the outline required by his rhetorical analysis, he concluded that “Paul [had] been very successful—as a skilled rhetorician would be expected to be—in disguising his argumentative strategy.”4 This

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1 Classen, “Kann die rhetorische Theorie helfen?,” 146.
4 Ibid., 369.
sort of argument serves Betz and his followers well, for it insulates their claims from any attempt at falsification: The more clearly it be demonstrated that Paul did not follow rhetorical expectations, the more certain we should be that he was a rhetorical genius. At best, then, the relationship between ancient rhetorical theory and the arrangement of Galatians is either enigmatic or disguised, hence it proves difficult to argue—or, again, to falsify the argument—that the structure of Galatians provides clear evidence of Paul’s rhetorical education.

Prior to his work on Galatians, however, Betz sharpened his rhetorical-critical teeth on 2 Cor 10–13. And it is here, in fact, that rhetorical criticism has produced what are generally thought to be assured results. Indeed, 2 Cor 10–13 has recently been called “Paul’s rhetorical tour de force,” a “magnificent composition,” and “a brilliant piece of text.” For previous generations of scholarship, what was most remarkable about this passage was its ability to convey Paul’s spirit, capturing his heartfelt indignation and his fiery passion. A strange but compelling flow of words, it was agreed, had erupted from the intensity of Paul’s emotion. Thus Hans Windisch observed how “die Leidenschaft verwandelt mit einem Mal den ἴδιότης τοῦ λόγου in einen δεινότατος τοῦ λόγου.” Others described the passage in similar terms: For Edgar Goodspeed, this was “a passage of the most amazing force and vigor . . . [which possesses] a power and effectiveness seldom equaled in any literature.”

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And Alfred Plummer spoke of “a rhythmical and rhetorical swing that sweeps one away in admiration of its impassioned intensity.”

In recent decades, a new consensus has emerged which explains this passage not as a function of Paul’s emotional intensity but rather as a manifestation of his mastery of the classical rhetorical tradition. In fact, 2 Cor 10–13 has become the text most frequently cited as evidence of Paul’s rhetorical prowess. It was this passage that led Judge to inquire into the social context of Paul’s boasting, and this passage that is the lynchpin in the arguments of Christopher Forbes, Peter Marshall, and now Tor Vegge that Paul received formal training in rhetoric.

The extent to which 2 Cor 10–13 has shaped scholarly imagination concerning Paul’s rhetoric is particularly evident from Jerome Murphy-O’Connor’s treatment in his Paul: A Critical Life. According to Murphy-O’Connor, Paul ordinarily restrained himself from rhetorical display so as not to distract from the message of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 2:5), but “his conscious control . . . collapsed in the heat of anger, and in the Fool’s Speech (2 Cor. 11:1 to 12:13) deeply engrained qualities become evident,” namely, “the masterful facility and freedom with which he employs a number of the techniques of rhetoric”—techniques, says Murphy-O’Connor, that he can only have learned in school. The implication, of course, is that if it were not for 2 Cor 10–13, scholars might be taken in by Paul’s self-characterization as a rhetorical amateur (2 Cor 11:6). But thanks to Paul’s passionate outburst, the truth is out.

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12 Ibid., 320.
So, if there is one text in which all seem to agree that Paul is dependent on knowledge of the formal tradition of ancient rhetoric, it is 2 Cor 10–13. There are quibbles regarding how, precisely, Paul manipulates rhetorical conventions—that is, the extent to which he conforms to or subverts the established protocol—but there is essential agreement that the passage is a rhetorically astute response to his opponents’ claims. This contrasts strikingly with the inconclusiveness that has beset rhetorical studies of Galatians, and suggests that it is here, if anywhere, that we will find evidence of Paul’s rhetorical education.

Excursus: “Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation”

Like her teacher’s commentary on Galatians, Margaret Mitchell’s rhetorical analysis of 1 Corinthians has been widely influential, and has been cited as evidence that Paul was familiar with ancient rhetorical conventions. As we will see, however, her argument does not withstand scrutiny.

Mitchell argues, against partition theories of the letter, that “1 Corinthians is a single letter of unitary composition which contains a deliberative argument persuading the Christian

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14 So, e.g., Neyrey, “Social Location of Paul,” 134–35.
community at Corinth to become reunified.”\textsuperscript{15} For Mitchell, the arrangement of 1 Corinthians thus corresponds to the ταξις appropriate to a deliberative speech, albeit with the addition of an epistolary framework.\textsuperscript{16} The πρόθεσις of the argument is Paul’s plea for unity and against factionalism in 1:10: “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” The bulk of the letter (1:18–15:57), then, constitutes a series of “proofs,” topically arranged, that address specific matters of contention and division in the Corinthian community.

Mitchell’s methodological discussion is clear and cogent.\textsuperscript{17} She recognizes that the designation of rhetorical species cannot be begged in the compositional analysis of a text;\textsuperscript{18} thus, before providing her proposed outline of the letter, she seeks to demonstrate that 1 Corinthians as a whole has the distinguishing characteristics of deliberative rhetoric. For Mitchell, these characteristics are four: 1) a focus on action to be undertaken in the future; 2) appeal to what is advantageous (τὸ συμφέρον); 3) proof by example; and 4) an appropriate (political) subject of deliberation, often factionalism and civic concord.\textsuperscript{19} Each of these characteristics, she attempts to demonstrate, is found in 1 Corinthians.

I am not convinced. Focus on future behaviour is indeed intrinsic to deliberative rhetoric (cf. Aristotle, \textit{Rhet.} 1.3.4), and we do find it in 1 Corinthians. But this in itself tells us very little about whether or not 1 Corinthians was composed in accordance with the rhetorical tradition of deliberative argument. Focus on the future is simply in the nature of

\textsuperscript{15} Margaret M. Mitchell, \textit{Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians}, HUT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1991), 1.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 1–2, 184–92.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 5–17.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 11–13.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 23.
giving advice, or instruction, or command; therefore, unless by deliberative rhetoric we simply mean that Paul is telling the Corinthians what to do—which is certainly not what Mitchell intends to argue—Paul’s future orientation does not provide much in the way of evidence.

In other words, Paul’s focus on the future can only serve as evidence that 1 Corinthians is a deliberative argument if we presuppose that the letter must belong to one of Aristotle’s three species of rhetoric, each of which has its own temporal frame of reference. This, in fact, is what Mitchell seems to have done: “The overwhelming future emphasis in the letter,” she argues, “indicates that of the three rhetorical species, only the deliberative fits 1 Corinthians.” Mitchell has been careful not to beg the question of which species of rhetoric 1 Corinthians represents, but not so careful with regard to the question whether these species are relevant in the first place.

Likewise, it may be true that the use of examples is characteristic of deliberative rhetoric, but, as Mitchell herself recognizes, examples are used throughout a wide variety of literary genres, and thus their use in 1 Corinthians cannot be taken as proof that the letter belongs to the deliberative tradition. Again, what Mitchell can say with confidence is only that “of the three rhetorical species, the deliberative most appropriately employs proof by example.”

Mitchell insists that it is not only the presence of these examples but their specific function in the argument of 1 Corinthians that is characteristic of deliberative rhetoric. Most decisive, for Mitchell, is Paul’s use of himself as an example throughout the letter. But

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20 See esp. ibid., 6–8.
21 Ibid., 25.
22 Ibid., 42.
23 Ibid. (her emphasis).
Mitchell has a tendency here, as throughout the book, to overstate her case, citing texts as evidence that simply do not support her reading. I can hardly see, for example, how Paul’s verdict on the fornicator in 5:3–4 functions as a παραδείγματα.

Paul is asserting authority here, not using his own behaviour as an example, and there really is no formal resemblance to the παραδείγματα she adduces from deliberative speeches.

A more serious problem for her reading is her inability to provide examples of analogous self-exemplification from her store of deliberative texts. Mitchell adduces three instances of letter writers commending their own examples for imitation; all erode upon further examination. She attempts to buttress her argument here by suggesting that “the orator himself can become a natural παραδείγμα, because the moral character of the orator (ήθος τοῦ λέγοντος) is an important part of the proof.”

This perhaps has a certain logic to it, but her examples do not demonstrate the currency of the strategy, and, in her analysis of Paul’s self-reference, this notion promotes a misleading conflation of two separate rhetorical moves, namely, the provision of examples and the development of ethos.

Mitchell does demonstrate clearly that appeal to the advantage of one’s hearers is a key and distinctive feature of deliberative argumentation. However, her argument regarding Paul’s use of the motif is problematic. As Mitchell notes, Paul uses the word συμφέρων and

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24 Ibid., 56.
25 Isocrates, in Ep. 8.10, does not use himself as an example of the behaviour he counsels; instead, he speaks of his own record of public service in order to establish ethos and thus lend credibility to his (unrelated) request. Pliny, in Ep. 7.1, does use himself as an example of the behaviour he advises; however, his letter is not deliberative rhetoric—which has its place, as Mitchell knows, in the political assembly (p. 60)—but is a piece of medical advice to a friend. (Note that Mitchell herself does not include Pliny’s letter in the catalogue of deliberative texts on which her analysis of the rhetoric species is based [pp. 21–23]). Read in context, Demosthenes’ reference to himself in Ep. 1.10 does not, in fact, hold himself up as an example. It is instead a rather clever dismissal of the anticipated charge that he is writing out of self-interest rather than the public good, a rhetorical move that manages to attribute any self-interest not to Demosthenes but to those who sent him into exile.
26 Ibid., 46.
27 See, e.g., Mitchell’s citation of 7:25, 40 on p. 56.
28 Ibid., 25–32.
cognates five times (6:12; 7:35; 10:23; 10:33; 12:7).\(^{29}\) This does not yet demonstrate, however, that Paul’s use of the word derives from his familiarity with deliberative rhetoric, for, as Mitchell acknowledges, “συμφέρειν was a term in wide currency.”\(^{30}\) It is not enough, then, for Mitchell to show that Paul could have been indebted to the deliberative rhetorical tradition here; no, she must demonstrate that he was. That is, she must show that the word group functions in 1 Corinthians as it does in the tradition of formal deliberative rhetoric.

The basic problem here, as Dean Anderson notes, is that none of Paul’s references to the concept of advantage concern what is ostensibly the thesis of the letter.\(^{31}\) Paul does not tell the Corinthians that it is in their best interest to avoid factions; instead, he argues that it is advantageous for them to avoid fornication (6:12), to stay unmarried in the short time before the eschaton (7:35), and not to give offense in eating idol food (10:23, 33). If this were a unified deliberative argument focused on 1:10, we should expect rather more explicit discussion of the advantage of avoiding factionalism.

Mitchell attempts to muster Paul’s varied uses of the concept into a unifying theme, but with little success. For her, Paul’s strategy is to redefine the concept gradually, shifting his addressees’ focus from their individual advantage to concern for the advantage of the group. But this involves some rather egregious misreading of the letter. Most problematic is her treatment of 6:12–20, which, she claims, shows Paul endorsing “the community standard of advantage over against the individualistic standard of the Corinthians.”\(^{32}\)

Mitchell’s evidence for this reading is twofold: First, Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are “members of Christ” (6:15), a phrase that Mitchell reads, without argument, as a

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 25–33.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 34.
\(^{31}\) Anderson, Ancient Rhetorical Theory, 256.
\(^{32}\) Mitchell, Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 36.
metaphorical reference to the ἐκκλησία and thus as a reminder that the needs of the ἐκκλησία must be given priority. This reading derives, apparently, from viewing Paul’s claim in 6:15 that the Corinthians are μέλη Χριστοῦ in the light of the use to which Paul puts that notion in 12:12–30.33 But such an interpretation ignores the function of the image here, which does not in fact focus on the community interest.34 In this context, Paul’s juxtaposition of being μέλη Χριστοῦ with being μέλη πόρνης is a juxtaposition of purity and impurity, and is thus intended to evoke the spectre of shameful and unthinkable pollution, not to promote concern for avoiding divisiveness.35 Accordingly, when Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are “not [their] own” (6:19b)—the second piece of evidence Mitchell adduces for her reading—he is not “bluntly [restating] his argument for the community standard of advantage,”36 but rather emphasizing the need to keep the body pure, for in it dwells the Holy Spirit (6:19a). This is clear from the following verse, which brings Paul’s discussion of the matter to a close, and makes it perfectly clear what “not your own” means in this context: “You were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body” (6:20).

Mitchell’s most substantial argument concerns Paul’s references throughout 1 Corinthians to the twin motifs of factionalism and concord, which, as she shows, were common in deliberative rhetoric.37 Although Paul does not use the specific language of ὀμόνοια and στάσις, he does use terminology throughout the letter that also appears in ancient discussions of concord and factionalism.38 Mitchell provides a comprehensive list of such terminology at the end of the section, and a glance at it reveals a fundamental problem.

33 Cf. ibid., 119.
34 See Fee, First Corinthians, 255–58.
36 Mitchell, Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 36.
37 Ibid., 60–64.
38 See ibid., 68–180. For her explanation of the omission of ὀμόνοια and στάσις, see p. 78 and pp. 76–77n66 respectively.
with her methodology. Much of this is typical Pauline vocabulary that he uses in a variety of contexts and to a variety of ends; it simply has no essential connection with deliberative arguments for concord. Further, Mitchell’s specific arguments regarding Paul’s use of this terminology seldom engage other exegetical possibilities. Often, she demonstrates only that parallels to Paul’s vocabulary can be found in ancient discussions of political concord, not that these are true analogues to Paul’s usage, nor that the connotations they imply fit the context of Paul’s argument.

And this is, I think, what finally undermines Mitchell’s thesis: In her attempt to sustain her interpretation of Paul’s rhetoric in the letter as a whole, she repeatedly mischaracterizes the nature of his individual arguments. According to Mitchell, in the body of 1 Corinthians, “Paul arranges his proofs logically and topically, as he takes up the assorted subjects of Corinthian contention one by one, in each case urging the course of unity and compromise he proposed in 1:10.” Even granting her dubious assertion that there are analogues for such seriatim treatment of individual topics among deliberative arguments for concord, the question remains: Is this an adequate description of what we actually find in 1 Corinthians? Hardly.

Paul’s discussion of fornication in 1 Cor 5 is not about establishing the boundaries of the community so as to set the stage for concord. Instead, he addresses a specific behaviour

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39 Over half (16 of 31) of the words she lists clearly fall into this category: καταρτίζειν, ἐρις, μερίζειν, καυχάσθαι, ζήλος/ζηλοῦν, διχοστασία, συνεργός, κολλάσθαι, πρόσκομμα/ἀπρόσκομμος/ ἕγκοπη, συγκοινωνία/κοινωνία/κοινωνία, ἁίρεσις, σῶμα, συγχαίρειν/συμπάσχειν, ἀγάπη, ἀκαταστασία, εἰρήνη.
41 Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 204.
42 Dean Anderson demonstrates that none of the parallels Mitchell adduces stands up under examination. See *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, 258–60.
by which he is particularly appalled. He makes no attempt to connect this argument to the ostensible thesis of 1:10. His only comments here about the integrity of the community concern its purity (vv. 6–8), not its unity. Moreover, this reference to the potential pollution of the “whole lump” is clearly at the service of Paul’s specific argument for the exclusion of the fornicator: He is not in fact arguing that the purity, let alone the concord of the community is important; rather he takes its importance as a given, and thus uses what is presumably a shared value to motivate the Corinthians to obey the specific command he issues.

This is the problem with Mitchell’s reading of 10:14–22 as well. Here Paul is undoubtedly speaking about the unity of the body: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (v. 17). But the function of the argument is not to encourage unity or concord. Rather, as in chapter 6, Paul is arguing that the Corinthians, by partaking of Christ’s body, become Christ’s holy body parts, and thus must not share in what is unholy: “I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (vv. 20b–21). Paul speaks of the unity of the body gathered around Christ’s table not because he is arguing against factionalism, but because he is arguing against what he considers idol worship.

Again, Paul’s marriage advice in chapter 7 simply is not integrated into any discussion of factionalism and concord. Mitchell is right, surely, that marriage and sexuality can be sources of contention, but Paul shows no concern about this. The two things that do

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44 Ibid., 141–42.
45 So ibid., 121–25.
concern Paul are the potential for fornication, which he abhors (vv. 2, 5, 9, 36–37), and the need for single-minded focus in light of the impending eschaton (vv. 26–35).

Especially strained is Mitchell’s attempt to read Paul’s discussion of the resurrection in chapter 15 as related to the overarching theme she posits.46 She contends that differences of opinion concerning the resurrection (cf. v. 12) have “contributed to Corinthian factionalism.”47 Perhaps. But Paul makes no attempt here to counter factionalism; he counters disbelief in the resurrection. And there is nothing in the text itself to sponsor Mitchell’s claim that Paul “appeals to the resurrected life to minimize the importance of the present striving to supremacy within the community, holding those insignificant gains and losses up against the great eschatological victory which all will share.”48 This may be attractive theology, but Paul does not articulate it.49

Finally, it is worth noting that even where Mitchell’s argument is the strongest, it is dependent on a refusal to engage the nature of the factionalism Paul ostensibly is addressing. It is certainly clear that in chapters 12–14 Paul seeks to provide guidelines for orderly and unified worship.50 But how, precisely, does disorderly worship relate to the party politics that, on Mitchell’s reading, Paul addresses in chapters 1–4? If there is a concrete connection to be made, Mitchell has not made it; instead, she retreats to a concept of factionalism in the abstract.51

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48 Ibid., 175.
49 Paul’s command in 15:58 to be steadfast (ἐδραίοι) and unmovable (ἀμετακίνητοι) is hardly a clear reference to the metaphor of a unified building (οἰκίσα), which, according to Mitchell, serves Paul as a “positive counterpart to factionalism” (177). Neither word has such connotations elsewhere in the letter (cf. 1 Cor 7:37). Moreover, both are plural, which would be an odd choice if such a unifying metaphor were on Paul’s mind.
50 So ibid., 157–74.
In sum, then, Mitchell’s argument is seriously flawed and cannot be used as evidence of Paul’s knowledge of the formal conventions of deliberative rhetoric.

The “Letter of Tears”

It is not necessary to detain ourselves here with a detailed discussion of the composition history of 2 Corinthians; still, a few words are in order. First, despite recent attempts to defend the unity of 2 Corinthians on the basis of its alleged conformity to ancient rhetorical standards,\(^\text{52}\) the current form of 2 Corinthians is evidently the work of a later redactor. This hypothesis was initially argued by J. S. Semler in his 1776 commentary; it achieved considerable influence through the work of A. Hausrath and J. H. Kennedy around the turn of the previous century.\(^\text{53}\) Although there is continued debate regarding the number of letters that canonical 2 Corinthians comprises, as well as their relative chronology, most would concur that chapters 10–13 constitute an independent letter.

The principal evidence here is Paul’s abrupt change of tone. Chapters 10–13 are famously agonized and polemical, a striking change from chapters 1–9, where Paul is conciliatory and rather gentle, his anxiety relieved by Titus’s welcome report from Corinth.\(^\text{54}\) As Semler observed and Hausrath reiterated, “die vier letzten Capitel . . . eine durchaus

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andere geistige Verfassung des Schreibenden voraussetzen.”

Short of positing that Paul called it a night after completing chapter 9, then woke up on the wrong side of bed the next morning, it is difficult to account for this sudden outburst. As Kirsopp Lake opined, “If 2 Cor. x.–xiii. had existed in a separate form, no one would ever have dreamt of suggesting that it was the continuation of 2 Cor. i.–ix.”

Both Hausrath and Kennedy went one step further, identifying 2 Cor 10–13 with the “tearful letter”—or, at least, the bulk thereof—to which Paul refers in 2 Cor 2:3–4 and 7:8–12. Indeed, Paul’s general description of this letter, written, he says, ἐκ πολλῆς θλίψεως καὶ συνοχῆς καρδίας and διὰ πολλῶν δακρύων (2:4), is in accord with Paul’s evident anguish in 2 Cor 10–13. Moreover, a number of verbal echoes in 2 Cor 1–9 show Paul taking up motifs from his earlier letter. Three are particularly notable: 1) Chapters 10–13 contain Paul’s self-conscious and reluctant self-commendation (10:12, 18; 12:11). In 3:1 and 5:12, Paul insists that he is not again commending himself. 2) In chapter 10, Paul warns that from now on he will be as forceful in person as he is in his letters (10:1–2, 9–11)—a motif that culminates in 13:1–4 when Paul threatens a visit to the Corinthians in which he will not spare them discipline (οὐ φείσομαι). In what appears to be an attempt to justify his decision not to undertake this punitive visit after all (1:15–2:4), Paul tells the Corinthians: “It was to spare you (φείδομεν ήμῶν) that I did not come again to Corinth” (1:23). 3) In retrospect, Paul

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55 Hausrath, Der Vier-Capitel-Brief, 1.
56 This is the oft-ridiculed suggestion of Hans Lietzmann, An die Korinther 1/2, ed. Werner Georg Kümmel, 5th ed., HNT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1969), 139.
59 For what follows, see the classic statements of Kennedy, Second and Third Epistles, 89–98; Plummer, Second Epistle, xxix–xxxiii; Lake, Earlier Epistles, 155–62.
can say that his earlier letter functioned to prove the Corinthians’ obedience (2:9), whereas at the time of that previous letter, Paul had been preparing to punish disobedience (10:6). In short, the conflictual situation reflected in 2 Cor 10–13 recurs, now in the past tense, in chapters 1–9.\(^{60}\)

**Paul and the Corinthians**

It was this conflictual situation, of course, that gave rise to the polemic that dominates 2 Cor 10–13. These chapters surpass even Galatians in urgency and forcefulness, and also in vituperation. Paul, it appears, had increasingly been sidelined by the Corinthians, and in 2 Cor 10–13 he pulls out all the stops in an attempt to reassert his apostolic status.

We know from 2 Cor 13:1–2 that Paul had visited Corinth a second time prior to writing 2 Cor 10–13, and it appears that things had not gone well for him. His frustration and

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\(^{60}\) The two major objections to this thesis—that it fails to make sense of what is said about Titus’s visits, and that there is no explicit reference in chs. 10–13 to the offence discussed in 2:5–11—have been refuted by Francis Watson (“2 Corinthians X–XIII and Paul’s Painful Letter,” 332–35) and Lawrence Welborn (“Identification of 2 Corinthians 10–13”) respectively. Note that chs. 1–9 themselves comprise multiple letters. As was noted initially by Johannes Weiss, 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 interrupts Paul’s ongoing account of his encounter with Titus in Macedonia, from whom he heard consoling news concerning the Corinthians; thus 2 Cor 1:1–2:13 plus 7:5–16 appears to be a separate, self-contained “Letter of Reconciliation” that postdates the “Letter of Tears.” (*Earliest Christianity*, 1:349; see also Bornkamm, “So-Called Second Letter,” 259–60). Weiss considered the intervening section—2:14–6:13 plus 7:2–4 (6:14–7:1 appears to be an interpolation)—to be, together with chapters 10–13, this tearful letter. (*Earliest Christianity*, 1:348–49; cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Exegetische Probleme des zweiten Korintherbriefes*, 2nd ed. [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963], 14n16). But the considerable difference in tone between the two fragments makes such an identification doubtful, as noted by Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 13–14; Bornkamm, “So-Called Second Letter,” 260; Watson, “2 Corinthians X–XIII and Paul’s Painful Letter,” 330. It is preferable to see two independent letters in 2 Cor 1–7, both of which were composed after 2 Cor 10–13. Note that here I disagree with Bornkamm, who argues that 2:14–6:13 plus 7:2–4 was “written in an earlier moment when Paul heard for the first time of the appearance of his opponents, but when the community had not yet fallen prey to them” (“So-Called Second Letter,” 260; cf. Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 14; Margaret M. Mitchell, “The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics,” in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict: Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and J. K. Elliott, NovTSup 109 [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 21, 27–30). There is simply no textual evidence for this theory; it rests solely on the generally plausibility of an escalating conflict, and Paul’s touchiness about self-commendation in 3:1 and 5:12 seems clearly to recollect his boasting in 2 Cor 10–13. So N. H. Taylor, “The Composition and Chronology of Second Corinthians,” *JSNT*, no. 44 (1991): 73–74. The status of 2 Cor 8 and 9, which are quite clearly two separate letters, remains disputed. Note, however, Margaret Mitchell’s compelling argument that 2 Cor 8 immediately followed 1 Cor and thus preceded Paul’s painful visit. “Paul’s Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction,” in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, HTS 53 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 307–38.
humiliation are evident from the tone of the letter as a whole, and his repeated reference to claims that he is bold when absent but weak or lenient when present suggest that an attempt to assert his authority in person was unsuccessful, perhaps even ridiculed (10:1–2, 8–11; 12:21; 13:2, 10; cf. 11:21a).

Paul’s later recollection of this visit in the “Letter of Reconciliation” (2 Cor 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16) is short on details, but confirms this general impression. Paul explains that he had delayed his third trip to Corinth in order to avoid “another painful visit” (μὴ πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν [2:1]). Instead, he had sent the letter that I have identified with 2 Cor 10–13, a letter written “out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears” (2:4). “Someone” (τις, τοιοῦτος, σὺτός) had offended Paul deeply, behaving in the sort of way that now engendered, in retrospect, the language of punishment and forgiveness (2:5–11).

There is some conflict between Paul’s retrospective reference here to a solitary “wrongdoer” (ὁ ὀδικήσας [7:12]) and the plural language that he had used in the heat of battle, language that sometimes seems to refer to a body of opposition (10:2, 11b–12; 11:12–15, 18, 22–23a; 12:21; 13:2; but cf. 10:7; 10–11a; 11:20, 21b), perhaps to be equated with those Paul calls the “super-apostles” (11:5; 12:11) plus those in their sway. The evidence does not admit of a detailed reconstruction, but it seems best to assume that by the time Paul wrote the “Letter of Reconciliation,” the most egregious offender—Paul’s “chief rival,” as Welborn has it⁶¹—had relented or become isolated, and thus Paul no longer faced what once had looked like a large-scale defection.

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It is usually thought that 2 Cor 10–13 attests to a new conflict, not to the exacerbation of the tension in 1 Corinthians. This reading is more often asserted than argued, in fact, it appears to depend on two highly ambiguous pieces of evidence. First, interpreters seem to assume that Paul’s extremely caustic characterization of his rivals in 2 Cor 10–13 cannot be directed at the same people that he had treated with relative deference in 1 Corinthians. But Paul’s treatment of Peter in Galatians would suggest that this argument is based on rather tenuous assumptions regarding his character; and, in any case, from everything we know of Paul’s second visit to Corinth, it was easily disastrous enough to provide fodder for Paul to reevaluate his previous opinion. Second, it is asserted that whereas 1 Corinthians concerns tensions within the Corinthian community, 2 Cor 10–13 is written to address the influence of outsiders. But this very widespread assertion inexplicably overlooks the fact that the work of other apostles was already at the root of what Paul denounces as factionalism in 1 Cor 1:12. Moreover, there is no evidence that Paul’s rivals in 2 Cor 10–13 are recent arrivals, only that Paul’s own status is more tenuous. (Note, in particular, that 2 Cor 11:4 gives no indication of how recently the rival in question [ὁ ἐρχόμενος] has arrived). Since it was Apollos who appears to have been at the root of the trouble in 1 Corinthians, and since, as

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62 E.g. Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 6–7, who mistakenly attributes to Kirsopp Lake the “discovery” that 1 and 2 Cor address different opponents. Lake in fact argues that “it is impossible not to think that [the opponents of 2 Cor] were identical with the persons to whom he refers in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians” (*Earlier Epistles*, 234).


64 So, rightly, Mitchell, “Paul’s Letters to Corinth,” 334n90.

we will see, the basic terms of the conflict appear to be unchanged, it seems reasonable to infer that 2 Cor 11:4 is an oblique reference to Apollos as well. In any case, even if one is uninclined to accept such an inference, there are certainly no grounds for introducing an entirely new group of rivals.

Moreover, there is considerable continuity in the nature of the problems faced by Paul. In 1 Corinthians, Paul had insisted that the mystery of God is not comprehended by human wisdom (1:17–2:13), that the mind of Christ is not grasped by those who are merely σαρκικοί (2:14–3:3), that the kingdom of God is not a matter of λόγος but of δύναμις (4:20; cf. 2:4). He uses similar terms in 2 Cor 10:3–5, contrasting his own divine-power-fueled weapons with the merely fleshly λογισμοί he combats (τὰ ὀπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικὰ ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ). As in 1 Cor 1:17 and 2:1–5, here too Paul must account for the fact that his proclamation lacks the sophistication of his rivals’ (2 Cor 11:5–6). In 1 Cor 3:8, Paul had insisted upon the principle that each worker would be rewarded according to his own labour (κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον κόπον); in 2 Cor 10:15 he bitterly deplores those who boast ἐν ἄλλοτριοις κόποις. Finally, just as in 1 Cor 4:21, where Paul offers the Corinthians a choice between his coming with discipline (ἐν ῥόδις) or with gentleness (πραΰτης), so Paul announces at the outset of 2 Cor 10–13 that he writes διὰ της πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιείκείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ but is prepared to punish any disobedience when he comes (10:6; cf. 13:1–4, 10).

But if 2 Cor 10–13 represents a intensification of the same conflict that generated 1 Cor 1–4, nevertheless it is clear that Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians has deteriorated significantly in the interim. This is evident above all from Paul’s touchiness about the esteem

shown to his rivals. Whereas in 1 Corinthians Paul had been content to suggest that another (ἀλλος) could legitimately build on the foundation he had laid—albeit with the somewhat threatening proviso that this builder’s work would be tested with fire, and the builder himself liable to punishment (3:10–17)—now he scorns those who have the audacity to boast of work done in someone else’s κανών (10:12–16) and dismisses their teaching as insidious proclamation of another Jesus, a different spirit, a different gospel (11:4). Whereas earlier Paul could call Apollos and himself coworkers (συνεργοί [1 Cor 3.9]), now Paul speaks angrily of those who would consider themselves his equals (11:12; cf. 10:7): they are false apostles, deceitful workers, ministers of Satan who disguise themselves as ministers of Christ (11:13–15). He insists that he is not at all inferior to these “super-apostles” (11:5; 12:11).

What has prompted this outburst of ire, this renewed concern for his own relative status?

The details of Paul’s unpleasant second visit are obscure,66 but at four points in 2 Cor 10–13 Paul appears to quote or refer to the accusations of his rival(s), thereby giving us some idea of what has upset him:

1) 2 Cor 10:10: ὅτι αἱ ἐπιστολαί μέν, φησίν, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἱσχυραί, ἤ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενής καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος. Paul, it appears, is accused

66 Certainly there is not sufficient evidence to support Welborn’s hypothesis of a charge made against Paul during a “quasi-judicial proceeding in the Corinthian assembly.” “By the Mouth of Two or Three Witnesses: Paul’s Invocation of a Deuteronomic Statute,” NovT 52 (2010): 217. Welborn’s attempt to argue that Paul invoked Deut 19:15 in his own defense fails to account for the immediate context of the citation: Paul is threatening judgement, insisting he will not again be lenient (13:2–4). Moreover, immediately before the citation, Paul notes that this will be his third visit (13:1a); immediately afterward, he enumerates his two previous warnings (προείρηκα καὶ προλέγω [13:2]). Using Deut 19:15 as a threat may be contrary to its original purpose, and the analogy of visits/warnings and witnesses may be strained, but this remains the only reading that makes sense of the text as it stands. The cost of this interpretation, as Welborn rightly notes, is that it “requires us to assume that Paul used a citation of Scripture contrary to its stated purpose and without consideration of its context” (p. 210). To quote Welborn again, a little mischievously, “We should not be surprised if this cost were too high for many interpreters to bear” (p. 220). Margaret Mitchell’s delightfully clever reading (Birth of Christian Hermeneutics, 79–94) likewise neglects the most immediate context of Paul’s citation; moreover, I find it difficult to see how the Corinthians can be expected to be counting up Paul’s “witnesses”—the textual demarcation of which is, by any account, far from transparent—prior to being told that their number is at issue. Mitchell wonderfully “comments with” the text, to use her phrase (p. 12), but I am not persuaded that this is credible exegesis.
of being bold from afar but weak in person—an accusation, I will argue, that derives from his failure to exercise the authoritative discipline with which he had threatened the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 4:20–21). Though often translated as plural, φησίν here is singular, corresponding to οὗ τοιούτος in v. 11 and perhaps τίς in v. 7. Given Paul’s similar usage to refer to the chief offender in 2 Cor 2:1–5 and 7:12, this should probably be seen as a response to a specific person and perhaps a specific occurrence, not a “diatribe” style generalized attribution (contra BDF §130.3), especially since 2 Cor 10–13 is not among those few Pauline texts in which we find a fictive interlocutor or other indicators of diatribe style. This verse will be the subject of a thorough exegesis in part 4. For now, it is enough to note that, whatever the specific occurrence, Paul has been treated with derision.

2) 2 Cor 10:1: δεσκατά πρόσωπου μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ύμην, ἀπὸν δὲ θαρρῶ οἷς ύματος. Although, unlike 2 Cor 10:10, there is no explicit citation formula here, the fact that Paul interrupts himself to offer this self-deprecating characterization is widely taken as evidence that he is paraphrasing the accusation of his rival(s). In support of this reading we may note the repetition of this present-absent antithesis throughout the letter (cf. 10:11; 13:2, 10), which is difficult to account for unless Paul is echoing language with which the Corinthians are familiar. Importantly, this accusation appears to be related to the antithetical characterization of Paul’s letters as forceful but his bodily presence as weak (10:9–11).

Indeed, it may be that 10:1 and 10:10 amount to two iterations of the same accusation: Paul writes boldly when absent, but cannot follow through when present. But follow through on what, precisely? Here chapter 13 gives us some clues: Paul was lenient the second time he was present (παρῴων τὸ δεύτερον), but will not be so the third time (vv. 1–2); indeed, he

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writes as he does while absent (ἀπών) so that he will not have to use his authority severely when present (παρών [v. 10]). It appears, then, that it is the exercise of discipline that is at issue here (cf. 10:6; 13:4). Remember that Paul had threatened in 1 Cor 4:18–21 to come with a rod of discipline, to confront not the talk of the Corinthian dissidents but their power. Apparently the Corinthians saw little of this authoritative power on his subsequent visit, and now Paul is forced to deal with the belittling accusation that his threats were merely hot air.

3) 2 Cor 11:6a: εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἄλλα οὐ τῇ γνώσει. We have already noted that in 1 Corinthians Paul finds himself defending his “foolish” (μωρία [1 Cor 1:18–23]) proclamation, which apparently seemed neither as wise nor as eloquent as that of his rival(s) (1 Cor 1:17; 2:1–5). It is not clear whether the phrasing of 2 Cor 11:6 reflects a specific accusation of his rival(s), but Paul obviously worries that he is being deemed their inferior (cf. 11:5). Again, the verse will be treated in full in part 4 below.

4) 2 Cor 12:16: ἀλλὰ ὑπάρχουν πανούργος δόλω ὑμᾶς ἐλαβόν. In 1 Cor 9 Paul provided what he called his ἀπολογία for those who would examine him—that is, presumably, examine his financial conduct (v. 3). The gist is this: Paul claims the right (ἐξουσία), like the other apostles, to “refrain from working for a living” (v. 6) and to reap τὸ σορκίκα from the Corinthians in exchange for τὰ πνευματικά (v. 11); however, he has not used this “right,” he says, because he wants to preserve his alternate μισθός, namely, the satisfaction of having offered the gospel free of charge (v. 18) and thus without unnecessary obstruction (v. 12). It seems strange that Paul should argue at such length in order to prove his entitlement to recompense he insists he would rather die than accept anyhow.68 Indeed,

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68 The passage begins, apparently, as an attempt to illustrate, from his own experience, the principle of refraining from the exercise of one’s right (ἐξουσία) as elucidated in 1 Cor 8, but it does not in fact make a very good object lesson, since the example itself is controversial and thus in the end distracts from the principle it sought out to illustrate. Note here how Margaret Mitchell’s emphasis on Paul’s self-exemplification fails to
the fact that Paul has to insist on this right so strenuously undermines the common interpretation that Paul was forced to defend himself precisely for not accepting payment.\(^6^9\)

Such interpretations rely for their credibility on Paul’s rhetorical questions in 2 Cor 10–13, questions that seem to imply that Paul was somehow seen to be in the wrong for not accepting support:

> Did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I proclaimed God’s news to you free of charge? . . . I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. . . . How have you been worse off than the other churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong! . . . I will most gladly spend and be spent for you. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? (11:7–9; 12:12–14)

Note first that this is evidently a continuation of the same tension we observed in 1 Corinthians. As in 1 Cor 9, here too Paul insists he will be no burden (ἦγκοπη [1 Cor 9:12]; καταναρκάω [2 Cor 11:9; 12:13, 14]), but will retain his boast (καύχημα [1 Cor 9:15, 16]; καύχησις [2 Cor 11:10]) that he offers the gospel free of charge (ἀδάναπτος [1 Cor 9:18]; δωρέαν [2 Cor 11:7]). Whatever forced Paul to offer an ἀπολογία in 1 Cor 9 clearly remains contentious (cf. 2 Cor 12:19). And it appears from what Paul goes on to say that the problem arose from suspicion that his collection project was duplicitous:\(^7^0\)

> Let it be assumed that I did not burden you. Nevertheless (you say) since I was crafty, I took you in by deceit. Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? (2 Cor 12:16–18)

\(^6^9\) E.g. Theissen, Social Setting, 40–49; Marshall, Enmity in Corinth, 165–258; Hock, Social Context, 50–65. Hock bypasses this problem with a startlingly misleading characterization of Paul’s insistent argument: According to Hock, Paul in 1 Cor 9 “admitted” that he had the right to receive support (p. 61).

\(^7^0\) See esp. Hurd, Origin of 1 Corinthians, 205–6.
Titus, we know from 2 Cor 8:6, had been sent to Corinth by Paul twice in relation to the collection, and had been accompanied by “the brother” at least on the second of those trips (2 Cor 8:18).\(^{71}\) So there can be no doubt that it is Paul’s collection project that lies in the background here, and, once we know this, it is not difficult to reconstruct the nature of the accusation. As Wilfred L. Knox explained some time ago, “The suspicion was expressed that Paul’s previous refusal to accept support from his converts at Corinth was a mere pretext for exacting larger sums on a later date on the score of the alleged collection, which, it was hinted, might very well fail to find its way to those for whom it was destined.”\(^{72}\) Paul was incredulous that despite having worked for his living he was now accused of financial misconduct, hence the barrage of rhetorical questions cited above.

I have identified, then, the gist of a number of accusations against Paul, each of which represents an exacerbation of tensions already evident in 1 Corinthians. It is impossible to determine if these were accusations made by the community as a whole, or, as I think more likely, demeaning characterizations suggested by his rival(s) and accepted to a greater or lesser extent by some of the Corinthians. In any case, Paul evidently found the whole affair humiliating, and, in 2 Cor 10–13, fought to reassert his primacy in Corinth. If Paul had the capacity for winning rhetoric, this clearly would have been the time to deploy it.

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\(^{71}\) The fact that 2 Cor 8:18 and 2 Cor 12:18 appear to be references to the same visit by Titus and “the brother,” the former prior to the event and the latter afterwards, is one piece of evidence adduced by Margaret Mitchell in her cogent argument that 2 Cor 8 was sent after 1 Cor but prior to 2 Cor 10–13. See “Paul’s Letters to Corinth,” 326.

\(^{72}\) Wilfred L. Knox, *St Paul and the Church of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 328; cited in Hurd, *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 205–6. Further support for this reading comes from Paul’s insistence in 2 Cor 8:20–21 that he will behave such that no one blame him with regard to the collection, an assertion that makes little sense if there was no suspicion in the air.
Putative Evidence of Rhetorical Education in 2 Corinthians 10–13

What evidence, then, have interpreters adduced of Paul’s rhetorical prowess? More specifically, what features of Paul’s rhetoric in 2 Cor 10–13 have been thought to reflect familiarity with the formal tradition of Greco-Roman rhetoric? There are six prominent arguments to consider here, and it is these with which I will be concerned in the subsequent six chapters. At this point, it will be helpful briefly to summarize the evidence that has been brought forward:

1) First, it has been asserted that the form of 2 Cor 10–13 as a whole corresponds either to the formal disposition of a forensic oration or to the formal prescriptions of epistolary theory.

2) More frequent are claims that Paul’s “boasting” in this passage attests to his familiarity with ancient rhetorical conventions for self-praise (περιστολογία) as described above all in Plutarch’s De laude ipsius.

3) Paul’s list of tribulations in 2 Cor 11:23–30 is generally taken as an example of a peristasis catalogue, which, we are told, was a literary form common in the “diatribes” of moral philosophers. According to some, Paul used the form, conventionally enough, to assert his status as an ideal sage; for others, Paul’s boasting in weakness amounts to a parody, a reductio ad absurdum of his opponents’ boasting in their achievements.

4) Interpreters almost uniformly refer to 2 Cor 11:1–12:10 (or thereabouts) as Paul’s “Fool’s Speech” or Narrenrede, and suggest, explicitly or implicitly, that the Narrenrede was an established literary or dramatic form that Paul adapted to his situation.

5) It is frequently argued that in 2 Cor 10–13 Paul engages in a rhetorical synkrisis, comparing himself with his rivals as prescribed by rhetorical convention.

6) Underlying the majority of rhetorical-critical approaches to 2 Cor 10–13 is the conviction that Paul’s rhetoric here is ironic, and thus attests to his rhetorical sophistication.

It will immediately be apparent that the bulk of this putative evidence is formal. That is, Paul is said to be indebted to various literary forms to which he would have been exposed in his rhetorical education. In addition, however, exegetes have identified a variety of
rhetorical figures in these chapters. Already Johannes Weiss was impressed by a number of “nicht unkünsterlisch” elements of Paul’s style.73 Specifically, in Paul’s litany of hardships in 2 Cor 11:16–12:10, Weiss identified parallelism, anaphora, antistrophe, homoioteleuton, homiooptoton, and isocolon.74 As we will see in our discussion of peristasis catalogues below, all of these stylistic features correspond to what has been called “catalogue style,” and thus need not receive independent treatment.

74 Ibid., 185–187. See also Heinrici, Der zweite Brief an die Korinther, 313–14.
Chapter Four

Forensic Rhetoric, Epistolary Types, and Rhetorical Education

**Forensic Rhetoric and the Disposition of 2 Corinthians 10–13**

Unlike rhetorical-critical studies of Galatians, which have been concerned above all with demonstrating the ostensible correspondence of the formal structure of the letter with the *partes orationis* described by ancient rhetorical theorists, treatments of Paul’s rhetoric in 2 Cor 10–13 have focused primarily on smaller rhetorical forms and figures embedded in the letter. In fact, most seem to agree that 2 Cor 10–13 as a whole is not amenable to formal description in terms of rhetorical disposition.¹ Nevertheless, in his Marburg dissertation, Hans-Georg Sundermann argued that 2 Cor 10–13 was a specimen of forensic rhetoric complete with the corresponding structure.²

Sundermann’s study has not been particularly influential. Margaret Thrall, who describes his thesis as “plausible,” is, to my knowledge, the only commentator to give it serious consideration.³ Nevertheless, since Thrall tentatively takes Sundermann’s analysis as proof that Paul received formal training in rhetoric, it is necessary to evaluate the evidence.⁴

(Nota that in this section, as elsewhere in this study, I replicate primary texts at some length.

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⁴ Ibid., 2:923–24. Note that Sundermann himself explicitly avoids making this assertion (*Der schwache Apostel*, 13).
My goal in doing so is not to overburden the reader, but rather to counter the dangerous
tendency in much New Testament rhetorical criticism of comparing Paul not with the ancient
sources themselves but rather with abstractions thereof.

Sundermann’s analysis is problematic from the start. He considers 10:1–11 an
exordium that takes the form of an insinuatio,⁵ which, as Rhet. Her. 1.6 explains, serves the
same function as the direct exordium—to win the audience’s goodwill and attention—but
does so “covertly, through dissimulation” (Caplan, LCL [cf. Cicero, Inv. 1.15.20]). On this
reading, Paul’s invocation of “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” is ironic, which would
account for the fact that “der moderate Ton, mit dem Paulus beginnt, steht im deutlichen
Kontrast zur Schärfe der Auseinandersetzung.”⁶ Regardless of whether this reading of 10:1 is
persuasive, it is difficult to see how Paul’s straightforward threat to “punish every
disobedience” (v. 6) can be construed as a dissimulative attempt to win good will. In fact,
attention to Paul’s language elsewhere suggests that both the gentle appeal of v. 1 and the
threat of punishment in vv. 2–6 are straightforward and in earnest: Paul would prefer to act
gently, but promises to resort to the rod of discipline if necessary (cf. 1 Cor 4:18–21; 2 Cor
13:1–4, 10). In any case, this all has little to do with the business of an exordium: Paul’s aim
is not the general good will and attentiveness of the audience as sought by the forensic rhetor.
His aim is obedience.

The stark difference between the conventions of forensic rhetoric and Paul’s method
here is easily illustrated by surveying the exordia of a few forensic speeches—something

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⁵ Sundermann, Der Schwache Apostel, 47–68.
⁶ Ibid., 50.
Sundermann appears to have forgone in favour of consulting Lausberg.⁷ Quintilian (Inst. 4.1.38–39; cf. 4.1.66–68) sees Cicero’s Pro Ligario 1.1–2 as an exemplary ironic exordium:

> It is a new crime, and one never heard of before this day, O Caius Caesar, which my relation Quintus Tubero has brought before you, when he accuses Quintus Ligarius with having been in Africa; and that charge Caius Pansa, a man of eminent genius, relying perhaps on that intimacy with you which he enjoys, has ventured to confess. Therefore I do not know which way I had best proceed. . . . [You], O Tubero, have that which is of all things most desirable for a prosecutor; a defendant who confesses his fault; but still, one who confesses it only so far as he admits that he was of the same party as you yourself, O Tubero, were, and as that man worthy of all praise, your father, also was. Therefore you must inevitably confess yourselves also to be guilty, before you can find fault with any part of the conduct of Ligarius. (Yonge, LCL)

The irony here consists in Cicero’s faux bewilderment at how to deal with the case, a posture that, as Quintilian observes, aids Cicero in his attempt to render the case absurd (cf. Cicero, Cael. 1.1): Ligarius has done only what the accuser and his father also have done. In addition, as in any good exordium, the nature of the case is clearly described, and we get a preview of Cicero’s argumentative strategy.

Quintilian (Inst. 4.1.46) is also fond of the exordium that begins Cicero’s speech in defense of Rabirus (Rab. Perd. 1–2), an exordium that employs a more conventional strategy for winning goodwill, namely, an assertion of the nobility of his own motives:

> Although, O Romans, it is not my custom at the beginning of a speech to give any reason why I am defending each particular defendant, because I have always considered that the mere fact of the danger of any citizen was quite sufficient reason for my considering myself connected with him, still, in this instance, when I come forward to defend the life, and character, and all the fortunes of Caius Rabirus, I think I ought to give a reason for my undertaking this duty; because the very same reason which has appeared to me a most adequate one to prompt me to undertake his defence, ought also to appear to you sufficient to induce you to acquit him. . . .

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Wherefore, if it is the part of a virtuous consul when he sees all the bulwarks of the republic undermined and weakened, to come to the assistance of his country . . . it is the part also of virtuous and fearless citizens, such as you have shown yourselves in all the emergencies of the republic, to block up all the avenues of sedition . . . and to judge the man who acts in obedience to them worthy of praise and honour, rather than of condemnation and punishment. (1.1–3 [Yonge, LCL])

Finally, note the use of the same topos by Demosthenes in an exordium as like Cicero’s in tone and content as it is unlike 2 Cor 10:1–11:

Gentlemen of the jury, it is chiefly because I consider that the State will benefit by the repeal of this law, but partly also out of sympathy with the young son of Chabrias, that I have consented to support the plaintiffs to the best of my ability. . . . For my own part, I shall forbear to retort that it is unjust to take away this privilege from all because you find fault with some. (Lept. 1–2 [Vince and Vince, LCL])

Indeed, surveying ancient forensic exordia, what strikes one is the conventionality of the topoi and of the basic content (cf. Aeschines, Tim. 1–8; Ctes. 1–9; Demosthenes, Mid. 1–8; Aristocr. 1–8; Isaeus, Cleon. 1–8; Cir. 1–5; Isocrates, Euth. 1; Lycurgus, Leocr. 1–15; Cicero, Sest. 1–2; Balb. 1–2). All these exordia contain most or all of the elements that Quintilian recommends an orator should consider while composing an exordium:

What he has to say; before whom, in whose defence, against whom, at what time and place, under what circumstances he has to speak; what is the popular opinion on the subject, what the prepossessions of the judge are likely to be; and finally of what we should express our deprecation or desire. (Inst. 4.1.52 [Butler, LCL])

Paul in 2 Cor 10:1–11 touches on none of these with any degree of clarity. To say that this is an exordium, then, can mean nothing more than that it is the beginning of his letter. There is certainly no indication of participation in the rhetorical tradition of Quintilian, Cicero, and Demosthenes.

According to Sundermann, Paul concludes his exordium with a partitio, which feature Sundermann defines, following Lausberg, as “an introductory listing of the points to be
treated.” In Sundermann’s scheme, 10:7 refers to the *probatio* in 11:16–12:18, while 10:10–11 points to the *refutatio* in 11:1–15. One wonders whether what Paul wants to accomplish with his foolish boasting is adequately summarized as a proof that “just as you belong to Christ, so also do we” (10:7). Surely Paul is arguing for something rather more contentious than being equally Χριστου. And, if 11:1–15 refutes anything, it is his rivals’ criticism of his financial dealings with the Corinthians, not, as it should if it were an elaboration of 10:10–11, their accusation that he is bold from afar but weak when present. Sundermann’s schema, then, does not correspond very well to what we actually find in the text.

Moreover, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Sundermann did not bother to find out what a real *partitio* looks like. He is correct that a *partitio* can occasionally occur in an *exordium*. Quintilian (*Inst*. 4.1.35; 4.5.11), as usual, cites Cicero as providing an example: “I have observed, O judges, that the whole speech of the accuser is divided into two parts . . . And, therefore, I have determined to preserve the same division of the subject in my defense” (*Clu*. 1.1 [Yonge, LCL]; cf. Aeschines, *Tim*. 8; Cicero, *Mur*. 5.11; Demosthenes, *Pro Phorm*. 12–13; Isaeus, *Cleon*. 15; *Apoll*. 4; Isocrates, *Callim*. 4). Here one would have to be asleep not to recognize that the author was providing a preview of the argument. And that is precisely the point. The rapt attention of one’s audience could never be taken for granted, and a *partitio* was thus intended to “make the case clearer and the judge more attentive and more ready to be instructed” (Quintilian, *Inst*. 4.5.1 [Butler, LCL]). It served, as Quintilian explained, like an ancient powerpoint outline: “[It] relieves [the judge’s] attention by assigning a definite limit to certain parts of the speech, just as our fatigue upon a journey is relieved by reading the distances on the milestones which we pass” (4.5.22). Subtlety, then,

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9 For a vivid example, see Dio Chrysostom, *2 Tars*. 1–7.
was not prized. If 2 Cor 10:7, 10–11 constitutes a partitio, Paul’s audience can only have figured this out retrospectively, if at all. And that undermines the purpose entirely.

Finally, particularly damaging to Sundermann’s reading is the absence of anything that resembles a clear statement of the facts of the case (narratio). Sundermann treats 10:12–18 as such, but the mere fact that Paul refers to a past event—in this case his founding of the Corinthian community (v. 14)—does not make this a narratio. In fact, Paul’s reference to his initial work among the Corinthians leaves us none the wiser as to what a narratio should in fact outline, namely, the events that have precipitated the current dispute (cf. Rhet. Her. 1.9.15; Quintilian, Inst. 4.2.31).

Indeed, if Paul were attempting to compose a narratio, he did a singularly poor job: According to Rhet. Her. 1.9, a narratio should not “trace the affair back to its remotest beginning,” which is precisely what Paul does by noting his founding of the community in Corinth. Likewise, it should be clear, and avoid language that is “confused, involved, or unfamiliar” (cf. Quintilian, Inst. 4.2.36, 43); Theodoret already noted that Paul wrote ὁσσαφῶς here (Int. Paul. [PG 82:437]), and, as Plummer notes, the confused textual tradition attests to the difficulty of rendering the passage clearly. Finally, it should avoid repetition (cf. Quintilian, Inst. 4.2.43), which Paul most certainly fails to do: ὃν γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐγκρίναι ἢ συγκρίναι ἑαυτοῦ . . . ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ εἶς τὰ ἀμετρα καυχοῦμεθα . . . οὐκ εἶς τὰ ἀμετρα καυχόμενοι ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόποις . . . οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχήσασθαι (10:12–16).

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10 Says Quintilian, “What can be simpler or clearer than a straightforward partition?” (Inst. 4.5.3).
11 Sundermann, Der schwache Apostel, 68–75. So also Peterson, Eloquence and the Proclamation of the Gospel, 93–104.
12 Plummer, Second Epistle, 284–85. See further p. 305n58 below.
Epistolary Theory and Paul’s Rhetorical Education

If Sundermann’s attempt to describe 2 Cor 10–13 as an instance of forensic rhetoric does not succeed, this is really no surprise: our text is not a speech; it is a letter. More immediately plausible, then, than analysis in terms of rhetorical disposition is John Fitzgerald’s assertion that 2 Cor 10–13 has affinities with a number of the letter types described by ancient epistolary theorists—affinities that, for Fitzgerald, attest to Paul’s rhetorical education:

Inasmuch as ... instruction in epistolary style was provided by teachers of rhetoric, the correspondence of Paul’s letters to the styles and letter types given by Ps.-Demetrius and Ps.-Libanius ... provides another piece of evidence that Paul’s educational level was high and that he had received training in rhetoric. 13

But here too there are problems. In addition to providing a superficial and thus misleading comparison of 2 Cor 10–13 with the epistolary handbooks, Fitzgerald’s argument misconstrues both the nature of the handbooks and their role in ancient rhetorical education. As we will see, it cannot be sustained.

I should note that although the primary task of the present discussion is to counter Fitzgerald’s argument, I intend it to play an additional role as well, namely, to establish a historical context in which to evaluate the evidence for Paul’s rhetorical education. Specifically, I hope to untangle the conflation, common in current New Testament scholarship, of literate education with formal rhetorical training. Although it is true that literary paideia, which included formal education in rhetoric, generally was available only among the elite, basic literacy and rudimentary letter-writing ability were more widespread, and those who possessed them need not have had any meaningful exposure to advanced literary curricula.

Letter Types in 2 Corinthians 10–13

In his influential commentary, Hans Windisch noted that 2 Cor 1–7 and 10–13 bore resemblance, “im Ganzen oder auf einzelne Abschnitte,” to a number of letter types described by Pseudo-Demetrius and Pseudo-Libanius. The “apologetic” letter (Ps.-Demetrius 18) was one such type, but so were the “accusing” (17), the “reproachful” (4), the “censorious” (6), the “vituperative” (9), the “admonishing” (7), and the “threatening type” (8). “Es ist für den Griechen bezeichnend,” Windisch remarked, “dass er für den Typus des Streitbriefes so viel Nuancen zur Verfügung hat.”

Windisch did not, apparently, delve any deeper into the matter than consideration of the labels Pseudo-Demetrius and Pseudo-Libanius assigned to their letter types. And Fitzgerald’s essay does not get much further. Consigning almost all discussion of what Pseudo-Demetrius actually says to the footnotes, Fitzgerald simply undertakes a reading of 2 Cor 10–13 that characterizes what Paul seeks to do in terminology drawn from these ancient letter manuals. Thus when Paul “entreats” the Corinthians (10:1–2), Fitzgerald invokes Pseudo-Demetrius’s “supplicatory” letter (12), when he threatens punishment, this is deemed comparable to the “threatening” letter type (8), and so on. In total, Fitzgerald suggests that 2 Cor 10–13 evinces familiarity with seven letter types, and thus concludes that it is a “mixed” letter.

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14 Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 8.
15 Ibid.
16 1) “supplicatory” (Ps.-Demetrius 12; cf. Ps.-Libanius 7, 54); 2) “threatening” (Ps.-Demetrius 8; cf. Ps.-Libanius 13, 60); 3) “apologetic” (Ps.-Demetrius 18); 4) “counteraccusation” (Ps.-Libanius 69); 5) “accusation” or “reproach” (Ps.-Demetrius 17; Ps.-Libanius 64); 6) “ironic” (Ps.-Demetrius 20; cf. Ps.-Libanius 9, 56); 7) “provoking” (Ps.-Libanius 24, 71).
17 Note that Ps.-Libanius describes a “mixed” letter as one composed εἰ διαφόρων χαρακτήρων—that is, from “different” or perhaps “various” styles, not, as Malherbe’s translation has it, “from many styles.” Indeed, Ps.-Libanius’s sample certainly does not contain more than two: “I know that you live a life of piety, that you conduct yourself as a citizen in a manner worth of respect, indeed, that you adorn the illustrious name of philosophy itself, with the excellence of an unassailable and pure citizenship. But in this one thing alone do you err, that you slander your friends. You must avoid that, for it is not fitting that philosophers engage in
What such analysis actually involves is evident from the few instances where Fitzgerald’s references to the handbooks go beyond the mere naming of letter types. What he says concerning the “apologetic” letter (18) is particularly illuminating:

The situation presupposed in 2 Corinthians 10–13 . . . conforms to the typical apologetic Sitz im Leben. The case involves three parties: Paul, the Corinthians, and the opponents. The accusations against Paul have been raised by the opponents (the third party), but Paul (the first party) does not respond directly to them. The apology is instead directed to the Corinthians (the second party). Ps.-Demetrius presupposes precisely this situation in an example of an apologetic letter, with the first party’s response to the third party’s charges being directed to the second party. 18

It is important to see that what such a comparison has in view is not the form, nor the style, nor the method of Pseudo-Demetrius’s and Paul’s letters. Instead, it simply notes the similarity of the historical contingency imagined by Pseudo-Demetrius and that faced by Paul: Paul considered himself the victim of slander, as did Pseudo-Demetrius’s fictive letter writer. 19 It hardly takes training in epistolary theory to attempt a defense of oneself under such conditions, and it is not at all remarkable that such a defense should be directed at those whose esteem one covets (the “second party”) and not the slanderers themselves (the “third party”). Put another way, since Pseudo-Demetrius’s goal, as outlined in his preface, was to provide a sample letter appropriate to every social circumstance in which a letter might be employed, 20 it stands to reason that he managed to provide something of relevance to the

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18 Fitzgerald, “Ancient Epistolary Theorists,” 197
19 Likewise, concerning the accusing or reproachful letter, Fitzgerald notes: “Just as Paul accuses the Corinthians of receiving those who malign him, so also Ps.-Demetrius’s letter writer complains that the recipient has caused him grief by befriending someone who has unjustly accused him of improper conduct. Again, just as Paul reproaches the Corinthians for failing to be properly appreciative of his sacrifices for them, Ps.-Libanius’s letter of reproach castigates the recipient for lack of gratitude toward his benefactor” (“Ancient Epistolary Theorists,” 198–99).
situation Paul faced in Corinth. Accordingly, unless Paul can be shown to have addressed this situation in a manner akin to what Pseudo-Demetrius recommended, the fact that he faced a similar contingency hardly constitutes evidence of Paul’s familiarity with the handbook tradition.

Here it is important to be clear regarding what, precisely, this letter manual was intended to accomplish. Pseudo-Demetrius’s goal evidently was not to promote the mastery of formal elements such as salutations and farewells. His sample letters contain the bodies of the letters only; apparently, ability to append the basic epistolary elements was taken for granted. And although Pseudo-Demetrius does say that he will provide a sample of the appropriate arrangement (ταξις [pr.]) of each letter, it would be misleading to suggest that his primary concern was to break each type down into its formal elements. No, what he sought to instill had more to do with appropriate style, tone, and etiquette. As Carol Poster summarizes the function of his handbook:

Its utility lies in its provision of phrases that can be reused and its modeling of how a secretary should compose elite correspondence in a tone appropriate to an educated man of paideia. The secretary who owned a copy of this manual would not need to work up an admonishing or congratulatory letter ex nihilo, but instead could look up the pertinent letter type, and either copy verbatim or embellish the model. In other words, the goal was not that Pseudo-Demetrius’s readers would write letters of certain genres or types—how, indeed, could they do otherwise?—but that, whatever type of

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21 My analysis will focus on the work of Ps.-Demetrius, for which scholars generally give a date range of 2nd c. BCE–3rd c. CE. See Abraham J. Malherbe, ed., Ancient Epistolary Theorists, SBLSBS 19 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 4; Carol Poster, “A Conversation Halved: Epistolary Theory in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” in Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies, ed. Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell, Studies in Rhetoric/Communication (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 24. Ps.-Libanius’s handbook likely dates from the 4th c. CE (Poster, “A Conversation Halved,” 27), and thus should be used only cautiously as evidence for the nature of first-century epistolary training.


letter they were writing, they would write it well, that is, appropriately for men of their standing and in keeping with the social mores relevant to the situation at hand.\footnote{As Stanley Stowers has rightly explained, “An elaborate letter of recommendation written by a highly educated person and a crude commendation by a barely literate Egyptian peasant are essentially of the same genre because they are both attempting to effect the same social transaction. The elaborations of the one letter make it cultured and aesthetically pleasing, not of a different genre.” “Social Typification,” 85.}

Accordingly, if we seek evidence that Paul was familiar with the sort of epistolary practice Pseudo-Demetrius reflects, we will have to consider not just the basic social situation Paul’s letter presupposes, but rather its conformity with the aristocratic social codes embedded in Pseudo-Demetrius’s samples.\footnote{Ps.-Demetrius clearly expects his audience to consist of those “in prominent positions” (ἐν ὑπάρχως κείμενοι [1]; cf. 11). See further Poster, “A Conversation Halved,” 25; Klauck, Ancient Letters and the New Testament, 200.} One potential indicator of such conformity, of course, would be similarly refined use of rhetorical tropes.

Since the “apologetic” letter is the type most frequently adduced as relevant to 2 Cor 10–13,\footnote{See esp. Betz, Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, 41. Note that despite Betz’s reference to apologetic letters, Betz himself was not really interested in epistolary apologies: After demonstrating that such things existed, he promptly left them behind and went on to compare Paul’s letter to a variety of literary apologies. In fact, he produces no exemplars of the form to which he assigns the letter, save a passing reference, in a footnote, to Plato’s Ep. 3. Likewise, in his treatment of Galatians as another such “apologetic letter,” Betz adduces, again in passing, Plato’s Ep. 7, misleadingly citing A. Momigliano’s reference to that text as “apologetic.” Betz, “Literary Composition and Function,” 354–55; Betz, Galatians, 14–15; citing Momigliano The Development of Greek Biography (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 60–62. On Betz’s misuse of Momigliano, see Aune, review of Betz, 324; Anderson, Ancient Rhetorical Theory, 124.} it will provide a useful example for undertaking this mode of comparison. In keeping with what we should expect from Poster’s characterization of his handbook, Pseudo-Demetrius’s sample letter, which “adduces, with proof, arguments which contradict charges that are being made” (18 [trans. Malherbe]), derives its force from skillful manipulation of the conventional rhetoric of friendship. Specifically, what makes this exemplar effective is its deflection of attention from the guilt of the sender to the moral character of the recipient. For Pseudo-Demetrius, less is more: The charges are addressed casually, almost in passing; they are simply too absurd to focus on. Thus, by the end of the letter, we can hardly help but
presume the sender’s innocence, being interested instead in whether the recipient will act as befits a true friend. Accordingly, then, the sample letter’s conventional friendship language is not merely a function of the handbook format, but in fact performs an important part of the social “work” of the letter. By using the traditional language of friendship, Pseudo-Demetrius locates the relationship of sender and recipient within a well-defined and therefore suasive moral framework, thus the sender’s “apology” becomes in fact an invitation for the recipient to act as a true friend ought.

Paul’s letter, on the contrary, remains essentially focused on Paul himself. There are only a few glancing references to the impure motives of his rivals (10:12; 11:12–13) and the lack of loyalty among his addressees (12:11). What Paul returns to again and again is the question of his own status (10:1–2, 7–11, 14–18; 11:5–6, 7–12; 11:17–12:10; 12:11–13, 15–19; 13:3–4, 6–8). He is unable, it seems, to resist the urge to self-defense. Were Pseudo-Demetrius consulted about this letter, he would surely suggest to Paul that by protesting too much he in fact lends credibility to the charges against him. In any case, such insistent self-vindication is clearly not what his handbook recommends for an apologetic letter.

Further, these letters are strikingly different in tone: Pseudo-Demetrius is confident and reassuring toward his addressee and relatively mild toward his accusers. His is a magnanimous posture: he is willing to give his friend the benefit of the doubt. Paul, contrarily, is famously impassioned, sarcastic, and vituperative. He pleads and he threatens. In short, his comportment is altogether different from that of Pseudo-Demetrius’s ideal aristocratic letter writer.

Such differences in comportment are seldom remarked in Pauline scholarship. If, however, as Stowers asserts, ancient epistolary practice represented precisely the
reinscription of social norms—an “implicit sociology,” he calls it—then this is exactly the level of comparison that is required. What such comparison demonstrates is clear: There is no evidence in 2 Cor 10–13 of Paul’s participation in the professional epistolographical tradition to which Pseudo-Demetrius attests. This conclusion will be reinforced in the next section, wherein I consider the nature of exposure to epistolary conventions and topoi in Greco-Roman antiquity.

Epistolary and Rhetorical Training in Greco-Roman Antiquity

Epistolary theory was a latecomer to the field of rhetoric, and, when it did arrive, it continued to occupy a peripheral place. As Abraham Malherbe notes, “The discussion in Demetrius is an excursus, [the consummate letter writer] Cicero makes no room for a systematic discussion of it in his works on rhetoric, and the references in Quintilian and Theon are casual.” But if we have little evidence of systematic theorization, nevertheless it appears that, in practice, letter writers sought to abide by fairly well-established epistolary conventions of style and content, as is evidenced above all by a fairly predictable set of standard formal elements and recurrent topoi. How, then, were these conventions learned?

Certainly we must dispense with Fitzgerald’s assignation of epistolary training to rhetorical school, which, it appears, is based either on a selective or a mistaken reading of Malherbe. Fitzgerald bases his conclusion on Malherbe’s assertion that “letters were written

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as an exercise in style early in the tertiary stage of the educational system.”\textsuperscript{32} What one would not guess from Fitzgerald’s use of Malherbe is that what Malherbe argues, in fact, is that “epistolary form was taught on the basis of model letters in the secondary stage of education.”\textsuperscript{33} What Malherbe says concerning letter writing during the tertiary stage is that here we first observe evidence of interest in epistolary style,\textsuperscript{34} a specification that is obscured by Fitzgerald. Malherbe goes on:

\begin{quote}
It should be noted that the purpose of the [tertiary] exercise was not to learn how to write letters, but to develop facility in adopting various kinds of style. One might expect that it was at this point that epistolary theory would be introduced, but the evidence is too slender to make a confident judgment. \textit{Nor can we assign the handbooks of ‘Demetrius’ and ‘Libanius’ to this point in the curriculum.}\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

We would never suspect from reading Fitzgerald that Malherbe in fact relegates the letter-writing manuals to a place outside the scope of the tripartite literary curriculum altogether, suggesting instead that they were used to train professional letter writers.\textsuperscript{36}

In any case, we would be sorely mistaken to imagine that competence in letter writing could serve, in itself, as evidence of rhetorical education. On the contrary, as Carol Poster explains, “epistolary theory . . . [permeated] a far greater portion of ancient society than rhetorical training.”\textsuperscript{37} Direct evidence for letter writing in schools is not extensive, but what evidence we do have suggests that its rudiments were taught at a much earlier stage than Fitzgerald or even Malherbe allows.\textsuperscript{38} The letters preserved in \textit{P.Bon. 5}, which appear to be

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Malherbe, \textit{Social Aspects}, 59.
\item Malherbe, \textit{Ancient Epistolary Theorists}, 6 (my emphasis).
\item Ibid., 7.
\item Ibid. (my emphasis).
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
schoolroom exercises, are relatively crude and certainly betray little in the way of rhetorical sensibility. Similarly, our best evidence for ancient knowledge of letter-writing skills—that is, the extant letters themselves—are, for the most part, “written in the kind of school language used by persons of average, superficial education, who painfully attempted to write in an educated manner.” Indeed, any theory regarding the place of letter writing in ancient education must account for the fact that the rudiments of epistolography were widely familiar even among those who had not yet mastered grammar. John Muir provides a sensible, though necessarily speculative explanation:

The outline of the basic family letter with its regular constituents of wishes for good health, thanks for gifts received, assurances of remembrance in prayers and final greetings to friends and relations was probably taught as a part of elementary education, and preserved and consolidated by that social expectation which still shapes such letters today.

Clearly, then, the basic formal elements of Paul’s letters—greetings, farewells, and epistolary *topoi*—provide no evidence of advanced education, rhetorical or otherwise. In fact, they provide no evidence of education at all, for they appear also in letters sent by the illiterate, whose letters were written, like Paul’s, by secretaries.

The evidence that letter writing occurred in the rhetorical schools of Paul’s time is extremely sparse, consisting of little more than an isolated mention in Theon’s *Progymnasmata* (8 [RG 2:115]), where Theon mentions letter writing as a possible avenue

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42 See esp. Richards, *Secretary in the Letters of Paul*. 
for practicing personification (προσωποποιία). The focus here, it should be noted, was not on letter writing per se, but rather on the student’s mastery of another exercise, the strategic inhabitation of another’s voice. We may presume that this would have had as a welcome byproduct the improvement of epistolary style, but it was obviously assumed that students undertaking the *Progymnasmata* already knew how to write a letter. Moreover, there is no evidence that students in rhetorical school were ever taught to write in their own voices or to compose “real” letters—that is, the sort of letters that bureaucrats, statesmen, and family members sent to one another. There were, certainly, well-educated men—Cicero, Seneca, and Gregory of Nazianzus, for example—who brought their rhetorical training to bear on the writing of letters, but this should not be taken to imply that they learned to write letters at a school of rhetoric.

Further, as noted above, it is certain that the handbooks of Pseudo-Demetrius and Pseudo-Libanius were not designed for use in rhetorical school. Instead, they were explicitly directed at professionals—bureaucrats and statesmen—for whom competent letter writing was essential to a “brilliant” (λαμπρός [Ps.-Demetrius, pr.]) career. Presumably their secretaries, whom Pseudo-Demetrius castigates for their careless compositions, would likewise have benefited.

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43 Theon’s comment is paralleled in the 5th c. by Nicolaus of Myra (*Progymn. 10* [Felten 67]). Theon is usually dated to the 1st c. C.E. So, e.g., Michel Patillon, ed., *Aelius Théon: Progymnasmata*, Budé (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1997), viii–xvi; George A. Kennedy, trans., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, WGRW 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 1. Note, however, that Malcolm Heath has recently challenged this consensus, advocating instead a 5th-c. date. “Theon and the History of the Progymnasmata,” *GRBS* 43 (2002): 129–60. I am not in a position to comment on this question, except to note that Heath’s dating would make good sense of the fact that reference to the ἐπιστολικὴ ἔδοξις appears in Theon and Nicolaus but not in the *progymnasmata* of Ps.-Hermogenes or Aphthonius. A 5th-c. date for both of these references would be in keeping with a general trend of increasing interest in letter writing by rhetoricians in late antiquity, evinced above all by Libanius. See Raffaella Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 169–73.


And these secretaries introduce a further complicating factor: Many of those who were expected to write letters competently were slaves. Here rhetorical and epistolary training decisively part ways, a phenomenon for which there is a relatively simple explanation: Whereas only the cultured elite encountered circumstances that demanded displays of formal rhetorical prowess, people of all social strata found it socially and economically necessary to send one another letters. In other words, although the literati attempted—chiefly by using the moral power of ridicule, it would appear—to restrict meaningful public speech and cultural activity to the rather closed circle of the *pepaideumenoi*, the basic tools of literacy, including letter writing, were far too useful to be subject to such restraint. So, while rhetorical education “remained accessible mainly to the rich and upper class,” training in basic literacy went wherever it was economically and socially advantageous.

Here it is important to distinguish between the sort of *paideia* to which the elite aspired and the functional literacy of slaves, clerks, and secretaries. This distinction has been neglected in much classical scholarship—and thus much biblical scholarship as well—largely because we generally have taken elite discussions of education as representative. Elite sources do give the impression of a universal curriculum, the *enkyklios paideia*, which consisted of the fundamental elements of literary education and culminated in the study of rhetoric. And scholars of ancient education have provided a convenient and intuitive systematization of the elite testimony, according to which students passed through three

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46 Poster, “Economy of Letter Writing,” 122; Richards, *Secretary in the Letters of Paul*, passim.
separate stages of this single curriculum: primary instruction, focusing on the fundamentals of literacy, was provided by a γραμματιστής; secondary education dealt with advanced grammar and literary studies under the tutelage of a γραμματικός; and tertiary education, provided by a σοφιστής or ρήτορ, consisted in the study of rhetoric.\textsuperscript{51}

Proponents of this model recognize, of course, that not all students who began the enkyklios paideia made their way through the entire curriculum; indeed, it is generally agreed that only a small proportion of students advanced to the level of tertiary, that is, rhetorical education.\textsuperscript{52} Still, despite the concession that some people made it further along the track than others, the model, like the elite texts on which it is based, implies that literate education in the ancient world was a single endeavour. Paideia was paideia, and either one had a little of it or a lot.

In recent scholarship, however, the adequacy of this model increasingly has come into question. This is due, in large part, to a new focus on the testimony of documentary papyri. Armed with these pedestrian texts, recent studies have shed light on a hitherto obscure realm of literate activity that is quite different from what the elite would have considered true paideia\textsuperscript{53}—a realm wherein, for example, students might master handwriting without being able to read the texts they produced.\textsuperscript{54} As Teresa Morgan has noted, in contrast to the ideal

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} So Marrou, \textit{History of Education}, 123; Hock, “Greco-Roman Education,” 204.
\item \textsuperscript{54} See Cribiore, \textit{Gymnastics of the Mind}, 161–62.
\end{itemize}
promulgated by the likes of Quintilian, “the contents of the papyri suggest a much more flexible system [of education] adaptable to a wide range of social contexts.”

The key finding here is one that unmasks the myth of a universal curriculum: As one would expect, “pupils from different social groups learnt what was appropriate, or deemed appropriate, to their backgrounds and expectations.” That is, they learned what it was worth their while to learn. Certainly students at all levels of society were proud to display what literary culture they did master; but, for all but the aristocratic elite, the primary motivation and reward was economic advantage: A village boy did not learn to read and write so that he could do a poor job of being Cicero; he learned to read and write so that he could do an adequate job of being a scribe.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the notion of a coherent tripartite curriculum does not hold up under scrutiny. As Rafaella Cribiore emphasizes, there simply was no uniform system of education. In general, however, at least in Rome and the major cities of the empire, “a two-track system prevailed,” Cribiore argues, “that served different segments of the population: while schools of elementary letters provided a basic literacy to slaves and

55 Morgan, Literate Education, 52.
56 Ibid., 51.
57 See esp. ibid., 109–18.
59 Note that the existence of multiple literacies which generally correspond to various social locations—and therefore have varying degrees of relationship to the formal educational system—is precisely what recent ethnographic work on literacy should have us expect. See esp. Shirley Brice Heath, Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Brian V. Street, Literacy in Theory and Practice, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
61 Cribiore, Gymnastics of the Mind, 36; see also Kaster, “Primary and Secondary Schools.”
freeborn individuals of the lower classes, schools of liberal studies offered a more refined education to children of the upper classes.”

Let me put this in terms of statistics, imprecise as they must be: William Harris declines to give a specific percentage, but his literacy estimates put us somewhere in the range of 10 percent for the cities of the Greek East. By Cribiore’s reckoning, the majority of students learned only the rudiments of reading and writing—that is, they would not have been on the “liberal education” track at all. Again, accepting the impossibility of anything like precision, that means that in a city like Ephesus, between five and nine percent of the population would have had only rudimentary training in reading and writing, and an additional one to four percent would have had varying degrees of real paideia. This one to four percent, it is worth noting, corresponds well to the three percent or so of the population that, by Steven Friesen’s calculations, constituted the aristocracy of a typical urban centre.

So, within this basic framework, where does one find the ability to write letters? Certainly not restricted to the pepaideumenoi. On the contrary, as Carol Poster concludes:

Letter-writing skills were scattered among various levels and types of instruction, from basic grammar classes to advanced professional training courses. . . . Slaves and women could profitably be trained in the mechanical skills of tachygraphy and calligraphy. Freedmen or nonelite metropolitan Greeks could, by limited literacy and professional letter-writing education, take advantage of plentiful employment opportunities as lower-level clerks, but might not have the social qualifications (or fees) appropriate to elite rhetorical courses. Sophistic education would provide access to elite secretarial positions.

In sum, then, even if Paul could be shown to have written letters in accordance with contemporary epistolary standards, this would prove nothing more than that he, or the

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62 Cribiore, Gymnastics of the Mind, 37; see also Kaster, “Primary and Secondary Schools,” 346.
64 Cribiore, “Gymnastics of the Mind,” 187.
65 According to the calculations of Steven Friesen, the wealthy aristocracy made up about 1.23% of the empire, amounting to just under 3% of the population of larger urban centres. “Poverty in Pauline Studies,” 340. Cf. Meggitt, Paul, Poverty and Survival, 50n49.
66 Poster, “Economy of Letter Writing,” 120.
secretary to whom he had access, had some basic clerical training. Only if we were also to encounter what were for his contemporaries the essential indicators of true paideia—specifically, refined diction, learned literary references, elegant use of conventional tropes and topoi, and elite moral and social values\(^{67}\)—would we have grounds for asserting that Paul had received advanced literary education, or, more specifically, formal training in rhetoric.

**Conclusion**

Second Corinthians 10–13 does not conform to the rhetorical disposition expected of a forensic oration. Moreover, the general resemblance of 2 Cor 10–13 to certain of the letter types described by Pseudo-Demetrius cannot be regarded as evidence for Paul’s formal education. Its use as such derives from a misconstrual of the nature and function of this epistolary handbook. Indeed, the classification of Paul’s letters among Pseudo-Demetrius’s letter types has involved surprisingly superficial comparison, glossing over telling differences in manner and comportment. When we take the time to look at how Paul apologizes, rebukes, admonishes, etc., it becomes difficult to sustain the argument that Paul is a participant in the epistolary tradition to which Pseudo-Demetrius attests. Moreover, given

what we can discern concerning the place of letter writing in ancient education, Paul’s more
general epistolary competence can by no means be considered evidence of formal literary, let
alone rhetorical education.
Chapter Five
Paul’s (In)appropriate Boasting: Periautologia

Paul’s boasting in 2 Cor 10–13 has been a source of consternation for generations of pious readers. Aside from simply giving the impression, to many readers, that he was “pathologically concerned about his own status,”¹ in this text Paul appears to engage in precisely the sort of behaviour of which he accuses his rivals. As Alfred Plummer notes, “seeing that he has just been maintaining that self-praise is no recommendation, it seems grossly inconsistent [that he should go on to describe his own accomplishments].”²

Not surprisingly, the posture of preachers and exegetes has long been almost as defensive as Paul’s own. One tack has been to stress that Paul really had no other choice—at least, not if the truth of the gospel was to be preserved. Thus Ambrosiaster assures us that Paul “is not really boasting” (non ergo vere ad gloriam suam haec loquitur), because he was constrained by the accusations against him to defend himself (Comm. 200 [PL 17:324; trans. Bray]). In a similar vein, F. C. Baur stresses Paul’s reluctance to tell of his revelatory experiences: “Willingly he would have avoided speaking of them at all, in order to escape every appearance of vain self-exaltation, yet here it behooved him to be silent on nothing

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which might serve for the vindication and establishment of his apostolic authority.”\(^3\) The implication, of course, is that Paul either had to reassert his position in Corinth or stand idly by as the gospel was perverted by false apostles.

Other, more sophisticated defenses of Paul’s boasting have been proffered. Plummer resolves the apparent contradiction between Paul’s anti-boasting talk and his self-promoting walk by stressing that he is self-consciously playing his opponents’ game: “The difference between him and his critics is this; that they, without being aware of it, are fools ceaselessly, because folly has become a second nature to them; whereas he deliberately plays the fool for a few minutes, because their folly can be met in no other way.”\(^4\) R. H. Strachan resorts to splitting hairs: “Paul boasts, not that he is an apostle, but that God had made him one.”\(^5\) In short, the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor 10–13 has consisted, in large part, of a series of excuses for Paul’s unseemly demeanour.

This apologetic endeavour has received fresh vigour in recent decades from the rediscovery of Windisch’s observation that Plutarch provides a nearly contemporaneous discussion of how to indulge in self-praise without arousing offense.\(^6\) Windisch, noticing a number of interesting parallels between Plutarch’s *De laude ipsius* (Mor. 539A–547F) and Paul’s dilemma, had concluded:


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\(^3\) Baur, *Paul*, 1:280.


\(^6\) Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 345. Before Windisch, Heinrici already had asserted the relevance of Plutarch’s treatise. See *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 313; Heinrici, *Der litterarische Charakter der neutestamentlichen Schriften*, 67n2.
In other words, Paul shared the cultural assumptions of his contemporaries. What was particularly interesting to Windisch was that these contemporaries were Greek.

Windisch’s appeal to Plutarch was taken up by Hans Dieter Betz in his 1972 monograph Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, but now the whole discussion was transposed into the key of rhetoric. Where Windisch referred rather vaguely to a shared “outlook,” Betz spoke of Paul’s conformity to rhetorical dictates: “Paulus hält sich strikt an die Vorschriften, wie sie die Rhetorik für die ‘periautologi/a’ aufgestellt hatte.” From here, using the fallacious but attractive reasoning we noted throughout chapter 2, it was but a short path to the conclusion that Paul’s use of periautologia betrays his rhetorical education. And, as an added bonus, those troubled by Paul’s boasting now could be assured that, however overblown it may appear to modern readers, Paul’s self-praise is “completely inoffensive when measured by ancient standards.”

**Plutarch, De laude ipsius (Moralia 539A–547F)**

It is necessary first to dispel the notion that Plutarch’s treatise is a summation of established rhetorical dictates. In fact, this is not a rhetorical work at all; it is an ethical tractate. Like elsewhere in the assorted writings we call the Moralia—and in his Parallel Lives, for that matter—Plutarch is advising ὁ πολιτικὸς ἄνθρωπος how he may conduct his public career honourably and virtuously (De laude 539F). Indeed, as L. Radermacher long

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7 Betz, Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, 75.
8 So Marshall, Enmity in Corinth, 355.
9 George Lyons, Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding, SBLDS 73 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 72. See also Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 432.
ago observed, *De laude ipsius* is perfectly at home in Plutarch’s moralizing corpus: “Die Frage, ob und wann man sich selber loben dürfe, ist eine ethische, und so ist es weiter nicht auffallend, wenn wir eine erbauliche Abhandlung darüber unter den moralischen Schriften des Plutarch finden.”¹¹ In short, what interests Plutarch is not eloquence but virtue; hence he seeks to isolate self-praise that is “good and helpful, teaching admiration and love of the useful and profitable rather than of the vain and superfluous” (546B [De Lacy and Einarson, LCL]; cf. *Comp. Dem. Cic.* 2.3).

Betz too had to admit that “it was the ethical implications [of self-praise] in which Plutarch was primarily interested,” but he argued that Plutarch was thereby developing an idea that “had long been a topic of discussion by rhetoricians.”¹² In other words, Plutarch took existing rhetorical precepts and elaborated their moral foundation and ethical implications. For Betz, then—and the ensuing discussion of *periautologia* among New Testament scholars—whatever Plutarch’s own interests and intent, the important thing is that he bore witness to an established rhetorical tradition.¹³

Betz’s recruitment of Plutarch as a witness for preexisting rhetorical *Vorschriften* was undertaken on Radermacher’s authority. Radermacher had noticed parallels between Plutarch’s treatise and discussions of self-praise by rhetoricians, and thus argued that

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Plutarch must have been influenced by rhetorical sources: Alexander Numenius’s fragmentary \( \text{Пери \ ῥητορικῶν \ ἀφορμῶν } \) reportedly included a discussion of \( \text{periautologία} \) that explained \( \text{πῶς \ ἃν \ τίς \ ἐαυτὸν \ ἀνεπαχθῶς \ ἐπαινεσειν} \) (\( \text{RG 3:4} \)); and Pseudo-Hermogenes, noting that praising oneself (\( \text{τοῦ \ ἐαυτὸν \ ἐπαινεῖν} \)) is “offensive and easily detested,” gives three methods for doing so \( \text{ἀνεπαχθῶς} \) (\( \text{Meth. 25 [Rabe 441–442; trans. Kennedy]} \)). As Radermacher noted, such resemblances to Plutarch’s subject matter and indeed his title are certainly striking. The difficulty, however, is that these works, like every other substantive rhetorical treatment of the matter, postdate Plutarch: Alexander can be dated with some precision to the middle of the second century CE, and Pseudo-Hermogenes cannot have written prior to the authentic Hermogenes’ late second-century acme. Of course, one would normally conclude from this sort of chronology that it was Plutarch’s work that spawned rhetorical treatments of \( \text{periautologia} \), not vice versa.

Prior to 100 CE—about when Plutarch composed his text—the odium of self-praise was mentioned in passing, but no extant work treated the subject at length—certainly not in sufficient detail to qualify as a real predecessor to Plutarch’s discussion. Christopher Forbes avers that “self-praise was discussed as early as Aristotle,” and he is correct, though perhaps guilty of some exaggeration: Aristotle mentions, with no elaboration, that Iphicrates

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15 For Alexander, see Mervin R. Dilts and George A. Kennedy, eds., Two Greek Rhetorical Treatises from the Roman Empire: Introduction, Text, and Translation of the Arts of Rhetoric, Attributed to Anonymous Seguerianus and to Apsines of Gadara, Mnemosyne Supplement 168 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), xii. For Ps.-Hermogenes, see E. Bürgi, “Ist die dem Hermogenes zugeschriebene Schrift \( \text{Περὶ \ μεθόδου \ δεινότητος} \) echt?,” \( \text{WS 48 (1930): 187–97; 49 (1931): 40–69} \). Other handbooks including relevant discussions are Ps.-Aristides, \( \text{Rhet. 1.12.2.7 (RG 2:506)} \) and Apsines, \( \text{Rhet. 3.6.} \) Neither predate Plutarch.
16 So Pernot, “Periautologia,” 109. See also C. P. Jones, “Towards a Chronology of Plutarch’s Works,” \( \text{JRS} \) 56 (1966): 73. Pernot makes the plausible suggestion that the topic was suggested to him while working on the paired lives of Cicero and Demosthenes. Indeed, his comparison of the two leads Plutarch to similar reflections on Demosthenes’ ability to praise himself \( \text{ἀνεπαχθῶς} \) and Cicero’s offensive \( \text{periautologία} \) (\( \text{Comp. Dem. Cic. 2} \)).
17 The one possible exception, Quintilian’s discussion of boasting in \( \text{Inst. 11.1.15–26} \), will be discussed below.
once gave his own encomia (αὐτὸν ἐνεκωμίας ἔθε [Rhet. 1.7.32]); elsewhere he briefly notes that when one is developing ethos, insidious comments about oneself (ἐπίφθονον), like harsh comments about someone else, are best attributed to another (3.17.16).

The Rhetorica ad Herennium (1.5.8) and Cicero’s De inventione (1.16.22) both briefly mention the value of lauding one’s own conduct. But neither treats self-praise as a subject in its own right; instead, both mention it in passing as a stratagem for gaining an audience’s goodwill at the outset of an oration. Moreover, neither have anything resembling Plutarch’s detailed treatment of the dangers of self-praise or delimitation of specific situations in which it is appropriate. Both handbooks simply caution that praise of one’s own services should be done without arrogance. This hardly amounts to precepts for periautologia.

In fact, it is worth noting that the word περιαυτολογία appears only once prior to Plutarch. Moreover, this single extant occurrence comes not in a rhetorical context, but, tellingly, in a moral-philosophical tractate: Philodemus’s fragmentary De bono rege secundum Homerum (col. 21), a text wherein, using examples drawn from Homer, Philodemus provides “a description of the duties and moral behaviour of a princeps in private and public life.” Here we have interests that clearly are akin to those of Plutarch. Like


20 It also appears only seldom afterward—and only once in a rhetorical handbook (Alexander, Περί ῥητορικῶν ἀφορμῶν [RG 4:9]). A TLG search locates 30 occurrences up to and including Chrysostom. Of those, fully half are from Plutarch: 11 from Laud. (539 C; 539E; 540B; 540F; 544C; 546B bis; 546C; 546D; 546E; 547C), 3 from elsewhere in the Mor. (Rect. rat. aud. 41C; 44A; Adol. poet. aud. 29B) and one from Comp. Dem. Cic. 2.1. With such sparse attestation, it is curious that the word has become a technical term among New Testament scholars. It is as if we are convinced that possessing a name for something—preferably a Greek or Latin name; German will do in a pinch—is equivalent to understanding it.

Plutarch, Philodemus’s concern is not eloquence but virtuous and effective public service. Moreover, like Plutarch, Philodemus addresses the outspoken self-praise of the Homeric heroes (Olivieri cols. 16, 18, 20, 22; cf. Laud. 540F; 541B–D; 542E; 543F–544B), including Nestor’s notoriously self-aggrandizing speech to Patroclus (fr. 9; cf. Il. 11.655–762), which very incident is later discussed by Plutarch (Laud. 544D; cf. Dio Chrysostom, Nest.). As a predecessor to De laude ipsius, Philodemus’s treatise clearly is a more viable candidate than any extant rhetorical work.

Plutarch is a moralist—a grammarian of decorum, to borrow Bourdieu’s useful phrase—in this case playing the role of a political advisor. Accordingly, De laude ipsius provides moral and strategic reflections on a particular exigency of statesmanship. This is not a collection of rhetorical techniques. Treating it as such promotes a cursory reading of the treatise that divorces Plutarch’s recommendations for inoffensive self-reference from the moral values that inform them, which is precisely the sort of thing that has been endemic among Pauline scholars. Indeed, as we will see, interpreters of 2 Cor 10–13 have drawn a number of superficial parallels between Paul’s boasting and Plutarch’s discussion, and have done so without attending at all to the social values that animate the treatise. When we read Plutarch on his own terms, what stands out is not what he shares with Paul, but rather the profoundly different place he occupies in ancient society. Thus a careful reading of De laude ipsius does shed light on Paul’s rhetoric, but it calls into question the facile conclusion that Paul praised himself according to the dictates of ancient rhetorical theory.

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23 Bourdieu, Theory of Practice, 8.
Boasting by Necessity

Most frequently adduced by Pauline scholars is Plutarch’s general observation that self-praise is excusable when it is absolutely necessary (539E; 541A), which purportedly illuminates Paul’s insistence that he boasts only by compulsion (2 Cor 12:11; cf. 11:30; 12:1). So Duane Watson asserts, “As convention advises, Paul demonstrates the necessity of boasting.” In fact, however, Plutarch says nothing at all about demonstrating that self-praise is necessary; he simply says that one should only praise oneself if it is necessary.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that in the process of transforming De laude ipsius into a collection of rhetorical techniques Pauline scholars have introduced this misreading, for otherwise there is no rhetorical device here at all, but simply a moral criterion. Further, the very nature of this criterion makes it impossible to know whether speakers who seem to employ it are in fact aware that they are doing so. If speakers must by necessity indulge in self-praise, they will do so whether or not they know that it is permissible. That is what necessity means.

In any case, the concept of necessity is far too general a criterion to be a meaningful point of comparison. If self-praise was widely considered unseemly (cf. Laud. 539A–B), it is not difficult to imagine why someone who engaged in it would claim to have no other choice. Certainly we need not posit knowledge of rhetorical precepts.

The point can be demonstrated by a survey of what was said in justification of Paul’s boasting before discussion of periautologia came into vogue. Independently of any reference to Plutarch’s treatise or putative rhetorical precepts for self-praise, older commentators frequently invoked the urgency of Paul’s situation, thus excusing his boasting. So Calvin

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remarked on Paul’s behalf: “Not as if he were a fool in glorying; for he was constrained to it by necessity.” Likewise, F. W. Robertson observed: “It is evident . . . that he has been forced to speak of self only by a kind of compulsion. Fact after fact of his own experiences is, as it were, wrung out, as if he had not intended to tell it.” This sort of argument was ubiquitous. Clearly, we do not need Plutarch to tell us that people can, when in dire necessity, get away with behaviour that otherwise would be deemed inappropriate.

Self-Defense

Plutarch’s more specific argument concerns the necessity of defending oneself (ἀπολογούμενος) in the case of slander or false accusation (διαβολὴν ἢ κατηγορίαν [540C]), and here we are justified, I think, in speaking of the influence of rhetorical tradition: Quintilian defends Cicero’s boasting on similar grounds (Inst. 11.1.18, 22–23), as does Cicero himself (Har. resp. 17; Dom. 92–95), and the basic argument is put to use by Demosthenes (Cor. 4), Isocrates (Antid. 1–8), and Dio Chrysostom (Pol. 2). So, although Paul likely could not have encountered instruction on this matter in a rhetorical handbook— Quintilian’s is the first extant “textbook” to refer to such an argument (ca. 93–95 CE)— nevertheless an astute student of rhetorical tradition would have been able, should he be faced with such an exigency, to draw on the practice of his predecessors.

It is widely agreed that Paul had been the object of various accusations in Corinth, and it is clear that in 2 Cor 10–13 he was fighting for his reputation. Thus it is frequently

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asserted that, on these grounds, “Paul would have received Plutarch’s permission to engage in self-praise.” As we will see, however, such a claim is founded on a misleadingly superficial reading of Plutarch’s concerns. Moreover, even if it were true, it would not yet provide evidence of rhetorical education. The fact that this was a traditional argument among rhetoricians does not by any means prove that only trained rhetoricians would have thought to employ it.

In fact, Paul’s behaviour here is perfectly understandable without positing knowledge of rhetorical precepts: Paul’s reputation and therefore his influence among the Corinthians were on the wane, so he responded, predictably enough, by reminding them of his divine mandate and his peerless qualifications. As far as I can see, the only real parallel between Paul and Plutarch here is that Plutarch described the same general situation in which Paul would later find himself—that of a man whose stock was in danger of falling. Most people would speak in their own defense in such situations, and it would not be surprising if they found it useful to recite their own merits. Thus the simple fact that Plutarch’s exemplars and Paul both spoke on their own behalf when under fire is not particularly remarkable.

Perhaps a more compelling case could be made if Paul—like Demosthenes (Cor. 3) or Isocrates (Trap. 1) or Cicero (Har. resp. 17; Phil. 14.13), for example—drew explicit attention to the fact that he had to boast in order to defend his own reputation. But the only time Paul addresses the question of self-defense (πάλαι δοκείτε ὅτι ύμίν ἀπολογούμεθα [2 Cor 12:19]), it is to deny that he is undertaking it. If there were a rhetorical advantage to be


29 So already Norden, responding to Heinrici’s suggestion that Paul was familiar with ancient apologetic conventions: “Jeder Mensch, der sich zu verantworten hat, verwandte Töne anschlägt, aber muss er die von anderen erlernen?” Die antike Kunstprosa, 2:494.
gained by reminding the Corinthians that only in self-defense would he speak so boastfully, Paul has let it pass him by.

Finally, no one who adduces Plutarch’s discussion here has paid the least attention, apparently, to his explanation of why self-praise works when one is speaking in one’s own defense. What Plutarch says is, in fact, most telling, providing considerable insight into both the logic of his treatise and the sort of discourse he admires:

[When one has been slandered,] not only is there nothing puffed up, vainglorious, or proud in taking a high tone about oneself at such a moment, but it displays as well a lofty spirit and greatness of character which by refusing to be humbled humbles and overpowers envy (μὴ ταπεινωθῇ ταπεινώσης καὶ χειρομένης τοῦ φθόνου). For men no longer think fit even to pass judgement on such as these, but exult and rejoice and catch the inspiration of the swelling speech, when it is well-founded and true. (540D [LCL])

If there is a rhetorical principle inscribed here, it is important to see that it is inseparable from its exercise within a particular social milieu and by a particular sort of aristocratic speaker. It is not the rules of rhetoric, but rather the social dynamics that inhere in a specific set of political relationships that, for Plutarch, make self-defensive boasting effective and therefore justifiable: If he possesses adequate gravitas, Plutarch explains, a beleaguered statesman can overawe his hearers by confidently asserting his power, thus moving himself beyond the range of his hearers’ envy.

Paul is not this sort of speaker. Although he certainly boasts in his own defense, his boasting does not appear to activate the social mechanism—the overpowering of envy—to which Plutarch refers. Indeed, I think it is safe to say that no one would confuse the sort of “swelling speech” Plutarch describes with 2 Cor 10–13. Far from “refusing to be humbled,” Paul famously puts his weakness on display. What this confession of weakness signifies will be the subject of further discussion below. In the current context, a comparison of Paul’s
demeanour with that depicted in Plutarch’s examples of self-defensive \( \mu \varepsilon \gamma \alpha \lambda \alpha \upsilon \chi \iota \alpha \) will suffice.

Epaminondas, so the story goes, convinced the other Theban generals serving with him not to return home at the end of their term as the law prescribed, but rather to seize their advantage and keep fighting. Though they orchestrated a very successful campaign, upon their return home the generals were impeached for their unauthorized action.\(^{30}\) Epaminondas, apparently, boldly took all the blame upon himself, then defiantly undertook an unconventional self-defense:

When Epameinondas expatiated on the glory of his acts and said in conclusion that he was ready to die if they would admit that he had founded Messenê, ravaged Laconia, and united Arcadia—[the very acts for which he stood on trial]—they did not even wait to take up the vote against him, but with admiration for the man commingled with delight and laughter broke up the meeting. (540E; cf. Nepos, *Epam.* 8.2–5)

A self-assured man like this does not dignify slander by becoming indignant; he simply rises above it.\(^ {31}\) Indeed, it is the impression that one’s dignity and self-possession are unfazed by petty accusations that lends such a defense particular force and undeniable charm—or perhaps the infuriating impression of patriarchal conceit, I suppose, depending on your perspective; in any case, Plutarch, who shared Epaminondas’s values, was charmed.

Paul’s demeanour is strikingly different. As is frequently remarked, his boasting is halting and reluctant, and although such reluctance may have its own way of mitigating the negative impression of self-praise, it certainly does not make for the sort of overawed and admiring response evoked by Epaminondas and his ilk. Paul, Chrysostom quipped, shrank

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\(^{30}\) In addition to the summary account at *Laud.* 540D–E, see also Plutarch, *Pel.* 25.1–2; Nepos, *Epam.* 7–8; Diodorus Siculus 15.66–72.

\(^{31}\) Thus Seneca *Ira* 3.25.3: “There will be no doubt about this—that whoever scorns his tormentors removes himself from the common herd and towers above them. The mark of true greatness is not to notice that you have received a blow. So does the huge wild beast calmly turn and gaze at barking dogs, so does the wave dash in vain against a mighty cliff” (Basore, LCL). See also Seneca, *Const.* 13.5; 14.3; *Clem.* 1.10.3; Quintilian, *Inst.* 11.1.17.
from self-praise like a horse rearing back from a precipice (*Laud. Paul. 5.12; Hom. 2 Cor. 11:1 4 [PG 51:305]). What Plutarch envisioned was more like a horse charging through an enemy line.

In sum, then, although there is certainly a superficial similarity here—Plutarch speaks of self-defense; Paul defends himself—attention to the values and social assumptions that fuel Plutarch’s treatment reveals that 2 Cor 10–13 has little in common with what Plutarch actually commends. Paul simply does not carry himself with the sort of dignity and “loftiness of spirit” that “humiliates and overpowers envy” (540D). In fact, what comparison of Paul’s self-praise with Plutarch’s discussion of self-defense does highlight is the tenuousness of Paul’s claim to status. Unlike Epaminondas, who can pretend disregard for the verdict of his jury (cf. Demosthenes, *Cor.* 10; Dio Chrysostom, *Pol.* 12), Paul wears his desperation on his sleeve.

**Misfortune**

Plutarch’s discussion of why the unfortunate can indulge in μεγαλαυχία more appropriately than the fortunate—sometimes adduced as a parallel to Paul’s boasting of shipwrecks, beatings, and the like—^32—is predicated on the same values (541A–C). Here the image Plutarch provides is that of an indomitable boxer holding his head up high: Unlike a vain man walking with his nose in the air, the boxer’s bold posture evinces courage, not fatuous arrogance. Likewise, the unfortunate, “far removed from ambition by their plight, are looked upon as breasting ill-fortune, shoring up their courage, and eschewing all appeal to pity and all whining and self-abasement (ταπεινομένου) in adversity” (541A [LCL]). Paul, I think all will agree, does not “[use] self-glorification to pass from a humbled and piteous

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^32 Heinrici, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 313; Betz, “De laude ipsius,” 388; Watson, “Paul and Boasting,” 92.
state to an attitude of triumph and pride” (541B [LCL]); on the contrary, he puts his ignominy on display—he wallows in it, I suspect Plutarch would say. And this sort of posture ultimately nullifies what for Plutarch makes the self-glorification of the unfortunate inspiring.

Usefulness; Benefit to Hearers

Plutarch concludes his treatise by reiterating the moral criterion that underlies the entire discussion: self-praise, in order to be legitimate, must be useful. In his words, “We will abstain from speaking about ourselves unless we are going to provide some great benefit to ourselves or to our hearers” (547F). The ἐαὐτῶς here comes as a bit of a surprise, since throughout the work Plutarch has emphasized that it is concern for the well-being of others that might motivate a statesman to speak on his own behalf (539E–F; 544D). Presumably this is a reference to the sort of self-defense when facing calumny or hardship that we have just discussed. In any case, one thing is clear: the desire for glory is not, for Plutarch, sufficient cause for self-praise; one must have some further—and noble—end in view.

This would also seem to be the assumption of Dio Chrysostom. Dio never provides anything resembling a systematic discussion of self-praise, but he does, on one occasion, set out to defend Homer’s Nestor against charges of braggadocio (ἀλαζονείᾳ [Nest. 3; cf. Iliad, 1.260–268; 273–274]). Dio justifies Nestor’s self-praise—without once using the word periautologia, we might note—by means of a single observation: Nestor’s boasting, like a
doctor’s unpleasant drug, was intended to have a salutary effect, namely, the end of
Agamemnon and Achilles’ quarrel (4–8).

Still, there are no grounds for asserting that Plutarch and Dio reflect rhetorical
precepts here. Dio is not commenting on the rhetorical efficacy of Nestor’s speech—in fact,
the speech did not, he admits, have its intended effect (9)—but rather considering whether or
not Homer had made Nestor a braggart. This is a question of character, not rhetoric. As we
have seen, the acceptability of Nestor’s self-adulation had been discussed under the rubric of
moral philosophy at least since Philodemus (Hom. fr. 9), and the consensus seems to have
been that in this case Nestor’s boasting was the lesser of two evils.

It is also noteworthy that from what Plutarch says, as from Dio’s example, we should
expect the criterion of usefulness to operate entirely in the background, helping a statesman
decide whether or not it is appropriate to indulge in self-praise, but not having any observable
impact on how it is articulated. For Plutarch, self-praise is risky whether it is useful or not;
however, if it is useful, then it just might be worth the risk (544D-F). There is nothing to
suggest that he was recommending a rhetorical strategy of seeking to attenuate the risk by
drawing attention to the benefit one’s self-praise would provide for one’s audience. Nestor
did not explain that he was boasting for Agamemnon and Achilles’ own good; no, that was
Dio’s retrospective justification.

Comparative Boasting

Plutarch obviously does not like self-praise, but what really irritates him is self-praise
motivated by vain ambition (φιλοτιμία), particularly when it involves rivalry with others:

When those who hunger for praise cannot find others to praise them, they give the
appearance of seeking sustenance and succour for their vainglorious appetite from
themselves, a graceless spectacle. But when they do not even seek to be praised
simply and in themselves, but try to rival the honour that belongs to others and set
against it their own accomplishments and acts in the hope of dimming the glory of another, their conduct is not only frivolous, but envious and spiteful as well. . . . Here then is something we clearly must avoid. (540A–C [LCL]; cf. Quintilian, Inst. 11.1.16)

At this juncture Pauline interpreters generally abandon their treatment of Paul’s boasting and commence with a discussion of how Plutarch’s treatise informs our portrait of his opponents. Thus for Duane Watson, “This warning illumines Paul’s statement about his opponents’ comparisons with each other and with himself as not ‘show(ing) good sense’ (10:12), because they were based on working in his sphere of action and trying to undermine his authority and honor (10:13–16).”36 Whereas Paul followed Plutarch’s conventions for self-praise, his rivals, on the contrary, “were the sort of arrogant self-boasters the culture despised.”37

It is an open question whether Paul’s rivals really were so shamelessly competitive and self-adulating as interpreters of 2 Cor 10–13 are wont to imagine: we have no independent evidence, and Paul’s testimony is far from disinterested. What we do know, from sound documentary evidence, is that Paul perceived the status gained by others as a threat to his honour and fought back by indulging in self-praise. Whatever he says in 2 Cor 10:12 about not daring to compare himself with his rivals, comparative boasting is precisely what he goes on to do.

That Paul here is in direct contravention of the one precept for periautologia regarding which Plutarch is most insistent seems to have escaped notice. So far as I can see, the only explanation for this interpretive myopia is our presupposition that Paul was in the right—that he was the (capital A) Apostle to the Gentiles and therefore that anyone seeking

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to discredit him or gain influence in “his” communities was a self-interested meddler. But the fact that Paul went on to become St. Paul must not be allowed to obscure the reality of the Corinthian community in the mid-50s: This was a group of Christ-believers that had been shaped by a number of charismatic leaders, among whom Paul was but one. Paul claimed a special position by virtue of having founded the community (1 Cor 3:6; 4:15; 2 Cor 10:14), but, in the ongoing competition for influence in Corinth, this apparently was no trump card. As David Horrell recently has argued, despite Paul’s claims, the Corinthian community was no “Pauline church.” Labeling it such mires our work in anachronistic conceptions of Paul’s apostleship and blinds us to the fact that legitimacy was precisely what was up for grabs in Corinth.

Reading 2 Cor 10–13 without presupposing Paul’s primacy reveals just how egregiously Paul violates Plutarch’s proscription of comparative boasting. Plutarch had made room for stripping honour from those deemed unworthy, but insisted that it be done without indulging in self-praise: “If we hold them undeserving and of little worth, let us not strip them of their praise by presenting our own, but plainly refute their claim and show their reputation to be groundless” (540C [LCL]). In contrast, Paul’s refutation is comparative throughout, contrasting his own praiseworthy behaviour with his rivals’ purported false claims. Ironically, it begins with the assertion that he, unlike “some people,” will not compare himself with others (10:12)—an assertion that is, of course, precisely an implicit comparison. Paul insists that he will not boast ἐὰν τὰ ῥήματα; he will not overreach himself; he will not boast in the labours of others or in another’s καυχών (10:13–16). Again,

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comparison with the behaviour he imputes to his rivals is implied throughout. Likewise, “It is not those who commend themselves”—read, “my rivals”—“that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends”—read, “me” (10:18). So when Paul insists that he is not inferior to the super-apostles (11:5), and then proceeds to his series of ἀγωγός’s (11:22–23), he is only making explicit the comparative mode that has been dominant throughout. By Plutarchean standards, Paul is clearly out of line.

Plutarch does, however, later in his treatise, qualify his resistance to rivalrous boasting: “Yet where mistaken praise injures and corrupts by arousing emulation of evil and inducing the adoption of an unsound policy where important issues are at stake, it is no disservice to counteract it” (545D). Again, interpreters have latched onto the superficial parallel, asserting that Paul’s boasting passages “meet the requirements of this test”: Paul, we are assured, only seeks to dissuade the Corinthians from his rivals’ corrupting influence.

Paul indeed does portray the influence of his opponents as a sinister force threatening to contaminate or destroy the Corinthian community (11:2–4, 13–15), but he by no means seeks to counteract this influence in the way Plutarch recommends. For Plutarch, the way to censure vice without merely looking envious of those who indulge in it is straightforward: “It is not . . . with the praise of persons but with that of acts, when they are vicious, that the statesman must wage war” (545E). For his part, Paul never manages to explain how, specifically, his opponents are leading the Corinthians astray, nor which vicious acts the Corinthians are in danger of emulating. Instead, he vaguely insinuates that his rivals pollute the Corinthians’ chastity (11:2–3) and accuses them of being disguised ministers of Satan (11:13–15). Clearly, this is an attack on persons, not on deeds. Nor is it an attack on bad theology, for that matter. If the issue were a theological or a moral one, Paul should, if he

were following Plutarch’s advice, have explained the dangers of the Corinthian’s present course of action, and done so without self-reference. He did not. Instead, he sought to reassert his authoritative role whilst undercutting the influence of his rivals.

Interpreters have worked hard to uncover the theological or ideological controversy that purportedly underlies the dispute between Paul and his opponents in 2 Corinthians, but all they have managed to do, I submit, is to elevate the means of the controversy into its substance: Paul polemically insists that the opponents have “another spirit” (11:4), so, his interpreters conclude, the dispute must have concerned the role of pneumatic experience; Paul seeks to defuse the accusation that he is a layman in speech, hence this must be a disagreement about the value of rhetoric; Paul defends himself for not receiving financial support from the Corinthians, hence he must have differed from his opponents insofar as he had counter-cultural ideas about patronage.

What each of these reconstructions does, I suggest, is confuse the argumentative strategies Paul employs with his ultimate goal. Certainly Paul and his rivals have various differences of opinion, but these are the means through which the conflict between them is negotiated, not its fundamental grounds. To argue that what we see here is a conflict about rhetoric, or patronage, or pneumatism is like saying that people engage in duels to prove the superiority of their favourite pistols. No, the real grounds of the controversy are far less subtle: What is perfectly clear from reading 2 Cor 10–13—though apparently unpalatable to many interpreters—is that the primary thing on Paul’s mind is his own status in the

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Corinthian community. Only through the casuistry of apologetic interpreters have we learned of a theological or ideological controversy.

Conclusion

Other parallels between Paul and De laude ipsius have been proposed, but they do not warrant detailed treatment. It is occasionally suggested that Paul’s theological grounding of his apostolate (10:8) is in accord with Plutarch’s suggestion that one can minimize the appearance of hubris by giving some credit for one’s achievement to chance and some to God (542E). But there is no similarity here: For Plutarch, giving credit to God allows one to set aside the burden of glory (φορτίου τῆς δόξης . . . ἀποτίθεσθαι); for Paul, on the contrary, to invoke God’s commissioning is precisely to make a status claim. As we have seen repeatedly, the superficial similarity erodes under further examination.

Likewise, a number of interpreters have followed Betz in asserting that Paul’s narration of his trip to the third heaven in the third person (12:2–4) evinces his familiarity with a rhetorical precept expressed by Plutarch: When possible, praise someone who shares your laudable traits rather than praising yourself, and then hope your audience can put two and two together (542C–D). Aside from the fact that Paul does not really praise someone else, it is important to see that for Plutarch’s ruse to work, the audience must not suspect the speaker’s self-promoting intention; for, if it is evident that one is really trying to praise

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44 Betz, Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, 95. So also Andrew T. Lincoln, “‘Paul the Visionary’: The Setting and Significance of the Rapture to Paradise in II Corinthians XII.1–10,” NTS 25 (1979): 208–9; Jerry W. McCant, 2 Corinthians, Readings (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 143; Long, Ancient Rhetoric, 190. Cf. Mitchell, “Patristic Perspective,” 366. Mitchell’s invocation of the rhetorical device prosōpopoia to describe Paul’s procedure here is particularly misleading. As Mitchell herself explains, Paul “does not speak the words of his new character so much as he denies that his own words, allegedly spoken about another, are really about himself.” That is, the speaking voice is Paul’s throughout; it is the object, Paul the visionary, not the subject, Paul the speaker, who is masked. Hence there is no fictive speaker here, and no prosōpopoia. Moreover, Chrysostom, whose reading Mitchell claims to be elucidating here, makes no clear reference to this rhetorical figure: Ησὺ προσωπείου ἐτέρου ὑπελείπετος (Laud Paul, 5.15) is surely an attempt to describe how Paul-as-visionary disguises himself (cf. 5.12 [κρύπτει ἑαυτὸν]), not a periphrastic reference to prosōpopoia.
oneself, one fails to avoid the appearance of boastfulness (cf. 542C). For his part, Paul had introduced this very section by explaining that he would proceed to boast of “visions and revelations of the Lord” (12:1). His intentions are transparent, thus there can be no real resemblance here to what Plutarch recommends.45

I conclude this section by reiterating the argument: The notion that Paul evinces knowledge of rhetorical precepts for periautologia is founded, I have argued, on a misleading treatment of Plutarch’s treatise. De laude ipsius is not a collection of rhetorical precepts, and there is no evidence that it is dependant on previous rhetorical discussions of periautologia. In fact, there are no previous rhetorical discussions of periautologia attested. What Plutarch’s treatise provides is an example of the use of moral suasion to control the sort of self-assertion—in this case self-assertion in the form of self-praise—that threatens to disrupt the social order by inciting envious rivalry. His is a conservative project: He seeks to justify the limited use of self-praise by a certain sort of speaker—namely, the traditional aristocrat who already has elevated status and its accompanying gravitas—whilst denouncing the self-praise of those who aspire to clamber up the social ladder. Self-praise that preserves the social order is acceptable; self-praise that would alter it is not. In the end, the question is not how one speaks so much as who speaks—and Paul does not appear to be the sort of speaker that would gain Plutarch’s approval.

Nevertheless, Paul’s comments in 2 Cor 12:11 are reminiscent of two very general aspects of Plutarch’s discussion: It is better to be praised by others than to praise oneself;

45 I have left unresolved the question why Paul refers to himself in the third person, one of many puzzling aspects of his narration of this experience. I favour the explanation that this manner of speaking derives from a subjective ambiguity inherent in the ecstatic experience itself—an explanation that seems particularly credible after Colleen Shantz’s recent work on the neurobiology of altered states of consciousness like that described in 2 Cor 12:1–4. See Paul in Ecstasy, 93–101. Cf. Furnish, II Corinthians, 543; Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:782.
self-praise is appropriate when done in legitimate self-defense. But this reminiscence is more credibly explained (with Windisch and contra Betz) as resulting from overlapping social mores than from shared dependence on rhetorical tradition. Moreover, as I will demonstrate in part 3, these assumptions are hardly unique to Paul and Plutarch, and can be detected in discourse that certainly has no connection to the classical rhetorical tradition.

**Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.1.15–26**

If there is one rhetorical work from which Plutarch could theoretically have gleaned material for his reflections on self-praise, it is the *Institutio oratoria* of his contemporary Quintilian.⁴⁶ Quintilian begins his eleventh book with a long section dedicated to the topic of speaking appropriately (*apte* [11.1.1]), the bulk of which elaborates on his insistence that one must consider “not merely what it is expedient, but also what it is becoming to say” (11.1.8 [Butler, LCL]). Although it is true that usually the two criteria go hand in hand—to speak unbecomingly is seldom to one’s advantage, and becoming speech is usually also expedient (11.1.8)—there are exceptions: It would have been expedient for Socrates, for example, to “[employ] the ordinary forensic methods of defence” (11.1.9 [LCL]), but it also would have been a betrayal of his noble character. “This instance alone,” Quintilian concludes, “shows that the end which the orator must keep in view is not persuasion, but speaking well (*non persuadendi sed bene dicendi*), since there are occasions when to persuade would be a blot upon his honour” (11.1.11 [LCL]; cf. 2.15). Therefore, what is becoming trumps what is expedient every time: “There are two things which will be becoming to all men at all times

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and in all places, namely, to act and speak as befits a man of honour, and it will never at any
time beseem any man to speak or act dishonourably” (11.1.14 [LCL]).

Quintilian’s primary example of unseemly speech is boasting about one’s own
elocution. This, he insists, is always a mistake (11.1.15). But here Quintilian gets himself
into difficulty, for the one orator most consistently censured for such behaviour is
Quintilian’s beloved Cicero. Hence his entire discussion of the propriety of self-praise
consists of a defense of Cicero’s notorious boastfulness (11.1.17–26).

Notably, there is little in his defense of Cicero to suggest that Quintilian is dependent
upon previous discussions of self-praise; on the contrary, these appear to be mostly ad hoc
justifications. Indeed, if there had been such widely accepted criteria for self-praise as
Pauline scholars would have us believe, and if Cicero abode by them, it is difficult to fathom
why he should have been so frequently censured for his boasting (11.1.17). No, Quintilian
finds himself defending Cicero precisely because the appropriateness of self-praise is a
matter of taste and judgement, not the simple application of established rhetorical rules
(cf. 11.1.91).

Still, Quintilian does seem to assume that his audience shares some basic
presuppositions concerning good rhetorical etiquette. First, Quintilian stresses that Cicero’s
boasting was “due quite as much to the necessities of defense as to the promptings of
vainglory” (11.1.18 [LCL]), which sort of argument I have treated in detail above. Second,

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47 See further Arthur E. Walzer, “Moral Philosophy and Rhetoric in the Institutes: Quintilian on Honor
48 For Quintilian’s admiring evaluation of Cicero, see Inst. 10.1.105–114, 123; 12.1.16–21. On
Cicero’s notorious arrogance, see Walter Allen, “Cicero’s Conceit,” TAPA 85 (1954): 121–44; Robert A.
he observes that Cicero, in his private letters, regularly quotes the remarks of others about his eloquence in order to mitigate the appearance of boasting. This strategy presumably stems from Aristotle’s advice (Rhet. 3.17.16), and had other practitioners too (cf. Pliny, Ep. 9.23.5–6), but it annoys Quintilian: “Yet I am not sure that open boasting is not more tolerable, owing to its sheer straightforwardness, than that perverted form of self-praise” (11.1.21 [LCL]). In any case, unlike Cicero, Paul seems to have had no one in Corinth to quote in his favour. Finally, Quintilian notes that Cicero deflected some credit for his success to the senate and some to providence (11.1.23). As noted above, Plutarch makes a similar point, but this has little in common with Paul’s claim to divine backing.

Quintilian’s discussion goes on to treat other instances of unbecoming speech—an “impudent, disorderly, or angry tone” (11.1.29 [LCL]), immodesty in speaking of shameful things (11.1.30), an indecorous attitude toward one’s opponents (11.1.57), and so forth. He does provide some rhetorical strategies for dealing with various courtroom exigencies along the way, but it is Quintilian’s moralizing that sets the dominant tone. Indeed, as we might have expected from the definition of the aim of rhetoric with which he began the section—non persuadendi sed bene dicendi (11.1.11)—the discussion is exemplary of Quintilian’s own particular emphasis, the notion that the ideal orator is not merely persuasive, but virtuous—a “good man speaking well” (vir bonus dicendi peritus [12.1.1; cf. 2.15.34]).

There may have been ancient precedent for this marriage of morality and rhetoric, but here Quintilian is self-consciously treading on what, in his time at least, was presumed to be

the philosophers’ turf (1 pr. 10–18; 12.2.6–9). Indeed, he begins book 12 by claiming that whereas his technical discussion has been largely a matter of collating the best existing work, in his attempt to nurture the virtuous speaker he is peerless (12 pr. 2–4). It appears, then, that Quintilian’s discussion of the inappropriateness of boasting derives not from prior codification of precepts for *periautologia* but rather from his own preoccupation with the moral formation of his ideal orator. Moreover, the only possible connection to Paul is Quintilian’s excusing of Cicero’s boasting on the grounds that it was necessary for his self-defense—hardly sufficient grounds, as we have seen, for asserting that Paul and Quintilian reflect a common rhetorical tradition.

**Hesitancy (Prodiorðhōsīs)**

Interestingly, Plutarch says much less about giving the impression of hesitancy or reluctance when indulging in self-praise than do interpreters of 2 Corinthians. That is, he says nothing at all. Neither does Quintilian. To my knowledge, the nearest we get to a rhetorical recommendation of such a practice comes somewhat later in Pseudo-Herodian’s treatment of προδιόρθωσις. According to Pseudo-Herodian, we should soften our words when we are about to say something shameful concerning our adversary or something vainglorious (μεγάλωτεχνικός) concerning ourselves by first forewarning our hearers (*Fig. 33 [RG 3:95]*)

And this is just what Paul does, repeatedly pleading for his hearers to bear with him before he begins to boast (11:1, 17; 12:1). As Margaret Mitchell has noted, Paul’s hesitancy was deemed an instance of *prodiorðhōsis* as early as John Chrysostom. Heinrici recognized it as

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such; so did E. A. Judge.\textsuperscript{53} I do not disagree. However, I would like to add two points of clarification.

First, it should be noted that Pseudo-Herodian, writing no earlier than the second century,\textsuperscript{54} stands alone in linking \textit{prodiorthōsis} with speech about oneself.\textsuperscript{55} Other descriptions of the figure make clear that it was construed very generally as warning the audience of something unpleasant to come (Alexander, \textit{Fig.} 1.3 [\textit{RG} 3:14–15]; Tiberius, \textit{Fig.} 8; cf. Ps.-Hermogenes, \textit{Inv.} 4.12). When more specific usages are discussed, they vary widely—from warning the audience that one is about to cite poetry (Hermogenes, \textit{Περὶ ἕμων}, 2.4) to notifying judges that one is about to say something ill-omened concerning their potential fate (Apsines, \textit{Rhet.} 10.34 [\textit{RG} 1:399]). The rhetoricians, like Plutarch, clearly saw no inherent connection between \textit{prodiorthōsis} and \textit{periautologia}. Thus Paul’s expressions of reluctance to boast may perhaps be rhetorically appropriate, but it would be an exaggeration to say they are done in conformity with rhetorical precepts for self-praise.

Second, we need hardly posit that Paul was rhetorically educated in order to account for his use of \textit{prodiorthōsis}. Again, the history of interpretation of Paul’s boasting helps put things in perspective here: Even if they have not always known its name, interpreters of Paul have had no difficulty whatsoever describing the function of the figure, and, until recently, they were content to consider it an expression of Paul’s sincere reluctance to boast. Charles


\textsuperscript{54} \textit{De figuris} in fact consists of two separate writings pieced together by a redactor. Neither part can be dated with precision, but Ps.-Herodian’s description of \textit{prodiorthōsis} comes in the second part, for which the earliest proposed origin is the time of Hadrian. See Kerstin Hajdù, \textit{Ps.-Herodian, De figuris: Überlieferungsgeschichte und kritische Ausgabe}, SGLG 8 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 21–23.

\textsuperscript{55} Nearest to Ps.-Herodian is probably the discussion of Ps.-Aristides (1.12.2.7 [\textit{RG} 2:506]), although he does not speak explicitly of \textit{prodiorthōsis}, nor does he refer to self-praise. Rather, in the context of a discussion of epideictic, he lists six ways of avoiding praise (of another) that irritates one’s audience (τοὺ δὲ μὴ φορτικῶς ἐπαίνειν), the third of which is to begin by asking an audience’s indulgence (ὅταν πρὶν εἰπεῖν τι συγγνώμην ἐφ’ οἷς ἰν μέλλῃ λέγειν αἰτήται παρὰ τῶν δικαστῶν).
Hodge’s remark is typical: “So repugnant was this task to his feelings, that he not only humbly apologizes for thus speaking of himself, but he finds it difficult to do what he felt must be done.” Whether or not Hodge accurately describes Paul’s feelings on the matter, the point is that Paul’s hesitancy is perfectly comprehensible without positing rhetorical training: Paul knows that boasting is unseemly, and is either embarrassed to do it or is worried about how his hearers will respond—indeed, where personhood is constructed corporately, the two amount to the same thing: Paul fears he will be derided as a fool. As will be demonstrated in part 3, speakers without formal rhetorical education also resort to prodiorthēsis in such situations, hence this cannot be adduced as evidence of Paul’s rhetorical education.

**Conclusion**

Contrary to the prevailing view, we must conclude that there is nothing in Paul’s boasting to warrant the conclusion that he was familiar with rhetorical prescriptions for self-praise. First, the notion that Plutarch and Quintilian based their writings on established rhetorical dictates for periautologia cannot be sustained. Both may occasionally reflect existing rhetorical practice, but Plutarch’s is a work of moral philosophy with only incidental rhetorical observations and Quintilian, in his treatment of what is “becoming,” is self-consciously innovating. Writing forty-some years after Paul, these authors provide no evidence of clearly defined rhetorical principles for self-praise.

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Yet our sources do attest to one well-established rhetorical tradition regarding self-praise, the notion that boasting could be deemed inoffensive if it was necessary for the purposes of defending one’s own reputation. Paul is, indeed, defending himself; but, unlike Demosthenes and Isocrates, he refuses to admit that it is his reputation that is at stake. Moreover, a careful reading of Plutarch’s explanation of why self-praise can be effective when one is defending oneself shows that Paul’s hesitant boasting is far from the self-possessed and self-confident sort of performance that Plutarch and his ilk admire.

Why, then, has Betz’s invocation of De laude ipsius been so well received? Why does nearly every recent commentary on 2 Corinthians refer to Plutarch’s precepts for periautologia—and do so without bothering to mention what actually interested Plutarch? The explanation, I suggest, is evident from the brief history of interpretation with which this chapter began: We simply have been unable to come to terms with a Paul who really does boast, a Paul who fights tooth and nail to defend his own status. Like the picture of Paul donning a fool’s mask—an interpretive chimera we will consider in a subsequent chapter—the image of Paul manipulating rhetorical conventions allows us to posit for Paul a degree of self-consciousness that keeps him safely at arm’s length from the shameless speaker the passage otherwise implies. Hence Duane Watson’s odd but telling paraphrastic usage: For Watson, Paul does not boast, Paul “uses boasting.”58 By implication, then, the whole thing is merely a clever stratagem, and therefore we can keep our theologian, our intellectual, our rhetorician—in short, our respectable Paul.

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58 Watson, “Paul and Boasting,” 90.
Chapter Six

Peristasis Catalogues: Rhythm, Amplification, Klangfiguren

There is no evidence that ancient rhetorical education involved training in the composition of hardship catalogues per se. Nevertheless, Paul’s lists of hardships are generally taken as evidence of his familiarity with contemporary rhetorical strategies, and, more specifically, with the propagandistic techniques employed by popular moral philosophers. Jerome Neyrey, for example, describes 2 Cor 11:23–28 as “a literary device known as a peristasis catalogue” which attests “indubitably” to Paul’s knowledge of Stoic tradition.¹ An assessment of the extent of Paul’s familiarity with contemporary popular philosophy is beyond the scope of this study; however, insofar as his so-called peristasis catalogues are associated with rhetorical amplification or auxēsis and attendant figures such as anaphora, asyndeton, and assonance, it is necessary to assess whether they provide evidence of formal education in rhetoric.

Lists and Catalogues in Greco-Roman Antiquity

One might infer from Neyrey’s reference to “a literary device known as a peristasis catalogue” that we are dealing here with a literary form that was named and theorized by ancient literary critics—in other words, the sort of thing that would have been discussed in schools of rhetoric. This is not in fact the case.² On the contrary, the use of Peristasenkatalog

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¹ Neyrey, “Social Location of Paul,” 151–52.
² John T. Fitzgerald asserts, correctly, that “the term peristasis was well-established in rhetorical circles by the first century.” Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence, SBLDS 99 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 37. Its rhetorical usage, however,
as a *terminus technicus* in Pauline scholarship tends to obscure the fact that until the twentieth century there was no literary device known by such a name.

As noted above, Johannes Weiss was among the few scholars prior to Betz to suggest that Paul had received formal rhetorical training. For Weiss, the similarity of Paul’s prose with the “Cynic-Stoic diatribe” was particularly compelling. As one example, he set Rom 8:38–39 alongside a similarly structured text from Epictetus: 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>καὶ ἀπλῶς</th>
<th>πέπεισμαὶ γὰρ ὅτι</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>οὔτε θάνατος</td>
<td>οὔτε θάνατος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οὔτε φυγὴ</td>
<td>οὔτε ζωὴ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οὔτε πόνος</td>
<td>οὔτε ἄγγελοι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οὔτε ἀλλὸ τῶν τοιούτων</td>
<td>οὔτε ἀρχαὶ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>αἰτίων ἐστὶν τοῦ πρᾶττειν τι</td>
<td>οὔτε ἐνεστῶτα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἴνα πρᾶττειν ἡμᾶς,</td>
<td>οὔτε μέλλοντα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀλλ’ ὑπολήψεις καὶ δόγματα</td>
<td>οὔτε δυνάμεις</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Diatr. 1.11.33)</td>
<td>οὔτε ὑψωμα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>οὔτε βάθος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>οὔτε τις κτίσις ἐτέρα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>δυνησται ἡμᾶς χωρίσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἁγαπῆς</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ἡμῶν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Rom 8:38–39)

His comparison was taken up by Weiss’s student Ruldolf Bultmann, who termed such texts *Peristasenkataloge*—lists of the vicissitudes of fate. 4

Bultmann’s term, it should be noted, is not merely descriptive, for it implies a particular interpretation of the meaning of Paul’s lists of tribulations, which, for Bultmann, derives from Stoic indifference to one’s external circumstances—one’s *περιστάσεις*, as Epictetus and his ilk would say: 5 “Wie der griechische Weise, so zählte auch Paulus die

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5 On the term, see Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 33–46.
Fügungen des Schicksals oder der Mächte, denen der Mensch unterworfen ist, auf und verkündet begeistert seine Überlegenheit über Freuden und Leiden, über Ängste und Schrecken.‘6 As Bultmann’s question-begging terminology has become standard, so has his interpretive framework.

This is particularly evident in John T. Fitzgerald’s *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, which remains the most influential treatment of these texts to date. Armed with the conventionality of Bultmann’s term, Fitzgerald is able to take a short-cut on the road from form to function: He begins with a study of philosophical use of the term περιστάσεις, which we are apparently to adjudge relevant simply because the texts he is discussing are, after all, “called” peristasis catalogues.7 Hence Fitzgerald unaccountably treats Bultmann’s interpretive conclusion—the notion that Paul’s lists of hardships are illuminated by Stoic discussion of περιστάσεις—as the starting point for his discussion, not noticing, apparently, that the connection between Stoic περιστάσεις and so-called “peristasis catalogues” only seems self-evident because of the terminology he has inherited.8

Nevertheless, a connection did exist in certain philosophical circles between the idea that virtue must endure the unpredictable circumstances supplied by fate and illustrative lists of those same circumstances. Epictetus provides the clearest example:

Who, then, is the invincible man? He whom nothing that is outside the sphere of his moral purpose can dismay. I then proceed to consider the circumstances one by one (ἐκάστην τῶν περιστάσεων), as I would do in the case of the athlete. . . . If you put a bit of silver coin in a man’s way, he will despise it. Yes, but if you put a bit of a wench in his way, what then? Or if it be dark, what then? Or if you throw a bit of

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6 Bultmann, *Stil der paulinischen Predigt*, 71. It is interesting to observe how Bultmann himself, in the final words of this quotation, adopts the beguiling rhythm of the texts he is treating.
7 Says Fitzgerald, with no further ado, “The first step . . . is an examination of the key term ‘peristasis.’ *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 31.
8 Note Fitzgerald’s undefended assertion that “for the purposes of this investigation, the most important of the various types [of peristasis catalogue] is the [hardships of the] wise man”—an assertion by which he bypasses any discussion of “catalogues of occupational hardship,” “catalogues of punishments,” or “woes of the wanderer”—all of which would appear to be relevant to a discussion of 2 Cor 11. Ibid., 47–49.
reputation in his way, what then? Or abuse, what then? Or praise, what then? Or death, what then? All these things he can overcome. (*Diatr.* 1.18.21–22 [Oldfather, *LCL*])

This, I think all will agree, is justly described as a *peristasis* catalogue—whether or not anyone before Bultmann would have thought to call it that.

And, although Fitzgerald himself has little to say concerning form or style, he does draw our attention to Stoic catalogues that have striking formal similarities to Paul’s lists of tribulations. Plutarch’s description of Stoic self-understanding provides a fine example:  

\[\text{ο̂ δὲ τῶν Στωικῶν σοφῶν} \quad \text{ἐν παντὶ}\\ \text{ἐγκλειόμενος} \quad \text{θλιβόμενοι}\\ \text{οὐ κωλύτει} \quad \text{ἄλλ' οὐ στενοχωρούμενοι}\\ \text{καὶ κατακρημνιζόμενος} \quad \text{ἀπορούμενοι}\\ \text{οὐκ ἀναγκάζεται} \quad \text{ἄλλ' οὐκ ἔξαισπορούμενοι}\\ \text{καὶ στρεβλούμενος} \quad \text{διωκόμενοι}\\ \text{οὐ βασανίζεται} \quad \text{ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐγκαταλείπομενοι}\\ \text{καὶ θρούμενος} \quad \text{καταβαλλόμενοι}\\ \text{οὐ βλάπτεται} \quad \text{ἄλλ' οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι}\\ \text{καὶ πίπτων ἐν τῷ παλαιεῖν} \quad (2 \text{Cor 4:8–9})\\ \text{άπττητος ἔστι} \quad \text{καὶ περιτειχιζόμενος}\\ \text{καὶ παλαιόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων} \quad \text{καταβαλλόμενοι}\\ \text{ἀνάλωτος} \quad \text{ἄπολλορ}\\ \text{(Stoic. abs. 1057E)} \quad \text{πωλούμενος}\\ \text{πρὸ τῶν πολεμίων} \quad \text{πωλούμενος}\\ \text{πρὸ τῶν πολεμίων} \quad \text{ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων}\\ \text{ἀνάλωτος} \quad \text{ἄνάλωτος} \quad \text{πωλούμενος}\]

The most striking formal similarity here is the shared antithetical structure, which occurs also in 1 Cor 4:10–13a, 2 Cor 6:8–10, and Phil 4:12, as well as in Epictetus (e.g. *Diatr.* 2.19.24).  

Also striking is the patterned use of conjunctions and verb forms to generate a compelling rhythm. Paul and Plutarch use different conjunctions—Plutarch prefaches each clause with καί but has no adversative within the clauses, whereas Paul

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10 This is not, however, characteristic of all Paul’s hardship catalogues nor those of his contemporaries. In fact, the majority consists of simple lists (cf. Rom 8:35b; 2 Cor 6:4b–5; 2 Cor 11:23b–29; 2 Cor 12:10; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.10.17; Seneca, *Const.* 6.3). See further Robert Hodgson, “Paul the Apostle and First Century Tribulation Lists,” *ZNW* 74 (1983): 62–67.
connects his clauses asyndetically but uses ἀλλά within them—but each do what they do consistently. Likewise with verb forms: Paul uses the same participial form throughout, whereas Plutarch begins each clause with a concessive participle and concludes it with the indicative—at least until the fifth clause, when a new rhythm emerges.¹¹

Such similarities are compelling, and would seem to necessitate the conclusion that Paul was dependent, both ideologically and stylistically, on the peristasis rhetoric of popular philosophy. However, when we begin to cast our net a little wider, we find these same stylistic features attested in a wide range of texts and put to a variety of different uses. But let us start where Weiss started: with Epictetus.

It is hardships (περιστάσεις), says Epictetus, that show what men are (Diatr. 1.24.1). And, given the influence of Bultmann’s work, it is not surprising that the catalogues most often adduced in Pauline scholarship are those most in keeping with this dictum.¹² But what this selective mode of comparison obscures is the fact that Epictetus’s Peristasenkataloge are but one species of catalogue among many, notable perhaps for their distinctive content but indistinguishable on stylistic grounds from other sorts of rhythmic lists. One need not get very far into the Discourses to see what I mean.¹³

¹¹ Plutarch’s fifth clause differs from the previous four both in the elaboration of the participial clause and the use of the privative alpha rather than the particle οὐ to provide negation. The privative alpha recurs in each of the final three clauses, and the participial clause is extended in the fifth and seventh, thus generating an a-b-a pattern.

¹² Esp. Diat. 1.11.22–24; 1.11.33; 1.18.21–23; 2.1.35; 2.16.42; 2.19.18, 24. Cf. Plato, Resp. 361E–362A; Horace, Sat. 2.7.83–87; Seneca, Const. 6.3; 8.3; Ep. 71.25–29; 82.10–14; Dio Chrysostom, Virt. (Or. 8) 15–16; Plutarch, Stoic. abs. 1057D–E. For a full list of texts cited by Pauline scholars, see Markus Schiefer Ferrari, Die Sprache des Leids in den paulinischen Peristasenkatalogen, SBB 23 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 90–92.

¹³ Compare also Rom 8:38–39, cited above, with Plato, Menex. 245D: οὐ γὰρ Πέλοπες οὐδὲ Κάδμοι οὐδὲ Αἴγυπτοι τε καὶ Δαναοὶ οὐδὲ ἄλλοι τολλοί φύει μὲν βάρβαροι όντες, νομῷ δὲ Ἐλλῆνες, συνοικοῦσιν ἡμῖν.
Clearly, the stylistic features Pauline scholars have come to associate with Epictetus’s so-called hardship catalogues—assonance, isocolon, homoioteleuton, antithesis, anaphora, patterned use of conjunctions, groups of two or three items—in fact characterize Epictetus’s

14 “. . . this faculty of choice and refusal, of desire and aversion, or, in a word, the faculty which makes use of external impressions; if thou care for this and place all that thou hast therein, thou shalt never be thwarted, never hampered, shalt not groan, shalt not blame, shalt not flatter any man” (LCL).

15 “We choose . . . to care for many things, and to be tied fast to many, even to our body and our estate and brother and friend and child and slave” (LCL).

16 “Epictetus will not be better than Socrates; but if only I am not worse, that suffices me. For I shall not be a Milo, either, and yet I do not neglect my body; nor a Croesus, and yet I do not neglect my property” (LCL).

17 “[We] become like wolves, faithless and treacherous and hurtful, and others like lions, wild and savage and untamed” (LCL).

18 “And so for them it is sufficient to eat and drink and rest and procreate, and whatever else of the things within their own province the animals severally do” (LCL).
catalogue-making style in general. Isolating certain of these catalogues on the basis of their content for comparison with Paul’s lists of tribulations gives the misleading impression of unique stylistic resemblance when in fact we are dealing with a much more general phenomenon.

And it is a general phenomenon indeed. As Fitzgerald himself has shown, lists and catalogues constitute a mode of expression ubiquitous in the literature of antiquity. These catalogues share no set form or structure; there are, however, a number of recurrent stylistic features. Particularly characteristic are asyndeton, anaphora, chiasm, alliteration, assonance, homoioteleuton, and the use of rhythm and rhyme—in other words, precisely those stylistic features that Paul’s tribulation lists share with so-called Stoic peristasis catalogues. A brief survey will illustrate the point.

John Austin’s thorough treatment of catalogues in the Iliad provides a good overview of the “endless variations and complexities which this form presents” in Homer. I have selected a characteristic example (Il. 10.227–232):

\[\text{ὁς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἔθελον Διομήδει πολλοὶ ἔπεσθαι.}\]
\[\text{ηθελέττων Αἰαντε δύω θεραπόντες Ἄρνος,}\]
\[\text{ηθελε Μηριῶνης, ἀλα δ' ἤθελε Νέστορος υίός,}\]

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19 The same is true, we might note, with regard to Paul, who also uses catalogues for purposes other than enumerating hardships. E.g. 1 Cor 3:20–21:

\[\text{πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἐστὶν}\]
\[\text{εἰτε Παῦλοσ εἰτε Ἀπολλώνι εἰτε Κηφᾶς}\]
\[\text{εἰτε κόσμος εἰτε ζωὴ εἰτε θανάτος}\]
\[\text{εἰτε ἑστῶτα εἰτε μέλλουτα}\]


The text is, of course, hexametric, so we see none of the staccato terseness of Paul’s or Epictetus’s catalogues. Still, typical catalogue features like anaphora (ἡθελεττην...ἡθελε...ἡθελε) and elaboration of the final item do appear.\(^{23}\)

Free from the constraints of meter, catalogues in the Hebrew Bible more closely resemble the compressed style we find in Paul. Hosea 1:7 provides an interesting example:\(^{24}\)

I will not save them
by bow or by sword or by war
by horses or by horsemen

Here we have the repetitive use of the preposition that is characteristic of Paul. Notice that the catalogue is structured into two groups of items, within each of which the conjunction \(\text{εν}\) is used consistently. The beginning of the second grouping is signaled by asyndeton. This follows, not coincidentally, upon \(\text{μεθαληθημα}\), which, with its additional syllable relative to the previous two items, completes the rhythmic unit.

Interestingly, the LXX manifests its own instinct for structure by adding an additional item (“chariots”), thus creating two groups of three items, each of which rhymes the first with the final item:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{où σώσω αὐτοὺς} & \quad \text{οὐδὲ} \text{ ἐν πολέμῳ} \\
\text{ἐν τόξῳ} & \quad \text{οὐδὲ} \text{ ἐν ἰπποῖς} \\
\text{οὐδὲ} \text{ ἐν ἀρμασίν} & \quad \text{οὐδὲ} \text{ ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ} \\
\end{align*}\]

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\(^{23}\) See further Austin, “Catalogues and the Catalogue of Ships in the Iliad,” 16–18.

The items in the first group are singular, in the second group plural. As in the Hebrew, here too the consistent use of both the preposition and the conjunction is anaphoric. The repeated use of "εὖ", incidentally, is reminiscent of Paul’s usage in 2 Cor 6:4–7, 11:23, 27, and 12:10 (cf. Deut 28:48 LXX).

Somewhat more complex is the catalogue in the Chronicler’s version of Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple (2 Chr 6:28–29):

If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight or mildew, locust or caterpillar; if his enemies besieges him at his gates in the land; every plague and every disease, every prayer, every supplication which there is from every man or from all your people Israel which they know each one his plague and his pain

The catalogue divides neatly into two parts. The first is bounded by an inclusio created by the repeated use of "εὖ ἡμῖν," Note the epistrophic repetition of "εὖ ἡμῖν" throughout this first section, as well as the pairs of items joined by the conjunction "ἢ," which stands out against the asyndeton that characterizes the remainder of the section. The second part features the anaphoric repetition of "ὅλως." Each of these features, which the exception of the inclusio in the first section, is preserved, *mutatis mutandis*, in the LXX.

Catalogues appear in later Jewish literature as well.²⁵ Indeed, according to Wolfgang Schrage, it is Jewish apocalyptic literature that provides a true analogue to Paul’s hardship

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catalogues, being nearer than the Stoic material to Paul’s eschatological perspective on suffering.\textsuperscript{26} I will not pause here to consider the merits of this argument; instead, I hope simply to demonstrate the ubiquity in Second Temple Jewish texts of the stylistic features found also in Paul’s catalogues.

In the \textit{Testament of Joseph} we find this antithetically structured psalm (1.4–7):

\begin{verbatim}
oi άδελφοι μου οὕτωι ἐμίσησαν με καὶ Κύριος ἡγάπησε με αὐτοὶ ἠθέλον με ἀνελεῖν καὶ ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πατέρων μου ἐφύλαξέ με eis λάκκον με ἐξάλασαν καὶ ὁ ψιστὸς ἀνήγαγέ με ἐπράθην εἰς δούλου καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἐλευθέρωσε με eis αἰχμαλωσίαν ἐλήφθην καὶ ἡ κράταια αὐτοῦ χείρ ἐβοηθήσε μοι ἐν λιμῷ συνεσχέσθην καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος διέθρεψε με μόνος ἡμῖν καὶ ὁ Θεὸς παρεκάλεσέ με ἐν ἀθενείᾳ ἡμῖν καὶ ὁ ψιστὸς ἐπεσκέψατό με ἐν φυλακῇ ἡμῖν καὶ ὁ σωτὴρ ἐχαρίτωσε με ἐν δεσμὸι καὶ ἔλυσε με ἐν διαβολαῖς καὶ συνηγόρησε μοι ἐν λόγοις Αἰγυπτίων πικροῖς καὶ ἐφρύσατό με
\end{verbatim}


\textsuperscript{26} Schrage, “Leid, Kreuz und Eschaton,” 25–26 and passim.
The antitheses are reminiscent of what we observed above in Plutarch, *Stoic. abs.* 1057E and 2 Cor 4:8–9. Four distinct patterns characterize each of the four sections, distinguished by changes in the verb form in the first line of each antithetical pair: in the first, the brothers’ action is expressed in the third person plural; in the second, Joseph’s situation is described with a first person verb in the passive voice; in the third section, the rhythm is compressed by the use of the simple copulative verb; and, in the even terser final section, the verb is unexpressed, and, in contrast to the variegated use of epithets in the first two sections, so is the divine subject. Epiphora is created by the use of the first person pronoun at the end of each clause (με throughout, except twice where Joseph is the indirect object), and anaphora in the second half of the catalogue by the repeated use of the preposition ἐν. As in 2 Cor 4:8–9—and in any number of other catalogues—the same conjunction is used within each clause, and the clauses themselves are asyndetic (cf. Hos 1:7; Wis 7:17–21).

The incorporation of a number of different rhythmic patterns that vary in complexity is a feature *T. Jos.* 1.4–7 shares with 2 Cor 11:21b–30 and 2 Cor 6:4b–10. It appears also in *Jub.* 23.12–14, 17–19, presented here in the Latin version:

Et non est pax, propter quod
uulnus super uulnus

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27 “These, my brothers, hated me but the Lord loved me. They wanted to kill me, but the God of my fathers preserved me. Into a cistern they lowered me; the Most High raised me up. They sold me into slavery; the Lord of all set me free. I was taken into captivity; the strength of his hand came to my aid. I was overtaken by hunger; the Lord himself fed me generously. I was alone, and God came to help me. I was in weakness, and the Lord showed his concern for me. I was in prison, and the Savior acted graciously in my behalf. I was in bonds, and he loosed me; falsely accused, and he testified in my behalf. Assailed by bitter words of the Egyptians, and he rescued me. A slave, and he exalted me” (Kee, *OTP*). Cited by Schrage, “Leid, Kreuz und Eschaton,” 27; Hodgson, “First Century Tribulation Lists,” 68–69; Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 198; Karl Theodor Kleinkecht, *Der leidende Gerechtfertigte: Die alttestamentlich-Jüdische Tradition vom “leidenden Gerechten” und ihre Rezeption bei Paulus*, WUNT 2/13 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984), 258.

28 Cf. Fitzgerald’s discussion of 2 Cor 11:21b–30 in “Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1984), 374–86.
et dolor super dolorem
et tribulatio super tribulationem
et auditus malus super auditum malum
et infirmitas super infirmitatem
et uniuerSa iudicia eius[modi]
maligna secundum hoc ipsud cum
corruptione et clades et niues et pruinae et glacies et febris et frigora
et prouocatio et famis et mors et gladius et captuItas
et uniuersae plaga planctus.

Et omnia haec superuenit superuenient [sic] super generationem
quae est iniqua quae iniquitatem facit in terra
et inmunditia et fornicationes et pollutiones abominationes operum
ipsorum. . . .

Propter quod
uniuersi malignati sunt
et omne os loquitur maligna
et omnes operationes eorum inmunditia et odium
et universae uiae eorum pollution[es] et abominatio et exterminium.

Et ecce
terra [p]erit
propter omnia opera ipsorum
et non est semen et uinum et oleum
propter quod uniuersa m[align]ata sunt opera ipsorum
et uniuerSi [pe]reunt bestiae et animalia et aues et omnes pisces maris
a malitia filiorum hominum.

Et litigabunt isti cum illis.
Nam iubenes cum senioribus
et seniores cum iunioribus
pauper cum diuite
infimus cum magno
et egenus cum eo qui potestatem exercet
in lege pro testamentom
quonium obliti sunt
praeeceptum et testamentum
et diem festum et mensem
et sabbatum et iubeleum
et omnia iudicia.29

29 “And there is no peace, because (there will be) blow upon blow, wound upon wound, distress upon distress, bad news upon bad news, disease upon disease, and every (kind of) bad punishment like this, one with the other: disease and stomach pains; snow, hail, and frost; fever, cold, and numbness; famine, death, sword, captivity, and every (sort of) blow and difficulty. All this will happen to the evil generation which makes the earth commit sin through sexual impurity, contamination, and their detestable actions. . . . For all have acted wickedly; every mouth speaks what is sinful. Everything that they do is impure and something detestable; all their ways are (characterized) by contamination, and corruption. The earth will be destroyed because of all that they do. There will be no produce from the vine and no oil because what they do (constitutes) complete disobedience. All will be destroyed together—animals, cattle, birds, and all fish of the sea—because of mankind. One group will struggle with the other—the young with the old, the old with the young; the poor with...
I have replicated this text at length in order to demonstrate the difficulty of categorizing ancient catalogues. This is clearly not a hardship catalogue, although it does include lists of tribulations; and it is no vice catalogue, though it is does elaborate vices. As is true of the other catalogues we have adduced, there is no form per se, but there certainly are discernable patterns. The more one sees of this sort of thing, the more one is convinced that the stylistic features this text shares with other ancient catalogues derive not from any specific literary tradition, but rather from a general rhetorical sensibility that governs human list-making. We will return to this point in part 3 below.

I will not comment in detail on the stylistic features of this catalogue, which by now should be familiar enough, except to draw attention to the preponderance of emphatic words like omnis and universus. We have seen this already in 2 Chr 6:28–29 (םְס [cf. Jer 25:18–26]), and it is a feature of a number of Pauline catalogues too, wherein we encounter πᾶς, πολύς, πνευτότε, ἀεί, and the like.30

This survey could be extended indefinitely. As Robert Hodgson has shown, comparable catalogues are extant from Nag Hammadi (Great Pow. 39.21–33) and appear in both Josephus (B.J. 2.151–153; 4.165) and the Mishnah (m. Pesah. 10:5; m. Ta'an. 3:5).31 There are a number in Philo as well (Det. 34; Somn. 2.84; Mos. 2.16).32 Anton Fridrichsen has found examples in various Greek novels (Chariton, Chaer. 3.8.9; 5.5.2; Achilles Tatius,
Leuc. Clit. 5.18.4). And I have not even begun to look into the catalogues in Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Egyptian documents, which, apparently, are legion. The point is, the use of catalogues was ubiquitous in the ancient world, and, where we find catalogues, we find a flexible but consistent set of stylistic features. We certainly need not posit any one particular stylistic influence to account for Paul’s tribulation lists, and we should avoid begging the question of their interpretation by perpetuating a faux terminus technicus like Peristasenkatalog.

**Catalogues, Auxēsis, and Rhetorical Education**

The composition of catalogues is not described as such in ancient rhetorical theory; however, as Fitzgerald has noted in a useful study of catalogues in ancient Greek literature, the rhetorical strategies involved fall under the rubric of auxēsis or amplificatio. Quintilian describes five different methods of amplificatio, of which the final one is “accumulation of words and sentences identical in meaning” (8.4.26 [Butler, LCL]). Although this would appear to exclude catalogues (since items in a catalogue tend not to be strictly synonymous), Quintilian does note the affinity between such amplificatio and “the figure styled συναθροισμός by the Greeks,” in which “it is a number of different things that are accumulated” (8.4.27). For Quintilian, these figures appear to be functionally equivalent.

The potential of catalogues to fulfill the magnifying function of auxēsis is particularly clear in On the Sublime. Here “Longinus” cites the consensus position on the nature of auxēsis, which holds that amplification is “discourse which invests the subject with grandeur

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34 For bibliography, see Fitzgerald, Cracks in an Earthen Vessel, 276–77n5.
36 The clearest description of συναθροισμός is that of Alexander Numenius (mid-2nd century CE), who provides as an example Demosthenes, Cor. 71, wherein Demosthenes catalogues the offenses of Philip against the Hellenes (RG 3:17).
But he is not quite content with this definition, since it fails to describe what sets auxēsis apart from other figurative language, so Longinus goes on to provide his own description, emphasizing that amplification consists essentially in multiplicity or abundance (ἐν πλῆθει [12.1–2]; cf. 23.1–2; Apsines, Rhet. 5.5 [RG 1:366]).

One means of its execution, then, consists in accumulation of what things are done or suffered (11.2; cf. 23:1–4), the result of which would be difficult to distinguish from what we have been calling a catalogue.

Again, we have no evidence of instruction in how such amplificatory catalogues should be constructed, but, as we have already seen, there are a number of specific figures that do seem to have been associated with catalogues in practice if not explicitly in theory. Most frequently attested are anaphora and epiphora, asyndeton and patterned use of conjunctions, and assonance or rhyming. Each of these figures was discussed by ancient rhetorical theorists; moreover, as has been observed at least since the work of Johannes Weiss, Paul’s list of hardships in 2 Cor 11 contains them all. So, did he learn such rhetoric at school?

One way to address this question would be to enquire concerning the education of those authors in whose works we have already found analogues to Paul’s catalogues. Here we have mixed results: Plutarch considered himself a philosopher, not an orator, and was critical of “sophistic pedantry” (σοφιστικὴ μικροφροσύνη [Glor. Ath. 251A]), yet he clearly benefited from a thorough rhetorical education. Josephus had some trouble with Greek

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38 Roberts translates ἔργων ἦ παθῶν as “of facts or passions,” but here I think Longinus refers to the commonplace contrast between the person as subject or object of what occurs. E.g. Plato, Phaedr. 245C; Aristotle, Rhet. 1.9.15; Philo, Leg. 3.88; Plutarch, Rom. 12.5.
diction, apparently, but both he and Philo were educated as befit aristocrats.\textsuperscript{40} And, of course, Dio Chrysostom was a famously eloquent orator. So, some of these catalogues were composed by men educated in classical rhetoric.

But others were not. Hosea, for example, clearly benefited from familiarity with the indigenous rhetorical tradition of Hebrew prophecy, but of course had no training in Greek or Roman rhetoric. And the authors of Jubilees and the Testament of Joseph can at most have had superficial exposure to Greek rhetorical principles.\textsuperscript{41}

Epictetus’s is an interesting case. Born a slave, he would certainly not have been expected to learn to speak like an aristocrat.\textsuperscript{42} As a young man, however, he was permitted to attend philosophical lectures by Musonius Rufus, and eventually became a philosopher in his own right. Still, although literate and clearly well-read in philosophy, Epictetus apparently received no formal rhetorical education.\textsuperscript{43} What he knew of style would have been learned from his observation of Rufus’s practice and from his own experience in persuasion. So,

\begin{quotation}


\textsuperscript{42} The distinction between the diction of slaves and their masters is put to good use in ancient comedy, wherein it serves a characterizing function. See Evangelos Karakasis, \textit{Terence and the Language of Roman Comedy}, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–16, 21–43.

\textsuperscript{43} According to A. A. Long, although Epictetus was a “virtuoso user of colloquial Greek . . . he probably did not have the elaborate training in schoolbook rhetoric that was the staple of Roman education.” \textit{Epictetus}, 13.
\end{quotation}
although he was certainly convincing in his own way, those with a taste for refined style seem not to have been impressed (*Diatr.* 3.9.12–14; cf. Origen, *Cels.* 6.2).

Finally, it goes without saying that the catalogues in Homer and Hesiod cannot have resulted from rhetorical education. Indeed, recent scholarship has placed these lists on the very threshold of oral and written “literature,” associating such stylistic features as rhythm, alliteration, and assonance not only with aesthetic intent but also with mnemonic function.\(^{44}\)

Clearly, then, the presence of catalogues in Paul’s letters is not in itself evidence that he was exposed to techniques of *auxēsis* at rhetorical school. Catalogues and their attendant stylistic features occur too frequently in literature that was not informed by the formal tradition of classical rhetoric for their appearance straightforwardly to be attributed to its influence. Moreover, as we have seen, instruction in the composition of catalogues is not attested in rhetorical sources; at best it can be inferred from Longinus’s isolated description of *auxēsis*. This is a perilous foundation upon which to assert that stylistic features associated with catalogues provide evidence of formal rhetorical education.

**Conclusion**

As noted in chapter 1, both C. F. G. Heinrici and Johannes Weiss described a wealth of aurally pleasing stylistic features—Heinrici called them *Klangfiguren*—in Paul’s list of tribulations in 2 Cor 11.\(^{45}\) Weiss attributed them to rhetorical education; Heinrici disagreed. And, in many respects, the discussion has remained precisely at the impasse where they left it. Indeed, although the consensus among scholars has shifted in Weiss’s favour, this is not because new evidence has been adduced or even because new arguments have been

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\(^{44}\) See esp. Minchin, “The Performance of Lists.”

articulated. No, it is the scholarly audience that has changed, not the arguments, which remain, in their essence, undefended assertions regarding whether or not the ability to write with a compelling sense of rhythm presupposes formal rhetorical education.\textsuperscript{46} The examples adduced above demonstrate that rhetorical education is not a necessary nor an adequate explanation for the widespread appearance of catalogues and their attendant stylistic features in the literature of antiquity. Indeed, as we will see in part 3 below, it is difficult to account for the ubiquity of “catalogue-style” without positing an origin in the “general rhetoric” of human persuasion.

\textsuperscript{46} Compare, e.g., Weiss, “Beiträge zur Paulinischen Rhetorik,” 187; Murphy-O’Connor, \textit{A Critical Life}, 319–21.
Chapter Seven
Not a Fool, a Fool’s Mask: Narrenrede and Prosopopoia

Hans Windisch and Paul’s So-Called Narrenrede

Hans Windisch’s 1924 commentary on 2 Corinthians spawned, or at least anticipated, a number of key features of the approach to 2 Cor 10–13 that predominates in current scholarship. Among the most influential of his proposals was his designation of the heart of the passage (11:21–12:11) a Narrenrede or “Fool’s Speech.”\(^1\) On this reading, the peculiarities of the passage result from Paul’s deliberate adoption of the role of the foolish braggart (ὁ ὀλαζών), a role presumably familiar to his audience from the mimic theatre. In other words, Paul was self-consciously and ironically play-acting: “Der ‘Narr’ für P[aulus] nur eine ‘Rolle’ ist”; indeed, it is “eine seinem Wesen fremde ‘Rolle.’”\(^2\)

Response to Windisch’s proposal has been somewhat paradoxical: Few have pursued his specific argument—that is, the notion that the role Paul plays comes from the mime. The most prominent exception, a 1999 article by Larry Welborn, shows why: Welborn certainly is able to demonstrate the ubiquity of the mime in contemporary popular culture,\(^3\) but he gets no further than Windisch did in explaining how Paul’s hearers would have been able to recognize mimic stock characters—and Welborn identifies five of them!—in Paul’s letter. According to Welborn, Paul’s self-referential statements throughout the section—“I speak

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\(^1\) Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 316.
\(^2\) Ibid., 344, 316.
like a fool,” and so forth—“are the linguistic counterpart of the dress and manners by which the fool was identified when he appeared on the mimic stage”; but this assertion only highlights the gulf between the representational mode of the theatre and the written discourse of the letter. To make a leap between two such different contexts, Paul’s hearers would have needed unambiguous cues indeed. Welborn argues that in the prologue which introduces the “Fool’s Speech” proper (2 Cor 11:1–21a) “Paul takes pains to identify the role that he is playing as that of the fool.” That’s true in a way, I suppose, but Paul’s concession that he is speaking foolishly (ἐν ἀφροσύνη [11:17, 21]) is hardly clear evidence that he had the mime in mind. There may have been a lot of folly in mimic comedy, but presumably Paul’s readers had seen some non-fictional fools too.

In any case, if scholars have not been convinced of the particulars of Windisch’s argument, nevertheless they have enthusiastically latched onto his characterization of the passage as a “Fool’s Speech.” Almost every recent discussion of the passage calls it Paul’s Narrenrede or “Fool’s Speech” or “foolish discourse,” typically with no explanation of what

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4 Welborn, “The Runaway Paul,” 138. It does not help Welborn’s case that one of these self-referential interjections—παραφροσύνω λαλῶ (11:23)—does not, according to Welborn’s scheme, accompany a change in roles, and the change from “braggart warrior” to “anxious old man” is accompanied by no such interjection. See Lee A. Johnson, “The Epistolary Apostle: Paul’s Response to the Challenge of the Corinthian Congregation” (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 2002), 207.


6 Welborn, “The Runaway Paul,” 137.

7 If Paul were taking on a mimic role here, it is difficult to understand why he would refer ambiguously to boasting ἐν ἀφροσύνη (11:17, 21b; cf. 11:1) rather than consistently and straightforwardly naming the role (ὁ ἀφροσύνων [11:16; cf. 11:19]—or, better, ὁ ἀλαζών) he purportedly is playing.

8 Windisch’s proposal was modified by Hans Dieter Betz, who argued that the Narrenrede was a literary form Paul encountered by way of popular philosophy. Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, 79–89. Betz seeks literary precedents in Alcibiades’ speech in Plato’s Symposium (212C–222B) and Seneca’s Apocolocyntosis—texts which are themselves so different that is difficult to see how they can be adduced as examples of a “literarische Form.” Still, Betz has been followed by Strecker, “Die Legitimität des paulinischen Apostolates,” 269–70; Stefan Schreiber, Paulus als Wundertäter: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und den authentischen Paulusbriefen, BZNW 79 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 215–16.
is meant by the designation. And although we are provided with little in the way of detailed
treatment of ancient parallels, general assertions that Paul “acts out the fool’s role” or is
wearing “an assumed disguise” are common.

Given the long-standing tendency of interpreters to seek justification for Paul’s
foolish boasting, this selective use of Windisch’s interpretive proposal should make us
suspicious. And, indeed, the use of Narrenrede as a quasi-technical term appears to play a
consistent function in the rhetoric of Pauline scholarship: It legitimizes an interpretive
whim—namely, the assertion that Paul’s boasting is not really boasting—by vaguely
suggesting some sort of literary precedent where in fact there is no relevant literature to
adduce. Murray Harris’s recent commentary is typical: With no explanation of what a
“Fool’s Speech” might be, and no discussion of ancient parallels, he nevertheless uses the
designation to sponsor his assertion that Paul himself—that is, his essential character—is not
implicated in his boasting: “Although Paul has censured his rivals for indulging in pointless
comparison with one another and in unbridled boasting, he now proceeds to engage in

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9 So Furnish, II Corinthians, 498; Martin, 2 Corinthians, 357; Calvin J. Roetzel, 2 Corinthians, ANTC
(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 103–14; Holland, “Speaking Like a Fool”; Sundermann, Der schwache
Apostel, 15n25; Travis, “Paul’s Boasting,” 529; Watson, “Paul and Boasting,” 85; Harris, Second Corinthians,
789; David E. Garland, 2 Corinthians, NAC 29 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 487; McCant, 2
Corinthians, 114–57; Paul Barnett, The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,
1997), 494–96; Zmijewski, Der Stil der paulinischen Narrenrede”; Vegge, A Letter about Reconciliation,
363–65; Fitzgerald, Cracks in an Earthen Vessel, 152; M. David Litwa, “Paul’s Mosaic Ascent: An
Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 12:7–9,” NTS 57 (2011): 254. Jan Lambrecht calls this a “Fool’s Speech,” but
411n28.

10 Here Martin, 2 Corinthians, 361; McCant, 2 Corinthians, 127. See also Rudolf Bultmann, The
Second Letter to the Corinthians, ed. Erich Dinkler, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985),
210; Mitchell, “Patristic Perspective,” 366n63; Harris, Second Corinthians, 789; Holland, “Speaking Like a
Fool”; Sundermann, Der schwache Apostel, 31–39; Garland, 2 Corinthians, 487.
comparisons and boasting himself, *but only in the disguise of a fool*, as he begins the ‘Fool’s Speech.’”

Thus what we accomplish, it seems, by invoking the dubious genre of the “Fool’s Speech” is to mute the immediacy of Paul’s voice and thereby to attenuate his unbecoming demeanour. If Paul’s willingness to make a fool of himself is not desperate self-promotion but clever rhetorical calculation, then the real Paul, the man behind the fool’s mask, can retain his respectability. He remains the sort of man whom we admire, committed to his cause but self-controlled, dispassionately selecting a daring but effective rhetorical strategy.

**Narrenrede, Prosōpopoia, and Rhetorical Education**

No one, to my knowledge, has suggested that ancient rhetorical education involved training in how to write a *Narrenrede* as such, but Windisch’s interpretive paradigm has sponsored arguments that the manner of Paul’s “Fool’s Speech” attests to his knowledge of rhetorical conventions. Specifically, it is claimed that this is an instance of speech-in-character, something Paul must have learned during his rhetorical training.

The figure in question, variously called προσωποποιία and ἡθοποιία by ancient rhetorical theorists, was indeed on the ancient rhetorical curriculum. According to Theon’s *Progymnasmata*, προσωποποιία is “the introduction of a person to whom words are attributed that are suitable to the speaker and have an indisputable application to the subject

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discussed” (8 [RG 2:115; trans. Kennedy]). The key element here, it appears, is suitability; for, as Theon goes on to emphasize, in order to be effective one must consider well what manner of speech befits the specific speaker one has in mind. Indeed, as Quintilian insists, when speaking in the voices of others “we shall only carry conviction if we represent them as uttering what they may reasonably be supposed to have had in their minds” (Inst. 9.2.30 [Butler, LCL]; cf. Theon, Progymn. 1 [RG 2:60]). Without such realism, the figure will fall flat.

Now, I do not intend to argue that there is nothing in Paul’s letters that can aptly be designated prosōpopoia. In fact, I think it is quite clear that Paul, in various ways, incorporates the voices of opponents real and fictive into his discourse. He even does so in 2 Cor 10–13 (cf. 10:1b, 10; 12:16). I do not think this constitutes evidence of formal rhetorical education, and will explain why in part 3 below. For the present, though, I wish to challenge the notion that Paul’s “Fool’s Speech” is an instance of speech-in-character by highlighting two key difficulties with this approach. First, it has proven impossible to delineate the extent of Paul’s use of the figure: The speech he disowns as “foolish” is not separable from his own voice, nor is it clear where his foolish discourse begins or ends. Second, Paul does not speak consistently of being “a fool” (ἄφρων [11:16]) but in fact introduces the theme by asking indulgence to engage in “a little foolishness” (τι ἄφρωσύνη [11:1])—a usage that suggests not role-playing but self-consciousness. Allow me to elaborate.

As noted above, recent commentators have been unable to agree where Paul’s so-called “Fool’s Speech” begins and ends—an lack of agreement that highlights, I think, a fatal

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15 Proposals for its beginning include 11:16 (Roetzl, 2 Corinthians, 103–12), 11:21b (Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 315–98; Furnish, II Corinthians, 498; Harris, Second Corinthians, 729), and 11:22 (Keener, I–2 Corinthians, 232), with 11:1f. sometimes considered an introduction of sorts. Various readers
problem with the current interpretive paradigm: There is no clear demarcation of Paul’s “foolishness” from the remainder of the letter, thus no clear distinction between Paul’s own voice and the role he is purported to adopt. If, for example, we assume for the sake of argument that Paul takes on the role of a fool at 11:21a, as is most commonly suggested, his voice thereafter should be clearly distinguishable from what precedes. This is not the case. Paul asks permission to be foolish already in 11:1, and undertakes a comparison of himself with his opponents, which includes an explicit boast (καύχομαι [v. 10]), throughout 11:4–15. This material is really of a piece with Paul’s “foolishness” later in the chapter.

Well, then, perhaps those readers are correct who believe Paul is already wearing the mask of the fool in 11:1–15. If he is, though, it is difficult to know how one would interpret his solemn assertion in v. 11 (“Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!”), not to mention his characterization of his opponents in vv. 13–15. Few would be willing to accept that all this should be consigned to the mouth of a fool.

Indeed, a reading of the “Fool’s Speech” in context makes clear that Paul’s persona does not in fact change at 11:1, 11:16, or even 11:21a. Specifically, the boastfulness and the comparison with his rivals that generally are associated with his fool’s role are entirely in accord with what Paul says throughout in the letter in propia persona. Note, particularly, 10:7–8:

If someone (τις) is confident that he is of Christ (Χριστοῦ), let such a one consider again this, that just as he is of Christ, so also are we. For even if I boast (καύχομαι) a little excessively about our authority . . . I will not be ashamed. (my trans.)

Certainly there is less elaboration here than in Paul’s subsequent boasting, but this is no different in kind from 11:22–23. In fact, Paul boasts about his authority and his status before,
during, and after the so-called “Fool’s Speech” (cf. 11:6–12; 12:11b–12), a fact that makes it impossible to distinguish the voice of the fool from Paul’s own voice. If this is prosōpopoia, it is not very convincing, for it lacks the clear differentiation of personae stressed by the rhetoricians.

Moreover, if Paul says things in propria persona that sound suspiciously like the fool, the converse is also true: The fool says things that sound suspiciously like Paul. According to Glenn Holland, once Paul puts on his fool’s mask “he pretends to share his opponents’ own foolish behavior as well as their faulty human judgments of things.” But is this an apt characterization of Paul’s assertion, “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness” (11:30)? Again, according to Holland, “Everything [Paul] says as a fool may be expected to be . . . worldly, self-congratulatory, and boastful.” But is this really a suitable description of what Paul says in 12:6: “If I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me”? Indeed, what might a statement like this mean coming from the persona of a fictive boastful fool? Even if we were willing to consider this some sort of role-playing mise en abyme, in which Paul the reluctant boaster plays a fool playing a reluctant boaster, we are left with a considerable problem: Paul’s putative attempt at

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17 Ibid.
18 Margaret Mitchell resorts to the suggestion that Paul here “pauses between his own voice and that of his “fool” persona” (Birth of Christian Hermeneutics, 89).
19 Here we approach the over-subtle interpretation of Windisch (Der zweite Korintherbrief, 316), who is followed by Welborn (“The Runaway Paul,” 159–61). See also Glenn Holland’s strained attempt to read consistent irony throughout this section. According to Holland, “The claim [in 12:6a] that all his boasts are ‘no brag, just fact’ is of course typical of a boaster and a fool. Far from being a sober assessment of his apostolic credentials, 12.6a represents the very heights of Paul’s ‘foolishness’ ” (“Speaking Like a Fool,” 262). But this reading quickly runs aground, for Paul has said essentially the same thing (“we will not boast beyond limits”) in 10:13 and 10:15, long before having supposedly put on the mask of the boastful fool. Again, Paul and the fool sound suspiciously alike.
credible speech-in-character has been compromised by discourse that is not at all suitable to the character in whose mouth it is supposed to appear.

So, given the difficulty of sustaining a “prosōpopoīiaic” reading of Paul’s boasting, I suggest a simpler explanation: The integration of the so-called “Fool’s Speech” with the rest of the passage suggests not that Paul is inhabiting another’s voice, but rather that he is making a self-referential comment about his own voice. Paul is worried about being considered a fool, and preempts the accusation by accepting it in qualified form.

Not only is this the simplest way to account for the text as it stands, it also gains support from Paul’s analogous procedure in the previous chapter. Note the disclaimer in 10:8: “Even if I boast a little too much of our own authority . . . I will not be ashamed.” Clearly, Paul is aware that his self-referential speech leaves him susceptible to characterization as shameless. He is self-conscious about his boasting, but he insists he will do it anyway. Likewise, in 11:16 Paul clearly anticipates the potential accusation of his addressees (“Let no one think that I am a fool”). Again he is aware that he is liable to belittling characterization, and again Paul insists that he will not be cowed: “But if you do, then accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little.”

Finally, the diverse ways in which Paul refers to his foolishness in 11:1–12:11 are much easier to interpret as self-consciousness than as announcements of a “prosōpopoīiaic” role. Paul introduces the theme of foolishness not as a description of himself as speaker, but rather as characteristic of his speech itself: ὀφελοῦν ἄνείχεσθέ μου μικρὸν τι ἀφροσύνης (11:1). Throughout the passage, his usage alternates between the abstract and the concrete noun (although readers of the NRSV or NIV may be led astray here, as both translations
standardize Paul’s usage, rendering ἐν ἀφροσύνη in 11:17 and 11:21 with the concrete noun: “as a fool”):

11:1 – μικρόν τι ἀφροσύνης
11:16 – ἄφρωνα (twice)
11:17 – ἐν ἀφροσύνη
e11:19 – ἄφρων
11:21 – ἐν ἀφροσύνη
e11:23 – παραφροσύνων λαλῶ
12:6 – ἄφρων
12:11 – ἄφρων

There simply is no reason to assume that “the fool” is the governing image here. Paul is engaged instead with the general notion of foolishness, and, accordingly, uses the word group in various ways. He is disclaiming *his own speech* as foolish. This is not *prosōpopoia*.

**Conclusion**

It is time, I suggest, to lay the notion of Paul’s *Narrenrede* or “Fool’s Speech” to rest. The term signifies nothing—nothing, that is, except an elusive and misleading interpretive tradition, a tradition that began with an unwarranted assertion and continues as an unexamined assumption, and a tradition, I submit, that precludes any understanding of this text. There is no evidence for anything like a literary, let alone epistolary *Narrenrede* in the ancient world, and the suggestion that Paul is playing a role from the mime cannot be sustained from the text. Further, the notion that Paul is engaged in *prosōpopoia* fails to take account of what he actually says while purportedly speaking in the voice of the fool.
Chapter Eight

*Synkrisis* in Corinth

The rhetorical features addressed in each of the previous three chapters have been seen, on closer examination, to have a very dubious relationship with the sort of ancient rhetorical theory Paul is alleged to have encountered in school. In fact, we have seen that three *termini technici* held dear by exegetes of 2 Cor 10–13 are, to varying degrees, the invention of modern scholarship: Neither *periautologia*, nor the *peristasis* catalogue, nor the *Narrenrede* was discussed by rhetorical theorists prior to the time of Paul; only *periautologia* was discussed by ancient rhetorical theorists at all. Moreover, when we turn to ancient rhetorical *practice*, it becomes clear that the referents of these terms have little to do with rhetoric: If the term *Narrenrede* could accurately be said to name anything in the ancient world, it is certainly not a rhetorical strategy; so-called *peristasis* catalogues have no distinguishing stylistic features, but instead encode ideal moral values concerning masculinity and freedom; ancient examples of self-praise and its avoidance evince concern not with rhetoric per se, but rather with the mitigation of envy and rivalry.

Assertions of Paul’s familiarity with rhetorical conventions for *synkrisis*, however, are an entirely different matter. Already Aristotle had suggested that one should compare (συγκρίνειν) the subject of one’s encomium with another estimable person as a form of *auxësis* (*Rhet.* 1.9.38; cf. *Rhet. Alex.* 3.7–8), and the *Progymnasmata* provide detailed
instruction on how this should be done, under the unambiguous heading Περὶ συγκρίσεως.¹

Here, at last, we are clearly in the realm of rhetorical education.

The notion that Paul’s boasting constitutes a rhetorical *synkrisis* was proposed by Christopher Forbes and Peter Marshall, two students of E. A. Judge, as an elaboration of Judge’s approach to 2 Cor 10–13.² Judge had argued that Paul found himself in Corinth “a reluctant and unwanted competitor in the field of professional ‘sophistry’”.³ Amongst the Corinthian sophists, Judge claimed, boasting was “absolutely *de rigeur*,” and so Paul, if he was to have any influence, had no choice but to compete.

It is in this social context that Forbes and Marshall too place 2 Cor 10–13. According to Forbes, “the key to the whole ‘boasting’ passage” comes in 10:12–13, which text he cites as follows:

Not that we dare to classify (ἐγκρίσει) or compare (συγκρίσει) ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits . . . ⁴

Forbes deduces from Paul’s statement here that Paul’s rivals have been boasting, and, further, that their boasting has included both “mutual comparison (συγκρισίς)” and comparison of themselves with Paul.⁵ So, since self-commendatory συγκρισίς was the order of the day, Paul responded by undertaking “a highly ironical comparison of himself with his Corinthian opponents”⁶—that is, he parodied the “synkritic” form of his rival’s boasting by choosing to boast of his incomparable weakness.

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⁴ Ibid., “Paul’s Boasting,” 67.
⁵ Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 1–2.
⁶ Ibid., 2.
This reading, which has been widely influential, rests on the convergence of three pieces of evidence: First, Paul’s opponents are thought to have been engaging in self-commendatory comparison (10:12), which, it is said, corresponds well with what we know of contemporary sophistic activity, not least in Corinth. Second, although he initially disavowed comparative boasting, Paul went on to compare himself with his Corinthian rivals, and, we are told, did so in ways that evince familiarity with rhetorical conventions for σύγκρισις. Finally, Paul placed his own boasting and that of his rivals in rhetorical context by using the common rhetorical term συγκριναμαι (10:12). I will address each of these claims individually.

**Sophistry in Corinth**

In his *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, Bruce Winter depicts Corinth as a city abuzz with sophistic rhetoric and thus permeated by rivalry and self-aggrandizement. “Corinth,” he says, “was flush with sophists, orators and poets, and the intense rivalry which seemed to arise wherever two or three were gathered together.” For Winter, Paul’s difficulties at Corinth must be seen against this background: The Corinthians were fascinated with sophistic display and susceptible to factionalism, hence their preference for Apollos and other “sophists” and their denigration of Paul. It was in such an environment, then, that Paul engaged in a parody of a self-adulating rhetorical *synkrisis*.

There are, I suggest, two problems with this analysis. First, much of the evidence cited by Winter pertains not to Paul’s time but rather to the height of the so-called Second

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9 Ibid., 172–79.
Sophistic in the second century. In fact, there is little to suggest that “sophists” as such were of cultural significance in mid-first-century Corinth. Second, the notion that the “boasting” of Paul’s rivals had a particularly sophistic flair receives no support from the text of 2 Cor 10–13.

Corinth, in fact, was not one of the “great sophistic centres” of the second century; Athens, Smyrna, Ephesus, and, of course, Rome retained that honour. It did, however, share the usual enthusiasm of provincial cites, playing occasional host to such luminaries as Favorinus and Herodes Atticus. This, however, was some years after Paul was in town. Herodes Atticus, a fabulously wealthy Athenian, was born in the first few years of the second century. Favorinus was a generation older, which still puts his floruit three-quarters of a century after Paul’s. In any case, despite the impression one might get from reading Winter’s treatment, neither of the two men had any particular connection to Corinth.

Winter does provide some evidence from the first century, but it is of dubious value. He refers, firstly, to Dio Chrysostom. Although Philostratus demurs from calling Dio a sophist outright (Vit. soph. 1.7–8), the latter’s career certainly anticipated the movement that

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10 G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 17; Ewen Bowie, “The Geography of the Second Sophistic: Cultural Variations,” in Paideia: The World of the Second Sophistic, ed. Barbara Borg, Millennium Studies 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 68. Indeed, the logic of Favorinus’s self-description in his *Corinthian Oration* 25–27 makes it clear that whatever aspirations Corinth had to being a city of paideia it had despite the inherent disadvantage of being a Roman colony: Favorinus’s personal example proves “that no one even of the barbarians may despair of attaining the culture of Greece” (Crosby, LCL).


13 Philostratus (Vit. soph. 1.8) and Cassius Dio (Hist. rom. 69.3.4–69.4.1) have Favorinus active under Hadrian (117–38 C.E.). See further Simon Swain, “Favorinus and Hadrian,” ZPE 79 (1989): 150–58. His *Corinthian Oration* ([Dio Chrysostom], Or. 37) is usually thought to have been delivered c. 130. See L. Michael White, “Favorinus’s ‘Corinthian Oration’: A Piqued Panarama of the Hadrianic Forum,” in Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches, ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, HTS 53 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 66n19.
Philostratus sought to memorialize.\textsuperscript{14} Dio was far more interested in both Rome and his native Prusa than in Corinth,\textsuperscript{15} but he does mention the city on occasion, and Jerome Murphy-O’Connor thinks he describes it with the accuracy of an eyewitness.\textsuperscript{16}

Winter focuses on Dio’s eighth oration (\textit{De virtute}), one of a number of addresses in which Dio uses Diogenes as a mouthpiece. It is generally agreed that Dio’s purpose in speaking in the persona of Diogenes is to use the Cynic hero as a lens through which to refract his own experience—in particular, his exile.\textsuperscript{17} For Winter, this means that what purports to be a description of Diogenes’ fourth-century B.C.E. Corinth should in fact be understood as “Dio’s assessment of the sophist movement in Corinth” in the late first century C.E.\textsuperscript{18}

What Dio’s Diogenes says about sophists in Corinth is rather hackneyed stuff, and hardly bears the weight of Winter’s historical reconstruction. The sophists, we learn, are gathered around the temple of Poseidon \(\text{βοώντων και λοιδορομένων ἀλλήλων} \) while their “so-called disciples” quarrel (\(\text{μάχομαι [9; cf. 36]}\)). For Winter, this is an allusion to the propensity for rivalry and envy among the sophists of Dio’s time.\textsuperscript{19} Whether or not the leading lights of the Second Sophistic were any more quarrelsome than competitive aristocrats of any other period is debatable.\textsuperscript{20} In any case, this is invective, not description, and has more to do with the sort of vilification Dio favours than with the characteristics of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14}Graham Anderson, \textit{The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire} (London: Routledge, 1993), 20–21;
\item \textsuperscript{15}Bowersock, \textit{Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire}, 110–12;
\item \textsuperscript{17}Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, \textit{St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology}, 3rd ed., GNS 6 (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 2002), 99–103;
\item \textsuperscript{19}Winter, \textit{Philo and Paul}, 123–24.
\item \textsuperscript{20}On their rivalries, see Anderson, \textit{The Second Sophistic}, 35–39; Bowersock, \textit{Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire}, 89–100.
\end{itemize}
sophists, be they contemporaries of Dio or of Diogenes. And, on that note, it is worth considering the possibility that Dio’s reference to sophists here is not aimed at his contemporaries at all, but is in fact part of the ethopoeiaic furniture of Dio’s oration, a detail included because it provides the conventional backdrop against which Diogenes’ legendary wit should be viewed (cf. Diogenes Laertius, Vit. phil. 6.47, 57).

Further, the sophists Dio’s Diogenes mentions are visitors to Corinth, not residents. Diogenes, we are told, had gone down to the isthmus with everyone else for the games (6). It was then (τότε)—that is, during the Isthmian games—that one could hear sophists at the temple of Poseidon (9). Thus it sounds very much like these sophists had come to Corinth for the special occasion, an impression that is confirmed a few lines later: Diogenes, apparently, did not attract any Corinthians, since they reasoned that they could see him on their streets at any time (10); the Corinthians were more interested in the novel fare on offer from the visiting sophists. Clearly, then, Dio’s brief and stereotyped description cannot be taken as evidence of a sophistic movement in late first-century Corinth.

Plutarch, like Dio, can be critical of σοφισταί, attributing to them the same sort of unworthy motives Dio posits: vanity, φιλοτιμία, and greed. Again, this can hardly be taken as a report of the values of first-century rhetors. These are topos, as old as Plato’s dispute with the original sophists, and, by Plutarch’s time, useful in denigrating any sort of rival at

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21 Dio puts μάχαμαι and λοιδορέω together elsewhere too, using the pair to describe the fractiousness of the avaricious man (4 Regn. 96), the disagreeable drunk (Compot. 3), and ignorant and corrupt humanity in general (Conc. Apam. 32).
22 As Winter also notes (Philo and Paul, 124n5). Note Dio’s similar comment in Dei cogn. 5, this time referring to the sophists who flocked to the games at Olympia.
23 Tu. san. 131A; Pyth. orac. 408D. Cf. Dio Chrysostom, Virt. 33; Dei cogn. 5; Lucian, Rhet. praec. 1–2. Plutarch also uses the word neutrally, and apparently makes no distinction between “rhetors” and “sophists.” See G. R. Stanton, “Sophists and Philosophers: Problems of Classification,” AJP 94 (1973): 151–53.
all (cf. Lucian, *Vit. auct.; Peregr.*). Plutarch’s usage tells us little more than that he considered some contemporary rhetoricians vacuous and vain.\(^{25}\)

Moreover, any connection specifically to Corinth is extremely tenuous. Winter notes that two of the symposia described in Plutarch’s *Table Talk* take place in Corinth (5.3 [675D–677B]; 8.4 [723A–724F]), and rhetors are among the guests at each.\(^{26}\) Again, however, it appears these men were in Corinth for the Isthmian games, as was Plutarch himself. And, even if one of these ἐτέκτοι were local, the appearance of a leading rhetor at a banquet hardly means that Corinth was rash with sophistry. It simply means that Corinth, like any other city, had a rhetorical school or a court of law.

This is approximately the level of banal insight into Corinth we get from the other first-century text Winter discusses, Epictetus’s discourse “On personal adornment” (*Diatr.* 3.1). The discourse is addressed to a young rhetorician who dressed too elaborately for Epictetus’s tastes (3.1.1). We can infer, from a passing mention, that he was a Corinthian: “Shall we make a man like you a citizen of Corinth, and perchance a warden of the city, or superintendent of ephebi, or general, or superintendent of the games?” (3.1.34 [Oldfather, LCL]). Evidently the young man was an aristocrat. Accordingly, he was receiving the rhetorical education that generally was thought necessary for a public career, in Corinth and elsewhere (cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.pr. 9–10; 1.2.18). And his attire has nothing to do with being

\(^{25}\) Indeed, first-century use of the philosopher vs. sophist *topos* seems to have amounted to little more than shadow boxing, an exercise in self-definition that allowed everyone to enjoy the esteem of being part of a courageous moral minority—a Socrates or a Diogenes. Hence, in the first century, everyone we might think to call a sophist insists that they are not (see Stanton, “Sophists and Philosophers,” 351–58). By the time we clear the room of philosophers, there is no one left to argue the other side. See, e.g., on Dio Chrysostom, Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*, Greece and Rome: New Surveys in the Classics 35 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17.

a sophist; it falls within the spectrum of the ordinary fashion of the Greek elite.\(^{27}\) Epictetus’s problem is simply that it is not very “philosophical” (cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.pr. 15).

In short, then, all of Winter’s evidence for “the sophistic movement in Corinth” erodes upon further examination. Reference to Corinth is marginal throughout, and, in the first-century material, there is no clear indication of sophists per se. The most we can say is that first-century Corinth, like any other town, had its fair share of orators—and perhaps more than its fair share during the games. Of course, sophists or no sophists, rhetoric and its elite practitioners would have been esteemed in Corinth as elsewhere. Surely they were competitive, and perhaps they quarreled. But there is no evidence in Paul’s letter that this is the background against which his troubles in Corinth should be viewed. I will restrict my comments here to Winter’s exegesis of 2 Cor 10–13.\(^{28}\)

According to Winter, “Paul calls his opponents in 2 Corinthians 10–13 ‘ignorant’ and ‘fools’ because they engaged in σύγκρισις and boasted about their achievements”—that is, they acted like sophists.\(^{29}\) But let’s look a little more carefully at what Paul actually says about their boasting. First, the notion that what Paul means to specify by his use of συγκρίνω in 10:12 is that his rivals had a particular affinity for the rhetorical exercise described in the *Progymnasmata* simply is not credible. The word’s use alongside such related terms as ἐγκρίνω, καυχάμαι, and ἐαυτοὺς συνίστημι makes it quite clear that

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\(^{27}\) As Eve D’Ambra explains, “Care taken to maintain one’s appearance and to distinguish oneself from the *hoi polloi* by grooming was an essential prerequisite for a man of honor.” “Kosmetai, the Second Sophistic, and Portraiture in the Second Century,” in *Periklean Athens and Its Legacy: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. Judith M. Barringer and Jeffrey M. Hurwit (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 207. See also Gleason, *Making Men*, 74–76.

\(^{28}\) On Winter’s reading of 2 Cor 10:10 in particular, see part 4 below.

\(^{29}\) Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 231.
Paul is referring to something considerably more general. And when Paul goes on to describe more precisely what is bothering him, he says nothing that calls to mind the sophists.  

In 2 Cor 12:10–16, Paul makes it clear that the immoderate “boasting” he attributes to his rivals—and insists that he will not undertake—consists of taking credit for the labours of others, harvesting in a field someone else has tilled:

οὐ γὰρ τολμῶμεν ἐγκρίναι ἢ συγκρίναι ἑαυτοὺς τισιν τῶν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστανόντων . . . ἡμείς δὲ οὐκ εἰς τὸ ὁμέτρα καυχήσομέθα . . . οὐκ εἰς τὰ ὁμέτρα καυχώμενοι ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις κόσμοις . . . οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ κανόνι εἰς τὰ ἔτοιμα καυχήσομαι. (10:12, 13, 15, 16)  

Clearly, his rivals are intruding on what Paul considers his territory. Paul founded the Corinthian community, and he wants the credit for it. His rivals’ “boasting,” then, consists of nothing more than a claim to status in the Corinthian community—which is precisely the nature of Paul’s “boasting” too (v. 9). The difference between them is simply that, from Paul’s perspective, he has not overstepped his God-ordained limits (vv. 13–14), and thus his boasting is not ὁμετρος. It is he alone who has the commendation of his master, Paul insists, and thus he alone is able to boast, as the Scriptures mandate, ἐν κυρίῳ (vv. 17–18).  

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30 Winter implies (Philo and Paul, 235) that they boasted, as sophists were wont to do, in their δόξα, πλοῦτος, τιμή, and ἄρχη, but there is no evidence for this in the text of 2 Cor. The only grounds for such an assertion is that such were the things about which sophists boasted. This is clearly a circular argument.  

31 On Paul’s rather obscure εἰς τὸ ἔτοιμα, see Plummer, Second Epistle, 290; Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:652. Note that καυχάομαι, particularly in Paul, need not signify boasting per se. It often refers more generally to taking pride in something (cf. 2 Cor 7:14; Gal 6:13). See BDAG s.v.; R. Bultmann, “καυχάομαι κτλ.,” TDNT 3:645–54; Ashton, Religion of Paul, 118.  

32 Paul’s κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὐ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς μέτρου is notoriously difficult to translate, although the sense is clear enough from the context: Paul is not “overreaching” (10:14) by working in Corinth, since it is within his God-measured jurisdiction. See Plummer, Second Epistle, 287–88; Furnish, II Corinthians, 471–72.  


34 Paul’s citation of Jer 9:23 here is often taken to be a denunciation of all human boasting. So Ulrich Heckel, for example, contrasts Paul’s absolute opposition to boasting with the attitude of “the Greeks”: “In Unterschied zu den Griechen geht es dem Apostel jedoch nicht einfach um die Vermeidung von Hybris und das Einhalten des rechten Maßes, sondern um Gottes Ehre als Schöpfer und Erlöser sowie um den völligen Verzicht auf jeglichen Selbstruhm des Menschen vor Gott” (Kraft in Schwachheit, 157). But this sounds more like Lutheran theologizing than exegesis of Paul (cf. Bultmann, “καυχάομαι,” TDNT 3:648–52), and is belied by consideration of the context of the citation in Paul’s argument. Perhaps in 1 Cor 1:31, in the midst of a discussion of the futility of wisdom, power, and nobility κατὰ σάρκα (v. 25), we are justified in supposing that
The comparative dimension in all of this is, of course, that his rivals have been asserting their own status at the expense of Paul’s.\(^{35}\) Thus Paul insists that he is not their inferior (11:5; 12:11), and emphasizes his own superiority where he can—i.e. in preaching the gospel free of charge—so as to “deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about” (11:12). There is nothing particularly rhetorical, let alone sophistic, about this sort of comparative dispute.

\[\text{συγκρίνω and Rhetoric}\]

Much of the credibility of the approach of Winter, Forbes, Marshall, et al. seems to derive from Paul’s use in 2 Cor 10:12 of the word \textit{συγκρίνω}, a verbal cognate of the rhetorical term \textit{σύγκρισις}. This is interpreted, often, as straightforward evidence that what Paul’s rivals were engaged in, and what he himself reluctantly undertook, was not merely comparison, but comparison as informed by rhetorical theory.\(^{36}\)

Indeed, both words, \textit{σύγκρισις} and \textit{συγκρίνω}, were used frequently by rhetorical theorists;\(^{37}\) however, as we will see, both were very common words, hardly restricted to this

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Paul’s initial characterization gives the impression that his rivals are making comparisons among themselves (αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῦ ἑαυτῷ μετρώντες καὶ συγκρίνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἑαυτῶς [10:12]), but his elaboration focuses solely on their comparability with himself. Hence this is probably best interpreted as an attempt by Paul dismissively to portray his rivals’ denigration of him as just one instance of characteristically self-promoting behaviour. On this point I have an unlikely ally in Peter Marshall, \textit{Enmity in Corinth}, 326–27.

\(^{35}\) For the noun, see Anderson, \textit{Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms}, 110–11. The verb occurs at Aristotle, \textit{Rhet.} 1.9.38; Dionysius Halicarnassus, \textit{Pomp.} 1.11; \textit{Thuc.} id. 14; \textit{Dem.} 17; 21; Theon, \textit{Progymn.} pr.; 6 (3x); 10 (8x); Ps.-Hermogenes, \textit{Inv.} 3.9; 4.14 (4x); \textit{Progymn.} 7; 8 (3x); Menander Rhetor, \textit{RG} 3:372, 377, 380 (3x), 381 (2x), 383, 386, 402, 417 (3x), 425, 427; Aphthonius, \textit{Progymn.} 10 (3x); Nicolaus, \textit{Progymn.} 9 (4x).
technical sense. A modern English equivalent, I suspect, would be hypothesis, which, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes, is used in a technical sense by logicians, but also more generally by the hoi polloi. Its use certainly is not evidence that the speaker is referring to formal logic.

I will focus on the verb συγκρίνω, since Paul nowhere uses the noun. “Compare” is one of four primary senses listed by LSJ. The word occurs only here with this meaning in the NT; in its one other NT occurrence, also in Paul (1 Cor 2:13), it means “interpret,” as it frequently does also in the LXX. Elsewhere in the LXX, συγκρίνω means “compare” in the general sense, with no particular rhetorical connotation. Josephus uses it six times, in five of which the word means “compare;” there is no indication in any of these instances that rhetorical *synkrisis* is what he had in mind. LSJ notes two occurrences for Polybius: on one occasion, Polybius does use the word in a setting somewhat reminiscent of the sort of *synkrisis* the rhetoricians recommend, but he also uses it more generally to describe Scipio’s meticulous collation of his spies’ reports (συνέκρινε καὶ διηρεύνα εἰς τὰ λεγόμενα [14.3.7]). I could go on, but the point is clear: the word simply means “compare.”

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39 Gen 40:8, 16, 22; 41:12, 13, 15; Dan 5:7.

40 1 Macc 10:71 (of the size of armies); Wis 7:29; 15:18.

41 *A.J.* 5.77; 8.42; 8.99; 13.89; *B.J.* 1.402. In *A.J.* 4.33 the sense is “judge.”

42 It is limited, however, to a comparison of historical methods: ἵνα γνώμων πότερος ἄξιος ἔσται τῆς τοιαύτης κατηγορίας (12.9.1).

43 A crude but telling way to see the scope of this word’s non-rhetorical use is a simple *TLG* search. A lemma search across the entire corpus locates 2635 occurrences of συγκρίνω; of these, only 141 occur in authors to which the editors of the *TLG* have appended the generic epithet *Rhetorici*. For the noun συγκρίσις, the ratio is marginally higher: 335 of 3407 hits occur in authors designated rhetoricians. Even granting that a considerable number of references to rhetorical comparison may occur in non-rhetorical writings, these data are striking, and make it impossible to assume, merely from the word’s occurrence, that Paul in 2 Cor 10:12 is referring to the rhetorical practice of *synkrisis*. Finally, a note on the meaning of συγκρίσις in P.Oxy. VIII 2190 is order, since Forbes addsuce it as an example of rhetorical *synkrisis* used for the purposes of self-advertisement among “popular teachers” (“Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 7). The text in question is a letter from a boy named Neilus, who is pursuing his education, probably in Alexandria, written to his father.
Moreover, in this case the context actually tells against the rhetorical sense of the word. As noted above, Paul uses συγκρίνω here alongside such related terms as ἐγκρίνω, καυχάμαι, and ἐσυνιστάμειν, suggesting that the concrete behaviour to which he refers is not the sort of thing that is best described by a technical term, but instead falls somewhere within the general semantic range circumscribed by these various words and phrases. Indeed, it would be very odd to put together a paronomastic pairing like ἐγκρίνω, συγκρίνω in which one word had a general and the other a technical signification. And, as noted above, when Paul goes on to elaborate on his rivals’ ἀμετρός “boasting,” καυχάμαι refers not to rhetorical exercises but to assertions of status or authority. In short, συγκρίνω here has nothing to do with rhetoric.

Paul’s Comparison in 2 Corinthians 11:21b–23

If there is no evidence that Paul’s rivals in Corinth were engaging in rhetorical συνκρίσις, and no evidence that Paul uses συγκρίνω in its technical rhetorical sense, then any argument that Paul utilizes this figure must rest solely on Paul’s prose itself. That is, only if

back in Oxyrhynchus. Neilus has been searching in vain for a teacher he likes. Some friends of his are being urged to attend the classes of one Didymus, who had recently sailed down the river (καταπλέουσαντα [line 19; cf. line 5]) to the city. Neilus is not impressed. I quote from the translation of John Rea: “I for my part . . . am depressed by the very fact that this person, who used to be a teacher in the country (ἐπὶ τῆς χώρας), has made up his mind to enter into competition with the others (ἐδοξην εἰς σύνκρισιν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἔρχεσθαι)” (lines 25–29). The logic of Neilus’s argument makes it clear that σύνκρισις here has nothing to do with the rhetorical exercise, but refers to competition in a more general sense. What Nelius criticizes is Didymus’s decision to attempt the transition from country teacher, a humble role but one with little competition, to city teacher, where competition for students was evidently intense. It is not orations wherein he compares himself with other teachers but his “sailing down” in the first place that constitute his ill-advised entry εἰς σύνκρισιν τοῖς ἄλλοις.

44 This sort of paronomasia, I might note, is hardly evidence of particular rhetorical sophistication. See, for example the similar pairing οὐδὲ φάσις οὐδὲ βάσις in P.Oxy. XLVIII 3396.5–6, a letter regarding which G. O. Hutchison notes that “ubiquitous misspellings, limited vocabulary, and unambiguous sentence-structure indicate a considerable distance from the world of the previous writer”—a writer Hutchison had placed at “the very foot of the rhetorical ladder.” “Down among the Documents: Criticism and Papyrus Letters,” in Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography, ed. Ruth Morello and A. D. Morrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 28.

45 Note that Marshall disingenuously avoids this problem by providing, in his citation of the text, the Greek for “compare” but not for “class” (Enmity in Corinth, 325).
his comparison of himself with his rivals in fact resembles the practice of rhetorical *synkrisis*. Could one argue that he was familiar with the rhetorical tradition the *Progymnasmata* represent.

There is, of course, some general resemblance. Paul does compare himself with his rivals, and arguably does hit on one of the traditional headings. But I am not at all persuaded, with Forbes, that Paul’s “boasting clearly takes the form of a σύγκρισις.” On the contrary, Paul’s comparison is far too brief, stylistically far too idiosyncratic, and far too easily explained on other grounds to suggest the influence of rhetorical theory.

Paul’s putative *synkrisis*, it should be noted, constitutes only the first few verses of his foolish boasting (11:21b–23):

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ἐν ὧν δὲ ἄν τις τολμᾷ, ἐν αφροσύνῃ λέγω, τολμῶ κἀγώ· Ἑβραῖοι εἰσιν; κἀγώ. Ἰσραηλίται εἰσιν; κἀγώ. σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ εἰσιν; κἀγώ. διάκονοι Χριστοῦ εἰσιν; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, ὑπὲρ ἐγώ· ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως ἐν δανάτοις πολλάκις.
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The passage begins in an explicitly comparative mode, expressed by the repeated use of κἀγώ. The precise connotations of Ἑβραῖος, Ἰσραηλίτης, and σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ need not detain us here; it is enough to note that each of these items of comparison revolves around authentic Judean ethnicity. With διάκονοι Χριστοῦ, Paul leaves behind his κἀγώ claims and asserts his superiority: ὑπὲρ ἐγώ. When it comes to service of Christ, Paul claims to be peerless.

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47 For an overview of the discussion, see Martin, 2 Corinthians, 373–75; Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:723–30.
It is not entirely clear whether the clauses that follow should be considered a continuation of Paul’s comparison with his rivals—that is, whether he means to back up his ὑπὲρ ἐγώ by specifying the ways in which his service exceeds theirs. As Plummer notes, the comparative form is dropped after the repeated περισσοτέρως, and therefore only in these first two clauses is there even in form any possibility of comparison with [the opponents]. It is possible that after ὑπὲρ ἐγώ they are altogether banished from consideration, and that περισσοτέρως means “very abundantly.”

In any case, by the end of v. 23, the comparative aspect of Paul’s boasting has disappeared, and all agree that from this point on Paul’s boasting no longer resembles a rhetorical synkrisis.

Nevertheless, for Marshall and Forbes, the significance of Paul’s boasting throughout 11:24–12:10 still derives from its relationship to the conventional form of a synkrisis. The argument is as follows: Paul begins his boasting—as Theon’s Progymnasmata recommends, we are told—with a comparison of “birth and racial status”; “next, where one would expect magistracies and honours, or some equivalent, Paul brings forward beatings and dangers on all sides.” From this perspective, it is precisely Paul’s deviation from the expected synkritic form that signals his aim: Paul “amplifies what he should minimise and minimises what he should amplify,” thus constructing a “parody of the self-display of his opponents.”

For this sort of parody to work—that is, for the listeners to recognize it as a parody—two basic conditions must be met: first, the form in question must have clearly identifiable distinguishing features; second, the parodist must make clear reference to them. Paul’s putative synkritic parody meets only one of these conditions. There were, I think, clearly

identifiable features of ancient rhetorical comparison, and thus parodic *synkrisis* was certainly possible. Indeed, how else would one make sense of the *synkrisis* of “peas and lentils” reportedly undertaken by the great poet and satirist Meleager of Gadara (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 4.45)? However, as we will see, Paul’s boasting is not sufficiently reminiscent of *Progymnastic* or literary *synkrisiseis* to function as a parody.

As noted above, Forbes implies that Paul’s boasting follows the conventional order of headings for comparison as outlined by Aelius Theon. But his argument here is somewhat misleading.53 What Theon in fact says is this:

> Whenever we compare persons we shall first put side by side their good birth (τὴν εὐγένειαν) and education (τὴν παιδείαν) and the excellence of their offspring (τὴν εὔτεκτικιάν) and the offices they have held (τῶι δροσίοις) and their reputation (τὴν δόξαν) and the condition of their bodies (τὴν τοῦ σώματος διάθεσιν) and any other bodily and external good that we mentioned earlier in discussing encomia. After this we shall compare their actions (τῶι πράξεις). (*Progymn.* 10 [RG 2:113; trans. Kennedy])

Forbes does the best he can to make Paul’s series of κατγώ statements appear to conform to Theon’s description, describing them as reference to “birth and racial status.”54 But Paul’s insistence on meeting the criteria of authentic Judean ethnicity (cf. Phil 3:4–6) is certainly

53 Note also that contrary to the impression given by Forbes there is no well-defined order of headings to be addressed in *synkrisis*. The *Progymnasmata* differ among themselves (Theon: see below; Ps.-Hermogenes: city of origin (πόλις), family (γένος), nurture (τροφή), pursuits (ἐπιτηδεύματα), deeds (πράξεις), external factors (τα ἐκτός), manner of death, and “what comes after”; Aphthonius: not specified; Nicolaus: not specified). They do, however, generally agree that the headings are the same as those of encomium. But that too is a shifting target: Theon (9) has three major headings—goods of the mind and character, goods of the body, and external goods—while Ps.-Hermogenes (7) and Nicolaus (8) follow a chronological or biographical format. There is certainly some common ground here—origin and education are, predictably, at the beginning of each list; πράξεις are the main focus; manner of death, if included, comes at the end—but, beyond that, there is no firmly fixed order. Indeed, these authors explicitly advocate flexibility, in order that speakers may judge what is relevant in any particular case (cf. Nicolaus, *Progymn.* 8). Such flexibility, I might note, is precisely what we see in Plutarch, whose famous *synkriseis* are composed not according to a set order of headings but rather with an eye to what is most interesting—from Plutarch’s moralizing perspective, that is—about each pair of heroes. See Duff, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 243–86; and, more generally, Timothy W. Seid, “Synkrisis in Hebrews 7: The Rhetorical Structure and Strategy,” in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps, JSNTSup 180 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 327, 332.

not the sort of thing Theon meant by “good birth” (ἐυγένεια), which refers, quite unambiguously, to social status or nobility of birth.\textsuperscript{55}

And, even if we were to let Forbes fudge here, we would still have only a single point of similarity between Paul’s putative synkrisis and that described by Theon. Paul says nothing about παιδεία and nothing about εὐτεκνία. There is at most a single shared heading. Is this really sufficient grounds for Paul’s listeners to “expect magistracies and honours” to come next? Such an expectation, remember, is key to Forbes’s interpretation: If there is no formal expectation that Paul enumerate his honours, his listing of humiliations may constitute a paradox but cannot be a parody.

A further important observation tells against Forbes’s reading. Forbes describes the progymnastic method as “point for point” comparison,\textsuperscript{56} and, although this certainly is an accurate description, nevertheless it misleads with regard to the relationship between 2 Cor 11:21b–23 and the synkrisis composed in rhetorical school. Stylistically, there is no similarity at all. Aphthonius helpfully provides a sample composition, which gives us a good sense of what “point for point” means in the case of the Progymnasmata:

They were not born in the same land, but nevertheless each in a land to be praised. The one (ὁ μὲν) came from Phthia, where the eponymous hero of Hellas came from, and the other (ὁ δὲ) from Troy, whose original founders were descendents of gods. To the extent that having been born in similar places is no derogation of praise, Hector is not excelled by Achilles.

And while both were born in a praiseworthy land, both had equal ancestry; for each descended from Zeus. Achilles was son of Peleus (Πηλέως μὲν γὰρ Ἀχιλλέως), Peleus of Aeacus, and Aeacus of Zeus; similarly, Hector was son of Priam (Ἐκτῶρ

\textsuperscript{55} See LSJ, s.v. What Theon meant is clearly visible from Plutarch’s Comp. Demetr. Ant. 1.1–2 (Perrin, LCL): “Since, then, both these men experienced great reversals of fortune, let us first observe, with regard to their power and fame, that in the one case these were acquired for him by his father and inherited, since Antigonus became the strongest of Alexander’s successors, and before Demetrius came of age had attacked and mastered the greater part of Asia; Antony, on the contrary, was the son of a man who, though otherwise gifted, was yet no warrior, and could leave him no great legacy of reputation.”

When both came to manhood, they acquired equal prestige from one war. First, Hector (πρώτον μὲν γὰρ Ἐκτώρ) was leader of the Trojans and, while alive, the protector of Troy; during that time he continued to have gods aiding him in the fight and when he fell made Troy fall with him. Achilles (Ἀχιλλεύς δὲ) was the leader of Greece in arms; terrifying all, he subdued the Trojans and had the help of Athene in the fight, and his death took away the superiority of the Achaeans. (*Progymn. 10* [trans. Kennedy])

Note that, in contrast to the terseness of 2 Cor 11:21b–23, each heading is introduced, briefly elaborated so as to justify any claim to equality or superiority, and, on occasion, summarized. The same pattern characterizes each heading in the *synkrisis* with which Plutarch concludes most of his paired *Lives*.\(^\text{57}\) I quote but two examples:

As for their outlays of money, Nicias was more public spirited (πολιτικότερος μὲν ὁ Νικίας) in his noble ambition to make offerings to the gods and provide the people with gymnastic exhibitions and trained choruses; and yet his whole estate, together with his expenditures, was not a tithe of what Crassus expended (ὡν δὲ ὁ Κράσσος ἄντιλωσεν) when he feasted so many myriads of men at once, and then furnished them with food afterwards. (*Comp. Nic. Crass. 1.4* [Perrin, LCL])

It is possible, too, to get a glimpse of the character of each in his style of speaking. For that of Demosthenes (ὁ μὲν γὰρ Δημοσθενικός), which had no prettiness or pleasantry, and was condensed with a view to power and earnestness, did not smell of lamp-wicks, as Pytheas scoffingly said, but of water-drinking and anxious thought, and of what men called the bitterness and sullenness of his disposition; whereas Cicero (Κικέρων δὲ) was often carried away by his love of jesting into scurrility, and when, to gain his ends in cases, he treated matters worthy of serious attention with ironical mirth and pleasantry, he was careless of propriety. . . . (*Comp. Dem. Cic. 1.3–4* [Perrin, LCL])

Plutarch is less concerned than the progymnast in simple demonstrations of superiority. Instead, his more sophisticated fascination is with the interplay of difference and sameness. But the structural similarity is evident: As in Aphthonius’s exemplar, in each case the heading is identified and then elaborated, often with specific examples.

Another stylistic similarity is the frequent use of balanced μέν...δέ constructions. Such constructions are, of course, eminently suitable to the sort of point-by-point comparison involved in synkrisis. Plutarch is a little less bound to this form than Aphthonius, occasionally finding more creative ways of denoting the second side of an opposition. Still, it would be difficult to imagine synkrisis without μέν and δέ clauses or their equivalents.

A particularly telling example of the conventions for synkrisis is a treatise, falsely attributed to Plutarch, that compares the merits of fire and water:

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ἀρ' οὖν ὦ χρησιμότερον ἔκεινο, ὦ πάντοτε καὶ διηνέκες δεόμεθα καὶ πλείστου, καθάπερ ἐργαλείου καὶ ὀργανον καὶ ἡ Δία φίλος ὁ πάσης ὄρος καὶ παντὸς καιροῦ παρῶν ἐτοιμος; καὶ μὴν τὸ μεν πῦρ ὦ πάντοτε χρήσιμον, ἐστιν δ' ὅτε καὶ βαρναυμέθα καὶ ἀποστάμεθα· τοῦ δ' ὑδατος χρεὶα καὶ χειμῶνος καὶ θερούς καὶ ναοῦσι καὶ ὑγιαίνουσιν, νυκτὸς καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν, καὶ οὐκ ἐστιν ὅτ' ἀνθρώπος οὐ δείται... καὶ ἀνευ μέν πυρός ἢ πολλάκις, ὑδατος δ' οὐδέποτ' ἀνθρώπος. (An ignis 2 [Mor. 955E–956A])
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What makes this synkrisis of particular interest is how poorly it is executed. As F. H. Sandbach explains, in addition to “the unusual meagreness of the author’s vocabulary,” the treatise is marred by unwieldy attempts at rhetorical display: “The author is clearly striving after effect, but hardly achieving it.” One manifestation of its amateurish quality is the way in which substance—and logic—have been sacrificed in order to meet formal expectations.

This author is intent on picking a winner, thus an observation about the danger of

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59 “Is not that element the more useful of which most of all, everywhere, invariably, we stand in need as a household tool, and, I swear, a friend, ready to help us at any time, in any emergency? Yet fire is not always useful; sometimes, indeed, we find it too much and interrupt our use of it. But water is used both winter and summer, sick and well, night and day: there is no time when a man does not need it. . . . Man has often existed without fire, but without water never” (Perrin, LCL).
60 “Then, too, that which by multiplication destroys its own contribution is the less useful. Such a thing is fire which, like an all-devouring beast, consumes everything near, so that it is useful rather by skilful handling and craft than by its own nature; but water is never dangerous” (Perrin, LCL).
conflagrations produces, by necessity of comparison, the absurd conclusion that water is never to be feared.\textsuperscript{62}

Note that despite this author’s incompetence the treatment of the headings conforms closely to the pattern we have come to expect: Each heading is briefly introduced and then elaborated, generally using balanced μέν . . . δέ clauses. What the \textit{Progymnasmata} teach, and what Plutarch utilizes elegantly, this author bungles. It is difficult to see how Paul’s comparison of himself with his rivals in 2 Cor 11 could be said even to belong on the same continuum.

It is true that the use of \textit{synkrisis} was not confined to the progymnastic exercise that went by that name, but was widely used as a means of \textit{auxēsis} in encomiastic oratory.\textsuperscript{63} Does such use bear more resemblance to Paul’s comparison? Well, no. Compare the use of \textit{synkrisis} in Xenophon’s famous encomia.\textsuperscript{64}

I will next point out the contrast between [Agesilaus’s] behaviour and the imposture of the Persian king. In the first place the Persian (ὁ μέν) thought his dignity required that he should be seldom seen: Agesilaus (Ἀγγήσιλαος δέ) delighted to be constantly visible, believing that, whereas secrecy was becoming to an ugly career, the light shed lustre on a life of noble purpose. In the second place, the one (ὁ μέν) prided himself on being difficult of approach: the other (ὁ δέ) was glad to make himself accessible to all. . . . In the matter of personal comfort, moreover, it is worth noticing how much simpler and much more easily satisfied were the tastes of Agesilaus. The Persian king (τῶν μὲν γὰρ Πέρση) has vintners . . . But Agesilaus (Ἀγγήσιλαος δέ), thanks to his love of toil, enjoyed any drink that was at hand . . . (Xenophon, \textit{Ages}. 9.1–2 [Marchant and Bowersock, LCL])

Immediately evident, again, is the use of balanced μέν . . . δέ clauses. Also, note that, just as in the \textit{synkrieseis} cited earlier, the grounds of each comparison are specified before being elaborated. Indeed, the structural similarity of these encomiastic comparisons with

\textsuperscript{62} See ibid., 201.
\textsuperscript{63} Aristotle, \textit{Rhet}. 1.9.38; \textit{Rhet. Alex}. 3.7–8; Theon, \textit{Progymn}. 9 (RG 2:111)
\textsuperscript{64} Cf. Isocrates, \textit{De pace} 41–44, which is explicitly labelled a \textit{synkrisis} by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (\textit{Isocr}. 17; \textit{Dem}. 17), and Isocrates, \textit{Evag}. 34–37.
what we have seen in the progymnastic tradition is striking. And here, I suspect, we have a clue as to the generic conventions that would allow Meleager to produce a parodic *synkrisis* of peas and lentils. I imagine headings something like this, though certainly more humorous:

Further, with regard to texture, peas and lentils compete valiantly for the prize: For while the one, when cooked, becomes so mushy as to render teeth unnecessary, the other, upon being boiled in a broth, resembles not so much victuals as sludge.

In fact, I like lentils and peas. My point is that it is this sort of thing, not Paul’s brief comparison of himself with his rivals, that would have been recognizable as a parody of the conventions of *synkrisis*.

Paul, of course, was not composing an oration; he was writing a letter. And so one could perhaps argue that the conventions for *synkrisis* I have highlighted would not have been relevant in the case of 2 Cor 10–13. From this perspective, Paul’s comparison does not sound like the *synkriseis* of oratory or the *Progymnasmata* because it is presented in a style that befits letter writing, terser and less formal than the stuff of oratory. But this sort of argument does nothing to rehabilitate Forbes’s reading of 2 Cor 11:21b–23 as a parodic *synkrisis*, since we have no evidence of epistolary *synkriseis* with defined characteristics predictable enough to make them amenable to parody.

More troublingly, this sort of argument leaves us in the awkward position of having derived our reading of the evidence from a prior conclusion. That is, having concluded that Paul was trained to compose rhetorical *synkriseis*, we have managed to find a way of explaining why he does not in fact do so. Surely it makes more sense first to consider the evidence—Paul compares himself with his rivals; his comparison does not resemble a formal *synkrisis*—and then to reach our conclusion. A suitable conclusion, I think, would be that Paul’s comparison of himself with his rivals does not evince knowledge of formal rhetorical practice.
In fact, there is a much simpler explanation than Paul’s putative knowledge of rhetorical conventions for the fact that he compares himself with his rivals: He was competing with them. The situation simply demanded that he assert his superiority, and that is a task for which it is difficult to imagine a more obvious strategy than comparison.
Chapter Nine
Not a Fool, It’s (Only) Irony

The assertion that Paul’s boasting is (only) ironic is all but universal in current scholarship, and it undergirds a number of the rhetorical-critical readings treated above:¹

Whatever rhetorical measures Paul must resort to, we are told, they cannot be taken at face value; no, it is the deeper ironic meaning of Paul’s rhetoric to which we must attend. From this perspective, Paul’s boasting becomes anti-boasting, a devastating critique of his rivals, who, one is left to imagine, prattle on shamelessly of their accomplishments—and do so without a trace of irony. In other words, interpreting this text as irony allows Paul to have his cake and eat it too: His ironic self-commendation functions both to demonstrate his superiority as an apostle and to demonstrate the absurdity of the very self-commendation he undertakes.²


² Prior to the rise of this ironic reading, interpreters sought to resolve the apparent contradiction between Paul’s self-commendation and his denouncement of self-commendation by positing a theological dialectic. See Ernst Käsemann, “Die Legitimität des Apostels: Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10–13,” ZNW 41 (1942): 33–71; John H. Schütz, Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority, 2nd ed., NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 165–86; Hafemann, “Self-Commendation.” Like the ironic interpretation we will discuss in this chapter, this is a needlessly convoluted reading. As I argued in the previous chapter, a simpler explanation—and one that makes better sense of the text—is that Paul sought to discount his rivals’ “boasting” because it was his rivals’, and thought his own was legitimate because it was his own.
This would be a clever rhetorical strategy indeed. The trouble is, Paul didn’t use it. Although he does make isolated ironic statements in this passage, his boasting as a whole simply does not admit of an ironical reading. Paul explains exactly what he intends to do, and then he does it. This explicitness leaves no compass for irony. In the end, one suspects that the attribution to Paul of ironic intent derives not from cues in the text but rather from interpreters’ incredulity that Paul could thus have praised himself in earnest.

**Glenn Holland’s Boastful Ironist**

Undoubtedly the most thorough attempt to read 2 Cor 10–13 as an essentially ironic discourse is that of Glenn Holland. Irony is not easy to define, and Holland begins by taking us on an instructive foray into the nature of irony, wading through the sometimes murky waters of modern literary criticism. Irony, he insists, is better understood through concrete instances than attempts at description. Still, he provides a useful working definition of the sort of irony that most interpreters attribute to Paul:

As it is most commonly understood, irony is a rhetorical trope, that of saying one thing while meaning another. . . . The ironic interpretation arises out of a perception (and this perception may be communicated in different ways) that another meaning lies below the surface meaning, and that this second meaning, the ironic one, is the true one.

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3 According to Christopher Forbes and Tor Vegge, Paul’s striking use of irony attests to his rhetorical sophistication—sophistication that can only have been achieved through formal rhetorical education. Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 22–24; Vegge, *Paulus und das antike Schulwesen*, 418–23.


5 Ibid., 20, 37–38. Holland discusses at some length whether irony inheres in authorial intention or in the evaluation of the reader, and, in short, equivocates—as can be seen from the odd notion in the quotation above of “communicating” a “perception.” For our purposes, the whole debate is irrelevant: those who assert Pauline irony in 2 Cor 10–13 generally believe that by doing so they are saying something about the historical Paul and his intention. What I am asking is thus not whether the text can be read ironically—any text can—but whether Holland et al. are right to assert that Paul’s boasting was self-consciously ironic.
This is a good description of what we may call (stable) verbal irony, and Holland evokes it again when summarizing his reading of Paul’s so-called “Fool’s Speech”:

In the guise of the fool, Paul is free both to speak ironically and to draw his reader’s attention to the fact that he is doing so. The whole concept of “speaking like a fool” invites the reader to look past the surface meaning of the text in order to find its deeper, true meaning. . . . Throughout these chapters Paul unabashedly presents matters from the divine perspective, exalting humility and suffering over human ideas of glory in an ironic tour de force.

Tellingingly, though, in treating Paul’s alleged irony in 2 Cor 10–13, Holland does not in fact isolate an ironic from a “surface meaning.”

Let me provide an example. Holland asserts that in describing his flight from Damascus (11:32–33) “Paul is being ironic, boasting about the cowardice that is part of his weakness.” But what Holland describes as the ironic meaning here is in fact the explicit surface meaning of the passage, for Paul had introduced the episode by explaining: “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness” (v. 30). There is no irony here—that is, to use Holland’s words, no meaning below the surface meaning—for Paul has flatly declared his intentions, paradoxical though they may be. Glorying in episodes that display one’s vulnerability may be counterintuitive, and Paul may indeed be “exalting humility and suffering over human ideas of glory,” but he is not using irony to do so.

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7 Holland, Divine Irony, 138–39. I am grateful to Dr. Holland for his charitable and helpful remarks on an earlier draft of this section.

8 Ibid., 144.

F. R. Ankersmit provides a useful differentiation of paradox and irony: “When being ironical we . . . expect the hearer or reader to see our point and to exchange what we say for what we really intended to express. But here irony differs from paradox. In the case of paradox semantic opposition should not be obliterated—as irony expects us to do—but has to be respected. . . . The secret of . . . paradox lies in the requirement that neither of the two opposites yield to the other.” Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy beyond Fact and Value (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 334.

10 There would indeed by irony here if, as E. A. Judge suggested, Paul intended to parody contemporary accounts of military daring: “If it is realised that everyone in antiquity would have known that the finest military award for valour was the corona muralis, for the man who was first up the wall in the face of the enemy, Paul’s point is devastatingly plain: he was first down.” “Educational Aims,” 708. So also Holland,
As Lee Johnson has shown, the same difficulty haunts Holland’s broader assertion that Paul’s “foolishness” constitutes an ironic stance: There simply is no compass for irony here, for Paul repeatedly makes his intention plain (11:1, 16–17). Indeed, each step of the way, Paul gives his reader explicit guidance as to how his “boasting” should be construed. Paul begins by explaining that he is about to boast κατὰ σάκρα and warning his addressees not to take such boasting as if it were κατὰ κύριον (11:17–18). Then, precisely as in Phil 3:2–6, where too Paul explains his grounds for confidence κατὰ σάκρα, Paul lists his qualifications as an authentic representative of Judean piety.12 When it comes to being a διάκονος Χριστοῦ, Paul offers yet another disclaimer (παραφρωνῶν λαλῶ), and then explains, just as in 1 Cor 15:10, that he is the hardest working of all the apostles (περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα [1 Cor 15:10]; ἐν κάποις περσοστέρως [2 Cor 11:22]). These κάποι are the grounds, apparently, on which he can claim to excel his rivals. But, in arguing his superiority as a διάκονος Χριστοῦ on these grounds, Paul finds himself making revelations that, he realizes, are hardly compelling indicators of authoritative status. Thus v. 30: “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.” There is no irony here, just a man caught between a rock and a hard place.

According to Wayne Booth, the first step in detecting the ironic intent of an author is the recognition that the author cannot mean what he or she seems to mean—that is, the

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1 Divine Irony, 144. But this would be rather an opaque reference: the incident is narrated with economy, not the bombast one would expect from such a parody; there is nothing to suggest a military context; and, as Murray Harris notes, “the crucial element of ‘firstness’ is missing (Second Corinthians, 824).


12 Thus, against Holland (Divine Irony, 141) there are no grounds for reading κατὰ σάρκα here as a reference to “human standards” in general, let alone the putatively worldly values of his rivals (cf. Winter, Philo and Paul, 234). On the telling parallel with Phil 3 here, see esp. Fitzgerald, “Cracks in an Earthen Vessel,” 375–77.
recognition that we are “required to reject the literal meaning.”\textsuperscript{13} A good example comes from 2 Cor 10–13 itself: When Paul asks, “Did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you could be exalted?” (11:7), we must reject the notion that Paul intends this as a sincere question. Paul cannot really be seeking an answer to the question as stated, for the correct answer is so obvious as to be laughable. The preposterousness of the question, then, changes our focus from the literal meaning to a “deeper,” ironic meaning: Translated, rather flatly, into literal terms, what Paul is really asking is something like, “How can you treat my work on your behalf with such disdain?”\textsuperscript{14}

In order to conclude that Paul’s boasting is ironic, then, we should need some compelling reason to reject a literal interpretation. That is, there must be some indication that Paul cannot mean what he seems to mean: first, that he knows boasting is foolish, but that he feels compelled to do it anyway; and, second, that he has nowhere to take refuge except in apostolic labours that turn out, as indicators of his status, to be ambivalent at best. The fact that Paul manages to refigure his weaknesses into marks of divine strength (12:9–10) does not mean the whole passage is ironic. Rather—if I may risk another old saw—Paul has only lemons, so he makes lemonade.

\textsuperscript{13} Booth, \textit{A Rhetoric of Irony}, 10. Booth is referring here to what he calls “stable irony,” which he distinguishes from “unstable irony,” which resists the reconstruction of a final authorial perspective. Since Paul clearly expects the Corinthians to be able to reconstruct his perspective well enough—well enough, indeed, to obey him (cf. 13:2, 10)—unstable irony need not concern us. Paul knows quite precisely what he wants, and expects the Corinthians to know too.

\textsuperscript{14} According to Forbes, Paul’s irony here is tinged with what Hermogenes calls indignation (\textalpha\varpi\upsilon\tau\varepsilon\iota\varsigma \[\textit{Peri ἴδεων} 2.8\]), and thus reflects his knowledge of rhetorical theory (“Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 17). The basic problem here is chronological: Hermogenes’s discussion of style dates from the 2nd c., as does the similar discussion in the \textit{Ars Rhetorica} falsely attributed to Aelius Aristides (1.2.1–1.2.2). See Kennedy, \textit{Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors}, 70; Malcolm Heath, \textit{Menander: A Rhetor in Context} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 45–48. So, as I. Vegge correctly notes, there is no evidence for discussion of \textalpha\varpi\upsilon\tau\varepsilon\iota\varsigma as a style of composition in Paul’s time (\textit{A Letter about Reconciliation}, 315). Any correspondence between Hermogenes’ discussion and Paul’s prose must be attributed to the fact that Hermogenes did a good job of his stated goal—namely, to describe what types of style speakers in fact use (1.1).
Allow me briefly to elaborate. For many scholars, it seems that what finally renders this passage ironic is Paul’s simultaneous claim to status and confession of weakness. From this perspective, the irony reaches a climax in what Holland calls Paul’s “claim to superiority through nothingness” in 12:11b.\(^{15}\) Again, though, it is difficult to locate an ironic signification. The “surface meaning” of the statement is clear enough. It has two clauses: 1) Paul claims that he is not inferior to his rivals; 2) Paul admits that he is nothing. I think it is quite clear that neither of these clauses demands an ironic interpretation. Paul does in fact think that he is not inferior to his rivals (cf. 2 Cor 10:7, 11:5), and his self-designation as “nothing” (οὐδὲν) is not out of keeping with how he describes himself in texts where few would allege ironic intent (1 Cor 3:7; 15:8–10; cf. 1 Cor 1:28; Gal 6:3). Quite simply, in both clauses, Paul means exactly what he says.

Holland’s analysis suggests that what he finds ironic here is in fact the relationship between these two clauses: “Paul can claim to be a better apostle precisely because he is more completely a nothing.”\(^{16}\) But I suspect the irony of juxtaposing these two apparently contradictory statements inheres not in Paul’s perspective, but in Holland’s. As a reader, Holland may find situational irony here—that is, it may be an ironic state of affairs, from Holland’s perspective, that Paul can claim, in the same breath, to be both “nothing” and “not inferior”—but that does not mean Paul is being ironic.\(^{17}\) On sober reflection, of course, Paul’s statements are logically irreconcilable. But when speaking of matters like identity and dignity one is not usually concerned above all with propositional logic. Rather, these two

\(^{16}\) Ibid. Notice that Paul does not in fact assert the causal relationship between his superiority and his nothingness that Holland finds in this text (ἐπεὶ καὶ οὐδὲν εἰμί), which is why his assertion that Paul’s engages in Socratic irony here cannot be sustained.
statements pertain to two different realms wherein Paul negotiates his identity: Paul experiences himself as a Christ-filled “nothing”; he also is convinced that he is an apostle, and expects to be honoured as such. Again, comparison with 1 Cor 15:9–10 is instructive:

I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Here too Paul is both the least and he is by no means inferior—and he certainly is not being ironic. I submit, then, that the paradoxical nature of Paul’s “boasting” in 2 Cor 10–13 derives not from Pauline irony but rather from Paul’s ongoing attempt to negotiate his controverted status as a disreputable apostle.

**Disclaiming Boastfulness**

Although recent interpreters of 2 Cor 10–13 have various emphases and approaches, the majority share a basic pattern of interpretation, an argumentative structure into which rhetorical criticism was co-opted and which rhetorical criticism now sponsors. It may be summarized as follows: Paul took up the rhetorical toolbox of his opponents in order to beat them at their own game; however, he did so *ironically*, and thereby deconstructed the worldly values of the Corinthians.¹⁸

This is an attractive interpretation. When we read this text ironically, we get a Paul who not only is sophisticated enough to outsmart his opponents, but also is humble enough to abstain from any straightforward participation in the quest for honour. He is the perfect Christian gentleman, if rather more passionate that most, responding with modesty, wit, and dignity to a challenging situation. But is this really the voice that speaks in 2 Cor 10–13?

¹⁸ For particular clear statements of the argument, see Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 20; Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 792–93; Travis, “Paul’s Boasting,” 529–30.
Given the long exegetical history of attempts to excuse Paul’s behaviour here, it is useful to remember Richard Levin’s observation, cited by Holland himself: Ironic interpretation is often suspiciously adept at defending authors from accusations of simple bad taste.\footnote{Richard Levin, New Readings vs. Old Plays: Recent Trends in the Reinterpretation of English Renaissance Drama (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 125–35; cited in Holland, Divine Irony, 34–35. Cf. Booth, A Rhetoric of Irony, 82.}

Notice further how this mode of interpretation shapes the characterization of Paul the rhetor in current scholarship: Paul not only knows how to engage in periautologia, but he can up the rhetorical ante by doing so ironically.\footnote{So Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 20; Watson, “Paul’s Boasting in 2 Corinthians 10–13,” 271–74; Duling, “2 Corinthians 11:22,” 829.} Paul is not only capable of composing a striking peristasis catalogue, but he can cleverly parody the genre.\footnote{Travis, “Paul’s Boasting,” 529–30; Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 452.} Paul not only has mastered the art of prosǒpopoia, but he ironically has chosen to take on the persona of a fool.\footnote{Keener, 1-2 Corinthians, 231.} Finally, not only can Paul put together a fine synkrisis, but he can deconstruct it by selecting ironic criteria for comparison.\footnote{Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 2.} In short, the attribution of ironic intent has been used to make Paul not only a gifted rhetor but the consummate rhetor—and, moreover, the only person in Corinth who can see through the superficial formality and the childish boastfulness of the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition. Indeed, it appears that one reason recent interpreters of 2 Cor 10–13 have found rhetorical criticism so attractive is that it provides, as Spätjudentum did until the recent crisis of conscience among New Testament scholars, a foil against which to highlight Paul’s moral and intellectual superiority. In other words, the argument that Paul’s boasting is ironic is not in fact exegetical but apologetic.

To understand the apologetic logic here, it is important to recognize that among the chief social functions of irony is its ability to allow speakers to say things “off-record” and
thereby to save face. Irony disassociates a speaker from his or her own words; it is, in the useful metaphor of Erving Goffmann, a framing device, signaling that a speaker “means to stand in a relation of reduced personal responsibility for what he is saying. He splits himself off from the content of his words by expressing that their speaker is not he himself in a serious way.” In other words, irony interrupts the easy assumption of listeners that what a speaker says is illustrative of her or his character. It does not take much time spent reading commentary on 2 Cor 10–13 to notice that, for centuries, interpreters have been eager precisely to distance Paul from the boastful speaker implied by the passage. Attributing to him ironic intent is simply the latest in a series of such strategies.

Of course, Paul himself does seek to disassociate himself from the implication that he is a boastful fool (cf. 2 Cor 11:1, 16–17, 21, 12:6, 11), but he uses a rather more explicit framing device, and one that, apparently, his interpreters have deemed ineffectual: the disclaimer. By repeatedly drawing attention to the fact that he is aware of the foolishness of his boasting, Paul goes, as it were, “off-record.”

Disclaimers, as John Hewitt and Randall Stokes have observed, result from a basic element of social interaction: Those who listen to a speaker “typify” that speaker—that is, they make judgements concerning the speaker’s character—on the basis of what is said, and, further, the speaker knows that this process of typification is underway. Speakers use

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26 See pp. 123–125 above.

disclaimers, then, in an attempt to manipulate how they are typified. Hewitt and Stokes provide the standard definition:

A disclaimer is a verbal device employed to ward off and defeat in advance doubts and negative typifications [of the speaker] which may result from intended conduct. . . . In each example, a specific utterance calls the other’s attention to a possible undesired typification and asks forbearance. Each phrase, in effect, disclaims that the word or deed to follow should be used as a basis for identity challenge and re-typification.28

Paul’s disclaimers, I submit, are textbook cases. I know boasting is foolish, he insists, but, now that you know I know this, you need not characterize me as a foolish boaster—even though I will go on to boast. As Plummer rightly explained, without the benefit of all this theory, “[Paul] is anxious that the Corinthians should be aware that he recognizes the foolishness of self-praise, and that it is not his fault that he is guilty of it.”29

Why, then, have interpreters not been content with Paul’s own strategy for mitigating the negative characterization that could result from his boasting? Why have they found it necessary to attribute to Paul ironic intent? Here I suspect the answer lies in the relative status that listeners attribute to speakers who use these two different framing strategies.

We have already considered the implications for characterizing Paul’s voice of attributing to him ironic intent. Reading Paul’s boasting as irony provides us with a Paul confident and secure in his own status. Yes, he is beleaguered, but he is sufficiently self-possessed to avoid the shameful spectacle of sincere self-promotion. Nor is he so vulnerable—so socially weak—that he must sacrifice his principles in order to assert his worth. This Paul still chooses. He remains firmly in control.

28 Ibid., 3. Among their examples are: “I know this sounds stupid, but . . .”; “This is just off the top of my head, so . . .”; “I realize I’m being anthropomorphic . . .”
29 Plummer, Second Epistle, 313.
This is in keeping with the nature of ironic speech, which tends to project an air of superiority. According to Aristotle, those who speak in earnest get angry with ironists, for irony is inherently disdainful (καταφρονητικός [Rhet. 2.2.24–25]). Indeed, for Aristotle, it is precisely this capacity of irony to host its apparent opposite, ἀλαζονεία, that makes it a vice (Eth. nic. 4.7.15; cf. Quintilian, Inst. 11.1.21)\(^{30}\)—though, when used in moderation, irony is a mark of superior refinement (Eth. nic. 4.3.28; 4.7.16; Rhet. 3.18.7). Similarly, for more recent theorists, the “ironic position is always one of superior power, knowledge or authority.”\(^{31}\) An ironic speaker is detached or disinterested enough that he or she is willing to risk misunderstanding—that is, risk that his or her hearers will miss the irony—and thus retains an aura of invulnerability.

In other words, one can boast ironically of weakness only if one can live with the potential consequence that a few boors will miss the irony and simply think that one is weak. Paul is apparently not secure enough in his position to leave such an interpretive option open (cf. 10:7–12; 11:5–6; 12:11; 13:1–4). So Paul uses the disclaimer, a framing strategy that avoids the risk of misinterpretation associated with irony.

The disclaimer, however, has its own risks. First, the repeated or habitual use of disclaimers is often associated by listeners with speakers who lack credibility and authority.\(^{32}\) This stands to reason: Why should speakers use disclaimers unless they lack the confidence to say what they are going to say “on-record”? Disclaimers, then, project insecurity or

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heightened concern with how one will be viewed—precisely the opposite of the detachment and disdainful disregard for the perception of others that ironists project.

Second, it is not at all clear that disclaimers actually work—that is, that they prevent the negative characterization of speakers on the basis of what they say. One recent study suggests that people who preface a statement with “I don’t mean to sound arrogant . . .” only avoid such characterization if what they go on to say is not, in fact, particularly arrogant.33 If such a disclaimer is followed by a statement of only modest self-praise, it appears to head off characterizations of arrogance. If, however, it is followed by what would otherwise be deemed shameless self-promotion, the disclaimer backfires, not only failing to prevent negative characterization, but even priming the pump by shaping the listener’s expectations.

My point is this: Paul disclaims the foolishness that he fears his audience will attribute to him as a result of his boasting. As the history of interpretation demonstrates, many readers have not found his disclaimers entirely convincing, and have been somewhat troubled by what appears to be Paul’s insecurity and concern for his own status. So, as the most recent move in a long apologetic tradition, interpreters have attributed to Paul a more refined rhetorical strategy, one that projects a more detached and self-possessed speaker—namely, irony. This may make for a more palatable Paul, but it obscures the voice that speaks in 2 Cor 10–13.

Conclusion

The burden of part 2 of this study has been to evaluate the evidence put forward by recent scholarship that Paul’s rhetoric in 2 Cor 10–13 demonstrates his familiarity with the classical rhetorical tradition. As we have seen, this text does overlap in four limited ways

with the theory and practice of the formal tradition of classical rhetoric: 1) Paul’s boasting in 2 Cor 10–13 is reminiscent of two general aspects of ancient discussions of self-praise: It is better to be praised by others than to praise oneself; self-praise is appropriate when done in legitimate self-defense. Additionally, Paul uses what the rhetorical theorists referred to as 2) prodiorthōsis, and 3) prosōpopoiia. Finally, 4) he utilizes a catalogue-style that also appears in some rhetorically trained writers.

However, on a close reading, the majority of the putative evidence simply evaporates:

1) Second Corinthians 10–13 does not conform to the expected arrangement of forensic rhetoric. Further, there is no evidence here that Paul was familiar with the refinements of formal epistolary theory. What he did know of letter writing cannot be located with any confidence in the enkyklios paideia within which rhetorical training was undertaken.

2) Arguments that Paul’s “boasting” in this passage attests to his familiarity with ancient rhetorical conventions for self-praise (periautologi/a) fail on two counts: First, they depend upon a superficial and misleading reading of Plutarch’s De laude ipsius, a reading that misconstrues the text as evidence for rhetorical conventions and thus overlooks the moral structure of Plutarch’s argument. Second, and as a result, they fail to observe how different a social role Paul projects from the aristocratic role Plutarch commends. When one does compare Paul’s boasting with Plutarch’s recommendations, as well as with the practice of exemplary speakers like Demosthenes, it becomes clear that Paul’s is not the sort of rhetoric Plutarch admires.

3) Although Paul does employ stylistic features associated generally with catalogues, this cannot be attributed to his dependence on formal rhetorical tradition. According to some, Paul used the peristasis form, conventionally enough, to assert his status as an ideal sage; for others, Paul’s boasting in weakness amounts to a parody, a reductio ad absurdum of his opponents’ boasting in their achievements. The problem with both these interpretations is simple: there was no established form for Paul to utilize or to parody. Stylistic features associated with catalogues were common enough, but they appear in such widely divergent texts and to such widely divergent ends that to speak of a form is meaningless.

4) There is no evidence that Paul’s so-called “Fool’s Speech” derives from literary or dramaturgical conventions. Nor it is possible to distinguish Paul’s alleged prosōpopoiia or speech in the character of a fool from Paul’s voice in the rest of the letter.

5) Paul’s comparison of himself with his rivals does not resemble a formal rhetorical synkrisis, and his use of the verb sugkri/nω cannot be taken as a reference to the
rhetorical device. Clearly not every comparison is a rhetorical *synkrisis*, and, when we look more carefully at the stylistic features of *synkriseis* in the *Progymnasmata* and encomiastic oratory, it becomes evident that Paul’s comparative boasting does not participate in this rhetorical tradition.

6) There are no cues in the text to suggest that Paul’s boasting was intended ironically. Paul uses disclaimers, not irony, in his attempt to disassociate himself from the boastful fool his speech threatens to imply.

A further discovery is perhaps of equal significance: We do not find in 2 Cor 10–13 what were for the ancients the essential indicators of *paideia*—refined diction, learned literary references, elegant use of conventional tropes and *topoi*, and elite moral and social values.\(^\text{34}\) Indeed, a careful reading of Paul’s letter against the backdrop of elite rhetorical discourse has begun to reveal a demeanour—a “voice”—that is strikingly different from that cultivated amongst the *pepaideumenoi*.

It is difficult, then, to sustain the argument that 2 Cor 10–13 shows Paul to have been the recipient of a formal rhetorical education. Quite simply, little compelling evidence for this proposition has been put forward—certainly nothing compelling enough to overturn the centuries of consensus on the matter we noted in chapter 1. Paul’s putative rhetorical education is not a very good explanation for the peculiar nature of this text. How, then, can the long-observed rhetorical characteristics of this letter be explained? That is the question with which we will be concerned in part 3.

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\(^{34}\) See p. 121n67 above for documentation.
PART THREE

RHETORIC AS INFORMAL SOCIAL PRACTICE
Chapter Ten
Toward a Theory of General Rhetoric

As part 2 of this study has demonstrated, there is very little evidence to support the claim that Paul received formal education in Greco-Roman rhetoric. Second Corinthians 10–13 is the text most often cited as evidence of Paul’s rhetorical prowess; however, an examination of recent claims produced almost exclusively negative results. There are a few points of contact between Paul’s letter and ancient rhetorical handbooks and exemplars, but much of the evidence adduced simply does not withstand scrutiny. Moreover, when Paul is read alongside the rhetoricians, it becomes increasingly clear that they are not part of the same discursive world. In sum, attributing to Paul a formal rhetorical education fails to explain the nature of Pauline discourse. It brings to light more idiosyncrasies than it resolves.

This leaves us with a puzzle: If they are not easily explained as resulting from formal rhetorical education, how are we to account for the presence in Paul’s letters of rhetorical features like anaphora, prosōpopoia, and prodiorthōsis? Further, how do we explain the fact that readers have, for centuries, found his prose peculiarly compelling? Is it possible to address these questions without reverting to romantic notions of the “natural,” or resorting to the unsatisfying conclusion that Paul’s instinctive aptitude for rhetoric was simply unprecedented?¹

¹ Cf. Mitchell, “Le style, c’est l’homme,” 387–88: “As much as I agree with the evocative power of Paul’s prose (both in antiquity and as attested by its history of reception), I cannot join what must ultimately be an apologetic argument for his complete uniqueness in this regard [by denying Paul’s knowledge of contemporary rhetoric].”
In what follows, I will demonstrate that if Paul spoke persuasively despite lacking formal rhetorical education, he would by no means be unique. By invoking a number of comparators who clearly did not have formal training in classical rhetoric but nevertheless were forceful speakers and, moreover, used many of the figures and tropes codified in ancient rhetorical theory, I will provide the outlines of an alternative explanation for the nature of Paul’s rhetoric: Like many other such speakers, Paul learned rhetoric not as curriculum but as informal social practice.

A Theory of General Rhetoric

“After spending much of my professional life teaching rhetoric, I began to wonder what I was talking about.”² So George Kennedy, eminent historian of classical rhetoric and guide for New Testament scholars pursuing the topic,³ began a late-career odyssey, probing behind the Greek rhetorical tradition and seeking to describe the “general rhetoric” that constitutes all human communication. And not only human communication; no, what particularly fascinated Kennedy was the comparability of human persuasion to the rudimentary rhetorical activity of all living things—rhetoric from growls to birdsong.

Rhetoric, Kennedy observed, was favoured by evolution because it was less energy-intensive than fight or flight.⁴ Two red deer stags competing for a mate could fight it out, but their

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species would be more likely to survive if they were to roar at each other instead, the stronger eventually convincing the weaker to back down. Human political rhetoric may be more complex than this, but, Kennedy observed, it serves a comparable evolutionary function.

Kennedy followed up an initial exploratory article with *Comparative Rhetoric*, a wide-ranging survey that begins with a reiteration of his discoveries concerning animal communication, continues on to a consideration of various nonliterate cultures, and proceeds to treat ancient Chinese and Indian rhetoric before revisiting the Greco-Roman tradition. Kennedy analyzes all of this material using the categories of the classical tradition—not, he admitted, because they were necessarily the most adequate, but simply because they were what he had been bequeathed.

Thus Kennedy found, for example, that deliberative rhetoric is “a universal genre,” whereas Western formulations of judicial and epideictic rhetoric are not particularly helpful for describing speech outside of the Western tradition. Enthymemes are frequently found in traditional societies; however, complex chains of logical arguments seem to appear only in literate societies. Arguments from *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* appear in various forms in all societies. And even animals use such rhetorical devices as repetition, anaphora, homoeoteleuton, and hyperbole.

What this all amounts to, of course, is a fundamental redefinition of rhetoric. Rhetoric can no longer be thought of as a particular quality *added* to speech—and certainly

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6 Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 5–6; Kennedy, “A Hoot in the Dark,” 115. See further the methodological excursus that concludes this chapter.
8 Ibid., 224.
not as something the Greeks invented. It is in fact prior to speech, perhaps identifiable with the “energy” that inheres in a communicative act—“the emotional energy that impels the speaker to speak, the physical energy expended in the utterance, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy experienced by the recipient in decoding the message.”

Therefore, although rhetoric certainly is culturally conditioned, it also contains universal elements that are shared among humans in general and even with our evolutionary forebears.

The perspective gained from this foray into cross-cultural comparison reaffirmed for Kennedy the conception of the classical tradition that he already had proffered in his New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism: What was “unique” about the Greco-Roman tradition was not its use of rhetoric but rather its extensive theorization thereof. In other words, the ancients’ study of rhetoric was descriptive before it was prescriptive.

But this is not a novel claim. In fact, it coheres perfectly with Aristotle’s own description of his project in the Rhetoric: to observe and theorize the reasons why speakers succeed in persuasion (1.1). Aristotle takes for granted that rhetoric is, “to a certain extent, within the knowledge of all people” (1.1 [trans. Kennedy]). Some utilize rhetoric “at random” (εἰκὼν), others “through an ability acquired by habit” (διὰ συνήθειαν ἀπό ξειωσ [1.2]). Aristotle’s theorization is meant to provide a third way, “a path” to eloquence—rhetoric as an art (τέχνη [1.2]; cf. Plato, Gorg. 465A).
Aristotle is by no means the only ancient theorist to have recognized that rhetoric is practiced independently of theoretical knowledge. Quintilian has a special interest in insisting that “no man can be an orator untaught” (Inst. 2.17.12 [Butler, LCL]); still, his description of the origin of rhetoric parallels what we saw in Aristotle:

It was . . . nature that created speech, and observation that originated the art of speaking. Just as men discovered the art of medicine by observing that some things were healthy and some the reverse, so they observed that some things were useful and some useless in speaking, and noted them for imitation or avoidance. (3.2.3 [LCL])

Moreover, Quintilian grudgingly concedes the observation attributed to Lysias “that uneducated persons, barbarians and slaves, when speaking on their own behalf, say something that resembles an exordium, state the facts of the case, prove, refute and plead for mercy just as an orator does in his peroration” (2.17.6; cf. 2.11.7). And, presented with Demades, a real-live example of a boatman cum orator (cf. Sextus Empiricus, Math. 2.16–17), Quintilian waffles, making an admission that nearly undercuts the premise of his pedagogical project: “It is quite uncertain that he never studied rhetoric and in any case continuous practice in speaking was sufficient to bring him to such proficiency as he attained: for experience is the best of all schools” (2.17.12).

Cicero sounds the same note in his presentation of his mentor Crassus. In De Oratore, Crassus admits that since he entered into the fray of the courtroom at an early age he himself did not receive the sort of rhetorical education he would now recommend: “In fact public life was my education, and practical experience of the laws and institutions of the state and the custom of the country was my schoolmaster” (3.20.74–75 [Sutton and Rackham, LCL];

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17 Quintilian also notes a number of specific figures that occur “naturally” in uneducated speech: emphasis (8.3.86), metaphor (8.6.4), allegory (8.6.51), and hyperbole (8.6.75). See Elaine Fantham, “The Concept of Nature and Human Nature in Quintilian’s Psychology and Theory of Instruction,” Rhetorica 13 (1995): 132.
Cicero himself, like Quintilian, is convinced that true eloquence generally derives from careful training, but he acknowledges that prior to the influence of Greek teachers budding orators had no choice but to learn as Crassus had—relying on their own ingenium and cogitatio (1.4.14; cf. Inv. 1.2.2–3).\textsuperscript{18}

Moreover, like Aristotle, Cicero takes for granted that the practice of rhetoric precedes its theorization. His Crassus initially dismisses as a matter of mere semantics the contentious question whether oratory is an art (1.23.107), but eventually he opines:

\begin{quote}
If . . . the actual things noticed in the practice and conduct of speaking have been heeded and recorded by men of skill and experience, if they have been defined in terms, illuminated by classification, and distributed under subdivisions . . . I do not understand why this should not be regarded as an art. (1.23.109)
\end{quote}

In sum, then, for Cicero’s Crassus, “Eloquence is not the offspring of the art, but the art of eloquence” (1.32.146; cf. 3.197; Philodemus, Rhet. 2.28; Longinus, Subl. 18.2; 22.1; Quintilian, Inst. 8.3.86).

Some centuries later, Augustine echoed this conclusion (Doct. chr. 4.3.4 [PL 34:91]), using the acquisition of grammar as an analogy for the process by which rhetorical capacity can be learned even without formal education:

\begin{quote}
As infants cannot learn to speak except by learning words and phrases from those who do speak, why should not men become eloquent without being taught any art of speech? . . . For even the art of grammar, which teaches correctness of speech, need not be learnt by boys, if they have the advantage of growing up and living among men who speak correctly. For without knowing the names of any of the faults, they will, from being accustomed to correct speech, lay hold upon whatever is faulty in the speech of any one they listen to, and avoid it. (4.3.5 [PL 34:91; NPNF\textsuperscript{1} 2:575–76]).
\end{quote}

Augustine would, it appears, concur with the conclusion of Mark Edwards:

\begin{quote}
To prove that [the New Testament authors] had enjoyed [rhetorical] education, we should need to do more than demonstrate the presence in their writings of such figures as anaphora, hyperbole, asyndeton or litotes; such terms, like those of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18} See further Elaine Fantham, \textit{The Roman World of Cicero’s De Oratore} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 78–82.
grammar, merely codify the practices in which most competent speakers of a language will engage before they have learned to give a name to them.}\(^{19}\)

In other words, before it is theory, rhetoric is social practice, and usually is learned as one learns any social practice, through a process of observation and imitation—a process we will explore in more detail in chapter 12 below.

Still, as Peter Osterreich observes, “the universality of rhetoric does not imply that every human being is a well-versed orator.”\(^{20}\) There is a difference between the educated and uneducated speaker, for the codification of rhetoric, together with the value judgements that attend such codification,\(^{21}\) creates “artificial” canons of speech, conventional expectations on the part of auditors that interfere with whatever “natural” response to oratory we might expect. In other words, speech practices are culturally defined—and among the cultural gatekeepers we find teachers of eloquence.

We can, then, theoretically distinguish three sources of rhetorical practice: 1) the general human capacity for persuasive speech—Kennedy’s “general rhetoric”; 2) the culturally-conditioned norms, constituent of what Pierre Bourdieu calls the \textit{habitus},\(^{22}\) that pervade the speech patterns of any given group—what I will call “informal rhetoric”; 3) the formally codified rhetoric taught by and to the cultural elite, which, it should be noted, can influence rhetorical practice either directly, through formal education, or indirectly, by means of the influence it exerts on broader cultural practices.

\(^{19}\) Edwards, “Gospel and Genre,” 51.


\(^{21}\) Aristotle’s initial codification looks like an attempt to control the unruly power of speech by valuing \textit{logos} above \textit{pathos} (\textit{Rhet.} 1.1.4–6; 2.22.3; 3.14.7–8)—which is why, as Carol Poster has noted, Aristotle himself repeatedly “disavows the very techniques he explicates.” “Aristotle’s \textit{Rhetoric} against Rhetoric: Unitarian Reading and Esoteric Hermeneutics,” \textit{AJP} 118 (1997): 240. Likewise, if Edward Schiappa is correct, the origins of the word \textit{rhetoric} itself. See “Did Plato Coin \textit{Rhētorikē}?,” \textit{AJP} 111 (1990): 457–70.

\(^{22}\) See further p. 282 below.
Distinguishing what is universal from what is culturally conditioned is no easy matter. Repetition, as its appearance among all manner of living thing indicates, is a device belonging to general rhetoric, whereas the use of asyndeton requires particular grammatical circumstances and thus cannot be universal. Still, perhaps asyndeton is a particular instantiation of a general rhetorical tendency. And what of the partes orationis? To what extent did such elite speech patterns influence the “informal rhetoric” of the Greco-Roman world? Or do they too instantiate a universal persuasive tendency, and thus recur outside of the classical tradition? Finally, particularly pressing for an understanding of Paul’s rhetoric in 2 Cor 10–13, what about the use of prodiorthōsis?

The comparative and synthetic research necessary for a thoroughgoing theory of general rhetoric has not yet been undertaken. But what clearly cannot be sustained is the facile assumption that Paul’s use of rhetorical strategies is in itself evidence of formal rhetorical education. To make that argument, one would need first to determine what, particularly, distinguished formal Greco-Roman rhetoric from other instances of human persuasion as well as from the informal rhetoric of the Greco-Roman world, and then to identify these distinguishing factors in Paul’s letters. This has not even been tried, let alone accomplished.

So, in the absence of a more general theory differentiating formal from informal rhetoric, I will use a series of comparators to test, on a case-by-case basis, the claim that what Paul knew about rhetoric must have been learned in school. If the rhetorical strategies to which Pauline scholars have recently drawn our attention are equally attested in uneducated speakers, then they must belong to the realm of informal or general rhetoric, and thus, in the

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absence of other indicators of Paul’s familiarity with formal classical rhetoric,\textsuperscript{24} they provide no evidence that Paul received a formal rhetorical education.

The simplest way to proceed, of course, would be to use comparators from Paul’s own milieu, speakers with no formal education but whose usage was shaped by the same informal rhetorical traditions as shaped Paul’s. Unfortunately, we are lacking in such comparative material. By far the majority of extant texts—and particularly those that can be said to make an argument—derive from the educated elite. Thus I will introduce comparators from a variety of other speech communities, focusing in particular on the Iroquois orator Red Jacket and the tradition of Native American oratory to which he attests. The disadvantage of such a procedure is that it is unable to give us direct leverage on the informal rhetorical tradition of Paul’s world. It does, however, serve as an effective \textit{reductio ad absurdum} of the logic that currently sponsors claims of Paul’s rhetorical education: If Red Jacket uses \textit{prodiorthōsis}, for example, as effectively as does Paul, then the figure can hardly serve as evidence of formal training in classical rhetoric.

\textbf{Rhetoric in the New World}

Kennedy is the most systematic student of comparative rhetoric to date; however, as is evident from his own chapter on Native American oratory, he is certainly not the first. With the European “discovery” of the New World came exposure to cultures that were at once strange and yet strangely familiar, and, in the resulting proto-ethnographic discourse of similarity and difference, indigenous rhetoric—and, in particular, its comparability to

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{24} As documented in part 2 above, recent work on the nature of \textit{paideia} in the ancient world suggests the following as a list of potential such indicators: specific patterns of refined diction, learned literary references, elegant use of conventional tropes and \textit{topoi}, and elite moral and social values.
\end{footnotesize}
Western rhetorical practice—often took centre stage.25 Expressions of surprise at the eloquence of the “unschooled savages”—eloquence which was often said to rival the best of the newly rediscovered classical tradition—became commonplace among observers Spanish, French, and British alike.26

In his *The Florida of the Inca*, published in 1605, Garcilaso de la Vega, after expressing doubt that the eloquent speeches reported to him could possibly have come from “barbarian” lips, is rebuffed by his informant, who ensures him that the speeches he heard were indeed so eloquent that “many Spaniards well read in history” could not but conclude that the speakers “appeared to have been trained in Athens when it was flourishing in moral letters.”27 The *Jesuit Relations* too are peppered with admiring references to the eloquence of First Nations speakers. Paul le Jeune, for example, praised an Ottawa capitaine who spoke “with a keenness and delicacy of rhetoric that might have come out of the schools of Aristotle or Cicero.”28 And Thomas Jefferson famously praised Native American “eminence in oratory,” singling out Logan’s speech to Lord Dunmore: “I may challenge the whole


orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent orator, if Europe has furnished more eminent, to produce a single passage, superior to the speech of Logan.”

None of this, of course, represents disinterested academic appraisal. As Edna Sorber has shown, admiration for “Indian eloquence” in North America remains deeply implicated in the romantic idea of the “Noble Savage.” It has also been politically useful. “Aestheticization” of Native American oratory has served to draw attention away from its political content and context—land claims, often—and highlighted instead its nostalgic pathos. Accordingly, surrender speeches and swansongs have long been particularly popular fare. The anonymous writer of “Indian Eloquence,” for example, contributing to The Knickerbocker in 1836, predicted that these great orations, “heightened . . . in impressiveness by the melancholy accompaniment of approaching extermination, will be as enduring as the swan-like music of Attic and Roman eloquence, which was the funeral song of the liberties of those republics.”

Paradoxically, then, the motif of “Indian eloquence” has served as justification for dispossession: It was precisely the “primitiveness” of Native American speech, its apparent freedom from the artificial constraints of form, that appealed to many European Americans—and what is primitive, they reasoned, is destined for decay. And so, according

29 Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (Richmond, Va.: Randolph, 1853), 67.
30 Sorber, “The Noble Eloquent Savage.”
33 “Indian Eloquence,” 390.
34 So Stoddard, Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana, 432: “Who at this day, except the untutored sons of nature, can utter the language of Ossian and Homer? What man, trammeled with the forms of modern art, can speak like Logan . . . ? The language of nature can alone arrest attention, persuade, convince, and terrify; and such is the language of the Indians.” See further Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), 441–97; Clements, Oratory, 8–9.
to the logic of their European interlocutors, “The more eloquently they spoke, often uttering their own elegies, the more certain was their passing.”35 (Hence Rudy Wiebe, in the story from which this study derives its title, invites us to ask: Yes, the dying voice is beautiful, but where is it coming from?)

So, the notion of Native American eloquence was romanticized, and it was a convenient salve for colonial consciences. That does not mean it was baseless. As William Clements observes, “One obvious reason that the image of the American Indian as a skilled orator appears so often is because it is accurate.”36 Eloquence is, of course, a difficult thing to quantify, but it would be difficult to deny the rhetorical power of the speeches to which we have access, particularly when we are guided by readers who understand the traditional rhetorical practices these speeches reflect, as well as the political exigencies they addressed.37 And we should not be surprised to encounter rhetorical prowess among the indigenous peoples of North America: As Kennedy notes, a vital tradition of oratory is an important aspect of social organization in many nonliterate cultures, and particularly in those societies that depend upon consensus and negotiation for political decision-making.38

But the majority of early European observers noticed no forest of rhetorical culture, only the individual trees of unexpectedly articulate orators. What they expected from savages

36 Clements, Oratory, 4.
was ululation, not argument, and thus they routinely were surprised by the power of Native American speech. Seeing no evidence of formal education, and unable to imagine any other rational explanation for the phenomenon, they resorted to romanticism: This was the pure speech of those untainted by the corruptions of formalism or of civilization itself. This was the eloquence of the Noble Savage.

It appears, then, that European expressions of surprise at Native American eloquence, like the subsequent romanticization thereof, are emblematic of the discomfiting interruption of the modern Western assumption that culture equals literate culture. In the Western imagination, texts, as Walter Ong explains, “have clamored for attention so peremptorily that oral creations have tended to be regarded generally as variants of written productions, or, if not this, as beneath serious scholarly attention.” Only the literate can study; and it is study, we have assumed, that enables the production of meaningful discourse. Already Garcilaso de la Vega had internalized his colonizers’ assumption:

I plead now that this account be received in the same spirit as I present it, and that I be pardoned its errors because I am an Indian. For since we Indians are a people who are ignorant and uninstructed in the arts and sciences, it seems ungenerous to judge our deeds and utterances strictly in accordance with the precepts of those subjects which we have not learned.

The response of European observers to Native American oratory parallels tellingly, I think, the history of the (Western) interpretation of Pauline discourse. As noted in part 1, nineteenth-century scholars were well aware that Paul’s letters did not belong amidst the great literature of the classical tradition. Paul’s prose just wasn’t literary. It was, however, strangely powerful. Like Europeans encountering Native American oratory, biblical and

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41 Ibid., 8–9.
42 Vega, The Florida of the Inca, xlv.
classical scholars had no rational explanation for this unliterary yet forceful discourse, thus they resorted to romanticism: Paul’s was a natural rhetoric, untainted by formalism; Paul’s was the “rhetoric of the heart.”

Recent Pauline scholarship has decried the romanticism of an earlier era, but has failed adequately to question the continuing presupposition that eloquence is the exclusive preserve of formal literate culture. Pauline discourse is striking, we observe, hence Paul must have been formally educated. Like Europeans in the New World, we still have trouble believing that those without formal Western education could say something worthwhile, let alone do so persuasively.

Excursus: Methodological Reflections on Comparison

George Kennedy’s decision to retain the terminology of Greco-Roman rhetoric has consistently been the most criticized aspect of his comparative project; for, although he insisted that he had no desire to impose Western categories on other cultures, critics have been suspicious of “unexamined ethnocentrism” and of a methodology that “teeters dangerously on the edge of a comparison that smacks of the logic of Orientalism.” Indeed, the fledgling discipline of comparative rhetoric appears to be mired in a methodological quagmire: comparison requires the use of a single analytical grid, but the use of a grid external to the culture being analyzed is potentially distorting. (Moreover, in some

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43 Kennedy, Comparative Rhetoric, 5–6.
academic climates, cross-cultural comparison is itself a minefield: observation of difference is easily interpreted as allegation of deficiency; observation of similarity is seen as an attempt to impose hegemonic universals upon diversity.) It is important, then, for me to be clear about what precisely I intend by using the categories of Greco-Roman rhetoric to frame a comparison between Paul and speakers from other cultures.

As Jonathan Z. Smith observes in his *Drudgery Divine*, a manifesto of sorts on the nature of comparison, “there is nothing ‘natural’ about the enterprise of comparison. Similarity and difference are not ‘given.’ They are the result of mental operations.”

Comparison—or, more broadly, analogical reasoning—is an important mode of human thought, one means of imposing structure and meaning on the world. Similarity and difference, then, inhere not in the things that are being compared, but in the conceptualizing processes of the person who compares them. In the academy, that person is the scholar. As Smith explains, “Comparison . . . brings differences together within the space of the scholar’s mind for the scholar’s own intellectual reasons.”

My intellectual reasons for undertaking the comparisons I do have been explained repeatedly throughout the course of this study: Current scholarship asserts that Paul was well trained in rhetoric, an assertion built on a comparison between Paul’s letters ($x$) and exemplars of Greco-Roman rhetorical theory and practice ($y$), where $x$ is shown to resemble $y$. But such a dyadic expression of resemblance is, as Smith notes, logically incomplete. Its full articulation would demand the introduction of a third term and the explication of the

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46 Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 50–51.
grounds of comparison: Paul’s letters (x) resemble exemplars of educated rhetoric (y) more than do attempts at persuasion by uneducated speakers (z) with respect to the use of rhetorical invention, arrangement, and style.\textsuperscript{49} Thus, in the first place, I undertake comparison with other speakers in order to introduce the necessary third term (z) into the comparison, falsifying the argument by demonstrating that, in regard to formal rhetorical conventions, x resembles y no more than z resembles y.

Accordingly, my argument is not that the rhetoric of Red Jacket, for example, is an instance of Greco-Roman rhetorical theory in unconscious application. Rather, I argue that in the same way Paul’s rhetoric is analogous to the formal Greco-Roman tradition, so also is that of Red Jacket and other speakers. This is a subtle but an important distinction, for it creates space for an analysis of the rhetoric of both Paul and Red Jacket on their own terms, without assuming that formal Greco-Roman rhetorical categories best describe their arts of persuasion.

Nevertheless, Greco-Roman rhetorical categories are privileged in this analysis, and they are privileged for a simple reason: They constitute the terms of comparison—the “with respect to”—of the argument I seek to falsify. It is the fact that Paul’s letters can be analyzed according to these particular categories that sponsors the argument that Paul was formally educated in rhetoric. Thus I use Greco-Roman rhetorical categories in analyzing Red Jacket’s oratory not because they are the most appropriate, but because they are the terms of the conversation in which I seek to participate. If I were to use other categories—Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s “New Rhetoric,” say—my comparisons would perhaps be interesting but would not be probative for assessing the historical question of Paul’s rhetorical education.

\textsuperscript{49} See ibid.
In part 2 of this study, we saw that the bulk of the putative evidence for Paul’s conformity in 2 Cor 10–13 to the dictates of rhetorical theory did not withstand scrutiny. Nevertheless, I identified four ways in which Paul’s rhetoric does correspond to what was recommended and practiced among ancient orators. First, with regard to what later became known as *periautologia*, Paul evidently shares his contemporaries’ belief that it is better to be praised by others than to praise oneself, and he concurs with Plutarch et al. that self-praise is less offensive when done in self-defense. Second, Paul utilizes what the rhetoricians called *prodiorthōsis*, warning his addressees in advance that he is about to say something unpleasant. Third, Paul uses *prosōpopoīia*, speaking in the voice of his opponents in texts like 2 Cor 10:1b, 10, and 12:16. And, finally. Paul’s list of tribulations is composed in what has been called “catalogue-style” and contains numerous related rhetorical features: rhythm, anaphora, isocolon, asyndeton and patterned use of conjunctions, and assonance or rhyme.

None of this constitutes evidence of formal rhetorical education. By showing that each of these persuasive strategies is also utilized by speakers who have no formal training in classical rhetoric, this chapter will demonstrate that such strategies must be attributed to what Kennedy calls general rhetoric. They are not unique to Greco-Roman society, let alone its formal rhetorical tradition. There is no reason, then, to attribute Paul’s use of them to formal rhetorical education.
But I have another task in this chapter as well: By providing a telling set of comparators—specifically, speakers who lack formal education but are, in their various ways, persuasive—I seek to provide an alternative context for conceptualizing Paul’s rhetoric and an alternative matrix wherein to describe Paul’s persuasive voice.

**Red Jacket’s Self-Defensive Boasting**

In part 2, I compared Paul’s boasting with the recommendations of Plutarch and Quintilian and the self-praise of speakers like Demosthenes. These comparisons brought mixed results: Paul was found to share with his educated contemporaries some general cultural assumptions; however, attention to the social values that underlie his contemporaries’ mitigation of self-praise highlighted Paul’s remoteness from the sort of boasting admired by Plutarch and his ilk. Further, I suggested that what similarities do exist between Paul’s rhetoric and Plutarch’s recommendations are too general to sustain the conclusion that Paul received a formal rhetorical education. Rather, they appear to result from analogous responses to a common social exigency, namely, the tension between the desire for honour and the need to abide by social proscriptions of arrogance.

A final comparison will reinforce this interpretation of the relationship between Plutarch’s treatise and Paul’s boasting. The Iroquois orator Red Jacket, independently of any knowledge of classical rhetorical precepts for *periautologia*, also stressed that he spoke of his own accomplishments only when compelled to defend himself and only because of his concern for the well-being of others, and Red Jacket too presupposed that it was preferable to let others praise him. In fact, in a number of significant ways, Red Jacket’s self-defense is closer to the spirit of Plutarch’s treatise and of the great orator Demosthenes’ exemplary self-
praise than is Paul’s—a phenomenon that forces us to reconsider what constitutes evidence for Paul’s rhetorical training.

Sagoyewatha, or Red Jacket

The Seneca chief Sagoyewatha, whom the British dubbed Red Jacket, was among the most famous of Native American orators. Since a number of my examples of general/informal rhetoric derive from extant records of his speeches, it is worth providing a brief introduction. Probably born in 1758,¹ Red Jacket rose to prominence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the Iroquois’ foremost orator.² His reputation among English-speaking Americans was considerable. According to William Stone, his first major biographer: “That he was an orator, in the most exalted sense of the term, of great and commanding power, is the universal testimony of all who enjoyed opportunities of forming a just opinion on the subject.”³ “His name,” avers J. Niles Hubbard, “like that of Demosthenes, is forever associated with eloquence.”⁴

Often speaking on behalf of the Iroquois clan mothers, Red Jacket was a vocal defender of the land rights of his people. Many of his most compelling speeches occurred in the context of treaty negotiations and are thus preserved in treaty records. Other public performances were printed in local newspapers. Neither type of source is unproblematic, particularly since extant records present not Red Jacket’s words but English translations

thereof. Still, we may be confident of the fundamental authenticity of many of these speeches. As Granville Ganter explains, Red Jacket “referred to himself as an orator and intended his speeches to be read and discussed in state capitols”; therefore, he concerned himself with ensuring accurate representation of his words. The representatives of the United States were also concerned to ensure accuracy of translation and transcription, since speeches like those of Red Jacket became part of the public record and played a significant role in shaping American policy.

Interpreters were often selected by Red Jacket himself. Two of his principal interpreters, Jasper Parrish and Horatio Jones, were captured as teens by the Senecas and were thus deeply familiar with both Red Jacket’s language and his culture. Moreover, by the apex of his political career, Red Jacket “understood English well enough to know when his meaning had been misinterpreted.” So, although we do not have unmediated access to Red Jacket’s oral performance, we do possess, quite frequently, his authentic communication. We have what he meant for English readers to have.

Let me provide an example: On August 3, 1802, Red Jacket spoke in defense of a Seneca named Stiff-Armed George, who had been taken into the custody of the sheriff after allegedly killing a white man, John Hewitt, in a drunken altercation the previous week. Red Jacket and the Senecas did not recognize American legal jurisdiction, arguing that the

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5 For a detailed treatment of “sources and resources for Native American oratory,” see Clements, Oratory, 23–78.
9 See Ganter, Collected Speeches, 118; Taylor, The Divided Ground, 317–22. Contemporary accounts of the event, which include resumes of Red Jacket’s speech, were recorded in the Albany Centinel, March 15, 1803, and the American State Papers, Indian Affairs 2:667–68.
situations should be resolved according to “the customs and habits of [their] forefathers.” Red Jacket also emphasized Stiff-Armed George’s drunkenness, and pointedly reminded his white hearers who it was that had introduced liquor among his people. Finally, in a rather astute piece of political rhetoric, he sought to shame President Jefferson into intervening:

“The President of the United States is a Great Man, possessing great power—he may do what he pleases—he may turn men out of office; men who held their offices long before he held his. If he can do these things, can he not even control the laws of this state? Can he not appoint a Commissioner to come forward to our country and settle the present differences?”

Red Jacket’s speech, as translated by Horatio Jones, was published the following week in the *Ontario Gazette* (Aug. 12, 1802). Although this publication is no longer extant, the speech was reprinted in other newspapers over the following few months, as well as in a pamphlet published by James D. Bemis, who worked for the *Gazette* and thus would have had access to the original published version. Although there was some contemporary dispute concerning the authenticity of the speech, it now appears to be beyond question: In the earliest extant version, published in the September 3, 1802 edition of the *Albany Centinel*, as well as the all but identical text in Bemis’s *Native Eloquence*, Red Jacket appeals for his speech to be delivered to the President himself: “We therefore now call upon you to take our Speech in writing, and forward our ideas to the President of the United States.” Of course, this in itself does not attest to the speech’s authenticity, since such a detail could itself be fabricated. There is, however, clear evidence elsewhere that it was not. In a separate speech on the matter, independently attested, that Red Jacket delivered later that August to the Governor of New York, he refers to the documentation of what can only be his August 3

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defense of George: “We have sent on our speech to the President of the United States about this business, and now present you with a copy thereof.”

Not only does this fortuitously preserved cross-reference authenticate these particular texts, but it also demonstrates Red Jacket’s intention to communicate via written translations of his speeches, which, in turn, motivated both him and his hearers to ensure their faithful translation and transmission. Indeed, in this case, the English translation of Red Jacket’s words, sent to the President and delivered to the Governor, apparently played a significant role in effecting Stiff-Armed George’s pardon.

Still, there are fraudulent speeches purporting to be by Red Jacket, and thus discretion is necessary. In assessing the authenticity of individual speeches, I am generally dependent upon the evaluation of scholars more qualified than I. Where expert evaluation is not available, I follow Harry Robie in considering three measures of authenticity: first, the competence of the interpreter; second, the speech’s publication history; and, finally, the coherence of the speech with the rhetorical tradition of which it purports to be a part. In the specific case of Red Jacket, this last measure is particularly useful, for the extant record is extensive enough that it is possible to identify Red Jacket’s authentic “voice”—that is, the sort of thing that he was liable to say—as well as deviations from it.

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13 See ibid., 18.
Red Jacket’s *Periautologia*

On August 31, 1826, Oliver Forward purchased large tracts of Seneca land, including four entire reserves, on behalf of the Ogden Land Company.\(^{16}\) Red Jacket was among the chiefs who signed the agreement, but immediately thereafter he began to accuse Forward of bribery and deception, petitioning that the deal be nullified. According to a letter of petition signed by Red Jacket and a number of other Seneca chiefs, in addition to giving out bribes, Forward had resorted to threats: “If they did not sell he should write to the President and Secretary at War, and they would show us the way to the Cherokee country”\(^{17}\)—a nation whose own looming dispossession attested to the plausibility of the threat. Meanwhile, the Christian Senecas sent a counter-petition in support of the land deal.

The whole controversy angered Thomas McKenney at the Office of Indian Affairs, who wrote a letter to the Christian leaders notifying them that the President would be pleased with the removal of Red Jacket as chief.\(^{18}\) Putative government support for the deposition of an outspoken critic of Christianity was an offer the Christian chiefs could not resist, and, on September 15, 1827, they met in council and signed a declaration against Red Jacket: “We now renounce you as a Chief, and from this time you are forbid to act as one.”\(^{19}\) And, in a letter to President John Quincy Adams, they requested the President to “pay no further attention to the communication of Red Jacket. . . . Red Jacket is an old man, his mind is broken, his memory is short, and he is devoid of truth.”\(^{20}\)

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16 For what follows, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State*, The Iroquois and Their Neighbors (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 152–61.
20 Repr. in Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests*, 158.
Though beleaguered, Red Jacket still had allies, and, on October 16, he convened his own council, at which chiefs from a number of Seneca tribes spoke on his behalf. Finally, we are told, “after an impressive pause,” Red Jacket spoke in his own defense:

You have heard, he said, what my associates in council have said and explained, in regard to the foolish charges against me. This is the legal and proper manner to meet these charges—and the only way in which I could notice them. Charges which I despise; and was it not for the concern which the respected chiefs of my nation feel for the character of their aged chief, now before you, I could fold my arms and sit quietly under these slanders.  

There are a number of things to notice here. First, like elsewhere in his speeches, Red Jacket begins with an exordium that clearly lays out the context for his remarks and seeks to win the good will of hearers. Although there is no record here of a direct plea for his hearers’ attention, we can presume, on the basis of Red Jacket’s speech patterns elsewhere, that if we had a verbatim report rather than a summary of this address we would find something like “Brothers, hear patiently what we have to say” or “I . . . beg your attention, and the attention of the Warriors and chief Women while I speak for the Nation” in other words, something that sounds remarkably like the captatio benevolentiae that introduce the rhetorically astute speeches made by the Paul of Acts and his fellow Lukan speechmakers.

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21 Albany Argus, October 27, 1827; repr. in Ganter, Collected Speeches, 262–64. The proceedings are described in such detail that the newspaper article can only have been written by an eyewitness. The general reliability of the account is further corroborated by the quality of the translator, a Seneca leader named Jack Berry, as well as the coherence of the content of the speech with what Red Jacket says elsewhere—in particular, his emphasis on the continuity of his religious practice with that of his ancestors, on which see Ganter, “Make Your Minds Perfectly Easy,” 125–27. We do not have a verbatim account of Red Jacket’s speech; it is presented in detailed summary. This is, of course, a barrier to accessing Red Jacket’s rhetoric, but arguably no more of a barrier than the one we face in accessing Paul’s voice in 2 Cor 10–13, which was almost certainly mediated through both a secretary and whoever compiled canonical 2 Cor. On the secretarial process, regarding the nature of which we can only make informed speculations, see esp. Richards, Secretary in the Letters of Paul.

22 Most striking for one familiar with the history of New Testament rhetorical criticism is Red Jacket’s famous “Reply to Cram, 1805,” which begins with an exordium, moves on to a narratio, provides a partitio, and then presents a loosely connected series of proofs before a closing peroratio. Text in Ganter, Collected Speeches, 138–43. See George Kennedy’s rhetorical analysis in Comparative Rhetoric, 92–94.


The fact that we do not see such invocations made by the Paul of the letters is not itself evidence that he lacked rhetorical training—after all, Paul was writing letters, not orations. Here I simply observe that the same logic used to make Paul a trained rhetorician would, in this instance, lead to the erroneous conclusion that Red Jacket had training in formal Greek oratory.

The structure of Red Jacket’s request for the indulgence of his hearers is also worthy of remark, particularly because of its striking resemblance to exordia composed by Demosthenes (*1 Phil.* 1; *Exord.* 1.1; 48.1): If matters had been different, both explain, I would have gladly remained silent; but, due to circumstances beyond my control, I must ask your indulgence to speak. Further, in the context of our discussion of self-praise, it is important to note that Red Jacket’s argument accomplishes precisely that for which Quintilian praised Demosthenes: it casts the odium of speaking about his own achievements onto the opponents who forced him to do so (*Inst.* 11.1.22; cf. Demosthenes, *Cor.* 4). With no advice from rhetorical theorists, Red Jacket recognized the wisdom of insisting that it was his rivals’ slander that forced him to speak in his own defense (cf. *De laude* 540C).

But Red Jacket’s argument goes one step further: Even the need to defend himself from slander would not rouse him to speak, were it not for the concern of his allied chiefs. It is to ease their minds that he speaks—and here I think the issue is not that he must assuage their doubts about his worthiness to lead; rather, they will be troubled on his behalf so long as there is a shadow upon his reputation. It is for their benefit, then, that he rises to vindicate himself. His boasting, like that Plutarch is willing to tolerate, “[has] in prospect some great advantage to [his] hearers” (*Plutarch, De laude* 547F; cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.6).
By insisting that, so far as he is concerned, he would be just as happy ignoring the foolish slander of his opponents, Red Jacket seeks to win his audience’s goodwill at the outset of his speech by establishing his own *ethos* as well as by discrediting his opponents—a rhetorical ploy recommended widely by the ancients (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.14.7; *Rhet. Her.* 1.8; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.7–12). The hypothetical portrait Red Jacket paints of himself—sitting with arms folded, unmoved by the slander against him—is an image, one suspects, that remains fresh in his hearers’ memory from his posture during the “impressive pause” before he deigned to speak. It is a portrait of a man dignified and self-possessed, a man “of lofty spirit and greatness of character,” who, like Plutarch’s Epaminondas, towers above his petty opponents (*De laude* 540D). Red Jacket maintains this demeanour throughout the speech—the sort of demeanour which, according to Plutarch, “by refusing to be humbled humbles and overpowers envy” (540D). Thus his stirring conclusion: “As long as I can raise my voice, I shall oppose such measures; as long as I can stand in my moccasins, I will do all I can for my nation.”

The heart of Red Jacket’s self-praise—like that of Demosthenes (*Cor.*; *Ep.* 2, 3) and Cicero (*Cat.* 3.1–2)—consists of a reminder of his unparalleled service on behalf of his people:

> It grieves my heart when I look around and see the situation of my people; once united and powerful; now, weak and divided. I feel sorry for my nation—when I am gone to the other world—when the Great Spirit calls me away—who among my people can take my place? Many long years have I guided the nation.

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25 Cf. Isocrates, *Antid.* 2–3: “Although I have known that some of the sophists traduce my occupation . . . nevertheless I have never deigned to defend myself against their attempts to belittle me, because I considered that their foolish babble had no influence whatever.”


27 Given that what we have here is a summary, it would not be wise to insist that the parallelism of this sentence results from Red Jacket’s rhetorical design.
As it does for Demosthenes, such reference to his own solicitous leadership has a dual function. First, it functions *ethically*, reinforcing the perception of his character as one concerned not with his own interests, but with those of his nation (cf. Demosthenes, *Ep.* 2.1, 11). Second, it functions *pathetically*, inviting his hearers to consider their own potentially grievous fate (cf. Demosthenes, *Ep.* 2.3; 3.5)—and implying that they had better trust in Red Jacket’s leadership while they have the chance.\(^28\) His rhetoric renders his own fate and that of his nation one—just as Demosthenes’ “basic appeal does not come from merely praising himself but from identifying himself with Athens.”\(^29\)

Red Jacket’s self-praise is brief, but bold—and particularly so in a culture which, far more than that of Demosthenes or Cicero, was suspicious of self-assertion and expected from its speakers expressions of deference and humility.\(^30\) Its brevity attests to the fact that, like Xenophon (*Mem.* 2.1.31) and Plutarch (*De laude* 539D), Red Jacket recognized that praise from others was more effective than self-praise. Thus he ceded the floor to his allied chiefs until the close of the council, allowing Big Kettle, for example, to recall that it was Red Jacket who “was the companion of the Great Washington” rather than drawing explicit attention to this honour himself.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, much more clearly than Paul, Red Jacket conforms to Plutarch’s admonition to avoid rivalrous boasting, contending rather with

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\(^28\) Cf. Demosthenes, *Ep.* 3.28, 31 (trans. Goldstein): “In sum, gentlemen of Athens, everyone shares in the disgrace and the entire city suffers a grievous blow when malice is seen to have more influence among you than gratitude for public services. . . . I am afraid that a time is coming when you will be bereft of men who will be spokesmen for your interests, especially when time and fortune and our common destiny have been carrying off some of the men devoted to the people.”


“unsound policy” than with “the praise and fame of others” (545D–E). Although he bitterly describes the accusations against him as “ridiculous,” he does not attack his opponents or accuse them of ill will; he rather asserts that they are “misguided.” Rather than trading slander for slander, he undertakes to defend his policy:

> The Lord gave his red children their lands—General Washington said they were sure—the Great Spirit has marked out a clear path for his children—the Christian party, by advice of the white people, have left this path and religion of our fathers. We worship as we always have done.

The argument is subtler than it initially appears. Red Jacket dexterously manages to build his own stature by association with the great (white) “General Washington” while simultaneously discrediting the Christian party for their association with “the white people.” Contradictory or not, this is certainly clever. Moreover, by placing the ultimate blame not on his Seneca opponents but on those predators who mislead them, Red Jacket provides his opponents with a ready excuse, thus giving them an opportunity to back down without losing too much face.

Although Red Jacket’s defense certainly merits consideration on its own terms, for our purposes we have seen enough: Red Jacket insisted that he spoke on his own behalf only under compulsion and for the purposes of self-defense; he rose to vindicate himself, he claimed, only because of his concern for his fellow chiefs and his nation; he clearly demonstrated preference for the praise of others over self-praise. None of this is evidence of classical rhetorical education nor, of course, knowledge of precepts for periautologia. On the contrary, what we have here is an astute man, conscious of the social dynamics of his situation, intuitively negotiating the tension between his need to defend himself and his need to refrain from inordinate self-assertion.
Finally, analysis of Red Jacket’s speech has sharpened our observations regarding Paul’s remoteness from the sort of speech admired by Plutarch. Red Jacket, though far removed in innumerable ways from the Greek world, provides a much closer analogue to the confident political self-assertion that characterized the speech of Demosthenes and his ilk than does Paul. That is, with respect to comportment or “voice,” Red Jacket, much more than Paul, resembles the elite rhetoricians of the Greco-Roman world. This does not, of course, result from their participation in a shared rhetorical tradition; rather, they inhabit analogous social locations: Red Jacket, like Demosthenes and Plutarch, was accustomed to deference, and comported himself accordingly. Paul, it appears, spoke from a rather more precarious place, and could not rely on the persuasive power of calm and confident dignity. He speaks, as I will attempt to demonstrate in part 4, with the voice of one accustomed to derision.

Conclusion

Rhetorical analysis of Red Jacket’s self-defense has demonstrated that those rhetorical strategies for self-praise which Paul does share with his educated Greek and Roman contemporaries are too general and too widespread to be compelling as evidence for Paul’s formal rhetorical education. What Paul shares with Plutarch, he shares also with Red Jacket. Accordingly, we must conclude that these persuasive strategies are not specific to formal classical rhetoric but rather inhere in what Kennedy calls “general rhetoric.”

By this I do not mean that “boastful” speech takes the same shape across cultures. It certainly does not.31 Instead, I would argue that the rhetorical exigency out of which these persuasive strategies arise—namely, the pressure to praise oneself and the countervailing

pressure to avoid socially inappropriate self-display—is universal, and therefore it is not surprising that some of the same basic strategies for inoffensive self-praise recur in various cultures. Certainly various societies have specific rhetorical traditions with regard to self-praise, both as aspects of what I have called formal and of informal rhetoric. But Paul, I have shown, does not evince specific familiarity with the rhetorical tradition of self-praise current among the Greco-Roman literati. Moreover, his self-praise is very different both in demeanour and in content from what our elite exemplars would have us expect.

Two conclusions follow: First, the persuasive competencies to which Paul’s manner of self-praise attests derive in the first place from socialization, not from formal education.32 Second, his socialization appears not to have been socialization into the values of the educated elite. Accordingly, even if precepts for self-praise had been on the curricula of first-century rhetorical schools—something for which we have no evidence—it would be difficult to sustain the argument that Paul learned to praise himself at school.

Informal Prodiorthōsis

Among the most memorable features of Paul’s boasting in 2 Cor 10–13 are his repeated warnings, prior to beginning his litany in earnest, of the “foolishness” to come: “I repeat, let no one think that I am a fool; but if you do, then accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little” (11:16; cf. 11:1; 12:1). The cumulative impression given by these statements is one of hesitancy to do what he is about to do: Chrysostom, as noted above, compared Paul’s reluctant boasting to a horse rearing back from a precipice (Laud. Paul. 5.12; Hom. 2 Cor. 11:1 4 [PG 51:305]); likewise, F. W. Robertson’s impression was that

32 See further ch. 12 below.
“fact after fact of [Paul’s] own experiences is, as it were, wrung out, as if he had not intended to tell it.”

The rhetorical term for warnings of unpleasant or unseemly speech to come is *prodiorthōsis*, a word that means essentially what its lexical elements would suggest: straightening out in advance any potentially problematic implications of what one is about to say. This is surely what Paul is doing here, and these verses have long been recognized as instances of this figure. I do not dispute such an identification. However, I would like to emphasize that the use of *prodiorthōsis* is by no means restricted to orators formally educated in the classical tradition. No, *prodiorthōsis* is, as we will see, undoubtedly an element of general rhetoric. Given the nature of Paul’s dilemma in 2 Cor 10–13, my focus here will be on *prodiorthōsis* that anticipates potentially offensive self-praise, though, as noted in chapter 5 above, the figure is by no means restricted to such usage.

**Anticipating Social Constraints**

Evincing hesitation prior to engaging in self-praise is so intuitive and so widespread in ordinary conversation that even the briefest of pauses may be interpreted as a concession to modesty. Prior to the final of the 2010 Australian Open, tennis great Roger Federer commented on his opponent’s chances. After noting that the relatively inexperienced Andy Murray would be in for an uphill battle, he added: “Plus he’s playing, you know, me, who’s won many Grand Slams and has been able to win here three times.” “You know, me.” Yes, this is *prodiorthōsis*, but I doubt Federer is aware of the fact, or that he learned it in school.

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33 Robertson, *Sermons*, 418.
34 For ancient descriptions, see Ps.-Herodian, *Fig.* 33 (*RG* 3:95); Alexander, *Fig.* 1.3 (*RG* 3:14–15); Tiberius, *Fig.* 8; Hermogenes, Περὶ ἔνδειγμα, 2.4; Apsines, *Rhet.* 10.34 (*RG* 1:399).
35 See further pp. 147–48 above.
On the contrary, it simply is required by the social dynamics of the situation: Unrestrained arrogance is socially unacceptable, and Federer asks for our indulgence by expressing, briefly, awareness that he is transgressing ordinary canons of self-reference.\footnote{Specifically, “you know” seems to function here by alerting Federer’s hearers to the fact that what he is about to say is already well known. The implication is that he is not boasting, but merely reminding his hearers of relevant information. Cf. Janet Holmes, “Functions of You Know in Women’s and Men’s Speech,” \textit{Language in Society} 15 (1986): 7–10, 16.}

Federer’s situation is common enough that English speakers have developed idiomatic shortcuts: “I don’t mean to toot my own horn,” “If I may say so myself,” and the like.\footnote{See further Anita Pomerantz’s discussion of “self-praise avoidance” techniques in informal English conversation. “Compliment Responses: Notes on the Co-operation of Multiple Constraints,” in \textit{Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction}, ed. Jim Schenkein, Language, Thought, and Culture Series (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 88–92.} These formulae are specific to particular speech communities and thus belong to the realm of what I have called informal rhetoric, but, as we will see, they instantiate a general phenomenon of human communication and social interaction.

The social exigencies that engender such prodigious disclaimers have been thoughtfully examined by pragmatic linguists under the rubric of “Politeness Theory.” The seminal work here is Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson’s \textit{Politeness}. It will be helpful to summarize the basic contours of their argument. According to Brown and Levinson, mutual awareness of “face”—a concept they define, following Erving Goffmann, as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for [her- or] himself”—is a human universal.\footnote{Brown and Levinson, \textit{Politeness}, 61–62. See Erving Goffman, “On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction,” in \textit{Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior} (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1967), 5–45; repr. from \textit{Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes} 18 (1955). The claim to universality has been contested, but intercultural research has vindicated the usefulness of Brown and Levinson’s basic assertion. See, e.g., Maria Sifianou, \textit{Politeness Phenomena in England and Greece: A Cross-Cultural Perspective} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); Rosina Márquez-Reiter, \textit{Linguistic Politeness in Britain and Uruguay: A Contrastive Study of Requests and Apologies}, Pragmatics and Beyond 2/83 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000); Ming-Chung Yu, “On the Universality of Face: Evidence from Chinese Compliment Response Behavior,” \textit{Journal of Pragmatics} 35 (2003): 1679-1710.} Further, since people are always vulnerable to the loss of face, it “must be constantly attended to in interaction”; indeed, in conversation people generally cooperate to
maintain their own face as well as that of their interlocutor(s). But of course people have other interpersonal goals besides face maintenance, and sometimes the pursuit of these goals conflicts with their basic desire to maintain face. This leaves people in a bind.

Politeness, according to Brown and Levinson, is the means whereby they resolve this dilemma, the repertoire of strategies people employ to minimize the negative impact of undertaking “face-threatening acts.”

Self-praise is clearly a “face-threatening act.” As Plutarch explains as well as anyone, it poses a threat to the face both of the speaker and of the listener: The speaker appears to be in shameful violation of cultural proscriptions against hubris (539D; 540A), and the listener is put in a dilemma, stuck between two equally unseemly responses: either he applauds the speaker and looks like a flatterer or he censures the speaker and “appears disgruntled and envious” (539D–E [LCL]). Nevertheless, it is easy to see how other social goals—the desire for honour and recognition, for example, or, with Plutarch, the pursuit of πλειώνών καὶ καλλιόνων πράξεων (539F; cf. 547F)—could compel one to risk face and praise oneself anyway. In such a case, we should expect to see what Brown and Levinson call “redressive actions,” communicative strategies that attempt to mitigate the negative consequences of face-threatening acts.

Among the repertoire of common redressive actions they identify is, not surprisingly, the use of “hedges” by which speakers express their reluctance to threaten face. Brown and

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42 Note that Brown and Levinson’s conception of politeness intersects with but also differs from what the term means in ordinary usage. Thus Paul’s prodiorthosis, for example, is clearly not polite in any ordinary sense of the term (see esp. 11:16–21), but it nevertheless is illuminated by politeness theory: Paul seeks to maintain his own face by forewarning his readers of his self-praise—an instance of what Rong Chen refers to as “self-politeness” (“Self-Politeness: A Proposal,” Journal of Pragmatics 33 [2001]: 87-106)—but in fact heightens the threat to the face of his readers.
Levinson describe the use of such hedges in English, Tamil, and Tzeltal; Japanese research demonstrates their use among children as early as the second grade. In other words, here we clearly are encountering what Kennedy would call general rhetoric.

Two of the examples Brown and Levinson provide are of particular interest for describing Paul’s expressions of reluctance in 2 Cor 10–13. First, although the authors nowhere speak explicitly of prodiorthōsis (or name any other rhetorical devices), they do note the common occurrence of hedges that “function directly as notices of violations of face wants”: “to be honest,” “I hate to have to say this,” etc.—in other words, disclaimers. Paul’s “Bear with me” (11:1) is of this nature, mitigating his self-praise by alerting his hearers to the fact that he is aware of and regrets the face-threat. Second, Brown and Levinson note the frequent occurrence of diminutives and vague “quantity hedges” (“roughly,” “more or less,” “to some extent”) as means of moderating a speaker’s investment in a face-threatening act. Paul’s μικρόν τι (11:1, 6; cf. 10:8) clearly serves this function.

That employment of this strategy does not require formal rhetorical education is clear from a particularly colloquial example reproduced by Anita Pomerantz—an example that incorporates quantitative hedging, prodiorthōsis, and general expressions of hesitancy: “So...
he—so then, at this—y’see,—I don’ like to brag but see he sorta like backed outta the argument then.”

In summary, then, expressions of reluctant self-praise are ubiquitous not because of rhetorical training but because of what are apparently cross-cultural canons of social interaction. As Ian Rutherford notes regarding discussions of appropriate self-praise in antiquity, what we have here is a “conflict between the social pressure to assert oneself in public and the social criticism of excessive assertiveness.” We may define “excessive assertiveness” quite differently than did the ancients, and the pressure to assert oneself may be differently constructed, but the fundamental tension remains—as does its unstable rhetorical resolution.

“You must not think hard if we speak rash”

Whether it pertains to boasting or other potentially offensive speech, prodiorthōsis results from a speaker’s anticipation and concern for how her or his hearers will respond. Such sensitivity to one’s audience is, as noted already by Plato’s Socrates, a prerequisite for effective speech (Phaedr. 271d–272b). Certainly the formal study of rhetoric may nourish this sensitivity, but, as indicated by my brief survey of politeness theory above, formal study is hardly its origin. A look at the function of prodiorthōsis in the rhetoric of Red Jacket will clarify the point.

Among the Iroquois, as Alan Taylor notes, speech was a means not only of communication but of social governance: “Authority ultimately lay in the constant flow of talk, which regulated reputation through the variations of praise and ridicule, celebration and

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49 Pomerantz, “Compliment Responses,” 90.
The functioning of such an informal system of social control depended on the ability of speakers to anticipate and negotiate the reception of their words, that is, to shape their speech such that it had its intended effect. In other words, Iroquois culture nourished in its speakers just such sensitivity to one’s audience as generates *prodiorthōsis*.

This is evident in the rhetoric of Red Jacket, whose speeches often show him dexterously anticipating and manipulating the responses of his hearers, using, among other techniques, *prodiorthōsis*. Red Jacket’s speech to the Governor of New York regarding the murder trial of Stiff-Armed George provides a fine example: “Altho’ the matter we have to communicate with you on this occasion is of a disagreeable and melancholy nature, yet we hope you will open your Ears to what we shall say, and reflect seriously on the subject.”

Elsewhere, Red Jacket apologizes in advance for reiterating what his auditor’s have already been told.

Notably, like modern speakers of English, Red Jacket often uses a formulaic idiom to forewarn his audience of potentially offensive words: “Brothers, you must not think hard if we speak rash”; “You must not think hard of us, when tomoro [sic] we lay before you all we have to say”; “Now if we say any thing not agreeable, have no hard thoughts of it. Keep your mind easy; listen to what we say.”

The idiom occurs frequently in the extant record, including at least one appearance not in a reported speech but in a letter bearing Red Jacket’s signature. Here we are clearly hearing Red Jacket’s own voice.

Further, like Paul in 2 Cor 12:11, Red Jacket follows up potentially offensive speech with what Alexander Numenius (Fig. 1.4 [RG 3:15]; cf. Ps.-Herodian, Fig. 34 [RG 3:95–96])

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53 Ibid., 29.
54 Texts from ibid., 3, 6, 24.
55 See ibid., 3.
calls *epidiorthōsis*—apology after the fact: “Do not think hard of what has been said”; “Now you must not think hard, nor suppose we are disturbed in our own minds, because we have given you the reasons of our surprise”; “Now Brother you must not be offended that at this time we have mentioned some of our ancient ways.”

Red Jacket’s use of both *prodiorthōsis* and *epidiorthōsis* does not, of course, derive from formal education in classical rhetoric; instead, this is an instantiation of a general rhetorical aptitude as mediated by the rhetorical traditions of his particular speech community. In other words, “do not think hard” is what I have called informal rhetoric; *prodiorthōsis* itself is universal, an aspect of general rhetoric.

“Feigned Reluctance”?

Having demonstrated that *prodiorthōsis* is a general rhetorical aptitude is not, of course, equivalent to having shown that Paul’s particular use of it was not shaped by formal rhetorical education. Perhaps his halting self-praise does reflect the calculation of a trained orator, or even “feigned reluctance,” as Watson has it. But on what basis can such an assertion be made? Given the ubiquity of the figure, it will not do to jump directly from observation of *prodiorthōsis* to the assumption of studied rhetorical intention. No, to argue that Paul’s use of this figure was mediated by the formal tradition of classical rhetoric, scholars should have to say something about how he used it, not only that he did so.

This sort of evaluation is complicated by the complex relationship between what we have called formal and general rhetoric: As “Longinus” avers, “Art is perfect when it seems to be nature, and nature hits the mark when she contains art hidden within her” (*Subl.* 22.1 [trans. Roberts]; cf. Cicero, *De or.* 3.215–219). Or, as Quintilian explains, a little more

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56 Texts from ibid., 10, 27, 13.
57 Watson, “Paul and Boasting,” 90.
snobbishly: “There is . . . a sort of resemblance between certain merits and certain defects [of speech]” (*Inst.* 2.12.4 [Butler, LCL]). Still, it is not impossible to discriminate. I think all will agree that Roger Federer, like Pomerantz’s exemplar, used prodiorthōsis instinctively and unselfconsciously; but, when Demosthenes, in the elegant proem of *De corona* (4), warns his audience that he will be forced to speak immodestly—and that this puts him at a rhetorical disadvantage vis-à-vis his accuser—this is a considered rhetorical strategy.

Where does Paul fit on this continuum? Perhaps Longinus and Quintilian can help us map the territory. If Longinus’s basic ideal is that art replicates nature, it is nevertheless important to recognize that art is never simply a copy of nature; on the contrary, even “realistic” art is governed by conventional canons of realism. Quintilian provides a useful example in his discussion of comic actors, “whose delivery is not exactly that of common speech, since that would be inartistic, but is on the other hand not far removed from the accents of nature, for if it were their mimicry would be a failure” (2.10.13 [LCL]). Mimesis, then, in order to be artistic, must reveal that it is mimesis—but must manage to do so without evaporating the mimetic spell. What comic actors do in order to accomplish this delicate balance is “exalt the simplicity of ordinary speech by a touch of stage decoration.”

For Quintilian, the difference between common speech and its comic imitation is analogous to the relationship between real forensic oratory and declamation: the latter imitates the former but adds a touch of rhetorical showmanship (2.10.12). But from what Quintilian says elsewhere it is clear that this would be an equally apt analogy for his understanding of the relationship between the uneducated speaker and his educated counterpart. Defending educated orators against the accusation that they lack the vigour of untrained speakers, Quintilian explains:
It must be confessed that learning does take something from oratory, just as the file takes something from rough surfaces or the whet-stone from blunt edges or age from wine; it takes away the defects, and if the results produced after subjection to the polish of literary studies are less, they are less only because they are better. (Inst. 2.12.8 [LCL])

So, education files off the rough edges of untrained speech—the bombast, in particular (cf. 2.12.6, 9–10). Educated orators reproduce the passion of a “naturally” emoting speaker, but signal that this is mimesis—and thus retain their aristocratic dignity—by doing so with “discrimination and self-restraint” (2.12.6 [LCL]). Indeed, “if [the educated speaker] has any one canon for universal observance, it is that he should both possess the reality and present the appearance of self-control (modestus)” (2.12.10 [LCL]).

If Quintilian is at all reliable on this score, what we should be looking for in educated, strategic prodiorθ放手ς is not in fact hesitancy or embarrassment, which would involve the loss of the orator’s aristocratic self-possession, but rather the stylized appearance thereof. And this is precisely the sort of thing we see in Demosthenes: “I shall try to [speak about myself] as modestly as I can; but what I am forced to do by the case itself is fairly to be blamed upon the person who set this prosecution in train—my opponent” (Cor. 4 [trans. Usher]; cf. Isaeus, Phil. 17). The idea of reluctance to boast certainly is evoked by this metadiscursive disclaimer, but Demosthenes remains decorously detached from any emotional investment in the issue. He reports on his own situation almost as if he were an outside observer.

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58 See esp. Inst. 6.2.26–27 (LCL): “What other reason is there for the eloquence with which mourners express their grief, or for the fluency which anger lends even to the uneducated, save the fact that their minds are stirred to power by the depth and sincerity of their feelings? Consequently, if we wish to give our words the appearance of sincerity, we must assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who are genuinely so affected, and our eloquence must spring from the same feeling that we desire to produce in the mind of the judge.” Cf. Cicero, De or. 2.189–96; Tusc. 4.43–55. M. Zerba helpfully explores the complexities of this “pantomimic” mode in “Love, Envy, and Pantomimic Morality in Cicero’s De oratore;” CP 97 (2002): 299–321.

59 Cf. Inst. 6.3.35; 11.3.184. And note Aristotle’s characterization of the great-souled man as one who has a “steady voice” (λέγεις στάσιμος [Eth. nic. 1125A]).
This is clearly reflected in Demosthenes’ diction. He provides a reasoned and dispassionate explanation for his self-adulation, and does so using well-balanced μέν . . . δέ clauses within an elaborate periodic structure:

τοῦτων τοῖνυν ὁ μὲν ἔστι πρὸς ἱδονήν, τοῦτω δὲδοται,
ὁ δὲ πάσιν ὡς ἐπος εἰτειν ἐνοχλεῖ, λοιπὸν ἐμοι.
καὶ μὲν εὐλαβομένος τὸυτο μὴ λέγω τα πεπραγμέν' ἐμαυτῷ,
οὐκ ἔχειν ἀπολύσασθαι τὰ κατηγορημένα δόξω,
οὐδ' ἐφ' οἷς αξιώ τιμᾶσθαι δεικνύαι
ἐὰν δ' ἐφ' α καὶ πεποίκα καὶ πεπολίτευμαι βαδίζω,
πολλάκις λέγειν ἀναγκασθήσομαι περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ.
πειράσομαι μὲν οὐν ὡς μετριώτατα τοῦτο ποιεῖν:
ὁ τι δ' ἄν το πράγμα αὐτ' ἀναγκάζῃ
τοῦτο τὴν αἰτίαν οὐτὸς ἔστι δίκαιος ἔχειν ό τοιοῦτον ἄγων
ἐνστησάμενος. 60

Importantly, then, what Demosthenes’ prodiorthōsis signals to his audience is not uncertainty, nor hesitancy, but, on the contrary, measured self-confidence and solicitousness.

Observe, similarly, Cicero’s parenthetical prodiorthōsis in a letter to Atticus:

And it is once more I—for I do not feel as if I were boasting vaingloriously when speaking of myself to you, especially in a letter not intended to be read by others—it was I once more, I say, who revived the fainting spirits of the loyalists . . . (Att. 1.16.8 [trans. Shuckburgh])

Cicero’s interruption of himself perhaps superficially resembles Paul’s parenthetical ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ λέγω and παραφρονῶν λαλῶ (11:21, 23), but notice again that whereas Paul concedes his foolishness, Cicero and Demosthenes anticipate objections, but, like Plutarch’s dignified self-praisers, hold their heads up high and proceed with calmness and confidence.

Again, Cicero’s diction is telling: his use of a parenthesis gives the impression of sincere
spontaneity, whilst the elegant epanalepsis with which he resumes his account (idem ego . . . idem inquam ego) projects control and self-possession.61

Contrast Paul’s “sudden outburst”.62 ὁφελῶν ἀνείχθετε μου μικρὸν τι ἀφροσύνης· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνέχεθε μου (11:1). These short, abrupt sentences constitute a very different sort of prodiorthōsis than that of Demosthenes or Cicero—or, for that matter, Red Jacket. Far from downplaying his emotional investment, Paul’s diction highlights it. The word ὁφελῶν is, as Plummer notes, comparable to the English particle “ ‘Oh,’ expressing a wish as to what might happen, but is almost too good to come true.”63 The anguished hope of Namaan’s wife captures the sense: “If only (ὁφελῶν) my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy” (2 Kings 5:3). It expresses an earnest plea.64

Paul’s earnestness—or, as Quintilian might allege, his lack of self-control—is evident also from the repetition of the plea,65 which, on its second iteration, is expressed in the imperative mood.66 This sort of repeated entreaty certainly does not attest to the self-possession of this speaker; rather, it bespeaks uncertainty, if not desperation. As noted in chapter 9 above, whereas moderate and confident use of disclaimers may be effective, such

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61 Note also Demosthenes’ aposiopesis in Cor. 3, wherein he manages, despite a break in the grammar and logic of the sentence, to preserve the μὲν . . . δὲ rhythm: ὁλὰμ ἐμοί μὲν—οὐ βούλομαι δυσχερὲς εἰπείν οὐδὲν αρχόμενος τού λόγου, οὕτως δ’ ἐκ περιουσίας μου κατηγορεῖ (“For me—but I wish to say nothing untoward at the beginning of my speech—whereas he prosecutes me from a position of advantage” [trans. Usher]). Cf. Anthanasius, Vit. Ant. 39.
63 Ibid. See also BDF §359.1.
64 Cf. LXX Exod 16:3; Num 14:2; 20:3; 2 Kings 5:3; Ps 118:5; Job 14:13. Elsewhere Paul uses the word with venomous irony (1 Cor 4:8; Gal 5:12), but, as the context indicates, that can hardly be the case here. Paul certainly wants to be taken seriously in 10:13–18, and he is in deadly earnest in 11:2–3, the thrust of which would be completely undermined if 11:1 were ironic. So Heinrici, Der zweite Brief an die Korinther, 343. Pace Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 317; Harris, Second Corinthians, 732.
65 Paul’s ἀλλὰ καὶ here is not really adversative, but emphatic, as in Phil 1:18. Cf. BDF § 448.6; Nigel Turner, Syntax (vol. 3 of J. H. Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 330. The sort of reading suggested by Martin (2 Corinthians, 327), such that ἀλλὰ “modifies and corrects” the implied impossibility of the wish expressed by ὁφελῶν plus the imperfect, is unnecessarily subtle.
66 Grammatically, ἀνείχθετε in v. 1b can be rendered either as an indicative or imperative, but the connection with vv. 2–3 demands the latter. See Harris, Second Corinthians, 733; Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:659.
repetition *ad nauseam* as we see in Paul (11:1, 16–18, 21, 23; 12:1, 5–6, 11) tends to undermine the credibility of a speaker by projecting insecurity. The fact that Paul goes on to speak pathetically—in the rhetorical, if not also the colloquial sense—about how the Corinthians are cheating on him and his gospel (11:2–4) does nothing to alleviate this impression. His authority no longer respected, here Paul uses guilt, shame, and the spectre of his own humiliation to win compliance. This may be an effective means of persuasion, but it certainly is not the sort of elite comportment that was taught in rhetorical school.

In sum, then, Paul’s *prodiorthōsis* bears little resemblance to the elegant and reasoned justifications we find in Demosthenes or Cicero, and contains no indicators of the influence of formal rhetorical tradition or training. It looks instead like an impassioned plea. John Chrysostom certainly saw it as such: for him Paul spoke ἄπό τίνος ἐρωτος θερμοῦ καὶ μανικοῦ (*Hom. 2 Cor. 23.1 [PG 61:552]*). So did Calvin, who paraphrased 11:2a as follows: “Do not demand that I should show the equable temper of a man that is at ease, and not excited by any emotion, for that vehemence of jealousy, with which I am inflamed towards you, does not suffer me to be at ease.”67 Perhaps Chrysostom and Calvin—along with every other interpreter prior to Betz—were taken in by Paul’s masterful rhetoric, his flawless imitation of natural passion; however, before we make confident assertions to that effect, we should need to provide some evidence.

**Prosōpopoitia and the Use of Interlocutors’ Voices**

Werner Herzog insisted on filming *Fitzcarraldo* on the Rio Camisea deep in the Peruvian Amazon, using a cast largely comprised of local Machiguenga and Campa (Asháninka) villagers. As a striking interview with a young indigenous extra named Elia

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reveals, many of these villagers approached their encounter with Herzog and his European crew with considerable anxiety. What I want to highlight here, however, is not the content of the interview but its rhetoric, specifically, Elia’s colloquial but capable use of prosōpopoiia or speech-in-character, which I have indicated here with italicized text:

Interviewer: ¿Cuando venía aquí tenía miedo de los gringos?
Elia: Yo no tenía miedo porque he comprendido todo lo que . . . mi compadre Walter dice, [Walter:] es engaño, es mentira. Mentira es.
Interviewer: ¿Que le dijeron [. . .]?
Elia: Sí, pues, [Others:] van a sacar cara, que [Others:] van a sacar su grasa para avión.

[. . .]
Me he venido casi todos los días. Hemos ido por acá, han llegado mis compañeros los que han venido de miedo, de miedo cuando le han visto los campamentos . . . de miedo! Yo les he dicho,
[Elia:] No tengas miedo! Hay bastante gente que . . . como lo demás.
[Others:] No, no les están esperando.
Y Atalaina han dicho que [Atalaina:] Hay con este . . . este sanitario . . . que te van a poner ampolleta y te lo este sacando un sangre, te está poniendo . . . veneno en tus venas y cuando regreses en tu pueblo ¡vas a morir!
Tenían miedo. Y [Atalaina?] No comes tanto cuando te invitan a comer. Así te dan [mimes large serving of food]. No comes para que te engorden, ¡para que te maten! 68

I have attempted to clarify the use of speech-in-character here by indicating in brackets the speakers in whose voices Elia expresses herself at various points in the interview: her friend Walter, the other villagers (collectively), one villager named Atalaina, and Elia herself. She uses a variety of cues, especially vocal modulation, to signal her adoption of these voices. Sometimes she designates clearly that she is presenting reported speech (“mi compadre Walter dice”); sometimes context and vocal cues are sufficient to

allow her listeners to identify the voice in which she speaks. Particularly noteworthy is the reported dialogue between her and the other villagers, in which the transition between her own (reported) speech and that of her interlocutors is marked only by non-verbal cues.

The basic point is simple: prosōpopoia, the use of others’ voices to further one’s own persuasive ends, is not unique to the classical rhetorical tradition, and it certainly is not restricted to the speech of those with formal rhetorical education. This is an aspect of general rhetoric: it is transcultural and independent of rhetorical training.69

But I would also like to make a few observations regarding the particular characteristics of Elia’s voice. Noteworthy here is the coexistence of rhetorically effective prosōpopoia with colloquial and sometimes clumsy use of Spanish. What Elia accomplishes by adopting the role of Atalaina et al. is, in fact, the establishment of ethos: At the expense of her fellow villagers, whose voices she imbues with laughable naivety as to the ways of the European visitors, Elia positions herself as uniquely sensible and worldly-wise. That is, by internalizing the evaluation of her visitors—and, by means of her speech-in-character, adopting their external evaluative stance vis-à-vis her compatriots—Elia has made herself an insider.

This is a rhetorically astute move, but its execution could hardly be called eloquent. In fact, there are a number of indicators here that Elia is not particularly articulate. I give but two examples: First, there is the odd turn of phrase, sacar cara, which seems to represent what we might call, duly noting the irony, a local “urban legend.” In context here, it is clear

69 For further examples and documentation, see Kennedy, Comparative Rhetoric, 56, 98; Meyer, Mahnen, Prahlen, Drohen, 183. Note also Zhuangzi’s use of “imputed speech” (yu yan), whereby the great Chinese philosopher introduced the fictive voice of interlocutors into his philosophical works. See Xing Lu, Rhetoric in Ancient China, Fifth to Third Century, B.C.E.: A Comparison with Classical Greek Rhetoric (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 251, as well as Zhuangzi’s own discussion of the technique in The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 303.
that what is feared is that the Europeans will remove the faces of the locals and somehow use them to fuel their airplanes (van a sacar su grasa para avión).\(^{70}\) Apart from the missing article, what makes this usage confusing is its resemblance to the common idiom sacar la cara por alguien—that is, “to stand up for somebody.”\(^{71}\)

Second, note the broken syntax of her initial description of the fear of her compañeros: Hemos ido por acá, han llegado mis compañeros los que han venido de miedo, de miedo cuando le han visto los campamentos. There is no grammatical connection between the first clause and the remainder of the sentence. Likewise, de miedo, repeated for emphasis, is logically but not grammatically attached to the narration of her fellow villagers’ arrival. It is clear enough what Elia means—she was already in the camp, and watched those of her compañeros who showed up later gape in fear when they arrived—but she lacks the linguistic resources to articulate it such that grammar and sense coincide.

This is characteristic of Elia’s prose. Given contextual cues, we can deduce her meaning, but she does not very well articulate what she communicates. Curiously, then, her rhetorical effectiveness far outstrips her control of the language. Hers is an informal rhetoric, and, regardless of its colloquial force, would never be confused with learned speech.

*Prosôpopoia* in 2 Corinthians 10–13

I argued above that Paul’s so-called Fool’s Speech is not an instance of *prosôpopoia*. On the contrary, in his boasting Paul speaks in his own voice, which is precisely why he is concerned that the Corinthians will consider him a fool. There are, however, a number of examples of *prosôpopoia* in this letter. Indeed, in 2 Cor 10–13 Paul inhabits the voices of his

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\(^{70}\) Note that correct usage would demand an infinitive after para here, or, alternatively, an article with avión.

rival(s) in a variety of ways, utilizing a spectrum of “prosōpopoiiaic” strategies from verbatim reported speech to subtler allusions to the language of his rival(s).\footnote{For an excellent treatment of these dialogic features in the Corinthian correspondence, see Mitchell, “The Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics,” 46–52.}

The clearest instance of Paul’s prosōpopoiia appears in 10:10, where he uses an explicit citation formula to mark the change in voice: αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μὲν, φησίν, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἱσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παροιμία τοῦ σώματος ἁθέτης καὶ ὁ λόγος ἔξουθενημένος. Whoever is the implied subject of φησίν,\footnote{So Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 305; Plummer, Second Epistle, 282; Furnish, II Corinthians, 468; Betz, Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, 44–45; Mitchell, “Le style, c’est l’homme,” 382.} it is clear that Paul is integrating into his argument a hostile voice.\footnote{So already Chrysostom, Hom. 2 Cor. 21.1 (PG 61:542). Cf. Heinrici, Der zweite Brief an die Korinther, 312.}

We hear echoes of this voice elsewhere in the letter. Indeed, Paul interrupts himself in its first extant verse to provide a characterization of himself that clearly derives from the perspective of his rival(s):\footnote{Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 305; Betz, Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, 47; Bultmann, Second Corinthians, 190. Cf. Chrysostom, Hom. 2 Cor. 21.1 (PG 61:542).} ὁς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὸ δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς (10:1b). This opposition between Paul’s demeanour when present and when absent clearly recalls the accusation reported in 10:10,\footnote{See esp. Betz, Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, 46.} but here Paul speaks in the first-person singular throughout, thus putting his opponents’ words into his own mouth.\footnote{This is not technically prosōpopoiia, but it is evidently a manifestation of the same rhetorical impulse.} As in 10:10, Paul confronts his opponents’ charge head on by citing or paraphrasing it and then adding a qualification that reverses its force: Yes, in the past I have not been so bold in person as I have been in my letters, but that will change if you persist in disobedience (10:2, 11).
Having indicated to his addressees that presence/absence and weak/bold oppositions characterize the voice of his rival(s), Paul can use these oppositions and their attendant vocabulary (πάρειμι/ἀπειμι; ταπεινός/θαρρέω or τολμάω) throughout the letter to channel that voice (10:2, 11, 12; 11:7, 21; 13:2, 10). Such rhetorical use of his rival(s)’ voice reconfigures his alleged weakness as a generous decision to “spare” the Corinthians (13:2), to use his God-given ἔξουσία to build up the Corinthians and not to tear them down (10:8; 13:10). Further, it threatens that Paul will not spare them again (13:2–4). Again, this is not prosōpopoia per se, but it certainly has the same function.78

Closely related, then, to Paul’s use of prosōpopoia is his ability to use his opponents’ own language against them. Paul redeployed key elements of his opponents’ accusations, rhetorically reshaping them to serve his very different rhetorical ends. Yes, he is weak, just as his rival(s) claim (10:10), but what this weakness signifies, he insists, is that he is a perfect vessel of divine power (12:9–10). This is clever rhetoric. But is it a mark of formal rhetorical education?

“The Tree of Friendship”

According to Granville Ganter, surely the preeminent student of Red Jacket’s rhetoric, the capacity for “harnessing his opponents’ tropes and values to suit his own purpose . . . was Sagoyewatha’s most characteristic gift as a poet and a politician.”79 Like

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78 One final example should briefly be noted: Ἐστώ δὲ, ἔγώ οὐ κατεβάρησα ὑμᾶς· ἀλλὰ ύπάρχων πανούργος δόλῳ ύμᾶς ἔλαβον (12:16). As in 10:1b, Paul speaks in the first person, but the voice of his rival(s) is clearly discernible. As Plummer paraphrases the underlying accusation: “Be it so, we are agreed about that; you did not yourself burden us by coming on us for support; but you were cunning enough to catch us and our money in other ways” (Second Corinthians, 363). Cf. Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 402; Martin, 2 Corinthians, 444–46. As Ralph Martin notes, the parenthetical “you say” supplied by the translators of the NRSV should probably be replaced with “they say”—or, perhaps “he says” (cf. 10:10)—to reflect more accurately Paul’s ongoing “prosōpopoiaic” dialogue with his rival(s) (p. 445).

Paul in 2 Cor 10–13, Red Jacket echoed his interlocutors’ language, first adopting and then subverting their voices. I will restrict myself here to a single example.⁸⁰

In his July 1819 attempt to convince the Senecas to accept President Munroe’s recommendation that they sell the majority of their remaining lands, Judge Morris S. Miller used the analogy of a tree to describe what he saw as the Senecas’ plight:

[Your great Father the President] remembers that the tree of your glory and your strength flourished upon the mountain; that its branches extended in every direction; that its root struck deep into the earth, and its top reached to the clouds. He observes with regret, that while some of its branches have fallen in the lapse of time, others have been lopped off by your own improvidence; . . . and others have been rent by the hand of violence; that what remains shews manifest symptoms of disease and decay; that the trunk itself, once so vigorous and healthful, is now covered with moss; that the top is bending with weakness; and that a destructive canker has fastened on its roots.⁸¹

Miller’s analogy of a once-mighty tree was chosen shrewdly, recalling the Great White Pine that served as a primary symbol of the strength and unity of the Six Nations.⁸² What Miller implied thereby was that the glorious days of the Iroquois confederacy were in the past, and the Senecas now had no choice but to depend on the magnanimity of the Americans.

In his response, delivered a few days later and translated by Jasper Parrish,⁸³ Red Jacket began by adopting—and using to his own advantage—the role laid out for him and his people by Miller’s rhetoric. He “played the role of a simpleton,”⁸⁴ feigning political naivety and ignorance of American polity:

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⁸¹ Text from Ganter, Collected Speeches, 203.


⁸³ On the translation and textual history of the speech, see Ganter, Collected Speeches, 198–99.

Brother, We had thought that all the promises made by one President, were handed down to the next. We do not change our Chiefs as you do. Since these treaties were made with us, you have had several changes of your President—and we do not understand why the treaty made by one President is not binding upon the other. On our parts we expect to comply with our engagements.  

Miller’s speech had represented the Senecas as hapless children, dependent on the benevolence and wisdom of their father the President. By feigning naivety, Red Jacket ironically accepted the dependent role he and his people were assigned—and, in so doing, highlighted the failure of President Munroe to act as the virtuous father Miller’s rhetoric had made him out to be.

Red Jacket carried on in this vein for much of his speech, acting the part with considerable relish:

We do not think that there is any land, in any of our reservations, but what is useful. Look at the white people around us and back. You are not cramped for seats; they are large. Look at that man (pointing to Mr. Ellicott) he has plenty of land; if you want to buy apply to him. We have none to part with.

Red Jacket’s subsequent reference to his hearers’ laughter makes clear that the humour of his remark was not lost on the audience—humour that derived, of course, from his ability simultaneously to pretend naivety and to strike at the heart of the matter under discussion. As Ganter explains, “While he pleads for compassion and pity as an ignorant, unlettered Native, he figuratively cuffs his opponent in the head with evidence to the contrary”—evidence, that is, of his political acuity.

Not only did Red Jacket subvert the role provided for him by Miller’s rhetoric, he redeployed Miller’s tree analogy by echoing its language whilst redefining its import.

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85 Text from Ganter, *Collected Speeches*, 213.
86 E.g.: “Your great Father has cast his paternal eye over your nation”; “Your great Father the President, whose happiness it is, to promote the welfare of all his children, has not been inattentive to you” (Ganter, *Collected Speeches*, 200, 203).
Traditionally, Red Jacket and the Iroquois spoke of their relationship with the Americans as a “chain of friendship” from which it was necessary, from time to time, to remove the rust. The metaphor appears almost invariably throughout Red Jacket’s extant speeches. Here, however, when Red Jacket holds up the treaty parchment and speaks of the Iroquois’s friendship with the Americans, the metaphorical chain has been replaced by Miller’s decaying tree: “Now the tree of friendship is decaying,” Red Jacket laments. “Its limbs are fast falling off, and you are at fault.” Ganter explains the rhetorical move well: “Inverting Commissioner Miller’s metaphor that the Tree of the Six Nations was rotting under their guidance, Sagoyewatha held . . . the rolled treaty to show that it was the national honor of the United States that was in decay.”

In short, like Paul in 2 Cor 10–13, Red Jacket constructed his argument by manipulating the very language and tropes of his interlocutors—and not least the language with which they characterized him. Such a strategy may be evidence of an astute speaker, but it hardly serves as proof of formal rhetorical education.

The Ubiquity of Catalogue-Style

Such figures of speech as characterize Paul’s tribulation list in 2 Cor 11—anaphora, isocolon, repetition, and assonance or rhyming—are, as George Kennedy explains, among the most widely observed rhetorical features of human speech. What is of interest here,

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90 Text from Ganter, Collected Speeches, 214.
however, is not simply their evident universality, but the ubiquity of their use, in combination, to produce catalogue-style. In particular, it is not difficult to document what appears to be a basic human propensity to catalogue hardships using various forms of isocolon and anaphor.

The following are firsthand accounts, provided by locals and reported by international journalists, of various recent catastrophes:

“There is no water, there is no food, no shelter. There are thousands of people living in the field.”

“We have no work, no shelter, no food. People have died because of the terrible conditions we live in.”

“We have no food, no clothes, no home. We have lost everything.”

“These people have no water, no food, no medicine; nobody is helping us.”

“No job, no money, no social welfare, no food.”

From Keyna to Haiti to Ireland to Bangladesh, these speakers describe their plight remarkably similarly. None of these incipient catalogues, of course, approaches the length and complexity of Paul’s list of tribulations, but they clearly are manifestations of the same rhetorical sensibility. The common impulse for rhythmic itemization is particularly clear from the decision of each to avoid any elaboration until the conclusion of each list.


The same impulse is evident in a Canadian woman’s testimony regarding a more personal tragedy, the diagnosis of her husband with Alzheimer’s disease:

I cannot scarcely think of an aspect of our lives that is not being impacted by this: um, our financial circumstances, our physical circumstances—we’re having to sell our home and to move—even our emotional [pause] relationship.98

A modern day Quintilian might scorn a few aspects of her usage (“cannot scarcely,” “impacted”), but this is an interesting example of the rudiments of catalogue-style. Note the epiphoric repetition of “circumstances,” in the first two items, a usage to which, it seems from her pause, she is tempted to return in formulating the final item before realizing its inappropriateness and choosing a better word.

Interesting here too is the redundancy of this catalogue. The first two items are both comprehended by the more specific detail—the necessity of selling her home—by which they are explained. Clearly, then, it is the catalogue-like features themselves that give the impression of comprehensiveness, regardless of whether the specific items listed substantiate that impression. Indeed, here we meet with the basic rhetorical force of the catalogue: the impression of magnitude it is able to generate. As Yair Hoffman explains, “It seems that a flow of words, all of which have the same syntactical structure and a certain common denominator, . . . has a cumulative power far beyond the information conveyed in the adding of parts to one another.”99 The catalogue, in other words, has the potential to function metonymically.100 Even without rhetorical training, speakers apparently recognize this potential, hence the ubiquity of the form.

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It would not be surprising to find catalogues in the speech of Red Jacket. Christian Meyer introduces a thorough review of ethnographic study of indigenous North and South American speech practices by observing, “Die wichtigsten, überall vielfach verwendeten Figuren der amerikanischen Indianer sind Repetitio und Parallelismus.”\textsuperscript{101} He elaborates in terms reminiscent of what we have been calling catalogue-style: “Mit Parallelismus wird z.B. die Wiederholung eines Wortes, Wortteils, Satzes oder Satzteils in einem anderen Kontext (Anapher, Epiphen, Alliteration, Reim), [oder] die Wiederholung rhythmischer oder intonationaler Muster.”\textsuperscript{102}

Lacking transcription in the original language, it is difficult to verify the presence of such stylistic features in Red Jacket’s speech, but there are tantalizing hints that he used them extensively:

[The President] told us it would be necessary to quit the mode of Indian living and learn the manner of the White people. And that the US would provide us oxen to plow the ground which would relieve our women from digging—that we should be provided with cows & we must learn our girls to milk & make butter & cheese. That we should be furnished with farming utensils for cultivating the ground & raise wheat & other grain—that we must have spinning wheals & learn our children to spin & knit—We were told we must make use of Cattle instead of Moose Elk etc. & Swine in stead of beans, sheep in place of dear etc etc.\textsuperscript{103}

One suspects that Red Jacket was just getting going when the translator or transcriber lost patience.\textsuperscript{104} In any case, even in translation, echoes of the rhythmic pattern remain: The government’s proposed provision is set out, followed by its putatively salutary result.\textsuperscript{105}

Notice Red Jacket’s affinity for paired items at the end of each clause: butter and cheese,

\textsuperscript{101} Meyer, \textit{Mahren, Prahlen, Drohen}, 178.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 179.
\textsuperscript{103} Text from Ganter, \textit{Collected Speeches}, 116. For other examples of isocolon, see pp. 17, 106.
\textsuperscript{104} For the use of “etc.” to mark elision by a transcriber, see, e.g., Ganter, \textit{Collected Speeches}, 46.
\textsuperscript{105} Albert Lord’s discussion of the usefulness of formulas in the composition of oral epic poetry may help us understand the ubiquity of such repetitive syntax as Red Jacket’s exemplifies here. The reuse of syntactical structures with substitution of key elements is not only rhetorically effective, but also rather easy to pull off, once one gets the hang of it. See \textit{The Singer of Tales}, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 24 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 35–36.
wheat and other grain, spin and knit. Finally, (if it does not result from the summarizing work of the translator), observe his use in the final sentence of simple antithetical clauses reminiscent of texts like 2 Cor 4:8–9.

If the precise nature of Red Jacket’s use of these figures remains inaccessible, we are fortunate, thanks to the work of Gary Gossen, to have a significant record of Chamula speech in the original language. Gossen provides the following as an example of the “redundancy and parallelism [that] is repeated throughout the oral tradition.” Here a female sheep thief is being chastised in court:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Many times already you have stolen.} & \quad \text{You steal sheep.} \\
\text{You steal chicken.} & \quad \text{You steal potatoes.} \\
\text{You steal squash.} & \quad \text{You steal clothing.} \\
\text{You steal cabbage.} & \quad \text{You steal turkeys.} \\
\text{You steal anything.} & \quad \text{You steal anything.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The only thing you don’t steal} & \quad \text{from people are their testicles;} \\
\text{And those you only eat.} & \quad \text{And those you only eat.}
\end{align*}
\]

The anaphoric repetition of šavelk’an here is reminiscent of Paul’s repeated use of κινδύνοις in 2 Cor 11:26. An added touch here, though, is the use of rhythmic couplets, the first two of which rhyme. The initial accusation, stealing sheep, stands alone, followed by three pairs of items and then the catch-all “anything”—a common way, as we have already seen, to conclude a catalogue. Notice also the elegant reversal of the syntax, not reproduced in the translation, in the last catalogue-item. Finally, in the second “stanza” note the

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artfulness of the final line, which follows the syntax of the first right up until the devastating final word.

Another example, for which I am indebted to a useful article by Christian Meyer, comes from Ivo Strecker’s work among the Hamar people of southern Ethiopia. We see the same pattern of lexical substitution within a fixed syntactic structure, as well as figures of speech such as _prosōpopoioia_ and, in the final line, aposiopesis:

Are people fathered for the vultures?  
Fathered for the hyenas?  
Fathered for the sun?  
People are fathered for people.  
A man fathers [a son] so that he may herd cows;  
that he may herd goats;  
that he may make fields;  
that he may herd calves;  
that he may herd lambs;  
that he may be sent on an errand:  
‘Run and get me that thing from him over there!’  
He whom you fathered—[he has been devoured by] vultures.

Finally, a rather different example: Billy Sunday remains one of the most influential of that peculiarly American religious figure, the revivalist preacher. Though frequently scorned by the intellectual and cultural elite, Sunday was enormously popular, not least because of his impassioned and compelling preaching style. What is interesting for our purposes is the means by which he acquired his prowess as a preacher. It was not formal education.

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107 For further examples, see Meyer, *Mahlen, Prahlen, Drohen*, 108–9, 159; Tannen, *Talking Voices*, 58.


Sunday was the son of an itinerant labourer who died less than a month after his son’s birth, in 1862, in rural Iowa. After spending some years in an orphanage, Sunday was working for his living by the age of 14. Although, thanks to the patronage of a generous employer, he did attend some high school, he did not graduate. As a youth, he was known not for brains but for his speed on the baseball field.\textsuperscript{110} Some years later, when, as a professional ball player in Chicago, he tried to court a respectable, middle-class girl, he was, as his letters to her suggest, “sensitive about his impoverished background, his ungrammatical speech, and his lack of polish.”\textsuperscript{111}

But if Sunday did not have the advantage of extensive formal education, he had nevertheless heard a lot of good preaching. By the late nineteenth century, revivalist preaching was a well-established part of the fabric of American culture and religious life. Sunday himself was converted through the evangelistic sermons of Harry Munroe—sermons that, if Sunday’s recollections can be trusted, were typical instances of the genre.\textsuperscript{112} And, before hitting the road as an evangelist himself, he spent two years as an assistant to the well-known Presbyterian preacher J. Wilbur Chapman.\textsuperscript{113} It was through something akin to apprenticeship, then, that Sunday learned to harness his natural theatricality into the rhythms and cadences of preaching. Moreover, since he met with only limited success in his first decade on the road,\textsuperscript{114} we can safely assume that much of his prowess simply derived from practice.

One aspect of rhetorical performance that Sunday mastered was what Quintilian would have called \textit{amplificatio} (\textit{Inst.} 8.4). In Sunday’s telling of the tale, for example, the

\textsuperscript{110} Martin, \textit{Hero of the Heartland}, 2–8; Dorsett, \textit{Billy Sunday}, 6–15.
\textsuperscript{111} Martin, \textit{Hero of the Heartland}, 36.
\textsuperscript{112} See Dorsett, \textit{Billy Sunday}, 25–27.
\textsuperscript{113} Martin, \textit{Hero of the Heartland}, 46.
\textsuperscript{114} See ibid., 47–48.
owners of the pigs Jesus dispatched into the sea are described as “peanut-brained, weasel-eyed, hog-jowled, beetle-browned, bull-necked lobsters.”¹¹⁵ In other settings, this propensity for rhythmic elaboration is expressed in catalogue-style itemization. Here Sunday eulogizes the temperance movement:

They have driven the business from Kansas,
    they have driven it from Georgia
    and Maine and Mississippi
    and North Carolina and North Dakota
    and Oklahoma and Tennessee and West Virginia.
And they have driven it out of 1,756 counties. . .
It is prosperity against poverty,
sobriety against drunkenness,
honesty against thieving,
heaven against hell.
Don’t you want to see men sober? Brutal staggering men transformed into respectable citizens?
No, said a saloonkeeper, to hell with men. We are interested in our business, we have no interest in humanity.¹¹⁶

I have included the final two sentences apropos of our discussion of prosōpopoia in the previous section.¹¹⁷ As for features of catalogue style, note the consistency of Sunday’s use of conjunctions: in the first section, initial asyndeton gives way to consistent use of “and” once Sunday begins to elide the verb phrase; in the second, he uses asyndeton throughout.
Either pattern would be at home in Paul’s catalogues: such repetition of conjunctions is reminiscent of Rom 8:35–39; the antitheses in 2 Cor 4:8–9 are linked asyndetically.
Noteworthy also is the rhythmic isocolon in the second section, centering on the repetition of “against,” and building to its rather overwrought climax. Finally, notice Sunday’s use of

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 87–88.
¹¹⁷ This is, in fact, the first of many instances in this sermon of Sunday’s attribution of venal first-person speech to those who profit from “booze.” A number are accompanied by apostrophe.
alliteration/anaphora in the organization of the states: Maine and Mississippi; North Carolina and North Dakota.

As a final illustration of Sunday’s verbal art, at once tasteless and compelling, note the use of anaphora and isocolon in his declaration of eternal war against the saloon:

I’ll kick it as long as I have a foot
and I’ll fight it and punch it as long as I have a fist
I’ll bark as long as I have a head
I’ll bite it as long as I have a tooth
and when I am old
and fistless
and footless
and toothless
I’ll gum it
till I go home to glory
and it goes home to perdition. 118

Conclusion

Since the earliest work of Betz on Galatians, it has been recognized that if Paul utilized formal rhetorical conventions he did so in his own peculiar way. Betz himself observed both the general comparability of Paul’s letters with rhetorical sources and a number of specific idiosyncrasies that such comparison placed in sharp relief. 119 His explanation of these data has become standard fare: similarities result from Paul’s knowledge of rhetorical conventions; specific differences derive from Paul’s philosophical inclination or conscious rhetorical intention. 120 Accordingly, arguments like that of Tor Vegge for Paul's formal rhetorical education have proceeded on the basis of Paul's general affinity to

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118 Transcribed from an audio recording available at SermonIndex.net, http://media.sermonindex.net/4/SID4499.mp3 (accessed January 6, 2011). Sunday stumbles over the “fight it” in the second line; the disruption of the rhythm appears to be accidental.
rhetorical theory, and then found ways to explain away specific differences. But this mode of argumentation obscures the nature of the Paul’s relation to the formal rhetorical sources.

Consider again, for example, Paul’s putative use of *synkrisis*: Yes, Paul certainly makes comparisons, but he does not do so in accordance with the conventions for *synkrisis* as manifested in the *Progymnasmata*, Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, and encomiastic oratory. Although there are differences in the use of *synkrisis* among these three sources, all clearly share a family resemblance; Paul does not. In short, with respect to his use of *synkrisis*, Paul differs more from the rhetorical sources than they differ amongst themselves. In the company of such speakers, he is an outlier.

This chapter has presented a different group of comparators, consisting not of speakers formally educated in classical rhetoric but instead of those whose rhetorical capacity was acquired informally. Here Paul is rather more at home—or, to stretch my statistical metaphor, here Paul is within a standard deviation: With respect to the rhetoric of his self-reference (*periautologia*) and his use of *prodiorthōsis*, *prosōpopoia*, and catalogue-style, Paul differs from these comparators about as much as they differ from one another. Thus, given the fact that he evinces no greater similarity to the formal rhetorical sources than do these other speakers, there is far more justification for locating Paul in this informal rhetorical matrix than for placing him among the educated elite of the Greco-Roman world.

One related conclusion, central to the argument of this study, should be reiterated: The four rhetorical features treated in this chapter evidently belong to the realm of general rhetoric, that is, the basic human propensity for persuasive speech. Thus there is no evidence that Paul’s use thereof evinces familiarity with the specific conventions of formal Greco-
Roman rhetoric. Certainly it does not provide grounds for overturning what was for centuries the consensus view of Paul’s rhetoric—namely, that it was forceful but unschooled.

Although I have limited myself here to an evaluation of rhetorical features in 2 Cor 10–13, there are indications that this method of analysis, if extended to the remainder of the Pauline corpus, would meet with similar results. Kennedy provides evidence, for example, of the ubiquity of the rhetorical question, and gives diverse examples of the persuasive use of what Aristotle called proof from *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. The division of speeches along the general lines of the formal *partes orationis* is attested in other cultures as well. These data must be taken into account when evaluating Paul’s rhetoric. In other words, it will not do to make claims about how Paul’s rhetoric relates to the formal Greco-Roman tradition without cultivating sensitivity to the general phenomenon of persuasive human speech.

Finally, this chapter has, I hope, illustrated a more general point as well: Compelling speech is not the exclusive preserve of the formally educated. This is hardly a novel observation; still, given the nature of recent discussion of Paul’s rhetorical education, it bears repeating. As Antoinette Clark Wire has quipped: “Just as a child can speak her native tongue correctly without schooling, so a man can sell a horse or a conviction very persuasively without reflecting upon how he does it.” The process of “language socialization” by which such skills are acquired is the subject of the next chapter.

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123 Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 92, 148.
Chapter Twelve

The Acquisition of Informal Rhetorical Knowledge

The acquisition of informal rhetorical competence is, in practice, inseparable from the acquisition of language itself.¹ We do not learn first to speak and then to speak persuasively. We learn to speak. This is, in short, because there is no speech in the abstract, only speech as social practice. Accordingly, it is as social practice that we learn the essentials of persuasion—that is, of rhetorical performance.

In the previous chapter, I set forth evidence that the sort of rhetorical aptitude demonstrated by Paul can also be found among those with no formal schooling in rhetoric. In this chapter I will discuss briefly the means by which such informal rhetorical ability is developed. We lack sufficient biographical information about Paul to assert any specific correspondence between Paul’s experience and that, for example, of Red Jacket; rather, this is an attempt to map the territory, and, in so doing, to invite us to rethink the privileged place formal education has in our explanatory imagination.

The Nature of Language Socialization

In the course of his ethnographic fieldwork among the Melanesians of eastern New Guinea, Bronislaw Malinowski was struck by his inability to translate with any degree of adequacy many of the texts he had collected. Or, rather, Malinowski recognized that translation was itself an act of ethnographic description: The only way to render these

utterances meaningful was to explain, explicitly or implicitly, their social context and function.\textsuperscript{2} From this observation, Malinowski drew the attendant conclusion:

A statement, spoken in real life, is never detached from the situation in which it has been uttered. For each verbal statement by a human being has the aim and function of expressing some thought or feeling actual at that moment and in that situation, and necessary for some reason or other to be made known to another person or persons . . . Without some imperative stimulus of the moment, there can be no spoken statement.\textsuperscript{3}

Speech, then, is “a mode of action,” an utterance “a piece of human behaviour.”\textsuperscript{4} Language, Malinowski concluded, must be studied ethnographically, as one functional element in a social system.\textsuperscript{5}

Accordingly, if speech belongs to the realm of social practice, what children learn when they learn their mother tongue is not language in the abstract but rather what Dell Hymes has called “communicative competence,”\textsuperscript{6} the ability to use speech according to the linguistic but also the social norms of a particular “speech community.” To quote Malinowski once more:

To the child, words are . . . not only means of expression but efficient modes of action. The name of a person uttered aloud in a piteous voice possesses the power of materializing this person. Food has to be called for and it appears—in the majority of cases.\textsuperscript{7}

What children learn, in other words, is the effective use of speech in social interaction—and this includes, as Malinowski’s examples make clear, the rudimentary ability to persuade.


\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 307.


\textsuperscript{5} See also the seminal discussion of Dell Hymes in \textit{Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974).


\textsuperscript{7} Malinowski, “The Problem of Meaning,” 320.
Building on these basic insights, sociolinguists have given considerable thought to the nature of language acquisition—or, as some prefer, “language socialization”—in various speech communities. For present purposes, we need not pursue the discussion in detail. What is significant, though, is the basic insight: Effective use of language, which includes facility in the common tropes and conventional genres of one’s speech community, is learned primarily through social interaction. As we will see below, the same obtains for the language socialization of adults into more sophisticated rhetorical practices. Formal systems of rhetorical theorization and education are the exception; more commonly, informal rhetorical competence is transmitted as are other social practices, through what Bourdieu describes as “an anonymous, pervasive pedagogic action” by means of which “practical mastery is transmitted in practice, in its practical state, without attaining the level of discourse.”

**An Analogy: The Singer of Tales**

Kennedy would likely argue that Malinowski’s crying child is already using rhetoric, (unconsciously?) manipulating pitch and volume, if not yet verbal meaning, for maximum persuasive effect. But even if it is legitimate to call this rhetoric, it is clearly a far cry—no pun intended—from the sort of thing we observe in the letters of Paul. Is the notion of language socialization sufficient to account also for this degree of rhetorical aptitude? Recent research into the ethnography of communication suggests that it is—as, indeed, do my comparative observations above. Before we pursue these studies, however, it will be helpful

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10 On various levels of intentionality in the production of rhetoric, see Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 25–26.
to consider an analogous process of language socialization, one that attests to the subtlety and complexity of the language practices that can be transmitted independently of formal education.

In *The Singer of Tales*, Alfred Lord describes a three-stage process of observation, imitation, and practice by which a young Yugoslav learns the art of oral epic.\(^\text{11}\) The first stage he characterizes as an “unconscious process of assimilation”:

From meter and music he absorbs in his earliest years the rhythms of epic, even as he absorbs the rhythms of speech itself and in a larger sense of the life about him. He learns empirically the length of phrase, the partial cadences, the full stops. If the singer is in the Yugoslav tradition, he obtains a sense of ten syllables followed by a syntactical pause, although he never counts out ten syllables, and if asked, might not be able to tell how many syllables there are between pauses. In the same way he absorbs into his own experience a feeling for the tendency toward the distribution of accented and unaccented syllables and their very subtle variations caused by the play of tonic accent, vowel length, and melodic line. These “restrictive” elements he comes to know from much listening to the songs about him and from being engrossed in their imaginative world. He learns the meter ever in association with particular phrases, those expressing the most common and oft-repeated ideas of the traditional story. . . . His instinctive grasp of alliterations and assonances is sharpened. One word begins to suggest another by its very sound.\(^\text{12}\)

The second stage of a singer’s “education” involves more intentionality, the conscious decision to attend to and to imitate the singing of the masters. Still, there is no school in which to learn to perform these songs, only the opportunity for immersion in their performance. Even if books of songs exist, most singers are illiterate and cannot put them to any meaningful use.\(^\text{13}\)

Finally, Lord emphasizes the decisive role of practice: “Whatever feeling for such sound patterns the boy has absorbed in his pre-singing days is crystallized when he begins to


\(^{12}\) Ibid., 32–33.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 23.
perform.”¹⁴ He enters the arena of public performance, unsteadily at first, but with growing confidence and control as he learns to produce the rhythms and formulae in which he has been immersed.

Acquiring aptitude as a singer, then, involves “no definite program of study, of course, no sense of learning this or that formula or set of formulas. It is a process of imitation and of assimilation through listening and much practice of one’s own.”¹⁵ It is, in other words, a process of socialization into a particular speech practice, albeit one that is at some remove from informal communication and thus is acquired with a greater than usual degree of self-consciousness.¹⁶

**Mexicano Rhetorical “Education”**

Notably, the process of the acquisition of informal “rhetorical competence” among the Mexicanos of rural New Mexico, as described by ethnographer and folklorist Charles L. Briggs, follows the same three stages as Lord outlined, namely, observation, imitation, and ongoing practice. Briggs’s summary is strikingly reminiscent of Lord’s discussion:

The beginning of the acquisition process lies in observation. Frequent exposure to the behavior of one’s seniors leads to the internalization of a sense of the pattern underlying what has been seen and heard. This permits the “student” to begin imitating the words and actions of others. Evaluating the success of such attempts is no less important for initial imitations than for other areas of rhetorical competence. Once an individual can adequately reproduce the forms provided by his or her seniors . . . the time has come to make one’s own judgments as to which utterances are

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¹⁴ Ibid., 42.
¹⁵ Ibid., 24.
¹⁶ As a fascinating recent study by Lucy Green demonstrates, popular music provides a similar analogy. Popular music skills and knowledge are primarily acquired through what Green calls “informal music learning practices”; therefore, “despite its widespread provision in a large number of countries, and notwithstanding the recent entrance of popular music into the formal arena, music education has had relatively little to do with the development of the majority of those musicians who have produced the vast proportion of the music which the global population listens to, dances to, identifies with and enjoys.” How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2001), 5.
appropriate in which environments. Such attempts to produce original utterances are met with evaluations with respect to his or her success.17

Again, then, it is through social interaction that the Mexicanos learn to speak appropriately and persuasively. We can elaborate further, thanks to the acuity of Briggs’s observations during more than a decade of fieldwork in Córdova, New Mexico.

Córdova is—or was in the 1970s and 80s, when Briggs was there—a town of about 700 inhabitants in rural northern New Mexico. The town, located in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, was populated almost exclusively by Mexicanos, who first settled the area in the first half of the eighteenth century.18 By the 1980s, a majority of the local workforce did janitorial and construction work in Los Alamos, 30 miles to the southwest.19 Prior to 1946, however, the community was considerably more isolated: the road into town was little more than a trail; Córdovans relied on sheep herding and seasonal migratory labour for income.20

This geographical isolation from mainstream America was paralleled by linguistic isolation. Córdovans speak New Mexico Spanish, which sets them apart not only from the English speakers who represent the majority in Los Alamos, but also from other Hispanics. As Briggs explains:

Using Castilian or Standard Mexican Spanish in northern New Mexico immediately alerts native speakers of New Mexican Spanish that the person in question has emerged from a vastly different social, cultural, and educational background and, more than likely, a higher social class. A person learns New Mexican Spanish not in formal academic settings but by living with Mexicanos.21

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19 Briggs, Learning How to Ask, 33.
20 Ibid., 36; Briggs, Competence in Performance, 37–38.
21 Briggs, Learning How to Ask, 36–37.
In short, the Córdovan speakers whom Briggs studied—and especially the elders who were his primary informants—represent a distinct speech community. Fluency in their native speech practices derives not from formal education but from social interaction.

This does not mean that Córdovans take a pedestrian view of language, or that they lack rhetorical sophistication. On the contrary, in Córdova “rhetorical competence is highly valued, and an individual’s verbal capacity is closely related to her or his reputation in the community.” Such competence includes mastery of folkloric material—what the locals refer to as *la plática de los viejitos de antes*—but also the ability to engage in what the classical tradition would call deliberative rhetoric. Briggs explains the social practices that facilitate the development of what he calls “political oratory” in Córdova:

As they progress from age thirty to sixty, many assume roles of importance in religious voluntary associations, irrigation-ditch associations, parish affairs, domestic water and land-grant associations, and other intracommunity groups. If they prove themselves to be thoughtful and persuasive speakers, their statements with regard to community affairs can come to be taken quite seriously by persons of all ages. These are the years in which men and women who possess *talento* for public speaking are expected to develop and exhibit their rhetorical facility. A great deal of prestige accrues to the community member who can sway an audience in the course of a meeting or other public gathering. . . . Gaining recognition for one’s verbal abilities is an important part of the process of moving through the status of *muchacho* (literally “boy,” meaning “young man”) and into full-fledged adult status. Speaking out on the affairs of the community is the most important means of establishing one’s reputation at this point in life.

Briggs provides an example from a speech delivered at a community meeting regarding water usage. His rhetorical analysis highlights the speaker’s ability to establish *ethos* from the outset, as well as his effective utilization of key shared values.

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22 According to Briggs, “many residents over fifty know little or no English” (ibid., 36).
23 Ibid., 38.
24 For a comprehensive discussion, see Briggs, *Competence in Performance*.
25 Briggs, *Learning How to Ask*, 77, 82.
26 Ibid., 79–83
attention of his audience. Its rhythmic qualities are clear from the following few lines, chosen apropos of our discussion of catalogue-style above. (Note that Briggs uses small uppercase letters to indicate emphasis.)

Y no camine bajo de,
   bajo de Política
o bajo de Envidia
o bajo de esto y el otro.27

Briggs’s study is remarkable for its detailed attention to the acquisition of rhetorical ability, but he is hardly alone in his conclusions. In 1975, Maurice Bloch edited a volume entitled Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society.28 Despite a host of differences in speech practices among the various cultural groups treated, two notes run like a refrain throughout the volume: first, rhetorical competence is both valued and cultivated;29 second, it is acquired through a process of observation, imitation, and practice, sometimes formalized to varying degrees, but often undertaken through informal social processes.30 Anne Salmond’s account of the acquisition of oratorical ability among the rural Maori is particularly lucid:

Oratory is learned as a natural process. Children hang around the fringes of the marae [speaking-ground] at local gatherings to watch the elders perform. Proverbs, genealogy, and local history soon become familiar, and the formal constraints of speech-making are unconsciously acquired. Young men stand to speak for the first time at a family life crisis . . . and after that the ambitious ones take their opportunities where they can. . . . It is in the informal speeches that they first enter marae discussions, and practice for an eventual role as regular speakers.31

27 Ibid., 78–79.
31 Salmond, “Mana Makes the Man,” 50, 62.
The marae of which Salmond speaks, like the community meeting at which our Mexicano orator held forth, exemplify what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as “structural exercises” that enable the transmission of practical mastery. Bourdieu conceptualizes such exercises as lying in the middle ground between learning through unconscious familiarization and explicit instruction. Like the play wrestling of pups, such activities serve to inculcate at once both practical skills and social roles—or, as Bourdieu would have it, practical mastery of the dispositions constituting the habitus. As Bourdieu explains, it is through boys’ “silent observance of the discussions in the men’s assembly, with their effects of eloquence, their rituals, their strategies,” that they receive informal training both in diction and in disposition.

A similar process of language socialization almost certainly lies at the root of Red Jacket’s rhetorical prowess. Political oratory played a key role in Iroquois society, wherein consensus was generally reached through persuasion rather than the exercise of power. Red Jacket was fascinated by the political discourse of the council from a young age, and at seventeen was selected as a “runner” and entrusted with “the responsibility of accurately transmitting the words spoken in council” to neighbouring tribes. Thus he had plenty of opportunity for observation and imitation, and, later, practice.

**Conclusion**

George Kennedy’s study of comparative rhetoric led him to what now should be a familiar conclusion regarding the acquisition of rhetorical competence: Excepting the rare

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33 Ibid., 89.
instances of formal rhetorical education, oratorical skills are attained through a process of “learning rhetorical conventions by observing older speakers, imitating them, and finding opportunities for practice.” In other words, most people acquire rhetorical competency the same way they do most of their learning, within what Etienne Wenger calls “communities of practice.” I will conclude this chapter with a few observations regarding the applicability of such a model to Paul.

Galatians 1:14 has long been taken as an autobiographical statement referring to Paul’s Jewish education: “I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous [lit. “a zealot”] for the traditions of my ancestors” (NRSV). For Conybeare and Howson, what we see here is an “eager and indefatigable student”; likewise, more recently, Margaret Mitchell speaks of “Paul’s self-portrait in Gal 1:14 of his youthful studious zeal.” The interpretation is offered far more often than it is argued; in fact, I have yet to locate an attempt to explain why Paul’s progress ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊκῷ should be interpreted as scholastic achievement. In any case, the reading is insupportable. As John Knox rightly insists, Paul “nowhere claims to have been an expert in the law, only zealous of carrying it out.”

What then does Paul mean by saying that he “advanced” (προκόπτω) beyond his contemporaries? Josephus does use this word to refer to his own progress ἔγανθιν

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36 Kennedy, Comparative Rhetoric, 63.
38 Conybeare and Howson, St. Paul, 62; Mitchell, The Heavenly Trumpet, 241. See also Farrar, St. Paul, 23; Hengel, Pre-Christian Paul, 41; Bruce, Paul, 43; Murphy-O’Connor, A Critical Life, 86; Légasse, Paul apôtre, 43; Hooker, Paul, 35–36; Vegge, Paulus und das antike Schulwesen, 440.
39 Note that, despite its frequent occurrence in biographical treatments of Paul, such a reading is absent from recent commentaries on Galatians. See, e.g., Betz, Galatians, 66–69; Longenecker, Galatians, 27–30; James D. G. Dunn, The Epistle to the Galatians, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Black, 1993), 55–62.
παιδείας (Vita 8), but its usage elsewhere makes clear that there is no inherent connection to education. Josephus also, for example, uses the word to describe Agrippa’s growing consolidation of political power (A.J. 18.142; cf. 18.339). And Luke uses it to describe the adolescent Jesus’ growth in σοφία καὶ ἠλικία καὶ χάρις (Luke 2:52). Paul’s own use of the cognate noun refers to something similarly intangible: he speaks of the Philippians’ “progress and joy in faith” (Phil 1:25).

Paul himself connects his “advancement” with the fact that he was more of a zealot than most for “the traditions of his ancestors” (τῶν πατιρκῶν μου παραδόσεων). Again, there is nothing in the phrase to suggest that he is talking about scholarship. In Paul’s single other use of παραδόσις (1 Cor 11:2) he is clearly referring not to doctrine but to customary practice (cf. συνήθεια in 11:16). Likewise the similar phrase ἡ παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 15:2; Mark 7:3, 5).

Josephus gives us some context for understanding what zeal for these traditions might mean:

The Pharisees have delivered (παρέδοσαν) to the people a great many observances (νόμιμα) by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe (τηρέω) what are derived from the tradition (παραδόσεως) of our forefathers. (A.J. 13.297 [trans. Whiston]; cf. 10.51; 13.408)

Some, clearly, are more zealous for the traditions than others, but what sets them apart is not knowledge of these customs, let alone classroom study thereof, but zeal for practical observance. Indeed, such traditions are, by their very nature, not esoteric, but rather matters of practice well known, as Josephus explains, among the people (δῆμος). What Paul is reminding the Galatians, then, is that in his former life he had been among the most
scrupulous observers of ancestral tradition—κατὰ νόμον Φαρίσαιος, as he puts it in Phil 3:5. Further, the context of Paul’s remarks in Galatians makes clear that he associates this former zeal for tradition with his persecution of those who strayed from traditional practice on account of their Christ-faith (1:13). This is rather a different sort of zeal from the “intense commitment to his studies” of which Jerome Murphy O’Connor speaks.

So, Gal 1:13–14 gives us no indication that Paul was striving to be at the top of his class nor indeed that he spent any time in class at all. It does, however, demonstrate the extent of the youthful Paul’s participation in a particular “community of practice.” Such participation would have given Paul ample opportunity to observe and to imitate effective speakers—particularly such speakers, I would suspect, as nourished his zeal.

Such an understanding of Paul’s acquisition of rhetorical competence fits well with the evidence presented so far: Second Corinthians 10–13 does include, as recent scholars have noted, some rhetorical figures and strategies discussed by ancient theorists, but these are also attested in speakers with no formal rhetorical training, and Paul’s use thereof lacks the specific markers associated with formal education. Therefore, they are best understood as deriving from informal social practice. If this is correct, we may conclude that Paul, like the majority of speakers in most human societies, learned what he knew of persuasive speech not through formal education but through an informal process of observation, imitation, and practice.

42 Further clarification of Paul’s meaning here comes from Steve Mason’s recent work on the significance of Ἰουδαιὸς in its rare pre-Christian usage. “Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” JSJ 38 (2007): 460–71. Although almost universally translated “Judaism,” Mason clearly demonstrates that prior to the 3rd c. CE the word “is not a general term for ‘Judaism,’ but rather a certain kind of activity over against a pull in another, foreign direction” (p. 466). This makes admirable sense in the context of Gal 1: Paul is not simply stating that he was a Judean, but rather that he fought against the dilution of Judean custom—in this case by persecuting the church.

43 Murphy-O’Connor, A Critical Life, 86.
PART IV

“WHERE IS THE VOICE COMING FROM?”
Chapter Thirteen

ניודם תוש תור לוג

There is no evidence in 2 Cor 10–13 that Paul received formal training in rhetoric. Many of the alleged correspondences between Paul and the rhetoricians derive from superficial or misleading treatments of the evidence; others are too general to be compelling, for we find the same figures, tropes, and rhetorical strategies among speakers who demonstrably have no training in formal rhetoric. To put it crudely, the presence of prosōpopoia, prodiorthōsis, elements of catalogue-style, and sensitivity to charges of boastfulness in Paul’s letters tells us nothing more than that Paul was a relatively adept speaker, and that he had a basic sense of the social dynamics of his situation.

In other words, our foray into comparative rhetoric has demonstrated that the presence of these rhetorical figures cannot in itself be adduced as evidence of rhetorical education. Neither does it constitute evidence of eloquence. In the course of our analysis, we have seen these rhetorical devices used by speakers artful and tasteless alike. Red Jacket, though not formally educated, uses prosōpopoia to powerful ironic effect. Elia, speaking Spanish as a second language and not fully in control of her grammar, does so clumsily—though she still manages to get her point across with a certain colloquial force. Billy Sunday is uneducated but artful, as well as bombastic. The Mexicano orator we overheard was reported to be powerful, though not eloquent by learned standards. His speech derived its rhetorical force from adept use of prosodic variation as well as invocation of his audience’s shared values.
I expect none of these characterizations to be controversial, although, depending on our own tastes and our own social locations, we may value such rhetorical styles differently. What I want to draw attention to are the indicators that enable such characterizations. Rhetorical figures per se do not help us much, although the specific manner of their use may be telling. Instead, two discursive features are particularly significant. First and most fundamental is the speaker’s control of grammatical and syntactical conventions. It is failure here that immediately marks Elia and our Mexicano orator as uneducated speakers. However much we might admire various aspects of their speech, they cannot attain to what generally is considered eloquence—at least by their cultured despisers.

Second, our characterization of these speakers owes much to what I have called their “voice,” the particular way in which each speaker negotiates the dynamics of his or her own identity vis-à-vis his or her audience and within a particular social location. Late in his career, Red Jacket, accustomed to deference and respect, defends himself by adopting a dignified posture of immovable superiority; he disdains his accusers. Elia, an indigenous Peruvian, casually insinuates herself to her European interviewer by laughing at the naivety of her co-ethnics, highlighting the knowledge that she alone among her peers shares with her interlocutor. Billy Sunday occupies a dual—one might say duplicitous—location as cultural insider and cultural outsider, projecting at once both power and alienation. Each of these speakers seeks room to maneuver within the constraints of a given social location; each adopts a persuasive ethos that is available within those bounds.

How, then, shall we characterize Paul’s rhetoric? Or, again to borrow Rudy Wiebe’s question, “Where is the voice coming from?” The question is far too large to receive a complete answer here. I will, however, follow up on a number of specific leads the
comparisons undertaken in this study have provided. To do so will necessitate further consideration of Paul’s prose style, as well as sustained exegesis of two key verses, 2 Cor 10:10 and 11:6. I will also reprise the comparison begun in chapter 5 of Paul’s self-praise with that recommended by Plutarch, and conclude by reflecting on the significance of Paul’s boasting in weakness.

**Untempered Vigour**

As noted briefly in chapter one, prior to the recent rise of rhetorical criticism, it was generally agreed that Paul’s letters were forceful, in their own peculiar way, but hardly represented the sort of eloquent discourse cultivated in the schools of rhetoric. For decades, even centuries, competent readers came to more or less the same conclusion, namely, that “dieses Griechisch mit gar keiner Schule, gar keinem Vorbilde etwas zu tun hat, sondern unbeholfen in überstürztem Gesprudel direkt aus dem Herzen strömt.”¹

Such evaluations may appear impressionistic and may be couched in romantic language, but in fact they derive from three well-founded observations regarding Paul’s prose, each of which will be demonstrated at greater length below. First, grammatical and syntactical irregularities are numerous. By Benjamin Jowett’s estimation, “more numerous anacolutha occur in St. Paul’s writings . . . than in the writings of any other Greek author of

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equal length.” Second, his train of thought is often difficult to follow. Opines Ernest Renan: “La langue y est, si j’ose le dire, broyée; pas une phrase suivie.” Finally, when Paul does attempt paronomasia, the results are often far from elegant. In sum, then, if for Quintilian the three virtues of style are correctness, lucidity, and elegance (Inst. 1.5.1), it is no wonder Paul was seldom thought to have benefited from the sort of education on offer from Quintilian’s ilk.

What positive things were said about Paul’s powers of expression also display a striking uniformity. He was, above all, praised for his vigour: “There are no formal periods,” concedes A. D. Nock, “but there is a rhetorical movement and energy which express a powerful personality.” Similarly, for Calvin, Paul is “not an eloquent orator,” yet he sends forth “thunderbolts, not mere words.” Such untempered vigour, we might note, is the one (dubious) virtue Quintilian is willing to grant the unschooled (indoctus) speaker (Inst. 2.12; cf. Lucian, Somn. 8).
**Epistolary Style: A Red Herring**

It remains the case that no one attributes oratorical diction to Paul. Weiss’s century-old description would still be uncontroversial:

Es ist anerkannt, dass Paulus nicht periodisch schreibt. Man braucht nur den Hebräerbrief zu vergleichen, . . . und man wird den Unterschied merken. Das Grundelement der Rede des Apostels ist der einzelne kurze Satz, der nur selten mit anderen zu einer grösseren wirklich Perioden verbunden wird. Die Regel ist entweder das asyndetische Nebeneinander, das namentlich in der lebhaften Rede sehr häufig ist oder die lockere Anreihung durch Copula, antithetische oder vergleichende Partikeln, Appositionen, oft mit Participiis conjunctis, sehr selten mit absoluten Genitiven. Zur anreihenden, nicht periodisierten Rede gehören auch die Sätze mit ὁτί, ἵνα, ὅπως, ὃςτε etc., wenn, was fast immer der Fall ist, der Hauptsatz sie nicht periodisierend umklammert und so zu einem runden Schluss führt. Auch die längeren Satzgebüße bestehen nur aus locker aneinander geknüpften Sätzen, die beliebig vermehrt werden könnten.8

Whatever one makes of such a style, this is certainly not what was taught in rhetorical school—which is why Pseudo-Demetrius, for example, can take for granted that the use of periods sounds σοφιστικός and the lack thereof ἰδιωτικός (Eloc. 15).9 Apparently, the argument for Paul’s formal rhetorical education has proceeded not because of his diction, but despite it.

At this point it will surely be objected that I am comparing apples and oranges: Paul wrote letters, not orations, and therefore can hardly be evaluated on the basis of his conformity to oratorical stylistic conventions. Letter writers were expected, after all, to employ a “looser,” non-periodic style (Ps.-Demetrius, Eloc. 229; cf. Quintilian, Inst. 9.4.19).

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9 Of course, stylistic theory was more complicated than this simple dichotomy would suggest, with some preferring to avoid periodic composition in certain situations. See esp. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Comp.* 22. Still, the basic point is indisputable: The style most associated with rhetorical education and prowess was periodic. Note that short sentences and asyndeton are what characterize the speech attributed to ignorant slaves and rustics by Menander. See A. G. Katsouris, *Linguistic and Stylistic Characterization: Tragedy and Menander*, Dodone Supplement 5 (Ioanina, 1975), 108, 121; W. Geoffrey Arnott, “Menander’s Manipulation of Language for the Individualisation of Character,” in *Lo spettacolo delle voci*, ed. Francesco de Martino and Alan H. Sommerstein, Le Rane 14 (Bari: Levante, 1995), 2:157.
Margaret Mitchell has taken Marius Reiser to task recently for precisely this error, namely, considering style independently of genre. But when one looks more carefully at the texts she adduces, her appeal to the conventions of epistolary style looks rather like a red herring.

Mitchell turns our attention here to Pseudo-Demetrius’s “valuable and . . . still largely unappreciated discussion,” which does indeed advocate a looser, more conversational style (Eloc. 223–235). What she fails to mention is that Pseudo-Demetrius in fact expressly forbids treatises disguised as letters or letters that are overly didactic. Moral exhortation, he opines, is not fitting in a letter (232), nor is philosophizing: “If anybody should write of logical subtleties or question of natural history in a letter, he writes indeed, but not a letter” (231 [trans. Roberts]; cf. 230, 234; Gregory of Nazianzus, Ep. 51.4; Ps.-Libanius 50).

Pseudo-Demetrius is similarly opposed to letters of excessive length: “Those that are too long, and further are rather stilted in expression, are not in sober truth letters but treatises with the heading ‘My dear So-and-So’ (συγγράμματα τὸ χαίρειν ἔχοντα προσεγγραμμένον [228; trans. Roberts]). A true letter, he explains, is a περὶ ἀπλοῦ πράγματος ἐκθέσις καὶ ἐν ὀνόμασιν ἀπλοῖς (231). Clearly, if Paul knew anything about conventional epistolary style, he flagrantly violated its strictures. It seems rather odd, then, to look here for an explanation of his non-periodic prose. Why should he have taken to heart just this one piece of advice?

Quintilian follows Pseudo-Demetrius closely on this matter, distinguishing periodic from non-periodic style and noting that the latter generally is appropriate for letters (Inst. 9.4.19). Notice, though, his qualification: “. . . except when [the letters] deal with some

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12 On the unusual length of Paul’s letters relative to contemporary conventions, see Richards, Secretary in the Letters of Paul, 213.
subject above their natural level, such as philosophy, politics or the like” (Butler, LCL).

From Quintilian’s perspective, then, it is the conversational content of the letter that makes its conversational diction appropriate. Once outside the natural purview of the epistolary genre—as Paul’s letters clearly are—epistolary stylistic considerations are no longer relevant.\(^{13}\) In any case, Paul hardly can be said to abide by them.

Letters, according to Pseudo-Demetrius, are to be a mixture of plain and elegant style (235), neither of which has any room for the sort of untempered vigour readers have long seen in Paul (cf. 128; 193; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 51.5–7). Further, if there was one stylistic virtue all but unanimously deemed appropriate to the letter, it was clarity (σαφήνεια).\(^{14}\) Thus Pseudo-Libanius, quoting Philostratus of Lemnos, remarks, “One should adorn the letter, above all, with clarity . . . for while clarity is a good guide for all discourse, it is especially so for the letter” (48 [trans. Malherbe]; cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 51.4; Julius Victor, *Rhett.* 27.19–21; Ps.-Demetrius, *Eloc.* 190–235). Few would suggest that Paul’s letters have been thus adorned. Now, I agree wholeheartedly with Mitchell’s assertion that Paul “is not only to be measured by the singular virtue of ‘clarity,’ but also by other elements, such as profundity, passion, brevity, power, etc.”\(^{15}\) But is this not simply to admit that Paul is not to be measured by the stylistic conventions of epistolography—at least not the conventions current among those with literary education?

\[\text{τὸ ἐν λόγῳ ἱδιωτικὸν τοῦ Ἀποστόλου}\]

Until recent decades, modern scholars generally assumed that Paul was formally educated, but not, as we have seen, specifically trained in rhetoric. Patristic interpreters did

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\(^{15}\) Mitchell, “Le style, c’est l’homme,” 387.
not attribute formal learning to Paul at all. To support this claim, Chrysostom, like other early exegetes, frequently cited Paul’s concession in 2 Cor 11:6 that he was an ἰδιωτὴς τῶν λόγων.  

Notably, Chrysostom and his peers came to this conclusion despite their recognition that Paul’s letters contained identifiable rhetorical tropes and figures. Augustine, like Chrysostom, devoted considerable attention to Paul’s rhetoric and discussed his use of a number of specific figures (Doct. chr. 4.7). Still, he insisted that the learned and unlearned alike would laugh if anyone were such an imperite peritus—perhaps “pedant” captures the sense—to claim that Paul was following the rules of rhetoric (4.7.11).

Apparently these readers did not consider the use of rhetorical figures decisive evidence of rhetorical education (cf. Augustine, Doct. chr. 4.4.6)—and this is no wonder, seeing as they also identified such figures in the writings of Amos, Isaiah, and Jesus. Instead, like Jowett, Renan, and Norden, their estimation of Paul’s education derived from his failure to fulfill learned expectations regarding clarity of grammar and syntax. Here patristic readers found unambiguous indicators of untutored speech.

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17 Laud. Paul. 4.10 (my trans.): οὐ λόγων ἱσχύων ἐπιδεικνύμενοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τούσαντίον ἀπαν, τὴν ἐσχάτην ἀμαθίαν ἀμαθίας ὄν.

18 Laud. Paul. 4.10; Hom. Rom. pr. (PG 60:394); Hom. 1 Cor. 3.4 (PG 61:27 [ἀμαθίας, ἰδιωτῆς, ἀπαίδευτος]); Sac. 4.6. See also Origen, Fr. Eph. 13; Comm. Rom. 6.3.2 (PG 14:1059); Jerome, Comm. Eph. 2.586 (PL 26:477); Gregory of Nyssa, Eun. 3.1.106.


20 Augustine, Doct. chr. 4.7.16–21; Chrysostom, Comm. Isa. 3.10; 5.5 (PG 56:54, 63); Hom. Matt. 22.4 (PG 57.304). The latter are noted in Mitchell, “Patristic Perspective,” 366n62.
This is clear already in the exegesis of Origen. Significantly, it is the comparably elevated style of the book of Hebrews that convinced Origen that this text came from a different hand than Paul’s ([Fr. Heb. [PG 14:1308–1309]]. According to Origen, anyone who knows how to make stylistic distinctions (πᾶς ὁ ἐπιστάμενος κρίνειν φράσεων διαφοράς) can tell that Hebrews lacks τὸ ἐν λόγῳ ἰδιωτικὸν τοῦ Ἀποστόλου. Its diction is, in a word, “more Greek” than we should expect from Paul (συνθέσει τῆς λέξεως ἐλληνικωτέρα). His detailed exegesis of Romans provides specific examples to support his general evaluation of Paul’s style: Commenting on Rom 1:8, Origen notices that Paul forgets to follow up his πρῶτον μὲν with a δὲ, but notes this is not surprising, since it accords with Paul’s unpolished style ([Comm. Rom. 1.9.6 [PG 14:853]]. And he begins his treatment of Rom 3:5–8 by noting that Paul’s sequence of thought (ordo dicendi) appears, by any normal standard, to be garbled and digressive (3.1.2–3 [PG 14:921]; cf. Methodius of Olympus, Symp. 3.2). By the time he reaches the unsatisfactory parallelism of Rom 6:16, he is content to suggest that it is “superfluous to expect skillful construction of words in a man who freely admits his own lack of training in speech” (6.3.2 [PG 14:1059; trans. Scheck]).

Above all, early readers noted Paul’s failure to express himself with clarity, an evaluation perhaps reflected already in 2 Pet 3:15–16. In his homilies on 2 Corinthians, Chrysostom repeatedly must clarify for his hearers what in Paul’s letter, he concedes, is ἀσαφεία ([Hom. 2 Cor. 24.2 [PG 61:566]; 28.1 [PG 61:589]; 29.2 [PG 61:598]]). Irenaeus manages to use Paul’s unpredictable syntax to his exegetical advantage: Since Paul regularly uses hyperbaton in confusing ways—not, apparently, as a stylistic device for emphasis but because he is in a hurry to blurt out what the Spirit is saying (cf. “Longinus,” Subl. 22.1)—Irenaeus can argue that Paul’s apparent mention of the “god of this world” in 2 Cor 4:4 is not
in fact a reference to the demiurge; instead, Paul’s jumbled sentence should be transposed such that τοῦ αἰῶνος modifies not ὁ θεὸς but τῶν ἀπίστων (Haer. 3.7 [PG 7:864–866]; cf. Origen, Comm. Rom. 1.13.1 [PG 14:858]). Origen prefaxes his commentary on Romans by noting the letter’s reputation for being difficult to understand, in part “because [Paul] makes use of expressions which sometimes are confused and insufficiently explicit” (Comm. Rom. pr. 1 [PG 14:833; trans. Scheck]). And Theodore of Mopsuestia explains Paul’s failure to express himself clearly by noting that he had not undergone training in speech, and thus “usually pays no attention to grammar but expounds the idea that appears to him according to his own power, so far as he could” (Comm. ep. Paul. 2.70 [trans. Greer]).

Admittedly, early interpreters managed to get considerable apologetic and theological mileage from Paul’s lack of worldly eloquence, refiguring this apparent weakness into a mark of unique and divine power.21 Peter Brown rightly speaks of “a long tradition that reached back to the apologists of the second and third centuries [in which] Christian writers insisted that the miraculous character of their religion was proved by the manner in which it had been spread throughout the Roman world by humble men, without paideia.”22 But it will not do to claim, as does Margaret Mitchell, that their assessment of Paul’s diction should therefore be discounted.23 As we have already seen, early commentators used this apologetic topos to account for specific exegetical problems arising from these less than perspicacious

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21 See Origen, Cels. 1.62; 3.39; 6.1–2; 7.37, 41; Comm. Jo. 4.2; Augustine, Conf. 3.5.9; Ep. 137.5.18 (PL 33:524); Ambrosiaster, Comm. 199 (PL 17:321); Jerome, Comm. Eph. 2.587–588 (PL 26:478); Chrysostom, Hom. 1 Cor. 3.4 (PG 61:27–28); Hom. 2. Cor. 21.4 (PG 61:546); Laud. Paul. 4.13.
letters. Moreover, it is clear that they did so in response to persistent critique from hostile readers who mocked the vulgarity of their sacred texts.\(^{24}\) Paul’s letters evidently were susceptible to such critique, thus alternative evaluations of rhetoric were deployed according to which, to quote Chrysostom, “this accusation becomes an encomium” (*Hom. 1 Cor. 3.4* [PG 61:27]). Paul’s defenders—like Paul himself, I would argue—did their best to make a virtue of necessity.

**“Confused and Insufficiently Explicit”**

Alfred Plummer describes 2 Cor 10–13 in accordance with the general evaluations of Paul’s diction noted above: Although the language is “powerful” and “sometimes has a rhythmical and rhetorical swing that sweeps one along in admiration of its impassioned intensity . . . at the same time [it] bewilders us as to the exact aim of this or that turn of expression.”\(^{25}\) Indeed, there are a number of instances in our text of language that is, again to quote Origen, “confused and insufficiently explicit.” In their rush to locate Paul’s use of tropes and figures of speech, rhetorical critics generally have ignored these features of his speech. But if, as Quintilian has it, “the first of all virtues is the avoidance of faults” (*Inst. 8.3.41* [Butler, LCL]), we cannot evaluate Paul’s rhetoric without attending to his grammar.

Commenting on 2 Cor 10:2, Ralph Martin notes, “The sentence is convoluted and hard to unravel, but the meaning is tolerably plain.”\(^{26}\) It is convoluted indeed: δέομαι δὲ τὸ μὴ παρὼν θαρρήσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμήσαι ἐπὶ τινας τοὺς λογίζομενους ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατῶντας. A few problems are worthy of note.

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\(^{26}\) Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 304.
First, from the outset, the sentence is hampered by Paul’s failure to articulate what, precisely, he is asking of the Corinthians. As it stands, he begs that he should not be bold—an entreaty he is presumably in a better position to oblige than are his addressees. In lieu of a discussion of the problem, most commentators elect to refer us to Blass’s treatment of the accusative articular infinitive (BDF §399.3). Fine. But the construction still fails to express what Paul is trying say—that is, that he does not want to feel forced to “show boldness.” Barrett adds “to compel me” here, noting that the “words are not in the Greek but bring out the force of Paul’s request.” The NRSV elects for “need not show boldness.” It is not difficult to determine what Paul must mean, but it is important to recognize that he does not in fact say it.

Second, the awkwardness of θαρρήσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι τολμήσαι is exacerbated by the inexplicable redundancy of the clause: “be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous” (NASB). There is no good reason not to take θαρρέω and τολμάω as synonyms here, so, if Paul wanted to reuse τολμάω (cf. v. 1), perhaps in order to echo his rival’s language, why not skip θαρρέω altogether? Indeed, the whole of θαρρήσαι τῇ πεποιθήσει ἢ λογίζομαι could be dropped from the sentence without losing anything but confusion. Unlike the NASB—a translation bold and confident and courageous enough to render the text as it stands—most recent English versions resort to paraphrase: “be as bold as I expect to be” (NIV); “show boldness by daring to oppose” (NRSV).

27 Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 294; Furnish, II Corinthians, 456; Bultmann, Second Corinthians, 183. The use of the nominative participle παρόν is correct; it agrees with the implied subject of ἔσομαι. See BDF §409.5.
29 So Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 294; Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:605n64.
Third, this absolute use of τολμάω with ἐπί is perhaps comprehensible, but certainly not idiomatic. The only approximate parallel is from the Greek version of 1 Enoch—hardly evidence for its currency among fluent speakers. In every other occurrence of ἐπί with τολμάω I have examined, the prepositional phrase either sets out the motivation for one’s boldness, or modifies not τολμάω but an infinitive that is dependant on it. Harris solves the problem by supplying χράσθαι as a complement to τολμάω, thus conforming the phrase to this latter usage (“the confidence that I reckon I will dare to use”). Others point us to the occurrence of τολμάω with κατα in a few papyri: BGU III 909.18 has τὰ τολμηθέντα ύπ’ αὐτῶν κατ’ ἐμου. But even if this is a good guide to what Paul means, it only highlights the oddity of his usage.

It is difficult to be certain whether the repetition of λογίζομαι here is a conscious play on words. As recent research demonstrates, such repetition is often unintentional, since it is normal for speakers to gravitate toward recently used words. But even if this is intentional paronomasia, it is not particularly effective. In this context, with all the distracting

31 οἱ γίγαντες ἐτολμήσαν ἐπ’ αὑτοὺς, καὶ κατησθίαν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους (1 En. 7:4). Cited in BDAG, s.v. τολμάω.
32 For the former, see Philo, Ios. 225. For the latter, Thucydides 6.86.4; Herodotus, Hist. 7.158; Lysias, Alc. 1.10; Diodorus Siculus 14.24.7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ant. rom. 5.62.3; Josephus, B.J. 4.391; A.J. 17.230; 17.278; 18.266; 20.181; Lucian, Tox. 54.
33 Harris, Second Corinthians, 673 (my emphasis).
34 Cited in MM 638. See also P. Lips. I 39.8, cited by Philip Bachmann, Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther, 4th ed., ZKNT 8 (Leipzig: Scholl, 1922), 342; Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 295.
static generated by the obscurity of the sentence, it merely muddies the waters further.\textsuperscript{37} Moreover, as Dean Anderson notes, ancient theorists considered paronomasia inappropriate for solemn or emotionally charged subject matter.\textsuperscript{38} Even at their best, such figures produce charm, says Pseudo-Demetrius, not forcefulness (\textit{Eloc.} 27–29; cf. \textit{Rhet. Her.} 4.32). Compare an example of paronomastic repetition that Pseudo-Demetrius does favour, an otherwise unattested quip from Aristotle: ἡγώ ἐκ μὲν Ἀθηνᾶν εἰς Σταγείρα ἠλθὼν διὰ τὸν βασιλέα τὸν μέγαν, ἐκ δὲ Στραγείρων εἰς Ἀθηνᾶς διὰ τὸν χειμώνα τὸν μέγαν (29, 154; cf. 211). Here it is the simplicity and lucidity of the antithetical construction that creates an appropriate backdrop for the elegant repetition of μέγαν. Even excusing the clutter of his sentence, what Paul does with λογίζομαι in 2 Cor 10:2 is, if intentional, more reminiscent of the trite wordplay Quintilian censures as “a poor trick even when employed in jest”: \textit{Amari iucundum est, si curetur ne quid insit amari} (\textit{Inst.} 9.3.70 [Butler, LCL]).\textsuperscript{39} Perhaps a more charitable comparison could be made with the folksy wit exemplified by Jay-Z in a recent radio interview: “You have to either know how to deal with that situation, or it deals with you.”\textsuperscript{40}

Tellingly, in his homily on the passage, Chrysostom does us the favour of a paraphrase, explaining what Paul means but is not quite able to articulate: δέομαι γὰρ ύμων, φασί, μὴ με ἀναγκάσῃ τε δεῖξαι, ὅτι καὶ παρὼν ἱσχυρὸς εἰμι καὶ δύναμιν ἔχω

\textsuperscript{37} It remains possible that the first occurrence of λογίζομαι is passive, not middle, hence “the confidence with which I am reckoned to dare . . .” Though out of favour now, this is how the Vulgate understood it, as also, reports Meyer, did Anselm, Luther, Beza, Bengel, and Semler, among others (\textit{Corinthians}, 2:392). The reading has the advantage of cohering with the motif, frequently repeated throughout this section, that Paul is aware of being considered too bold (cf. vv. 1, 8–11). Whatever voice of the verb Paul intended, he has clearly left himself open to misunderstanding.

\textsuperscript{38} Anderson, \textit{Ancient Rhetorical Theory}, 283–85.


And again: ὁ γὰρ θέλει εἰπεῖν, τούτο ἔστιν δέομαι ὑμῶν, μὴ με ἀναγκάσῃ, μηδὲ ἀφήτε ἐχρήσασθαι τῇ δυνάμει μου κατὰ τῶν ἐξευτελιζόντων ἡμᾶς, καὶ νομίζοντων σαρκικοὺς ἄνδρας εἶναι (21.1 [PG 61:541]). After the murkiness of Paul’s prose, the clarity of Chrysostom’s is striking. He resolves all of the problems noted above: The addition of με ἀναγκάσητε clarifies the content of Paul’s request, and the confusing string of datives and infinitives has found a suitable replacement. Further, the awkward τολμάω plus ἐπί has given way to the clearer ἐχρήσασθαι τῇ δυνάμει μου κατα . . .

Notice again what has happened here: Paul has written an awkward but comprehensible sentence; Chrysostom has drawn out its essence—that is, “what he wishes to say” (ὁ θέλει εἰπεῖν). Significantly, this is just what we noted in the speech of Elia: The sense could be deciphered—we could read it between the lines, so to speak—but it did not sit on the surface of the text. The grammar and the logic were not coterminous. This disjuncture between grammar and logic is, I submit, characteristic of Paul’s prose, and is a significant indicator of the level of his rhetorical aptitude.

Plummer’s comment on 2 Cor 10:8–9 sounds the same tone as Martin’s on 10:2: “The constr., though not quite regular, is intelligible enough.” Here I think he is overly optimistic: ἐάν [τε] γὰρ περισσότερον τι καυχήσωμαι περὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας . . . οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσομαι. ἵνα μὴ δόξω ὡς ἄν ἐκφοβέην ὑμᾶς διὰ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν. The basic problem here is accounting for the ἵνα: There simply is no logical connection between Paul’s refusal to be ashamed and the purpose or result clause that follows. As Windisch observes:

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41 Notice also the addition of ὑμῶν to δέομαι, which eliminates the ambiguity that had led some commentators to view the verse as a prayer. See Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:605n63.
42 See also Hom. 2 Cor. 24.2 (PG 61:566), where Chrysostom uses a similar phrase (ὁ γὰρ βούλεται εἰπεῖν) to introduce a paraphrase of the “obscure” (ἀσαφῆς) 11:21b.
43 Plummer, Second Epistle, 281.
“Wenn zwischen V. 8 und V. 9 nichts ausgefallen ist, dann ist V. 9 wieder ein Beispiel für
den außerordentlich brachylogischen Stil des P[aulus].”

There are two quite credible “solutions,” but neither leaves us with a particularly coherent text.

First, v. 9 can be taken as the protasis of a construction that is resumed in v. 11, with v. 10 forming a parenthesis. This would be analogous to what we see in 10:1–2, with Paul breaking off in order to interject the words of his rivals: “In order that I may not seem as though I were [merely] trying to frighten you with my letters—[v. 10: ‘for this is what he is saying, that I am bold in my letters but weak in person’]—let such a one consider this, that just as we are in word through letters when absent, thus also [will we be] when present in deed.” This reading makes decent sense of the flow of thought here, but it leaves us with rather garbled syntax. Verse 10 cannot be a true parenthesis, since, on this interpretation, it provides the antecedent of the τοιούτος in v. 11. Moreover, this interpretation results in an odd disjuncture between the protasis and the apodosis: “In order that I should not seem . . . let such a one consider.” And, finally, we are still left with a “very palpably abrupt” transition between v. 8 and v. 9.

The other possibility, more frequently advocated by recent commentators, is that v. 9 connects with v. 8 “by means of some intermediate thought that remains unexpressed.”

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44 Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 305.
45 For a thorough survey of the exegetical options, see Harris, Second Corinthians, 696–98; Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:626–29.
46 So Martin, 2 Corinthians, 310–11; BDF §483. Meyer reports this as the interpretation of Calvin, Rückert, de Wette, and Ewald (Corinthians, 2:402).
49 Meyer, Corinthians, 2:402. Note the addition of δέ after ἵνα in Chrysostom’s reported text (Hom. 2 Cor. 22.2 [PG 61:548]) and of autem in the Vulgate.
50 Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:626.
which thought, precisely? Perhaps what is elided here is an implicit decision not to boast any further, in which case Barrett’s addition of “I forbear to do this” prior to ἰνα captures the sense.  

Moule suggests supplying a verb of volition prior to ἰνα. Harris prefers to add τοῦτο λέγω. In any case, Paul has not made himself clear; that is, his syntax does not conform to the logic of the sentence, however it is we reconstruct that logic.

One could argue, I suppose, that this is intentional ellipsis for stylistic purposes, but it is difficult to see what Paul would gain thereby. For his part, Pseudo-Demetrius acknowledges that admission of hiatus and even “disconnected composition” (ἡ διαλελυμένη σύνθεσις) befit a forceful style (Eloc. 299–301; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Comp. 22). But what he means here is non-periodic composition, as is evident from his earlier discussion (12). He certainly is not advocating such ellipses as obscure the sense of a passage. Indeed, he specifically censures prose that is downright disjointed (ἡ διεσπασμένη ὀλως σύνθεσις), complaining about cola that “resemble fragmentary pieces” (301 [trans. Roberts]; cf. Quintilian, Inst. 2.11.7).

In any case, the notion that this is an intentional stylistic choice becomes increasingly untenable when we observe the extent of the syntactical irregularities and ambiguities in this text.

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53 Harris, Second Corinthians, 697; also Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:626.
54 Cf. Mitchell, “Le style, c’est l’homme,” 384. Mitchell notes Dionysius of Halicarnassus’s displeasure with Plato’s sometime lack of clarity (Dem. 5), suggesting that Paul, like Plato, sometimes chose to use language “cryptically” (pp. 384–88). But such a comparison is hardly relevant here: Dionysius is complaining about exotic figures, not disjointed prose, and 2 Cor 10:7–11 is hardly a passage of such esoteric content that it requires cryptic language.
55 Notice that it is not only the transition between vv. 8 and 9 that is abrupt; rather, the whole section is disjointed. Observes Windisch regarding the transition from v. 7 to v. 8: “Nicht leicht ist der logische Zusammenhang . . . zu bestimmen.” Der zweite Korintherbrief, 303.
56 A few additional problems in these verses are worthy of note: First, if Paul intended by his use of περισσότερον in v. 8 to suggest that he could boast of more than simply being equally Χριστοῦ (cf. v. 7; so Barrett, Second Corinthians, 258; Meyer, Corinthians, 2:401), he has not made himself clear. Alternatively, he
The chart below lists a number of additional problems that commentators have identified in 2 Cor 10–13. In most cases—for example, the lack of explicit negation to explain the γάρ in 10:3—we can discern the sense with confidence. That is, despite inexplicitness on the level of syntax, we know what Paul must have meant. Occasionally, however, there is sharp disagreement among commentators—and, as the state of the text attests, among early scribes—regarding how to render the text. The cumulative effect, I submit, is to obscure the logic of the passage. This sort of writing may facilitate the proliferation of exegetical commentaries, it does not facilitate comprehension, let alone effective persuasion.

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57 Indeed, one suspects that it is precisely the indeterminacy of Paul’s prose that has allowed it to serve as a textual basis for the diverse systematizations of Valentinus, Marcion, Luther, Bultmann, and now Alain Badiou, to name but a few.
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58 This difficulty, and the next on our chart, are ameliorated in the Western text, which omits οὐ συνιᾶσιν ὑμεῖς δὲ, thereby making Paul the referent of αὐτοί and preserving the contrastive sense of ἀλλὰ. See Plummer, Second Epistle, 284–85; Meyer, Corinthians, 2:408; Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:636–39. The longer text is surely correct: it has better external attestation, and is difficult to account for if not original. Plummer suggests that the shorter reading results from an attempt to clarify a text that even early readers (e.g. Theodoret, Int. Paul. [PG 82:437]) recognized as unclear. Cf. Barrett, Second Corinthians, 264.
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Again, it is important to note that such difficulties can hardly be explained as resulting from an intentional stylistic decision. The only possible benefit that could arise from the use of such disjointed syntax is the impression of unrestrained vehemence (cf. “Longinus,” Subl. 8.4; 22.1–4; Ps.-Demetrius, Eloc. 300 [but cf. 303]). But being overly forceful from afar is precisely what Paul knows he is accused of in Corinth (cf. 10:1, 8–11), and it would be a strange rhetorical move indeed to fan the flames by intentionally selecting such a style. Surely a more straightforward explanation is that Paul’s irregular syntax arises from a lack of articulateness, exacerbated, perhaps, by real anger and distress. It was widely recognized already in antiquity that redundancy and frequent anacolutha and parentheses

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59 In only two cases has a credible stylistic explanation been proposed. With regard to Paul’s amphibolous use of ἐν υἱῷ in 10:15, Thrall proposes that its location before rather than after μεγαλυχθηναι is chiasmic (Second Epistle, 2:651n397). But cf. Quintilian, Inst. 7.9.9–12, who assumes that such ambiguity is a fault that should be remedied. Similarly, some suggest the duplication of ἵνα μή ὑπερτεράζωμαι in 12:7 is intended to form an emphatic chiasm. So Zmijewski, Der Stil der paulinischen “Narrenrede,” 366; Martin, 2 Corinthians, 393.

signalled speakers possessed of strong emotion.\textsuperscript{61} Thus to explain Paul’s uneven diction by appeal to conscious stylistic choice is both far-fetched and unnecessary.

What, then, does this analysis of Paul’s syntax indicate with regard to his rhetorical education? First, it must be admitted that such diction does not itself necessarily rule out formal rhetorical training. Pseudo-Plutarch’s \textit{synkrisis} of fire and water (\textit{An ignis}), discussed in chapter 8 above, is evidence enough that the rudiments of a rhetorical education provide no guarantee of articulateness, let alone eloquence. But notice what shape Pseudo-Plutarch’s incorporation of rhetorical theory takes: a clumsy and rather wooden adherence to formal expectations. He clearly has some rhetorical education, but not enough to be fully fluent. This, all agree, is not what we find in Paul, which is why Betz and his followers consistently have argued that if Paul knew rhetorical theory, he had so thoroughly digested it that he could benefit from its insights without being bound by mere imitation of its forms.\textsuperscript{62} But here Paul’s syntax becomes a fatal problem, for the degree of rhetorical proficiency Betz posits can hardly be reconciled with the clumsiness of expression and inelegant diction we find in 2 Cor 10–13. Perhaps neither Paul’s uneven syntax nor his failure to abide by formal conventions is, on its own, irreconcilable with the claim that he received a formal rhetorical education. But taken together they point rather straightforwardly, I think, to a different world of discourse altogether.

\textsuperscript{61} This is clear from the representation of angry and agitated speech in ancient comedy. For Menander’s use of anacolutha in such circumstances see Karakasis, \textit{Terence and the Language of Roman Comedy}, 4. For repetition, see Katsouris, \textit{Linguistic and Stylistic Characterization}, 107.

2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:6

Our survey of 2 Cor 10–13 has substantiated the evaluations of Norden, Jowett, et al.: Paul’s diction is, to quote Windisch, “wirklich holperig,” and frequently renders his train of thought difficult to follow. There is often a disjuncture between Paul’s apparent flow of thought and his syntax. Sometimes we can discern the intended sense with confidence; sometimes we cannot.

There is an old habit of attributing this lack of clarity to the profundity of Paul’s thought. Already F. C. Baur opined that “the peculiar stamp of the apostle’s language” was a sign that “the thought is too weighty for the language, and can scarcely find fit forms for the suberabundant matter it would fain express.” But such an explanation hardly accounts for 2 Cor 10, where there is no “thought” to speak of, let alone “superabundant matter.” Why should it be so difficult for Paul to articulate with clarity his conviction that his opponents’ boasting is vacuous, and that he will be as powerful when present as he is in his absence?

So, if Baur’s explanation is unconvincing, perhaps we should revisit the possibility that Paul simply was not, by any conventional standard, an eloquent man. This is, after all, what Paul’s rival(s) in Corinth seem to have thought, and, as we will see, Paul himself admitted as much.

“His Letters are Forceful and Bold”

Together with 2 Cor 11:6, which will be considered in detail below, 2 Cor 10:10 has become a central text in discussions regarding Paul’s rhetorical ability. As noted in chapter 3 above, the verse preserves a characterization of Paul that derives from his rival(s) in Corinth. It is, one might say, the earliest record of the reception history of Paul’s letters. Therefore, its

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63 Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 313.
64 Baur, Paul, 2:280–81.
interpretation is pivotal in our attempt to locate Paul’s voice. The report in question is as follows:

αἱ ἐπιστολαί μέν . . . βαρεῖαι καὶ ἱσχυραί
η δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἁθενής
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος

All agree this is a highly significant text, but what exactly it signifies is disputed. One interpretive crux concerns the meaning of the twin adjectives βαρεῖαι and ἱσχυραί. Are they complimentary in their intent (“weighty and strong”), or, on the contrary, disdainful (“tyrannical and oppressive”)?

Of course, those who see Paul as well trained in rhetoric advocate the former interpretation. In its essence, the argument runs as follows: What this passage preserves is the perceived difference in rhetorical capacity between Paul the letter writer and Paul the extempore orator. Paul’s letters, his detractors admit, are rhetorically effective and powerful. (In fact, βαρεῖαι and ἱσχυραί, we are told, are words that derive from rhetorical theory, wherein they designate positive stylistic traits.) What Paul lacks is the capacity for compelling rhetorical delivery (ὑπόκρισις), something cultivated among professional orators and sophists—and sought by the Corinthians. So, Paul was well trained in rhetoric and used it capably in his letters, but, for whatever reason, was either incapable or unwilling to deliver in person.

I have explained above why I am not persuaded by the notion that the trouble in Corinth spawned from the rhetorical sensitivities of a community infatuated with rhetorical

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65 These alternatives are taken, respectively, from the NRSV and Harris, Second Corinthians, 698.
performance. But however one conceives of the context in Corinth, what is troubling about the reading summarized above is that an external interpretive lens—in this case, rhetorical theory—is allowed to trump clear indicators in the text itself that point decisively to a different interpretation.

It must be admitted from the outset that the words βαρεῖαι and ἴσχυραι can, in various contexts, signify either positive or negative qualities:67 The word βαρύς most commonly means heavy, oppressive, or grievous (LSJ s.v.), but the closely related βαρός is also used by Dionysius of Halicarnassus to refer to the stylistic virtue of “gravity” (Thuc. 23 [Usher, LCL]). The term ἴσχυρός is occasionally used in reference to positively forceful prose (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Comp. 22; Thuc. 31), but can also designate severity or violence (LSJ s.v., I.3). Clearly, then, the sense of both words must be determined from their context in 2 Cor 10–13.68

Here it will be helpful to work outwards, in concentric circles, from 10:10 itself. Notice how Paul introduces the accusation in v. 9, “I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters.” This alone is not decisive, but does seem to suggest that “threatening” would be more apt than “powerful” as a description of how Paul’s letters are perceived.69 Even more telling is v. 11: “Let such a one [as says this about me] consider this, that just as we are in word through letters when absent (τῷ λόγῳ δι’ ἐπιστολῶν

67 For the range of significations, see Corin Mihaila, The Paul-Apollos Relationship and Paul’s Stance toward Greco-Roman Rhetoric: An Exegetical and Socio-Historical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–4, LNTS 402 (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 155–60; Vegge, A Letter about Reconciliation, 310–16.
68 It should be noted, however, that neither is a common rhetorical term. See Anderson, Ancient Rhetorical Theory, 278. The fact that Dionysius occasionally uses both with reference to prose style does not alter this fact, for, as he himself explains, his descriptive vocabulary is not technical but metaphorical (Comp. 21). Cf. Vegge, A Letter about Reconciliation, 314–16.
69 Cf. Harris, Second Corinthians, 699.
απόντες), so also will we be in deed when present (παρόντες τὸ ἐργῶ)” (my trans.).

The appropriateness of this as a rebuttal to the accusation in v. 10 is not at all clear if we follow the rhetorical interpretive model. On that model, remember, the discrepancy between the present Paul and the absent Paul is one of rhetorical aptitude: he writes with eloquent power, but speaks poorly. But v. 11 is not a response to that—unless, perhaps, Paul is saying that he is on his way to Corinth to deliver his oratorical pièce de résistance, but that would hardly justify Paul’s word vs. deed dichotomy. Rather, what this rebuttal addresses is a perceived discrepancy in how Paul asserts his authority when present versus when absent: Whatever he is bold enough to say from afar, he insists, he will henceforth be bold enough to follow through on in person. So there is no evidence here that his letters were admired for their rhetorical force. Rather, the sense of the accusation in 10:10 is that Paul’s bark is bigger than his bite: From a safe distance, he poses as strong and authoritative, but, when in Corinth, his abject weakness is manifest.

This interpretation is confirmed when we look at the broader context. The characterization of Paul in 10:10 is, as is widely acknowledged, reflected also in v. 1b: “I who am humble (ταπεινός) when face to face with you, but bold toward you (θερρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς) when I am away.” Again, the perceived discrepancy is hardly one of rhetorical

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70 The future tense I have used in the second clause is not explicit, but is surely implied. See ibid., 702–3.
72 So Chrysostom, Hom. 2 Cor. 21.1 (PG 61:542); Calvin, Corinthians, 2:330; Meyer, Corinthians, 2:403; Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 305; Harris, Second Corinthians, 698; Jan Lambrecht, “Dangerous Boasting: Paul’s Self-Commendation in 2 Cor 10–13,” in The Corinthian Correspondence, ed. Reimund Bieringer, BETL 125 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 329; Martin, The Corinthian Body, 53; Vegge, A Letter about Reconciliation, 260–62. Betz’s interpretation of v. 1b (Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition, 45–57), wherein both ταπεινός and θερρῶ have positive connotations as characteristics of a true (Cynic) philosopher, tears the fabric of the text, failing in particular to cohere with v. 11. Moreover, as Margaret Thrall observes, Betz adduces but one example of the use of ταπεινός in this sense (Lucian, Somn. 9–13), and it is unconvincing (Second Epistle, 2:604n62). Similarly, it is telling that 2 Cor 10:11 is nowhere to be found in Donald Walker’s treatment of “Paul’s offer of leniency,” and 13:1–4 is given only perfunctory treatment (Paul’s Offer of Leniency). This results in a failure to recognize the straightforward sincerity of Paul’s threatened discipline, and thus seriously undermines Walker’s reading.
competence, but rather concerns the authority (ἐξουσία) in which Paul boasts (v. 8; cf. 13:10), but which, apparently, he has not (yet) been able to exercise. On his proximate visit, he insists at the letter’s close, he will not be lenient (οὐ φείσωμαι), but will manifest the disciplinary power of God (13:1–4; cf. 10:2, 6).

This language would have sounded familiar to the Corinthians, for, in a previous letter, he had issued a similar ultimatum:

But some of you, thinking I am not coming to you, have become arrogant. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness? (1 Cor 4:18–21; cf. 2 Cor 13:2)

One wonders whether Paul is now reaping the consequences of having made but not followed through on such threats. Paul had indeed gone to Corinth prior to writing 2 Cor 10–13, and, he says, this had been “a painful visit” (2 Cor 2:1)—painful not for the Corinthians, however, as Paul had threatened, but instead for Paul himself (cf. 2:5–10; 7:12; 13:1–4). We do not know precisely what occurred, but it stands to reason that the insulting characterization of Paul as bold from afar but weak in person derived at least in part from his failure on that visit to execute disciplinary power as promised. Perhaps we catch a glimpse of this in 2 Cor

74 How, exactly, Paul expected to manifest this power remains obscure. We may find a clue, however, in 1 Cor 5:4, where he uses similar language—exercising power (δύναμις) with (σὺν) Christ—in speaking of the role of his spirit in handing over the sexually immoral man to Satan: συνεχθηντών ὑμῶν καὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ πνεύματος σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ὑμῶν Ἰησοῦ. See Thrall, 2 Corinthians, 2:887, following Karl Prümm, Diakonia pneumatou: Der zweite Korintherbrief als Zugang zur apostolischen Botschaft, Auslegung und Theologie, 2 vols. (Rome: Herder, 1960–1967), 1:712. Presumably what is expected is a charismatic display with decisive social consequences. Chrysostom, interestingly, read 1 Cor 4:21 (see below) in conjunction with the account of the death of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–11 (Hom. 1 Cor. 14.2 [PG 61:116–117]).
75 Cf. Chrysostom, Hom. 2 Cor. 21.1 (PG 61:541), who connects 2 Cor 10:1–2 to 1 Cor 4:18–21, noting that Paul’s threat (ἀπειλή) in 2 Cor 10:2 is even more severe (βαρύτερον[!]) than in the previous letter.
76 Cf. Plummer, Second Epistle, 283.
12:21, where Paul speaks of having been humiliated by God (ταπεινώση με ο θεός) before the Corinthians (προς ύμως).

In any case, this much is clear: Paul is being treated with derision: ἥ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἁθενής καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος. Two recent studies have sought, in complementary ways, to uncover the connotations of this characterization of Paul, both indebted, in various ways, to Maud Gleason’s Bourdieu-inflected discussion of physiognomy and self-presentation in the Roman Empire. For Jennifer Larson, what is at issue for Paul—as, somewhat differently, for Gleason’s Favorinus—is masculinity: Paul’s status as a powerful and virile male has been challenged. Viewed in the light of Roman preoccupation with vigilant “performance” of manhood, this is a serious impugnation of his honour indeed. Albert Harrill thinks rather that Paul is being characterized in accordance with “the ancient physiognomic principle that a weak bodily presence signifies a slave.” His citation of Lucian, wherein the satirist reflects autobiographically on the choice between παιδεία and a manual trade (τέχνη τῶν βανούσων [Somn. 1]), is particularly instructive:

On the other hand, if you turn your back upon these men so great and noble, upon glorious deeds and sublime words, upon a dignified appearance (σχῆμα εὐπρεπές),

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77 Note that πάλιν in 12:21 can taken be taken with ἐλθόντος (i.e., “lest when I come again”) or with ταπεινώση (i.e. “lest God should humble me again”). The latter is almost certainly intended. See Meyer, *Corinthians*, 2:493; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 369; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 562; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 330–31; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 464–65; Philip E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 472n166; Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 901. Paul associates his humiliation—though rather obscurely—with unrepented sin in the community. But what would it mean for him to be humiliated by God before them? The context in Corinth makes one wonder if this is a reference to failure on Paul’s part to manifest spiritual power, a failure he interprets as resulting from divine inaction as a response to sin. To my knowledge, no satisfactory interpretation of the verse has been proffered. Bultmann’s notion (*Second Corinthians*, 238–39), similar to that of Chrysostom (*Hom. 2 Cor. 28.2* [PG 61:591–592]; cf. Meyer, *Corinthians*, 2:493), that Paul feared the “humiliation” of having to exercise his authority for tearing down, not building up (cf. 13:10), fails to account for Paul’s previous humiliation, or makes it of a different order altogether. Cf. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 465–66.

78 Gleason, *Making Men*.

79 Larson, “Paul’s Masculinity.”

upon honor, esteem, praise, precedence, power (δύνασμι) and offices . . . then you will put on a filthy tunic, assume a servile appearance (σχήμα δουλοπρεπές), and hold bars and gravers and sledges and chisels in your hands, with your back bent over your work; you will be a groundling, with groundly ambitions, altogether humble (πάντα τρόπον ταπείνως); you will never lift your head, or conceive a single manly or liberal thought, and . . . you will make yourself a thing of less value than a block of stone. (Somn. 13 [Harmon, LCL])

Harrill and Larson are to be commended, certainly, for helping us locate terms like ὀσθενής and ταπείνως: weak, abject, inarticulate, servile, emasculate—this is the sort of characterization of Paul that is reflected in 2 Cor 10–13 generally and 2 Cor 10:10 specifically. But both Larson and Harrill sidestep what would appear to be the evident conclusion, namely, that Paul was indeed a man susceptible to derision and contempt.

Larson’s Paul looks and acts weak and servile, but the implication throughout is that this is (merely) voluntary behaviour and therefore not indicative of Paul’s essential identity. The Corinthians mistook his behaviour for actual weakness; Paul and his interpreters know better.

The prince remains the prince even when playing the pauper. Indeed, what Larson seems to imagine is that Paul, secure in his apostolic identity, simply stands above the fray.81 Thus his social location is irrelevant: He visits Corinth, but he is not really implicated in the precariousness of his position there.

Harrill has a more explicit means of evading what would seem to be the consequences of his own study. For him, it’s all just rhetoric: “The language conforms to conventions and techniques of character assassination common in Greco-Roman invective.”82 Such invective, we are told, “was rarely directed at slaves, per se, but rather at freeborn men, often political

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81 See also, far more egregiously, Lars Aejmelaeus, “‘Christ is Weak in Paul’: The Opposition to Paul in Corinth,” in The Nordic Paul: Finnish Approaches to Pauline Theology, ed. Lars Aejmelaeus and Antti Mustakallio, LNTS 374 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 129: “His weakness is in reality, if rightly understood, nothing but the greatest spiritual strength. . . . Because it is so, he is able to accept with calmness [!] the Corinthian evaluation of him.”

82 Harrill, “Invective against Paul,” 209.
Paul had a more philosophical attitude toward the whole thing than his sophistic rivals in Corinth, who apparently were taken in by the pseudoscience of physiognomy, and thus responded to their invective by intentionally taking on the slavish σχῆμα of a Cynic. The implication, then, is that behind the abject appearance effected by Paul’s filthy tunic and work-bent back stands a noble Odysseus or Antisthenes. His ταπεινότης is merely a disguise.

What Harrill seems to have overlooked is that what allows the topos of the servile body to function effectively as elite invective is, in fact, the actual body of the slave. In other words, physiognomy is compelling precisely to the extent that it articulates the habitus. If the literary record preserves elite men calling each other slavish in appearance, that is because they agreed—indeed, it generally went without saying—that the somatic characteristics of slaves were despicable. Thus to imply, as Harrill does, that Paul cannot really have been slavish because he was called slavish is, if not absurd, at least profoundly arbitrary.

No, if Paul was called slavish, it was because he really appeared so: his ταπεινότης was embodied. Indeed, what 2 Cor 10:10 reveals is that it was his somatic vulnerability that constituted the interpretive matrix through which Paul’s failure convincingly to exercise...
authority in Corinth was seen. So, although this may be invective, it is not merely so. Paul, to all appearances, is weak and derisible—utterly unlike the man who issues bold threats from afar.

But we have still to consider the final clause: ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος. As indicated above, there are no grounds for restricting the sense of λόγος here such that it refers to Paul’s rhetorical ὑπόκρισις. What, then, does the word mean in this context?

There are, I suggest, two credible readings. The first fits admirably with the context, but, to my knowledge, has not previously been proposed. If, as I have argued, 2 Cor 10:10 preserves the charge that Paul wrote boldly, even threatening to come to Corinth with a rod of discipline (cf. 1 Cor 4:21), but could not follow through in person, it is attractive to read ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος here as a related taunt: “He talks big, but what he says comes to nothing.” ὁ λόγος, then, would refer specifically to what Paul had said in his βαρείαι καὶ ἰσχυραὶ letters, thus completing the contrastive sense of the sentence. This is a perfectly reasonable way to render λόγος (cf. BDAG s.v., 1.γ), and, importantly, coheres well with the next verse, wherein τὸ λόγῳ corresponds not with παρόντες, as we should expect if it were a reference to Paul’s speech in general, but rather with δι’ ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες.86

A possible objection to this interpretation is that it seems to require reading ἐξουθενέω in terms of its etymology and not its established usage. The word generally means “despise” or “disdain,” or, in the passive voice used here, “be despised or contemptible.” “Come to nothing” appears to be a stretch. Interestingly, though, in the only instances I could locate of ἐξουθενέω (or the equivalent ἐξουθενέω) with reference to λόγος, the word has precisely the connotation required by the interpretation I have proposed.

86 Contrast Bultmann, Second Corinthians, 191, who resorts to the conclusion that “the λόγος of verse 10 belongs precisely to the ἔργον [of v. 11].” Cf. Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 307.
In both 1 Macc 3:14 and 2 Chr 36:16, the active participle is used of those who scorn the command(s) (λόγος/λόγοι) of someone who attempts to exercise authority. Thus Judas Maccabeus and his companions, by virtue of refusing to comply with Antiochus’s notorious prohibition, become τοὺς ἐξουθενοῦντας τὸν λόγον τοῦ βασιλέως (cf. 1:50). We have the same situation, mutatis mutandis for the participle in the passive voice, in 2 Cor 10:10: Paul has sought to exercise authority, but his threats, commands, and instructions are deemed worthy only of scorn.

If this reading is correct, 2 Cor 10:10 tells us nothing about Paul’s knowledge of rhetoric per se. Alternatively, if, as most think, λόγος should be construed more generally as “speech,” what we have here is a damning report indeed. The word ἐξουθενημένος, like ἀσθενής and ταπεινός, belongs to the vocabulary of honour and shame. Second Maccabees apposes the passive participle to βδελυκτός (“abominable” [1:27]). Paul himself famously sets it alongside μωρός, ἀσθενής, and ἄγενής and over against σοφός and ἰσχυρός (1 Cor 1:27–28). If this is a description of Paul’s speech, the implication is that it is not only unskilled, but derisible.

I should clarify that I am not arguing that the characterization of Paul preserved in 2 Cor 10:10 can be taken as an objective historical observation. Clearly it derives from those who would belittle him. But in order to generate such an impassioned response from Paul, it must have hit close to home. In other words, Paul was at least susceptible to such a characterization, which is itself a telling indicator both of his voice and of his social location.

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87 So Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 306; Plummer, Second Epistle, 279; Harris, Second Corinthians, 700; Furnish, II Corinthians, 468. Lacking anything in the context to demand such a reading, “rhetoric” is too technical a translation for the word as it is used here, contra Martin, 2 Corinthians, 311. Others argue that λόγος refers to Paul’s message or teaching in toto, not merely its form. Cf. Bultmann, Second Corinthians, 190; Barrett, Second Epistle, 261.
“Boorish in Speech”

Prior to the rise of rhetorical criticism, scholars frequently accounted for Paul’s anacolutha and difficult syntax by citing his apparent concession in 2 Cor 11:6 that he was an ἰδιότης τῶ ὁγῷ. In recent decades, however, the significance of this phrase has been contested. No longer considered straightforward attestation of Paul’s lack of literary education, it is now frequently read as itself a sophisticated rhetorical figure, namely, asteismos or urbanitas, a figure wherein, to quote E. A. Judge, who first—though tentatively—proposed this interpretation, “one urbanely displayed one’s own skill by affecting the lack of it.” On this reading, the concession is an ironic one, akin to that of the eloquent and sophisticated Dio Chrysostom:

όταν μὲν γὰρ εἰς ἐμαυτὸν ἀπίδω καὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ, περὶ πάντα μὲν ἀπλώς, μάλιστα δὲ τὴν περὶ τοὺς λόγους, ὡς ἰδιότης ἄν διανοοῦμαι καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν ἰδιότου βίον βιωσόμενον: οὕτως δὲ εἰς τοὺς σπουδαζόντας καὶ παρακαλοῦντας, ὑπονοοῖν ἐμαυτὸν ἀναγκάζομαι, μὴ ἀρα τι τῶν ἐμῶν λόγου ἀξίου . . . (Dial. 3; cf. Lucian, Bis acc. 33).

The comparison is more telling than Judge and his followers have seen, and does not support their reading. Notice Dio’s stature: he credibly can claim that he is being eagerly urged to make a speech (cf. 1–2, 4) by those who expect to hear from him τι θαυμαστόν (1).

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88 E.g. Norden, Die antike Kunstprosa, 492–93; Nock, St. Paul, 234; BDF §464. For patristic examples, see p. 294n18 above.
89 Judge, “Paul’s Boasting,” 57. Cf. Watson, “Paul and Boasting,” 86; Murphy-O’Connor, A Critical Life, 50; Pogoloff, Logos and Sophia, 136; DiCicco, Ethos, Pathos, and Logos, 24; Classen, Rhetorical Criticism, 44; Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 17. H. D. Betz has proposed an alternative reading, suggesting that by emphasizing his knowledge over his verbal prowess Paul is positioning himself on the philosophical side of the philosophy vs. sophistry divide. See Der Apostel Paulus und die socratische Tradition, 57–69; followed by Keener, I–2 Corinthians, 227–28; Walker, Paul’s Offer of Leniency, 275n41. This is not convincing. First, as argued in ch. 8 above, there is no evidence that Paul was contending with sophistry in Corinth. Second, this interpretation requires a more precise signification for both λόγος and γνώσεις than the words can bear in this context (cf. 2 Cor 2:14; 4:6; 8:7). See further below, and Barrett, Second Epistle, 279–80; E. A. Judge, “St Paul and Socrates,” in The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays, ed. James R. Harrison, WUNT 229 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 670–83.
90 “For on the one hand, whenever I consider myself and my inexperience, my inexperience in simply everything, but especially in speaking, recognizing that I am only a layman, I am minded for the future to live the life of a layman; on the other hand, when I consider those who take me seriously and invite me to make a speech, I am constrained to feel suspicious of myself, lest some quality of mine may after all be worth while . . .” (Crosby, LCL).
In this situation a show of modesty is indeed well advised. It has the potential to head off not only envy but also the sort of criticism that can arise from a failure to live up to exalted expectations. What possible objection remains for his audience to raise, except perhaps that Dio’s modesty is itself ostentation (cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 11.1.21)? But no, Dio has thought of that too, and disarmed the accusation simply by naming it (*Dial.* 2).

Paul’s situation is strikingly different. His competence as a proclaimer of the gospel had been at issue in Corinth for some time (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–2:16). Indeed, it is often argued that the dismissive phrase ἰδιωτῆς τῷ λόγῳ derives not from Paul himself but rather from his rival(s) in Corinth.⁹¹ The claim, I think, goes beyond the evidence. Still, it is clear that the basic thrust of the characterization had currency in Corinth. Paul, then, is in no position to indulge in faux modesty. An ironic concession would be rather ill advised and liable to be taken as a real admission of inarticulateness⁹²—especially given the clumsiness of expression manifested in this very letter, and, indeed, in this very verse.

The central antithesis of 11:6a is clear enough, even if the omission of both εἰμὶ and a clarifying personal pronoun is unusual:⁹³ εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιωτῆς τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ’ οὐ τῇ γνώσει. “Now even though I am an ἰδιωτῆς with respect to speech, nevertheless I am not with respect to knowledge.”⁹⁴ The trouble comes in the next clause, which, concedes Bultmann, is “scarcely intelligible”:⁹⁵ ἀλλ’ ἐν παντὶ φανερώσαντες ἐν πᾶσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς. This is likely

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⁹³ Cf. BDF §128.2, and notice the addition of εἰμὶ in a few manuscripts (D* E).
⁹⁴ My trans. On this sense of ἀλλά in conditional sentences, see BDF §448.5; LSJ s.v., I.2. The datives are construed as datives of respect with Bultmann, *Second Corinthians*, 203; Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 748. Notice that the syntax suggests a real concession—that is, the protasis is assumed to be factual—as per a “first-class” condition. See Turner, *Syntax*, 115; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 299; Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 748.
⁹⁵ Bultmann, *Second Corinthians*, 204.
another instance of Paul using a participle where the syntax demands a finite verb, the difficulty of which is exacerbated, in this case, by the transition from a singular verb in v. 5 to a plural participle in v. 6b, then back to a singular verb in v. 7. If what is to be supplied in v. 6a is ἐσμὲν, not ἐμί, this is rather late notice—not to mention the soleciism that would result (ἐσμὲν [pl.] + ἰδιωτὴς [sg.]).

In any case, even if we simply take φανερώσαντες to mean ἐφανερώσαμεν, we are still left with an impenetrable turn of phrase. Plummer’s rendering, which takes πᾶσιν as masculine, is a decent attempt to make sense of the apparent redundancy of the prepositional phrases ἐν παντὶ ... ἐν πᾶσιν: “in all things ... among all men.” But more likely this is simply poorly executed emphasis (cf. Phil 4:12: ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν).

Finally, and most confoundingly, the sentence is lacking an object. Following Paul’s train of thought, it seems most probable, despite being grammatically untenable, that he is referring to the manifestation of his γνῶσις, which is to be supplied from the previous clause. Alternatively, one could resolve the problem by adding something like an αὐτόν or, with a number of ancient witnesses, an ἐσαύτος. The scribe who brought us the 46 stumbled upon another solution: he omitted the offending clause entirely. However we make sense of the text, Paul certainly has not made all things clear. This is hardly the sort of

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96 So Turner, Syntax, 343; Plummer, Second Epistle, 300; Barrett, Second Epistle, 280; Harris, Second Corinthians, 749–50.
97 The appearance of the singular participle in D* appears to be an attempt to resolve this problem. So Plummer, Second Corinthians, 300.
99 So Furnish, II Corinthians, 491; and, tentatively, Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:678; Barrett, Second Epistle, 281.
100 Cf. Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief, 333; Plummer, Second Epistle, 300.
101 For the former option, see Barrett, Second Epistle, 280–81; Harris, Second Corinthians, 750; Thrall, Second Epistle, 2:656n147. The latter can be observed in 0121 0243 630 1739 1881. A roughly equivalent emendation is replacing the active with a passive participle, as in p14 ἐκλογὴ D Ψ 0278.
rhetorical display in the context of which an admission of untutored speech is likely to be taken ironically.  

Contrast Dio Chrysostom’s sparklingly clear yet expressive diction. As Paul too often does, Dio admits a parenthesis (περὶ πάντα μὲν ἀπλῶς, μάλιστα δὲ τὴν περὶ τοῦ λόγου); however, in contrast to what we have seen in Paul, Dio’s is clearly structured and brief, and, above all, does not disturb the syntax of the period. It adds a nice touch of spontaneity and authenticity without sacrificing eloquence. Again, like but very unlike Paul, Dio indulges in ellipsis: we must supply ἀπίδω from the μὲν clause into the δὲ clause. But, again, the clear structure of the sentence precludes any ambiguity or obscurity. Finally, as Paul too often does, Dio utilizes repetition, reusing, to elegant effect, the words ὅταν, ἐμαυτοῦ, and ἰδιώτης. Paul’s ἐν παντὶ . . . ἐν πᾶσιν may also be repetition, but it hardly has a comparable rhetorical effect. In short, Dio’s is the sort of elegant diction that provides an apt setting for an ironic confession of ineptitude; Paul’s is not.

So this is a sincere concession, albeit one that may be prompted by the uncharitable evaluation of his rival(s). But what does it mean? The word ἰδιώτης is very common, and its meaning is not really in doubt, but there has been some debate of late regarding the sense in which it should be taken in this context. Dale Martin well articulates the interpretation currently in vogue: “When Paul calls himself a ‘layman with regard to speech,’ . . . he is saying that he is not a professional orator or teacher of rhetoric; but he is not denying that he has had a rhetorical education.”

But such a reading cannot be sustained: It misconstrues

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102 Nor is it feasible to imagine, with Bruce Winter (Philo and Paul, 226), that in such a context a phrase like ἐν παντὶ . . . ἐν πᾶσιν would be deemed a “rhetorical flourish.”
both ἰδιωτὴς and λόγος, and it fails to attend to the context of Paul’s concession. It is, in short, an egregious case of special pleading.

Derived from ἰδιος, ἰδιωτὴς means, firstly, a private individual, one who tends to his own affairs. Accordingly, the word is often used to designate those who play no active role in political life or public service—that is, those outside the political class or aristocracy. By extension, apparently, it came to have two related but distinct significations: First, it could be used of a layperson, someone who was not an expert or professional in a given field. Second, it could be used with reference to the plebs—ordinary folk—in implied opposition to the noble classes. It is this latter sense that allows Lucian to appose “laymen” (ἰδιωταὶ) to “workingmen” (βάναυσοι) and “tradesmen” (ἀγοραίοι [Vit. auct. 27; Harmon, LCL]).

Given the widespread equation of paideia with power and elite status, it is not surprising that these two senses frequently were conflated in the Koine such that the word came to signify the rustic or the ignorant commoner. Hence Josephus contrasts the foolish masses (ἰδιωταὶ) with οἱ λόγιοι (B.J. 6.295). For Lucian, ἰδιωταὶ are characterized by ἀπαιδευσία (Nigr. 24; cf. Ind. 29), and can thus be set in opposition to the πεπαιδευμένοι (Dom. 2; Lex. 24) and the σοφοί (Symp. 35). Reflecting these same assumptions, Luke

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104 For numerous examples, see LSJ s.v., I, II; MM 299. Also Josephus, A.J. 5.344; 9.227; B.J. 4.602.
105 E.g. Plato, Symp. 185b; Herodotus, Hist. 1.59.1; Lysias, Callias 5.3 (οὐτὲ ἰδιωτὴς . . . οὐτὲ ἀρχων); Josephus A.J. 3.332; 8.24; 19.213; Lucian, Vit. auct. 10.3; Aristides, Or. 2.189, 195.
106 For varied examples, see BDAG s.v; LSJ, s.v., III.1. Note also Paul’s use of the word to refer to the uninitiated in 1 Cor 14:16, 23, 24.
107 LSJ s.v., II.2. See esp. Plutarch, Thes. 24.2 (τῶν μὲν ἰδιωτῶν καὶ πενήτων . . . τοῖς δὲ δυνατοῖς); Herodotus, Hist. 1.32.1; Herodian, Excess. div. Marc. 4.10.2; Josephus, B.J. 6.300; Lucian, Dom. 3.
108 So also Gregory of Nazianzus, Ep. 51.4; Sextus Empiricus, Math. 1.155; Philostratus, Vit. Apoll. 3.43 (σοφὸς μὲν . . . δοξείν ξε ἰδιωτὸν τε καὶ ἀσόφου, πεπαιδευμένος δὲ εἰκ βαρβάρου). Cf. Origen, Cels. 7.41 (PG 11:1480).
puts ἰδιώται in apposition to ὀγρόμματοι (Acts 4:13). And, for Dionysius of Halicarnassus, ἰδιώται, more ignorant even than farmers and artisans, are those who do not know how to pay attention to an ordinary, well-composed speech (Dem. 15; cf. Lys. 3; Epictetus, Diatr. 2.12.2–4, 11–13).

It remained possible to refer to those in private life as ἰδιώται without implying boorishness, but only when the context demanded this more technical sense. Dio Chrysostom, for example, spoke of ἰδιώται—by which, in this context, he simply meant individuals as opposed to πολείς (see LSJ s.v., I)—who possessed good breeding and education (Nicom. 29). But it is only the clarity of Dio’s antithetical construction that, in this instance, activates a non-derogatory signification. When the context of its usage does not specify such an opposition, the word consistently implies low social status and the vulgarity assumed to attend it.

It is misleading, then, to adduce texts like Isocrates’ Antidosis, in which he characterizes trained but non-practicing orators as ἰδιώται, as parallels for Paul’s usage. Isocrates differentiates those who retire into private life (ἰδιώτας ἀπαλλαττομένους) from those who pursue careers in declamation or forensic rhetoric (ἀγωνισταί [201]; cf. ἰδιωτεύειν ἐξουλήθησαν [204]). The context here leaves no room for doubt regarding in which sense these men are ἰδιώται: They are, to borrow a phrase from Dionysius of

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109 So also Didymus, Fr. 2 Cor. 4.7 (Staab 25); Theophilus, Autol. 2.35; John Chrysostom, Hom. Gen. 28.3 (PG 53:258).
110 Cf. Dio Chrysostom, Regn. 12; Aristides, Or. 1.311; 11.17. Likewise, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Dem. 56, differentiating between speeches that concern private vs. public interests; Epictetus, Diatr. 3.15.13 (φιλοσόφον στάσιν ἔχειν ἢ ἰδιώτου); 3.16; 3.19.
111 See also LSJ, s.v. ἰδιατεία, ἰδιατεύω, ἰδιοτικός, ἰδιώτις, and ἰδιωτισμός.
Halicarnassus, Ἰδιώτης βίον ζήν (Ant. Rom. 5.5.3; cf. Isocrates, Soph. 14). Nevertheless it would be an affront to their sophistication to refer to them as Ἰδιώται τῷ λόγῳ. 113

In addition to demanding an unlikely rendering of the word Ἰδιώτης here, the “non-professional” interpretation makes no sense in the immediate context. This is an antithetical construction—“but not [an Ἰδιώτης] with respect to knowledge,” Paul insists—and it will not do to interpret the first half of the antithesis in a way that renders the second half incoherent. Whatever Paul means by saying that he is not an Ἰδιώτης τῇ γνώσει, he is not claiming to be a professional γνώσις practitioner. What Paul insists on here is not that he has made a career out of γνώσις, but that he possesses it.

Two further considerations tell against the reading of Martin et al. First, it demands a more specific signification for λόγος than the context allows. The word may occasionally mean “rhetoric,” but that is hardly its usual sense. In order to translate it as such, we should need some contextual indication that Paul means something more specific than “speech.” In this case, there is no such evidence; there is only the recent habit of reading the text through the lens of ancient rhetorical theory. I have demonstrated above the inappropriateness of such a reading.

Second, this interpretation of Paul’s concession fails to account for these scholars’ own reading of 2 Cor 10:10, where Paul cites the specific accusation to which he is usually thought to be responding in 11:6. Paul’s rivals do not accuse him of being, like Isocrates’

113 Bruce Winter also cites Philo, Agr. 160 as evidence that the Ἰδιώται could “include not only students of rhetoric, but also those who have graduated from such schools” (Philo and Paul, 102). What Winter fails to see is that Philo’s use of the word Ἰδιώτης here derives from an extended military metaphor wherein sophists are experienced, professional soldiers (ἐμπειροπόλεμος) whilst their would-be combatants are civilians or private recruits (ἰδιώται). For Ἰδιώται as civilians (vs. soldiers), see Xenophon, Eq. mag. 8.1; and, as privates (vs. men of military rank), P.Hamb. I 26.11 (BGU X 1958); P.Hib. I 30.12; I 89.2; Xenophon, Anab. 1.3.11; Polybius, Hist. 1.69.11. Thus Philo’s usage tells us nothing about the sort of rhetorical knowledge of an Ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ.
students, a well-trained orator living a private life; they characterize his rhetorical delivery—at least according to these scholars—as despicable (ὁ λόγος ἔξουθενημένος). According to these scholars’ own claims, then, the terms of the dispute have already been established such that an admission that one is an ἱδιώτης τῶν λόγων is necessarily a concession of ineloquence, even rudeness of speech.¹¹⁴

Indeed, given the pattern of usage elucidated above, translations like “layman” and “untrained” fail to capture the full connotations of the phrase. If Paul were merely conceding that he was untrained, normal usage would require an objective genitive here in place of his dative of reference.¹¹⁵ Rather, what Paul concedes is that he is an ἱδιώτης—a boor, a plebian, an “ignoramus” (LSJ s.v., III.3)—with regard to speech. His use of the language, he cannot deny, is uncultured and unrefined.

A particularly illuminating glimpse into the characteristics associated with such λόγος ἱδιωτικός is afforded by Sextus Empiricus. Sextus digresses to consider Dionyius Thrax’s definition of grammar as “expertness in the language of poets and composers” (Math. 1.63 [Bury, LCL]). He notices a contradiction here, for this definition restricts the grammarian to learned language, yet, in practice, grammarians often enough take aim at the common usage of τῶν ἱδιωτῶν καὶ ἀνεπιστημώνων (1.64). And notice what such grammatical activity involves: καὶ τὸ βαρβαρὸν καὶ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν τὸ τε σόλοικον καὶ τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον ἐξελέγχουσαν. In other words, the ἱδιώται are those who, precisely by

¹¹⁴ The objection holds on my own preferred reading of 2 Cor 10:10 also, since we have evidence elsewhere that the manner of Paul’s proclamation was under critique. See my comments on 1 Cor 1–4 in ch. 3 above.
¹¹⁵ See LSJ s.v., III.2. Cf. Plato, Prot. 345a; Xenophon, Oec. 3.9.
speaking vulgarly, generate an ample store of raw material for pedantic grammatical analysis.\(^\text{116}\)

Our image of the ancient plebs and their defective *Umgangsprache* is enriched later in the treatise, when Sextus contrasts scientific diction with “the plain untechnical usage of the ordinary folk (*τῶν ἰδιωτῶν*) which differs from one State (*πόλεις*) or Nation (*ἐθνῆ*) to another” (1.233). Such local and ethnic differences in Greek usage—barbarisms, as they were called by those less charitable than Sextus—were anathema to the *pepaideumenoi*, who sought to express their social and cultural status precisely by shrugging off the provincial and embracing what was purely and universally “Greek”—a preoccupation that culminated, of course, in the Atticism associated especially with the so-called Second Sophistic.\(^\text{117}\) The ἰδιώται clearly belong to another world of discourse altogether.

Sextus goes on to describe the usefulness of graciously adjusting one’s vocabulary so as to avoid ridicule from one’s audience:

Aiming at propriety and clearness and the avoidance of ridicule from our serving lads and ordinary folk (*τῶν διακονούντων ἡμῖν παιδαρίων καὶ ἰδιωτῶν*),\(^\text{118}\) we shall use the [term] *πανάριον* (even if it is barbarous), not ἀρτοφορία . . . And again, in

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\(^{116}\) For his part, Dionysius of Halicarnassus insists that composition that resembles the prose of the ἰδιώτης—he specifies the ὀδόλεχχης (“prater”) and the φλύρος (“babbler”—is unworthy of critical attention (*Comp.* 26).


\(^{118}\) In his Tuebner edition, J. Mau brackets καὶ ἰδιωτῶν here, referencing an emendation suggested by Richard Harder. More recently, Harder’s proposed emendation has been rejected by D. L. Blank—see Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Grammarians* (trans. D. L. Blank; Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 47n49. For our purposes, the question is immaterial: the following sentence makes clear that Sextus does, in any case, associate ἰδιωτικάς λέξεις with the speech of “serving lads” et al.
serious discussion, having regard to the company present, we shall put aside commonplace phrases (ἰδιωτικὸς λέξεις) and pursue after a more refined (ἀστειοτέραν) and cultured (φιλολόγου) manner of speech. (Meth. 1.234–235 [Bury, LCL])

In the discursive gap that separates slaves and aristocracy, the ἰδιωταὶ, apparently, belong with the slaves, speaking in language unfit for serious discussion.119

To sum up, then, when Paul concedes that he is an ἰδιωτὴς τῶ λόγῳ, he is not merely admitting that he is a non-professional orator, nor even that he lacks rhetorical education, although certainly that can be inferred. What he is admitting is rather that his speech locates him among those liable to be deemed ταπεινός (10:1) and ἀθενής (10:10). His is an abject voice; and, I submit, the drama of 2 Cor 10–13 derives from his vehement and sometimes vulgar attempt to refigure his degradation into a mark of status and authority—or, more specifically, into a representation of the crucified yet powerful body of Christ (12:9–10; 13:3–4).

**Envy and Foolishness: The Social Locations of Self-Praise**

As demonstrated in detail in chapter 5 above, the idea that Plutarch’s *De laude ipsius* provides us with an inventory of the rhetorical precepts that shaped Paul’s boasting derives from a misreading both of Paul and of Plutarch, and cannot be sustained. However, that does not render comparison of the two unfruitful. On the contrary, as was noted repeatedly, *De laude ipsius* provides a telling contrast with Paul’s boasting, as it appears to be predicated on

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119 Sextus concludes with a remark that should invite us to rethink recent interpretation of 1 Cor 2:1–5: ὡς γὰρ ἐφιλολόγος γελάται παρὰ τοῖς ἰδιωταῖς, ὡς τῶ ἰδιωτικῆ παρὰ τοῖς φιλολόγοις (Math. 1.235). Notice that what is attested here is not a “rhetorical [disavowal] of rhetorical activity,” as Martin would have it (Corinthian Body, 49), nor, à la Betz, philosophical disapproval thereof (“Rhetoric and Theology,” 137–52). Rather, it appears that in antiquity, as today, the non-elite were able to take paradoxical satisfaction precisely in what was, from an elite perspective, their deficiency. Indeed, it does not take a philosopher to be dismissive of elite speech. Cf. William Labov, Sociolinguistic Patterns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 311–13. And, more generally, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 193–200.
a very different set of values and social assumptions. These differences, I will suggest here, can be distilled into a single opposition: Whereas Plutarch is concerned with the social consequences of appearing envious, Paul is worried about being derided as a fool. Further, this distinction attests to two different social realities inhabited by Plutarch and Paul: Plutarch’s concerns presuppose the constraints of an aristocratic social milieu; Paul’s attest to his marginality, and the tenuousness of his claim to status.

For his part, Plutarch’s discussion negotiates a fundamental tension inherent in his social and political reality, what Ian Rutherford describes as “a problem of decorum created by a conflict between the social pressure to assert oneself in public and the social criticism of excessive assertiveness.” In other words, everyone wants honour, and everyone is reluctant to grant too much of it to others. This dynamic is most explicit in Plutarch’s description of how hearing the praise of others begets self-praise. The passage is worth reproducing in full:

First, when others are praised, our rivalry (φιλότιμον) erupts, as we said, into praise of self (περιστολογίαν); it is seized with a certain barely controllable yearning and urge for glory (ὀρμή προς δόξαν) that stings and tickles like an itch, especially when the other is praised for something in which he is our equal or inferior. For just as in the hungry the sight of others eating makes the appetite sharper and keener, so the praise of others not far removed inflames with jealousy (ζηλωτυπία) those who are intemperate in seeking glory. (546C–D [De Lacy and Einarson, LCL]; cf. 540A–C)

Elsewhere in the tractate, Plutarch’s descriptions of the negative effects of unseemly self-praise tend to mystify this social tension. His terminology is diverse, but generally revolves around two corporeal symbols: disgust and burden-bearing. Unmitigated self-praise is heavy, burdensome, and oppressive (ἐπιχθής [539A; 541B; 541D; 543F; 547A; 547D];

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120 Rutherford, “Poetics of the Paraphthegma,” 201.
121 On Plutarch’s conception of the relationship between envy and the search for honour, see also Inv. od. 537B. On Plutarch’s platonic understanding of the passions more generally, see esp. Virt. mor. (440D–452D) and Duff, Plutarch’s Lives, 72–98.
moreover, it is nauseating (ἐνδής [547D]; cf. ἐνδία [539B; 539C]) and it disgusts us (δυσχεραινομεν [539D; cf. 540A]). This is not very perspicuous, but what all of this body language seems to effect is the elevation of Plutarch’s socially constructed conception of decorum to the level of a natural aversion: When we encounter self-praise, we feel discomfort in our guts—“as if by nature” (ὡσπέρ φύσει), as Plutarch has it (547D; cf. Demosthenes, Cor. 3).123

Like most arguments from nature, Plutarch’s serves his larger interest in preserving stability and social order.124 The point here is that restraint from self-praise—and restraint of ambition generally (cf. Praec. ger. rei pub. 809C; 819F–820B)—attenuates the envy and rivalry that always threaten to disrupt a harmonious society. In short, self-praise is a problem because it incites envy; the solution is decorous modesty.125

Hence when Plutarch approves a particular occasion as appropriate for self-praise, it is almost invariably the unlikelihood that boasting in such a situation will arouse envy that provides his rationale. When one is speaking in answer to an accusation, Plutarch notes that bold self-defense, in its refusal to be humiliated, “humbles and overpowers envy” (540D [De Lacy and Einarson, LCL]).126 Likewise, when one boasts in the midst of hardship, the boaster’s peril removes all thought of envy (ἀφήρει τὸν φθόνον ὁ κίνδυνος [541A]).

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122 Plutarch’s vocabulary here is not unique. Laurant Pernot identifies in discussions of self-praise “une série de termes, toujours les mêmes” that depict the burdensome experience of enduring another’s boasting: ἐποχθης, φορτικός, ἐπίθεμος. “Periautologia,” 107.
125 Note the constraining language of shame: It is seemly to be embarrassed (σιδεῖσκαι προσήκον) even when others praise us, hence boasters are derided as “shameless” (ἀνοισχύντως [539D]). Cf. 547Β: δεὶ γὰρ ἐμφύτευσαι ἐπαινοῦμεν.
126 τῷ λέγειν τηνικάτα περὶ αὐτοῦ τι σημάνον... καὶ φρόνημα καὶ μέγεθος ἁρετῆς διαδείκνυσι, τῷ μὴ ταπεινοῦσα βαλεπεινοὺσης καὶ χειρομενής τον φθόνον.
Blending praise of one’s audience with praise of oneself makes self-praise unlikely to incite envy (ἀνεπιφθόνως) since the audience is allowed to take some credit for the great deeds that are recited (542B–C). Further, statesmen can remove φθόνος by praising fortune or the gods—the logic being that people “would rather be bested by luck than by merit” (542F). And conspicuous rejection of flattery from others makes room for inoffensive self-praise, since ὁ φθόνος οὐκ ἁδείς τὰ τὰ μείζονα παραπομπέω τὰ μετριώτερα δίδωσι (543D). Finally, envy can be averted by confession of minor shortcomings (544B). For good reason, then, the work is entitled Περί τοῦ ἐαυτοῦ ἐπαινεῖν ἀνεπιφθόνως—or, as Dana Fields paraphrases: “On praising oneself without engendering the odium that accompanies too- eminent success.”

Again, then, it is profoundly misleading to speak as if Plutarch were reiterating abstract rhetorical rules, enumerating the occasions when, in ancient society, boasting was “permissible.” Instead, his recommendations—and they are but a single take on the matter—derive from social observation. Tautologous as it might sound, self-praise is acceptable when it is well received, that is, when it arouses emulation rather than envy—and Plutarch’s keen analysis into the workings of envy enables him to give a sound estimate of when that might be.

Plutarch’s emphasis on the dangerous nexus of self-praise and envy is not novel. In Plato’s Phaedo, Socrates, having been praised for undertaking a brilliant argument, demurred, attentive to the possibility that such boastful speech should arouse an evil eye

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129 For example, Plutarch and Quintilian disagree outright regarding the appropriateness of Cicero’s self-praise (Laud. 541A; Inst. 11.1.17–18), and different perspectives altogether are evidenced by Aristides and Pliny, e.g., both of whom are rather more forthright about their own virtues than Plutarch would countenance. See Fields, “Aristides and Plutarch on Self-Praise,” 160–72; Rutherford, “Poetics of the Paraphthegma”; Gibson, “(In)offensive Self-Praise.”
As noted above, Aristotle too recognized the proclivity of speaking about oneself (περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγειν) to perpetuate envious rivalry (ἐπίφθονος [Rhet. 3.17.16]). The same sensitivity is evident in the Homeric scholia: In book 18 of the Iliad, Achilles avers that no Achaeans is his equal in the art of war, yet concedes that others perform better in council (18.105–106). One ancient commentator notes that by divvying up the praise thus Achilles steers clear of envy (τῶ διελείν τὸν ἕπαινον ἀπελύσασαι τὸν φθόνον [schol. T 105–106a]).

Finally, Isocrates remarks, at the outset of his Antidosis, that he has adopted the form of a fictional defense speech because if he were to have undertaken his own encomium (εἰ ... ἕπαινεῖν ἐμαυτὸν ἐπιχειροῖν) he could not have avoided arousing displeasure and envy (οὔτ' ἐπιχορίτως οὔδ' ἀνεπιφθόνος εἴπεῖν . . . δυνησόμενος [8]).

Evidently, the recognition that self-praise had a dangerous tendency to incite envy was widespread. It is striking, then, that this concern is entirely lacking from Paul’s expressions of hesitancy to boast. What worries Paul is not the possibility that he will be envied, but that he will appear to be a fool—an evaluation he repeatedly seeks to preempt by using a series of disclaimers (2 Cor 11:1, 16–17, 21, 12:6, 11). Indeed, whereas Demosthenes, in keeping with the common description of invidious speech as “heavy,” fears that his hearers will be “loaded down” (ἀχθεσθαι) by his self-laudation (Cor. 3), Paul shows no recognition at all that the Corinthians may find his boasting burdensome. Instead, they are apt to think it foolish. How are we to account for this difference in perspective?

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130 See further Fish, “Giving Credit Where Credit is Due,” 470–72.
131 See also Demosthenes, Ep. 2.4, 24; Pliny, Ep. 1.8.5–6; 9.23.5–6; Thucydides 2.35.2; Pindar, Pyth. 1.81–85; Pliny, Ep. 9.23.5–6.
132 The closest Paul comes is a single mention of jealousy (11:2), but here he is describing his own “righteous zeal” (ζηλωττήρ γὰρ υἱός θεοῦ ζηλωττήρ) for the Corinthians (11:2) which has been aroused by his rivals’ intrusion. There is no connection to self-praise. Cf. 11:12, where there is perhaps recognition that envy leads to boasting, but no sensitivity to the inverse possibility.
133 See Pernot, “Periautologia,” 107.
For Ulrich Heckel, the explanation for Paul’s concern with foolishness is his dependence on “the Jewish wisdom tradition,” in which “the fool” (ἄφιξυς) is the principal antagonist. Foolishness, Heckel concludes, thus consists in “Gegensatz zum Herrn,” and Paul manifests it—though only in parody of his opponents—by boasting in 11:16–12:10 according to “äußerlich-weltlichen Maßstäben.” The trouble here is that it is Heckel’s theology, not anything in the texts themselves, that provides the link between Paul’s foolishness and the wisdom tradition. Though the fool of the Proverbs is often characterized as loud and brash, there is not much talk of boastfulness (only Sir 20:7), and nothing at all about pride in one’s own äußerlich-weltlichen accomplishments. Moreover, there is nothing in 2 Cor 10–13 that brings to mind that willful rejection of God which is, as Heckel correctly notes, fundamental to the characterization of the fool in Psalms 13 and 52 LXX. Only if we ourselves provide the middle term—namely, the theological conviction that pride in one’s own accomplishments is rejection of God—can we link Paul’s foolishness with the wisdom tradition.

To appreciate the significance of Paul’s concern with foolishness rather than envy, we must look, I suggest, not to a particular theological—or dramaturgical—tradition, but rather to two different mechanisms of social control by which any number of groups seek to restrain the disruptive self-assertion of their individual members. Here Quintilian provides us

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135 Ibid., 194, 202. Thus Heckel sees two different kinds of boasting here, boasting “in the Lord” in ch. 10, and foolish boasting in the *Narrenrede* (p. 202). Cf. Travis, “Paul’s Boasting,” 529, who thinks that with the “fool’s speech” Paul deliberately crosses the line from Hebrew “boasting in the Lord” to Greek rhetorical performance—though, again, only as a parody.
138 On Windisch’s suggestion that Paul’s foolishness derives from his imitation of the Greek mime, see the discussion beginning on p. 169 above.
with a helpful starting point, describing the varied responses of an audience to one who boasts:

There is ever in the mind of man a certain element of lofty and unbending pride that will not brook superiority: and for this reason we take delight in raising the humble and submissive to their feet, since such an act gives us a consciousness of our superiority, and as soon as all sense of rivalry disappears, its place is taken by a feeling of humanity. But the man who exalts himself beyond reason is looked upon as deprecating and showing a contempt for others and as making them seem small rather than himself seem great. As a result, those who are beneath him feel a grudge (invident) against him (for those who are unwilling to yield and yet have not the strength to hold their own are always liable to this failing), while his superiors laugh at him and the good disapprove. (*Inst. 11.1.16–17 [Butler, LCL]*)

As Quintilian explains, boasting engenders different responses from different groups within one’s audience, with the significant criterion, apparently, being the hearers’ social status relative to the speaker: his inferiors envy him (*invident humiliores*), while his superiors laugh (*rident superiores* [*Inst. 11.1.17*]). What we have here, then, are two different ways of dealing with an over-ambitious status claim: Those who aspire to similar status but find themselves overshadowed by the boaster (*qui nec cedere volunt nec possunt contendere*) feel slighted and cannot resist envy. Those whose recognized status exceeds that of the boaster merely laugh, deriding his claim to honour by treating it as unworthy of serious response.

Quintilian’s observation accords with Hesiod’s old quip: Potter strives with potter, artisan with artisan; beggar envies beggar and singer singer (*Op. 25–26*). Indeed, the notion that envy obtains primarily among relative equals in status was widespread in the ancient world.¹³⁹ According to Aristotle:

The kind of people who feel envy are those who have, or seem to themselves to have [more fortunate acquaintances among] those like themselves. I mean those like themselves in terms of birth, relationship, age, disposition, reputation, possessions, as

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well as those who just fall short of having all these on an equal basis. (*Rhet.* 2.10.1–2 [trans. Kennedy]; cf. 2.10.5–7)

This is Plutarch’s basic assumption too: Envy attaches itself in particular to those who are increasing in virtue and honour and fame, but only if they are within range of competitors. The truly resplendent, like Alexander or Cyrus, are immune to envy; they are in a category all their own (*Inv. od.* 538A–B). Plutarch uses shadow analogies to explain how this works: Those who reach the heights of good fortune are like the noontime sun—they shine from far above our head and thus cast hardly a shadow (538A–B); the thing that irritates us is dwelling in the shade of our neighbour’s house when it rises above our own (538E).

It is not difficult to transpose this conception of envy onto Plutarch’s own political milieu: Roman imperial power is ultimately beyond envy, but rivalry among the local aristocracy is a perpetual threat (cf. *Praec. ger. rei pub.* 815A–B; 825E–F). Indeed, Plutarch’s use of the pronoun “we” throughout *De laude ipsius* suggests that what concerns him about immoderate self-praise is precisely its potential to incite envy among people like himself—his circle of provincial aristocrats and statesmen140—and thus disrupt the harmonious status quo.141 Plutarch’s entire discussion, then, is predicated on particular aristocratic values and indeed presupposes a particular social location. That is, his “voice” locates him as a man accustomed to a particular set of social constraints.

Paul’s concern with appearing foolish is remote from Plutarch’s interests; however, it does recall the response to immoderate boasting that Quintilian ascribes to a boaster’s superiors, namely, derision. The function of derision as a response to an inordinate status claim is well illustrated by Lucian’s account of Peregrinus Proteus. According to Lucian, Peregrinus was so eager for fame (*Peregr.* 38; cf. 1, 2, 4, 8, 20, 22, 42, 43) that he immolated

140 See Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 135–86.
himself by leaping onto a pyre at the Olympic Games. Lucian’s one-dimensional diagnosis—
\(\phi i\lambda \delta \delta \xi \zeta \omega \varsigma\) (38)—tells us more, I suspect, about Lucian himself than about Peregrinus:
perhaps Peregrinus’ action was misguided, but there really is no reason to suspect that his
motives were insincere.\(^{142}\) In any case, Lucian interpreted his behaviour as a status claim—
Peregrinus “[dared] to exalt himself as an authority figure independent of the constraints of
received culture”\(^{143}\)—but not one to be taken seriously. No, for Lucian, the only appropriate
response to the man’s madness (\(\alpha \pi \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \alpha\) [2]) was laughter: “I think I can see you laughing
heartily at the old man’s drivelling idiocy (\(\varepsilon \pi \iota \ \tau \eta \ \kappa \omicron \rho \upsilon \zeta \eta \ \tau \omicron \upsilon \ \gamma \epsilon \rho \omicron \nu \tau \omicron \varsigma\)),” Lucian tells his
addressee. “Pray, what else . . . are we to do when we hear utterances so ridiculous (\(\sigma \omicron \tau \omicron \omicron \ \gamma \epsilon \lambda \omicron \omicron \omicron \ \rho \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omega \nu\), and see old men all but standing on their heads in public for the sake of a
little despicable notoriety?” (2, 8 [Harmon, LCL]). This is the behaviour of fools and
vainglorious men (\(\mu \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \varsigma \ \kappa \omicron \iota \ \kappa \omicron \nu \omicron \delta \delta \xi \varsigma \omicron \varsigma \ \alpha \upsilon \theta \omicron \rho \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron\) [25]), and merits only ridicule
(34).

Lucian’s strained insistence on the authenticity of his laughter (\(\varepsilon \gamma \epsilon \lambda \varsigma\ \kappa \omicron \iota \ \delta \varsigma \lambda \omicron \varsigma\ \eta\ \nu\ \nu \iota \iota \omicron \theta \omicron \nu\ \omicron \tau \omicron \omicron\) [7]) makes one suspect that he is, despite himself, entering into rivalry
with Peregrinus for cultural influence and secretly fighting off envy—an emotion, after all,
that no one admits to feeling (so Plutarch, \(\text{Inv. od.}\) 537E). Still, he is clearly working from the
assumption that when a status claim is unlikely to get much traction it can simply be laughed
off. Pierre Bourdieu observed the same phenomenon among the Kabyle, where boastfulness
is routinely met with ridicule: “‘Only dung swells,’ they say.”\(^{144}\)

\(^{142}\) So already Eduard Zeller, “Alexander und Peregrinus: Ein Betrüger und ein Schwärmer,” in
\(^{143}\) James A. Francis, \textit{Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World}
(University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 54.
\(^{144}\) Bourdieu, “Sentiment of Honour,” 198.
Bourdieu’s related observation has become a commonplace in biblical studies due to the work of Bruce Malina: “Only a challenge issued (or an offence caused) by one’s equal in honour deserves to be taken up. . . . An affront from an inferior in humanity or honour recoils upon the presumptuous person who makes it.” But this principle must be modified slightly. As Zeba Crook recently has demonstrated, “inter-status honor challenges” did occur in the ancient world; indeed, even the honour of emperors and gods was vulnerable. What finally makes an honour challenge—or, accordingly, a boast—worthy of a rivalrous response is not, pace Bourdieu and Quintilian, the antagonist’s relative status per se, but rather the credibility of the challenge in the eyes of a “public court of reputation”—and it just so happens that challenges and boasts from people of inferior status are seldom credited. An insult or a boast only engenders rivalry if it is perceived to hit close to home; if not, it can be met with laughter and ridicule.

And laughter and ridicule, we should remember, constitute precisely the sort of treatment to which those deemed “fools” in the ancient world were susceptible. This is evident above all from the theatre, where, as Larry Welborn explains, the “fool” (μῦρος), who represented those in society most susceptible to derision and abuse, became a stock character:

The “foolishness” of this social type consisted in a weakness or deficiency of intellect, often coupled with a physical grotesqueness. Because the concept of the laughable in the Greco-Roman world was grounded in contemplation of the ugly and defective, those who possessed these characteristics were deemed to be “foolish.”

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147 See ibid., 609–10.
148 L. L. Welborn, Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1–4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition, JSNTSup 293 (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 32–33. Welborn treats the word μῦρος, but his observations are relevant to the δρακοσ as well. For the correlation of foolishness and physical defect, see Plutarch, Lyc. 15.8; Galen, Quod qual. incorp. 19.479. For the correlation of foolishness and low social status, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ant. or. 1; Ant. rom. 5.67.1–2.
Of course, the association of foolishness and derision was by no means limited to the mime. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for example, reports the discovery of the Sibylline oracles by telling of a woman who, oddly, burnt six of the books she had for sale, then came back and tried to sell the remaining three for the same price she had asked for the whole set. Not surprisingly, all thought her a fool (ἄφρων) and derided her (γελάσιαςα [Rom. ant. 4.62.2]; cf. Cicero, De or. 2.61; Diodorus Siculus 17.101.4–5).

Here the fool is someone who cannot put two and two together (cf. Diodorus Siculus 12.12.1; 12.14.2; Polybius 33.20; Hesiod, Op. 210), and thus incites mockery. More relevant to Paul’s usage, perhaps, is the assumed connection between foolishness and silly babble (cf. Plutarch, Garr. 510A), and the association of foolishness with groundless boasting or ἀλοξονεία (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ant. rom. 14.9.4; Plutarch, Def. orac. 419B; Dio Chrysostom, Virt. [Or. 69] 7). Note that it appears not to be boasting itself that makes one a fool, but rather the making of self-assertions that one is not able to realize or substantiate (Diodorus Siculus 16.70.2; cf. 2 Cor 12:6). Clearly, then, as Dio Chrysostom’s usage attests, being considered a fool is shameful indeed (In cont. 16).

Thus it is of great significance for understanding Paul’s hesistant boasting that it is the perception of foolishness that Paul seeks specifically to preempt (11:1, 16–18; 12:6, 12; cf. 1 Cor 4:10). His status is apparently tenuous enough that his claim to apostolic authority teeters on the verge of being derisible. He cannot assume that his status claim will be taken seriously or confronted head on; he fears that it will simply be ridiculed, that he will become a laughingstock. (Indeed, who insists that he is “not inferior” [11:5], except a man who knows that he is liable to be considered so?)
Paul’s sensitivity to this possibility is evident from the way he speaks of the perceived gap between the authoritative tone of his letters and the weakness of his personal presence (10:8–11; cf. 10:1–2; 13:2). He will not be ashamed, he insists, for being excessively boastful of his authority (10:8)—that is, for making status claims that overreach the Corinthians’ rather belittling estimation of him.\footnote{Cf. Arthur J. Dewey, “A Matter of Honor: A Social-Historical Analysis of 2 Corinthians 10,” \textit{HTR} 78 (1985): 212.} We tend to miss his reference to shame here, assuming that what he really means is that he is not \textit{apologetic} for boasting,\footnote{So Harris, \textit{Second Corinthians}, 692; Roetzel, \textit{2 Corinthians}, 100. Cf. Ragnar Leivestad, “‘The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ’ II Cor. x. 1,” \textit{NTS} 12 (1966): 164; Barnett, \textit{Second Epistle}, 473. Garland recognizes the social dynamics at play here (“shame comes when one exceeds one’s social boundaries”) but is too embedded in Paul’s own view of his status (“he has certainly not exceeded his”) to notice the implications. \textit{2 Corinthians}, 443.} but such a reading obscures the social dynamics of the situation: Paul is being accused of making himself ridiculous, thus he must defiantly insist that his status claim be taken seriously: “If I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth” (12:6).\footnote{See also 2 Cor 7:14, where the fact that Paul’s boasting in Titus has been shown to be truthful prevents him from being shamed, and 9:3, where the possibility that Paul’s boasting in the Corinthians should prove empty creates the potential for his humiliation.}

This is a voice remote from that of Plutarch, Quintilian, and Demosthenes, and also from that of Red Jacket, who, in keeping with his own social location as a man accustomed to deference, grounds his self-defense precisely on his dignified demeanour and thus his immunity to his interlocutors’ derisive characterization. Tellingly, we find a closer analogue to Paul in Elia, who, like Paul, speaks from a place of marginality. Indeed, although these two speakers make what are in many respects very different rhetorical moves, their strategies are in one key way alike.

Elia, remember, was asked if she had been afraid of the \textit{gringos}. No, not me, she insisted, but you should have seen how scared Atalaina and the others were. Thus she fends off the threat that she herself will be perceived as a naïf. By internalizing the evaluation of

\begin{itemize}
\item[150] So Harris, \textit{Second Corinthians}, 692; Roetzel, \textit{2 Corinthians}, 100. Cf. Ragnar Leivestad, “‘The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ’ II Cor. x. 1,” \textit{NTS} 12 (1966): 164; Barnett, \textit{Second Epistle}, 473. Garland recognizes the social dynamics at play here (“shame comes when one exceeds one’s social boundaries”) but is too embedded in Paul’s own view of his status (“he has certainly not exceeded his”) to notice the implications. \textit{2 Corinthians}, 443.
\item[151] See also 2 Cor 7:14, where the fact that Paul’s boasting in Titus has been shown to be truthful prevents him from being shamed, and 9:3, where the possibility that Paul’s boasting in the Corinthians should prove empty creates the potential for his humiliation.
\end{itemize}
the Europeans, and laughing *through* it at her peers, Elia insinuates herself with her interviewer and ensures that she will be laughed with, not laughed at. Clearly, in the particular social space constituted by this interview, it is her European interviewer who possesses symbolic capital and thus whose evaluative perspective is decisive. Elia occupies a subaltern position, and, in this context, exercises control over her identity only to the extent that she is able to inhabit and then to manipulate this European perspective.

Paul’s relationship with his addressees is assuredly quite different; still, like Elia, he knows that he is susceptible to ridicule, and he apparently occupies a marginal position. Indeed, according to the dominant evaluative perspective—that is, the common sense that governs the social space of the Corinthian community—Paul is ἀσθενής and ταπεινός. Like Elia, then, in order to get any traction, he must inhabit and then seek to manipulate that dominant perspective. For Paul, this involves a rather tortured admission of weakness, then an attempt to refigure that weakness as a mark of divine strength. In short, he seeks to resolve his ambivalent status by making a virtue of necessity.

**Boasting in Weakness**

It is surely an indicator of the inadequacy of the underlying interpretive approach that Paul’s boasting in 2 Cor 10–13 has, by various recent scholars, been considered both a sincere attempt at a *peristasis* catalogue and a parody of (self)-encomiastic conventions. In fact, neither proposal does a very good job of explaining the peculiarities of this text.

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152 Witherington, oddly, says both that Paul is creating a *peristasis* catalogue comparing “his own sufferings and hardships to those that the opponents claim to have endured” *and* that by boasting of his weaknesses instead of his achievements Paul is undertaking a “parody of the public standards by which leaders were normally judged to be great and legitimate.” *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 450, 452. But how can one have it both ways? It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Witherington is simply parroting recent scholarship without having digested it.
The latter reading can be traced to the work of Anton Fridrichsen, who appealed to Augustus’s *Res gestae* for an explanation:

Wenn der Apostel trotz dieser christlichen Grundstimmung des Martyriums und der Schwäche sich dem Stil der Ruhmeschronik anschließt, zeugt das von einer gewissen Spannung in seinem Wesen zwischen menschlichem Selbstbewußtsein und christlicher Selbstentäußerung; einer Spannung, die in der paradoxalen Diskrepanz zwischen Form und Inhalt des Peristasenkatalogs hervorbricht.\(^{153}\)

This is an appealing interpretation, elegantly simple and theologically evocative. But the stylistic parallels noted by Fridrichsen are insufficient to suggest formal imitation, amounting, essentially, to the use of the first-person aorist, repeated use of πολλάκις, and enumeration of deeds. These are hardly unique to the *Res gestae*.\(^{154}\) Moreover, the isolated similarities Fridrichsen identifies occur in the context of texts that are, on the whole, hardly comparable.\(^{155}\) If Paul was attempting to pillory the sort of self-display the *Res gestae* represent, he seems to have missed his target.

The fundamental problem with the former explanation is perhaps best summarized by Scott Andrews: In contrast to what we should expect on the basis of John Fitzgerald’s discussion of the meaning of *peristaseis* for the ancient sage, “the apostle boasts of hardships

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\(^{155}\) The sentences cited by Fridrichsen that, stylistically, have the most in common with 2 Cor 11:23–28 are these: Δίς ἐπὶ κέλπτος ἐθριαμβέεσα, τρίς ἐφ’ ἀρματος. Εἰκοσάκις καὶ ἀπαξ προσηγορέυθην αὐτοκράτωρ (*Res. gest. divi. Aug.* 4 [2.9–10]). This does, indeed, look rather like Paul’s enumeration of his beatings: ύπο ύπουδιῶν πεντάκις τεσσεράκοντα παρα μίαν ἐλαβο, τρίς ἱρραβδίσθην, ἀπαξ ἠλιθασθήν, τρίς ἐνοσύγησα (v. 25). But, as one reads on, all stylistic similarities cease: “Although the Senate decreed me additional triumphs I set them aside. When I had performed the vows which I had undertaken in each war, I deposited upon the Capitol the laurels which had adorned my fasces” (*Res. geste divi Augusti*, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1924), 336. This sort of style is difficult to reconcile with Paul’s overwrought descriptions (*νυχθιμερον* ἐν τῷ θυμῷ [11:25]; ἐν λίμῳ καὶ δίψῃ [11:27]) and hyperbolic adverbs (περισσότερος . . . περισσότερος . . . ὑπερβαλλόντως [11:23]).
that reveal his weak status and not of the fact that he has overcome or endured the hardships.”

Indeed, Paul says this explicitly: τὰ τὴν ἁσθενείας μου καυχήσομαι (11:30).

The importance of Andrews’s distinction is clear from what Aelius Theon has to say about hardships in his discussion of encomia (Progymn. 9 [RG 2:111–112]). Theon adheres to the view, emphasized by Fitzgerald, that “virtue shines brightest in misfortunes” (trans. Kennedy). But notice what sort of rhetorical use of hardships he recommends: “One should say that he was not brought low by his misfortunes (ἀτυχῶν ταπεινῶς οὐκ ἢν) nor unjust in poverty nor servile (ἀνδραποδωδὴς) when in want.” Clearly, what was considered praiseworthy among Theon’s ilk was not undergoing hardships per se but enduring them with one’s head held high.

Indeed, as Andrews correctly insists, whereas endurance of hardship could be adduced as evidence of ἀνδρεία or constantia, succumbing to difficulty was simply humiliating.

The ignominy of Paul’s self-presentation is particularly evident from his willingness to boast of his beatings. As Jennifer Glancy has shown, the ancients were keenly aware of the difference between honorable war wounds and the humiliating scars of corporal punishment. Whereas one could unveil one’s battle-scarred chest as attestation of martial valour, uncovering a back marred by whips and rods was an admission of servile status; for, in the moral logic of antiquity, “dishonorable bodies were whippable; honorable bodies

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157 See Fitzgerald, Cracks in an Earthen Vessel, 42–44.
158 See also Plutarch, Laud. 544B–C and the discussion in ch. 5 above.
were not.” Therefore, as Glancy insists, “in boasting of beatings, Paul boasts not of his \(\text{δυνατία} \) but of his humiliating corporal vulnerability.” So, although Paul might insist that his weakness means something different from what the Corinthians think it means, nevertheless this sort of self-presentation has little in common with the Stoic values Fitzgerald has described.

But Paul’s self-confessed \(\text{οσθενία} \) does not only constitute a failure to live up to the standards of the austere Stoics; it represents a more fundamental deficiency as well: Paul’s “weakness” signifies his inability to act as befits a freeborn man—specifically, to possess \(\text{δυνατία} \) and autonomy. In Greco-Roman antiquity, as Jennifer Larson explains, “masculinity was all but identified with social and political dominance”—that is to say, with power. Clement of Alexandria pithily expresses what was the conventional view on the distinction between the genders: It is given to man to act (\(\tauο\ \deltaραν\)) to woman to be acted upon (\(\tauο\ \piασχειν \) [\(\text{Paed. 3.3.19.2; cf. Philo, QE 1.8}\)]. Slaves were tossed in with latter. Thus Paul’s weakness—that is, precisely his inability to act or to dominate—was not something about which a self-respecting freeborn man would boast.

Of all the possible explanations for Paul’s failure to conform to such expectations, the one least often considered is that Paul was, in fact, no self-respecting freeborn man. But it is precisely when we make this interpretive move—that is, when we recognize that Paul’s voice comes not from a body accustomed to mastery and autonomy, but rather from a body that

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165 Ibid., 101.
166 Fitzgerald himself is aware of the tension here, though he fails to see its extensive implications for his interpretive proposal. See esp. “Cracks in an Earthen Vessel,” 387n267.
167 For shameful \(\text{οσθενία} \) contrasted with virtuous and honorable \(\text{δυνατία} \), see Plutarch, Cor. 15.5; Menander Rhetor, RG 3:379; Athanasius, C. Gent. 16.5. Cf. 1 Cor 16:13; 1 Pet 3:7; 2 Tim 3:6.
bears the scars of subjugation—that we are in a position to make sense of this text. The voice that speaks here is abject yet defiant, and presents us with what can only be considered a shameless spectacle of persuasion.

Plutarch speaks admiringly of those noble unfortunates who, like the Stoics discussed by Fitzgerald, brave adversity without resort to piteous appeals or self-abasement (φεύγειν ὀλως τὸ ἐλεεῖνον καὶ συνεπιθηρηνοῦν τοῖς ἁβουλήτοις καὶ ταπεινούμενον [Laud. 541A]). What is interesting about this comment is that it presupposes that self-abasement is in fact a tempting rhetorical move, which is why any self-respecting freeborn man must steel himself and flee it. But for someone without such scruples—someone, for example, for whom it is more important that his master stop whipping him than that he appear to possess ἀνδρεία—appeal to pity might be an attractive means of persuasion.¹⁷⁰ Here, I submit, we begin to hear Paul’s voice.

¹⁷⁰ Compare the persuasive self-abasement of the Syrophoenician woman in Mark 7:28.
CONCLUSION

When I began this study, I expected part 2 to be considerably shorter, and parts 3 and 4 to be considerably more substantial. That is, I thought what is now part 2 would be but a brief chapter, a summary of the findings of rhetorical criticism of 2 Cor 10–13 that would set the stage for a what would necessarily be a more extensive foray into comparative rhetoric and then the particularity of Paul’s voice. I had done enough reading of speakers like Red Jacket and Elia to know that many of the rhetorical figures attributed to Paul could securely be placed in the realm of “general rhetoric.” What I did not expect was to find that much of the alleged correspondence between Paul and the theorists and practitioners of formal Greco-Roman rhetoric would turn out to be unsubstantiated and illusory. I did not expect to find blatant but pervasive misreadings of the ancient rhetorical sources, not to mention of 2 Cor 10–13, or recently invented *termini technici* being used as if they designated ancient rhetorical concepts.

So, I have spent much more time than I anticipated clearing away the overgrowth, as it were, of a methodology that seems to have taken on a life of its own. Apparently, once elevated to the level of one of New Testament scholarship’s many “criticisms,” rhetorical criticism has quickly morphed from scholarly query to methodological presupposition, and, accordingly, much recent scholarship has approached our text having already decided that the ancient rhetorical sources constitute the lens through which Pauline persuasion should be analyzed. As part 2 of this study has amply demonstrated, this presupposition has not facilitated clarity of analysis. The rhetorical-critical model that has dominated the landscape of Pauline scholarship fails to account for what we find in 2 Cor 10–13, and, moreover, misconstrues the rhetorical sources themselves.
In part 3, I tested another model for explaining Paul’s rhetoric, one that had been anticipated quite frequently by scholars chafing at the confines of the dominant model but had not been subjected to critical analysis. Using George Kennedy’s work on comparative rhetoric and the insights of sociolinguists on language socialization, I examined the possibility that what Paul knew of persuasion derived not from formal education but from informal social practice. Here, amidst a diverse assortment of speakers from a variety of social and cultural locations, I found a compelling context within which to apprehend the nature of Pauline persuasion.

In the final part of this study, then, I took a few key steps toward a redescriptions of what I have been calling Paul’s “voice.” First, I observed that Paul's control of grammatical and syntactical conventions is at times unsteady, a fact that points decisively away from the only sort of formal rhetorical competence that could explain his independence from formal conventions, namely, fully integrated fluency. Indeed, not only is there no evidence in 2 Cor 10–13 that Paul received formal education in rhetoric, there are telling indicators that he did not.

This conclusion receives confirmation from exegesis of two key verses in our text, 2 Cor 10:10 and 11:6. Although neither verse directly addresses the question of Paul’s rhetorical education, both imply that he speaks unimpressively, and, moreover, attest to a voice that inhabits a very different position in Corinth than does the authoritative apostle generated by the rhetorical-critical model. Paul evidently is susceptible to characterization as weak, derisible, and vulgar. Importantly, he is in no position to refute these characterizations; instead, he seeks to redeploy his evident weakness as a mark of divine commission.

1 See p. 309 above.
Finally, comparison of Paul’s rhetorical demeanour with that of Plutarch, Demosthenes, Red Jacket, and Elia highlighted the abjectness of Paul’s rhetoric in 2 Cor 10–13. Paul cannot rely on the persuasive power of calm and dignified self-possession. His voice comes from a more tenuous place. His is a rhetoric that arises from vulnerability, desperation, and defiance.

**Toward a Reading of 2 Corinthians 10–13**

Although the primary focus of this study has been the question of Paul’s rhetorical education, my use of 2 Cor 10–13 as a case study has involved sustained exegesis as well. Indeed, scattered throughout the previous pages lie the basic contours of a reading of 2 Cor 10–13, a reading that runs counter to the interpretive model that currently prevails. My aim here is to provide a brief synthesis of these exegetical insights, and thus to suggest an alternative model.

First, I have been at pains to show that the crisis that occasioned Paul’s “Letter of Tears” was not a dispute concerning rhetoric—though certainly it was, in the broadest sense of the phrase, a rhetorical dispute. There is no evidence that the Corinthian community was especially enamoured of rhetorical display, and no reason to imagine that words in 2 Cor 10–13 like λόγος and συγκρίνοι nor general phrases in 1 Cor 1–4 like ἐν πειθοὶ σοφίας refer to the practice of formal rhetoric. If 2 Cor 11:6 reflects criticism of Paul’s manner of speech, this is not because Paul was deemed a rhetorical amateur, but because his unrefined speech was derisible and thus served for the Corinthians as one further indicator that he was, as his rival(s) said openly, ταπεινός and ὀσθενής.

Thus 2 Cor 10–13 represents Paul’s attempt to reassert his status in Corinth by confronting the demeaning characterization to which he was evidently susceptible. Paul’s
response, I have argued, was not a parody of the boasting of his opponents. Indeed, a close reading here suggests that their so-called boasting consisted not in verbal (let alone rhetorical) bragging but simply in their willingness to claim apostolic status and to do so in Corinth, where Paul—by divine commission, he believes—had been the first to arrive with the gospel. Nor is Paul’s response essentially ironic, although it does include isolated moments of irony. Rather, Paul straightforwardly insists that he is not inferior to his rival(s), and, with all sincerity, threatens the Corinthians with disciplinary tokens of his authority when he arrives.

But Paul was, apparently, in no position straightforwardly to deny his ἀσθένεια, hence the tortured and tortuous “boasting” wherein he attempts to refigure his ignominious weakness into a mark of divine power. The passage is, as C. K. Barrett once remarked, a “puzzling mixture of humility and aggression, of self-abasement and authority.” In other words, this is both a piteous plea and a claim to status, two rhetorical moves that may appear to be mutually exclusive, but in fact occur in concert often enough—though not, to be sure, in the mouths of powerful speakers.

As we have seen, then, one important aspect of Paul’s “boasting” in 2 Cor 10–13 is his display of his own humiliation in a pathetic attempt—pathetic in the rhetorical, if not also the colloquial sense—to shame the Corinthians into compliance. But there is defiance in Paul’s voice too, and this complicates the rhetoric of the text considerably: At one and the same time he abases himself and insists on his status (cf. 11:21; 12:11; 1 Cor 15:8–10). In

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other words, Paul is willing to forfeit any normal claim to self-respect in an attempt to win status of a different sort: Yes, I am shamefully weak and I have no claim to ὑποκρίσια; nevertheless, as one in whose body dwells the spirit-power of Christ, I merit your respect and fear (cf. 13:3–4). Receive me as a fool if you must, but you must receive me (cf. 11:16).

This apparently paradoxical self-presentation derives, I suggest, from the profound ambivalence of Paul’s self-understanding. Paul is at once convinced of his status as an apostle in whom Jesus Christ is manifest (Gal 1:1, 15–16) and incessantly reminded of his equally manifest shamefulness (Gal 4:12; 2 Cor 10:1, 10). This conflicted self-understanding finds a manner of resolution in Paul’s conviction regarding the conformity of his embodied existence to that of Jesus: “[We are] always carrying around the dying (νεκρωσιμα) of Jesus in the body,” he says, “so that the life of Jesus also may be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor 4:10 [my trans.]; cf. 13:3–4; Phil 3:10–11, 21).

But such resolution is necessarily unstable, for this sort of conviction is difficult to sustain unless it is recognized and affirmed by those to whom one imagines oneself to be manifesting Christ. In their Portraits of Paul, Malina and Neyrey discuss the need, particularly acute in “collectivist cultures,” to maintain conformity between the privately defined self and the self as defined by one’s in-group.4 But they fail to note the extent to which, in Paul’s case, these two selves are in conflict: Both in Corinth and in Galatia, after an initial period of enthusiasm, Paul’s converts—his in-group, to use Malina and Neyrey’s term—have ceased to validate the honourable identity he claims for himself.

Again, Malina and Neyrey correctly note that Paul’s “‘independence’ of any group authorization would have been a major liability for him,”⁵ but, presumably because their rigid schematization makes little room for Paul even to possess a discrete sense of self, they fail to consider how Paul negotiates the resulting tension: on the one hand, Paul insists that he is Παύλος ἀπόστολος οὐκ ἂπο ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι’ ἀνθρώπου ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal 1:1; cf. 1:10–11); on the other hand, his very insistence on this point attests to his need for this status to be recognized ἐν ἀνθρώποις. It is this same tension, I submit, that animates 2 Cor 10–13: Not least in his relationship with the Corinthians, Paul experiences himself both as weak and as strong, as derisible and as glorious, and he struggles to give an account of himself as nevertheless a coherent self.⁶

If, then, as George Kennedy suggests, rhetoric is the energy that inheres in a communicative act, Paul’s “boasting” in 2 Cor 10–13 is precisely the energy he must expend in his effort to hold together two (socially constructed) conceptions of himself, the man he knows himself to be from habitual experiences of public derision and subjugation and his own internalization thereof, and the man he knows himself to be from experiences of Christ-glory and erstwhile in-group ratification thereof.

“Where Is the Voice Coming From?”

I began by posing a question derived from the title of a short story by novelist Rudy Wiebe: “Where is Paul’s voice coming from?” I intended the question to be evocative and exploratory, to open up space for reflecting on the alternative to the prevailing assumption that Paul’s letters represent intellectual discourse.

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⁵ Ibid., 217.
I know of at least one compelling attempt to name this alternative, one I cited in the opening sentence of this study: In his *Paulus*, Adolf Deissmann insisted that Paul’s was the mission of an artisan, not the mission of a scholar; that, although incidentally interested in Χριστολόγος, he was, “above all and in everything,” a Χριστοφόρος; that the centre of gravity of Pauline discourse was religion, not theology. Unlike the majority of Pauline interpreters then and since, Deissmann attended to the way Paul’s voice arose from and attested to his embodied experience. In other words, he conceptualized Paul as a human subject, not merely as a cipher for a theological system.

Deissmann’s *Paulus* generally is dismissed as a romantic flight of fancy rather than serious scholarship. This is not least, I imagine, because of his fondness for a vivid phrase. But interpreters of Paul have perceived a more serious difficulty with his emphases as well, one aptly summarized by Albert Vanhoye in a neglected rumination not on Deissmann but on the place of “personality” in exegesis of Paul: “Il n'y a pas de science de l'individuel [cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.* 13.1086B]. En s'intéressant à ce qu'il y a d'un'unique dans une personne, l'exégèse risque de devenir subjective et de n'être donc plus scientifique.”

The guild’s collective fear of such subjectivity, of losing our status as objective historians, is invoked to powerful effect by advocates of rhetorical criticism. Observe, for example, Troy Martin’s rebuttal to Michael Cosby’s “Red-Hot Rhetoric.” Cosby had taken

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issue with the tendency of rhetorical critics—Lauri Thurén is the focus of his ire—to read “every emotional sounding outburst” in Galatians as the fruit of a dispassionate rhetorical strategy: “To relegate Paul’s emotional language to a calculated use of rhetorical techniques,” he insists, “is to miss a vital source of the letter’s power.”  

Notably, Martin responds not by assessing the evidence, but simply by raising the daunting spectre of a “methodological void”: The mark of the “judicious” scholar, we are told, is the recognition “that Paul was probably not overwhelmed by emotions but as an effective rhetorician knew exactly what he was doing.”

I must confess this baffles me. Is it not precisely as arbitrary to presume Paul to be dispassionate as to presume him to be under the sway of intense emotion? Surely neither conclusion is judicious if it cannot be demonstrated from a reading of the text. Whether we like it or not, Paul’s letters derive from a human subject, and thus his discourse must be interpreted as human behaviour. We cannot simply evade the question of Paul’s subjectivity because it is methodologically inconvenient. As Vanhoye goes on to say, “Ce

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14 Moreover, Martin’s comment surely poses a false alternative: The assumption that persuasive intention is incompatible with the expression of emotion surely reflects a remarkably superficial conception of what it is that people do when they speak. And note that it is precisely on the basis of this false alternative that Thurén and his ilk posit a dispassionate Paul: If Paul can be shown to be using a rhetorical figure, the argument goes, then we must assume that he is not in fact expressing emotion. See esp. Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2002), 59–64.

15 Peter Lampe offers another way to circumvent consideration of Paul’s subjectivity by advocating that scholars of Pauline rhetoric join the march of “secular studies of literature” toward consideration of the text and its reception apart from authorial intention. “Rhetorical Analysis of Pauline Texts—Quo Vadit? Methodological Reflections,” in Paul and Rhetoric, ed. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 20–21. I am in no position to tell Lampe he cannot undertake such a reading. But one cannot make such a move and still claim, as most are wont, to be saying something about Paul.
risque inverse consiste à stériliser les textes bibliques en les soumettant à des analyses incomplètes, qui ne tiennent pas suffisamment compte de leur aspect personnel.”

Indeed, Est-il possible d'exposer correctement la christologie de Paul, sans analyser la relation personnelle de Paul avec le Christ, telle qu'il l'exprime en parlant de lui-même, et de sa vie dans le Christ? Peut-on rendre compte de l'ecclésiologie de Paul sans analyser avec soin la place que prend la personnalité de l'apôtre dans ses rapports avec les communautés au moment de leur fondation, lors de leur croissance, dans les périodes de tension et de crise?

My intent here is not to vindicate Deissmann’s portrayal of Paul, though I am in fact persuaded by each of his three proposals noted above. Rather, my intent is to highlight the crucial significance of addressing the fundamental question of Paul’s voice. Who speaks? What sort of discourse do we have here? As long as we persist in avoiding this question, all our attempts at methodological rigour have us straining out gnats while swallowing a camel.

Il n'y a pas de science de l'individuel. Perhaps. But, as I hope this study has begun to demonstrate, what confronts us is not, as Martin would have it, a methodological void, but rather a void of methodological imagination.

**Voice, Habitus, and the Individual Speaker**

Only when this study was nearing completion did I attempt to think theoretically about what I meant by voice. Prior to that, I was simply invoking the common metonym wherein “voice” represents something akin to comportment, at least insofar as comportment is manifest in discourse. This has remained my starting point. But, as my work progressed, I realized that I was seeing something more: “Voice,” as a mode of comportment, could be correlated with social location. There was something particularly “aristocratic” about Plutarch’s voice—and, differently, Red Jacket’s—but not Paul’s. But what was it? Here the

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17 Ibid., 9.
sociolinguists I had been reading for other purposes began to provide a framework for conceptualizing what I was seeing. Their thinking on the matter goes back to a striking article by Edward Sapir, first published in 1927. I will begin there as well.

Sapir begins with a discussion of a number of characteristics of speech for which “voice” serves, in common parlance, as a metonym: intonation, rhythm, pronunciation, and, more significantly for our purposes, vocabulary and style. As Sapir observed, these features together constitute a “form of gesture,” which, like other modes of comportment, derives from and thus attests to both cultural patterns and the particularity of an individual speaker: “Society has its patterns, its set ways of doing things,” Sapir noted, “while the individual has his method of handling those particular patterns of society, giving them just enough of a twist to make them “his” and no one else’s.” For Sapir, then, “voice” serves as an indicator both of social location and of individual identity.

What interested Sapir was how people spoke, not what they said. In other words, to use Dell Hymes’s distinction, he was interested in “stylistic” as opposed to “referential” aspects of speech. But, as Hymes’s own work in particular has shown, the content of speech, not only its style, derives its meaning from its relationship to conventional social norms. So, when I speak of voice, I refer not only to vocabulary and style, but also to referential content insofar as it pertains to Sapir’s two domains of analysis, namely, social patterns and individual negotiation thereof.

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19 Ibid., 535.
20 Ibid., 538.
21 See also Hymes, “Ways of Speaking,” 436.
22 Ibid., 435–39.
Sapir’s basic insight can be extended in both directions, toward consideration of voice as an indicator of social location and toward analysis of the particularity of individual speech. In conceptualizing the former, the work of Pierre Bourdieu is particularly useful. For Bourdieu, social interaction is structured not by “rules” but by *habitus*, “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*”\(^{24}\) that are, quite literally, the embodiment of (social) history: “Biological individuals carry with them, at all times and in all places,” he explains, “their present and past positions in the social structure . . . in the form of dispositions which are so many marks of *social position*.\(^{25}\) These are “values given body, made body” in keeping with what Bourdieu refers to as bodily *hexis*: “a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*.\(^{26}\) In other words, an individual’s bodily *hexis* or comportment represents the somatic reinscription of his or her social location and attendant history of social interaction.

It follows, then, that discursive elements of social interaction—in a word, speech—take place in accordance with the dispositions inculcated by and constitutive of the *habitus*.\(^{27}\) Communication, as social practice, is structured not only by grammar and syntax—let alone by literary forms and genres, which are merely the tip of the iceberg of discursive conventions—but by a “durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations.”\(^{28}\) What I am calling voice, then, is one instance of such regulated improvisation, one aspect of the embodiment of the structuring dispositions of the *habitus*—namely, their vocalization. A voice comes from a particular body, and a particular body comports itself in accordance with

\(^{24}\) Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 72.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 82. Relevant here is Richard Rohrbaugh’s helpful clarification that social location is “a *structural* term describing a position in a social system,” not a reference to group membership. “‘Social Location of Thought’ as a Heuristic Construct in New Testament Study,” *JSNT*, no. 30 (1987): 114.

\(^{26}\) Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 93–94.


\(^{28}\) Description of the *habitus* from Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 78.
its particular social location—that is, in accordance with a repertoire of past experiences specific to its particular place in society.29

But this is not to say that each individual who occupies a comparable position in society will speak or act identically. On the contrary, although it is often suppressed in both linguistic and sociological theory—including that of Bourdieu—individual variation and idiosyncrasy are, in actual occurrence, constant features of social practice. As Hymes has repeatedly insisted, their analysis is fundamental to any adequate empirical account of human communication.30 Individuals have different resources—different sorts of “communicative competence”—at their disposal, and they do different things with what they have. In other words, within the constraints of the habitus, persons speak and act with varying degrees of skill, appropriateness, and creativity.31 Each has his or her own “personal voice.”32 Or, as Vanhoye puts it, intuiting, apparently, the theoretical insight of Sapir and Hymes:

29 No one has demonstrated this more compellingly than William Labov, who, in his studies of English usage and pronunciation in New York City, correlated such features of spoken English as post-vocalic r and diphthong variation with both social location and personal aspiration. See esp. The Social Stratification of English in New York City (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966).


31 Bourdieu explicitly downplays the significance of individual variation, stating that “sociology treats as identical all the biological individuals who, being the product of the same objective conditions, are the supports of the same habitus” (Theory of Practice, 85; and cf. p. 79). But of course he cannot deny such variation outright. For Bourdieu, then, “it is in a relation of homology, of diversity within homogeneity . . . that the singular habitus of the different members of the same class are united; the homology of world-views implies the systematic differences which separate singular world-views, adopted from singular but concerted standpoints” (p. 86). In other words, personal style is analogous to an individual specimen: it can meaningfully be characterized only in relation to its genus. What is personal is, in Bourdieu’s terms, a “structural variant” (86; cf. Hanks, “Practices of Language,” 71). On Bourdieu’s reification of the habitus here, and his consequent failure adequately to account for human agency, see Brenda Farnell, “Getting Out of the Habitus: An Alternative Model of Dynamically Embodied Social Action,” Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 6 (2000): 397–418.

Quoi que je dise, c'est avec ma voix que je le dis et ma voix n'est identique à aucune autre. Elle a des inflexions et des modulations, qui correspondent à mon caractère et à mon éducation, à ma sensibilité, à mes capacités de décision et de relations, bien plus elle reflète ma situation physique et psychologique du moment.

This, then, is what I have come to mean by the evaluation of voice: the attempt to elucidate the social location of a speaker as well as his or her particular negotiation of what we might call, alluding to Bourdieu, the “habitual” constraints of that location. When I speak of Paul’s voice, then, I mean to indicate the discursive dispositions, correlative of his social location but also distinctly his own, that characterize his letters as artifacts of social practice. Paul’s voice comes from Paul’s body; Paul’s body inhabits a particular social location, and it does so in its own peculiar way.

A Weak Apostle in Corinth

If the Corinthian correspondence is not our only opportunity to observe the diachronic development of Paul’s relationship with a community of his founding, it is certainly the most substantive. Indeed, to my knowledge, there is no other moment in the history of earliest Christianity that is so well attested as Paul’s relationship with the Corinthian community in the mid-fifties of the first century.

That does not mean we know all we should like to know; for, although we have tantalizing clues, they do not always admit of confident historical reconstruction. Even the fundamental question of the number and sequence of letters contained in canonical 1 and 2 Corinthians continues to defy consensus. Still, with regard to one key element of the story all seem to be in agreement: Paul initially had significant success in Corinth; thereafter, the legitimacy of his apostleship increasingly came into question. Explaining “this deterioration

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of Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians” may be, to quote Margaret Mitchell, “the largest puzzle on the landscape of Corinthian studies.”  

For F. C. Baur, the roots of Paul’s difficulties in Corinth were twofold: First, the introduction of the Gospel to “the classic ground of ancient Greece” inevitably brought with it cultural complications: “How,” asked Baur, “could the Greek spirit disown its original nature, even when new-born in Christianity?” Second, and more famously, Baur posited that Paul’s “Judaising opponents . . . introduced a new and most disturbing element into the life of this Greek Christian Church, when still in the first stage of its development.” Specifically, his opponents asserted that Paul was disqualified from true apostleship because he had not had direct interaction with Jesus.

Although the details of Baur’s reconstruction no longer exert much influence, these have remained the two dominant modes of explanation: Paul’s waning influence in Corinth is attributed, on the one hand, to perduring Corinthian characteristics—their profligacy, their factiousness, their “worldly values,” or, more recently, their sophistic orientation—and, on the other, to the influence of intruders, whose specific identity has long been a preoccupation of Pauline scholarship. Seldom, then, have we framed this as a question about Paul himself: What was it about Paul that made him initially so compelling and then, within a few years, all but disposable? Why was he susceptible to this sudden loss of stature?

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35 Baur, Paul, 1:258.
36 Ibid., 1:259.
37 Ibid., 1:267–74.
There appear to have been multiple factors at play, and it is beyond my scope here to give a full explanation. Nevertheless, the abject voice we have heard in 2 Cor 10–13 provides a telling clue, as does our exegesis of 2 Cor 10:10 and 11:6: Paul was not a man whose dignity commanded respect; rather, he was weak and servile, subject to derision and subjugation.

I have not attempted in this study to isolate the biographical details correlative of this characterization, but rather have been content with the more general observation that Paul evidently did not occupy an elevated social location. He was not, as I concluded above, a respectable freeborn man. Still, it may be useful at least to list those aspects of his precarious and ignominious existence to which the letters, more or less arguably, attest: Paul was, to use Glancy’s term, “whippable”; he was frequently imprisoned; he was a manual labourer; he was itinerant; he seems to have suffered from some sort of bodily infirmity; and, as the present study has emphasized, his speech was rude and uncultured.

If this is Paul, perhaps the real puzzle is not why the Corinthians wavered in their loyalty, but why they attended to Paul and his gospel in the first place. This is a problem of some moment, and one that has received surprisingly little attention. In general, the implicit assumption seems to be that Paul drew in converts through convincingly reasoned

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39 Margaret Mitchell and Colleen Shantz have each made valuable contributions to the discussion in recent years. See Mitchell, “The Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics,” 23, 26–30; Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 182–84. And now see also Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, eds., *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*, Early Christianity and Its Literature 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), which, unfortunately, appeared too recently to be engaged in this study.
41 Rom 16:7; Phlm 1, 9, 23; Phil 1:12–17.
42 1 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor 4:12. See further Hock, *Social Context*.
44 Illness or infirmity is clearly in view in 4:13–14. And there is, of course, much speculation on the nature of Paul’s “thorn in the flesh.”
articulation of (proto-)Christian theology. Take, for example, Stanley Stowers’s influential article on the circumstances of Paul’s proclamation, wherein he seeks to elucidate the social context of “that initial effort which led people to belief in Christ and the founding of churches.” Although Stowers explicitly disavows consideration of the content of Paul’s “preaching activity,” it is not difficult to deduce what sort of discourse he imagines. Indeed, his argument that Paul taught primarily in private homes is sponsored by the observation that the home was “a center of intellectual activity” where “occasional lectures, declamations and readings of philosophical, rhetorical and literary works often took place,” as did the regular classes of “philosophers and sophists.”

If this is our starting point, it is easy to see why we have been so quick to assume that the source of Paul’s difficulty in Corinth was some form of false teaching, for, on this model, only the intrusion of an alluring doctrinal alternative can explain why Paul’s teaching, once so convincing, had now lost its lustre. A basic problem here, as we have seen, is that when the chips are down this is not the level on which Paul engages his rival(s) in Corinth. What is more, when Paul does talk about his own foundational “preaching activity,” he says nothing to suggest that it was comprised of “intellectual activity.” On the contrary, as Colleen Shantz has insisted, what he refers to is “unequivocal experience of the spirit.”

And notice that such powerful charismatic display is precisely what appears to have been absent on Paul’s second and painful visit to Corinth. Paul had promised to come with a rod of discipline, to demonstrate that the kingdom of God consisted not in word but in

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45 Stowers, “Social Status,” 64. For a much more thoughtful treatment of the question, though one that continues to see Paul primarily as a purveyor of ideas, see now Stowers’s “Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power: Paul and the Corinthians,” in Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, Early Christianity and Its Literature 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 105–49.
46 Ibid., 65–66.
48 See the exegetical discussion on pp. 310–318 above.
power. He did not follow through. Instead, he was humiliatingly “lenient”—or, as his rival(s) in Corinth put it, less charitably, he who had been bold and overbearing from afar turned out to be powerless and derisible in person.

In the face of such derision, Paul the weak apostle insists, like Aesop the whipppable slave, “My worthless body is my instrument, by which I utter wise words to benefit the lives of mortals” (*Vit. Aesop.* 99 [trans. Wills])—or, more in keeping with Paul’s own self-understanding: My worthless body is God’s instrument, in which—and for your benefit, you Corinthians!—Christ-power dwells. This is a voice at once abject and defiant, a voice, I submit, that arises from a decidedly precarious “social location.”
1. Ancient Texts and Translations

Most citations of primary sources are from the editions of the Loeb Classical Library or those available online through the Thesaurus linguae graecae (http://www.tlg.uci.edu). Exceptions are listed here, as are additional translations and editions to which I have made express reference. Papyri are cited in accordance with John F. Oates et al., eds., Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets, http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html (accessed May 15, 2011). Inscriptions are cited and abbreviated in accordance with the online database compiled by the Packard Humanities Institute, http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions (accessed May 15, 2011).


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