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Sarcasm in Paul's Letters

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Preface

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

Some material in chapter 3 parallels material in “How to Be Sarcastic in Greek: Typical Means of Signaling Sarcasm in the New Testament and Lucian.” (Matthew C. Pawlak, *HUMOR* 32.4 [2019]: 545–64). However, the version in this dissertation is broader in its analysis and has an expanded dataset.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit of 80,000 words for the Divinity Degree Committee. The Degree Committee has agreed that the Appendices are not to be included in the word count, as they are an extra service to the reader rather than necessary reading.

Abstract

Sarcasm in Paul's Letters

Mathew C. Pawlak

This dissertation investigates the use of sarcasm in the undisputed letters of Paul. A methodologically rigorous treatment of this subject can make an important contribution to Pauline studies, as determining whether a given passage is meant sincerely or sarcastically has a considerable impact on interpretation. Observing Paul's use of sarcasm can also contribute to the study of Pauline rhetoric, elucidating a facet of Paul's argumentative strategy and providing a novel angle from which to assess the ways he negotiates his relationships with different early-Christian congregations.

To break ground on the study of ancient sarcasm before turning to Paul, Part 1 of this dissertation explores three central questions: What is sarcasm? How is sarcasm expressed? And what does sarcasm do? To answer the first question, we review ancient and modern scholarship on irony and sarcasm to construct a working definition of sarcasm. The following two chapters address the latter two questions by treating the issues of sarcasm recognition in ancient Greek and sarcasm's rhetorical functions through a series of case studies: the first on the Septuagint with special reference to the book of Job and the prophets, and the second on an eclectic selection of ancient Greek texts with special reference to Lucian of Samosata.

Part 2 focuses on the identification and exegesis of sarcasm in Paul. The relationship between Galatians's opening (1:6), irony, and ways of expressing rebuke in ancient letters will feature in our chapter on Galatians. Diatribe will play a major role in our discussion of Romans. In order to clarify the presence of sarcasm throughout the letter, I will offer a revised conception of authorial voice in dialogical passages, which can nuance previous scholarship on diatribe. First Corinthians provides the opportunity to address the presence of sarcasm in the letter's "Corinthian slogans." Work on Second Corinthians will focus on the relationship between sarcasm and *asteismos*, a self-deprecating form of irony that, in Paul, occurs significantly only in 2 Cor 10–13.

Acknowledgements

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other things large and small that have shaped my values and etched their way into my personality and mannerisms, I will always be thankful.

I am convinced that at times there is nothing better for revitalising one's academic work than thinking about anything but one's academic work. For this refreshment I am indebted to a community of outstanding friends, mostly Petreans (here in alphabetical order): Antoine Koen, Carolina Orozco, Daniel McKay, Emily Bohl, Jarred Braun, Jordan McKittrick, Lauren Morry Fels, Peerapat Ouysook, Peter Day-Milne, Peter Faul, Theresa Jakuszeit, and William Simpson. Thank you for conversations about science, philosophy, and comparative grammar; for MCR dance parties, impromptu Shakespeare in the Deer Park, and top-quality banter. Special thanks goes to the "house family" at #40: to Theresa, who is always there for her friends and has basically kept my Cambridge-life organised, to Carolina for making everyone around her a better person and for baking muffins for the house, and to Antoine, from whom I have learned a lot and who also bakes muffins. Thank you for making Cambridge the place I call my home.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow the SBL Handbook of Style, second edition. Abbreviations of classical texts follow the conventions of Classics—Perseus abbreviations. Patristic abbreviations are as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Chrysostom, <i>Comm. Gal.</i> | Alexander, Gross (trans.). n.d. “The Commentary and Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle to the Galatians and Ephesians.” Pages 8–321 in <i>Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon</i> . Edited by Philip Schaff. NPNF 13. Edinburgh: T&T Clark (in-text reference is to NPNF page number). |
| Chrysostom, <i>Epist. Rom.</i> | Migne, J.-P. 1857. “In Epistulam Ad Romanos (Homiliae 1-32).” Pages 391–682 in <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus (Series Graeca)</i> . MPG 60. Paris: Migne (Greek; accessed via TLG; in-text reference is to page number as indicated in TLG). |
| | Morris, J.B., and W.H. Simcox (trans.). n.d. “The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans.” Pages 604–997 in <i>Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans</i> . Edited by Philip Schaff. NPNF 11. Edinburgh: T&T Clark (in-text reference is to NPNF page number). |
| Jerome, <i>Comm. Gal.</i> | Cain, Andrew (trans.). 2010. <i>St. Jerome: Commentary on Galatians</i> . FC. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press (in-text reference is to section of Galatians addressed). |
| Origen, <i>Comm. I Cor.</i> | Jenkins, C. 1908. “Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulam i ad Corinthios (in catenis)” in “Documents: Origen on I Corinthians.” <i>JTS</i> 9 & 10: 9:232-247, 353–72, 500–514; |

10:29-51 (Greek; accessed via TLG; in-text reference is to section as indicated in TLG).

Origen, *Comm.Rom.*

Scheck, Thomas (trans.). 2001. *Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1–5*. FC. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press (in-text reference is to section in Scheck's edition).

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Introduction

A few years back, I was sitting in Evensong at the Peterhouse Chapel. During the service, the first scripture reading was taken from the Book of Job, the 26th chapter, beginning at the second verse: “How you have helped one who has no power! How you have assisted the arm that has no strength! How you have counseled one who has no wisdom, and given much good advice!” (Job 26:2–3 NRSV). This was read in a tone that conveyed all the grace and solemnity appropriate to the liturgical setting. The passage sounded as if Job was addressing pious thanksgiving unto God. I must confess to having repressed a chuckle with some difficulty, knowing that what sounded so sincere in this context was Job’s biting sarcasm and indictment of his false comforters. While I do not fault a student reader for mistaking the tone of a passage for which they had no context, this situation well illustrates the exegetical importance of being able to accurately identify sarcasm. Simply put, taking a sarcastic utterance literally or reading a literal utterance sarcastically both have the potential to generate serious misreadings of a text.

With as much at stake for Pauline scholarship in determining whether a given statement is meant sincerely or sarcastically, it is surprising that there has been no dedicated study of sarcasm in Paul’s letters. This dissertation is meant to address this gap in scholarship, but not only for the sake of filling a void. Its first major contribution will be exegetical. I aim to determine systematically when Paul engages in sarcasm throughout his undisputed letters, and how the presence of sarcasm influences the interpretation of each passage. Because irony is about implicit rather than explicit communication, sarcastic passages include some of the most difficult and disputed texts in the Pauline corpus. A methodologically grounded analysis of sarcasm can, therefore, bring a measure of clarity to several debated texts.

This dissertation also contributes to the well-established study of Pauline rhetoric. Analysing Paul’s use of sarcasm throughout his undisputed letters enables investigation of how Paul uses sarcasm as a means of navigating his interactions with his congregations and opponents. The systematic scope of the dissertation, surveying the full breadth of the undisputed letters rather than a single epistle, also creates an avenue for exploring how Paul’s use of sarcasm differs depending on which congregation and situation he addresses and what this reveals about the tone of his relationships with different early-Christian congregations. With the Corinthian correspondence, we may also observe how these relationships develop over time.

However, with no previous studies of sarcasm in Paul, and very few even in classics, significant work remains to be done before we are ready to embark on our analysis of Paul. Much previous discussion of potentially sarcastic passages in Paul consists of commentators asserting whether a given verse is or is not ironic or sarcastic without sufficient supporting evidence. There have been a few dedicated studies of irony in Paul, but these tend to suffer from two methodological shortcomings. First, as we shall see in the next chapter, most Pauline scholarship is thoroughly out of date where irony research is concerned. Second, studies that treat “irony” in general run the risk of ironing out the distinctions between different forms of irony, such as situational irony, verbal irony, and sarcasm. Because ironic situations and ironic comments are very different phenomena—both in terms of how they are communicated and recognized, and in terms of their functions—conflating different forms of irony leads to problematic conclusions. We cannot assume that what other scholars have argued about irony in Paul will necessarily hold true for sarcasm. Therefore, by focusing on sarcasm, a specific form of irony, this study can nuance previous discussions of irony in Paul.

With the field as it stands three fundamental questions remain to be answered before we turn to Paul’s letters: What is sarcasm? How is sarcasm expressed? And what does sarcasm do? These questions will form the basis of Part 1 of this study. The first chapter will address method and review the history of scholarship on sarcasm and irony in Paul. It will provide a detailed answer to the first question and a partial answer to the second. Surveying ancient and modern treatments of irony and sarcasm will enable us to disambiguate sarcasm from other forms of irony and facilitate the creation of a working definition of sarcasm that will serve throughout this project. Modern accounts of verbal irony will also furnish us with information about how sarcasm is normally expressed, allowing us to begin analysing instances of sarcasm in ancient Greek texts.

The next two chapters will focus on the final two major questions—how sarcasm is communicated and its typical rhetorical functions. Our first comparative study on the Septuagint, which focuses on the texts where most of the evidence appears: the book of Job and the prophets, will address both of these issues to some extent with an especial focus on establishing the normal rhetorical functions of sarcasm in an ancient context. The next comparative study will look more broadly at ancient Greek texts, with special reference to the second-century satirist Lucian of Samosata—also including Aristophanes, the New Testament (outside Paul), and ancient satirical epigrams, among other texts. It will focus more on describing the typical signals for communicating sarcasm in ancient Greek.

These choices of comparative texts may strike some readers as unintuitive, especially when there is perhaps no ancient figure more associated with irony than Socrates, so here some preliminary justification is necessary. My choice to avoid Socrates, beyond brief discussion of his association with the term irony in the next chapter, is intentional. As we shall see, the sort of irony attributed to Socrates is different from the use of irony as a figure of speech that we find in the later rhetoricians and grammarians. It is this latter form of irony that is associated with sarcasm, and is therefore the more relevant to this study. Furthermore, in her reassessment of the concept of Socratic irony, Lane questions whether much of Socrates's "ironic praise" of his interlocutors—which, if ironic, would also be sarcastic (see Chapter 1, §1.2)—is really ironic at all.¹ Therefore, because the sort of irony attributed to Socrates in Plato is different from sarcasm, and because it is debatable whether Plato's Socrates makes use of sarcasm to a significant degree, Socrates would be a problematic point of comparison for a study of ancient sarcasm.

Why then the Septuagint? First, between the book of Job and the prophets, the Septuagint furnishes us with many, approximately 30, examples of sarcasm with which to work. The Septuagint also has the advantage of being a Jewish text. Without intending to spark debate about Paul's self-identification vis-à-vis Judaism, Paul is at the very least "circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews" (Phil 3:5 NRSV), and intimately familiar with this body of texts. Furthermore, because of this familiarity, the Greek of the Septuagint impacts the way Paul writes in Greek. There is therefore linguistic overlap between the two corpora. While I will not argue that the use of sarcasm in the Septuagint directly influences Paul's use of sarcasm, greater linguistic and cultural overlap make for better analogical comparison.

Being the first large-scale study of sarcasm in ancient Greek and having to establish the common signals that indicate sarcasm in this language create a need for assembling many examples of sarcasm. Lucian is the perfect author for this task. His works will furnish us with hundreds of examples of sarcasm—the chapter will treat almost 400 when we add all supplementary texts.² These data will provide considerable linguistic information about how ancient Greek speakers normally indicated sarcasm. While further research across time and

¹ 2010:249–57.

² Although Lucian is not Paul's contemporary, he is closer to Paul's context than authors such as Plato and Aristophanes.

dialects of Greek still has the potential to nuance these findings, the signals of sarcasm identified in our chapter on Lucian and other ancient Greek texts will play a significant role in facilitating the identification of sarcasm in Paul.

Following these chapters, Part 2 will take each of the undisputed Pauline letters in which sarcasm occurs in turn, beginning with Galatians, then Romans, and finally the Corinthian correspondence. For each letter I will identify and exegete sarcastic passages, discuss how sarcasm fits into Paul's rhetoric in each letter, and provide pushback in places where previous scholarship has misidentified certain passages as ironic or sarcastic.

The relationship between Galatians' opening (1:6), irony, and ways of expressing rebuke in other ancient letters will feature in our chapter on Galatians. Diatribe will play a major role in our discussion of Romans. In order to clarify the presence of sarcasm in certain rhetorical questions throughout the letter, I will offer a revised conception of authorial voice in dialogical passages, which can nuance previous scholarship on diatribe. First Corinthians will provide the opportunity to address how closely or loosely the letter's often-discussed "Corinthian slogans" represent the perspectives of the Corinthians, and whether any may be sarcastic. I will also assess Paul's use of sarcasm in his discussion of idol food in 1 Cor 8:1–11, a pericope which has (almost) never been considered ironic or sarcastic in past scholarship, and address the difficulties presented by 1 Cor 11:19, which some interpreters have attempted to resolve with recourse to irony. Paul's fool's speech in Second Corinthians has been the focal point for the lion's share of scholarship on Pauline irony. One of the major findings of our chapter on Second Corinthians will be the fact that Paul does not actually use sarcasm within the fool's speech itself. Paul does however use significant sarcasm throughout 2 Cor 10–13, although less frequently than he uses self-deprecating irony, *asteismos* in Greek. We shall define *asteismos* in §1.2 of the next chapter and discuss its rhetorical functions briefly in our work on Lucian. The relationship between sarcasm and *asteismos*, which we find only in 2 Cor 10–13, will be a major focus of our treatment of Second Corinthians. The concluding chapter of the dissertation will review the major findings of the study and compare Paul's use of sarcasm across the letters surveyed.³

³ A note on translation: When not otherwise indicated, translations are my own. My normal practice is to translate sarcastic statements in a colloquial English register. This allows for greater range of expression in terms of tone and subtext than would be possible with academic language. It is not a comment on the register of the Greek.

PART 1

What Is Sarcasm? How Is Sarcasm Expressed? What Does Sarcasm Do?

Chapter 1

Method and Literature Review

This chapter will begin with a discussion of method before moving on to review Pauline scholarship on irony and sarcasm. We will be in a better position to assess Pauline scholarship having first treated irony and sarcasm in their own right. The first two sections, then, will survey ancient and modern treatments of these subjects.

These surveys will make an important methodological contribution to this study by defining my approach to irony and sarcasm, and focusing the scope of the project. Beginning with ancient discussions will ground the study in terminology relevant to Paul's linguistic context, providing a theoretical vocabulary for analysing different forms of irony, including sarcasm, in language from Paul's day. Ancient treatments of irony and sarcasm, however, are not systematic accounts of language and there is much helpful nuance to be gained from modern scholarship. The first methodological contribution of modern irony research will be in narrowing the scope of this study by defining the relationships between different forms of irony. I will define sarcasm as a subcategory of verbal irony, which is itself distinct from other forms of irony. We will then go on to discuss the major paradigms for describing verbal irony that have been significant in recent scholarship before developing a working definition of sarcasm. I will not adopt a single approach to verbal irony, but will instead consider each of the modern accounts as exegetical tools that can be used to explain why a given utterance is or is not sarcastic as we move forward with the study. Our working definition of sarcasm will aim to encapsulate as much of the insights of recent scholarship as possible while still maintaining continuity with the way sarcasm was defined in the ancient world.

Although surveying ancient and modern treatments of sarcasm and irony will provide a methodological framework for analysing instances of sarcasm in ancient Greek texts, we will continue to develop our method for detecting sarcasm and evaluating its effects throughout this study. Determining how ancient Greek speakers normally communicated sarcasm and what its typical rhetorical functions were will be the major tasks of chapters 2 and 3. These findings will create a baseline for comparison when we turn to the Pauline corpus itself.

Having surveyed ancient and modern discussions of sarcasm and irony, we will be well situated to evaluate the contributions of previous Pauline scholarship. Our review will focus on dedicated studies of irony or sarcasm in Paul, establishing which scholars will serve as conversation partners in discussing specific letters of Paul, and in what capacity past scholarship on Pauline irony will be relevant for our analysis of sarcasm. The background in

modern irony research provided in §2 will enable us to fit Pauline scholarship into a chronology of developments in irony studies. This contextualization shows scholarship on Paul to have been significantly out of date in its understanding of irony, an issue that the present chapter aims to remedy.

1 Ancient Discussions of Irony and Sarcasm

We begin by overviewing ancient treatments of irony (εἰρωνεία). The concept of εἰρωνεία develops over time, being a pattern of behaviour in earlier works before becoming a dedicated figure of speech or trope as we move closer to Paul's historical context. We will focus on tropic irony in greater detail,¹ as here we find specific reference to σαρκασμός as well as other forms of irony that will play a role in this study. Because εἰρωνεία is a subject that some Pauline scholars have addressed, we will interact with their discussions of ancient authors here to some extent, while reserving more detailed assessment of their work for §3.

1.1 εἰρωνεία from Aristophanes to Aristotle

The meaning of εἰρωνεία changes over a few generations across the earliest extant texts to employ the term. In Aristophanes, εἰρωνεία means something like “concealing by feigning,” an act associated with deception.² This behaviour is assessed negatively, and Theophrastus censures it at length (*Char.* 1; cf. Demosthenes 4 (*Phil I*), 7, 37; *Ex.* 14.3). With Aristotle, εἰρωνεία comes to mean self-deprecation: “disavowing or downplaying qualities that one actually possesses.”³ The use of εἰρωνεία in Plato is a matter of debate. It remains negative; when the term is applied to Socrates, it is used as an insult,⁴ and as an

¹ “Tropic” refers to a constellation of terms employed by the rhetors and grammarians in describing sarcasm as a figure of speech (e.g. τρόπος, φράσις, λόγος). The differences in classification between these terms is slight and will not be a focus of this study.

² Lane 2006:54–56; 2010:248; cf. Vlastos 1987:80–81. See Aristophanes, *Birds*, 1221; *Cl.* 449; *Wasps*, 174.

³ Lane 2006:79, cf. 77–80.

⁴ *Gorg.* 489e; see Vlastos 1987:82.

accusation.⁵ Lane argues that the Platonic references still carry the Aristophanic meaning,⁶ whereas Vlastos sees something closer to Aristotle.⁷

Regardless, it is Aristotle's take on εἰρωνεία that becomes the more significant, influencing how later writers would read Plato.⁸ Following this tradition, scholars have described the ironist (*eiron*) as a dissembler who conceals their knowledge or abilities in order to gain some advantage.⁹ In Pauline studies, Holland and Nanos describe the *eiron* as the foil to the *alazon*, the boastful person characterized by self-aggrandizement.¹⁰ But this does not mean that the *eiron* is the good guy. Aristotle considers both εἰρωνεία and ἀλαζονεία vices. Each is a perversion of the virtue ἀλήθεια, εἰρωνεία being a deficiency in truthfulness and ἀλαζονεία an excess (*Eud.Eth.* 1221a; *Nic.Eth.* 1008a). However, self-deprecation is still better than ἀλαζονεία, especially when done tastefully—as Aristotle considers Socrates to have done (*Nic.Eth.* 1127a–b). Thus, Holland rightly notes that we find (qualified) endorsement of (some) εἰρωνεία as early as Aristotle.¹¹

Much more could be said about early references to εἰρωνεία and the demeanour of the *eiron*, especially as it relates to Socrates in Plato. However, what is important to recognise for this study is that despite the common terminology, there is no necessary relationship between irony as a behaviour pattern as described here and the use of irony as a trope/speech-act that we see in the later rhetoricians and grammarians. We cannot therefore assume that Paul's use of sarcasm—because as we shall see, sarcasm is a form of tropic irony—characterises him as an *eiron* as described in early texts.

⁵ *Apol.* 37e–38a; *Rep.* 337a; *Symp.* 215a–222c.

⁶ Lane 2006:49–80; 2010:247–49.

⁷ Although he frames it in different terms (see 1987:87–95).

⁸ Lane 2010:239–41.

⁹ Forbes 1986:10; Holland 2000:84; Nanos 2002:35. Holland and Forbes read this interpretation of the *eiron* into Plato (Holland 2000:82–97; Forbes 1986:10). Forbes and Nanos consider Plato's association of εἰρωνεία with Socrates as positive (Forbes 1986:10; Nanos 2002:35). For reasons noted above, both of these interpretations are potentially problematic.

¹⁰ Holland 2000:86–87; Nanos 2002:35.

¹¹ Holland 2000:84–87; cf. Vlastos 1987:81; Warren 2013:3.

1.2 Sarcasm and Irony as Tropes: The Rhetoricians and Grammarians

We shall focus our treatment of irony and sarcasm as tropes on the timeframe most relevant Paul—the first century BCE to the second century CE. By this time *εἰρωνεία* has lost many of its negative connotations, largely thanks to association with Socrates.¹² Its meaning has also changed again. As we shall see, when discussed as a trope, *εἰρωνεία* is distinct from the behaviour of the *eirōn* discussed above. Ancient treatments of tropic irony will be an important starting point for this project, because of how these texts associate irony with *σαρκασμός*. Synthesizing these grammatical and rhetorical discussions of sarcasm reveals three significant patterns in how ancient authors go about defining it in relation to *εἰρωνεία* and other rhetorical techniques.

The first pattern lies in how ancient authors connect sarcasm to other rhetorical techniques. Dating from as early as the first century BCE, the two grammars attributed to Tryphon contain the earliest extant treatments *σαρκασμός*.¹³ Although neither of the Tryphonic grammars provide systematic taxonomies of tropes, there remains a clear connection between irony, sarcasm, and other comparable speech acts in these texts. Both group sarcasm and irony together along with a constellation of related terms such as self-deprecating irony (*ἀστεϊσμός*), negation (*ἀντίφρασις*), mockery (*μυκτηρισμός*), wit (*χαριεντισμός*) and derision (*ἐπικερτόμησις*),¹⁴ see Tryphon, *Trop.* 19–24; [Greg.Cor.]¹⁵ *Trop.* p). We may take this cluster of tropes as significant.

These connections are even clearer in other treatments. Writing in the second century CE,¹⁶ Alexander Numenius states, “There are four sorts of irony: *ἀστεϊσμός*, *μυκτηρισμός*, *σαρκασμός*, and *χλευασμός*”¹⁷ (*Fig.* 18; cf. [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* II 706–8, 716–17, 721–22; Herodian, *Fig.Epitome* 16–17; *Rhetorica Anonyma*, *Trop.* 20).¹⁸ Quintilian applies a multi-layered hierarchy, considering irony (*ironia/illusio*) a subcategory of allegory

¹² See Holland 2000:87–90; Vlastos 1987:84–85.

¹³ For discussion of the texts’ dates and relationship to one another, see West 1965:230–33, 235.

¹⁴ See Ch.3, n.86.

¹⁵ The second Tryphonic grammar was originally (and erroneously) ascribed to Gregory of Corinth (see West 1965:230–31).

¹⁶ Schmitz 1873:1:123.

¹⁷ Another form of mockery.

¹⁸ Here Tryphon is less systematic, but still differentiates between self-irony (*ἀστεϊσμός*) and irony used on others (*μυκτηρισμός καὶ χλευασμός*, *Trop.* 19).

(*allegoria/inversio*)¹⁹ and listing sarcasm²⁰ and related terms as species of irony (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.44, 54, 57 [Butler, LCL]).

This close relationship between sarcasm and irony plays out in their definitions as well. In *De Tropis*, Tryphon, or someone writing in his name, defines irony as follows: “Irony is a stylistic device that uses what is expressed literally to hint at an oppositional meaning, with pretence” (Εἰρωνεία ἐστὶ φράσις τοῖς ῥητῶς λεγομένοις αἰνιττομένη τούναντίον μεθ’ ὑποκρίσεως, [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 15). Tryphon’s definitions of sarcasm and irony here differ by only two Greek words. While irony is delivered “with pretence” (μεθ’ ὑποκρίσεως), sarcasm is spoken “with mockery” (μετὰ χλευασμοῦ, [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 15–16). It is best to view this difference as additive. It is not that Tryphon considers sarcasm to lack pretence, but to communicate mockery in addition to ὑπόκρισις.²¹ The expression of oppositional sentiment lies at the heart of other ancient definitions of irony and sarcasm as well (see [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* II 699–700, 716–7; *Rhet.* Anon. *Trop.* 20, 23).

It is important that we do not read Tryphon’s “oppositional meaning” (τούναντίον) too literally, as I have sought to do by avoiding the more restrictive translation “the opposite.” The interpreter should not impose an unnecessary degree of rigidity on ancient definitions, which are brief and functional rather than systematic investigations into the nature of communication. Where we find more elaborated discussion in ancient authors, the focus is on the communication of affect rather than on strict semantic opposition. In Quintilian, sarcasm requires nothing more than ‘censur[ing] with counterfeited praise’ (*laudis adsimulatione deträhere*) or ‘disguis[ing] bitter taunts in gentle words’ (*tristia dicamus mollioribus verbis*, *Inst.* 8.6.55, 57, respectively [Butler, LCL]). This is a contrast in affect or evaluation—praise versus dispraise—not necessarily a difference in semantic meaning or contradiction in a matter of fact (cf. §2.2). Likewise, in *Rhetorica Anonyma* sarcasm “expresses dishonour

¹⁹ Allegory here means a disjunction between the literal meaning of the words used and their intended meaning (see *Inst.* 8.6.44).

²⁰ Which Quintilian leaves in Greek.

²¹ Consider the examples of irony and sarcasm in [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 15–16, which differ primarily in terms of the degree of mockery they express—the sarcastic being the greater—rather than in the presence of pretence (cf. Homer, *Od.* 17.397–408; 22.170–200).

through kind words” (διὰ χρηστῶν ῥημάτων τὴν ἀτιμίαν ἐμφαίνων, *Trop.* 23).²² Such sentiments are certainly oppositional to the literal message, but not necessarily its opposite.

The second significant pattern in ancient treatments of sarcasm is the way the grammarians connect it to different forms of mockery. We have already seen that in Tryphon sarcasm is expressed “with mockery” (μετὰ χλευασμοῦ).²³ The overlap between sarcasm and different forms of mockery is most pronounced in the second-century grammar attributed to Herodian. While his definitions of the first three subcategories (εἶδη) of irony, χλευασμός, μυκτηρισμός, and σαρκασμός, are quite distinct, the examples illustrating each term are similar. χλευασμός occurs, “when laughing at the cowardly we might say, ‘what a manly soldier!’” μυκτηρισμός: “What a deed you have done, friend, and a necessary one at that, that is, for so clever a man as yourself.” Both of these examples fit perfectly with the way Herodian defines sarcasm:

Σαρκασμός δέ ἐστι λόγος τὴν ἀλήθειαν διὰ χρηστῶν ῥημάτων ἐμφαίνων, ὥς ὅταν τὸν ἐν προ<σ>λήψει τιμῆς κακοῖς περιπεσόντα καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀτιμαζόμενον ἐγγελῶντες εἴπωμεν “εἰς μεγάλην δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἤγαγες σεαυτὸν, ἐταῖρε.”

Sarcasm is an utterance that expresses the truth²⁴ through kind words, such as we might say while laughing at the person who in accepting an honour has fallen into wicked deeds and because of this is dishonoured: “you, my friend, have won much glory and honour for yourself!” (*Fig.Epit.* 16–17).

With the examples of three of Herodian’s four species of irony fitting sarcasm’s definition, there is little to be gained from trying to disentangle semantically these clearly overlapping speech acts. Instead, it will be sufficient to note that any given example of ancient Greek sarcasm could potentially be conceived of as an instance of χλευασμός or μυκτηρισμός. For our purposes, this is of no concern so long as it is also sarcastic. Ultimately, if we can take Herodian’s word for it, the key difference between sarcasm and these other

²² Cf. Phrynichus, *Praeparatio Sophistica*, A, concerning the phrases ἄριστος κλέπτειν and ἄριστος μοιχεύειν: σαρκασμοῦ τρόπῳ ἐπὶ γένηται εἰς ὑπερβολὴν τοῦ κακοῦ.

²³ Cf. the gloss in Tryphon’s list of tropes ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* p): σαρκασμός {ἡγουν χλεύη}.

²⁴ Rhetorica Anonyma’s treatment of irony so close to that of (Pseudo-)Herodian’s that some sort of literary dependence must be the case. Here, *Rhet.Anon. Trop.* 23 has ἀτιμίαν (cited above) instead of ἀλήθειαν. This is probably a correction of Herodian, and not an unreasonable one.

forms of mockery is a matter of delivery, that is, a distinction in the non-linguistic signals that accompany a given utterance.

We shall return to the issue of delivery presently, however, we must first concern ourselves with Herodian's fourth form of irony, which is simultaneously very like and unlike sarcasm. This last irony-type is *asteismos*, a speech act that we will encounter in Lucian, and that will play a significant role in our discussion of Second Corinthians.

In the Tryphonic tradition, *asteismos* is a self-deprecating form of irony (Ἀστεῖσμός ἐστι λόγος ἅφ' ἑαυτοῦ διασυρτικός γενόμενος, Tryphon, *Trop.* 24),²⁵ "a stylistic device that tactfully indicates something positive through words expressing oppositional meaning" (ἀστεῖσμός ἐστι φράσις διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων τὸ κρεῖττον ἡθικῶς ἐμφαίνουσα, [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 17). Classic examples include when "someone who is rich says, 'I myself am the poorest of all men,' and the wrestler who defeats all his opponents claims to have lost to everybody." (Tryphon, *Trop.* 24). Quintilian cites a more defensive example from Cicero, who employs *asteismos* to dismiss the accusations of others: "We are seen as such typical 'orators,' since we've always imposed ourselves on the people" (*oratores visi sumus et populo imposuimus*, *Inst.* 8.6.55; cf. Cicero, *Letter Fragments*, 7.10).

Asteismos is sarcasm's mirror image; instead of ironic praise used to mock another party, we have self-mocking irony for the sake of self-praise. Resultantly, Quintilian requires only the words *et contra* to separate his examples of sarcasm and *asteismos* (*Inst.* 8.6.55).²⁶ While *asteismos* so conceived is similar to Aristotle's interpretation of the *eiron* as discussed in §1.1, there remains an important distinction.²⁷ Both the *eiron* and the *asteist* downplay some positive trait that they consider themselves to possess. However, in *asteismos* the speaker's ultimate aim is to imply something positive about themselves, while the *eiron* communicates only their own modesty. Therefore, the *eiron* and *asteist* alike might say, "I am a mere fool," but only the *asteist* would thereby mean to imply "I am actually wise."

²⁵ Cf. Herodian, *Fig.Epit.* 16–17.

²⁶ The Greeks do not appear to have a specific term for the use of irony to compliment others, although this is possible. There is a whole class of insincere comments that John Haiman describes as "affectionate insults" that function similarly to *asteismos* but are targeted at others (see 1998:22–23). Saying, "You're just constantly underachieving," to ironically compliment a student who just got a distinction well illustrates the concept.

²⁷ *Asteismos* differs from Aristophanic εἰρωνεία insofar as the former is not an attempt at concealment.

We now turn to the third significant feature of sarcasm particular to the ancient grammars. In discussing pseudo-Herodian we have already made reference to certain performative features of ancient irony. These elements of tone and delivery are represented significantly enough across the grammars to suggest their being an integral part of how the Greeks conceived of sarcasm.²⁸

We have already cited one of the definitions of sarcasm attributed to Tryphon. The other reads as follows: “Sarcasm is showing the teeth while grinning.” (Σαρκασμός ἐστι μέχρι τοῦ σεσηρῆναι τοὺς ὀδόντας παραφαίνειν, Tryphon, *Trop.* 20). Here there is no description of what sorts of statements qualify as sarcastic, but only a facial expression. This definition juxtaposes a degree of aggression (“Showing the teeth,” τοὺς ὀδόντας παραφαίνειν) with the ostensible positivity of a smile (σεσηρῆναι).²⁹ The author of the *Vitae Homeri* also includes facial expression in their definition of sarcasm,³⁰ which reads like a synthesis of the two definitions attributed to Tryphon: “There is a certain kind of irony, namely sarcasm, in which someone, through words of oppositional meaning, reproaches someone else while pretending to smile” (Ἔστι δέ τι εἶδος εἰρωείας καὶ ὁ σαρκασμός, ἐπειδὴν τις διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων ὀνειδίῃ τινα μετὰ προσποιήτου μειδιάματος, [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* II 716–717).³¹

In Herodian the difference between sarcasm, χλευασμός, and μυκτηρισμός seems to be entirely a matter of delivery. Here we find χλευασμός delivered with insincere smiling (μειδιασμοῦ προ{σ}φερόμενος) and while laughing at the victim of a comment (ἐγγελῶντες). Sarcasm too is delivered ἐγγελῶντες (Herodian, *Fig.Epit.* 16–17). As for μυκτηρισμός, it involves the movement of the nostrils and something like a derisive snort (μετὰ τῆς ῥινῶν ἐπιμύξεως... πνεῦμα διὰ τῶν ῥινῶν συνεκφέροντες, Herodian, *Fig.Epit.* 16–17).³²

Although nonverbal cues cannot help us exegete sarcasm millennia after the fact, these descriptions of a typical sarcastic facial expression reinforce the major features of how

²⁸ Cf. Quintilian: “[Irony] is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery (*pronuntiatio*), the character of the speaker (*persona*) or the nature of the subject (*rei natura*)” (*Inst.* 8.6.54).

²⁹ See Pawlak 2019:551n.11. On sardonic smiling in ancient texts, see Lateiner 1995:193–95; Halliwell 2008:8–9, 93; Beard 2014:73.

³⁰ For discussion and provenance, see Keaney and Lamberton 1996:2, 7–10, 45–53.

³¹ Interestingly, over a thousand years later, Rockwell found mouth movement to be significant for the expression of sarcasm (see 2001:47–50).

³² Cf. Tryphon, *Trop.* 21.

the ancient Greeks conceptualise sarcasm. The presence of an artificial smile concealing a look of hostility emphasizes the way sarcasm communicates a message oppositional to its literal appearance and the importance of pretence within that process. This pretence must be transparent enough to communicate the sarcasm's negative message clearly, because sarcasm's ultimate aim is to express mockery, *χλευασμός* more specifically, as they laugh-at (*ἐγγελῶντες*) the victim of their barb.

2 Modern Research on Verbal Irony

While ancient treatments of sarcasm and irony are an important starting point, the precision of modern research will be essential for developing the approach to irony that I will adopt throughout this study. We will create a focused scope for the project by elucidating the relationships between different forms of irony, namely situational and verbal irony, and by defining sarcasm as a subtype of verbal irony. We will then survey several paradigms for understanding verbal irony in modern scholarship. Because verbal irony is the broader category compared to sarcasm, most scholarship in recent years has focused thereon. However, most results are still generalizable to sarcasm.

In this survey, we will not have space to be fully systematic, but will instead focus on the concepts that have had the largest impact on the field. I will not adopt a single approach as the methodological lens for this study. While the accounts of verbal irony surveyed are nuanced and well-fleshed-out systems in their own right, they each have their own strengths and drawbacks. These paradigms will contribute methodologically to this study as exegetical tools: concepts that can be used to explain why a given text is an example of verbal irony. From there, it will remain to narrow our focus again from verbal irony to sarcasm by developing a working definition of sarcasm that will serve throughout the study.

2.1 Narrowing the Scope: From Irony to Verbal Irony to Sarcasm

This section will concern itself with demonstrating the utility of treating specific forms of irony in their own right instead attempting a single analysis of irony in general. In making this case we shall focus on the two forms of irony most discussed in recent research, verbal irony and situational irony. From there, we will go on to clarify sarcasm's relationship to irony by defining it as a subspecies of verbal irony. We will go no further in defining sarcasm than this until we have explored scholarship on verbal irony.

There are a great many phenomena described under the umbrella “irony.” Muecke lists no less than 19—including ironies of Fate, chance, and character alongside better-known forms such as dramatic, situational, verbal, and Socratic irony.³³ Early critical studies of irony, which we will go on to designate the “First Quest” for the nature of irony (§3.1), were broad in their scope, leading to generalisations from one form of irony to the next.³⁴ But conceptual problems arise when treating multiple forms of irony together.

The verbal/situational irony divide will be a helpful way of illustrating this issue. At present, scholarship remains divided over whether there is any significant connection between these two forms of irony. Utsumi’s implicit display theory is one of the most thoroughgoing attempts at making verbal irony dependent on situational irony.³⁵ Utsumi argues that verbal irony arises when a speaker implicitly makes reference to an “ironic environment” and expresses a negative evaluation thereof. This ironic environment consists of a situation in which the speaker’s expectations at a given time have failed.³⁶ Utsumi illustrates his paradigm using the following example: “a mother asked her son to clean up his messy room, but he was lost in a comic book. After a while, she discovered that his room was still messy.” She remarks, “This room is totally clean!”³⁷ The mother alludes to her failed expectation (that the room should be clean), thereby communicating implicit negative evaluation.

But one can just as easily conceive of verbal irony without an ironic environment, that is, without any situational irony, as the following anecdote illustrates:

It often rains in England. It rained yesterday. The forecast says it will rain today.
Knowing these things, when I step outside, I still say, “My, what lovely weather.”

While I suspect most interpreters would view this comment as an instance of verbal irony, even sarcasm, there is no irony in the underlying situation. My expectations have been

³³ 1969:4. Cf. Colston 2017:19.

³⁴ Although Muecke is capable of making fine distinctions between different ironies, he goes on to generalize about “the ironist” and irony’s morality in ways that efface these distinctions (see 1969:216–47; see also Kierkegaard 1966:336–42).

³⁵ For other attempts at connecting verbal and situational irony, see Shelley 2001:811–14; Colston 2017:19–42. For scholarship on situational irony, see Shelley 2001:775–814; Lucariello 1994:129–44.

³⁶ Utsumi 2000:1783–85, 1803–4.

³⁷ Utsumi 2000:1779, 1783–84.

fulfilled exactly. As such, it appears that verbal irony overlaps with situational irony in some cases, but not others.

Because there is no fundamental overlap between situational and verbal irony, it is methodologically problematic to draw conclusions about an author's use of irony in general without respecting the differences between different forms of irony.³⁸ Concerning the many forms of irony, Wilson writes, "There is no reason to assume that all these phenomena work in the same way, or that we should be trying to develop a single general theory of irony *tout court*... in other words, irony is not a natural kind."³⁹ We cannot assume that two things are meaningfully related just because they share the label "irony." There is no *prima facie* reason why an ironic situation, such as a police station being robbed, and an ironic comment, such as saying "How lovely!" after stubbing one's toe, should be formed by the same mechanisms or have comparable rhetorical effects when communicated. Indeed, situational irony is a matter of interpretation: situations can be construed as ironic independent of whether, in the case of written texts, the author considered the situation ironic. Verbal irony, however, is an act of communication from one speaker to another party.⁴⁰

As we shall see in §3, failure to draw distinctions between different forms of irony has been a persistent problem in scholarship on Paul. As a corrective, this study will now narrow in scope from irony in general to verbal irony, leaving situational and other forms of irony largely behind. It remains now to discuss briefly the relationship between sarcasm and verbal irony before moving on to contemporary treatments of verbal irony.

In current scholarship, there is disagreement over sarcasm's relationship to verbal irony. Certain scholars see some but not complete overlap, arguing that sarcasm consists of intentionally hurtful utterances that can be ironic but need not be. Another perspective considers sarcasm a subtype of verbal irony. From this viewpoint, all sarcastic statements are instances of verbal irony, but not all instances of verbal irony are sarcastic.⁴¹ In order to maintain continuity with the thrust of ancient thought, I will adopt this latter position. We have therefore left irony-in-general behind in order to avoid invalid generalisations between

³⁸ This methodological issue remains even if some generic relationship or common underlying mechanism between situational and verbal irony could be demonstrated.

³⁹ 2006:1725. Sperber and Wilson do, however, consider *verbal* irony a "natural kind" (1998:289–92).

⁴⁰ Cf. Haiman 1998:20.

⁴¹ For a review of perspectives, see Attardo 2000b:795.

ironic comments and situations. Before moving on from verbal irony to a working definition of sarcasm, we will first explore contemporary scholarship concerning what verbal irony is and how it works.

2.2 Counterfactuality and Verbal Irony

English dictionaries often describe irony as “the expression of meaning through the use of words which normally mean the opposite.”⁴² This definition, which Colston terms a “lay account” of irony,⁴³ has its basis in the sorts of descriptions we find among the ancient Greek rhetoricians and grammarians. But, as discussed in §1.2, it is important to remember that when pushed to a systematic account of verbal irony, this strict notion of opposition does not do justice to the ancient discussions, with their emphasis on pretence and on dispraise-through-praise.

Although earlier modern treatises on irony are more nuanced than such dictionary definitions, they still conceive of irony semantically, that is, in terms of meaning. For Booth, the detection of verbal irony⁴⁴ begins with “reject[ing] the literal meaning” of a statement.⁴⁵ However, this semantic account of irony, the idea that verbal irony consists of saying the opposite of or something conflicting with what one means, has been largely abandoned since the late 1970s (see §3.2).⁴⁶

The first significant flaw with the semantic approach is worth illustrating with a short parable, as it will become essential to our exegesis of sarcasm in Paul later on:

An undergraduate sits in lectures. As the talk carries on, she finds herself next to a student who treats the professor’s questions like a game of University Challenge, chirping quick answers and dominating the conversation. In a moment of irritation at the end of class, she mutters, perhaps a little too loudly, “My, aren’t you clever!”⁴⁷

This example, henceforth *The Parable of the Disgruntled Undergraduate*, represents a clear instance of verbal irony—sarcasm more specifically.⁴⁸ Sarcastic statements of this kind

⁴² E.g. Waite 2013:484–85.

⁴³ 2019:112–13.

⁴⁴ Booth uses the term “stable irony,” a concept that is close to, but somewhat different from verbal irony (see 1974:1–14).

⁴⁵ 1974:10, see also 39–41. Cf. Muecke 1969:23, 52–54; Kierkegaard 1966:264–65, 272–73.

⁴⁶ For an early refutation, see Sperber and Wilson 1981:295–96.

⁴⁷ Example adapted from Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg, and Brown 1995:4–6; cf. Wilson 2006:1726; Camp 2012:596.

⁴⁸ It also fits nicely with Quintilian’s “censur[ing] with counterfeited praise” (*Inst.* 8.6.55).

constitute a major problem for traditional semantic accounts of irony, which require the expression of meaning in conflict with the literal utterance. Inexplicable by these paradigms, the above example contains a sarcastic statement that also happens to be factually true; the irritating student clearly is clever. Verbally ironic statements therefore need not be false. They may simultaneously express their literal meaning and imply more.

The second flaw with semantic approaches to verbal irony is the fact that not all ironic statements are propositional; sometimes there is no opposite meaning. Wilson illustrates this problem as follows: “Bill is a neurotically cautious driver who keeps his petrol tank full, never fails to indicate when turning and repeatedly scans the horizon for possible dangers.” The following ironic imperative (uttered by Bill’s passenger), “Don’t forget to use your indicator,” and the ironic question “Do you think we should stop for petrol?” are not declarative.⁴⁹ It is therefore difficult to conceive of imperatives and questions as having opposite meanings implied through irony, even though the above examples demonstrate that they can be used ironically.⁵⁰

Because of the problems illustrated by these examples, scholars have had to move beyond semantics in describing verbal irony. But this is not to say that opposition cannot still feature in much verbal irony. Research has demonstrated that clearly counterfactual statements are significantly more likely to be interpreted ironically than their factual counterparts.⁵¹ Therefore, while verbal irony may not require the inversion of meaning, obvious incongruity between what is said and what is meant remains an important signal of its presence.

2.3 The Echoic Account

The echoic account of verbal irony was developed in the late 1970s by Sperber and Wilson.⁵² This account comes out of a broader approach to linguistics known as Relevance Theory (RT).⁵³ RT purports that effective communication seeks to obtain maximum

⁴⁹ Wilson 2006:1726.

⁵⁰ See Popa-Wyatt 2014:131; cf. Sperber and Wilson 1981:295.

⁵¹ Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989:382; cf. Kreuz and Roberts 1995:27; Katz and Pexman 1997:30–2, 36–8; Pexman, Ferretti, and Katz 2000:202–3, 220.

⁵² See “Les Ironies comme Mentions” (1978). Published in English as “Irony and the Use—Mention Distinction” (1981).

⁵³ RT also owes its genesis to Sperber and Wilson (see Sperber and Wilson 1995; 2012).

relevance, to generate the greatest possible “contextual effect,” while requiring a minimum of “mental effort” to understand.⁵⁴ One may illustrate this concept using two hypothetical SBL presentations: Presenter A reads his highly esoteric paper in monotone. It quickly becomes evident that the only people in the room listening are those with strongly overlapping research areas (high contextual effect); the rest consider checking their emails to require lower mental effort. Presenter B explains her research clearly and dynamically. Even those from unrelated fields tune in thanks to the accessibility of the presentation (low mental effort), and for those whose work is directly related, we have reached optimal relevance (high contextual effect, low mental effort).

Sperber and Wilson argue that all verbal irony can be described as instances of echoic mention. In contrast to *use*, where the words employed are the speaker’s own, *mention* makes reference to the statements, thoughts, or expectations of others.⁵⁵ This is the difference between a child who stubs his toe and yells, “Ow, crap!” (use) and his older brother who runs off shouting, “Mom, mom! Matt said a bad word!” (mention). But Sperber and Wilson do not consider every instance of mention to be ironic. The echoic account defines verbal irony as instances of echoic mention implicitly referring to the speech or perspective of another party, not for the sake of conveying information (as in the above example of mention), but in order to express evaluation—that is, an affective response to the statement/thought mentioned.⁵⁶

These echoes should not be thought of as citations, or even as reasonable approximations of another person’s position, but can be quite loose. Sperber and Wilson use the example of a rained-out country walk where someone comments, “What lovely weather!” If someone in the party had predicted nice weather, the ironic echo would be explicit. However, even if no such comment had been made, the quip could still make reference to the general expectation that people go on walks to enjoy nice weather.⁵⁷ Irony therefore obtains relevance not by conveying reliable information about the proposition mentioned, but by expressing a speaker’s feelings or perspective thereon.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Wilson and Sperber 1992:67–68.

⁵⁵ See Sperber and Wilson 1981:303–6.

⁵⁶ Sperber and Wilson 1981:306–11; see also Wilson and Sperber 1992:53–76; Wilson and Sperber 2012:123–45. This perspective develops over time. Wilson and Sperber go on to replace the notion of irony as echoic mention with the broader concept of irony as a subtype of “echoic use,” itself a subtype of “attributive use” (see 2012:128–34).

⁵⁷ Sperber and Wilson 1981:310.

⁵⁸ Wilson and Sperber 2012:128–29.

The echoic account is not without its critics. Haiman considers the paradigm “restrictive,”⁵⁹ and attempts have been made to demonstrate that there are cases of verbal irony that are entirely non-echoic.⁶⁰ At the same time, recourse to more indirect echoes, such as the echoing of social norms or expectations, can make the paradigm feel rather vague. As Simpson puts it,

[T]he problem is simply that we can never know what exactly it is that [the ironist] is echoing, which means that if the echoic argument is to be sustained, then some anterior discourse event has to be invented, come hell or high water, to justify the echoic function.⁶¹

At some point wonders whether the ironic echo becomes too faint to be useful.

Despite these drawbacks, the echoic account continues to exert influence within irony studies and remains useful for our purposes. Throughout this study we will encounter several instances of sarcasm that are best explained as echoic, and we will find that the explicit use of echoic mention functions as a significant indicator of sarcasm in ancient Greek texts.⁶²

2.4 The Pretence Account

Clark’s and Gerrig’s pretence account of verbal irony emerges in response to the echoic paradigm and aims to resolve some of its problems. Clark and Gerrig consider verbal irony to occur when a speaker pretends to make a statement sincerely and also pretends that their audience will receive it as such. But this pretence is meant to be transparent to the speaker’s actual audience, who recognize the remark as ironic.⁶³ They illustrate this phenomenon using a speaker who exclaims, “See what lovely weather it is,” under drizzly conditions:

[T]he speaker is pretending to be an unseeing person... explaining to an unknowing audience how beautiful the weather is. She intends the addressee to see through the pretense... and to see that she is thereby ridiculing the sort of person who would make

⁵⁹ 1998:25–26.

⁶⁰ Clark and Gerrig 1984:123; Seto 1998:239–56. For Sperber and Wilson’s response, see 1998:283–89.

⁶¹ Simpson 2003:116.

⁶² See Ch.3, §1.1.3. Cf. Pawlak 2019:549–50. The echoic account has also become the starting point for a number of spin-off paradigms—such as the echoic reminder and allusional pretence perspectives—which take it in different directions or combine its ideas with other hypotheses (see Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989:374–86; Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg, and Brown 1995:3–21; Attardo 2000b:793–824; Popa-Wyatt 2014:127–65).

⁶³ Clark and Gerrig 1984:122.

such an exclamation... the sort of person who would accept it, and the exclamation itself.⁶⁴

This articulation of the pretence account has since been revised. The multi-layered pretence that Clark and Gerrig describe above is too complex to account for what is going on when many speakers engage in verbal irony. Every ironic comment need not involve the appropriation of another persona and an address to a pretended, naïve audience.⁶⁵

Responding to various issues and critiques, Currie streamlines the pretence perspective.⁶⁶ Currie considers verbal irony to occur when “pretending to assert or whatever, one pretends to be a certain kind of person—a person with a restricted or otherwise defective view of the world or some part of it.”⁶⁷ This pretence can be broken down into two distinct elements, the pretending itself, and the evaluation of the ironic utterance’s target represented in the “defective outlook.”⁶⁸ Currie’s revised pretence account has the advantage of not requiring a pretended address to a credulous audience, nor does it require an audience at all.⁶⁹

At its best, the pretence account can integrate examples of verbal irony where proposed echoes are vague or that are difficult to describe as echoic at all. It also has some affinities to Sperber and Wilson’s account. The use of verbal irony to express evaluation remains constant across both paradigms, while here pretence replaces the echoic mechanism.⁷⁰ Additionally, pretending features in ancient accounts of irony and sarcasm, creating continuity between modern and ancient discussions (recall Tryphon’s μεθ’ ὑποκρίσεως (*Trop.* 15); μετὰ προσποιήτου μειδιάματος, [Plutarch] *vit. Hom.* II 717; see §1.2).

Just as echoic irony invites us to think less in terms of semantics and more in terms of mention and evaluation, the pretence paradigm enables us to consider verbal irony in terms of sincerity versus insincerity—a distinction that will play a significant role in interpreting ancient sarcasm, both Pauline and otherwise.

⁶⁴ 1984:122.

⁶⁵ For further criticism of the pretence account, see Sperber 1984:130–36; Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989:384.

⁶⁶ For Currie’s interaction with the echoic paradigm, see 2006:111–13, 122–28.

⁶⁷ 2006:116.

⁶⁸ See Currie 2006:115–19.

⁶⁹ I.e. one can be sarcastic with no one else around (Currie 2006:114–15).

⁷⁰ For Sperber and Wilson’s critique of pretence theory, including Currie’s revision, see Wilson 2006:1734–41; 2013:48–54; Wilson and Sperber 2012:134–45.

2.5 Constraint Satisfaction: How We Process Verbal Irony

In addition to addressing verbal irony's nature, scholarship has also devoted considerable resources to exploring the ways humans process verbal irony. In an early study, Booth describes the interpretation of irony as a step-by-step process—even if these steps “are often virtually simultaneous”—beginning when one finds reason to reject the literal interpretation of an utterance.⁷¹ Recent research has so vindicated, not Booth's steps, but his intuition about the rapidity and seamlessness of verbal irony recognition that we may no longer speak of irony processing as linear at all. This revised understanding of verbal irony processing is known as the parallel constraint satisfaction approach (CS). It hypothesizes that irony processing occurs early and is non-linear.

Studies have shown that the interpretation of ironic cues begins “in the earliest moments of processing the remarks, suggesting that participants were integrating all available information as soon as it was relevant.”⁷² In an eye-tracking study, subjects presented with an ironic statement and visual prompts representing ironic and literal interpretations did not show a tendency toward looking at the object representing a literal reading first.⁷³ Katz's research adds a temporal dimension, finding that sarcastic statements are processed rapidly, often in less than a second. This does not require consideration and rejection of the literal meaning of an utterance, but instead, “the same processes are involved in processing for literal and sarcastic intent on-line.”⁷⁴

Early, simultaneous processing does not mean that the interpreter never processes the literal meaning of an utterance during irony recognition, only that they need not go through the literal to comprehend the ironic. This point is methodologically important. CS demonstrates that we cannot limit our search for verbal irony only to instances where one is forced to reject an utterance's literal meaning. To do so ignores both what verbal irony is (§2.2) and how we process it. Parallel processing means using all available data to reach the

⁷¹ See 1974:10–13. For a more recent, linear approach to verbal irony processing, see Giora 1997:183–202; Giora and Fein 1999:425–33; Giora 2007:269–79; Fein, Yeari, and Giora 2015:1–26. We will not treat this perspective in detail. The most recent, methodologically nuanced studies support constraint satisfaction (see n.73).

⁷² 2008:287; cf. Pexman, Ferretti, and Katz 2000:201–220.

⁷³ Kowatch, Whalen, and Pexman 2013:304–13. Studies on brain activity during irony processing have also supported CS (Akimoto et al. 2017:42–46; Spotorno et al. 2013:1–9).

⁷⁴ Katz 2009:88.

most plausible of several possible interpretations.⁷⁵ Neither the literal nor the ironic reading should be given an *a priori* advantage.⁷⁶

Therefore, if we want our method for identifying verbal irony to respect the way humans actually process it, ironic cues—the linguistic and contextual means by which speakers and authors signal irony to their audiences—become essential. Here too we have much to learn from CS.

In 2012 Campbell and Katz used sarcasm production and rating tasks to test whether certain cues theorized as essential to the nature of verbal irony were necessary to the interpretation of sarcasm.⁷⁷ These cues included some of those already discussed, such as echoic mention and pretence, in addition to others.⁷⁸ Campbell and Katz found that while each irony-signal was important and in some cases sufficient to characterise a statement as sarcastic, no single cue was necessary.⁷⁹ This means that we can create neither a linear method for interpreting ironic statements, nor a checklist of essential cues. Instead, the “comprehension of language, in general, including non-literal and sarcastic language, involves utilizing all of the information that a person has at his or her command at any one point in time.”⁸⁰

With the cues of verbal irony being essential to its recognition, but not fixed, it becomes important to determine what signals can tip the balance in favour of an ironic reading. While studies such as Campbell’s and Katz’s (above) have made significant progress with modern English, ancient Greek is largely unexplored territory.⁸¹ Therefore, one of the

⁷⁵ See Campbell and Katz 2012:477.

⁷⁶ Cf. Sim 2016:118.

⁷⁷ 2012:462–76.

⁷⁸ Campbell and Katz 2012:459–62.

⁷⁹ 2012:468–73, 476–78. This finding does not necessarily invalidate previous models of verbal irony. Just because a participant does not recognize the presence of a specific feature, pretence for example, in a sarcastic statement does not mean that this feature was not present in the first place (cf. Campbell and Katz 2012:477).

⁸⁰ Campbell and Katz 2012:477.

⁸¹ Although Minchin’s work on Homer is a helpful starting point (2010a; 2010b). For further work on modern English, see Attardo 2000a:3–20; Attardo 2000a:3–20; Haiman 1990:181–205; Gibbs 1986:3–15; Katz and Pexman 1997:19–41; Kovaz, Kreuz, and Riordan 2013:598–615; Kreuz and Roberts 1995:21–31; Rockwell 2007:361–69; Woodland and Voyer 2011:227–39. For work on other languages, see Adachi 1996:1–36; Colston 2019:109–31; Escandell-Vidal and Leonetti 2014:309–42; Okamoto 2002:119–39; Yao, Song, and Singh 2013:195–209.

major tasks of chapter 3 will be elucidating the linguistic and contextual signals of sarcasm in ancient Greek texts.

2.6 Sarcasm: Toward a Working Definition

Although we have presented no definitive solution to the nature of verbal irony, each of the paradigms reviewed contributes conceptual information that will be useful in identifying and exegeting specific instances of sarcasm throughout Paul's letters.

Recognising the fundamental differences between forms of irony, such as situational and verbal irony, has led us to narrow the scope of this project from irony in general to verbal irony. Surveying contemporary accounts of verbal irony has also defined the approach to verbal irony that I will be adopting throughout this study. We have seen the deficiencies of semantic accounts, which see verbal irony as inhering in meaning inversion. While counterfactuality can function as a signal of verbal irony, not all ironic statements negate or invert their literal meaning. Indeed, as we saw with CS, the literal interpretation of an utterance does not have priority over the ironic, as all relevant signals are processed simultaneously. Shifting from semantic to pragmatic approaches is an important methodological step that will impact exegesis.

Beyond arguing for the utility of pragmatic approaches over semantics, I have not taken a strong position on the validity of the echoic and pretence accounts of verbal irony. While perhaps neither paradigm provides a complete account, both mechanisms are operative in much verbal irony. Both accounts can thereby make a methodological contribution to this study by functioning as interpretive frameworks for exegeting specific examples of sarcasm in the chapters to come.

Having now defined our approach to verbal irony, it remains to narrow our scope again and construct a working definition of sarcasm that will become the foundation of our analysis. Here we will take the overlap between the two pragmatic accounts surveyed as our starting point. Both the echoic and pretence accounts highlight the importance of evaluation in verbal irony. The ironist's aim is not to be informative but to provide an affective commentary on their utterance.

Bailin's recent definition of verbal irony helpfully captures the importance of evaluation, by emphasising attitude rather than meaning. I do not suggest that Bailin's is a perfect description of verbal irony, and some theorists may disagree with it. What is important is that, with its balance of specificity and breadth, it is complete enough to provide

the foundation for a working definition of sarcasm that will hold up in all the cases treated in this study.

Bailin sees two conditions as necessary for the production of verbal irony: inconsistency and implicitness. Implicitness means that “the speaker’s actual attitude is not directly stated by the speaker in the immediate context.” I prefer a generous interpretation of implicitness. I do not regard statements that are explicitly signalled as ironic or sarcastic after the fact to thereby cease to be so. For example, I consider the statement, “Nice haircut! [pause] Not!” an instance of sarcasm—if an artless one.⁸²

Inconsistency requires that “we assume the utterance normatively or typically to imply a certain attitude on the part of the speaker, but assume as well that the speaker producing the utterance has an actual attitude inconsistent with what is normally or typically implied.”⁸³ Notice that this condition does not supply the mechanism by which inconsistent evaluation is communicated. This allows for the presence of echoic mention, pretence, or sundry other signals to explain how we get from attitude A to attitude B.

But how do we get from here to sarcasm? We have already, following the ancients, defined sarcasm as a subspecies of verbal irony. Bailin’s definition will therefore only require slight alteration. I define sarcasm as a subset of verbal irony in which an utterance that would normally communicate a positive attitude or evaluation implies a negative attitude or evaluation.⁸⁴

The Parable of the Disgruntled Undergraduate from §2.2, despite the difficulty it presents to semantic accounts, provides an excellent illustration of this definition of sarcasm. With the utterance, “My, aren’t you clever!”—an ostensible compliment and therefore a statement that would normally express positive evaluation—our student implies (through her tone of exasperation) a negative attitude toward the other student’s intellectual grandstanding.

3 Literature Review: Irony and Sarcasm in Pauline Scholarship

In organising this review, it will be helpful to follow the progression of scholarship on Pauline irony chronologically, setting these works alongside significant developments in

⁸² Cf. Haiman 1998:53–55.

⁸³ Bailin 2015:112.

⁸⁴ By reversing the evaluations (a negative statement implying a positive attitude) we arrive at “affectionate insults” (see n.26), and by making these self-referential (a negative statement about oneself implying a positive attitude) we create *asteismos* (see §1.2).

irony studies proper. This structure will enable us to gauge the extent to which Pauline scholars have interacted with the research on irony available to them. On the whole, Pauline scholarship has been significantly out of date when it comes to modern scholarship on irony and has not always addressed a sufficient breadth of ancient discussions. Lacking this theoretical grounding can limit the utility of certain observations.

3.1 The First Quest for the Nature of Irony

It is difficult to find irony research that still cites work written before 1975, as around this time a shift to pragmatic models renders much earlier scholarship obsolete. However, because the monographs that most Pauline scholars draw on predate this advance in irony studies, we must trace our history back further.

There is little development of note within the semantic tradition between Kierkegaard's 1841 thesis *The Concept of Irony: With Constant Reference to Socrates* and Muecke's *The Compass of Irony* in 1969. Although such works were important contributions for their times, certain conceptual issues render them problematic as accounts of irony.⁸⁵ Muecke's monograph and Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony* represent the pinnacle of the semantic approach to irony. To borrow a principle of organization from elsewhere in New Testament studies, it will be helpful to think of these three monographs as a sort of First Quest for the Nature of Irony.

During this first-quest period, few authors take up the subject of irony in the letters of Paul. Reumann published "St Paul's Use of Irony" in 1955. This short paper does not get caught up in discussion of ancient or modern theory on irony. At only five pages long, there is also little time for exegesis. The work consists primarily of brief identifications of different sorts of irony—including litotes, understatement, allegory, and others—following which Reumann concludes that Paul's use of irony in Second Corinthians is intended as "a teaching device."⁸⁶ For our purposes, the value of this piece lies in its presentation of a list of passages that a scholar has considered ironic and are thereby worth a second look.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See §2.1–2.2, §2.5.

⁸⁶ 1955:141–44.

⁸⁷ Linss's paper on humour in Paul, which touches briefly on sarcasm and irony, is similarly more helpful for identification than exegesis (see 1998:196–97).

Still years before Muecke, Jónsson published *Humour and Irony in the New Testament*. For its time, Jónsson's work is noteworthy for its use of literary theory in addition to ancient discussion of irony and humour.⁸⁸ Jónsson focuses primarily on humour, considering irony a secondary interest that is difficult to disentangle from humour itself.⁸⁹ Jónsson defines humour as "always sympathetic" in some way, while he considers sarcasm inherently unsympathetic.⁹⁰ He therefore seeks explicitly to study humour and irony to the exclusion of sarcasm. This fact significantly limits the utility of Jónsson's work for our discussion of Pauline sarcasm, but his identification of isolated ironic statements within Paul's letters will merit some reference.⁹¹

3.2 The Pragmatic Revolution: 1975–1984

Although subsequent research would find fault with his paradigm, Grice's pragmatic definition of irony, published in 1975, would begin a shift in irony studies away from semantic approaches.⁹² The echoic account follows soon after (1978; §2.3) and by 1984, pretence theory joins the conversation (§2.4). By this point, we have three competing pragmatic accounts of irony, which have rightly shown the deficiencies of earlier semantic paradigms (§2.2).

During this decade of sweeping change within irony studies, we find little work on irony in Paul. In 1981, Spencer published a study on irony in Second Corinthians's "fool's speech." Although it is reasonable that this paper should be unaware of a revolution in irony studies still very much in process at the time, Spencer's work also bypasses many of the "first-quest" texts on irony, drawing primarily on Kierkegaard.⁹³

⁸⁸ See 1965:16–34, 35–40, 41–89.

⁸⁹ For disambiguation, see 1965:22–23.

⁹⁰ Jónsson 1965:18–9, 23–4, 26.

⁹¹ See 1965:223–42.

⁹² For reprints of Grice's influential 1975 and 1978 essays, see Grice 1989:22–57. Grice considers irony as the intentional flouting of the expectation that a speaker in conversation should tell the truth. For example, if a professor who catches a student in clear plagiarism comments, "I'm impressed by the originality of your argument," the obviousness of the falsehood signals that the statement, "must be trying to get across some other proposition than the one [it] purports to be putting forward" (1989:34, cf. 28). This model, insofar as it requires the ironist to say something that is not true, suffers from the flaw illustrated by The Parable of the Disgruntled Undergraduate (§2.2).

⁹³ 1981:349, 360.

Like Jónsson, Spencer wishes to avoid the term sarcasm in describing Paul's irony in 2 Cor 11:16–12:13, preferring the designation “sardonic.” For both authors, this seems to be partly methodological; Spencer appears to consider sarcasm to be an element of tone (“in other words, sneering, cutting, caustic, or taunting”) rather than a form of irony.⁹⁴ There also seems to be an apologetic element in such designations as well, insofar as avoiding the term “sarcasm” excuses Paul from the use of tendentious rhetoric. Spencer ultimately argues that for Paul, the indirectness of irony functions as a stratagem for winning over a potentially unreceptive audience and ultimately works to “expertly reinforce his central message.”⁹⁵

3.3 The Second Quest: 1985–early 2000s

Over the following years echo and pretence become greater while Grice becomes less. These former two paradigms expand, develop, and become the basis for hybrid accounts of irony that draw on both.⁹⁶ On the whole, the discipline starts shifting towards controlled laboratory experimentation rather than building paradigms on literary examples.⁹⁷ We do not reach anything like a consensus on the nature of irony at this time, but irony studies makes significant gains and there is much insightful, relevant work for Pauline scholars to have drawn on had they chosen to.

Forbes's 1986 article on comparison, self-praise, and irony in 2 Cor 10–12 shows no interest in modern research on irony,⁹⁸ but focuses instead on ancient discussions. His citation of ancient authors is broad, including Plato, Demosthenes, Hermogenes, and Quintilian, to name a few.⁹⁹ Although I argue that any major study on irony in Paul has much to gain from interaction with both ancient and modern work, Forbes's focus on ancient discussions well suits the article's purpose and scope.

Forbes pushes the importance of Hermogenes for understanding Paul's irony in 2 Cor 10–12 and considers Paul's use of rhetorical techniques, including irony, as providing evidence that he “may have had a full education in formal Greek rhetoric.”¹⁰⁰ While I am

⁹⁴ 1981:351. Cf. Loubser 1992:509.

⁹⁵ 1981:349–51, 60.

⁹⁶ See §2.3–2.4, n.62. New hypotheses also emerge in this period. For the state of the field at the time, see Attardo 2000b:797–813.

⁹⁷ I have cited several examples of such studies in §2.5.

⁹⁸ See 1986:1.

⁹⁹ See Forbes 1986:10–15.

¹⁰⁰ 1986:23, see 12–24.

critical of Forbes's ultimate conclusions (see Ch.7, §3.3), I consider his work one of the strongest pieces of scholarship on irony in Paul's letters to date. Forbes will therefore be a significant conversation partner in our chapter on Second Corinthians.

Published a year after Forbes's article, Plank's study of irony in 1 Cor 4:9–13 takes a very different approach to the subject. Like Forbes—though not to the same depth—Plank works through a number of ancient treatments of irony.¹⁰¹ Unlike Forbes, Plank is convinced by the utility of (relatively) modern scholarship, using Muecke as his starting point for defining irony,¹⁰² and drawing significantly on Kierkegaard and Booth.¹⁰³ Plank is thereby the first Pauline scholar to interact with a range of “first-quest” irony scholarship.

Plank's draws three major conclusions about Paul's use of irony. First, for Plank, Paul's irony is apologetic. Paul uses irony to turn the tables in his favour; weakness becomes strength, and thus criticisms of Paul on these lines only support his legitimacy. Second, Paul's irony is homiletic, encouraging the Corinthians to “view their calling in a new way.” Third, Paul's irony seeks to influence his audience's theological convictions, affirming for his readers God's paradoxical salvific actions.¹⁰⁴

Plank is concerned with two major forms of irony: dissimulative and paradoxical irony.¹⁰⁵ Plank describes dissimulative irony as “a technique by which something *appears* to be other than it really is,” an effect achieved through the use of exaggeration and pretence.¹⁰⁶ So defined, this form of irony has some affinity to verbal irony, and because I define sarcasm as a form of verbal irony, Plank's work on dissimulative irony in 1 Cor 4:9–13 will be worth some interaction.¹⁰⁷ However, Plank's greater interest lies in paradoxical irony, where what is said is not what is meant but ultimately turns out to be true on a deeper level.¹⁰⁸ This larger discussion will not figure into our analysis of sarcasm, since the irony of such a paradox would be a product of the situation.

¹⁰¹ 1987:35–36.

¹⁰² 1987:34.

¹⁰³ Amongst others, see 1987:35, 42–45.

¹⁰⁴ Plank 1987:92, cf. 33.

¹⁰⁵ See 1987:38–42.

¹⁰⁶ 1987:39.

¹⁰⁷ See 1987:48–51.

¹⁰⁸ See 1987:39–42, 51–69. Socrates—who pretends to know nothing, when in reality he is wiser than his contemporaries, precisely because he knows that he truly knows nothing—is the classic example of this form of irony (see Plank 1987:40). We have already discussed why Socrates dissembling does not qualify as tropic (verbal) irony (§1.1–1.2).

In the early 1990s, Loubser releases a study that draws considerably on Plank. Essentially, what Plank does with 1 Cor 4, Loubser does with 2 Cor 10–13. As a result, both works share similar strengths and drawbacks. Compared to Plank, Loubser does cite a greater breadth and depth of modern work on irony,¹⁰⁹ and discusses a greater variety of irony-types.¹¹⁰

For Loubser, Paul's *Narrenrede* is permeated with verbal irony: it is an ironic discourse (dissimulative irony) underlain by the (paradoxical) irony of strength-through-weakness.¹¹¹ Loubser uses his analysis of irony in 2 Cor 10–13 to argue that these chapters form a *peroratio* to the letter as a whole, thus supporting the integrity of Second Corinthians.¹¹²

At one point or other in this study I will push back on all of these conclusions. As mentioned above, paradoxical irony is better thought of as a form of situational irony rather than verbal irony. Partially as a result of this methodological difference, I will go on to argue that the fool's speech in 2 Cor 10–12 does not contain significant verbal irony or sarcasm. Furthermore, an analysis Paul's irony in these chapters cannot provide significant evidence for the integrity of Second Corinthians.¹¹³

Nanos's *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* is not primarily a book about irony. Nanos's interest in irony is taken as far as necessary to characterise Galatians as a letter of ironic rebuke.¹¹⁴ This characterization forms the foundation of his later argument, where he provides a rethinking of the identity of Paul's opponents and the nature of the situation in Galatia.¹¹⁵ Although Nanos's discussion of modern theory on irony does not run much deeper than the First Quest, he shows a proficient grasp of ancient discussions.¹¹⁶ Because our interests lie solely in irony, we may limit our interaction to the relevant parts of Nanos's study in our treatment of sarcasm in Galatians.

¹⁰⁹ 1992:507–11. Loubser draws his definition of irony from an early pragmatic perspective, but not one that would become significant in irony studies. See Loubser 1992:508–9; Warning 1985.

¹¹⁰ See 1992:509–11.

¹¹¹ Loubser 1992:517–18.

¹¹² 1992:518–19.

¹¹³ See Ch.8, §3.

¹¹⁴ 2002:49–56, 60–61.

¹¹⁵ See Nanos 2002:73–322.

¹¹⁶ For his use of ancient authors and Muecke, see 2002:34–39. For citation of Booth and Kierkegaard, see (2002:305–9, 311).

3.3.1 Glenn Holland's Divine Irony

To date, no one has produced a larger body of work on irony in Paul than Holland. His first paper thereon addresses the fool's speech and his second 1 Cor 1–4.¹¹⁷ My review will focus on his monograph *Divine Irony*, because it is at once his most complete treatment of irony and also reiterates most of the material from the previous articles.

Holland begins *Divine Irony* with irony's definition. He provides a fuller discussion of contemporary scholarship than he had in his previous papers, although only one of the works cited falls within a decade of his own monograph.¹¹⁸ The hallmarks of Holland's approach to irony in Paul are that "Paul uses irony to build solidarity with the members of the church in Corinth by reinforcing their common values" and that Paul's irony invites his audience to consider the situation at hand from the "divine perspective."¹¹⁹ At the same time, within the persuasive task, specific instances can have targeted rhetorical effects and the production of shame stands out as a feature of several cases of Pauline irony.¹²⁰ Holland uses Socrates and Paul as his major case studies,¹²¹ concluding that:

Paul and Socrates are alike in their use of irony as an indirect means of communicating the insights they gained from a revelation of the divine perspective. In both cases their irony was meant to educate, to be recognized as irony, and appropriated by their audiences as a means for discovering divine truth.¹²²

Because for Holland "all irony is at root divine irony,"¹²³ we will explore his concept of divine irony briefly. The basics of this outlook can be described as follows: In being ironic, the ironist adopts a detached perspective, much like that of an omniscient narrator. The divine perspective is also a detached perspective. Therefore, the ironist shares in the divine perspective.¹²⁴ Holland grounds his divine irony in a sort of ironic detachment discussed in

¹¹⁷ Holland 1993:250–64; 1997:234–48.

¹¹⁸ Holland begins with Muecke and Booth (2000:19, 21–5, he also draws heavily on Kierkegaard, see 2000:101–16), gets into reader-response theory (2000:25–32), but does not make it to the Pragmatic Revolution. He takes the semantic tradition as his starting point (2000:20, see also 79, 160; cf. 1993:250n.4; 1997:236n.8, 237n.13, 238n.14–6). To Holland's credit, his discussion of ancient irony is considerable (2000:82–97).

¹¹⁹ 2000:131, 148–49.

¹²⁰ Holland 2000:136–37, 148.

¹²¹ See 2000:82–118, 119–56, respectively.

¹²² 2000:156.

¹²³ Holland 2000:149.

¹²⁴ See Holland 2000:59–60. Of course, this summary is somewhat simplified.

Kierkegaard,¹²⁵ though divine irony is itself a novel paradigm rather than a mere distillation of Kierkegaard.

While there is no space to mount a thorough critique, divine irony suffers from conceptual problems. The jump from the detachment of the ironist to the detachment of the divine is not logically necessary. One's outlook can ascend high indeed without entering the realm of the gods. More significantly, I argue that the ironic perspective is not always detached. A Paul who sarcastically mocks "very-super apostles" or ironically begs the Corinthians to forgive him the *ἀδικία* of not being a financial burden on them is very much a participant in the conflicts he responds to ironically (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11, 13, see Ch.7, §2.2.2, §2.4.2). Furthermore, as we shall see in the next chapter, both Job and his interlocutors employ irony throughout the dialogues of *Job*, and it takes the appearance of God himself to reveal that none of them adequately expressed the divine perspective.¹²⁶

Although we will not go further with divine irony, Holland's exegetical conclusions regarding irony in First and Second Corinthians will merit interaction in our treatment of the Corinthian correspondence.

3.4 Recent Scholarship

I will not at this time attempt to demarcate a "third quest" period in irony studies. More time and distance will be required to determine what the next significant movement in the field might be. The next steps could involve synthesizing different accounts of irony into a unified whole, or perhaps advances in neuroscience will shed light on how the brain processes irony.¹²⁷ Colston's recent survey argues that an important step for the field will involve weighing the conclusions of past scholarship, which has been largely Anglocentric, against the different systems for communicating verbal irony across languages.¹²⁸ Within this research agenda, the results of our study, especially related to the typical means ancient

¹²⁵ See Holland 2000:105–16. Holland dedicates significant space to discussing Kierkegaard (Holland 2000:101–18).

¹²⁶ Interestingly, Holland addresses God's use of irony in *Job*, but not the irony employed by Job and his friends (2000:75–79). Lucian's character assassinations provide further examples of a more emotionally invested ironic perspective, although Lucian is more detached than Paul (see Ch.3, §3.3).

¹²⁷ For this latter direction, see Akimoto et al. 2017:42–46; Spotorno et al. 2013:1–10.

¹²⁸ 2019:109, 124, 127–28.

Greek speakers use to express sarcasm (Ch.3, §1–2), can hope to be relevant not only to Pauline scholarship, but to the study of verbal irony as well.

Once we get into the 2010s, we start to see new developments in Pauline scholarship. Schellenberg devotes a chapter to irony in his 2013 study of Paul’s rhetorical education. Like the book as a whole, this chapter is an essentially negative project, which argues that Paul’s fool’s speech is not ironic¹²⁹—although Paul does make “isolated ironic statements” in 2 Cor 10–13.¹³⁰ Schellenberg is critical of Holland’s work,¹³¹ and his assertion that Paul’s boasting is actual self-promotion delivered without irony is an interesting foil to interpreters such as Loubser and Spencer.¹³²

Sim’s work on verbal irony marks a significant moment in scholarship on irony in Paul. Approaching verbal irony from the standpoint of relevance theory, Sim brings ideas from the Pragmatic Revolution into the conversation.¹³³ Her discussion moves through both (largely) accepted and (more) contentious examples of irony in the Pauline corpus.¹³⁴ Sim then compares Paul’s use of irony to that of Jesus and of Epictetus,¹³⁵ and also points out prophetic irony in the Hebrew bible.¹³⁶

In line with Sperber and Wilson, Sim defines irony as “*an echoic utterance from which the speaker distances himself*.”¹³⁷ Unfortunately, the way that she simplifies the paradigm—perhaps for the benefit of her non-specialist audience—ends up creating a historical problem. Sim’s interpretation of echoic mention assumes that irony involves re-presenting the speech or perspectives of another. As part of the process for identifying verbal irony, she recommends asking, “Can we identify whose thought or utterance the speaker is

¹²⁹ See Schellenberg 2013:169–79. Heckel also considers the association of irony with Paul’s appropriation of “*der Rolle und Maske eines Narres*” problematic, considering this instead an example of parody (1993:20–22). Lichtenberger’s 2017 article on humour in the New Testament, which devotes about a page to sarcasm and irony in Paul, lists the fool’s speech as an example of Pauline irony. Lichtenberger also considers Phil 3:2 and Gal 5:12 instances of sarcasm, though he does not dedicate space to defining sarcasm or irony (2017:104–5).

¹³⁰ Schellenberg 2013:170.

¹³¹ 2013:170–75.

¹³² See 2013:170, 175–79.

¹³³ See 2016:53–70.

¹³⁴ Sim 2016:56–65.

¹³⁵ 2016:67–68.

¹³⁶ 2016:65–66.

¹³⁷ Sim markets this approach as a new one, which, as we have seen, is not correct (2016:5–6, 54). To be fair, it was new to New Testament studies at the time.

echoing?”¹³⁸ While a more nuanced form of this hypothesis allows for more indistinct forms of mention (§2.3), this assumption leads Sim to consistently claim access to the actual perspectives of Paul’s interlocutors by means of irony’s echo.¹³⁹ Making these kinds of historical claims assumes too much about Paul’s opponents and congregations, and does not account for the distorting influence of hyperbole and misrepresentation, which are absolutely common in verbal irony.

Despite this caveat, Sim’s exegesis of verbal irony in Paul remains helpful, and her work deserves commendation as a first step in bringing the discipline up to date on developments in irony studies since 1975.

4 Conclusions

Scholars of Paul have never been scholars of irony. My somewhat tongue-in-cheek choice of “quest” terminology from historical Jesus studies to discuss stages in irony research has been an intentional way of communicating this methodological shortcoming. Most Pauline work stays fixedly in the First Quest period, that is, within the major monographs of the semantic tradition. Only in recent years has Sim broken into early pragmatic approaches. By treating the monographs of Kierkegaard, Muecke, and Booth as if they were the definitive works on irony, scholars of Paul’s letters have made a methodological decision akin to reading only Schweitzer as preparation for writing on the historical Jesus.

Partially because Pauline scholarship on irony has been so out of date, there has been little consistency in terms of irony’s definition. Some scholars do not consider sarcasm to be a form of irony (Jónsson, Spencer, Loubser). There is also an overall lack of clarity and consistency regarding how different terms, such as sarcasm, irony, verbal irony, dissimulative irony, and paradoxical irony, relate to one another. Furthermore, in drawing conclusions about Paul’s use of irony in a given text, scholars have made generalizations about different forms of irony that, as we saw in §2.1, are not formed in the same way and have different rhetorical functions.

§1 and §2 of this chapter have sought to address these problems. We extended the work of previous Pauline scholarship by creating a more detailed survey of ancient treatments of irony with an especial focus on *σαρκασμός*. Although there has not been space to be fully

¹³⁸ Sim 2016:55.

¹³⁹ See 2016:56, 58, 61–62.

systematic with modern research, our survey in §2 provides biblical scholars with the resources to become up to date on theoretical discussions of verbal irony, in addition to elucidating some of the more important concepts within the field. We have also sought greater specificity in defining the relationships between different forms of irony. We drew distinctions between situational irony, verbal irony, and sarcasm (§2.1), and by focusing primarily on sarcasm, a single form of verbal irony, we will avoid making generalisations about Paul's use of irony that do not hold true for all forms of irony.

We are now equipped with a working definition of sarcasm and a number of exegetical tools for explaining how specific examples may be considered sarcastic, such as echoic mention and pretence. This will enable us to begin addressing sarcasm in ancient texts, but it will not be our final word on method. In discussing constraint satisfaction, I emphasised the importance of being able to recognise a diverse range of signals that indicate sarcasm in order to facilitate accurate identification. With so little previous work done on sarcasm in ancient texts, it will be necessary to develop our understanding of how ancient Greek speakers communicated sarcasm as we go along. This will begin in the next chapter and will be a major focus of chapter 3, which will bring together hundreds of examples in order to elucidate the common linguistic and contextual signals of sarcasm in ancient Greek.

We are also yet to address the rhetorical functions of sarcasm in an ancient context. Determining the situations in which sarcasm is typically appropriate or inappropriate, who may use it with whom and to what end will be an integral part of this project. One of the central aims of the next chapter will be to establish the normal rhetorical functions of sarcasm and also to begin describing less typical, more subversive uses. This work will continue through the following chapter on Lucian. By the time we come to discuss Paul, we will have a broad understanding of sarcasm's pragmatic functions within in an ancient context as a baseline for comparison.

Chapter 2

Sarcasm in the Septuagint: With Special Reference to *Job* and the Prophets

We begin our study of ancient sarcasm with a body of texts that we can be sure had a profound influence on Paul's life and thought: the Septuagint. The Septuagint also has the advantage of having a relatively high density of sarcasm compared to other Jewish texts relevant to Paul's historical and religious context. The impact of LXX Greek on Paul's also makes this corpus a valid tool for linguistic comparison.¹ For reasons of scope and because our goal is to establish the use of sarcasm in ancient Greek, we will only make reference to the Hebrew versions of the texts in question when doing so is necessary to explain the Greek.

This chapter will proceed with two case studies, *Job*² and the prophets,³ and its primary task will be to describe sarcasm's most common rhetorical functions. For our purposes, *Job*'s utility lies in how it enables us to observe considerable variation in the use of sarcasm across several different character relationships in a single literary work.⁴ *Job* magnifies sarcastic interactions to a literary scale, making patterns stand out more boldly. By putting an analysis of sarcasm in OG *Job* into conversation with previous scholarship on sarcasm in classics, we will be able to make some preliminary hypotheses about the rhetorical functions of sarcasm, which we may then temper throughout this project with reference to texts across several genres and historical situations.

The LXX prophets also engage in frequent sarcasm, making their writings an excellent point of comparison for both reinforcing and refining the conclusions of our work on *Job*. In this case study we will consider both the writings of the prophets themselves, and stories about prophets in narrative works, which contain longer descriptions of sarcastic exchanges that can be helpful for illustrating certain points.⁵ The way that the prophets' perceived divine mandate impacts their use of sarcasm will provide an important exception to the normal use of sarcasm defined in our analysis of *Job*. By way of analogy, the prophets

¹ Tim McLay argues that Paul not only read his scriptures in Greek, but that his use of the text in this language impacted his theology (2003:145, 150–53).

² I use italics to differentiate *Job* the book from Job the character.

³ These being the most sarcasm-dense corpora in the Old Testament.

⁴ Although Paul makes far more references to the Prophets throughout his letters, he is not unfamiliar with Greek *Job*. Cox suggests that Paul quotes Greek Job 5:12 from memory in 1 Cor 3:19, and Phil 1:19 may allude to Job 13:16 (2017:1–3).

⁵ I will refer to this broader grouping of texts as “the prophets” and reserve the capitalised “the Prophets” for referring specifically to the major prophets + the XII.

will also be important for comparison with Paul, whose apostolic vocation colours the way he interacts with his congregations.

Although this chapter is primarily concerned with answering the question “what does sarcasm do?” we will also address in part the communication and identification of sarcasm. As we exegete *Job* and the Prophets, we will begin to identify patterns in how speakers communicate sarcasm both linguistically and through context. Establishing common signals of sarcasm in ancient Greek will play an essential role in identifying sarcasm in Paul in Part 2 of the study. We will continue this work to a higher level of detail in the next chapter, which will focus primarily on answering the question “how is sarcasm expressed?” using a collection of examples several times larger than that which we address in the present chapter.

1 *Job*: Sarcasm as Implicit Challenge

As a translation, LXX *Job*’s relationship to its Hebrew parent text is complicated. The translator of the Old Greek (OG) is well known as the “freest” Septuagint translator, skilled in the use of Greek and inclined towards paraphrase and epitomisation.⁶ This results in a text that is not only one sixth shorter, but a literary work in its own right advancing a certain interpretation of *Job*’s story.⁷ I will treat the text as such. This will allow us to bypass complex debates over the composition history and interpretation of the Hebrew. LXX *Job* is also a composite text, as later translators fill in the gaps, so to speak, left by OG’s epitomisation.⁸ In order to deal with more of a literary unity, and because the later, asterisked portions of LXX *Job* do not contain significant sarcasm, I will focus on the OG for this case study.

We join the narrative at the conflict between *Job* and his friends,⁹ which begins as they react to *Job*’s irreverent curse of his own birthday.¹⁰ We will explore the ways that each

⁶ Kepper and Witte 2011:2054–55. For detailed discussion of translation technique, see Dhont 2018:18–40, 332–34.

⁷ Kepper and Witte 2011:2046; Cox 2015:385–88.

⁸ See Cox 2007:668–69; 2015:396–98.

⁹ I will refer to *Job*’s interlocutors as his “friends,” not because they behave in a friendly manner toward him; they usually do not, but because the text designates them as such (φίλοι, *Job* 2:11).

¹⁰ Robertson, writing on the MT, argues that in cursing the day of his birth, *Job* has essentially cursed God (1973:449–51), though Good considers the text ambiguous (1973:476). Regardless, *Job*’s initial speech “must have seemed to border on blasphemy” (Driver and Gray 1958:40; cf. Robertson 1973:452).

character or group of characters uses sarcasm against their interlocutors within the polemical interactions of *Job* as the basis for our observations about sarcasm's rhetorical functions.¹¹

1.1 Friends vs Job

By a logical necessity stemming from their theology, Job's friends consider his affliction to be some sort of judgement for wrongdoing.¹² In the face of Job's unrepentance, their criticism focuses on his innocence (Job 4:6–9, 17–21; 8:2–3; 11:2–11; 15:5–6; 22:4–10; 25:2–6). As the discussion moves forward and Job refuses to accept a loss of face, they must also discredit his wisdom in order to call his arguments into question (4:21; 11:7–12; 15:2–3, 9–10). Of all Job's friends, Eliphaz is the only one to engage in clear sarcasm, which functions to support the broader challenges to Job's innocence and wisdom raised throughout the friends' speeches.

In Eliphaz's first speech, after more generally questioning Job's innocence (4:6–9, 17–21), Eliphaz invites Job to "Call out, then, to see whether anyone will listen to you or whether you will see any of the holy angels" (ἐπικάλεσαι δέ, εἴ τις σοι ὑπακούσεται, ἢ εἴ τινα ἀγγέλων ἀγίων ὄψῃ, 5:1). The ostensible encouragement of Eliphaz's imperative can be readily explained as a case of sarcastic pretence.¹³ ἐπικάλεσαι δέ suggests momentarily that Job's call for vindication could be efficacious and "encourages" him to proceed. Because the reader already knows that Eliphaz does not consider Job innocent, and thereby worthy of divine vindication, his pretence is thin enough that Job cannot fail to catch its critical implications.¹⁴

How we translate εἴ in the latter clauses of 5:1 changes how we read Eliphaz's sarcasm. Different ways of reading εἴ will also feature in several other instances of LXX sarcasm, so it will be worth discussing a few potential readings here. NETS takes 5:1b–c as conditionals: "But call, if anyone will respond..."¹⁵ I do not consider this the most plausible option. εἴ is a common way of indicating indirect questions in Greek.¹⁶ The MT explicitly

¹¹ While acknowledging his place in OG's narrative, I will ignore Elihu for reasons of scope.

¹² See Hartley 1991:44.

¹³ See Ch.1, §2.4.

¹⁴ Cox notes several emphatic elements in the OG ([Forthcoming]:5.1). On hyperbole and emphasis in sarcasm, see Ch.3 §1.2.

¹⁵ Cf. Cox [Forthcoming]:5.1.

¹⁶ LSJ, s.v. "εἴ"; Boas et al. 2019:§42.3; Smyth 1959:§2671.

marks the two latter clauses of 5:1 as questions, with an interrogative ה , and מִי , respectively. Assuming the translator's *Vorlage* was close to the MT,¹⁷ it seems likely that they have here produced a rendering that retains a question-like element from the Hebrew, and which would appear to a reader with only the Greek in front of them as a series of indirect questions. On this reading—"Call out, then, to see whether anyone will listen to you or whether you will see any of the holy angels"—the imperative conveys sarcastic encouragement, while the indirect questions communicate the unlikelihood of Job's call for aid being efficacious. In his afflicted position, it is ever so clear that none of the holy angels are rushing to help him.

Another possibility is to take $\epsilon\iota$ as dubitative. The dubitative modality expresses uncertainty or doubt—"maybe" and "perhaps" are dubitative markers in English—and here it is uncertainty specifically to which I refer.¹⁸ This reading is close to certain elliptical uses of $\epsilon\iota$, where it can mean "supposing that,"¹⁹ or even "perhaps."²⁰ Categorizing the dubitative use of $\epsilon\iota$ is simply a recognition that this meaning can occur outside of elliptical constructions. We see this most strongly in Isa 47:12, which we will discuss in §2.1, where $\epsilon\iota$ translates the Hebrew dubitative marker אולי ("maybe").

On a dubitative reading of Job 5:1, both the initial imperative "Call out, then!" and the following clause "Maybe someone will listen to you, or perhaps you will see one of the holy angels!" would be sarcastic. With feigned uncertainty, Eliphaz pretends that Job might be heard if he calls for help, but ultimately implies that he will not.²¹

I prefer taking $\epsilon\iota$ as indicating indirect questions here over a dubitative interpretation, as I think this best describes how the translator attempts to convey the sense of their *Vorlage*. However, we may still note a subtle dubitative element in these indirect questions, insofar as they raise the possibility of Job succeeding in applying to divine aid. Here too one may detect a note of sarcasm.

Eliphaz engages in sarcastic pretence again at the outset of his second speech, in response to Job's claims that God has over-judged him (13:22–14:22). Since Job's complaint

¹⁷ An assumption Cox too makes here (see [Forthcoming]:5.1).

¹⁸ On the dubitative in sarcasm, see Haiman 1998:55–56.

¹⁹ See LSJ, s.v. " $\epsilon\iota$ ", VII.1.

²⁰ Cf. Barrett on Acts 8:22 (1994:1:415–16).

²¹ It is reasonable to read an element of indirect questioning in this interpretation, especially considering that this is a normal function of $\epsilon\iota$ and that we have questions in Hebrew. One can reflect this nuance by adding a question mark to the above translation.

would have sounded impious to his friends, the first clause of Eliphaz’s reply seems surprising, capable of being read: “Will the wise man (i.e. Job) give an answer of spiritual knowledge?” (Πότερον σοφὸς ἀποκρισιν δώσει συνέσεως πνεύματος, 15:2). For a moment, Eliphaz appears to associate Job with wisdom (σοφός) and pneumatic understanding (συνέσεως πνεύματος).²² This is all the more curious considering Eliphaz’s depiction of himself as a recipient spiritual revelation in 4:15 (καὶ πνεῦμα ἐπὶ πρόσωπόν μου ἐπῆλθεν). However, in the next clause the image of the spiritual sage is undercut and replaced by one of Job attempting to sate himself on hot air: “Will a wise man give an answer of windy insight, and did he satisfy the ache in his belly—[reproving others] with statements that are beside the point, with words that are of no benefit?” (15:2–3 [modified] NETS).

Although the full statement is obviously critical, the ambiguity of the first clause allows for double entendre and creates scope for sarcasm. The fact that the whole first clause can be read positively creates a moment of pretence that extends the time between ostensible praise and literal evaluation, in which it seems like Eliphaz is complementing Job. An element of surprise emerges when, following the obvious negativity of what comes, the reader must reassess and reinterpret the statement as a whole. This process of reinterpretation requires inverting the positive qualities of spiritual knowledge and wisdom applied to Job. To Eliphaz, Job is only wise in his own estimation and his insight is vacuous.

1.2 Job vs Friends

Job is at once more loquacious and more sarcastic than his friends. His responses to their critiques include several sarcastic statements that implicitly challenge their ability to judge his character.

After bemoaning the fact that, “Those who held me in respect have now fallen on me like snow or like solid ice” (6:16 NETS), Job refers to his comforters as “you who see so clearly” (οἱ διορῶντες, 6:19 NETS). In light of the speech as a whole and the fact that Job will characterize them as speaking “mercilessly” shortly after (ἀνελεημόνως, 6:21), Job clearly

²² πνεῦμα is used throughout LXX *Job* with both positive (4:15; 10:12; 12:10; 27:3) and negative (1:19; 7:7; 30:15) connotations, leaving both options easily in play during a first-pass reading of 15:2.

means the epithet οἱ διορῶντες sarcastically.²³ Job’s friends have turned on him precisely because they have failed to correctly assess the situation.

At the close of the first round of speeches, Job refers to his friends with biting rhetorical questions: “So are you really human, then? Is it with you that wisdom will die?” (εἴτα ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἄνθρωποι; ἢ μεθ’ ὑμῶν τελευτήσῃ σοφία; 12:2). It is best to read synonymous parallelism here, with both questions based on the same pretence.²⁴ Job’s questions pretend that his friends might have some exclusive claim to superhuman wisdom such that their death would put an end to all wisdom (μεθ’ ὑμῶν τελευτήσῃ σοφία;). Maybe they are not mere mortals after all (εἴτα ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἄνθρωποι;). However, the following verse emphasises that the friends are just human beings and no better than Job: “My heart too is just like yours” (12:3). This makes it clear that the pretence of 12:2 was sarcastic, and Job never was in any danger of considering the friends superior.

Later in the same speech, Job challenges his friends to “Go ahead; become judges yourselves!” (ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτοὶ κριταὶ γένεσθε, 13:8 NETS). Here the emphatic redundancy of Job’s pronoun use (ὑμεῖς + αὐτοί) signals insincerity. One would typically expect an invitation to become a judge to imply that its object is competent and worthy of the honour. However, in what follows it becomes clear that Job only wishes to see his friends step into a position where they would be under more rigorous divine scrutiny. No matter how faithfully the friends would seek to fulfil their vocation, God’s accusations will hound them and expose them as faithless (13:9–12). Job’s imperative is therefore sarcastic, like Eliphaz’s “encouragement” in 5:1. To draw a more modern parallel, Job’s remark is a bit like telling someone to assert his rights as a nobleman during the French Revolution.²⁵

1.3 Job vs God

²³ Cox recognizes it as a taunt (see [Forthcoming]:6.19).

²⁴ The parallelism in 12:2 MT is also synonymous, and the verse is clearly sarcastic. For scholars who see 12:2 MT as sarcastic or ironic, see Whedbee 1977:12; Good 1981:214; Janzen 1985:102; Parsons 1992:40; Geeraerts 2003:40–41; Luciani 2009:389; Lauber 2017:158–59.

²⁵ In Hebrew, Job 26:2–3, which I mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, is a deeply sarcastic critique of Job’s false comforters (see Whedbee 1977:12; Good 1981:214–15; Janzen 1985:177; Jackson 2010:156; Ingram 2017:55; Lauber 2017:159). We will not treat it here, however, because the OG version is not sarcastic.

Robertson identifies Job 7:16–18 MT as a parody of Psalm 8, aiming to show that “God’s assaults on [Job] are unjustified.”²⁶ Parody is also present in the OG, and we see the translator’s imitation of the psalmist most clearly in Job 7:17:²⁷

τί ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι μιμνήσκη αὐτοῦ, ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, ὅτι ἐπισκέπτη αὐτόν; (Ps 8:5).

τί γάρ ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι ἐμεγάλυνας αὐτόν ἢ ὅτι προσέχεις τὸν νοῦν εἰς αὐτόν; (Job 7:17).²⁸

This parody is also sarcastic. Like we saw with 15:2 (§1.1), Job’s psalm parody begins with positive-sounding language that can be read as sincere praise: “What is the human that you have made him great or that you consider him in your mind? Or that you watch over him until morning and until he rests, you judge him (ἢ ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ ποιήσῃ ἕως τὸ πρωὶ καὶ εἰς ἀνάπαυσιν αὐτόν κρινεῖς;)?” (7:17–18). κρινεῖς, the last word of 7:18, is the first clear indication that Job does not consider God’s watching over him as benevolent divine protection, but as unwelcome scrutiny. This shift from language that can be read as praise to clear complaint continues in 7:19: “How long are you not going to let me be and not let go of me, until I swallow my spittle in pain?” (Cox). The point here is that constant divine surveillance leaves Job not even a chance to swallow his own spit.²⁹ 7:17–19 therefore begins with mock-praise in imitation of Psalm 8, which carries on for almost two verses before finally being clarified as sarcastic by the sincere negative evaluation that begins at the last word of 7:18 and carries through 7:19.

This depiction of God’s dogged surveillance is well summarised in 7:20, where Job calls God “you knower of the mind of humans” (ὁ ἐπιστάμενος τὸν νοῦν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, NETS). As before, this is not meant as an expression of praise, but is a sarcastic epithet. “A person cannot even retreat into their mind to get away from the Lord, to find peace.”³⁰

Robertson maintains that in 12:13, Job seemingly accepts Zophar’s argument that God is wise (cf. 11:6–12, esp. 11.6), only to imply God’s foolishness in his mismanagement of

²⁶ 1973:453; cf. Kynes 2012:63–71; Lauber 2017:160–61.

²⁷ Cf. Cox [Forthcoming]:7.17–18.

²⁸ Note the linguistic similarity of the first clause, even in the translator retaining the μ-sound in the verb.

²⁹ See Cox [Forthcoming]:7.19.

³⁰ Cox [Forthcoming]:7.20.

creation (12:14–25).³¹ This contrast is an example of situational irony at the very least,³² and could suggest that Job originally intended the words “With [God] are wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his” (12:13 NETS) as a sarcastic echo of Zophar’s assertion.³³ Job repeats a modified version of this line in 12:16. The full passage reads:

¹³ παρ’ αὐτῷ σοφία καὶ δύναμις, αὐτῷ βουλή καὶ σύνεσις.

¹⁴ ἐὰν καταβάλλῃ, τίς οἰκοδομήσει; ἐὰν κλείσῃ κατὰ ἀνθρώπων, τίς ἀνοίξει;

¹⁵ ἐὰν κωλύσῃ τὸ ὕδωρ, ξηρανεῖ τὴν γῆν· ἐὰν δὲ ἐπαφῇ, ἀπώλεσεν αὐτὴν καταστρέψας.

¹⁶ παρ’ αὐτῷ κράτος καὶ ἰσχὺς, αὐτῷ ἐπιστήμη καὶ σύνεσις (12:13–16).

¹³ With him are wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.

¹⁴ If he tears down, who can rebuild? If he shuts out people, who can open?

¹⁵ If he withholds the water, he will dry up the earth, but if he lets it loose, he has destroyed it completely.

¹⁶ With him are strength and power; knowledge and understanding are his (NETS).

The repetition of παρ’ αὐτῷ followed by four attributes (12:13, 16)—wisdom, counsel, strength etc.³⁴—forms a pseudo-doxological *inclusio* that contrasts sharply with the four ἐὰν clauses that lie between (12:14–15). This juxtaposition highlights the use of divine power in ways that harm humanity and against which humans are powerless. Furthermore, 12:17–24 depict additional divine injustice,³⁵ making it more difficult to read 12:13, 16 as straightforward praise. Cox’s comment on the Greek is apt: “the Lord is a powerful, disruptive, irritating force in the world.”³⁶ Here we do well to recall from the previous chapter that sarcastic statements need not be counterfactual (Ch.1, §2.2). Job highlights the reality of divine δύναμις, κράτος, and ἰσχὺς, but resents how they work against humanity.³⁷ In light the negative sentiments communicated in its context, we have good evidence for reading 12:13, 16 as non-counterfactual sarcasm that acknowledges God’s power but implies a negative evaluation of its use. With sarcasm in addition to situational irony in 12:13, 16, we

³¹ Robertson 1973:457. Cf. Williams 1971:245. Although these scholars are discussing the MT, their observations hold for the LXX.

³² Insofar as it is ironic that a God so described in 12:13 would behave as described in 12:17–24.

³³ Cf. Ch.1, §2.3. On irony here in the MT, see Janzen 1985:103; Good 1981:218.

³⁴ On the use of multiple adjectives separated by καὶ in ancient Greek sarcasm, see Ch.3, §1.2.1.

³⁵ With the exception of 12:21, which mentions God “heal[ing] the humble” (NETS).

³⁶ [Forthcoming]:13.1.

³⁷ Compare Clines 1989:1:296.

can agree that, “[c]hapter 12 shows unmistakably that what began in the folktale as a test of Job has become a test of God.”³⁸

1.4 God vs Job

Job has questioned, challenged, and accused the Almighty. In chapter 38, God enters with no intention of answering but tells Job to steel himself for interrogation (38:3).³⁹

Ritter-Müller provides an overview of scholarship that touches on irony in God’s first speech. She sees it as symptomatic of such studies to neither define clearly what they mean by irony nor which specific passages they consider ironic.⁴⁰ Consonant with this trend, without any further discussion Pfeiffer advances the tantalizing thesis that God’s first speech consists of “a series of sarcastic questions”.⁴¹ To approach the issue with greater specificity, I will argue that God’s first speech is sustained sarcasm that provides the counter-challenge to Job’s accusations and seeks to put him in his place.⁴² While we shall focus primarily on the first divine speech, many of our observations will be applicable to the second.

As God begins to question Job, he interjects sarcastic comments that are suggestive of the tone he will take throughout the speech. God interrupts his first two questions to encourage Job to reply, suggesting sarcastically that Job must know their answers: “Where were you when I set the earth’s foundations? Tell me, if you comprehend insight! Who set its measures? Perhaps you know!” (ποῦ ἦς ἐν τῷ θεμελιοῦν με τὴν γῆν; ἀπάγγειλον δέ μοι, εἰ ἐπίστη σύνεσιν. τίς ἔθετο τὰ μέτρα αὐτῆς; εἰ οἶδας,⁴³ 38:4–5). The imperative ἀπάγγειλον in 38:4 conveys the same taunting, sarcastic encouragement that we saw in 5:1 and 13:8. NETS takes both εἰ clauses in 38:4–5 as conditionals (“if you have understanding”; “if you know”). This is uncontroversial in the first instance (38:4), being an isomorphic rendering of the Hebrew אִם־יִדְעַת בִּינָה. But the final clause of 38:5 is a sarcastic assertion in Hebrew, rather than a conditional: “Who determined [earth’s] measurements-- surely you know! [כִּי תֹדַע]” (NRSV). For this reason, I prefer a dubitative reading of εἰ in 38:5 LXX (recall §1.1). The

³⁸ Robertson 1973:457.

³⁹ Cf. Job 40:7.

⁴⁰ Ritter-Müller 2000:623–24; for a more recent study, see Lauber 2017:165–66.

⁴¹ 1953:691.

⁴² Geeraerts astutely notes that God responds to Job’s pragmatic flaunting of hierarchy rather than Job’s specific accusations or questions (2003:45–48).

⁴³ Greek punctuated to reflect dubitative reading (see as follows).

feigned uncertainty of “Perhaps you know!” in the OG is close to the pretence of the Hebrew where God acts like Job must know the answers to his questions.

Later in the speech, God asks, “Again, have you been advised of the breadth of what is under heaven?” before remarking, “Do tell me how much it is” (*ἀνάγγειλον δὴ μοι πόση τίς ἐστίν*, 38:18 NETS). God knows as well as Job that Job cannot answer, but the faux-sincerity of God’s request supplies the ostensible positivity necessary for sarcasm. The pretence underlying this sarcastic request is signalled linguistically with the emphatic particle *δή*,⁴⁴ which occurs frequently in ironic statements by virtue of its ability to show exaggeration.⁴⁵

The next question concerns the dwelling places of light and darkness (38:19 LXX), to which Job obviously does not know the answer. But God asks nonetheless, “Would that you might lead me to their borders! And perhaps too you know their paths?” (*εἰ ἀγάγοις με εἰς ὅρια αὐτῶν; εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐπίστασαι τρίβους αὐτῶν*; 38:20).⁴⁶ Cox sees *εἰ* as indicating direct questions in both clauses.⁴⁷ *εἰ* + optative is a common way to indicate wishes,⁴⁸ which I argue better explains the first instance than a direct question. Smyth notes that this volitive use of *εἰ* is poetical.⁴⁹ The translator may thereby be adding a tone of archaic formality to God’s wish that heightens its sarcasm.⁵⁰ The second *εἰ* is likely dubitative (“perhaps”; “presuming”). With this sequence, neither clause is a direct question, but God’s wish for Job to lead him is an implicit request. The image created by this instance of divine sarcasm is quite humorous, as we see the Almighty speaking “through a whirlwind and clouds” (38:1 NETS) to ask a mortal directions.

God follows his sarcastic wish in 38:20 by claiming to be convinced that Job’s knowledge of the cosmos indicates that his origins are of old: “Thereby I know that you were born then, and the number of your years is great!” (*οἶδα ἄρα ὅτι τότε γεγέννησαι, ἀριθμὸς δὲ*

⁴⁴ Which NETS translates well with the over-polite “Do tell me...”

⁴⁵ See Denniston 1954:229–36; Pawlak 2019:557–58.

⁴⁶ Translation adapted from NETS.

⁴⁷ [Forthcoming]:38.20.

⁴⁸ LSJ, s.v. “*εἰ*”, A.2.

⁴⁹ 1959:§1815.

⁵⁰ Which I have sought to convey in my translation, and which NETS communicates well. Cf. Minchin 2010a:394–95.

ἐτῶν σου πολὺς, 38:21 NETS). Ritter-Müller’s designation of this verse as “ein ironischer Höhepunkt” in the MT suits the LXX here as well.⁵¹

The concept of pretence provides the best inroad for understanding how these isolated instances of more obvious sarcasm set the tone for the whole (cf. Ch.1, §2.4). The irony of the verses discussed plays on the idea that Job really does have the wisdom and intellect to answer God’s questions (38:4–5, 38:18, 20–21), and can even impart knowledge to God (38:4–5, 18)! God performs his speech as if he is either Job’s equal or subordinate.

MacKenzie’s envisions this pretence as one of equality:

[The author] presents Yahweh as pretending to believe that such criticism and challenge as Job has uttered can come only from a rival God. It must be that this fault-finder is himself, in reality, the One who operates the universe and knows all its secrets!⁵²

This performance, however, is not *trompe l’oeil*. Throughout the questioning, we the audience—as much as Job himself—are fully aware that Job cannot answer God’s questions, and thus cannot fail to catch the mocking sarcasm that carries on all the way from 38:4–39:30.⁵³ There is an extreme contrast between God’s pretence of ignorance and deference, and the reality that Job is confronted with: an omnipotent being speaking from a raging storm. Compared to the petty squabbling between Job and his friends, God shows himself to be the sarcasm *par excellence*.⁵⁴

1.5 Conclusion: Expression and Function of Sarcasm in OG *Job*

1.5.1 Expression

Surveying the use of sarcasm across OG *Job* has begun to reveal patterns in the communication of sarcastic utterances. The imperative featured significantly in a number of

⁵¹ 2000:274. See also Cox [Forthcoming]:38.21.

⁵² 1959:441.

⁵³ With the exception of 38:7–11, 39:6–7, 21–25, 29–30, where the rhetorical questioning breaks off in favour of statements concerning God or nature.

⁵⁴ While space has not permitted discussion of God’s second speech, the same sarcastic pretence can be seen throughout much of its rhetorical questioning as well. In the same manner as the first speech, the second too is punctuated with more obvious uses of sarcasm. The most outstanding of these occurs when God dramatically invites Job to display the qualities of divinity, to “Go ahead take on loftiness and power, and put on glory and honour...” (ἀνάλαβε δὴ ὕψος καὶ δύναμιν, δόξαν δὲ καὶ τιμὴν ἀμφίεσαι... 40:10–13 NETS). For scholars who see irony or sarcasm in these verses (MT), see Dhorme 1926:562–64; Clines 1989:3:1181–83; Hoffman 1996:214; Geeraerts 2003:41–42; esp. Geiger 2018:39–42.

sarcastic commands and requests (5:1; 13:8; 38:4; 38:18), and we also saw various uses of *ei* (5:1; 38:4–5; 38:20). We will hold off discussing these patterns until after we have completed our work on the prophets, since both features recur there as well.

On several occasions sarcastic statements are followed by literal statements that explicitly express negative evaluation (7:17–19; 12:2–3, 13–24; 15:2). This juxtaposition clarifies the presence of more subtle sarcasm that would otherwise have been difficult to detect (esp. 7:17–19; 12:13–24; 15:2). The literal, negative evaluations presented in these passages confirm for the reader what tone the speaker’s sarcasm implies. For example, 7:19 makes it clear that, “What is the human that you have made him great or that you consider him in your mind?” (7:17), sarcastically conveys the subtext, “What is the human that you consider scrutinising him so important?”

We also observed two different ways of expressing sarcastic politeness, with God’s pseudo-deferential requests featuring the imperative + *dh* and the optative of wish (38:18–19).⁵⁵ This mocking over-formality is an excellent tool for deflating the status-claims of others, as it implies that its target does not deserve the politeness with which they are being treated.

The friends (6:19), Job (15:2) and God (7:20) are all targets of different sarcastic epithets, positive appellations turned to ironic use, at one point or another. Even more frequent is the use of repetition and parallelism as a means of adding emphasis to sarcastic statements (5:1; 12:13, 16; 38:20, 21). This prevalence of this feature is a likely by-product of dealing with Hebrew poetry in translation. The pinnacle of this sarcastic repetition comes in the divine speeches where a torrent of rhetorical questions forms the longest sustained act of sarcasm in *Job*. God’s pretending to require instruction from a near-divine Job creates the insincerity necessary to recognize the sarcasm in this scene, contrasting sharply with the reality of God’s manifestation (38:1) and Job’s affliction (2:8). Pretence played an important role throughout our analysis of *Job*, as characters temporarily assume a version of their interlocutors’ positions so as to better trash them sarcastically.

⁵⁵ On particle use in sarcasm, cf. Ch.3, §1.2.3.

1.5.2 Function: Implicit Challenge and Social Hierarchy

Tracing the use of sarcasm through a single literary work has enabled the observation of its use across diverse character relationships. This will enable us to make some preliminary hypotheses about the pragmatic functions of sarcasm in an ancient Greek speaking context that we may continue to refine throughout this study on the basis of examples drawn from both literary and more “real-life” texts.

I argue that sarcasm normally functions as an implicit challenge to what the speaker perceives as a claim to some positive quality made by another party. This has been the case throughout the book of Job. The friends use sarcasm to challenge Job’s innocence and wisdom, Job in turn questions their wisdom and ability to judge him, and also challenges God’s justice. God uses sarcasm to challenge Job to display divine intelligence, in order to expose Job’s ignorance and unworthiness to call God to account.

The way sarcasm works as a speech act makes it aptly suited to conveying this implicit challenge. As we defined it in the previous chapter, sarcasm always involves an utterance that would normally communicate positive evaluation. This ostensible positivity presents a (possibly exaggerated) version of the positive quality the sarcastist sees their target as claiming. For example, the epithet “You Who See Clearly” (οἱ διορῶντες, 6:19) indicates that Job considers his friends to perceive themselves as insightful. Sarcasm also always implies negative evaluation. This negative evaluation communicates that the sarcastist does not accord their interlocutor the positive quality they might wish to possess. Job’s sarcastic epithet therefore implicitly denies that his friends see things clearly at all.

Social hierarchy often plays a role in these exchanges, because the claim to a positive quality or qualities that sarcasm implicitly challenges is often bound up with status. For example, if Job is really blameless, his friends ought to treat him with greater respect. In using sarcasm to challenge Job’s innocence, his friends imply that he is their inferior, while Job’s counter-sarcasm challenges his friends attempt to situate themselves as his superior.

In her excellent work on sarcasm in Homer, which is to my knowledge the only dedicated research on sarcasm in ancient Greek texts prior to this study, Minchin makes further observations about sarcasm and social hierarchy:

Sarcasm responds to—and reinforces—status and rank: it is acceptable for a superior or elder to be sarcastic to a subordinate or junior; equals may trade sarcasm; a subordinate or a junior should not be sarcastic to a superior or elder. In Homer these

rules are occasionally broken; and Homer always is careful to observe what happens next: those who speak out of turn will always be reproved.⁵⁶

This pattern also plays out in *Job*. God’s second discourse leaves Job thoroughly humbled, he calls himself dust (γῆν καὶ σποδόν, 42:6), the stuff of creation (cf. Gen 3:19), which is a recognition and acceptance of his mortality.⁵⁷ God also rebukes Job’s friends (42:7). The fact that Job must intercede for them (42:8–10)⁵⁸ establishes a clear final hierarchy: God, then Job, then the friends. Just as Minchin describes, those who have challenged this hierarchy are humiliated and must repent, while those who have challenged those below are vindicated.

As such, I will accept as a further working hypothesis that this is a “normal” or at least inoffensive use of sarcasm. As long as hierarchies are not upset, sarcasm is appropriate. But when Job or his friends attempt to use sarcasm to assert themselves over those they belong in subordination to, they will be put in their place. Having established this “rule,” we will now turn to some notable exceptions within the prophets as well as in our subsequent work on Lucian. While these more subversive uses of sarcasm are interesting and will be important for comparison with Paul later on, we would do well to remember that they are a clear minority (see Ch.3 §3).

2 The Prophets

We now move to another sarcasm-dense corpus: the prophets—including both the writings of the prophets and stories about prophets in narrative texts. As before, we are interested in identifying patterns in sarcastic expression on both linguistic and contextual

⁵⁶ 2010b:554. Cf. Minchin 2010a:399.

⁵⁷ Cox [Forthcoming]:40.6. Some scholars have advanced subversive readings of the Hebrew in which Job’s repentance is less than genuine and God comes off as an unsympathetic character (see Robertson 1973:466–69; Pelham 2010:105–9; for an overview of and argument against subversive readings, see Newell 1992:441–56). We shall not deal with these interpretations here, as they are foreign to the thought world of the LXX, which ends by blessing Job (42:10–16) and guaranteeing his resurrection (γέγραπται δὲ αὐτὸν πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι μεθ’ ὧν ὁ κύριος ἀνίστησιν, 42:17a), the latter especially suggesting lifelong piety (cf. Häner 2019:41–42, 46, 48–49).

⁵⁸ Driver and Gray point out that the friends are made to offer “an exceptionally large burnt-offering” (1958:374; see also; Hartley 1991:539). Clines notes that Job remains in his afflicted state when he must intercede for his friends (1989:3:1234). The friends, who are kings and tyrants (2:11; 42:17a), must submit to Job at his lowest.

levels. We will also explore sarcasm in the prophetic literature as a means of nuancing our understanding of its pragmatic functions.

Translation tendencies vary widely across the LXX Prophets. Isomorphism is more common across books such as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the minor prophets—although each translation has its own particular features.⁵⁹ While we shall cite instances of sarcasm from all these works, partially by coincidence and partially for expedience, we draw most of the cases for sustained discussion from Isaiah. More comparable to OG *Job*, LXX Isaiah’s translator is both apt and keen to paraphrase.⁶⁰ In light of the complex relationship between translation and source text in Isaiah and the prophets more generally, we will again focus on the LXX as a literary production in its own right, using the MT only where necessary to explain the Greek.

2.1 The Sarcastic Taunt

The story is well known. All Israel is gathered for a spectacle pitting Elijah against hundreds of Baal’s and Asherah’s prophets in a contest of life or death. Elijah allows the opposition the first chance at calling down fire from heaven, ostensibly because of their greater numbers (3 Kgdms 18:25), but based on what follows one wonders if it were not for the sake of exposing them to humiliation. Having allowed Baal’s prophets to call on their god for hours to no effect, Elijah finally speaks out, mocking (ἐμυκτήρισεν), “Call in a loud voice! For he is a god, for prating occupies him, and at the same time he is perhaps giving an oracle, or perhaps he is asleep and will get up” (ἐπικαλεῖσθε ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, ὅτι θεός ἐστιν, ὅτι ἀδολεσχία αὐτῷ ἐστιν, καὶ ἅμα μήποτε χρηματίζει αὐτός, ἢ μήποτε καθεύδει αὐτός, καὶ ἐξαναστήσεται, 3 Kgdms 18:27 NETS).

Here Elijah signals his insincerity using exaggeration. Baal’s prophets must not only call upon their god, they must cry louder (ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ)! Then comes a threefold repetition of activities from which the god may need to be beckoned. As sarcasm, this list is insincerely affiliative insofar as Elijah pretends to make excuses for the deity. At the same

⁵⁹ On Ezekiel, see Olley 2009:12–14; Hammerstaedt-Löhr et al. 2011:2850–51; Lust 2016:622. On Jeremiah, see Cox 2007:876–77; Shead 2015:469–83; Bogaert 2016:584. On the XII, see Dines 2015:442, 440–44.

⁶⁰ See van der Kooij and Wilk 2011:2489–91; van der Kooij 2016:562–64; Ngunga and Schaper 2015:457–62, 464–65.

time, the activities suggested belittle Baal for being too weak or preoccupied to notice the summons of hundreds of his prophets.⁶¹ The ostensible uncertainty in the passage is also sarcastically affiliative, as Elijah suggests that Baal might just respond when every outward indication has made it clear that he will not: “Maybe he is sleeping and will wake up!”

Elijah gives an exaggerated imitation of someone who might support the prophets of Baal. It is an act of pretence, a performance given before a literal crowd. The subtext of this sarcastic encouragement communicates to the people the nonentity of Baal and absurd uselessness of his prophets.

This chapter of Elijah’s story is worth telling because it so well captures much of prophetic sarcasm. Sarcastic taunts similar to Elijah’s are the most common form of sarcasm that we see throughout the prophets. In these acts of pseudo-encouragement, the prophet urges his victim(s) to persist in some useless or immoral action. This ostensible encouragement implies that the requested actions may be efficacious, but with a heavy irony undercutting the whole.

Isaiah 47:12–13 provides another clear example of this phenomenon.⁶² After proclaiming doom on Babylon (47:11), the prophet “encourages” the Chaldean diviners:

στῆθι νῦν ἐν ταῖς ἐπαιδαῖς σου καὶ τῇ πολλῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου, ἃ ἐμάνθανες ἐκ νεότητός σου, εἰ δυνήσῃ ὠφεληθῆναι.

Now, stand firm in your charms and your great sorcery, things which you were trained in from your youth! Maybe you will be able to be helped by them (47:12).

Like Elijah’s taunt, we have an imperative (στῆθι), here underlined with an emphatic particle (νῦν),⁶³ encouraging Babylon’s diviners in immoral behaviour that we already know will not benefit them (47:11). This pretence of encouragement is also present in the final

⁶¹ E.g. DeVries notes that Elijah suggests Baal is sleeping while it is still the afternoon (1985:229).

⁶² For scholars who note elements of mockery, irony and/or sarcasm in 47:12–13, see Berges 2008:498–500; Koole 1997:1:543–47; Oswalt 1998:253–54.

⁶³ I take νῦν here as emphatic since it is rendering καὶ rather than a temporal particle. Ancient evidence suggests that the LXX’s *Vorlage* was very like the MT in Isa 47:10–13. See 1QIsa^a [Col. XXXIX–XL]; IQIsa^b [Col. XX]; Watts 1987:170; Oswalt 1998:251n.42; Baltzer et al. 2011:2653.

clause which suggests (sarcastically) that the Babylonian diviners may be successful (εἰ δυνήσῃ ὠφεληθῆναι).⁶⁴

Isaiah's sarcasm continues in the next verse:

κεκοπίακας ἐν ταῖς βουλαῖς σου· στήτωσαν καὶ σωσάτωσάν σε οἱ ἀστρολόγοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, οἱ ὀρώντες τοὺς ἀστέρας, ἀναγγειλάτωσάν σοι τί μέλλει ἐπὶ σέ ἔρχεσθαι.

You have become weary with your counsels; let the astrologers of heaven stand up and save you, those who look at the stars; let them declare to you what is about to come upon you (47:13 NETS).

Here we have a series of three imperatives that all function as sarcastic taunts. The first two occur together, calling on the Chaldean astrologers: “Let them stand and save you!”

(στήτωσαν καὶ σωσάτωσάν σε). These astrologers are then described with the epithet “those who look at the stars” (NETS), which can be read either as a sarcastic or neutral reference.

Isaiah then encourages them again in the imperative, this time to tell the future

(ἀναγγειλάτωσάν σοι τί μέλλει ἐπὶ σέ ἔρχεσθαι). The repetition of imperatives creates a sense of parallelism, emphasising Isaiah's taunt.

We find such sarcastic taunts throughout the LXX Prophets (Isa 41:21–23; Jer 2:28; 7:21; 46:11; Mal 1:8),⁶⁵ in addition to some that are sarcastic only in the MT (Amos 4:4–5; Jer 44:25 [51:25 LXX]). These taunts are characterized by two significant features. First, with their ostensible encouragement they emphasize the utter uselessness of the actions they satirize.⁶⁶ Time and time again we have seen the prophets call on their victims to cry out to gods that cannot save (3 Kgdms 18:27; Isa 41:21–3; Jer 2:28), or to otherwise persist in actions that will not help them in the slightest (Amos 4:4–5 [MT]; Isa 47:12–3; Jer 7:21; 44:25 [MT]; 26:11).

⁶⁴ Here again, contra NETS, I take the εἰ construction as dubitative. This reading is supported by the fact that the translator likely has “maybe” (יִאֻלֵּי) in his *Vorlage* (see n.63 above), and has translated the rest of the phrase isomorphically (compare: εἰ δυνήσῃ ὠφεληθῆναι; יִאֻלֵּי תוֹכְלִי הוּעִיל). Malachi 1:8 also contains a sarcastic taunt and comparable (likely dubitative) εἰ constructions.

⁶⁵ Cf. Isa 5:19 (see Good 1981:136) and Jer 17:15. Here the prophets report the taunts of others.

⁶⁶ Not all taunts are sarcastic. Consider a Pauline example: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:55 NRSV). While both the sarcastic taunts of the prophets and this non-ironic taunt emphasize the impotence of their victims, this example lacks the ostensible encouragement of sarcasm.

The second major feature of the prophetic taunt is its role in emphasising divine judgement. Very often, these statements are contextualized by more literal declarations of the outcomes that may be expected from the “recommended” actions. After Isa 41:21–23 invites hand-made gods to prove their divinity—“Declare the things that are coming at the end, and we will know that you are gods” (41:23 NETS)—the prophet calls these gods an abomination (41:24).⁶⁷ The oracle then turns to judgement, as Babylon brings destruction from the north (41:25), a doom that no false god can predict (41:26).⁶⁸ This combination of sarcasm and plain speech functions to make the irony of the ostensible encouragement clear. The sarcastic taunt points to the uselessness of the recommended action while its context expresses the inevitability of judgement. It is a double-edged rhetorical move that mockingly holds up false hope before snatching it away.

2.2 Prophetic Sarcasm as Implicit Challenge

In terms of pragmatics, the sarcastic taunts observed throughout the prophets function in much the same way as the sarcasm of *Job*. The element of challenge in these cases is explicit, as the prophets call upon their opposition to perform a specific action. They ironically imply that such deeds could be efficacious, “perhaps you will be able to be helped (by your magic)!” (Isa 47:12; cf. μήποτε καθεύδει αὐτός καὶ ἐξαναστήσεται, 3 Kgdms 18:27). The inability of the victim(s) to complete the requested action calls their legitimacy—as astrologers and prophets in these examples—into question. One may paraphrase the substance of these speech acts (and their subtexts [and further implications]) as follows: “you think you are a powerful astrologer (but you’re not [and therefore you’re a fraud])” (Isa 47:12–13), “you think you are a true prophet of Baal (but he is not a true god [and therefore you’re a fraud])” (1 Kgs 18:27).

There is more to the use of sarcasm in the Prophets than the sarcastic taunt. Isaiah’s ironic lament over the King of Babylon is an excellent example of the way the prophets turn other sorts of sarcasm to the task of challenging another party’s status.⁶⁹ This song-of-

⁶⁷ On the LXX translation, see Vonach 2011:2649.

⁶⁸ For other instances of this phenomenon, see Amos 4:1–5 (MT); Isa 47:8–15; Jer 26:11–12; 3 Kgdms 22:15–23.

⁶⁹ Ezek 28:3–5 (MT) has a comparable case of sarcasm.

mourning (θρῆνος, Isa 14:4) is not intended sincerely. Here Isaiah invokes and inverts the category of lament, using a genre of mourning to mock and indict.

Most of Isaiah’s “lament” is not properly sarcastic, but an intense castigation of Babylon’s king delivered without irony. There is one point, however, where the prophet shifts to more ostensibly positive language to carry his critique forward:

πῶς ἐξέπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὁ ἑωσφόρος ὁ πρωὶ ἀνατέλλων.⁷⁰ συνετρίβη εἰς τὴν γῆν ὁ ἀποστέλλων πρὸς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.

How The Morning Star, the One Who Rises Early, has fallen from the sky! The One Who Sends forth (Light) to All Peoples has crashed into the earth! (Isa 14:12).

Isaiah uses a series of three epithets, “The Morning Star” (ὁ ἑωσφόρος), the One Who Rises Early (ὁ πρωὶ ἀνατέλλων), and The One Who Sends forth (Light) to All Peoples (ὁ ἀποστέλλων πρὸς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), to exaggerate Babylon’s glory, self-importance, and divine aspirations (cf. 14:13–14). The use of repetition here and the way these epithets get longer and longer create an effective parody of Babylon’s pretention. The way these positive appellations are juxtaposed with a description of Babylon’s demise signals that they are intended sarcastically 14:12 (πῶς ἐξέπεσεν; συνετρίβη εἰς τὴν γῆν; cf. 14:15). Instead of mourning Babylon’s fall from glory as in a true lament, the prophet glories in its demise (14:7–8). His sarcastic epithets raise his victim up only to give them further to fall. Thus Isaiah’s sarcasm becomes one of several ways in which he seeks to diminish Babylon’s status in a mocking lament that ends in portraying its utter decimation (14:21–27).

2.3 Prophetic Sarcasm as Insubordination

We have hitherto observed a basic consistency concerning what sarcasm does. But the Prophets also attest to a pattern in the way sarcasm-use interacts with social dynamics that confounds the norms established on our reading of *Job* and in Minchin’s work on Homer. Here, another narrative about another prophet’s sarcastic taunt will serve to illustrate.

In 3 Kgdms 22:13–28, King Ahab grudgingly summons the prophet Micaiah, whom he hates (22:8), to weigh in on the upcoming battle against Ramoth-Gilead (22:1–9). Although Micaiah’s response does not appear to contain any overt signals of sarcasm, the

⁷⁰ Despite the question mark in VTG, I agree with NETS in reading πῶς as exclamatory rather than interrogative (cf. Ch.3, §1.2.4).

narrative presumes that there must have been something in his tone to indicate the insincerity of the pronouncement, “Go up, and you will succeed, and the Lord will give it into the hand of the king” (22:15 NETS). Ahab’s reply, “How many times must I make you swear that you tell me the truth in the name of the Lord?” (22:16 NETS), makes it clear that Micaiah was only giving a mocking imitation of the other prophetic yes-men who predicted the campaign’s success (22:6, 11–12).⁷¹

Ignoring rank, Micaiah is malicious, even arrogant in the face of peers and superiors alike. When one of the court prophets seeks to reprimand him, Micaiah lashes back by declaring his doom (22:24–25), and even when consigned to prison for the duration of the upcoming battle, Micaiah cannot resist a parting threat against the king: “If returning you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me” (22:28 NETS).

This story well-illustrates the tendency of the prophets to use sarcasm as a means of transgressing rank. Where sarcasm was used against the grain of rank in *Job*—such as Job’s sarcastic references to God—the insubordinate sarcasm was always eventually reproved, and their punishment restored the proper hierarchy (§1.5.2).

Not only do the prophets often engage in insubordinate sarcasm, they persist in their insubordination in spite of punishment. Just as Micaiah is sarcastic with Ahab to his face, the prophetic sarcasm often pronounces his doom on victims of significantly higher social standing. Foreign powers receive considerable sarcasm (Ezek 28:3–5 [MT]; Isa 14:12; 41:21–23; 47:12–13; Jer 26:11), although this would no doubt play favourably to a domestic audience. However, the extent to which the prophets employ sarcasm to criticize their own people and rulers is significant (Amos 4:4–5 [MT]; Jer 2:28; 7:21; 41:17; 44:25 [MT]; Mal 1:8). Despite their lower rank, they employ sarcasm like a superior to a subordinate, seeking to expose their victims to shame—often publicly. In the Elijah narrative, this shaming is conceived as a spectacle before the masses. The book of Jeremiah too conceives of a public audience for Jeremiah’s oracles (Jer 7:2; 17:19; 25:2; 43:1–26),⁷² including the parties criticized (see Jer 43:21). Micaiah’s prophecies (22:15, 17, 19–23) are given before everyone they insult, both the king and his prophets (22:10, 24).

⁷¹ See Sim 2016:65; cf. Montgomery 1951:336, 338. Micaiah is made aware of the other prophecies in 22:13.

⁷² This includes the sarcastic taunts of 2:28 and 7:21 in addition to other sarcastic comments critical of Israel and Judah (2:33 [MT]; 4:22; 41:17).

The justification for prophetic sarcasm so often transgressing social boundaries lies close at hand. Like so much prophetic speech, the sarcasm of the prophets is frequently contextualized by some version of “Thus saith the Lord” (Amos 4:5 [MT]; Ezek 28:1–2, 6, 11–12 [MT]; Isa 41:21; Jer 2:29, 31; 7:21; 41:17; 44:25 [MT]; Mal 1:8). By speaking for God, the prophets appropriate a level of status above their interlocutors, which they reflect in the boldness of their criticism.

Claiming to speak for God does not guarantee that the prophet will get away with flouting hierarchy. In our narrative texts, although Elijah ultimately triumphs and Micaiah’s prophecy is vindicated (3 Kgdms 22:34–37), both prophets face significant resistance, with the latter struck and imprisoned (3 Kgdms 22:24–27). It appears that the extent to which prophets might expect pushback on their insubordination is proportional to the extent to which their audience accepts their claim to speak for God.⁷³

While we lack testimony to the original reception of much of the prophets’ writings, the evidence we do have suggests that those who collected and edited these texts were aware of a degree of danger in the prophetic vocation. Jeremiah receives a beating and imprisonment, to which he responds with a Micaiah-esque counter-prophecy (Jer 20:1–6), in addition to significant further hardships (20:7–8, 10; 33:7–11; 43:21–26; 44:11–16; 45:1–13). Unlike in *Job*, here the punishment of the sarcasm does not restore the balance of the original social hierarchy. As long as the prophet remains convinced of their divine mandate, one may expect conflict to continue.

3 Conclusions

The Septuagint has enabled us to engage with many instances of sarcasm across texts with which Paul would have been intimately familiar. Observing the sarcasm of the prophets can nuance our work on *Job* in important ways. As far as the expression of sarcasm is concerned, there were many similarities. Clarifying the presence of sarcasm by following it with statements of literal negative evaluation was significant in *Job* (§1.5.1) and also occurred in Isa 41:21–26. As we will see in the next chapter, this is an important signal of sarcasm in ancient Greek texts (Ch.3, §1.1.4). Ways of creating emphasis and exaggeration were used to communicate sarcasm in both corpora. These include repetition (3 Kgdms

⁷³ The Elijah narrative provides a literary illustration of the way shifting public opinion about the gods in question can have a dramatic impact on the safety of their respective prophets.

18:27; Isa 14:12; 47:13; Job 5:1; 12:13, 16; 38:20, 21), the use of adverbial phrases (3 Kgdms 18:27), and emphatic particle use (Isa 47:12; Job 38:18; 40:10; Mal 1:8). The use of sarcastic epithets was also significant in *Job* (6:19; 7:20; 15:2), and occurs in Isa 14:12.

The most significant pattern in prophetic sarcasm is the prevalence of what I have called sarcastic taunts. These employ the imperative to command or request that the target perform some foolish, useless, or immoral action. While they are most prevalent in the prophets, several sarcastic taunts occur in *Job* (5:1; 13:8; 38:4). They are sarcastic insofar as they ostensibly encourage the other party, engaging in a pretence that the recommended actions could be efficacious. The primary function of these taunts in both the prophets and *Job* is to imply the uselessness of the recommended actions. In the prophets specifically, they also function to emphasize the inevitability of divine judgement.

On a linguistic level, ways of expressing mock uncertainty—that is, when the sarcast pretends to be unsure whether a situation will turn out to the benefit of their victim when it clearly will not—have been an important feature of sarcastic taunts. This is most explicit in 3 Kgdms 18:27 with Elijah’s use of the dubitative marker “maybe” (μήποτε): “Call out!... maybe Baal’s sleeping and will wake up!” We have also observed diverse uses of εἰ, including its use to indicate indirect questions (Job 5:1), express wishes with the optative (Job 38:20a), and to form conditional (38:4) or dubitative constructions (Job 38:5, 20b; Isa 47:12; Mal 1:8).⁷⁴ Dubitative use, which depending on the context can be translated “maybe,” “presumably,” or “perhaps,” also adds an air of mock uncertainty to sarcastic taunts.

In terms of rhetorical function both *Job* and the prophets support the working hypothesis that, in the ancient contexts hitherto surveyed, sarcasm’s primary function is to communicate an implicit challenge. The sarcast’s negative evaluation calls into question their victim’s perceived claim to some positive quality. This often has implications for social hierarchy, communicating that the sarcast’s victim does not merit the standing and honour that they believe they deserve. My work on *Job* also agrees with Minchin’s observations about the use of sarcasm in Homer: that sarcasm is appropriate when used with the grain of social hierarchy. Superiors may use sarcasm to keep their subordinates in line, but those who break rank are liable to reprisal.

⁷⁴ A dubitative reading was also a possibility for Job 5:1.

Although it is an exception rather than the rule, the prophets subvert this pattern in an interesting manner. By claiming to speak for God and thereby appropriating a level of status above their normal rank, the prophets take the liberty of criticizing parties of higher status. This flouting of hierarchy presents a danger to the prophet, but here negative consequences do not re-establish the original hierarchy. The prophets continue their insubordination regardless of punishment so long as it fits their perceived divine mandate. These dynamics will be interesting to compare with Paul's letters, as Paul at times speaks as an accepted leader and elsewhere must appeal to divine backing to support an apostolic authority that has been called into question.

Chapter 3

Sarcasm in Ancient Greek Texts: With Special Reference to Lucian

The previous chapter focused primarily on the rhetorical functions of sarcasm, while also providing a partial answer to the question “how is sarcasm expressed?” The major focus of the present chapter will be addressing the issue of how sarcasm is communicated in ancient Greek. Cross-cultural studies have shown that while there are many similarities between languages in terms of how speakers communicate sarcasm, different languages have their own particular nuances.¹ Therefore, while it is an important first step, understanding how verbal irony works in modern English does not adequately prepare the exegete for identifying sarcasm in ancient Greek. Minchin’s work, which analyses 61 examples of Homeric sarcasm,² is a helpful starting point. There is however considerable distance in register and dialect between the dactylic hexameter of Homeric Greek and Paul’s Koine. Further comparative material is needed. With close to 30 examples of sarcasm assessed as the foundation for our work on the Septuagint, there is still much to cover to determine how to be sarcastic in ancient Greek.

The Lucianic corpus is one of the ancient world’s most prolific stores of sarcasm. To date I have catalogued well over 200 examples of sarcasm in Lucian. This more than doubles the number of cases surveyed in Minchin and our work on the LXX combined. To Lucian I will also add several other texts and corpora, including the New Testament (excluding Paul), Aristophanes, the satirical epigrams of the Greek Anthology, our previous examples from the LXX, and an eclectic selection of other texts, for a total of 386 examples of sarcasm.³ This will create a dataset large enough to begin parsing out the contextual and linguistic signals by which ancient Greek speakers typically indicated sarcasm (§1). These will be foundational in

¹ See Colston 2019:124–28.

² By my count, see Minchin 2010a:540; 2010b:396n.42.

³ I have marked some examples of sarcasm in this dataset as uncertain. When proportions of specific features of sarcasm are given, they will be given as an average of the percentages including and excluding the uncertain examples. The specific breakdown of the dataset is as follows, which I express with the total number of examples, followed by the number of uncertain examples in parentheses. I.e. there are 386 total examples, 79 of which are uncertain; therefore, 386 (79). In this dataset: Lucian 270 (55); LXX 33 (11); NT 26 (9) [mostly the Gospels and Acts, 1 from James]; Aristophanes 24 (4); Greek Anthology 9; Misc. Rhetors and Grammarians (such as those cited in Ch.1, §1.2) 12; Pseudo-Lucian 7; Josephus 3; Philo 1; Euripides 1. There will be variation between the findings of this chapter and Pawlak 2019, which uses a dataset consisting only of Lucian and the NT (Paul included), see 2019:547.

supporting the identification of sarcasm in Paul. The second section of this chapter will identify patterns in the use of sarcasm across our dataset that can both assist in the identification of sarcasm and further our understanding of its pragmatic functions in different contexts.

After addressing the expression of sarcasm, we will return to the question “what does sarcasm do?” (§3). Here we will use Lucian as a case study for furthering the work begun on the rhetorical functions of sarcasm in the previous chapter. Although Lucian is far from Paul in terms of context and genre, sarcasm finds use in both corpora for common rhetorical ends, such as discrediting one’s opponents and influencing the sympathies one’s audience. Lucianic sarcasm can therefore further our understanding of the rhetorical advantages and pitfalls of sarcasm in different contexts. Applied analogically, these findings can be helpful in evaluating the role of sarcasm in Pauline rhetoric.

1 Signals of Sarcasm

In this section we will identify signals of sarcasm that occur with significant frequency across our dataset. This will bring into sharper focus observations made in the previous chapter concerning linguistic and contextual cues of sarcasm in ancient Greek. Any of the following features, whether alone or in combination with others, can in certain contexts be sufficient for indicating the presence of sarcasm. However, even the occurrence of several signals at once does not guarantee a sarcastic reading, and a best-fit interpretation based on all available evidence must always be sought (Ch.1, §2.5).

1.1 Contextual Signals

We begin with signals that are context dependent. These do not involve the linguistic elements of the sarcastic utterance itself, but are derived from the surrounding discourse. We will first explore signals peculiar to narrative, which are created by the author as a third-party, and are therefore generally more explicit (§1.1.1–1.1.2). We then move on to contextual cues given by sarcasts themselves (§1.1.3–1.1.6). Incongruity plays a major role in many of these latter cases, as speakers communicate their insincerity through literal negative evaluations that clash with their sarcasm.

1.1.1 Narration

In her work on *The Odyssey*, Minchin discusses the use of narrative devices to signal sarcasm. She found that introductory verbs expressing negative affect such as νεικέω ‘to taunt’ and κερτομέω⁴ often introduce sarcastic dialogue.⁵ We saw this in the last chapter: “Eliou the Thesbite mocked them [ἐμυκτηήρισεν] and said, “Call in a loud voice! For he is a god...” (3 Kgdms 18:27 NETS). Here the LXX translator’s verb choice is especially apt considering the close relationship between μυκτηρισμός and σαρκασμός in ancient discussions of irony (Ch.1, §1.2).

Lucian does not use much narrative, so we lack the necessary data to determine how prevalent introductory verbs are as signals of sarcasm across ancient Greek texts generally.⁶ But Gospel authors use them significantly (ἐνέπαιξαν, Matt 27:29; ἐμπαίζοντες, Mk 15:31; ἐξεμυκτηρίζον, Luke 23:35, ἐβλασφήμει, Luke 23:39; cf. Homer *Il.* 16.740–50; *Od.* 22.194–200; Pseudo-Lucian, *Ass.* 24).⁷

1.1.2 Victim Recognition

Minchin also shows how the reactions of characters to sarcastic statements can function as a signal of sarcasm.⁸ Lucian’s comic dialogues lend themselves more to this signal, providing us with more reliable data. Having a character, usually the victim, recognize the implied insult of their interlocutor makes it clear to the text’s audience that the previous utterance was meant sarcastically. This occurs in 6% of our examples. *Dialogues of the Sea Gods* provides a helpful illustration. The scene begins with Doris mocking Galatea’s cyclopean paramour: “A good-looking lover they say you have, Galatea, in this Sicilian shepherd who’s so mad about you!” (*DMar.* 1.1 [MacLeod]).⁹ Galatea returns, “None of your jokes (Μὴ σκῶπτε), Doris. He’s Poseidon’s son, whatever he looks like” (*DMar.* 1.1 [MacLeod]).

⁴ See n.86

⁵ Minchin 2010b:539–42, 553.

⁶ They occur in 6% of the full dataset. Interestingly, when we ignore Lucian, this jumps to 15%. Further research on narrative texts is necessary to draw meaningful conclusions.

⁷ In Lucian, see *Demon.* 44; *Lex.* 23.

⁸ 2010b:540–43, 553; cf. Minchin 2010a:399.

⁹ Citations of *DDeor.*, *DMar.*, *DMeretr.*, and *DMort.* follow the numbering of MacLeod’s Loeb edition. All translations of Lucian, aside from my own, are from the LCL.

This narrative device can help one’s audience keep up with subtler uses of sarcasm. In the early part of Lucian’s *Lexiphanes*, most of what Lexiphanes’s friend Lycinus says is some sort of teasing.¹⁰ However, Lycinus’s dissembling makes it difficult to be sure whether his compliments are sincere, until Lexiphanes asks Lycinus to “throw the irony on the ground” before they move on in the discussion (Τὸν μὲν εἴρωνα πεδοῖ κατάβαλε, *Lex.* 1; cf. *JTr.* 52).¹¹ We saw a similar case in the last chapter, where Ahab’s remark was the only hint that Micaiah’s prophecy was sarcastic: “How many times must I make you swear that you tell me the truth in the name of the Lord?” (3 Kgdms 22:16 NETS, See Ch.2, §2.3).

1.1.3 Explicit Echoes

The echoic account of verbal irony considers ironic statements inherently referential, echoing the words or perspectives of others in order to communicate the speaker’s evaluation thereof (Ch.1, §2.3).¹² While I have not taken a position on whether all sarcasm is inherently echoic, it is certainly the case that explicit echoes of another’s words can signal the presence of sarcasm (present in 14% of our examples).

Lucian’s satire on power, status, and the transient nature of life, *Dialogues of the Dead*, illustrates the use of explicit echoing to indicate sarcasm. Set in Hades, one conversation sees the late Alexander the Great facing constant mockery from the late Cynic Diogenes. Though dead, Alexander still hopes for apotheosis into the Egyptian pantheon. Echoing the hope expressed in Alexander’s words, Diogenes parodies this desire for divinity in the epithet he chooses for his sarcastic reply, “Anyway, for all that, O Most Divine [Alexander], don’t get your hopes up!” (*DMort.* 13.3). The echo here is also linguistic, as ‘O Most Divine’ (ὦ θειότατε) draws on Alexander’s use of θεός.¹³

¹⁰ *Lexiphanes* is a discussion between a pompous sophist (Lexiphanes) with a love of archaic terminology, and a concerned friend (Lycinus) who attempts to cure him.

¹¹ This cue indicates that when Lycinus calls Lexiphanes ὁ καλός and refers to his work as a “feast,” he is being sarcastic (*Lex.* 1 [Harmon]). On Lycinus as a character, see §3.2. Other instances of this cue include *Cat.* 2; *DDeor.* 2.1; *Icar.* 2; Aristophanes, *Cl.* 293–96.

¹² Markers of direct quotation, despite their relationship to echoic mention and commonality as a signal of verbal irony in English, are not typical cues of sarcasm in Lucian or the New Testament (Pawlak 2019:548–49, 560–61).

¹³ The line reads: “I’ve been lying in Babylon for a whole thirty days now, but my guardsman Ptolemy promises that... he’ll take me away to Egypt and bury me there, so that I may become one of the gods of the Egyptians [ὡς γενοίμην εἷς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων θεῶν]” (*DMort.* 13.3 [MacLeod]). Sarcastic echoing continues in *DMort.* 13.4–5 (see Pawlak 2019:550).

Another example occurs in Aristophanes's *Birds*, where one of the protagonists sarcastically refers to an irritating poet as “this clever poet” (τῷ ποιητῇ τῷ σοφῷ, 934). This sarcastic comment harks back to the poet's self-description, which bombastically appropriates Homer: “I am he that launches a song of honey-tongued verses, / the Muses' eager vassal, / to quote Homer.” (*Birds* 908–10 [Henderson]).¹⁴ In these examples, by making reference to their interlocutors' self-perception, the sarcasts imply that they do not consider their victims to merit the esteem that they accord themselves.

1.1.4 Explicit Evaluation

Incongruity is an important signal of sarcasm.¹⁵ A contrast or contradiction between the literal meaning of the sarcastic statement and its context indicates that the utterance has not been meant sincerely, and helps express its implicit negative evaluation.¹⁶ There is little more incongruous than immediately negating an assertion. Haiman coins the term “utterance deflater” to describe this very phenomenon, the use of “... Not!” to explicitly indicate sarcasm—as in: “What an insightful chapter... Not!”¹⁷ I propose that this concept is worth extending to other forms of negation, and beyond. We find a range of deflative effects in Lucian where ostensibly positive statements are followed by the author or character's literal negative evaluations, thus making evident what was really meant all along. We find an example in Lucian's *The Ignorant Book-Collector*, which viciously satirizes a man of many books but little learning:

Ah yes, already you have been improved beyond measure by their purchase [i.e. the purchase of the books], when you talk as you do—but no [μᾶλλον δέ], you are more dumb than any fish! (*Ind.* 16 [Harmon]; further examples include: *DMort.* 20.7; *Philops.* 32; Aristophanes, *Cl.* 1366–67; *Frogs*, 178).

At times it is difficult to determine what should qualify as an “utterance deflater” in the abrupt sense that Haiman describes. Even if there is no jarring negation, speakers will often follow their sarcastic statements with a contrastive and clearly negative appraisal of

¹⁴ Further examples include: Aristophanes, *Birds*, 911–14; Lucian, *DDeor.* 2.1; *DMar.* 1.1; *DMort.* 29.2; *Peregr.* 1; *Philops.* 32; *Tim.* 1; 3 *Kgdms* 22:15; Mark 15:31–32.

¹⁵ Haiman 1990:192–99.

¹⁶ Cf. Attardo 2000a:9.

¹⁷ 1998:53–54; cf. Attardo 2000a:10–11.

their victim (recall Ch.2, §1.5.1, §3). Medea’s sarcastic complaint against Jason is an excellent example of juxtaposing sarcasm with literal negative evaluation:

That, doubtless, is why you have made me so happy in the eyes of many Greek women, in return for these favors [sarcasm]. I, poor wretch [literal negative evaluation], have in you a wonderful and faithful husband [sarcasm] if I am to flee the country, sent into exile, deprived of friends, abandoned with my abandoned children [negative evaluation] (Kovacs).¹⁸

τοιγάρ με πολλαῖς μακαρίαν Ἑλληνίδων
ἔθηκας ἀντὶ τῶνδε· θαυμαστὸν δέ σε
ἔχω πόσιν καὶ πιστὸν ἢ τάλαιν’ ἐγώ,
εἰ φεύξομαι γε γαῖαν ἐκβεβλημένη,
φίλων ἔρημος, σὺν τέκνοις μόνη μόνοις (Euripides, *Med.* 509–13).¹⁹

Sharply disjunctive utterance deflaters that clearly negate the affect of the previous utterance, such as our example from *Ind.* 16 above, represent only 5% of the total dataset. The broader trend whereby speakers clarify sarcastic remarks with either curt or more elaborated statements of literal evaluation, such as we see in *Medea*, occurs in 25% of our examples. This use of explicit negative evaluation that confirms the implicit negative evaluation of the sarcastic utterance is, therefore, one the most prevalent signals of sarcasm in our dataset. It is, in fact, prominent enough to have found its way into epistolary theorist Pseudo-Libanius’s definition of the ironic letter: “The ironic style is that in which we feign praise of someone at the beginning (περὶ τὴν ἀρχήν), but at the end (ἐπὶ τέλει) display our real aim, inasmuch as we had made our earlier statements in pretense” (*Epist.Styl.* 9 [Malherbe]; cf. *Epist.Styl.* 56).

1.1.5 Contrasting Evaluative Terms: “Scare-Quotes” Sarcasm

An entire statement is not always necessary to generate clashing evaluations. Speakers can create incongruity by placing a word with typically positive resonances into a negative context. Consider the following epitaph:

My murderer buried me, hiding his crime: since he gives me a tomb, may he meet with the same kindness as he shewed me (*Anth.Gr.* vii.310 [Paton, LCL]).²⁰

¹⁸ Alexander Numenius cites this passage as an example of εἰρωνεία (*Fig.* 18).

¹⁹ Cf. Lucian, *DMeretr.* 7.1; *DMort.* 13.5; *Hes.* 7; *Hist.Conscr.* 31; *Tim.* 1; Aristophanes, *Ach.* 71–72; *Cl.* 8–10, *Thes.* 19–24; *Anth.Gr.* xi.155; *Jas* 2:19.

²⁰ Cf. *Anth.Gr.* xi.86; Lucian, *DMort.* 13.5; 20.8, 20.11; *Fug.* 10; *Hist.Conscr.* 31.

Here the negative associations surrounding being murdered indicate that the writer is being sarcastic when he wishes his murderer to come upon the like “kindness” (χάρις) that he has received—that is, being buried in a shallow grave by a murderer.

Conversely, a single negative term within a list of positive ones can indicate that the latter are meant sarcastically. Take for example the Lucianic Zeus, who complains that he has trouble even hearing the prayers of the Athenians over the din of their endless philosophical discussions of “some sort of ‘virtue,’ and ‘incorporeal things,’ and nonsense” (ἀρετήν τινα καὶ ἀσώματα καὶ λήρους, *Tim.* 9).

These ways of sarcastically inverting positive concepts are most naturally expressed in written English with scare quotes or inverted commas.²¹ While accurate translation may involve the use of quotation marks, in Greek it is the contrast between the evaluations natural to the different terms’ connotations that make the sarcastic elements stand out. This is a context-dependent means of indicating sarcasm that accomplishes what we do with inverted commas, but through means linguistically distinct from quotation. The prevalence of this signal in our dataset, occurring in 16% of our examples, provides further testimony to the importance of contextual cues of sarcasm in ancient Greek writing.

1.1.6 Counterfactuality and Absurdity

Speakers may also display insincerity through contradictions in matters of fact, and research has shown that clear counterfactual messages are identified as sarcastic with far greater frequency than factual statements.²² This use of counterfactual statement to create incongruity is common in ancient Greek texts, where the surface meaning of the sarcastic statement contradicts the actual state of affairs. This can be observed in Lucian’s *Phalaris*, where the tyrant for whom the story is named has a craftsman roasted inside a hollow, metallic bull that he has just presented to Phalaris as a gift.²³ As the man begins to burn, the tyrant jeers: “Take the reward you deserve for your wonderful invention” (Ἀπολάμβανε... τὸν

²¹ Which are two idioms for the same thing.

²² Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989:382; see also Kreuz and Roberts 1995:27. See Ch.1, §2.2.

²³ Though he intended the bull to be used as a torture device, the craftsman was not expecting to be its first victim.

ἄξιον μισθὸν τῆς θαυμαστῆς σου τέχνης, *Phal.* I.12 [Harmon]; cf. Job 38:21; Tryphon, *Trop.* 19/Homer, *Od.* 17.396–99;²⁴ 22.194–200).²⁵ Obviously, sadistic torture is not a reward.

As a signal of sarcasm, absurdity works in much the same way. Here the sarcastic statement is so ridiculous that it cannot be taken literally. Zeus creates absurdity in an argument with Hera in Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Gods*. The two are arguing over Ganymede, whom Hera is jealous of for obvious reasons. Zeus defends his choice in cupbearer with sustained sarcasm: “I suppose we ought to have our wine from your son, Hephaestus, hobbling about, straight from the forge, still filthy from the sparks, having just put down his tongs...” (*DDeor.* 8.4 [Macleod]; cf. *Anach.* 10; *Anth.Gr.* xi.112; Isa 36:8; Job 38:18, 20; Luke 23:39). Zeus carries on awhile in this vein, painting a ridiculous picture of Hephaestus as a cupbearer that makes it obvious that he considers the lame god of the forge to be a poor replacement for Ganymede.

1.2 Linguistic Signals

Linguistic signals of sarcasm, those cues proper to the language and phrasing of the sarcastic statement itself, are both diverse and essential to its communication. Our discussion of these cues will focus largely on different ways of conveying emphasis and hyperbole, although other signals will come into play as well.

Exaggeration is a fundamental means of conveying sarcasm.²⁶ In both spoken and written contexts, hyperbole finds extensive use in generating the requisite incongruity to express insincerity and also increases the likelihood that a given statement will be perceived as ironic.²⁷ One need look no further than our last example from §1.1.6 to witness hyperbole in ancient Greek sarcasm. The length at which Zeus describes Hephaestus’s “skill” at waiting tables is well beyond what is necessary to grasp his point. Indeed, emphasis and hyperbole are so common in our dataset that I cannot claim to have quantified them reliably. Our focus will therefore not be on hyperbole in general, but on identifying different ways that emphasis is deployed to communicate sarcasm in ancient Greek.

²⁴ See Minchin 2010a:542–44.

²⁵ Both *μισθός* and *θαυμαστός* have both positive and negative senses in Greek that allow for a measure of double entendre here that does not come across in translation.

²⁶ See Haiman 1990:193–197; Kreuz and Roberts 1995:21–29; Braester 2009:75–85.

²⁷ See Kreuz and Roberts 1995:24–28.

1.2.1 Adjective Use: X καί Y, Repetition, and Chunking

The repetition of adjectives is a common way of using emphasis indicate sarcasm. Lucian has an especial love of pairing ostensibly positive adjectives in the form *x καί y* (16% of examples in our dataset).²⁸ This formula generates redundancy and emphasis. In Lucian's *Prometheus*, Hermes chats with Prometheus whilst Hephaestus crucifies the poor Titan. Once the last spike is driven home, Hermes gives the project a once-over, then teases, "That's good. The eagle will soon fly down to eat away your liver, so that you may have full return for your beautiful and clever handiwork in clay [ὡς πάντα ἔχοις ἀντὶ τῆς καλῆς καὶ εὐμηχάνου πλαστικῆς]" (*Prom.*²⁹ 2 [Harmon]; cf. *Icar.* 2, 10; *Alex.* 25; *Cat.* 21; Hermogenes, *Style*, 1.10).³⁰ With the double sarcastic adjectives "beautiful and clever" (καλῆς καὶ εὐμηχάνου), Hermes not only gets in a sarcastic shot at Prometheus, but also at his creation—humanity. We also find the *x καί y* formula in Pseudo-Lucian's novel *The Ass*, where a group of bandits sarcastically appropriate the common epithet κάλος κάγαθος to refer to a captured girl as "You beautiful and goodly virgin" (ὦ καλὴ κάγαθὴ σὺ παρθένος, *Ass* 24; cf. Lucian, *Cat.* 1).³¹

The emphatic repetition of sarcastic adjectives need not always follow this formula.³² Lucian's Timon takes sarcastic adjective use to an excessive degree, as the misanthrope sarcastically lauds Zeus's lightning bolt, and so symbolically criticizes Zeus's inactivity in carrying out justice on earth:

Where is your blasting lightning and loud-roaring thunder and your burning and flashing and frightful thunderbolt now? ... I'm at a loss to describe just how completely extinguished and cold your renowned and far-shooting and ever-at-hand weapon is! (ποῦ σοι νῦν ἡ ἐρισμάραγος ἀστραπὴ καὶ ἡ βαρύβρομος βροντὴ καὶ ὁ

²⁸ The use of adjectives more generally to generate sarcastic hyperbole is itself far more common. I will focus on more specialised uses of the adjective that stand out as clearer indicators of sarcasm.

²⁹ To disambiguate, I abbreviate *Prometheus* as *Prom.* and *A Literary Prometheus* as *Prom. Verb.*

³⁰ For Latin examples, see Apuleius, *Met.* 1.8; Cicero *Fam.* 2.8; *Cael.* xxvi.63. A similar effect can be accomplished with the *x καί y* repetition of nouns that normally communicate positive affect (see Herodian, *Fig.Epit.* 16–17; Job 12:13, 16). The percentage given above includes *x καί y* adjectives and nouns.

³¹ See Meier 2006.

³² Beyond adjectives specifically, we have also seen how other forms of repetition can signal sarcasm by communicating emphasis and exaggeration (Ch.2, §1.5.1, §3).

αἰθαλόεις καὶ ἀργήεις καὶ σμερδαλέος κεραυνός; ... τὸ δὲ αἰοίδιμόν σοι καὶ ἐκηβόλον
ὄπλον καὶ πρόχειρον οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως τελέως ἀπέσβη καὶ ψυχρόν ἐστι... (*Tim.* 1).

Here, the unnecessary repetition of adjectives hammers home the exaggeration used to convey Timon's sarcasm. The plodding repetition of καί also creates the sense that the standard list of epithets that describe Zeus's power is boringly long.³³ In addition to their quantity, the “epic” quality of these adjectives further heightens the hyperbole (cf. §2.2), as does the use of alliteration (βαρύβρομος βροντή).³⁴

Lucian also furnishes us with a special case of sarcastic adjectival modification. In some instances, emphatic modifiers become attached to their nouns, creating compound sarcastic appellations. This is close to a mainstay of English sarcasm that Haiman describes as “chunking,” which involves running words together to generate an ironic effect.³⁵ One can express annoyance—with automated telephone customer service for example—by uttering or writing a cliché as if it were a single word: “Oh great. Another *your-call-is-important-to-us-and-is-being-held-in-a-queue*.”³⁶ I will use the term chunking more broadly than Haiman, to refer to the addition of emphatic modifiers to other words to create sarcastic compounds. Lucianic examples include, μεγαλοδωρεᾶ (‘great-gift,’ *Anach.* 9), πάνσεμνα (‘totally-clever,’ *Anach.* 9); καλλιρρημοσύνη (DDeor 1.2);³⁷ and πανδαμάτορος (‘all-conquering,’ *Tim.* 2 [Harmon, LCL]).³⁸ While such compounds are not particularly common, occurring in only 3% of our dataset, their similarity to the English idiom makes them worth mentioning.

1.2.2 Adverbs

Like adjectives, adverbs can play an important role in communicating sarcasm. Late in *Timon*, Timon describes a gluttonous, intemperate philosopher (*Tim.* 54). At the end of this unflattering exposition, Timon concludes sarcastically, “and he is *all-in-all* a sort of totally-

³³ On Lucian's “heavy use” of καί, both here and elsewhere, see Mackie 1892:93. This passage is also an excellent example of juxtaposing explicit negative evaluation with sarcasm (§1.1.4).

³⁴ See Hopkinson 2008:165.

³⁵ I would also add that this form can be a way of creating emphasis and hyperbole.

³⁶ Haiman 1998:52.

³⁷ Levy: “etymologically ‘beautiful language’; here ‘braggadocio’” (1976:260).

³⁸ Cf. βαρύβρομος βροντή, *Tim* 1 above. See also Aristophanes, *Cl.* 293: πολυτίμητοι. *Anth.Gr.* xi.354 juxtaposes the sarcastic ἰσοπλάτωνα “equal-to-Plato” with the negative σκινδαλαμοφράστην “straw-splitter” (LSJ, s.v. “σκινδαλαμοφράστης”).

clever thing and accurate *in every way* and *intricately* perfect.” (καὶ ὅλως πάνσοφόν τι χρῆμα καὶ πανταχόθεν ἀκριβὲς καὶ ποικίλως ἐντελές, *Tim.* 55 [adverbs italicised]). This example combines several features we have discussed. Repetitive adjective use following Lucian’s standard x καὶ y (καὶ z) cadence combines with triple sarcastic adverbs (ὅλως, πανταχόθεν, ποικίλως) to create emphasis and exaggeration.³⁹ There is also chunking (πάνσοφον) and alliteration (πάνσοφον, πανταχόθεν, ποικίλως).

The sarcastic use of adverbs occurs in 10% of our dataset (cf. *Hist. Conscr.* 15, 29; *DMeretr.* 7.1; Aristophanes, *Ach.* 71; *Birds*, 362–63; *Frogs*, 1261; Josephus, *Ap.* 2.11.125⁴⁰) and Lucian’s fondness for the sarcastic use of πάνυ is worth specific mention (*Deor. Conc.* 11; *Herm.* 12–13; *Hes.* 7; *Hist. Conscr.* 26; *Ind.* 16; *Pseudol.* 30). Mark’s Jesus uses the adverb καλῶς sarcastically, giving it first position for added emphasis: “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God [Καλῶς ἀθετεῖτε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ] in order to keep your tradition!” (Mark 7:9 NRSV; cf. Lucian, *DMeretr.* 12.1).

1.2.3 Particles

Ancient Greek is rich in the variety of its particles, enabling great subtlety of expression that is often difficult to render in English.⁴¹ A subset of Greek particles are emphatic in function, and through their ability to show exaggeration occur frequently as a means of signalling sarcasm—20% of our examples. γε is the most common in Lucian and Aristophanes, either on its own or elided to γοῦν (Lucian, *Abd.* 14; *Deor. Conc.* 11; *DMeretr.* 14.4; *DMort.* 6.5, 29.2; *Herm.* 2; *Ind.* 16; Aristophanes, *Ach.* 71; *Birds*, 176–77, 362–63; *Cl.* 1064; *Frogs*, 491; *Thes.* 20–21; cf. §2.1 for εὖ γε),⁴² but others occur as well, including μέν (Lucian, *Icar.* 10), μήν (*Herm.* 2),⁴³ and -περ (*Alex.* 35).

δὴ can also play a significant role in sarcasm (*Abd.* 14; *Peregr.* 33).⁴⁴ We saw this in the Septuagint, where it was used in sarcastic requests and taunts (Job 38:18; 40:10; Mal

³⁹ For adjective/adverb combination in English sarcasm, see Kovaz, Kreuz, and Riordan 2013:600–601, 611; Kreuz and Roberts 1995:24–25.

⁴⁰ “Apion is therefore *so very* (Σφόδρα) worthy of admiration for his abundant insight in what is about to be said...” Josephus then cites and refutes Apion’s argument (2.11.125–28).

⁴¹ See Smyth 1959:631–671.

⁴² Cf. Josephus, *Ap.* 2.34.246 (καλὰ γε ταῦτα).

⁴³ Here we find three distinct particles—γε, μέν, and μήν—over two sarcastic statements.

⁴⁴ See Denniston 1954:229–36.

1:8).⁴⁵ Lucian’s *The Passing of Peregrinus*—a satire on a sage whose philosophical career took him from Cynicism to Christianity to self-immolation—provides an instance where whether a statement is sarcastic depends on the presence of an emphatic δῆ. At this point in the narrative Peregrinus is distressed. He has just proclaimed his intention to ascend the pyre alive,⁴⁶ and the voices of those who are calling for him to go on living are overwhelmed by those who look forward to watching his fiery exit. The way Harmon translates the passage ends with a sarcastic flourish that has Lucian pretending to believe the sincerity of the Peregrinus’s motives: “he hoped that all would cling to him and not give him over to the fire, but retain him in life—against his will, naturally [ἄκοντα δῆ]!” (*Peregr.* 33 [Harmon]). This translation could well be correct, picking up on Lucian’s emphatic δῆ (here translated ‘naturally’) to indicate insincerity.

1.2.4 Interjections and the Exclamatory ὥς

Interjections are another common means of being emphatic, and therefore find typical use in sarcasm.⁴⁷ Although not as pervasive as other signals (6% of examples), interjections are also noteworthy as cues of sarcasm in Greek. “Heracles!” and “By Zeus!” are common interjections in Lucian, both within and without sarcastic use (for sarcasm see *Im.* 1; *Symp.* 30 and *Hist. Conscr.* 25; *DDeor.* 2.1, respectively). Vocalizations of surprise or distress, such as βαβαί and παπαί work just as well.⁴⁸ Sarcasm marked by interjection also occurs in Mark’s Gospel, where those crucified with Jesus mock him: “Wow!⁴⁹ You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself...!” (Οὐὰ ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν... σῶσον σεαυτὸν, Mark 15:29–30 [NRSV, with modified interjection]).

Within the broad range of its semantic use, ὥς can function as an exclamation, an emphatic ‘how/so,’ such as we find in straightforwardly positive cases like Rom 11:33

⁴⁵ Cf. *Od.* 22.194–200 (§2.5).

⁴⁶ Apparently, Peregrinus chooses to die in this manner to teach others to “despise death and endure what is fearsome” (*Peregr.* 23 [Harmon]). Lucian disagrees (see *Peregr.* 22), and intends to prove the man a fame-seeking fraud.

⁴⁷ Kovaz, Kreuz, and Riordan 2013:601–602, 608, 611.

⁴⁸ *Pseudol.* 27 and *Herm.* 5, 55, respectively. Cf. Nordgren 2015:216–217, 236–237. For interjections in sarcasm outside Lucian, see Aristophanes *Ach.* 64; *Birds*, 176–77; *Thes.* 20–21; Homer, *Il.* 16.745–50.

⁴⁹ For other, non-sarcastic examples of οὐὰ, an “exclamation of admiration or of astonishment,” see LSJ, s.v. “οὐὰ.”

(NRSV): “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How [ὥς] unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”⁵⁰ Speakers use this construction sarcastically with enough regularity to suggest some degree of formalization—6% of examples in our dataset. For example, in *The Wisdom of Nigrinus*, a speaker mocks his friend who has just come back from his study of philosophy: “How very clever and lofty have you returned to us!” (Ὡς σεμνὸς ἡμῖν σφόδρα καὶ μετέωρος ἐπανελήλυθας, Lucian, *Nigr.* 1).⁵¹ Another example occurs in Aristophanes’s *Birds*, where Euelpides teases his companion for behaving in a cowardly manner: “How manly you are!” (ὥς ἀνδρείος εἶ, *Birds*, 91; cf. *Frogs*, 178; see also Lucian, *DMeretr.* 12.2; *Herm.* 55, 82; *Hist. Conscr.* 14, 19; *Nigr.* 1, 10; *Sacr.* 14). πῶς and ὅπως can function in a similar fashion (see Lucian, *J Tr.* 29; *Symp.* 30).

1.2.5 Dismissives

All of the linguistic signals discussed so far in §1.2 have centred on hyperbole and emphasis, especially the exaggeration of positive language to communicate insincerity, but other means of conveying sarcasm are possible. Functioning similarly to the use of contrasting evaluative language (§1.1.4–1.1.5), speakers may subtly communicate negative appraisal within sarcastic statements. Using a vague term of reference such as τις can function to devalue and dismiss the ideas of others. We saw this in *Tim.* 9 with the dismissal of pedantic philosophical discourse on “some sort of ‘virtue’” (ἀρετήν τινα [§1.1.5]).

When used of persons, such markers can be ways of stripping individual identity by avoiding the use of proper names (*DMort.* 20.7; *Hist. Conscr.* 30; *Tim.* 55 [§1.2.2]), or otherwise diminishing another’s importance. In *Dialogues of the Dead*, the cynic philosopher Menippus mocks Pythagoras sarcastically for his belief in transmigration, cheerfully addressing him by his alleged past lives when he is obviously properly dead: “Hail Euphorbus, or Apollo or whatever else you like calling yourself!” (Χαῖρε, ὦ Εὐφορβε ἢ Ἀπολλων ἢ ὅ τι ἂν θέλῃς,⁵² *DMort.* 6.3; cf. *Luct.* 20; *Im.* 1; *Tim.* 1). While τις is the most common dismissive in Lucianic sarcasm, οὗτος (Lucian, *Peregr.* 30 [§2.4];

⁵⁰ On ὥς, see Smyth 1959:101–2; for the exclamatory ὥς, see Smyth 1959:606–7.

⁵¹ Note the use of multiple adjectives (σεμνὸς... καὶ μετέωρος) and adverbial emphasis (σφόδρα; §1.2.1–1.2.2).

⁵² The use of ἂν + subjunctive here also contributes to the tone of dismissiveness.

Aristophanes, *Cl.* 8; Hermogenes, *Style*, 1.10;⁵³ Pseudo-Lucian, *Ass*, 25), ἐκεῖνος (Lucian, *DMar.* 1.4; *DMort.* 13.5⁵⁴), and τοιοῦτος (*DMar.* 1.5) can function in a similar fashion.⁵⁵

1.3 Conclusions

With the foregoing discussion of contextual and linguistic signals, we have already gone a long way in facilitating the identification of sarcasm in ancient Greek. The contextual cues surveyed reveal that there is more to the identification of sarcasm than the sarcastic statement itself. While signals peculiar to third parties and narrative texts appear to be important, they do not feature in Lucian, or Paul, and will therefore not take a significant place in this study. The echoic approach to irony, however, showed its utility through the prevalence of explicit echoing in our dataset. But the most significant contextual cue was incongruity, manifested in the expression of the speaker's literal evaluation to underline the implicit negative evaluation of sarcasm. The use of conflicting evaluations in the context of sarcastic statements clarifies the presence of sarcasm in written texts and makes up for an absence of tonal cues.

We have also collected a number of linguistic features that correlate with the use of sarcasm. These are nearly all ways of creating hyperbole and emphasis, which is unsurprising. Exaggeration is a common way for speakers to indicate that they do not mean what they say (§1.2). The repetition of positive adjectives and the use of emphatic particles were the most significant linguistic cues surveyed. The former fits well with the importance of repetition in LXX sarcasm (Ch.2, §1.5.1, §3). The high frequency of emphatic particles is also of particular interest, showing a way in which the idiomatic features of the Greek language itself can contribute to the communication of sarcasm.

Other signals—including the adverbs, exclamations, and dismissives—although somewhat less frequent, remain significant cues of sarcasm likely to recur across ancient Greek texts. Furthermore, although we lack frequency data, we have also observed several cases of alliteration as a means of creating emphasis in sarcastic statements. Both analogy

⁵³ See Ch.7, §3.3.2.

⁵⁴ See Pawlak 2019:550.

⁵⁵ For dismissive use of *iste* in Latin sarcasm, see Cicero, *Cael.* xxvi.63. The use of dismissives in ancient sarcasm represents an avenue for further research, as at this time I do not have reliable statistics for its frequency in our dataset.

and direct comparison to the linguistic and contextual cues discussed will play an important role in the identification of sarcastic statements as we turn to Paul's letters.

2 Patterns in Sarcasm Use

We will now identify recurring patterns in ancient sarcasm. As we saw with the sarcastic taunts of the prophets, certain related sarcastic utterances share specific features or are used in analogous situations, occurring with enough regularity to suggest common pragmatic functions. These include speech acts that can be repurposed sarcastically (e.g. §2.1, §2.3) and specific situations in which speakers employ sarcasm (§2.5). At times there will be overlap between these patterns and signals of sarcasm, especially where indicators of hyperformality are concerned (§2.2). This is not a problem, and indeed the recognition of any pattern can be helpful in facilitating the identification of sarcasm. At the same time, exploring common ways in which sarcasm is put to use can also extend our understanding of its pragmatic functions.

2.1 Sarcastic Encouragement

Sarcastic encouragement is present in 14% of our examples. Here the sarcasm gives an ostensibly supportive request for their victim to engage in some action, or offers their mock-encouragement after the fact. The action endorsed is often something foolish, absurd, or otherwise unlikely to turn out well. The sarcastic taunts of the prophets represent a specific subset of sarcastic encouragement, which gesture both to the inevitability of their objects' failure and to divine judgement (Ch.2, §2.1).⁵⁶

But not all sarcastic encouragement is so intense. In Lucian, we find a number of offhand comments that qualify as sarcastic encouragement. In the trial scenes of *The Double Indictment*, having been thoroughly defeated in court, Stoa appeals to Zeus—despite the improbability of winning the case and the likelihood of further embarrassment. Justice simply replies: “Good luck to you!” (Τύχη τῇ ἀγαθῇ, *Bis.Acc.* 22 [Harmon]; cf. *DMeretr.* 14.4; *DMort.* 3.2; *Philops.* 39). Lucian's go-to means of sarcastic congratulations involves a curt combination of an adverb and emphatic particle: εὖ γε (see *JTr.* 32, 42; *Pisc.* 45; *DMort.* 3.2;

⁵⁶ For NT sarcastic encouragement/taunts, see Mark 15:30–32; Matt 27:39–40, 41–42. See also Homer, *Il.* 3.432–36 (Minchin 2010a:392–93).

DMort. 6.6; *DDeor.* 12.1; cf. Aristophanes, *Birds*, 362).⁵⁷ As a sarcastic “well done!” the use of εὖ γε that we find in Lucian is analogous to Jesus’s sarcastic καλῶς in Mark 7:9 (§1.2.2; cf. Jas 2:19).

2.2 Hyperformality

Discussed by several scholars of irony, hyperformality is a form of hyperbole that involves showing greater “respect” than is due in a given social situation.⁵⁸ For example, “Would that her majesty might accept my humble apologies!” is appropriate when speaking to the Queen, and sarcastic when used to address one’s sister. Unnecessary politeness can function as an indicator of sarcasm. However, because there are many mechanisms for communicating hyperformality, including several of those addressed in §1.1 and §1.2, I will group all forms of sarcastic politeness as a pattern in sarcasm-use.

Ancient Greek provided speakers with several means of showing respect or familiarity that could be appropriated sarcastically. When a speaker wishes to challenge the status of another, unnecessary politeness is an excellent way to communicate: “This is the status you may think you have, but you don’t deserve it.” Hyperformality is one of the most prevalent features of sarcasm in the literature surveyed (36% of examples).

The use of ancient Greek address forms related to friendship (φίλε, ἀγαθέ, βέλτιστε, etc.) is complicated. Dickey writes that there is a “mass of conflicting evidence” in Attic texts concerning the use of friendship terms as vocative forms of address, and that this diversity in use carries forward into later Greek.⁵⁹ They can be used positively following their etymological sense, but are often—especially in Plato—used “with slightly patronizing connotations” by the dominant speaker in an exchange.⁶⁰ Dickey argues that this condescending use, though negative, is not sarcastic.⁶¹ She sees Lucian’s use of friendship

⁵⁷ This exclamation is an ironic version of a common positive expression (for sincere examples, see Lucian, *Pisc.* 28; *Nec.* 15; *Vit.Auct.* 8).

⁵⁸ Haiman 1990:199–202; 1998:41–44; cf. Sperber and Wilson 1981:311–12; Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989:383; Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg, and Brown 1995:3, 20; Minchin 2010a:394; Minchin 2010b:554.

⁵⁹ 1996:121, 127–33. On the social functions of address forms in general, see Dickey 1996:12–17.

⁶⁰ Dickey 1996:133, 107–33.

⁶¹ 1996:118; cf. Lane 2010:249–50. The distinction between unironic, condescending use of friendship terms and sarcastic, condescending use of friendship terms is a fine one. If the negative use of the friendship term has become so well-worn and cliché that the

terms as mixed, at times following Plato, and at times not.⁶² While I agree to an extent, I argue that Lucian's use of friendship terms is far more likely to be sarcastic than Plato's, even when Lucian imitates Plato. Lucian self-consciously writes comic dialogue, a genre of his own invention, rather than philosophical dialogue.⁶³ Even where he imitates Plato, it is with a comic twist,⁶⁴ and so we should expect that where we find subtle condescension in address forms in Plato, we are more likely to find outright sarcasm in Lucian.

Friendship terms are most obviously sarcastic in Lucian when they are combined with other forms of address that clearly do not suit their referents. In *The Cock* for example, a rooster who happens to be an incarnation of Pythagoras says to a cobbler who has just related a dream about riches: "Stop it, O Most Excellent Midas (ὦ Μίδα βέλτιστε), with all this gold-chat!" (*Gall.* 7; cf. *DDeor.* 8.2; *DMeretr.* 13.4; *DMort.* 6.4; *JTr.* 41; *Pisc.* 48; *Tim.* 4). Combining the appellation "Midas," which is clearly hyperbolic when used to address a poor cobbler, with the common friendship term βέλτιστε makes the whole address clearly sarcastic. Sarcasm is also likely where friendship terms are employed in statements that have sarcastic elements beyond the address form, such as in *Pisc.* 45 where Philosophy sarcastically congratulates a phony Cynic with Εὖ γε, ὦ γενναῖε, combining sarcastic encouragement (§2.1 above) with a sarcastic friendship term (cf. *Hes.* 7; Aristophanes, *Birds*, 91, 362–63). The most common sarcastic friendship terms in Lucian include ὦ βέλτιστε,⁶⁵ ὦ γενναϊότατε,⁶⁶ and ὦ θαυμάσιε.⁶⁷ Friendship terms are not the only forms of address used

user/audience no longer recognises the original, positive resonance (as is the case with the English phrase "yeah, right"), it may be used condescendingly without sarcasm (on the impact of repetition on meaning, see Haiman 1998:128–37, 147–72, 190).

⁶² Dickey 1996:131–33.

⁶³ On Lucian's invention of comic dialogue, see *Prom. Verb.* 1–7; *Bis. Acc.* 33–35 (cf. §3.1).

⁶⁴ See especially Lucian's *Symposium*.

⁶⁵ See *Deor. Conc.* 10; *DMort.* 2.3, 6.4, 9.3, 29.2; *Gall.* 7; *Prometheus* 6; *Vit. Auct.* 3; *Pseudol.* 14. Dickey does not seem to consider βέλτιστε sarcastic in Lucian. I of course disagree. She does note that it is often sarcastic in other authors (Dickey 1996:139). For the sarcastic use of the adjectival form βέλτιστος, see *Herm.* 12, *Nav.* 46; *Peregr.* 1, 12.

⁶⁶ See *DDeor.* 8.2; *JTr.* 41; *Pisc.* 48; *Tim.* 4 (cf. Dickey 1996:140–41). For γενναῖε, see *DDeor.* 4.2; *Nav.* 14; *Pisc.* 7, 45. Other related forms include γενναῖος (*Tim.* 22, 47; *Peregr.* 19) and γεννάδας (*Cat.* 1; *Peregr.* 1).

⁶⁷ See *Tim.* 4; *JTr.* 30, 49; *Tox.* 5. For the ironic use of the superlative θαυμασιώτατε, see Dickey 1996:141. For sarcastic use of θαυμάστος and other adjectival θαυμα-terms, see *Hist. Conscr.* 24, 28, 31; *Peregr.* 43; *Symp.* 30, 35; *Anach.* 11; *Peregr.* 11, 30; *Phal. I.* 12; *Prom.* 20; *Pseudol.* 21; *Symp.* 23. For θαυμάζω as a verb, see Josephus, *Ap.* 2.11.125 (n.40).

sarcastically. Royal terms work just as well, as in the famous, “Hail! King of the Jews!” (χαῖρε, βασιλεῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, Mark 15:18).⁶⁸

In addition to sarcastic address forms, exaggerated politeness is often accomplished with epithets. Many of these are simply the adjectival forms of common sarcastic vocatives (see n.65–67 above), such as when Josephus refers to Apion as ὁ... γενναῖος Ἀπίων (*Ap.* 2.3.32; cf. Aristophanes, *Ach.* 575, 578; *Frogs*, 1154; *Anth.Gr.* xi.354; Pseudo-Lucian, *Ass.* 28).⁶⁹ While sarcastic vocatives and epithets are relatively easy to quantify, occurring in 15%⁷⁰ and 19% of our dataset, respectively, there are several other ways of manipulating language to express unnecessary formality.

Drawing language from an unnecessarily high register for the situation can also signal insincerity. We already noted unnecessarily formal, sarcastic requests in Job employing emphatic particles and the optative of wish (38:18–19; Ch.2, §1.4, §1.5.1).⁷¹ Lucian enjoys the sarcastic use of poetic and Homeric epithets, such as in *Icaromenippus*, where certain philosophers are mockingly referred to as “High thundering and well-bearded gentlemen” (ὕψιβρεμέταις τε καὶ ἡϋγενεῖσις ἀνδράσιν, *Icar.* 10 [adapted from Harmon])⁷²—the former appellation is typically reserved for Zeus (cf. *Tim.* 4).⁷³ Here ἡϋγενεῖσις has the initial vowel lengthened from εὐγένειος such that it fits with epic metre, signaling further its inappropriately high register. *Timon* 1⁷⁴ similarly over-uses poetic address forms and epithets for Zeus to convey its sarcasm. But one need not compose Homeric verse to engage in hyperformality. The use of unnecessarily complicated terminology or phrasing, archaic language, and verbosity can all function in this manner.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Cf. Matt 27:29; John 19:3. For further discussion see Halliwell 2008:471–474; cf. Haiman 1998:43. For another, albeit more playfully sarcastic use of βασιλεῦ, see Lucian, *Nav.* 30. For miscellaneous sarcastic vocatives, see Lucian, *Icar.* 2; *JTr.* 47, 49; *Tim.* 1; Aristophanes, *Cl.* 293–95; *Frogs*, 491.

⁶⁹ For LXX sarcastic epithets, see Job 6:19; 7:20; 15:2; Isa 14:12.

⁷⁰ Note that the sarcastic use of address forms is likely overrepresented in Lucian compared to other texts (see the discussion of Dickey above).

⁷¹ Cf. Homer *Il.* 24.263–64 (Minchin 2010a:394–95).

⁷² Note x καὶ y (§1.2.1).

⁷³ Cf. the Homeric πανδαμάτορος (*Tim.* 2; §1.2.1; LSJ, s.v. “πανδαμάτωρ”). See Cicero, *Cael.* xxviii.67 for further sarcastic epic language.

⁷⁴ Cited partially in §1.2.1.

⁷⁵ See *Anth.Gr.* xi.11, 17, 155, 354, 410. Job’s Psalm parody (Job 7:17–19; Ch.2, §1.3) is a good example of sarcastically appropriating a poetic register. For Lucian’s satire on the

2.3 Sarcastic Concessions

Sarcastic concessions occur when a speaker pretends to concede some point to their interlocutor, usually about a disputed matter. These are common in our dataset (13%), especially in Lucian.⁷⁶ For example, in his satire on cultic practices, Lucian pokes fun at Cretan religious customs by pretending they are correct:

As for the Cretans, they not only say that Zeus was born and brought up among them, but even point out his tomb. We were mistaken all this while, then, in thinking that thunder and rain and everything else comes from Zeus; if we had but known it, he has been dead and buried in Crete this long time! (*Sacr.* 10 [Harmon]; cf. *Alex.* 35; *Anach.* 9, 10; *DMar.* 1.5; *JTr.* 30, 45, 52).

Mark 15:32 contains sarcastic encouragement and is also a sarcastic concession that ostensibly accepts the *titulus* (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, Mark 15:26) at face value: “Let now the Christ, the King of Israel [ὁ χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραήλ] descend the cross, so we might see and believe!” (cf. §1.1.3).

In such concessions the speaker is overtly condescending and implies that the position referenced is ridiculous. As we will see in §3.1, this tactic can be infuriating for those on its receiving end, who would rather their perspective be taken seriously.

2.4 Mock-Astonishment: θαυμά-Sarcasm

The use of θαυμάζω and its derivatives are significant in sarcasm, not only for their commonality (9% of dataset), but also for the interpretive difficulty they create.⁷⁷ θαυμάζω is a versatile term that can be used to indicate astonishment in a positive sense (“I am amazed/awed”) or negatively (“I am shocked/appalled”).⁷⁸ As such, it can often be difficult to

pretentious use of Atticism, see *Rh.Pr.* 16–17; *Lex*; cf. Plutarch, *De Recta*, 9. For further discussion of Lucian and Atticism, see Adams 2010:595–97.

⁷⁶ Lucian, which makes up 70% of our dataset, contains 82% of the examples of sarcastic encouragement. This pattern may therefore appear more widespread in our dataset than it is in other authors.

⁷⁷ Because of its frequency in sarcasm, the presence θαυμά-terminology can aid the identification of sarcasm. I include it as a pattern, however, rather than as a signal because it is only in specific contexts that θαυμά-terminology indicates hyperbolic or mock astonishment and is sarcastic.

⁷⁸ See Ch.4, §1.1, n.17. It can also be both positive and negative at once; recall the double entendre in *Phal.I.* 12 (§1.1.6).

disentangle straightforwardly negative cases from sarcastic use, where positive resonances are invoked and inverted. We will experience this problem more fully in the next chapter when treating Gal 1:6, which itself contains an ambiguous use of θαυμάζω.

Ambiguities aside, Lucian furnishes us with many clear cases of θαυμα-sarcasm. In *The Passing of Peregrinus*, Lucian describes Peregrinus as having “mastered the Christians’ amazing wisdom” (τὴν θαυμαστὴν σοφίαν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἐξέμαθεν, *Peregr.* 11). This comment is clearly insincere. Lucian goes on to characterize these Christians as gullible, and Peregrinus’s relationship with them as exploitive (*Peregr.* 11–13). Lucian also makes sarcastic remarks about Peregrinus’s non-Christian disciples, whom he styles, “these wondrous followers of Proteus”⁷⁹ (τοῖς θαυμαστοῖς τούτοις ὁμιληταῖς τοῦ Πρωτέως, *Peregr.* 30 [Harmon, LCL]; cf. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1261; Euripides, *Med.* 509–13; Pseudo-Lucian, *Cynic*, 14).⁸⁰ Beyond these examples, we have already cited many instances of θαυμα-terms as recurrent sarcastic vocatives, epithets, and otherwise (see n.67).

2.5 Insult to Injury

Sarcasm occurs with some frequency in situations of torture or otherwise brutal violence. We saw this with Phalaris’s bull (*Phal.I.* 12, §1.1.6),⁸¹ and with the crucifixions of Prometheus and Jesus (§1.2.1⁸² and §2.2–2.3, respectively). Such sarcasm adds further insult to an already degrading situation.⁸³

What is most interesting about this pattern is not its frequency—it only occurs in 6% of Lucianic examples⁸⁴—but its close relationship to ancient definitions of sarcasm. Tryphon draws on *Od.* 22.170–200 to illustrate the term σαρκασμός ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16). The scene depicts Odysseus retaking his house by the destruction of Penelope’s suitors. Having come

⁷⁹ On the nickname “Proteus” to refer to Peregrinus, see §3.3.

⁸⁰ See also Ch.4, n.13.

⁸¹ For other, less violent situations where the misfortunes of certain characters are sarcastically referred to as “rewards,” see *Abd.* 14; *DDeor.* 11.4; *Tox.* 22; *Anth.Gr.* vii.310; Aristophanes, *Cl.* 1064 (such [Lucianic] examples are also included in the percentage given in this section).

⁸² Compare Philo, *Flaccus* 6.36–40, where a sarcastic homage is paid to a “madman” (τις μεμηνώς) as an act of political satire.

⁸³ On the use of sarcasm to increase the severity of insults, see Colston 2007:319–38.

⁸⁴ 11% of total dataset. The prevalence of this pattern in the Gospels makes it appear more common in our dataset than I suspect we would normally find in other texts.

upon an enemy accomplice, the goatherd Melantheus, Odysseus orders him to be put to death. While Melantheus is being hung by his limbs, awaiting a slow and painful end, one of Odysseus’s companions jeers: “Now indeed Melantheus, you will keep watch the whole night long, lying on a soft bed.”⁸⁵ In these examples the sarcastic utterance plays on the massive incongruity between the physical situation and the literal meaning of the sarcastic statement.⁸⁶ A night of death by hanging is far from a soft bed (cf. §1.1.6).

In terms of pragmatic function there are also significant differences among the examples we have cited. In Homer, sympathetic characters are the sarcasts and perpetrators of violence alike, while in the Gospels, the brutality of the Romans is meant to increase our sympathy for Jesus. Lucian is often just trying to be funny, and all characters involved are fodder for comedy. The connection to ancient definitions of sarcasm and the variety of its rhetorical functions suggest that the use of sarcasm to add insult to injury in ancient texts would be a fruitful avenue for further research.

2.6 Other Patterns in Verbal Irony: *Asteismos*

This section explores the pragmatic functions of *asteismos* in Lucian. This form of verbal irony will play an important role in our chapter on Second Corinthians. I have previously defined *asteismos* as the mirror image of sarcasm. While the sarcast expresses something ostensibly positive that implies negative affect, in *asteismos*, insult is used to express positive evaluation. While sarcasm tends to target a third party, *asteismos* is self-deprecating (Ch.1, §1.2). Although Lucian employs far more sarcasm than *asteismos*, his use of the latter is by no means insignificant.

In Lucian *asteismos* features most significantly in apologetic situations. We have already met Lucian’s Prometheus, whom we left crucified on a mountain. As Prometheus’s story progresses, he sets up a makeshift trial in which he defends his actions against the accusations of Hermes (*Prom.* 3–6). Within this apologetic context Prometheus leans heavily on *asteismos* to make Hermes’s charges appear unfounded.

⁸⁵ Minchin notes the presence of “lofty diction” in lines 197–98 (Minchin 2010b:551–52; cf. §2.2).

⁸⁶ Cf. Homer, *Od.* 20.296–300; 22.290 (Minchin 2010b:547, 552). A comparable scene is used in Tryphon as an example of ἐπικερτόμησις—which is a near cognate of σαρκασμός that combines ἀλληγορία and χλευασμός (*Trop.* 23; cf. *Il.* 16.740–50). For discussion of κερτομέω, see Minchin 2010b:545, 545n.43.

After describing his creation of humanity, Prometheus declares, “Therein lies the great wrong I have done the gods” (ἡ μεγάλη ἐγὼ τοὺς θεοὺς ἡδίκηκα),⁸⁷ and then to highlight the absurdity of the divine response to his actions, which were no “great wrong” whatsoever, he gestures to his own crucified form: “and you see what the penalty is for making creatures out of mud...” (*Prom.* 13 [Harmon]). Prometheus goes on to describe how his creation of humanity benefits the gods, providing them temples and worshipers—although he himself has no temple. Following this description, his *asteismos* comes out strongly, “You see how I look out for my own interests, but betray and injure those of the community!” (*Prom.* 14 [Harmon]). Just as we have seen sarcasm’s ability to both reflect and deny the claims of other parties, these self-deprecating ironic comments simultaneously raise and reject the accusations made against him, making Prometheus appear a victim unjustly used.

We find a further example this sort of *asteismos* in *Disowned*, another mock forensic speech in which the defendant, a physician, runs the risk of being disowned by his father for a second time.⁸⁸ Having just described, in reasonable terms, the course of actions he has adopted and must defend, the doctor describes himself: “I who am so difficult and disobedient, who so disgraced my father and act so unworthily of my family...” (*Abd.* 3 [Harmon]). In this case, the physician clearly means the opposite of what he says.

This apologetic function of *asteismos* is highly prevalent (cf. *Anach.* 40; *Herm.* 63, 81; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55 [Ch.1, §1.2]), and likely one of its primary rhetorical functions.⁸⁹ In contrast to sarcasm’s implicit challenge, here *asteismos* becomes a defensive tool for those whose status has been challenged. The speaker pretends to accept a version of their opponent’s accusation in order to imply its absurdity. It is entirely appropriate that the function of *asteismos* should be a mirror image of sarcasm, since the former is, as a speech act, the inverse of the latter.

2.7 Conclusions

A larger dataset has enabled us to greatly expand the work begun with our discussion of sarcastic taunts in the prophets, revealing several new patterns in the use of ancient sarcasm.

⁸⁷ Prometheus’s description of stealing fire from the gods—“that reprehensible theft” (καὶ τὴν ἐπονείδιστον ταύτην κλοπὴν, *Prom.* 18 [Harmon,])—is similarly ironic.

⁸⁸ For the humorous backstory, see *Abd.* 1–8.

⁸⁹ This apologetic use of *asteismos* is not wholly uniform. We also find cases where self-deprecating irony combines with sarcasm to emphasize mockery (*Herm.* 5; *Sacr.* 10).

These patterns will not only assist in the recognition of comparable sarcasm in other ancient texts, but also extend our understanding of the common functions of sarcasm and of the situations in which sarcasm typically occurs.

Hyperformality was by far the most frequently attested pattern, consisting of inappropriately polite terms of address or otherwise unnecessarily high-register language. A strong, developed honour culture is a likely cause of this prevalence, as the presence of culturally and linguistically encoded means of showing respect lend themselves to sarcastic appropriation.

Other forms of sarcasm will also be significant in our work on Paul. Both sarcastic encouragement and concessions will feature in the Corinthian correspondence, and the examples cited under mock-astonishment will be important for comparison with Gal 1:6. Recognising the apologetic function of *asteismos* is also significant, as this form of verbal irony will play a major role in our treatment of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13.

3 Rhetorical Functions of Sarcasm in Lucian

Having identified signals that often indicate sarcasm in ancient Greek, along with some patterns in how sarcasm is used, we will now continue the work on sarcasm's rhetorical functions begun in the last chapter, using Lucian as a case study. We have hitherto established the general hypothesis that sarcasm typically functions as an implicit challenge to some positive quality that the sarcastist perceives their victim as laying claim to. It is appropriate when used on those of lower or equal status and can be effective for putting upstart subordinates back in line. A quick glance at Lucianic sarcasm reinforces what we have seen so far. A full 46% of sarcastic utterances in Lucian are spoken by persons of higher status compared to their victims, and 30% of sarcasm is traded between equals. This leaves only about a quarter of sarcastic statements subverting social hierarchy.⁹⁰

The prophets revealed one way that sarcasm may be employed subversively, as the prophet's appropriation of the divine voice emboldens him to satirize those of higher rank. This often-brash approach can create difficulty and even physical danger for the prophet, leaving one to wonder whether there might be more subtle ways of being sarcastic at the expense of one's superiors.

⁹⁰ While proportionally small, this still provides over 50 examples to work with.

With so much sarcasm delivered by a variety of characters across texts ranging from the fantastic to more “real-life” rhetorical situations, Lucian is well-situated to nuance this picture. In the following discussion we will follow Lucian’s most common sarcasts, paying special attention to the ways in which characters of lower status use sarcasm to undermine their superiors. Beginning with historical and mythic characters, our observations of Lucian’s sarcasts will lead us progressively closer to their author’s own narrative persona. This investigation will not only further our understanding of the advantages and dangers of sarcasm use in an ancient context, but will shed light on the way Lucian employs sarcasm and narrative voice to accomplish his satire.

Surveying the ends to which speakers employ sarcasm across our case studies will provide several points of comparison for assessing Paul’s use of sarcasm in the coming chapters. Lucian portrays the use of sarcasm in interactions between actors across a variety of social relationship, as do *Job* and the Prophets. Analogical comparison to these examples will be a helpful tool for assessing what Paul’s use of sarcasm can tell us about his relationships with different early-Christian communities.

3.1 Lucian’s Sarcasts: From Dogs to Gods

This section explores the ways in which major characters in Lucian use sarcasm against their superiors. We begin with one of Lucian’s favourite sarcasts, whom we have met once or twice already, the Cynic philosopher and satirist Menippus. Since the works of Menippus are now lost, it is difficult to ascertain the specifics of Lucian’s literary relationship to him.⁹¹ Lucian openly claims Menippean influence,⁹² and is pleased not only to draw on his work, but also to feature him as a recurring character. A true Cynic, Menippus is fearless in using sarcasm on anyone, regardless of their social standing.

Menippus shows up repeatedly throughout *Dialogues of the Dead*. Not only does he use sarcasm on those who in life were richer and more powerful than himself (*DMort.* 3.2), Menippus also takes shots at more famous philosophers.⁹³ Meeting Pythagoras and Empedocles in Hades, Menippus pokes fun at their frustrated post-mortem expectations. We have already discussed his hyper-formal greeting of Pythagoras (§1.2.5). Empedocles, who

⁹¹ See Hall 1981:64–66, 74–150.

⁹² See Hall 1981:64; *Bis.Acc.* 33; *Pisc.* 26.

⁹³ Menippus is even unafraid to be sarcastic with immortals (see *DMort.* 2.3).

had hoped for divinization upon throwing himself into a volcano, is met by a sarcastic vocative: “O brazen-foot most excellent [ῥΩ χαλκόπου βέλτιστε],⁹⁴ what came over you that you jumped into the crater?” (*DMort.* 6.4 [MacLeod, LCL]). Despite breaking rank, Menippus gets away with his sarcasm and general mockery, as his targets simply seem too dead to care.

When Menippus chances upon Socrates himself, he prides himself on the fact that he at least believed that Socrates truly knew nothing (*DMort.* 6.5). Menippus then asks about those attending the philosopher. Socrates replies “Charmides, my good fellow, and Phaedrus and Clinias’ son.” Menippus exclaims, “Bravo, Socrates! Still following your own special line here! Still with an eye for beauty!” (Εὖ γε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅτι κἀνταῦθα μέτει τὴν σεαυτοῦ τέχνην καὶ οὐκ ὀλιγωρεῖς τῶν καλῶν, *DMort.* 6.6 [MacLeod]). Levy notes a possible double entendre here. τέχνην and τῶν καλῶν could refer to Socrates work as a philosopher and his pursuit of The Good, or a practice of pursuing pretty boys.⁹⁵ But the audience is already aware of Menippus’s penchant for mockery, and coupled with the fact that those cited as in Socrates’s company were known to be attractive,⁹⁶ it is hard to miss the sarcasm. The way Socrates then goes on to miss the joke (*DMort.* 6.6) shows that he, as Menippus suggested, truly knows nothing.⁹⁷

There is overlap between typical Cynic traits and characters who engage in considerable sarcasm and mockery.⁹⁸ Cynic *παρρησία* is visible in characters who use sarcasm without regard for their victim’s social position. Through the mouth of a hostile character, Lucian describes Menippus as “a really dreadful dog who bites unexpectedly because he grins when he bites” (*Bis.Acc.* 33 [Harmon]).⁹⁹ The similarity between this description of Menippus and Tryphon’s definition of sarcasm (“Sarcasm is showing the teeth

⁹⁴ The use of χαλκόπους parodies its Homeric meaning, which is to refer to the strength or speed of horses. Here, the term draws attention how the crater’s spewing out of Empedocles’s sandal was clear evidence that he was not taken up to the realm of the gods (Levy 1976:190).

⁹⁵ Levy 1976:192.

⁹⁶ Levy 1976:191.

⁹⁷ For further Menippean sarcasm, see *Icar.* 2, 10, 34.

⁹⁸ Menippus is not the only sarcastic Cynic in Lucian; Diogenes, whom we encountered in §1.1.3, follows essentially the same pattern.

⁹⁹ “Dog” was a colloquial way of referring to Cynics. Note the etymological relationship in Greek.

while grinning.” *Trop.* 20) further strengthens the connection between Cynic and sarcasm.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, we cannot draw a one-to-one comparison between Cynic traits and those of Lucian’s major sarcasts, as Lucian writes a number of characters of different backgrounds who use significant sarcasm.

Zeus Rants, which consists of the gods watching helplessly as mortals debate their existence, contains excellent examples. Much of this text’s sarcasm is spoken by Momus, the deification of mockery and criticism. Momus has plenty of sarcasm for Apollo, and takes especial delight at teasing his prophetic (in)abilities (*JTr.* 30–31, 43). Even Zeus himself cannot escape censure. As the debate over the gods’ existence carries on, Zeus begins to express concern that their side is faring poorly. Momus “reassures” him sarcastically and in epic style by quoting Homer: “But whenever you like, Zeus, you can let down a cord of gold and ‘sway them aloft, with the earth and the sea, too, into the bargain’” (*JTr.* 45 [Harmon]).¹⁰¹ Unlike in *Dialogues of the Dead* where one might argue that the brashness of our Cynics stems from the fact that they are already dead and cannot be further harmed, Momus gets away with picking on higher ranking gods.

While Momus may be the patron god of sarcasm,¹⁰² Damis—an Epicurean whose debate over the gods’ existence against the Stoic philosopher Timocles drives the plot of *Zeus Rants*—does his work on earth. Damis is constantly sarcastic with his opponent. He uses many hyper-formal address-forms, insincerely referring to his opponent as: ὦ γενναιότατε φιλοσόφων Τιμόκλεις (*JTr.* 41), ὦ ἄριστε (43), ὦ καλὲ Τιμόκλεις (42), ὦ θεοφιλέστατε Τιμόκλεις (47, an example of chunking [§1.2.1]), ὦ σοφώτατε (49), ὦ θαυμάσιε (49).¹⁰³ Damis goes so far as to ironically concede the entire debate to Timocles (*JTr.* 52), who, when it comes to things divine, “no doubt know[s] best” (σὺ ἄμεινον ἂν εἰδείης, *JTr.* 45 [Harmon]; cf. §2.3). Timocles finds this constant stream of sarcasm masquerading as good manners infuriating, and becomes more and more frustrated throughout the debate. The dialogue ends with him storming off in a frenzy of rage, leaving

¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, *σαρκασμός* comes from *σαρκάζω*, which literally means “to tear flesh.”

¹⁰¹ The sarcasm comes from the fact that both Momus and the audience know that Zeus will not, or cannot, do so—making the comment an example of sarcastic encouragement (§2.1).

¹⁰² Momus turns up again in *The Parliament of the Gods*, where he is again full of mockery, and criticism, and is also not without sarcasm (for the latter, see *Deor. Conc.* 11).

¹⁰³ Note the use of the superlative in adding further hyperbole in several of these examples.

Damis appearing the calm, collected victor who has won the approval of the crowd (*JTr.* 52–53).

Sketching out these sarcastic characters helps further hone our picture of the traits associated with sarcasm in Lucian. Both Momus and Menippus use sarcasm subversively on their relative superiors. Momus lacks something of the Cynic’s *παρρησία*, being overall more subtle and more polite. This enables him to avoid the censure of more powerful gods. He receives no more pushback from Zeus than, “You are boring us to extinction, Momus, with your untimely criticism” (*JTr.* 43 [Harmon]).¹⁰⁴ Momus’s sarcasm also successfully flies under the radar with Apollo, who does not seem to realise that he is being mocked (*JTr.* 29–30).

Damis finds himself in a different rhetorical situation. He begins the debate on roughly equal footing with his opponent and both must contest the philosophical standing of the other, aiming to win the crowd to their side with argument and rhetoric. On the rhetorical end, here sarcasm works much as it did with our other sarcasts. Damis’s hyper-formal insincerity erodes the credibility of his opponent whom the fictitious audience, as well as actual audience, take less and less seriously as the debate progresses, until there is a clear winner and the loser is laughed off stage.

These traits are common across all of our sarcasts so far. The use of sarcasm shows the character to be more clever, collected, and lucid than their victims. Their dry wit and insincere comments undercut their targets with mockery that remains subtle enough to go unpunished, and occasionally undetected.¹⁰⁵ The result is comic, and renders the sarcast a sympathetic character.

However, there also is variation among Lucian’s sarcasts that show them to be composites of different influences. Some Cynic elements are common, especially a willingness to criticize without regard for social position. However, our exemplar sarcasts accomplish this with different levels of subtlety, using ostensible politeness to mask offence to varying degrees, at least superficially. In contrast to the brashness of Menippus, Damis’s relative calm and polite demeanour has notes of self-deprecating *εἰρωνεία* as Aristotle

¹⁰⁴ More literally: “You are slaughtering us...” (Σὺ ἡμᾶς ἐπισφάττεις) or as the LSJ suggests, “You are talking us to death” (LSJ, s.v. “ἐπισφάζω”). The point is that Momus is not helping the divine cause.

¹⁰⁵ Undetected by the target, not the audience.

conceives of it, although Damis's sarcasm is too overt to reach the unbroken pretence of humility and ignorance often associated with Socrates (see Ch.1, §1.1). Doubtless, comic elements influence these characters as well, the ways in which they are always ready with a jocular quip or retort having parallels in Aristophanes.¹⁰⁶

This patchwork of influences likely has its source in Lucian's own composite writing style. In *The Double Indictment*, this style is described through an accusation against Lucian made by the personification of Dialogue, who claims that The Syrian has "unceremoniously penned me up with Jest and Satire and Cynicism and Eupolis and Aristophanes" (Dialogue also adds Menippus into the mix, *Bis.Acc.* 33 [Harmon]). It is unsurprising that some of Lucian's recurring characters would exhibit these traits characteristic of his style. As we will see presently, the sarcasts surveyed have similarities with the persona that Lucian takes when he writes himself into the narrative.

3.2 Lucian as Lucian: The Sarcasm of Lucian's Alter-Egos

Lucian also writes versions of himself into several of his dialogues. These characters engage frequently in sarcasm and share several features with Lucian's other sarcasts. However, important differences in characterization are still present. With only the faintest pretence, Lucian (Λυκιανός) appears as the character Lycinus (Λύκινος) in several stories. Obviously, Lucian cannot hope to hide under a dropped alpha, so it is safe to say that he expects his audience to see a fictionalized version of himself in these narratives.¹⁰⁷

Generally speaking, Lycinus is characterised in much the same way as other Lucianic sarcasts—the dialogue *Hermotimus* can provide an illustrative example. In this dialogue, Lycinus attempts to convince Hermotimus that his twenty-year study of philosophy has been a waste of time. Lycinus's rhetoric follows essentially the same pattern we have already observed. He is constantly teasing and mocking, confounding, and outwitting his opponent, in addition to using significant sarcasm (see *Herm.* 5, 10, 12, 42, 81, 82). His sarcastic

¹⁰⁶ Compare Dicaeopolis in Aristophanes's *Acharnians*, who like our Lucianic sarcasts is ever-*schlagfertig* and at times sarcastic, but lacks something of the wit and subtility of Lucian's characters (e.g. *Ach.* 64–93).

¹⁰⁷ It is important to distinguish between Lucian himself and Lucian's narrative persona. One cannot assume continuity between an author's personal perspective and the perspective of the narrator. This distinction is even more significant in Lucian, who delights in taking almost nothing seriously, himself included.

concessions remind one of Damis. Lycinus suggests that Hermotimus's inability to construct a plausible argument must be a deliberate attempt to keep Lycinus from becoming a true philosopher as Hermotimus himself so clearly is (*Herm.* 21; another sarcastic concession occurs in *Herm.* 20).¹⁰⁸

Despite these similarities, Lucian's avatars differ from his other sarcasts in being overall more subtle and more cautious. Lucian enters the narrative of *The Fisherman* as Free-Speech (Παρησιάζης). This dialogue was written in response to criticism that Lucian received for *Philosophies for Sale*, in which he puts representatives of different philosophical schools up for auction using the marketplace as a vehicle for comedy and satire. *The Fisherman* 11 is an excellent example of the way Lucian subtly winks to the audience throughout his apology. The great philosophers of yore have risen from the dead to wreak vengeance on Free-Speech for the outrage of *Philosophies for Sale* (*Pisc.* 1–4). After finally convincing the mob, headed by Socrates, to grant him a trial before execution, Lycinus exclaims, “Well done, most learned sirs [Εὖ γε, ὦ σοφώτατοι]; this course is better and more legal” (*Pisc.* 11 [Harmon]). Both εὖ γε and superlative, ostensibly complementary vocatives are typical of Lucianic sarcasm (§2.1, §2.2, §3.1).¹⁰⁹ However, it is essential to Lucian's defence at this point that Free-Speech flatter his opposition, and so the line is delivered sincerely, and received as such. It is only beneath the surface where one may recognize that Free-Speech is complimenting his opponents more highly than he actually thinks of them—especially considering that hitherto the behaviour of the philosophic mob has been hardly characteristic of the model sage. Thus there remains an element of irony for those who know the character well enough to detect it.¹¹⁰ In her article on *The Fisherman*, Marília Pinheiro argues that “in this dialogue Lucian accentuates the satirical tone of the previous dialogue [i.e. *Philosophies for Sale*], and that this is yet another striking instance of his irreverent, sarcastic and corrosive sophisticate vein.”¹¹¹

In broad strokes, both Lycinus and Free-Speech share a number of traits with Lucian's other sarcasts (§3.1). They are ready wits, whose frequent sarcasm undermines their opponents and renders them sympathetic to the audience. They also manage to escape serious

¹⁰⁸ For Lycinus's sarcasm elsewhere, see *Hes.* 7; *Lex.* 1; 23; *Symp.* 35.

¹⁰⁹ Dickey notes that σοφώτατοι is “usually ironic” (1996:143).

¹¹⁰ For further examples of the exaggerated tone underlying Lycinus's speech in this dialogue see *Pisc.* 4, 6.

¹¹¹ 2012:296.

censure and come out on top of the exchanges in which they find themselves. This is as clear in *Hermotimus* where Lycinus convinces his interlocutor to abandon philosophy as it is in Lucian's apologies in which Free-Speech is literally acquitted before a divine court (*Pisc.* 38–39; *Bis.Acc.*¹¹² 32, 35).

Lucian's avatars do, however, differ from Lucian's other sarcasts in several ways. First, there is a greater degree of levity and playfulness to Lycinus's character compared to the biting wit of Menippus. An excellent example of this difference is *The Ship*, in which Lycinus, though often sarcastic (*Nav.* 29, 30, 37, 39), is much more jocular in teasing his friends (see *Nav.* 14–5, 45). Second, Lycinus's satire is more modest in its objects. He does not directly target Socrates or Zeus, but saves his criticism for those of his own rank (*Herm. Lex.*; *Nav.*). When Lucian's avatars satirize philosophy, it is always done indirectly. Free-Speech's defence in *The Fishermen* is based on the argument that he has been criticizing contemporary representatives of philosophical schools, rather than their founders, whom he respects (*Pisc.* 5–6, 29–37). The same indirect critique of philosophy is made in *Hermotimus*. Contemporary philosophy is satirized in its myriad forms, but Lycinus's sarcasm is mostly directed at Hermotimus himself. In these ways, Lucian's avatars accomplish their satire more subtly and indirectly than his literary sarcasts.

3.3 Lucian Unmasked: Character Assassinations

We have been moving slowly inwards from significant Lucianic characters, to avatars for Lucian's persona, and now finally we come as close to Lucian as the written word permits. In some works, Lucian does not hide behind even a semi-pseudonym—although it is still important to recognize Lucian's authorial voice as a persona even when he writes as himself.¹¹³ Among these texts, we find several personal attacks. These are absolute character assassinations within which Lucian tends more toward the use of straightforward insult and invective than irony. However, when Lucian employs sarcasm, one experiences it at its full rhetorical force.

Lucian's *The Passing of Peregrinus* consists of a bitterly satirical attempt to discredit a man whose career, which Lucian characterizes as fuelled by insincere and self-serving ambition, transitioned across several philosophical positions, included a stint as a Christian,

¹¹² Lucian's avatar in this dialogue is "The Syrian"—a reference to his native land.

¹¹³ See n.107.

and ended in self-immolation.¹¹⁴ Lucian is not shy of telling his audience exactly what he thinks of Peregrinus, engaging in myriad polemic throughout, both sarcastic and otherwise. Lucian begins his disparagement with stock sarcastic epithets (βέλτιος, γεννάδας, *Peregr.* 1), before styling Peregrinus's life a series of "spectacular performances... outdoing Sophocles and Aeschylus" (*Peregr.* 3 [Harmon]). Lucian is always quick to contrast his sarcastic praise with the realities of Peregrinus's character, reminding his audience that "this creation and masterpiece of nature, this Polyclitan canon, as soon he came of age, was taken in adultery..." (*Peregr.* 9 [Harmon]; cf. §1.1.4).

In this sustained work of polemic, Lucian is not above resorting to simple name-calling. Playing on connections between self-immolation and sacrifice, Lucian refers to Peregrinus as a "holy image" (ἁγάλμα, *Peregr.* 8, 10 [Harmon]). We are also informed that Peregrinus was in the habit of calling himself Proteus (*Peregr.* 1).¹¹⁵ Lucian echoes this appellation, sarcastically appropriating it as a means of mocking Peregrinus's vainglorious career changes (*Peregr.* 1; cf. §1.1.3).¹¹⁶

Lucian also shows his capacity for double entendre in *The Passing of Peregrinus*, referring to Peregrinus's self-cremation as his greatest work (τὸ κάλλιστον τοῦτο ἔργον, *Peregr.* 36). Considering how little love Lucian has for Peregrinus and his deeds, this statement is straightforwardly sarcastic. However, it is also doubtless true that Lucian is not at all displeased to watch the old philosopher burn, so in some sense Lucian does consider this deed to be Peregrinus's κάλλιστον ἔργον.

Lucian's use of sarcasm in *The Passing of Peregrinus* is certainly unrestrained. Its sheer quantity, not to mention all of the straightforward insults that occur alongside it, are testament to the fact that Lucian really could not stand the person about whom he was writing. Though the grievances are different, we find the same patterns in Lucian's other character assassinations. For instances of sarcasm in these works, see *Alex.* 25, 35, 60; *Ind.* 1, 16, 22; *Pseudol.* 6, 14, 21, 23, 27, 29, 30, 31.

¹¹⁴ Cf. §1.2.3, §2.4.

¹¹⁵ Proteus, as described by Homer, was a sea-god who had the ability to transform himself into various creatures, water, or, more pertinently to this piece, fire (MacLeod 1991:271).

¹¹⁶ Lucian does not see "Proteus," used in a positive sense, as a worthy appellation for man whom he considers a fraud, so it is quite possible that in several other cases where Lucian refers to Peregrinus as Proteus, there is some degree of sarcasm, either poking fun at his changeability or flammability (e.g. *Peregr.* 12, 30, 36).

The use of sarcasm in Lucian's character assassinations is markedly different than what we observed in the previous sections. We have left far behind the subtle undermining of the opposition by the clever underdog sarcast. The polemic and sarcasm of the character assassinations is direct and vehement. In these works of polemic, sarcasm functions as a satirical device to expose and discredit. It is one of several tactics used to annihilate the reputation of its victim and, blended with other elements of Lucian's sense of humour, turn them into an object of ridicule. There is a persuasive element to this rhetoric as well. The overall weight of Lucian's polemic is such that his audience cannot avoid becoming aware of the fact that should they dissent at all from Lucian's appraisal of Peregrinus—or any of the others he seeks to tear down—they too would soon fall under the same ridicule and shame to which Lucian subjects his victims.¹¹⁷

The considerable difference between Lucian's sarcasm in his character assassinations compared to that of his other typical sarcasts is readily explainable. In the assassinations, Lucian's targets are unable to create significant reprisal, being either dead—Peregrinus and Alexander—or of lower social standing. Furthermore, where we have evidence, Lucian appears to be writing the assassinations primarily for a more limited, sympathetic audience (*Alex.* 1–2, 61; *Peregr.* 1–2). These factors enable Lucian to be unrestrained in his polemic and sarcasm without offending anyone who can cause him trouble.

It is important to recall that the sort of sarcasm we find in Lucian's character assassinations is closer to the rule than the exception. Almost half (46%) of Lucian's sarcasm is spoken by characters of higher status. The assassinations may be more tendentious than average, but on the whole, the freedom with which Lucian uses sarcasm to damage the reputation of his victims is not atypical. Indeed, while it is helpful to explore the more subversive uses of sarcasm that we discussed in §3.1–3.2, they are the minority cases.

3.4 Conclusions

Surveying sarcastic characters throughout Lucian's writings both confirms our general observations about ancient sarcasm-use and nuances our understanding of how sarcasm may be turned to subversive effect. Although they are extreme cases, Lucian's character

¹¹⁷ Despite differences in form, *On Sacrifices*, which has affinities to diatribe (MacLeod 1991:276), a Cynic favorite, is another excellent example of the rhetorical use of sarcasm to beat down the positions or practices of others to the extent that only a fool would raise them again. See *Sacr.* 4, 10, 12–14.

assassinations fit within the paradigm of majority, appropriate sarcasm. Dealing with victims either unable to do him harm, or beneath him in status, Lucian uses sarcasm as one polemical tool among many to dismantle the reputations of his victims. These cases are also the closest we get to Lucian's own narrative voice, or at least the voice that Lucian wishes his audience to accept as his own.

The other sarcasts analysed exist at varying degrees removed from their author's persona and take different approaches to using sarcasm against the grain of social status. On the far end of the continuum we find Lucian's recurring Cynics, including Menippus and Diogenes. In line with the reputation of Cynics at the time, these sarcasts are bold and unfiltered in their use of sarcasm and mockery on their victims, whether kings, famous philosophers, or gods. These Cynics are perhaps closest to the prophets of the LXX, insofar as both presume the freedom to criticize whomever they deem necessary with impunity. Of course, the Cynics do so as a matter of philosophical principle, while the prophets are limited by their perception of their divine mandate.

As we move from Menippus toward Lucian's avatars, we begin to see increasing subtlety in the use of insubordinate sarcasm. While Momus and Damis still succeed in turning their sarcasm against those of higher rank, they do so more carefully, employing different degrees of ostensible formality to keep their comments flying either under the radar or over the heads of their victims. Like the Cynics, they manage this flawlessly, undermining their victims and winning over the audience with their wit and humour.

When Lucian writes a version of himself into his dialogues, as characters such as Lycinus and Free-Speech, his avatars use sarcasm to similar effect, despite being more modest in their targets. Lycinus usually saves his sarcasm for characters of his own rank and does not directly take on the likes of Zeus or Socrates. To an even higher degree than Damis or Momus, he uses techniques such as insincere politeness and sarcastic concessions to undermine the positions of his interlocutors, and is likewise ever-successful.

We thus have three distinct types of Lucianic sarcasts, existing at three degrees of separation from Lucian's narrative persona. What is most interesting is the way that these characters correlate with different uses of sarcasm. Lucian's more literary characters, who at least in name are entirely removed from their author's personality, engage in the most inappropriate, insubordinate sarcasm. As we move inward, Lucian's doppelgängers remain subversive, but choose more appropriate targets commensurate with their social rank, whereas Lucian attacks targets that cannot fight back when writing as himself. I suggest that this correlation between degree of separation from authorial voice and degree of

appropriateness in sarcasm-use is not incidental, and can extend our understanding of strategies for using insubordinate sarcasm in an ancient context.

The first major strategy is subtlety. Unless you are a Cynic, adjusting one's level of ostensible politeness—or similar tactics such as sarcastic concessions and encouragement—appears to keep one's victim either unable to recognize the speaker's sarcasm or at least less inclined to punish it. The utility of this tactic likely stems from the fact that the sarcasm continues to pay lip service to the degree of politeness or deference required by the situation. So long as they do not make a clear break from the social script, they retain a measure of deniability. This tactic is, however, problematic at least because it depends on one's interlocutor not being savvy enough to get the joke, and also for further reasons we shall discuss presently.

Perhaps the most important evidence for the effect and reception of Lucianic sarcasm comes from beyond the level of the narrative. We have already mentioned two of Lucian's apologies, and these are not the only occasions on which he must respond to significant criticism (see also *Apol.*). These apologies show Lucian to have received serious censure for his satire on multiple occasions. This evidence of pushback is a good reminder that the profile of the sarcasms we have been sketching is in certain aspects a literary fiction. The ease with which Lucian's sarcasms evade censure for being critical of their superiors is a better representation of the way Lucian would like things to be than the way things actually are. It would therefore be fallacious to say that an imitation of Momus or Menippus would be a viable strategy for an ancient person to succeed in insubordinate sarcasm. Lucian himself has much more difficulty getting away with his sarcasm and satire than his characters do. In real life, offending the wrong people is dangerous.

This danger, however, does not stop Lucian from satirising religious or philosophical positions. As we have seen, Lucian employs different degrees of distance from his own persona depending on the targets of his satire. When he wants to be sarcastic about the gods or make jokes at the expense of Socrates and other famous philosophers, Lucian writes characters fully distinct from himself such as Menippus or Momus to use as vehicles for his satire. Less controversial or lower status victims do not require so great a distance between author and character, and Lucian is happy to write a version of himself into the narrative. I argue that this is Lucian's most significant strategy for succeeding in insubordinate sarcasm and satire. By adjusting the degree of removal between himself and the satirical voice, Lucian creates the measure of deniability necessary for him to feel comfortable subverting rank. Menippus may mock and insult Socrates, but Lucian has every respect for him!

This disassociation of the self from the critical voice lies of the heart of the strategies for using sarcasm against those of higher rank that we have seen this far. In the prophets, this is the distinction between the divine voice and that of the prophet, whereas Lucian can accomplish varying degrees of distance by manipulating the *dramatis personae* across his narratives. In both cases, there is evidence that this does not always work as well as the sarcasm hopes, and they must be prepared to deal with the fallout of their social transgressions.

4 Conclusions

With a dataset of 386 examples, this chapter is by far the largest scale analysis of sarcasm in ancient Greek texts to date. These data have enabled the identification of many common contextual and linguistic signals of sarcasm in ancient Greek. These signals will become essential evidence for identifying sarcasm in Paul throughout the rest of the dissertation. The patterns in sarcasm use discussed in §2 will also facilitate sarcasm recognition in addition to providing material for comparison when thinking about the rhetorical functions of cases where Paul's sarcasm follows the same patterns.

The means of signalling sarcasm presented in §1 and §2 also have implications for modern research on verbal irony. This study presents new linguistic data removed from English both historically and linguistically that can be used to hone our understanding of how sarcasm is expressed across languages and cultures.¹¹⁸

Our case study of Lucian's sarcasms in §3 has expanded the work begun on the pragmatic functions of sarcasm in the previous chapter. Both case studies confirm the hypothesis that sarcasm normally functions as an implicit means of challenging another party's perceived claim to some positive quality, and that it is most appropriate and most commonly used by superiors on subordinates or between equals. Our case studies also provide examples of several strategies for using sarcasm against the grain of social hierarchy, such as we saw with the prophets and Lucian's Cynics. The most significant pattern here however was the way that Lucian manipulates voice, using characters at different degrees from his authorial persona depending on the prestige of the victims he wishes to satirise.

Voice will become a major theme in our chapter on Romans as we deal with the possibility of sarcasm in the dialogical passages of the text. Here comparison to voice in Lucianic dialogues will be instructive. Analogical comparison with our case studies will also

¹¹⁸ See Pawlak 2019:545–48, 560–63.

be helpful for thinking about how Paul's use of sarcasm reflects his relationship with different early Christian congregations. Will Paul use sarcasm with the confidence and aggression of Lucian's character assassinations? The brashness of a Cynic or prophet? Or perhaps with the subtlety of Lycinus?

Summary to Part 1: What is sarcasm? How is sarcasm expressed? What does sarcasm do?

The first chapter addressed the question “what is sarcasm?” On the basis of ancient and modern discussions, I defined sarcasm as a subtype of verbal irony in which an utterance that would normally communicate a positive attitude or evaluation implies a negative attitude or evaluation.

The next chapter on the Septuagint began to address the question “how is sarcasm expressed?” Several cues appeared throughout *Job* and the prophets, including repetition, sarcastic politeness, and the sarcastic use of the dubitative. Sarcastic taunts were also prevalent in the prophets. The question of expression was the major focus of the chapter “Sarcasm in Ancient Greek Texts.” This study analysed 386 examples of sarcasm across Lucian and other sources to produce the first large-scale study of sarcasm in ancient Greek.

The most common signal of sarcasm identified was the use of contrastive evaluation: clarifying the presence of sarcasm by following it with statements of literal negative evaluation (Ch.3, §1.1.4). Ways of conveying emphasis and exaggeration were also important, especially the use of emphatic particles and the repetition of adjectives. Hyperformality, or exaggerated politeness, also occurred in a large proportion of the sarcastic utterances surveyed.

Work on the question “what does sarcasm do?” began with our analysis of *Job* and has since been refined by our case studies on the prophets and Lucian. I hypothesise that sarcasm normally functions as an implicit challenge to what the sarcastist perceives as some claim to a positive quality made by another party. Social hierarchy often plays a role in these exchanges, because the claim to a positive quality or qualities that sarcasm implicitly challenges is often interconnected with social status. Sarcasm is appropriate when it is used with the grain of social hierarchy: speakers of high rank may use sarcasm on subordinates without censure.

Beyond these more common uses of sarcasm, our case studies in the prophets and Lucian provided a number of examples where sarcasm was used against parties of higher rank. The prophets appropriate the divine voice to give them the authority to engage in sarcasm with targets of higher status. Lucian’s Cynics also use sarcasm boldly and without regard for social hierarchy, while other Lucianic characters employ greater subtlety and ostensible politeness. But Lucian’s most significant strategy for engaging in sarcasm and satire against the grain of social hierarchy is to adjust his use of voice and persona. Lucian

uses characters far removed from his own voice when satirising higher-status victims, saving more modest targets for characters meant to represent a version of his own persona.

The findings of Part 1 will provide the tools necessary for identifying and analysing sarcasm in Paul's letters throughout Part 2 of this study. Here, beginning with Galatians, we will exegete sarcastic passages throughout all of the undisputed Pauline epistles in which sarcasm occurs, and discuss the role of sarcasm in Paul's argumentation and rhetoric across each letter. Our theoretical work on sarcasm and study of its expression in ancient Greek will be essential for identifying Pauline sarcasm. Our case studies on *Job*, the prophets, and Lucian will also provide paradigms against which it will be fruitful to compare the rhetorical functions of Paul's sarcasm in different situations.

PART 2
Sarcasm in Paul's Letters

Chapter 4

Sarcasm in Galatians

The rest of the dissertation will explore Paul's use of sarcasm across each of the letters where it occurs. Both the linguistic gains made regarding sarcasm recognition and work done on the pragmatic functions of sarcasm over the previous chapters will provide helpful analogies for furthering our interpretation of Paul.

Not only for chronological reasons but also for the prevalence of conflict therein, Galatians will be an excellent starting point for this investigation. Surveying Paul's rhetoric in passages across this letter will provide insight into the ways he employs sarcasm as a tool for navigating his relationships with Galatian Christians and Jerusalem apostles alike.

We will analyse three passages that have been considered ironic or sarcastic in previous scholarship to determine whether they qualify as instances of sarcasm as we have defined it: an utterance that would normally communicate positive evaluation but implies negative evaluation. We begin with the opening of the letter, where Paul expresses astonishment with the Galatians for their apparent rejection of the gospel (Gal 1:6–7a). We will assess evidence for this opening expressing “ironic rebuke,” which some have argued for on the basis of comparison with ancient papyrus letters. We will then consider whether the *δοκέω* epithets that Paul uses to refer to the “pillar” apostles in 2:2, 6, and 9 can be classified as sarcastic, and how their use serves Paul's rhetorical aims across the broader passage. Finally, I will push back on a common misidentification of sarcasm in 5:12.

1 Gal 1:6–7 and “Ironical Rebuke”

The fact that Paul does not open Galatians with his usual thanksgiving but an expression of frustration at his congregation for turning aside from their calling has been much remarked on in scholarship.¹ While the Galatians would not have had other Pauline letters for comparison—and would probably not have been expecting a thanksgiving section in the first place²—by the end of 1:6 they could not have missed the intensity of Paul's tone.

A number of scholars have argued that this intense opening in Gal 1:6 is also ironic.³ Comparison with other ancient letters has played a central role in this argument. Nanos

¹ For a summary, see Van Voorst 2010:154–59.

² Van Voorst 2010:160–66.

³ Betz 1979:46. See also as follows.

argues that Gal 1:6 contains an epistolary formula for expressing “ironic rebuke.”⁴ The coinage “ironic rebuke” comes from Mullins’s work, which undertakes an analysis of epistolary formulae in the New Testament based on previous scholarship conducted by White on non-literary papyri. Linguistically speaking, the form consists of θαυμάζω plus the “the object of astonishment,” indicated by ὅτι or πῶς.⁵

Kremendahl’s survey of θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ in the papyri is the most systematic to date, overviewing 30 instances occurring in the introductions of papyrus letters. For Kremendahl, θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ is a way of signalling rebuke, but not direct rebuke. The speaker’s comment about their wonder or confusion in the first person implies a second person complaint (“*Ich wundere mich, daß*” → implies → “*Du hast in der und der Sache gefehlt*”).⁶ The indirectness of this expression of wonder can make the speaker’s concern or complaint read more politely than open rebuke, creating an overall softening effect.⁷ Of course, the actual level of politeness would depend on the situation, and speakers can adjust how thinly they wish their complaint to be veiled.⁸ “In einigen Fällen ist unsere Briefformel sogar nur noch der letzte höfliche Auftakt zu offener Konfrontation und derber Beschimpfung.”⁹

Concerning irony, Kremendahl, agreeing with previous work done by Roberts, does not see θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ as inherently ironic. Instead, the possibility of irony in such expressions must be determined from context.¹⁰ Access to a larger dataset of θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ in letter openings has made this observation clear. There is nothing ironic about concerned, yet polite requests for information such as P.Mich. VIII 500:

θα[υ]μ[ά]ζω πῶς ἐπιστόλιον ἡμεῖν οὐκ ἔπεμψας / δι’ οὗ ἡμεῖν φανερόν ποιήσης [ε]ἰ κατὰ τὰς / εὐχὰς ἡμῶν διεσώθης κα[ὶ] τί ἄρτι πρά[σ]ς[εις], / ἵν’ εἰδῶμεν πῶς τὰ πραγμάτια σου φέρῃ[ι-] / ται.

⁴ 2002:32–61.

⁵ Mullins 1972:385; White 1971:96. Dahl adds that these rebuke clauses may also be signalled by εἰ or εἴπερ (2002:118–19).

⁶ Kremendahl 2000:102–3.

⁷ Kremendahl 2000:103; cf. Dahl 2002:119.

⁸ For polite use see P.Mich. VIII 479, VIII 500; XV 751. For impolite: P.Bad. II 35; P.Freib. IV 69.

⁹ Kremendahl 2000:103.

¹⁰ Kremendahl 2000:103–4; cf. Roberts 1991:111–13, 116–17, 119; Hansen 1989:33.

I'm surprised that you haven't sent us a short letter through which you could make it clear to us whether, in answer to our prayers, you've made it through alright and whether you are doing well, so we might know how things are going with you.¹¹

The overdone formality of P.Oxy. I 123, on the other hand, makes irony much more likely:¹²

κυρίῳ μου υἱῷ Διονυσοθέωνι / ὁ πατήρ χαίρειν. /... / πάνυ θαυμάζω, υἱέ μου, μέχρις
σήμερον γράμ- / ματά σου οὐκ ἔλαβον τὰ δηλοῦντά μοι τὰ περὶ τῆς / ὀλοκληρίας ὑμῶν.
κὰν ὥς, δέσποτά μοι, ἀντί- / γραψόν μοι ἐν τάχει· πάνυ γὰρ θλείβομαι διότι / οὐκ
ἐδεξάμην σου γράμματα.

The father sends his greetings to my lord and son Dionysos theon... I am sorely amazed, my son, until today I have not received any letters from you concerning your well-being. And kindly do, my lord, write me back as soon as possible, for I am woefully afflicted on account of not having received your letter!¹³

With θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ sometimes ironic but more often unironic in the papyri, we cannot make a one-to-one connection between the use of θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ and irony. We must therefore decide whether Gal 1:6 is sarcastic on the basis of the text itself rather than on comparison with the papyri. Before moving on, however, I will push back on an assumption underlying scholarship on θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ in order to promote further critical thinking about the relationship between Gal 1:6 and the papyri.

1.1 How Formulaic is the θαυμάζω “Formula”?

Kremendahl argues that the Galatians would recognise in Paul's θαυμάζω ὅτι an epistolary formula “die ihnen aus ihrer Alltagskorrespondenz geläufig war.”¹⁴ But there are reasons to doubt that the Galatians would be familiar with this expression as an epistolary convention. Of the 30 examples that Kremendahl cites, several are quite late. Letters written centuries after Paul should be used cautiously in influencing our impression of what would have been typical in the correspondence of Paul and his congregation. If we, still allowing a

¹¹ For further unironic examples, see n.8.

¹² See Ch.3, §2.2.

¹³ Of the 30+ examples of θαυμάζω + conjunction cited in scholarship, the following have been identified as ironic: P.Oxy. XXXVI 2783, X 1348, XLII 3063 (Kremendahl 2000:104n.29). P.Oxy. IX 1223 (Mullins 1972:386; Roberts 1991:117). P.Cairo.Zen. 59060/59061 (Roberts 1991:117).

¹⁴ 2000:99; cf. Longenecker 1990:11. For others who argue that Gal 1:6 may be interpreted in light of the θαυμάζω formula in the papyri, see Dahl 2002:118–19, 129–30; Hansen 1989:33, 43; Nanos 2002:32–3, 39–46, 304; Roberts 1992:330–2, 337.

considerable window, constrict our search only to the first two centuries BCE and CE, we are left with 8–11 instantiations of this so-called epistolary formula.¹⁵

Comparison with greeting formulae, which perhaps more than any other feature deserve the title epistolary formulae, can help refine our understanding of how strong the evidence for *θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ* as an actual convention is. Between 200 BCE and 200 CE, there are thousands of ancient papyrus letters extant.¹⁶ A ratio of circa 10 instantiations of *θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ* out of 3747 letters should already suggest caution in using the technical designation “epistolary formula” to refer to an indicative verb + conjunction occurring so infrequently. To add further perspective, a papyrus.info search for *χαίρειν* between these dates turns up 4854 hits. These are not all letters, but include contracts, receipts, and other types of writing. *ἀσπάζομαι/ἀσπάζεται* occur 364 times within this date-range and, unlike *χαίρειν*, occur predominantly in letters.

Of course, one must expect greeting formulae to be more prevalent than other conventions that deserve the designation epistolary formulae in their own right. However, only about 10 examples within the four centuries most relevant to Paul are too few to suggest that the use of *θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ* in letter writing was formalised enough to merit reference as an “epistolary formula.” We therefore cannot assume that it would be recognizable to an audience as a common letter-writing convention with stereotyped features—that Galatian Christians would hear *θαυμάζω ὅτι* and immediately recognise Paul as expressing perplexity, rebuke, or whatever. This does not mean that Galatian Christians would hear *θαυμάζω ὅτι* with no preconceptions at all. *θαυμάζω* is a common, versatile verb capable of being used positively, neutrally, and negatively,¹⁷ literally and ironically.¹⁸ Doubtless Paul’s audience in Galatians would have used or heard *θαυμάζω* used in all of these ways.

¹⁵ Nine letters date to the first and second centuries CE, and three could be second or third century CE—for a maximum of 12 examples of high relevance—while Kremendahl’s other 18 examples date anywhere from the 3rd to 5th century CE, except P.Zen.Pestm. 56, which is third century BCE (see 2000:101–2). BGU III 850 should not be counted among the relevant examples despite its early date. It is missing the necessary context to determine the letter’s subject and the tone of its *θαυμάζω* clause. Therefore, 9 within the date-range – 1 missing context (+ up to 3 that may or may not date within the date-range) = 8–11 examples.

¹⁶ A papyrus.info metadata search for “‘letter’ OR ‘lettre’ OR ‘Brief’” between 200 BCE and 200 CE (inclusive) returns 3747 hits.

¹⁷ Kremendahl 2000:103. Cf. LSJ s.v. “*θαυμάζω*.”

¹⁸ See Ch.3, §2.4.

It is therefore exegetically inappropriate to use the papyri as an interpretive key for understanding Gal 1:6. Without sufficient evidence for θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ as an epistolary formula, we cannot assert that Paul's audience would be biased towards a specific interpretation of θαυμάζω in Gal 1:6 just because Paul uses the verb in the context of a letter. This is not to say that comparison between Paul and the papyri is not worth making, only that Paul's use of θαυμάζω must be established in its own right.

1.2 Galatians 1:6

Multiple lines of evidence support a sarcastic reading of Gal 1:6, although Paul's use of ambiguous language makes this interpretation ultimately uncertain.¹⁹

1.2.1 A Sarcastic Reading

We have established indices of exaggeration as some of the most prevalent signals of sarcasm in ancient Greek (Ch.3, §1.2). Galatians 1:6 is certainly emphatic. Paul begins: “Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως.” θαυμάζω can indicate amazement, fascination, and awe at something wonderful that has just transpired.²⁰ The double adverbs οὕτως ταχέως also create a sense of emphasis, which is underlined by their placement early in the clause, just after the ὅτι.²¹ Paul expresses amazement at the Galatians celerity,²² and when he goes on to describe this as nothing less than the blinding speed with which they have turned from God, it is certainly plausible to read a measure of sarcasm in Paul's expression of awe.

The strongest evidence for a sarcastic reading of Gal 1:6 lies in the element of pretence in the verse as a whole (Ch.1, §2.4). Jesus's sarcastic encouragement, which we saw in the previous chapter, can provide a helpful illustration (Ch.3, §1.2.2, §2.1): “You do a

¹⁹ We will begin our exegesis with 1:6, as I do not see Paul as having provided significant indication of his tone in 1:1–5. Contra Van Voorst, who argues that in 1:1–5: “Paul has been implicitly but clearly critical of the Galatians in this prescript” (2010:171, 166–72). Paul's apostolic self-description in 1:1 does not imply that the Galatians have done anything wrong. Likewise, the benediction and doxological aside in 1:3–4 are mildly positive where they touch on the Galatians at all. There is no reason why the Galatians should have been biased to expect criticism in 1:6, or praise for that matter.

²⁰ TLG, s.v. “θαυμάζω,” esp. 2b. Note the use of θαυμάζω in describing reactions to miracles in the gospels (Mark 5.20; Matt 8.27; 9.33; 21.20).

²¹ Cf. Pawlak 2019:555.

²² See Lightfoot 1876:219; Bonnard 1953:22–23.

good job of rejecting God’s command so you can hold onto your tradition!” (καλῶς ἀθετεῖτε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν στήσητε, Mark 7:9). Although the audience knows almost instantly that Jesus does not mean to praise his opponents, his comment is still clearly sarcastic. With his ostensibly positive congratulations (καλῶς), Jesus creates the sort of “counterfeited praise” discussed in Quintilian (*Inst.* 8.6.55 [Butler, LCL]; Ch.1; §1.2). This contrasts sharply with the obvious dispraise he means to communicate (ἀθετεῖτε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ). The absurdity of this juxtaposition makes his sarcasm obvious; in a discussion about keeping the law, Jesus tells others that they have done well in breaking it!

The same sort of feigned congratulations for doing something obviously wrong would also be present in a sarcastic reading of Gal 1:6. Here Paul pretends to compliment the Galatians, “amazed” by how quickly they have defected from their calling to a different gospel: “I marvel at just how quickly you’ve managed to abandon the one who called you in the grace of Christ for a different gospel!” This pretence would be very thin, the dispraise and rebuke implied being far and away the dominant sentiments communicated.

In addition to such sarcastic congratulations, there may be further sarcasm later in the verse. Paul writes that the Galatians are turning to “a different gospel, which is not another” (εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο, Gal 1:6–7a). Some scholars argue that Paul uses “gospel” ironically here, an inversion of its normal positive sense.²³

We have shown that following an ostensibly positive message with a conflicting statement that expresses the speaker’s real attitude is one of the most common signals of sarcasm in ancient Greek texts (Ch.3, §1.1.4). This is precisely what we see in Gal 1:6–7a. ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο immediately undercuts ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, clarifying that Paul does not mean “gospel” in a positive sense, but intends to communicate a negative evaluation of his opponents’ message, which distorts the gospel (1:7) and is worthy of anathema (1:8–9). To imply such strong negative affect through the positive term “gospel” is textbook ancient sarcasm.²⁴

²³ Reumann 1955:142; Kremendahl 2000:104; Nanos 2002:298–300.

²⁴ Kremendahl writes that for Paul, his opponents’ message “gerade das Gegenteil eines Evangeliums ist,” and therefore Paul’s ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο makes it clear that, “der Terminus εὐαγγέλιον in 1,6 nicht im eigentlichen Wortsinn gemeint gewesen sein kann” (2000:104). This is close to what I have argued, but with one important distinction. Since, as we saw in Ch.1, §2.2, verbal irony inverts ostensible affect rather than meaning, an ironic reading of εὐαγγέλιον does not commit the interpreter to a stance on whether Paul admits the possibility

Recognizing this typical means of communicating sarcasm supports the exegesis of scholars who see ἕτερον and ἄλλο here as essentially synonymous.²⁵ Schröter objects, arguing that if ἕτερον and ἄλλο are synonymous, ἄλλο becomes unnecessary. He also sees it as a problem that they “stand in syntactical opposition to each other here,” and that with the ἄλλο clause Paul immediately retracts his initial statement that his opponents’ message is a gospel.²⁶ Such repetition and opposition do not however indicate inconsistency on Paul’s part or create an exegetical problem. Instead, they constitute the common signal of sarcasm discussed above in which the sarcastic statement is juxtaposed with a literal, negative message.

1.2.2 A Non-Sarcastic Reading

Although multiple lines of evidence support the plausibility of a sarcastic reading of 1:6, we must also acknowledge a level of ambiguity. θαυμάζω is a polyvalent term, and it is often difficult to determine whether its positive sense is being inverted ironically, or whether it is being used literally in a negative sense. A literal, negative reading of θαυμάζω remains a possibility, communicating emphatic rebuke rather than sarcastic congratulations: “I’m shocked that you have so quickly abandoned...” It is also possible that Paul’s addition of ἕτερον to εὐαγγέλιον is itself meant to convey negative evaluation, leaving no positive affect or “counterfeited praise” to invert ironically.

At the same time, a straightforwardly negative, non-sarcastic reading of 1:6 leaves little reason for Paul to qualify what he says so immediately (ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο, 1:7a). As we have seen, this sort of immediately contrastive statement is common in ancient sarcasm and would be somewhat out of place here if there was no element of ostensible praise or positive affect to undercut in either Paul’s θαυμάζω ὅτι opening or use of εὐαγγέλιον. Ultimately, the difference between the sarcastic “I marvel that...” and the straightforwardly negative “I am shocked that...”—as well whether “gospel” belongs in inverted commas—would come down to tone and delivery. Without access to these elements, we must speak in terms of plausibility rather than certainty.

of other legitimate gospels (so Schröter 2013:152–53)—or whether Paul’s opponents referred to their message as a gospel (so Nanos 2002:299).

²⁵ Moo 2013:1:79. Contra Longenecker 1990:15.

²⁶ Schröter 2013:140–41.

Regardless, Gal 1:6 certainly means to communicate a strong, vehement criticism in a highly emotive passage that crescendos through Paul's pronouncement of anathema on anyone who would preach a contrary gospel (1:8–9). In this way, Paul contrasts sharply with the use of θαυμάζω ὅτι/πῶς/εἰ in many of the papyri, where this expression softens criticism and seeks to avoid conflict.²⁷ As deSilva observes: "Paul's opening is well calculated to arouse feelings of shame among the hearers."²⁸

2 Gal 2:1–9: οἱ δοκούντες

In Galatians 2, Paul narrates his interactions with the leaders of the Jerusalem church in an attempt to defend the divine origin of his gospel (1:11–12). Here he must simultaneously depict his ministry as accepted by the Jerusalem apostles and also demonstrate that their approval is inconsequential compared to his divine commission and empowerment. Within this context, the means Paul employs to refer to these leaders is ambiguous. When obedience to a revelation finds Paul in Jerusalem, he lays out his message before τοῖς δοκοῦσιν, which one can only infer refers to the apostles leading the Jerusalem church (2:2). This epithet snowballs in 2:6, expanding to τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι τι and reaches its most explicit form at 2:9, where we learn that James, Peter, and John are "those reputed/who seem to be 'pillars'" (οἱ δοκούντες στῦλοι εἶναι). Considering the subtlety of Paul's rhetorical aims in this passage, it is difficult to read his tone. Are these references to the Jerusalem apostles sincere acknowledgment of their authority, or a sarcastic undercutting of that authority?

Early Christian interpreters did not recognise irony in this passage; however, since those in question are apostles, one should expect theological biases to come into play. Clement refers to the apostles—Paul included—as "the greatest and most righteous pillars of the church" (οἱ μέγιστοι καὶ δικαιοτάτοι στῦλοι, 1 Clem 5:2–3, 5 [Lightfoot]). Chrysostom cites 1 Cor 7:40 to defend the non-pejorative nature of τοῖς δοκοῦσιν in Gal 2:2, and considers the epithet of 2:9 encomiastic.²⁹ But the fact that Chrysostom must argue for a sincere reading of these epithets attests to the fact that the Greek can be taken otherwise.

²⁷ See n.7.

²⁸ 2018:125.

²⁹ Chrysostom, *Comm. Gal.* (NPNF vol.13, pp. 32, 37; see also. Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* bk.1, §2.6a, §2.7–9).

This tendency to take Paul's references to the Jerusalem apostles as expressing positive evaluation has also persisted in modern commentaries. Ernest de Witt Burton writes that for all three of the verses in question: "There is nothing in the present passage or in the usage of the words to indicate that they are used with irony."³⁰ Bruce provides somewhat more discussion to support his assertion that Gal 2:2, 6, and 9 contain neither irony nor sarcasm, citing instances in Josephus where a similar construction is used positively to refer to "those of them who seem/were considered to be esteemed" (οἱ προύχειν αὐτῶν δοκοῦντες, Josephus, *War*, 4.159).³¹

Despite this long tradition, a few interpreters advance an ironic reading. Betz cites a number of instances where οἱ δοκοῦντες is used both positively and negatively, before leaning towards irony.³² Longenecker suggests that the repetition of οἱ δοκοῦντες, coupled with a similar use of the verb in Phil 3:4, support an ironic reading.³³ Although he does not mention sarcasm or irony, Lightfoot sees evidence for "a tinge of disparagement" in this repetition, as well as in the use of στυλοὶ εἶναι and, especially, εἶναι τι. To these he also adds "the contrast implied in the whole passage between the estimation in which [the Jerusalem apostles] were held and the actual services they rendered to [Paul]."³⁴

While interpreters have come away from 2:2, 6, and 9 with different impressions, neither side has marshalled much evidence to support an argument one way or another, and those in favour of irony will not usually push beyond a "maybe" in terms of the likelihood of this interpretation. It is, then, worth setting out in full the evidence for a sarcastic reading of these epithets, in addition to clarifying where the interpretive difficulties lie.

Parallels do not take us far. Interpreters on both sides have brought examples to either support or reject viewing οἱ δοκοῦντες as ironic. These demonstrate that οἱ δοκοῦντες can be read positively, negatively, or ironically. We must therefore move beyond semantics. The Galatians did not have a lexicon in front of them from which they could select the meaning of

³⁰ Burton 1921:71.

³¹ 1982:109; see Josephus, *War* 3.453; 4.141, 159. DeSilva adds several ironic uses from Plato to this list (2018:173n.131; see Plato, *Apol.* 21b, c–e; 22a–b; 29a; 36d; 41e). Franz Mußner rejects an ironic reading (1974:104–5, 120–21).

³² Betz 1979:87. Barrett too gives a soft yes to the presence of irony here (1953:3–4). Jónsson takes 2:9 as ironic (1965:237).

³³ Longenecker does not seem to be fully committed to this reading, ultimately describing Paul's tone as "ironic or dismissive" (1990:57).

³⁴ Lightfoot 1876:231.

δοκέω most in line with comparable passages from their linguistic milieu. Instead, both Paul and the Galatians would have experienced the term οἱ δοκούντες with all its ambiguous resonances—including both the ideas of appearance and reputation (LSJ s.v. “δοκέω,” I.4, II.5)—potentially in play.

The clearest evidence for a degree of negative evaluation in Paul’s δοκέω epithets lies in elements that point to his being dismissive of the Jerusalem apostles. Longenecker’s assertion that Paul’s use of repetition here supports an ironic reading is a good starting point, though the way Paul uses repetition has more to say than its mere presence. It is curious that Paul does not begin with the more unambiguous description Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ δοκούντες στῦλοι εἶναι (2:9). While in 2:2 one may assume from context that the men in question are the leaders of the Jerusalem church, Paul first introduces them with only αὐτοῖς and οἱ δοκούντες. In doing so Paul provides only the most generic level of identification and identity. The reader must wait until 2:6 to receive more than superficial information about οἱ δοκούντες, and until 2:9 for their names.

Paul’s clearest dismissal of οἱ δοκούντες comes in 2:6, in the reference to the still-unnamed Jerusalem apostles being reputed and/or seeming “to be something”—the εἶναι τι Lightfoot gestures to. Different forms of τις are frequently used to add a level of dismissiveness to sarcastic statements—communicating a subtle degree of negative evaluation that contrasts with the ostensible positivity of the sarcastic statement (Ch.3, §1.2.5). τι very likely has the same function here.³⁵ Paul is vague and noncommittal about the status attributed to the Jerusalem apostles, implying that he does not esteem them as highly as they “are reputed” or “seem” to be.

Both the way Paul makes only cursory reference to the Jerusalem apostles in 2:2, avoiding their names, and the vague use of τι function to indicate dismissiveness, implying some degree of negative evaluation. We therefore have two options for reading the δοκέω epithets in 2:2, 6, depending on their connotations. First, if Paul, as in the passages from

³⁵ Dunn states that τις is a typical Pauline “somewhat diminishing allusion,” although he does not cite Gal 2:6 here, reserving Paul’s “diminishing” τις for “known opponents” (1996:146). Paul uses οἵτινες in a dismissive fashion also in 2:4, where he gives no identity to his opponents beyond the sharply negative τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδελφούς. Cf. 6:3, which is similar to 2:6, though not directed at the Jerusalem apostles.

Josephus cited above,³⁶ refers to reputation, then the epithets are sarcastically dismissive of the status ascribed to the Jerusalem apostles: “Those Men of Repute” (2:2, 2:6c) and “those-renowned-for-being-something” (2:6).

This reading explains Paul’s aside in 2:6b, where his implicit dismissal becomes explicit. Immediately following the epithet, Paul states, “whatever they were at one time or other doesn’t at all matter to me; God does not play favourites” (ὅποῖοί ποτε ᾔσαν οὐδέν μοι διαφέρει· πρόσωπον [ὁ] θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει, 2:6). The use of two non-descript terms of reference here “whatever” and “whenever” (ὅποῖοί ποτε) fit with Paul’s dismissive tone as observed so far, as does οὐδέν μοι διαφέρει. Juxtaposing explicit negative evaluation with sarcasm was one of the most common signals of sarcasm that we identified in the previous chapter (Ch.3, §1.1.4), and which we saw in Gal 1:6–7a. If this is what Paul is doing with the juxtaposition of 2:6a and 2:6b, then 2:6b provides the literal evaluation that Paul implies with his sarcastic epithets throughout Galatians 2. Though the Jerusalem apostles may be reputed to be “something,” Paul does not care about their ascribed status, nor does it win them any favours with God. It is not that the Jerusalem apostles are not legitimate authority figures, only that their standing is inconsequential.³⁷

Second, if however οἱ δοκούντες refers to appearance instead of and in contrast to reality, these dismissals are mildly disparaging, but unironic. Here 2:2 and 2:6c, would essentially be shorthand for the longer epithet in 2:6a,³⁸ with all three meaning: “those who (only) *seem* to be something (but whose status is inconsequential).”

In 2:9 we have Paul’s most elaborated epithet for James, Peter, and John: οἱ δοκούντες στῦλοι εἶναι. Following 2:2, 6, we should be expecting something dismissive, and while we cannot be sure about direct quotation, there is good evidence to suggest that here we are dealing with an echoic and (mildly) sarcastic appellation. Several commentators agree that Paul’s use of the term “pillars” is not his own designation, but stems from the parlance of the Jerusalem church.³⁹ Generally, one ought not mirror-read too far into echoic sarcasm, as

³⁶ n.31.

³⁷ Although implied indifference is not negative evaluation *per se*, there remains scope for sarcasm insofar as Paul’s implied indifference suggests that the Jerusalem apostles’ status is unimportant, making the implicit evaluation negative relative to the ostensible positivity of sarcasm.

³⁸ See Martyn 1997:191.

³⁹ Lietzmann 1923:13; Bruce 1982:122; Longenecker 1990:57–58; Martyn 1997:204–5.

sarcasts are often uninterested in accurate portrayal.⁴⁰ However, the attributive nuance of *δοκούντες*,⁴¹ brought across by translations such as “reputed,” provides reasonable evidence that Paul means to communicate that he is referring to the designation of others.⁴² His implied evaluation here is likely to be the same as it was with previous versions of the same appellation: “whatever they were at one time or other doesn’t at all matter to me; God does not play favourites” (2:6b). To imply such indifference through positive words echoed from another source is clear sarcasm as described by the echoic account of verbal irony (Ch.1, §2.3).

Between the echoic reference in 2:9 and the juxtaposition of dismissive epithet with literal evaluation in 2:6, I suggest that on balance there is more evidence for a sarcastic reading of these appellations in 2:2, 6, and 9 than a literal, negative interpretation. Paul is keen to show that no human can be credited as the source of his gospel, and so he does not go up to Jerusalem following his conversion for many years, and then only at God’s summons (2:1–2). He does not name the “Men of Repute,” on recounting his first visit (2:2), then in 2:6 his more disparaging and more dismissive reference to “those-renowned-for-being-something” emphasises the fact that “those Men of Renown added nothing (to my Gospel).” Instead, “James and Peter and John, those reputed to be ‘pillars,’ gave myself and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship” (2:9).

While I consider there to be more evidence for a sarcastic reading, I do not consider a sarcastic reading and a straightforwardly dismissive interpretation as mutually exclusive options. *δοκέω* encapsulates both “to seem” and “to be considered,” and there is no reason why Paul should not have meant for both resonances to show through; to convey simultaneously that the Jerusalem apostles *seem* to be something and *are considered* to be of high status.⁴³ In either case, what Paul implies is the same (2:6b).

Paul’s use of ambiguous, polyvalent language in 2:2, 6, and 9 (*δοκέω, τις*) may be an intentional choice that enables him to balance his desire to distance his gospel from human influence with his recognition that the support of the Jerusalem apostles strengthens his

⁴⁰ See Ch.1, §3.4; Nanos 2002:60–61; Sperber and Wilson 1998:284.

⁴¹ See LSJ s.v. “*δοκέω*,” II.5.

⁴² On the origin and implications of the designation “pillars” within the Jerusalem church, see Lightfoot 1876:237; Bruce 1982:122–23; Longenecker 1990:57.

⁴³ Recall the double entendre in Lucian, *Phal.* I.12; Ch.3, §1.1.6.

overall argument. As we have discussed, Paul's implied, indifferent evaluation accomplishes this first end, but it is also important that Paul does not overtly disrespect the apostles who did not force Titus to be circumcised (2:3) and who offered him their support (2:9). The fact that Paul's language can be read positively, as many later interpreters have done, enables Paul to show a surface level of respect for the Jerusalem apostles while distancing himself from their influence and dismissing their importance off the record. As Haiman writes: "Part of what I consider the aesthetic appeal of sarcasm, in fact, lies in its ambiguity, and its potential deniability."⁴⁴ For Paul, using ambiguous language enables him to tread the fine line he aims to follow in the autobiographical section of Galatians, where he at once wants to deny human influence on his Gospel, but still use the endorsement of other apostles.

3 Gal 5:12: Cutting Language

In 5:12 Paul expresses a wish that his circumcision-promoting opponents would cut off significant portions of their genitalia. Dahl asserts: "(5:12) is sarcasm."⁴⁵ Longenecker calls this verse "caustic sarcasm" that is "meant to caricature and discredit [Paul's] opponents"⁴⁶ While the latter point is clearly true, the verse itself is not sarcastic.

I have defined sarcasm as occurring when an utterance that would normally express a positive evaluation implies negative evaluation (Ch.1, §2.6). There is no room for affected positivity in the sentiment "go cut yourself." Reading 5:12 as sarcasm betrays a certain colloquial understanding of the term that essentially views sarcasm as cutting language.

Campenhause was on the right track when he called the passage a "grausigen" or "'blutigen' Witz."⁴⁷ Longenecker is correct that Paul is not seriously suggesting that anyone castrate themselves.⁴⁸ Paul's comment is therefore insincere, hyperbolic, and sharply polemical. I am not sure we can rightly call it a joke; I find it unlikely that Paul is trying to

⁴⁴ Haiman 1990:203.

⁴⁵ 2002:129.

⁴⁶ Longenecker 1990:cxix, 234. Lietzmann sees "Schärfster Sarkasmus" (1923:36; cf. Lightfoot 1876:288; Bonnard 1953:107; Betz 1979:270; Dunn 1993:282; Moo 2013:2:337; Lichtenberger 2017:104).

⁴⁷ 1963:104.

⁴⁸ So too Dunn 1993:283.

get a laugh here.⁴⁹ Considering the ancient connotations of emasculation, Paul's opponents certainly would not have appreciated it.

This verse is not the only point in Galatians where Paul employs strong language regarding his opponents (1:8–9; 2:4; 6:12–13) or his congregation (3:1–5; 4:8–11, 16; 5:4, 15). The vehemence in Paul's tone speaks to his assessment of the urgency and importance of the problem of circumcision in Galatia. Paul knows the Galatians well and knows at one time they “would have torn out [their] eyes and given them to [him]” (4:15 NRSV). It is perhaps the strength of this prior relationship that enables Paul to employ strong language without feeling like he runs the risk of alienating his audience.

4 Conclusions

Although his language is ambiguous in both cases, Paul uses sarcasm in Galatians 1 and 2 to very different effects. I have argued that Paul's use of θαυμάζω ὅτι in 1:6 is not an epistolary convention for expressing “ironic rebuke,” and would not immediately signal a specific interpretation to Paul's audience. There is however evidence for sarcasm in 1:6 itself. On this reading, there is an element of sarcastic congratulations in Paul's expression of amazement that his congregation has so quickly run off to find a new gospel. However, the ambiguity of θαυμάζω makes it difficult to be certain about a sarcastic interpretation. It remains possible that Gal 1:6 is a straightforward rebuke conveying only negative evaluation without any ostensible positivity.

Regardless of whether this rebuke is sarcastic, it is representative of the tendentious tone Paul adopts throughout the letter. In our discussion of 5:12, we saw that strong, vehement language is used without irony throughout Galatians with respect to both Paul's opponents and the Galatians themselves. Galatians 5:12 itself is an excellent example, consisting of hyperbolic, insincere polemic at the expense of Paul's opponents but lacking the ostensible positivity of sarcasm. I suggest that it is Paul's close relationship with the Galatians coupled with his assessment of the import and urgency of the circumcision issue that emboldens him to take a hard-line in persuading the Galatian church to accept his views.

In contrast to Paul's behaviour with his congregation and opponents, his use of sarcasm on the Jerusalem apostles is much more subtle. I have argued that the primary

⁴⁹ See Lichtenberger 2017:104—although he misidentifies 5:12 as sarcasm. For jokes about circumcision, see Aristophanes, *Ach.* 156–63.

characteristic underlying the δοκέω epithets in Gal 2:2, 6, and 9 is dismissiveness. Paul's lack of description and use of vague terms of reference (e.g. τις) implicitly dismisses the status accorded to the "pillar" apostles as inconsequential. Paul does not deny their authority, but deflates its importance, emphasizing that whatever others consider them to be is immaterial to him and unimportant to God (2:6). Paul's language is ambiguous in these epithets, allowing simultaneously for sarcastic resonances (dismissive of status "reputed") and the idea that the Jerusalem apostles only "seem" to be something. We have seen ambiguity and ostensible politeness put to use in the previous chapter by some of Lucian's subtler sarcasts, Lycinus especially (Ch.3, §3.2, §3.4). These give the sarcasm an advantageous measure of deniability when being sarcastic at the expense of parties of high status.⁵⁰ Paul's epithets in Gal 2:2, 6, and 9 take similar advantage of ambiguity, implying dismissiveness without breaking from language that avoids disrespect on a surface level.

Paul's sarcasm in 2:2, 6, and 9 is nowhere near as tendentious as the tone he adopts with his congregation and opponents at different points throughout Galatians. In the autobiographical section of the letter, Paul must strike a balance between emphasizing the divine legitimation of his gospel and the pragmatic reality that the acceptance of other apostles strengthens his position. The epithets in 2:2, 6, and 9 maintain this tension, being mildly dismissive of the Jerusalem apostles' importance without nullifying the fact that Paul still respects them and recognizes that their approval supports his ministry.

⁵⁰ Cf. Haiman 1990:203.

Chapter 5

Sarcasm in Romans: With Special Reference to Diatribe and the Dialogical—Dialogue Distinction

Previous scholarship has recognised dialogical elements throughout much of Romans reminiscent of ancient diatribe, as Paul engages in a rhetorical back-and-forth with hypothetical interlocutors. Much of Paul's sarcasm in Romans occurs in such exchanges, creating two major interpretive problems. The first problem is the issue of voice; we cannot determine whether a given passage is sarcastic without first knowing who the speaker is.

We will begin, therefore, by nuancing previous scholarship on diatribe in Romans, with reference to Romans and Epictetus's *Discourses* (§1). Without space to engage in a systematic overview of all texts considered examples of diatribe, Epictetus will be helpful for comparison insofar as his work has the most relevant stylistic parallels with Romans, especially in the use of rhetorical questions answered by *μὴ γένοιτο*—a feature only he and Paul share.¹

Previous scholarship has gone too far in separating Paul's voice from the voice of his hypothetical interlocutor, making sections of Romans appear more like dialogue proper than diatribe. I will argue that Romans is closer to a one-man show than a conversation, insofar as the voices of Paul and his interlocutors are never fully separate. Romans contains dialogical elements, but not dialogue.

The second interpretive difficulty is created by the use of rhetorical questions in Romans. For example, in Rom 6:1–2, we have, “What then shall we say? Should we keep on sinning so we can get even more grace? ...NO!” The question is intentionally absurd, and is immediately shut down with the sort of utterance deflater that Haiman identifies as a signal of sarcasm in English—which we have also confirmed as not uncommon in ancient Greek (see Ch.3, §1.1.4). In order to determine whether such questions—Rom 3:8; 6:1, 15—can be considered sarcastic, we will first address the relationship between sarcasm and rhetorical questions in general, in addition to what features suggest the presence of sarcasm in these particular questions. We shall then apply the revised understanding of voice advanced in §1 to these questions, which will serve as the interpretive key for understanding how they can be considered instances of sarcasm.

¹ See Malherbe 1980:231–40.

Following this discussion, we will turn to other passages where Paul is sarcastic with his hypothetical interlocutor (2:17–19; 11:19–20). We will discuss the implications of these verses for the identity and characterisation of Paul’s hypothetical interlocutor. In both cases, attending to the relationship between sarcasm and counterfactuality will be important for avoiding problematic assumptions that could be drawn from a sarcastic reading (Ch.1; §2.2). Finally, we shall comment on subversive and ironic readings of Paul’s discussion of governmental authority in Rom 13:1–7 and assess whether there is any firm evidence of sarcasm and insubordination therein.

After determining how sarcasm functions within the dialogical back-and-forth of Paul’s argument in Romans, we will be able to draw more general conclusions about the pragmatic functions of sarcasm throughout the letter in light of the patterns we have observed in other authors.

1 Whose Line Is It Anyway? The Dialogical—Dialogue Distinction

The contention that Romans should be read in light of diatribe has been influential in scholarship. Epictetus’s discourses make up one of the most significant examples of diatribe; and when one lays Romans alongside these texts, considerable stylistic similarities become evident. One of the major impacts of understanding Romans as a diatribe has been the recognition of dialogical elements in the letter. Stowers considers dialogical exchanges to be “the most distinctive feature of diatribe style,” and finds such exchanges to be prevalent throughout Romans.² Paul bounces comments and questions off of a hypothetical interlocutor to drive his argument forward. The purpose of this section will be to clarify how voice works in these exchanges.

1.1 Diatribe, Dialogue, and Voice

While the discovery of Paul’s dialogue partner has produced much exegetical fruit, it has become all too easy to lose track of the interlocutor’s hypotheticalness in terms of narrative voice. The way Stowers lays out dialogical passages in Paul and Epictetus makes the text read like fully-fledged dialogue, with clear distinctions between speaking parts:

² 1981:2, 174–84. Thorsteinsson helpfully emphasizes the importance of dialogical elements in diatribal epistolography as comparative literature (2003:128–30, 134–44). For a summary of New Testament scholarship on diatribe see King 2018:103–23.

- G. Int. Do we then overthrow the law through faith?
H. Paul. By no means! On the contrary we uphold the law.
I. Int. What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh found?³

While some scholars have more nuanced understandings of voice in such passages, it is still common to see language implying sharp distinctions in speaker and characterisation slip in.⁴ King's recent study is perhaps the superlative example of treating dialogical passages in diatribal texts as scripted dialogues.⁵ I argue that such division implies a sharper demarcation between speakers than can be safely assumed from diatribe-style.

One may expect fully realized characters who speak with their own voices in Platonic dialogue, or even tragedy and comedy, but not here. Diatribe does not belong to any one of these genera. We must be cautious of thinking about diatribe as a strictly defined genre.⁶ Without space to develop a critical definition of diatribe, I will take a minimalist approach, considering it a constellation of stylistic features common to comparable texts identified by scholars as diatribal.⁷ What matters most for the present purpose is what diatribe is not. Diatribe is not dialogue. The dialogical exchanges that we find in diatribe may have stylistic features analogous to dialogue, but we cannot assume that the back-and-forth between the speaker of the "diatribe" and the hypothetical interlocutor will be the same as the interactions between characters in dialogue. We cannot import wholesale the features of the latter into the former.

To respect this distinction, I will lay out an alternative proposal for conceptualizing voice in Romans, and diatribe more broadly.⁸ Then, after indicating what lines of evidence

³ 1981:165; cf. 158–65, 172. King summarizes the dialogical divisions of Rom 3:1–9 offered by various scholars, before providing his own (2018:269–70). Campbell divides the whole of Rom 1:16–3:20 into the voices of Paul and "The Teacher" (2009:587–90).

⁴ For more nuanced language, see Stowers 1981:73–74, 128–29, 134–35; Thorsteinsson 2003:126–30, 145. For treatments of dialogical exchanges as essentially fully-fledged dialogues in terms of speaker or characterisation, see n.3 above; Stowers 1984:710–16; 1994:159–66; Thorsteinsson 2003:125–26, 148–50, 194–96, 244–46 [see §3.1.1].

⁵ See 2018:157–59, 252–74, 292–98.

⁶ See Schmeller 1987:1–54, 428; Stowers 1981:75–78; Thorsteinsson 2003:124; for an argument in favour of diatribe as a genre, see Porter 1991:655–61.

⁷ For typical features of diatribe, see King 2018:124–27.

⁸ I am operating on the assumption that Paul—regardless of where he learned it, or how intentional his use of the style is—is doing something like other texts that have been collected as representatives of diatribe. At minimum, I will lay out an understanding of voice that

lead in this direction, I will go on to discuss how this conception of voice impacts our interpretation of sarcasm in rhetorical questions throughout Romans, such as Rom 3:8; 6:1–2, 15.

1.2 Diatribe as a One-Man Show

Rather than a dialogue, as a rhetorical performance, diatribe is a one-man show. Whether the audience is Epictetus’s classroom or the Roman church, it is clear from this vantage point that there is only one speaker.⁹ Thus, the voice of the hypothetical interlocutor cannot be fully separated from the voice of the author.¹⁰ The role of Paul’s dialogue partner in Romans would, then, be better billed Paul-as-hypothetical-interlocutor. There is a level of self-consciousness to the performance such that both Paul and his audience remain aware that even when the “interlocutor” speaks, there is a sense in which it is still Paul.

Five lines of evidence support this conception of voice in the dialogical passages of Romans. First, the use of the first-person plural $\tau\acute{\iota}$ ($\sigma\upsilon\nu$) $\epsilon\pi\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$ to introduce potential objections creates overlap between Paul’s voice and the voice of his interlocutor (Rom 3:5; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14). Scholars have variously attributed some questions introduced by $\tau\acute{\iota}$ ($\sigma\upsilon\nu$) $\epsilon\pi\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$ to Paul (3:5)¹¹ and others to the hypothetical interlocutor (6:1; 7:7, 9:14).¹² The use of the first-person plural, whether ascribed to Paul or the “interlocutor,” has the effect of drawing all parties into the discussion, including Paul, his audience, and the hypothetical interlocutor.¹³ The point is that anyone might draw the false inference represented by the following rhetorical question should they misinterpret Paul’s argument. It is therefore better to read multiple potential voices—Paul, interlocutor, and audience—in the cohortative “we-

describes Paul in Romans, that works for Epictetus, and that may also work for other texts that share similar stylistic features.

⁹ There are instances where Epictetus might be answering actual questions from his audience, but this does not apply to Paul.

¹⁰ Compare Hays 1985:79n.13.

¹¹ Stowers 1984:715; King 2018:715; Campbell 2009:589.

¹² On 6:1; 7:7 as spoken by the interlocutor, see Rodríguez 2016:110–11, 124–25. Stowers considers the speaker in 7:7 unclear (1994:270). On 9:14 as the interlocutor, see Jewett 2007:581.

¹³ “[$\epsilon\pi\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$] makes it sometimes difficult to identify the one speaking because of its inclusive potentials” (Thorsteinsson 2003:145).

ness” of questions prefaced by τί (οὖν) ἐροῦμεν, rather than the voice of only Paul or only the interlocutor.¹⁴

The next two pieces of evidence for this imprecision in distinguishing speakers in diatribe—numbered (2) and (3)—are best observed in Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.23. We will describe them there first before drawing parallels with Paul.

(2) *Discourses* 2.23 discusses the superiority of the will (προαίρεσις) over rhetorical expression. Epictetus begins with a series of rhetorical questions and answers such as the following: “What is the faculty that opens and closes the eyes...? The faculty of sight? No, but the faculty of [the will]” (*Diss.* 2.23.9 [Oldfather, LCL], see 2.23.5–19). Stowers considers it typical in diatribe for the hypothetical interlocutor to provide quick responses to the speaker’s questions. He cites a question and answer string from Epictetus *Diss.* 4.1.1–2 beginning with: “Who, then, wishes to live in error? -No one [hyphen used to mark change of speaker].”¹⁵ In both of these examples, one can just as easily see a single speaker answering their own questions as two distinct speaking parts. Indeed, Epictetus conducting a back-and-forth with himself is exactly what his students would have observed. At the same time, answering one’s own questions still creates a second voice,¹⁶ but not necessarily a second persona or distinct character. Thus, we have two voices, at times imprecisely distinguished and at times blurring and overlapping, being performed by a single speaker.

(3) Epictetus’s “interlocutor” can also convey content that Epictetus wishes to teach, showing further overlap between speakers. Consider another passage from *Diss.* 2.23:

What then? Does a person dishonor the other faculties? *Absolutely not!* Does a person claim there is no use or progress outside of the faculty of the will? *Absolutely not! That would be thoughtless, impious, and thankless towards god. Rather he gives to each its value. For, there is a use for a donkey, but not as much as for an ox... There is a value for the power of speaking, but not as much as for the power of will* (*Diss.* 2.23.23–25).

¹⁴ We should view τί (οὖν) ἐροῦμεν and τί οὖν in Paul as essentially interchangeable. The same blurriness and imprecision apply in all cases. τί οὖν is significant in both Paul (Rom 3:1, 9; 6:15; 11:7) and Epictetus (occurring 295 times; τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν does not occur at all).

¹⁵ Stowers 1981:159, for citations across Epictetus and other texts, see 239n.31.

¹⁶ One questioning, which engages in a pretence that an answer is required, and one answering, which engages in a pretence that the speaker must inform themselves as to the answer to their own question.

King ascribes the text above in italics to Epictetus's interlocutor and the plain text to Epictetus.¹⁷ He argues that following the second question, the interlocutor speaks to the end of 2.23.25, since the whole section provides an answer to the question. King therefore sees the interlocutor as having been won over to Epictetus's position.¹⁸

If what we have here is an interlocutor who responds to Epictetus's questions by answering at length with a response Epictetus agrees with that also contains the information Epictetus wishes to convey to his students, it is no great leap to see Epictetus's voice in the voice of his "interlocutor." Indeed, in the next sentence, Epictetus says, "When, therefore, I say this [ὅταν οὖν ταῦτα λέγω], let no one suppose that I am bidding you neglect speech, any more than I bid you to neglect eyes, or ears..." (2.23.26 [Oldfather, LCL]). Epictetus clearly considers himself to be the speaker of the above discourse, despite having engaged in rhetorical questioning and answering in a way that creates multiple voices.

Both of these features can also be observed in Romans. (2) Scholars ascribe *μή γένοιτο* negation of rhetorical questions to both Paul (3:31, 6:2, 6:15)¹⁹ and his interlocutor (3:4, 3:6)²⁰ in different cases. The commonality of *μή γένοιτο* as a means of negating rhetorical questions in Romans creates the same hazy distinction between speakers that we saw in Epictetus: there is a sense in which one voice questions and another responds, but also a sense in which Paul both asks and reacts to his own questions.²¹

(3) There are also cases where, as in Epictetus, speech ascribed to Paul's interlocutor expresses opinions with which Paul agrees, and contains information that Paul wishes to convey to the Romans. When Paul asks, "what advantage has the Jew?" the "interlocutor" responds: "Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2 NRSV).²² Here and elsewhere (3:4, 3:6, 4:1–2a), the interlocutor is essentially Paul's mouthpiece for communicating his own perspective to his audience.²³ The

¹⁷ 2018:152–53; cf. Stowers 1984:712. I am using King's translation, but have changed the formatting, and added italics to indicate how he parses the passage.

¹⁸ 2018:153.

¹⁹ On 3:31, see Stowers 1994:234. Paul is implied as the speaker of 6:2, 15 in Rodríguez 2016:110–11, 119.

²⁰ Stowers 1984:715; Campbell 2009:589; King 2018:269.

²¹ Cf. Wilckens on 3:27–31 (1978:1:244).

²² King and Campbell script this response as the interlocutor (King 2018:269; Campbell 2009:589). Stowers takes it as Paul (1984:715).

²³ On 3:4, 6, see Stowers 1984:715; King 2018:269; Campbell 2009:589. On 4:1–2a, see Stowers 1994:234.

questions of the “interlocutor” likewise do not emerge simply as a consequence of the interlocutor’s personality, but are selected by Paul to drive his argument forward. That is, the “interlocutor” asks “What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh found?”²⁴ in order to give Paul an opportunity to discuss the relationship between Abraham and faith (4:1–5). In such cases we may observe Paul’s voice within the voice of his interlocutor.

The fourth piece of evidence for my conception of voice is stylistic: Paul’s style does not change depending on which “speaker” is talking. As we saw above, both τί (οὐν) ἐροῦμεν as a means of introducing rhetorical questions and μὴ γένοιτο as a negation have at times been ascribed to Paul, and at times to the interlocutor. The fact that these two “speakers” share these stylistic traits provides further evidence that Paul has not created his interlocutor as a distinct character with a voice fully separate from his own.²⁵ Stylistic distinctions between characters are by contrast very common in dialogue. This is clear in the characterisations of Aristophanes and Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium* (see 201D–215A, 189C–94E), and also in Lucian’s *Philosophies for Sale*, which includes many speaking parts with distinct personalities and even changes in dialect between characters (e.g. *Vit.Auct.* 1–6).

The fifth piece of evidence for overlap between Paul’s persona and that of his “interlocutor” is the text’s reception. To illustrate, I reproduce a chart from King’s monograph that lays out which parts of Rom 3:1–9 have been attributed to Paul or his interlocutor by different scholars:²⁶

²⁴ See n.3 above.

²⁵ Cf. Stowers 1981:128–29.

²⁶ 2018:269 (with slight formatting differences). For discussion of the “traditional” reading, see King 2018:165–96.

Line in Script	Traditional	Stowers	Elliott	King
3:1	Interlocutor	Interlocutor	Paul	Paul
3:2	Paul	Paul	Interlocutor	Interlocutor
3:3	Interlocutor	Paul	Paul	Paul
3:4	Paul	Interlocutor	Interlocutor	Interlocutor
3:5a	Interlocutor	Paul	Paul	Paul
(3:5b)	Paul; authorial aside			
3:6	Paul	Interlocutor	Interlocutor	Interlocutor
3:7	Interlocutor	Paul	Paul	Paul
3:8a				
(3:8b)	Paul; authorial aside			
3:8c	Interlocutor			
3:8d	Paul		Interlocutor	Interlocutor
3:9a	Interlocutor	Interlocutor	Paul	Paul
3:9b	Paul	Paul	Interlocutor	Interlocutor

This chart demonstrates that almost every line in Rom 3:1–9 has at various points been attributed to both Paul and the interlocutor. The fact that the text can be coherently parsed in so many different ways further indicates that distinctions between speakers are not clear. I argue that this lack of distinctions as well as the other lines of evidence for overlap between Paul and his “interlocutor” discussed above are best explained by there being ultimately only one speaker: Paul, who plays both sides of the dialogical exchanges in Romans without breaking fully from his own persona.

One may object that this conception of diatribe as a one-man-show—with a single speaker playing both parts without fully breaking from their own persona—is unnecessarily complicated. It is certainly simpler, from the standpoint of the interpreter, to distinguish sharply between passages where Paul is speaking and passages where his interlocutor is speaking. This is how voice and characterisation work in dialogue. But Paul is not writing dialogue. Plato writes dialogue, and we have encountered a great deal of dialogue in Lucian. When one places Romans alongside these texts it is immediately clear that Paul is the outlier in terms of genre. We cannot therefore import a conception of voice from dialogue wholesale into Romans. It is precisely the fact that we have dialogical elements but not dialogue proper that creates the muddy distinctions between personae that I have described.

2 Sarcasm in Pauline Rhetorical Questions

This blurring of speakers that occurs when dialogical elements are brought to a single-author style like diatribe, or epistolography for that matter, will provide the interpretive key

for elucidating the presence of sarcasm in the rhetorical questions that make up our first case study in Romans.

Rhetorical questions are themselves difficult to conceive of ironically. As such, we must first consider the conditions under which rhetorical questions can be sarcastic. We will then identify the elements that make certain rhetorical questions in Romans more likely candidates for sarcasm than others before finally bringing our conception of voice to bear on their exegesis.

In a recent paper, Wilson rightly argues that several tropes often grouped together as forms of irony in recent experimental literature are not inherently ironic. These include “hyperbole, banter, understatement, jokes and rhetorical questions.”²⁷ Although Wilson does not dedicate significant discussion to rhetorical questions specifically, it is easy to conceive of unironic rhetorical questions. With classic examples such as, “If so-and-so jumped off a bridge, would you?” and “What’s wrong with you?” the speaker’s evaluation is straightforwardly negative, and there is therefore no scope for the inversion of positive affect through sarcasm. Conversely, Wilson cites an example drawn from the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* where a question that would express positive affect if uttered sincerely is used sarcastically to communicate criticism:

The turtles try to get a computer expert to show them how he did something on a computer. The computer expert just walks away. One turtle remarks, “Helpful, isn’t he?”²⁸

Luke’s gospel provides another clear case: “You’re the Christ, right? Save yourself, and us too!” (Οὐχὶ σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός; σῶσον σεαυτὸν καὶ ἡμᾶς, 23:39).

Thus, with rhetorical questions, sarcasm is a possibility but not a given. As in other cases, we must be on the lookout for the implicit communication of negative evaluation through ostensibly positive sentiments.

²⁷ Wilson 2017:201–17; cf. Wilson 2013:42, 52–54. For studies that associate rhetorical questions with irony, see Gibbs 2007:339–60; Hancock 2004:453.

²⁸ Wilson 2013:43; from Dews et al. 1996:3084.

2.1 Interrogation, Deliberation, and Exhortation: Questions that Look like They Might Be Sarcastic

Certain rhetorical questions in Romans are posed with air of absurdity that may indicate sarcasm. These include:

Shall we do what is wrong so that good may result? (ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακὰ ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ; 3:8),

Should we keep on sinning so grace is multiplied? (ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ; 6:1),

Should we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? (ἁμαρτήσωμεν ὅτι οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν; 6:15).

These questions share several elements that will enable us to treat them together to some extent. They all take a first-person subjunctive as their main verb and represent absurd misreadings of Paul's logic. Two are negated with *μὴ γένοιτο* (6:1, 15). Romans 3:8 is negated with *ὣν τὸ κρίμα ἔνδικόν ἐστιν*, but both this and *μὴ γένοιτο* function similarly as utterance deflaters—sharp and immediate contradictions of the preceding utterance (Ch.3, §1.1.4). Finally, 6:1, 15 are both prefaced with the introductory question *τί οὖν* (*ἐροῦμεν*), a staple in Romans and typical of diatribe more generally (§1.2). Pragmatically speaking, Rom 3:7–8 functions somewhat differently than our other examples, and as such, we will treat it separately.

What makes these rhetorical questions appear sarcastic is the way that they skirt the boundaries between interrogation and statement, and between deliberation and exhortation. Functionally speaking, the major difference between the deliberative and hortatory subjunctive is whether or not a given phrase is a question or statement: “The *Deliberative Subjunctive* is merely the hortatory turned into a question.”²⁹ This distinction has already been weakened in the case of rhetorical questions, which are “thinly disguised statement[s],”³⁰ designed to make a point rather than obtain information.

Furthermore, our examples lack any grammatical indication that they are questions in the first place. Porter proposes that in the absence of formal indicators, we may translate a phrase as a question if, left as a statement, it would contradict the overall position of the

²⁹ Moule 1953:22. Cf. Porter 1992:57–58.

³⁰ Wallace 1996:467.

author, “or if it poses a set of alternatives.”³¹ None of our examples satisfy the latter criterion, and the first is itself methodologically problematic. A proposition that clearly contradicts the author’s thought could just as easily be an ironic statement as a question.

This being the case, there remain reasons for reading our examples as questions. The “What then?” (τί οὖν [ἐροῦμεν]) prefaces in Rom 6:1, 15 suggest that these passages are at least asking: “Is the following statement valid?” More importantly, several other passages in Romans share similar stylistic features to our examples and are explicitly marked as rhetorical questions with an initial μή (3:3, 5–6; 9:14; 11:1). These features make it likely that Paul intends 6:1, 15 to be read as questions.

While I follow almost all interpreters in translating our examples as rhetorical questions, it is worth observing how the fuzziness of the rhetorical question/statement distinction creates further overlap between the deliberative and hortative senses of the subjunctive verbs in our examples. For most first-century Christians, Paul included, to follow the phrase ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ with a full stop is to engage in sarcasm; it is a statement so absurd in this context that no one can be expected to take it seriously. As a sarcastic utterance, “We should sin more so grace can increase!” is similar to the examples of sarcastic encouragement that we have discussed in Lucian and other authors, which ostensibly recommend useless or foolish actions (Ch.3, §2.1). By contrast, a question mark renders the same words sincere in some contexts and ironic in others. The interrogative form is more ambiguous than the statement insofar as the exhortation, “We should sin!” implies a much more (ostensibly) positive evaluation than the deliberative,³² “Should we sin?”, making the former more clearly sarcastic. Greek however lacks the syntactic distinction between these two forms that we find in English, allowing more overlap in resonance. We should therefore read the subjunctive verbs in Rom 3:8; 6:1, 15 as expressing simultaneously elements of both deliberation (“should we?”) and exhortation (“we should!”).³³

³¹ 1992:276.

³² The plural hortative subjunctive represents an invitation to join the speaker in doing some action. It implies that this course of action is a good idea.

³³ Cf. Fitzmyer 1993:432; Jewett 2007:390, 394, 415.

The positive affect associated with the hortatory subjunctive (“we should do *x*!”) coupled with the obvious absurdity of the rhetorical questions in Rom 3:8; 6:1, 15 makes these our most likely candidates for sarcastic rhetorical questions in Romans.

2.2 Exegesis: Rom 3:8; 6:1, 15

Having established why Rom 3:8; 6:1, 15 might be sarcastic, we may now apply our modified understanding of voice in dialogical diatribe-like texts to their exegesis to determine whether they qualify as sarcasm indeed. To simplify the process, we begin by addressing how these statements function on the lips of Paul’s “interlocutor,” and then, in light of this, how we can understand them as instances of Paul-speaking-as-interlocutor. Romans 3:8 will be apt for the first stage of this process, as here Paul creates a starker division of speakers than usual in Romans. He writes:

But if through my falsehood the truth of God brings about an abundant increase in his glory, why am I still judged as a sinner? And why don’t we say, as we are slandered and as some say that we say, “let us do what is wrong so that good things may result!”? They deserve what judgement they get! (...καὶ μὴ καθὼς βλασφημούμεθα καὶ καθὼς φασὶν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακά, ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ; ὣν τὸ κρίμα ἔνδικόν ἐστιν, Rom. 3:7–8).

Here Paul creates distance between ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακά ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ and his own authorial voice. He first indicates a negative response to the exhortation with an initial *μὴ*, and then distances it from his own persona by explicit indications of speech (φάσιν τινες, ὅτι, 3:8). Before the statement is even made, we already know that its logic is false and that it consists of other people’s words. Thus, here we are not dealing with the sort of ambiguous distinction between Paul and hypothetical interlocutor that we have been discussing, but with something more like quotation. It may even be the case that Paul is here citing actual criticism of his teaching.³⁴

In addition to the message “these words are not mine,” Paul communicates two other pieces of information about the accusation at the end of 3:8. First, he states that such criticism is spoken as an instance of mocking slander or blasphemy (καθὼς βλασφημούμεθα).³⁵ Second, this slanderous comment is framed as a parodic appropriation of Paul’s voice, “as some say that we say” (καθὼς φασὶν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν).

³⁴ Barrett 1991:62; Jewett 2007:251; Longenecker 2016:350–51.

³⁵ For another NT example where this verb is used to introduce sarcasm, see Luke 23:39.

Bringing these two factors together, we find firm grounds for reading ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακὰ ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ as a sarcastic exhortation rather than a question, in its “original” form spoken by Paul’s opponents.³⁶ Paul depicts them as mimicking him in their mockery, saying something like, “Typical Paul: [*imitating Paul’s voice*] ‘Let’s do what’s wrong so good things may result!’” As spoken by Paul’s opponents, this is textbook sarcasm according to the echoic account of verbal irony (see Ch.1, §2.3), being a mocking echo of Paul’s actual position.

Ultimately, the mocking exhortation of 3:8 does not come to us directly from Paul’s opponents, but is refracted through Paul’s voice. Paul states it as a rhetorical question that asks, “is this a valid criticism?” before pronouncing judgement on anyone who would answer “yes” (3:7–8). In this way, as it stands in Romans, ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακὰ ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ; is best described as reported sarcasm. It is a citation of someone else’s sarcasm, which Paul has rejected.

The clear distinction that Paul makes between his voice and the voice of his opposition in 3:7–8 has given us the opportunity to see how this sort of critical, sarcastic exhortation functions when spoken in the voice of a third party. We may now apply this insight to 6:1, 15 where there is a more complex interplay between Paul’s persona and his hypothetical interlocutor’s.

We have already established the similarity between the rhetorical questions in 3:8; 6:1–2, 15. It therefore makes sense to read the latter two in light of the features that Paul applies to the first. Thus, when stated in the voice of the hypothetical interlocutor, “Let us (remain in) sin...” takes on its full hortatory force as a sarcastic, mocking imitation of Paul (6:1, 15).³⁷ However, unlike 3:8, these objections do not involve Paul directly quoting an opponent, but the murkier performance of the interlocutor that overlaps with the voice of the speaker, which we laid out in our discussion of “Whose Line Is It Anyway.” Therefore, while the sarcastic voice of the interlocutor shows through to an extent, we do not fully break away from Paul’s persona. This creates multiple layers in the delivery, such that we have Paul-as-interlocutor-imitating-Paul. This blending of voices accounts for the overlap between the deliberative and hortative, and between interrogative and stative that we observed earlier. As

³⁶ For our reading, it does not matter whether Paul is citing real or imagined opponents.

³⁷ Rodríguez ascribes both of these questions to the interlocutor (2016:110–11, 118–19).

Paul, Paul poses a deliberative question. As his interlocutor (imitating Paul), Paul makes a mocking exhortation.

Before offering a working translation, we must first put these questions back into place as they occur following $\tau\acute{\iota} \omicron\upsilon\breve{\nu}$ ($\epsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$). I am not confident that we can “script” $\tau\acute{\iota} \omicron\upsilon\breve{\nu}$ to either Paul or his interlocutor. In both cases, the question essentially asks whether the following utterance is a logical consequence of the preceding argument: “What, therefore, shall we say?” From the perspective of the hypothetical interlocutor, the question has an undertone of derisive incredulity. In this case, “What then?” would imply the subtext, “Is this *really* what you think?” If this were a dialogue and the interlocutor were a fully fleshed-out character, the line might read: “What should we say, then? [*begins sarcastically imitating Paul’s voice*] ‘Let’s keep on sinning so we can get even more grace!’?” However, as I have argued, we cannot fully separate out Paul’s voice. Coming from Paul, $\tau\acute{\iota} \omicron\upsilon\breve{\nu}$ ($\epsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$), coupled with the use of the subjunctive in the following question, add a degree of insincere deliberation to 6:1, 15. By asking whether one ought to accept ridiculous caricatures of his position, Paul affects a greater degree of uncertainty in his argument than he actually has. Similar to the use of the dubitative in LXX sarcasm (Ch.2, §3), such insincere deliberation implies a more positive assessment of the objection than Paul really means to give.³⁸ We may therefore detect a note of sarcasm in Paul’s voice as well. What makes coming to a single translation difficult is that both voices overlap in Paul’s performance of his interlocutor (imitating Paul). I suggest a translation that retains elements of both deliberation and exhortation and where elements of an interlocutor/potential opponent’s sarcasm show through in the second of the two rhetorical questions:

So, what shall we say? Maybe we should just keep on sinning so we can get even more grace? Absolutely not! (6:1–2a).

What then? Maybe we should sin because we are not under law, but under grace? Absolutely not! (6:15).

Without launching into a sustained discussion, I would like to suggest the possibility of this sort of multi-layered sarcasm in other Pauline rhetorical questions. Although lacking the affective positivity of the hortatory subjunctive, and without verbs altogether, Rom 7:7

³⁸ On the deliberative subjunctive as expressing uncertainty, see Boas et al. 2019:§34.8. For comparable “ $\mu\eta\ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$ ” rhetorical questions in Epictetus that may also be sarcastic, see *Diss.* 1.2.35–36; 1.5.10; 1.11.23–24; 3.1.44.

and Gal 3:21—“(Is) the law sin?” and “(Is) the law opposed to God’s promises?” respectively—share affinities to our other examples.³⁹ In First Corinthians, it is also possible that Paul uses the question, “Should I take the parts of Christ and stick them in a prostitute?” (ἄρα οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνης μέλη; 1 Cor 6:15) to communicate sarcastically the metamessage “this absurd, offensive question should never have been asked in the first place.”

A sarcastic reading of the rhetorical questions discussed above may appear to conflict with assessments of Paul’s didactic aims in these passages. Stowers argues that Paul’s interlocutor in the objection-response sections of Romans is a hypothetical member of his congregation posing legitimate questions and seeking to learn.⁴⁰ Moo writes that, “Paul’s question-and-answer style in Romans is pedagogical rather than polemical in orientation.”⁴¹ One must however avoid creating a false dichotomy between pedagogy and tendentious rhetoric. King’s citation of a painting from Pompeii that depicts a student “being stripped, restrained by two other students, and whipped by the schoolmaster” is a good reminder that didactic environments did not solely consist of cordial discussion.⁴² Even Jesus was known for calling out the stupidity of his students (e.g. Matt 15:16). For Paul’s rhetoric to involve a measure of intensity, a sense of absurdity, and elements of sarcasm and mockery does not therefore suggest that his purpose is not didactic. It is also worth noticing, especially considering the prevalence of strong language directed at the Galatians that we observed in the previous chapter, that Paul’s sarcasm in these rhetorical questions is not directed at his audience. The Romans observe Paul being sarcastic with hypothetical opponents,⁴³ and therefore need not feel personally targeted at any point, especially if they are in agreement with Paul.

3 Sarcasm Elsewhere in Diatribe-like Passages

Beyond the rhetorical questions discussed, we find sarcasm elsewhere in Paul’s performance of the conversation between himself and his hypothetical interlocutor. While our

³⁹ Cf. Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.12.10.

⁴⁰ 1981:152–53. For my caution on making specific reconstructions of “interlocutor’s” identity, see §3.1.1.

⁴¹ Moo 1996:356; cf. Jewett 2007:25–27, 394–95.

⁴² See 2018:125–27.

⁴³ Or, potentially, absent third parties (3:8).

conception of voice will be less essential to the recognition of sarcasm in these passages, it will still be helpful to keep in mind throughout that Paul is playing both roles.

3.1 2:17–20

Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ καὶ γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα καὶ δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου, πέποιθάς τε σεαυτὸν ὁδηγὸν εἶναι τυφλῶν, φῶς τῶν ἐν σκότει, παιδευτὴν ἀφρόνων, διδάσκαλον νηπίων, ἔχοντα τὴν μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ...

But if you call yourself a Jew and take comfort in the law and boast in God and know The Will and discern what is best—being taught direct from the law—and you’re convinced that you’re a guide for the blind, a Light for those in darkness, Educator of the Ignorant, Teacher of Infants, possessing the essence of knowledge and of truth in the law...

This passage has become a hotbed for debate about the identity of Paul’s hypothetical interlocutor. While understanding how these verses work as sarcasm will be our primary concern, we will also have something to bring to this larger discussion.

Ironic interpretations of 2:17–20 are nothing new. Origen writes, “We need to realize, however, that the Apostle is using irony when he addresses these things to the Jews [*Sciendum tamen est haec apostolum per ironiam dicere ad Iudaeos*]. For it is impossible to believe that those who truly rest in the law... could do the things which are enumerated [in 2:21–24].” (*Comm.Rom.* 2.11.12 [Scheck]). Chrysostom takes Paul as “indirectly mocking” his interlocutor in 2:17 (ἡρέμα... σκώπτειν)⁴⁴ and catches the undertones of dispraise throughout 2:19–20 (*Epist.Rom.* pp. 432–33 [homily 6]; cf. NPNF vol.11 p. 666).

Modern commentators too have recognized irony in 2:17–20. Moo writes, “There is some measure of irony in the way Paul presents these privileges as items in which the Jew boasts... the irony emerges in the piling up of these distinctives and in the anticipation of the point that will be made in vv. 21–24.”⁴⁵ However, in previous scholarship, irony usually receives only brief mention. The reader is left wondering whether Paul is intentionally, or

⁴⁴ ἡρέμα can indicate an aside or “stage whisper” (LSJ, s.v. “ἡρέμα”), and can be glossed: “1. gently, 2. indirectly, 3. gradually” (Lampe, s.v. “ἡρέμα”).

⁴⁵ Moo 1996:159. Other exegetes who see irony in 2:17–20 include Gifford 1886:78; Murray 1967:81; Cranfield 1975:1:164; Thorsteinsson 2003:208; Jewett 2007:223. Linns designates 2:17–23 as sarcastic, though without supporting argumentation (1998:196–97).

unintentionally, drawing our attention to an ironic situation, or whether he may be engaging in a more pointed form of verbal irony.

Paul's description of his interlocutor in 2:17–20 satisfies both the echoic and pretence accounts of verbal irony (Ch.1, §2.3, §2.4). That Paul is echoing his interlocutor in 2:17–20 is self-evident. Since Paul's discussion partner is fictitious, whatever Paul says of him is true. Thus, if the hypothetical interlocutor calls himself a Jew (Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ), or considers himself (πέποιθας... σεαυτόν) a guide for the blind, a light to those in darkness, etc., he does, and in characterising him thus Paul simultaneously creates and makes reference to his perspective. Furthermore, the designations Paul uses in 2:17–20 can be traced back to Jewish literature,⁴⁶ and therefore could be appropriated seriously in other contexts. While the echoic element of 2:17–20 is clear, we must turn to evidence of hyperbole to uncover the way Paul disassociates himself from the statements he echoes.

In 2:17–20, Paul's description of his interlocutor is exaggerated both in terms of its content and style. The section is heavy with repetition, as Paul applies no less than ten ostensibly positive appellations to his interlocutor. Between these, Paul's plodding use of καί four times in 2:17–18 creates an impression of repetitiveness, that his interlocutor's credentials go on and on pretentiously and unnecessarily.⁴⁷ He also creates a sense of flow using alliteration and wordplay.⁴⁸ The way Paul adjusts his cadence throughout these verses also creates emphasis in different ways. Longer phrases such as δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου and ἔχοντα τὴν μὀρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ convey a sense of wordiness and pretension. These are juxtaposed with denser lists of epithets—φῶς τῶν ἐν σκότει, παιδευτὴν ἀφρόνων, διδάσκαλον νηπίων—that increase the pace and lend to the impression that Paul's interlocutor's list of qualifications has carried on overlong. These stylistic features coincide well with the means of indicating sarcasm through exaggerated formality previously discussed (Ch.3, §2.2).

Paul's repetitious and exaggerative characterization of his interlocutor also signals the section as sustained pretence. Exaggeration is a common means of indicating insincerity, which is a major component of pretending in general, and sarcastic pretence specifically.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Dunn 1988:109–13; Fitzmyer 1993:316–17.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ch.3, §1.2.1.

⁴⁸ ἐπονομάζῃ καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι; δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα.

⁴⁹ Cf. Haiman 1998:25–26, 34–35, 45.

Paul also employs terms capable of expressing the message “you consider yourself to be *x*,” while allowing the implication, “however, you are not.” (ἐπονομάζῃ, καυχᾶσαι, πέποιθας... σεαυτὸν, ἔχοντα τὴν μὀρφωσιν). Paul performs praise in an exaggerated manner, and with language flexible enough for him to implicitly communicate the insincerity of his performance—along with a negative evaluation of his interlocutor.

As is the case with much ancient sarcasm, Paul does not leave his sarcastic pretence implicit, but will end his performance by “breaking the fourth wall,” so to speak, and providing his literal evaluation of his interlocutor (cf. Ch.3, §1.1.4). In 2:21–24 Paul uses a series of rhetorical questions to highlight the hypocrisy and situational irony present in the rift between his interlocutor’s self-presentation and actions. “Since you’re the one out teaching others, do you teach yourself? You preach, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ but don’t *you* steal?” (2:21). This series of rhetorical questions makes the dispraise communicated implicitly through sarcasm in 2:17–20 more explicit.

With Paul’s characterization of his interlocutor qualifying as ironic by both the echoic and pretence accounts of irony, there is much to commend a sarcastic reading of Rom 2:17–20. But there is one line of objection worth addressing. Nygren writes that, in 2:17–20, irony “is not Paul’s intention. The special status of the Jews... he does not consider as something unimportant or paltry about which one might speak ironically.”⁵⁰ For Nygren, an ironic interpretation undermines Paul’s intention to lay out starkly the “contrast which he draws between knowing the law and keeping the law.”⁵¹ From this standpoint, irony and a Pauline acceptance of legitimate Jewish advantages are mutually exclusive interpretive options.

We may address this objection by briefly clarifying the implications of a sarcastic reading. As we learned in the Parable of the Disgruntled Undergraduate (Ch.1, §2.2), sarcastic statements are not always factually untrue. Paul’s use of sarcasm need not imply that those markers of Jewish “special status” that he lists in 2:17–20 do not legitimately apply to the Jewish people. Paul’s use of sarcasm in 2:17–20 functions as polemic and characterises his hypothetical interlocutor negatively. It should not be read as a statement of Paul’s opinion of Jews in general.⁵²

⁵⁰ Nygren 1952:131. Followed by Fitzmyer 1993:315; cf. Longenecker 2016:303.

⁵¹ Nygren 1952:131.

⁵² Novenson notes significant differences between Paul’s characterization of the interlocutor in 2:17–29 and the Jewish people in Romans 9–11 (2016:160–62).

3.1.1 Paul's Interlocutor: A Jew or a So-Called Jew?

Having spoken of the extent to which Paul accepts the “Jewish advantages” enumerated in 2:17–20, we now discuss a trend in scholarship toward viewing Paul as not addressing Jews here at all, hypothetical or otherwise. Thorsteinsson argues that Paul dialogues with the same interlocutor in 2:1–5 and 2:17–29, and throughout Romans 2–11.⁵³ He characterizes this interlocutor as a potential Gentile proselyte “who calls himself, or wants to call himself, a Jew.”⁵⁴ Thiessen develops this thesis further, arguing that this Judaizing gentile interlocutor has undergone circumcision and “believes that he has become a Jew.”⁵⁵ It will not be my aim here to resolve the debate over the identity of Paul’s interlocutor, but instead to show areas in which my analysis suggests interpretive caution.

Thorsteinsson highlights the fact that Paul does not explicitly say that he is addressing a Jew, only someone “who calls himself, or wants to call himself, a *Ἰουδαῖος*.”⁵⁶ He argues that there were situations in which Gentiles could be referred to as *Ἰουδαῖοι*, and that this is the case with Paul’s interlocutor in Rom 2:17.⁵⁷ Thiessen argues that Paul disputes his Gentile interlocutor’s claim to Jewishness, which he sees as a designation that Paul reserves only for ethnic Jews.⁵⁸

I would caution against reading too much into *Ἰουδαῖος ἐπωνομάζῃ*. “If you call yourself a Jew” could refer to an ethnic Jew or to a Gentile who considers himself a Jew. In the sarcastic reading of 2:17–20 argued above, Paul negatively evaluates his interlocutor’s claim to markers of Jewish advantage, then characterises him as a hypocrite (2:21–24). But we have also established that a sarcastic interpretation does not necessarily mean that Paul denies his interlocutor the qualities listed. “You call yourself a Jew” need not imply, “But you’re not a Jew.” Any positive quality can serve as the basis for sarcasm,⁵⁹ and Paul certainly considers Jewish identity worth boasting about in certain contexts (2 Cor 11:22). There is no reason therefore that Paul cannot be sarcastic about a Jewish interlocutor’s claim

⁵³ 2003:145–50, 159–64.

⁵⁴ Thorsteinsson 2003:204, see 188–204.

⁵⁵ Thiessen 2016:59, see 54–59.

⁵⁶ 2003:198.

⁵⁷ See Thorsteinsson 2003:197–204.

⁵⁸ 2016:55–59, 70–71.

⁵⁹ Haiman 1998:24.

to the positive qualities attached to his ethnic identity, and do so without disputing that ethnic identity.⁶⁰ At the same time, my reading also does not rule out the possibility of a Judaizing Gentile interlocutor who calls himself a Jew. Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζει leaves both options open.

If, as I argue, the distinction between Paul's voice and his interlocutor's is less clear than scholarship has suggested, we should also expect less certainty in our attempts to characterise Paul's interlocutor. The more detailed we are in our characterisation, the more we run the risk of creating a more fully fleshed out interlocutor than Paul himself does. Therefore, in addition to the possibility of a Jewish or Gentile interlocutor, we should also consider the possibility that Paul is not being ethnically specific at all times. In 2:1 Paul is at minimum addressing a human who judges others (ὁ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων). This character may remain the same or be developed further by the time he is referred to as one who calls himself a Jew in 2:17, a designation that could encompass Judaizing Gentile and ethnic Jew alike.⁶¹

3.2 Sarcastic Concession: 11:19–20

ἐρεῖς οὖν, Ἐξεκλάσθησαν κλάδοι ἵνα ἐγὼ ἐγκεντρισθῶ. καλῶς· τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σύ δὲ τῇ πίστει ἔστηκας.

So then you'll say: Other branches got cut off so I could be grafted in! Congrats. They were cut off for their unbelief; but you got your place by faith.

Stowers classifies Rom 11:17–24 as diatribe, with Paul's imaginary interlocutor personified as a wild olive branch, and symbolic of the Gentiles.⁶² Paul characterises this conversation partner as arrogant; prone to boasting over those less advantaged.⁶³ While I agree with this characterisation, it should be stressed again that Paul does not create an entirely separate persona. There is no change of speakers, but instead Paul anticipates what his "interlocutor" is going to say. "You will say" (ἐρεῖς οὖν), distances Paul from the content

⁶⁰ For example, noting my aversion to cold while visiting my family in Canada, one of my brothers may tease me with a comment like, "And you call yourself Canadian!" without meaning to contest my citizenship or suggest that I have ceased to be Canadian in any meaningful way.

⁶¹ See King 2018:238–51, who argues for an ethnically unspecific interlocutor.

⁶² 1981:99–100.

⁶³ See Stowers 1981:114–15; Morris 1988:415–16; Moo 1996:705.

of the next phrase—it is not his opinion—but is still spoken by Paul.⁶⁴ In this way 11:19–20 well-illustrates what I have argued concerning voice in dialogical passages throughout Romans.

The egoistic pride that Paul attributes to his hypothetical interlocutor comes to the forefront in 11:19, as Paul depicts his interlocutor as ready to assert his superiority over the Jews who were “cut off” so that the Gentiles might take their place among God’s chosen. In 11:20 Paul counters this opinion with “admonishing imperatives,”⁶⁵ before explaining in more detail the error he has stated as his interlocutor (11:21–22). This short dialogue-like exchange turns on Paul’s use of *καλῶς* (11:20), with the exclamation bridging the assertion of Gentile superiority and Paul’s rebuttal.

A minority of commentators hear a note of irony in Paul’s “well done.” Unfortunately, this position receives little argumentation beyond assertions like as Michel’s: “Die Entgegnung des Paulus in **V20** beginnt mit einem ironischen *καλῶς*.”⁶⁶ It would be helpful indeed to hear more specifically what Morris means in saying that Paul “concedes the point, though with some irony.”⁶⁷ Is Paul’s concession entirely feigned? Sincere? Or only partially so?

The majority of interpreters follow either of these latter two options. Moo characterizes 11:20 as “qualified agreement,” with Paul acknowledging that the absence of the Jews has allowed for the inclusion of the Gentiles, but also keen to stress the point that the process of Gentile inclusion is ultimately intended to stimulate the re-ingrafting of the Jews.⁶⁸ Still others see Paul’s use of *καλῶς* as conceding the point to his interlocutor: “Paul grants the fact; but he denies the inference drawn from it.”⁶⁹ Jewett understands Paul as constructing for his interlocutor a clever retort that turns Paul’s own language back on him. This makes Paul’s concession a witty piece of self-deprecation: “The audience would enjoy

⁶⁴ Paul’s use of the future makes this clear. The interlocutor has not spoken yet, therefore it must still be Paul.

⁶⁵ Stowers 1981:99–100.

⁶⁶ 1978:351. Cf. Zahn 1910:518; Lagrange 1931:281; Manson 1962:949; Schmidt 1963:196.

⁶⁷ 1988:414.

⁶⁸ Moo 1996:705. Others from the “qualified agreement” camp include Dunn 1988:2:663; Käsemann 1980:310; Schreiner 1998:607.

⁶⁹ Godet 1883:407. Cf. Wilckens 1978:2:247; Siegert 1985:169; Barrett 1991:203.

Paul's admission that a sharp riposte was made at his own expense by such an undiscerning Christian blockhead."⁷⁰

While many have taken sides on whether Paul's response to the assertion, "Other branches got cut off so I could be grafted in!" includes irony, very little has been said in defence of these positions beyond assertions and brief assessments of the extent to which the objection of Paul's interlocutor could be seen as true in some sense. We shall therefore look more closely at the evidence for a sarcastic reading.

In terms of semantics, one requires little time to collect diverse uses of *καλῶς*, both sarcastic and otherwise. Jewett cites several classical texts employing *καλῶς* as an unreserved or partial concession.⁷¹ The New Testament furnishes us with relevant sarcastic "well dones" (Mark 7:9 [see Ch.3, §1.2.2]; Jas 2:19⁷²). Paul elsewhere makes sarcastic comments linguistically similar to Rom 11:20 (2 Cor 11:4, 19; Ch.7, §2.2.1, §2.3). While noting Paul's own use is helpful, for our purpose there is little to be gained from citing varied uses of *καλῶς*. The term is clearly versatile, and, like any positive statement, can be used sincerely or sarcastically.

When we broaden our search from analogous linguistic use to analogous situations, we find evidence that sarcasm is a common response to the sort of rhetorical context in which Paul places himself in Rom 11:17–24. We have seen the prevalence of sarcastic concessions in ancient Greek texts, as well as the use of a sarcastic "well done" (εὖ γε) to mock-encourage one's opponents.⁷³ It is also telling that here we have the juxtaposition of ostensibly positive language (*καλῶς*) with a literal, negative evaluation of the "interlocutor's" boastful assertion immediately following (τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σύ δὲ τῇ πίστει ἔστηκας). "They were broken off because they broke faith, but you have your place because of faith" communicates negative evaluation insofar as it denies the validity of the attitude underlying the previous assertion (Ἐξεκλάσθησαν κλάδοι ἵνα ἐγὼ ἐγκεντρισθῶ). One may paraphrase as follows: "You boast X. Great. X is nothing to boast about." This is one of the most common ways of signalling sarcasm in ancient Greek texts.⁷⁴ With the combination of these factors present, it

⁷⁰ Jewett 2007:687.

⁷¹ 2007:687n.212–13.

⁷² James 2:19 is structurally very similar to Rom 11:19–20. Several of the arguments made below for a sarcastic reading of the latter will also apply to the former.

⁷³ Ch.3, §2.1, §2.3.

⁷⁴ Ch.3, §1.1.4.

is not difficult to see why Paul might employ a sarcastic concession in Rom 11:19–20. Indeed, If Jewett is correct that Paul hopes to display wit in this exchange, sarcasm would achieve this end nicely.⁷⁵

Much of the reluctance to reading irony or sarcasm in these verses comes from the fact that there is a sense in which the assertion, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in” is true (11:19 NRSV). Again, as “The Parable of the Disgruntled Undergraduate” reminds us, sarcastic statements need not be counterfactual (Ch.1, §2.2). Paul can react sarcastically to this assertion independent of its validity. Paul’s sarcastic *καλῶς* implies a negative evaluation of the arrogance with which he characterises his interlocutor for claiming privileged status vis-à-vis the Jews. He then spends 11:20–24 not only correcting his conversation partner’s assessment of the facts—the logistics and rationale for the Jews’ standing with respect to the vine metaphor—but also directly warning against the sort of arrogance that he represents in his interlocutor (*μὴ ὑψηλὰ φρόνει, ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ*, 11:20). In this way, the attitudes underlying different positions on Gentile inclusion take a significant role in the overall discussion. Paul uses sarcasm to make an arrogant self-satisfaction in what appears to be the privileging of Gentile over Jew appear foolish, and in doing so invites his audience to reject this attitude.

4 13:1–7: “Submit” to “Authorities”?

We now leave diatribe behind for a moment to discuss the role of irony in scholarship on Romans 13. Paul’s seemingly unqualified endorsement of the political powers-that-be in 13:1–7 has sparked many lines of interpretation, leading Moo to remark: “It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the history of the interpretation of Rom. 13:1-7 is the history of attempts to avoid what seems to be its plain meaning.”⁷⁶ Scholarly work-arounds include attempts to dismiss these verses altogether as an interpolation or construals of the pericope’s “authorities” as angelic or demonic powers,⁷⁷ although neither of these perspectives have taken hold in contemporary scholarship.

⁷⁵ See Jewett 2007:687.

⁷⁶ 1996:806.

⁷⁷ For summaries of scholarship on Rom 13:1–7, including these perspectives, see Jewett 2007:782–88; Marshall 2008:160–62.

More recently, several scholars have advanced subversive readings of Rom 13:1–7 that marshal elements of resistance hidden beneath Paul’s apparently complicit rhetoric. This work draws on theory from post-colonial studies, which distinguishes between the public and hidden “scripts” found in the discourse of the colonised. From this perspective, Paul’s words about the government are designed have a legitimately flattering effect on those in power. However, behind this show of compliance, those within Paul’s colonised in-group may detect a “hidden script” containing a subtle parody of the coloniser. While far from outright rebellion, this covert speech constitutes a form of resistance to imperial domination.⁷⁸

Carter also suggests a subversive reading of Rom 13:1–7, although through the lens of irony rather than post-colonialism. Carter depicts Rom 13:1–7 as a covert critique of Rome in which Paul does not recommend rebellion, but rather presents submission to the authorities as a way to “overcome evil with good” (as in Rom 12:21).⁷⁹ To bring about this ironic reversal in meaning, Carter draws heavily on Quintilian, seeing Paul as “blaming through apparent praise.”⁸⁰ Although Carter himself does not make the connection, Quintilian associates this definition with a specific sort of irony: sarcasm (*Inst.* 8.6.55–57; cf. Ch.1; §1.2). Since Carter’s ironic reinterpretation of Romans 13 is made in part with reference to ancient discussion of sarcasm, we will assess his arguments in more detail, along with other evidence of a “hidden script.”

Carter reconstructs a historical situation in which Paul’s lower-status Roman audience, not to mention Paul himself, would be no strangers to mistreatment at the hands of the Roman authorities. As a result, they would recognize something amiss in Paul’s portrayal of the imperial government as succeeding in the righteous execution of justice (Rom 13:3–4).⁸¹ This incongruity between Paul’s flattering depiction of the political authorities and the realities of life under Roman rule form a key signal of irony.⁸²

⁷⁸ Herzog 1994:339–42, 351–60; Elliott 2004:117–22; Wan 2008:173–84; Lim 2015:1–9. Employing Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, Marshall blurs the lines between subversion and compliance in the “hidden scripts” perspective, viewing Paul’s (legitimate) endorsement of submission in Rom 13:1–7 as part of the flux between affiliation and resistance both typical of the colonised subject and observable throughout Paul (2008:162–74). For a recent non-subversive reading, see Bertschmann 2014:126–70.

⁷⁹ 2004:226–28.

⁸⁰ Carter 2004:213–14; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55.

⁸¹ Carter 2004:210–12, 215–17, 219–22. Carter also notes Paul’s own clashes with the authorities, which included imprisonments and beatings (2004:212).

⁸² Carter 2004:215–17.

While Paul and the Roman church were clearly subordinates to Rome, Jewett argues that the Roman church would have contained a number of individuals whose professions set them with the greater Roman administrative machine. Thus, the opening verses of Romans 13 “provide a significant sanction for their activities,” legitimizing the occupations of some members of the Roman congregation.⁸³ While Jewett recognizes the distance between Paul’s apparently idealistic depiction of Rome and its actual activities, he also grounds Paul’s endorsement of submission in missional concerns. Being keen to preach in Spain, Paul is careful not to ruffle any feathers in Rome.⁸⁴

Carter’s identification of incongruity between Paul’s description of the government’s actions and the Roman church’s experience of mistreatment as supporting an ironic interpretation of 13:1–7 is therefore dependent on how one reconstructs the underlying historical situation. If Carter’s persecution-narrative holds, then the case for irony has a reasonable foundation. If, however, other concerns such as those outlined by Jewett may be found in Paul’s rhetoric, irony becomes less likely. Leaving the question of social situation presently unresolved, it will be useful to seek evidence of sarcasm more grounded in the text of Romans itself.

Linguistically speaking, the strongest evidence for sarcasm in Rom 13:1–7 lies in potential hyperbole. Paul begins this section with the epithet ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις (13:1). This particular combination, with its doubling of terms for authority and ὑπερ-prefix, is a bit of an odd one and at least seems to have an element of redundancy.⁸⁵ This epithet could be explained as hyperbole, reminiscent of Paul’s ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11; Ch.7, §2.2.2). Paul goes on to describe these authorities as θεοῦ διάκονος twice (13:4–5), the fore-
placement of θεοῦ emphasizing the divine authorization of political “service.” When considered with the description of tax collectors as λειτουργοὶ θεοῦ in the following verse, these appellations could create an air of overstatement, especially if the Romans’ experience of these “ministers” was overwhelmingly negative. While Carter acknowledges that λειτουργοί can simply indicate public servants,⁸⁶ he argues that the pairing of the term with

⁸³ Jewett 2007:792, 794.

⁸⁴ Jewett 2007:793–94.

⁸⁵ Cf. Jewett 2007:787–88.

⁸⁶ Jewett notes that the use of λειτουργοὶ θεοῦ is surprising, and: “In view of the historical circumstances, it remains a breathtaking claim.” (2007:799–800). Moo acknowledges cultic

θεοῦ brings out its cultic resonance, creating a strong, ironic contrast with the dishonest reputations of tax collectors.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the intensity of the commitment and devotion implied by the term *προσκαρτεροῦντες* could also be hyperbolic (13:6).

As was the case with the political situation, each piece of evidence for hyperbole can be read in different ways: either as overstatement or as technical, if somewhat laudatory, statement. Wan sees the use of terms that allow for double-meaning as providing evidence for covert subversion.⁸⁸ However, when one sets these glimpses of hyperbole against the seemingly straightforward argumentation of Rom 13:1–7, it is difficult to recognise hidden intentions on Paul’s part with much confidence.

In addition to contextual and linguistic evidence, there is also a sense in which Paul’s argumentation subverts the basis of imperial power. Roman rule is limited by the fact that its leaders are subordinated to the authority of God.⁸⁹ Establishing Paul’s God as responsible for the institution of government undermines the standard imperial narrative, especially insofar as divine honours for the emperor are concerned.⁹⁰

While these points must be granted, it is this very positioning of the imperial authorities under divine purview that makes submission to Rome a compelling argument for Paul’s audience.⁹¹ This line of reasoning is explicit in 13:1, which can be paraphrased: “Submit to the authorities, because God established them.” This rhetoric is hardly subversive.

With certain elements leaning in support of a subversive reading, and also much of the pericope apparently arguing for submission to governmental authority in a rather straightforward manner, it is difficult to come down on either side with much certainty. Perhaps what makes Rom 13:1–7 so difficult is that any sarcasm, irony, or “hidden script” therein would have been intentionally occluded. Those belonging to the outgroup, including the Roman authorities and the modern exegete, are not supposed to pick up on subversive elements.

use but also points out that *λειτουργοί* was often used “to denote public officials of various kinds” (1996:804). For an example of the latter, see P.Corn. 52.

⁸⁷ 2004:223–26.

⁸⁸ 2008:174.

⁸⁹ Carter 2004:219.

⁹⁰ See Lim 2015:5–9; Wan 2008:177–78; Jewett 2007:789–90.

⁹¹ Cf. Jewett 2007:790.

This potential occlusion calls into question whether Carter’s characterization of the passage as irony is the best paradigm for thinking about potential subversion in Rom 13:1–7. The ironist seeks to convey a message—the evaluation behind their literal statement—to their audience, if implicitly (Ch.1, §2.6). What Carter classifies as irony in Romans 13 falls closer to what Haiman describes as the “put-on.” Unlike sarcasm, put-ons include no clear cue that the speaker means anything other than what they say. Instead, only an initiated subsection of the audience is meant to understand the speaker’s real intent.⁹² Should this be an accurate description of what Paul is doing in Rom 13:1–7, such a put-on would also have trouble fitting into ancient conceptions of irony. While Carter’s analysis of Romans 13 makes much of Quintilian’s statement that irony “is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery, the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject,” central to this description of ironic cues is the fact that irony is something readily intelligible (*intelligitur*) to the speaker’s audience, including the brunt of the joke (*Inst.* 8.6.54 [Butler]).⁹³

What Carter describes as irony, if its presence in Romans could be sufficiently demonstrated, may better fit into a different category of ancient allegory, which Quintilian defines as *aenigma*.⁹⁴ These riddles are intentionally obscure statements which, although insiders who share relevant cultural background may know their answers, require explanation for those on the outside (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.52–53).

Overall, with the linguistic and contextual evidence readable from different angles, the modern exegete may be situated at too great a distance to resolve the possibility of subversion in Rom 13:1–7.⁹⁵ Categorically speaking, a “hidden script” is too covert for irony or sarcasm, but the question remains whether there is some degree of enigmatic resistance behind Paul’s compliant political rhetoric. While answering such riddles is beyond the scope of a study on Pauline sarcasm, both the complete-affiliation and covert-resistance perspectives are likely too extreme to respect the balance of the evidence. I suspect that Marshall rightly places Paul’s situation in between these two: “Paul is both ‘in and of’ that

⁹² Haiman 1998:18.

⁹³ The examples Quintilian gives of the various species of irony are all quite overt (*Inst.* 8.6.55–56). Of course, certain individuals may misunderstand irony, but the assumption that irony seeks to communicate and be understood underlies both ancient and modern descriptions.

⁹⁴ For Quintilian, both irony and *aenigma* are species of allegory (*Inst.* 8.6.44–54).

⁹⁵ Especially considering that one of Paul’s earliest interpreters, the author of 1 Pet 2:13–17, was not sufficiently on the “inside” to catch Paul’s subversive rhetoric.

world, working in relation to its centre from its margins, gathering and deploying its resources in the interest of his own programme, whether that means swimming with or against the current of imperial power in any particular moment.”⁹⁶

5 Conclusions

Exploring the use of sarcasm in Romans has led to a rethinking of how authorial voice functions in the dialogical exchanges within diatribe. Whether it is Paul or Epictetus who is engaging in a back-and-forth with a hypothetical interlocutor, it is important to draw a distinction between these passages as dialogical and the conventions of dialogue proper. Ancient dialogue involves a conversation between fully distinct characters, at least one of whom is completely separate from the author’s persona. In both diatribe and (single-author) epistolography, however, there is only one speaker. When dialogical elements turn up in these genera, the result is something of a hybrid. A single speaker plays both sides of the conversation without fully breaking from their own voice. They may distance themselves from perspectives that they place in the mouth of their hypothetical interlocutors, but this distance never reaches the level of a fully realized, separate persona. While this paradigm adds a layer of ambiguity and complexity to the simpler notion of clearly demarcated dialogue, it better illustrates the liveliness and imprecision of diatribe.

This conception of voice has been the key for understanding the extent to which certain rhetorical questions in Romans can be considered sarcastic. I have argued that Rom 3:8 represents an instance of reported sarcasm. Paul cites someone else’s sarcastic criticism of his position. In 6:1–2, 15 Paul’s rhetorical questions insincerely deliberate the sarcastic criticisms of his hypothetical interlocutor—that is, Paul pretends to entertain the objection without really entertaining the objection—which Paul states on behalf of his hypothetical interlocutor (who, like in 3:8, is mockingly imitating Paul). The element of sarcasm in this insincere deliberation is slight, as there is a sense in which Paul pretends to give more ground to the objection than he really means to. This use of sarcasm has its closest parallels in the sarcastic use of the dubitative identified in our work on the LXX (Ch.2, §3). But the sarcasm of Rom 6:1, 15 comes through most strongly where we hear the voice of the “interlocutor,” mockingly caricaturing Paul’s position with the exhortation “Let’s sin!”—in a manner analogous to the reported sarcasm of 3:8. This blurring Paul’s of voice with the voice of the

⁹⁶ Marshall 2008:174, see 170–74.

“interlocutor” accounts for the overlap between statement and question and between deliberation and exhortation that we see in these rhetorical questions.

We have also seen sarcasm elsewhere in diatribe-like passages in Romans (2:17–20; 11:19–20). In both cases, Paul’s use of sarcasm characterises the interlocutor as arrogant and pretentious. These uses of sarcasm have not been well recognized in previous scholarship, potentially because they are not necessarily counterfactual. While past interpreters have shied away from ironic readings on the assumption that they would negate the propositional content of the theologically significant statements in these passages, this is not the case. Paul’s sarcasm expresses a negative evaluation of the arrogance with which he characterises his interlocutor, but does not mean that Jews lack the advantages enumerated in 2:17–20 or that Gentiles have not been grafted into the people of God.

The conception of voice in dialogical, diatribe-like texts that I have argued for in this chapter also has implications for scholarship on the identity of Paul’s interlocutor in Romans. Without clear distinctions between Paul’s voice and the voice of his interlocutor, we cannot assume that Paul has created a consistent, well fleshed out character for his hypothetical interlocutor. I argue that attempts to use 2:17–20 to determine the ethnic identity of Paul’s interlocutor must exercise caution so as not to create a characterisation more specific than Paul intends. A Jewish, Judaizing gentile, or ethnically unspecific interlocutor must all be considered as possibilities.

Surveying the evidence for sarcasm in Romans 13:1–7 has proved ultimately inconclusive. Had Paul intended a counter-imperial “hidden script” to be visible to his audience, the modern exegete could well be too far from the intended in-group to detect it to a reasonable degree of probability. I also argue that even if such a hidden script were present, it would be too clandestine to qualify as sarcasm, being better described by Haiman’s “put-on” or Quintilian’s *aenigma*. By contrast, sarcasm is meant to communicate rather than conceal negative evaluation.⁹⁷

Considering Paul’s use of sarcasm in Romans altogether, it is also significant that Paul is never directly sarcastic with his audience. Instead, he is only sarcastic with parties

⁹⁷ We have discussed ambiguity, deniability, and double entendre in sarcasm, especially regarding Galatians 2. While there would be similarity between these and a “hidden script” in Rom 13:1–7, negative evaluation meant to be undetectable to one party and discernible to another differs from these uses of sarcasm by an important degree.

who do not exist—his “interlocutor”—and also uses sarcasm in representing misreadings of his argument. This is certainly not the case in Galatians or, as we shall see, in the Corinthian correspondence, where Paul is sarcastic with his congregations quite frequently.

Familiarity likely plays a role in this difference. Paul has never met the Roman church and is therefore interested in ingratiating himself to them rather than directly criticising them. The audience is invited to identify with Paul and enjoy watching him unmask the arrogance and deflate the pretension of his hypothetical conversation partner. The use of sarcasm, absurdity, and sweeping negations in Paul’s rhetorical questions may likewise work as a means of engaging his audience.⁹⁸

Comparison to Lucian can help us understand how Paul’s stylistic decisions enable him to mitigate the possible offence of sarcasm. Lucian seeks to avoid reprisal for his more controversial uses of sarcasm by placing them in the mouths of characters removed from his authorial voice. This creates distance between Lucian and the satirical voice of his characters. Paul too creates a sort of character, albeit an only partially realized one, in his hypothetical interlocutor. Regardless of whether the interlocutor is sarcastic with Paul or Paul is sarcastic with the interlocutor, the interlocutor always gets the worse of the exchange. In this way Paul deflects sarcasm from his audience onto the interlocutor, not distancing himself from the critical voice, but distancing his audience from his criticism.⁹⁹ Paul can therefore be a version of the sarcast-as-sympathetic-character that we saw in Lucian (Ch.3, §3.1–3.2), who decisively and wittily undercuts the arguments of his conversation partner, while minimising the likelihood of offending his audience. The audience is invited to affiliate with Paul in pointing out the absurdity of other positions, and enjoy the lively back-and-forth of the dialogical repartee.

⁹⁸ See also, for example, Jewett 2007:221, 394–95, 687.

⁹⁹ Thorsteinsson argues that Paul’s interlocutor is meant to represent his congregation (2003:134–50, 231–34). While I suggest caution in characterising the interlocutor too specifically, Thorsteinsson rightly recognises the use of the hypothetical interlocutor to avoid directly criticising the audience (2003:234; cf. Stowers 1994:103).

Chapter 6

Sarcasm in First Corinthians

First Corinthians is varied in its themes, as Paul pieces together responses to different questions and reports. So it comes as no surprise that his use of sarcasm in this letter occurs in several distinct rhetorical and contextual situations. We will begin by seeking out sarcasm in Paul's paradoxical discussion of divine foolishness and worldly wisdom in 1 Cor 1:18–2:5, a discourse within which Holland sees much irony. Next we will consider 4:8–13. Many scholars consider 4:8 ironic and several also see irony in 4:10. In exegeting the pericope as a whole, I shall agree with the former, but diverge from ironic readings of 4:10, although not drastically. Other potential uses of sarcasm in First Corinthians fall within what scholars have termed the letter's "Corinthian slogans." Critical thinking on how closely or loosely these slogans represent the Corinthians' actual words or positions of will be necessary to determine which slogans may be considered sarcastic. Finally, we will briefly address the so-called 'gods' of 8:5 before dealing with 11:19, one of the letter's interpretive cruxes, which some scholars have attempted to resolve through ironic readings.

1 Irony and the Inversion of Worldly "Wisdom": 1 Cor 1:18–2:5

In 1 Cor 1:25, Paul writes that "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (NRSV). Holland sees Paul as employing irony throughout 1 Cor 1:18–25 to create a stark contrast between divine and human standards, presenting God's perspective as that which the Corinthians should adopt. To accomplish this end Paul sets "Christ crucified" as the controlling norm against which worldly standards clash ironically.¹

The idea that God's actions can be described as either "foolishness" or as the result of divine "weakness" starkly contrasts of the standards of heaven and earth. The ironic reversal of human valuations of worth indicates what is true from God's point of view.²

There are certainly elements of paradox here. God's wisdom is foolish from a human perspective, but is simultaneously true wisdom that transcends human categories. It is unclear what makes this an "ironic reversal." Is it the element of contrast between divine and human

¹ 1997:242–43; 2000:131–34.

² Holland 2000:133–34.

standards that is ironic? Or perhaps the insincerity that Paul employs in speaking of God’s wisdom as “foolishness”? Holland also does not specify what sort of irony he sees as operative in this passage. I for one do not find evidence of sarcasm or verbal irony in 1:18–25.

Perhaps there is an argument to be made here for some sort of situational irony. Such an argument would require further critical discussion of the relationship between situational irony and paradox, and would also need to address the likelihood that these elements are intended by Paul or whether they are simply products of our interpretation.³ While this analysis would be an interesting avenue for future research, it departs too far from the aims of this study to be dealt with here. My task will be to clarify where sarcasm plays a role in Paul’s allegedly ironic discourse on wisdom and foolishness, and weakness and strength. As we shall see, this role is relatively minor.

1.1 Implicit vs Explicit Criticism: 2:1–5 (with 1:27–28)

In 2:1–5 Paul uses sarcasm in passing to dismiss worldly standards and rhetorical skill. Proclaiming Christ at Corinth, Paul avoided using *ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας* (2:1). In this context, *λόγος* indicates that Paul refers to professional rhetoric specifically.⁴ From 1:18–25, we are already aware that the “wisdom” of 2:1 can be nothing more than *τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου*, which God has made foolish (cf. 2:5). Paul therefore uses the ostensibly positive term *σοφία* sarcastically here to communicate the same negative evaluation that he ascribed beforehand to worldly wisdom.

Paul’s use of *καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν* also supports a sarcastic reading, as an indication of insincerity through hyperbole. *ὑπεροχή* is a term of intensification. It can denote “*excess*” (comparable to *ὑπερβολή*) or “*prominence*.” It is often used in relation to social status, and takes on a positive resonance in such cases, indicating people in positions of eminence or authority (LSJ, s.v. “*ὑπεροχή*”, cf. 1 Tim 2:2). LXX usage follows this pattern, with *ὑπεροχή* carrying positive evaluation when describing the social level of esteemed persons (2 Macc 3.11; 15:13), but expressing negativity when emphasizing a negative quality (2 Macc 13.6). Considering this baseline emphatic function, *ὑπεροχὴν λόγου* on its own could refer

³ See Schellenberg 2013:174.

⁴ See Collins 1999:118; Fitzmyer 2008:171–72; Thiselton 2000:208–9.

sarcastically to “impressive rhetoric” or criticise “excessive rhetoric” by conveying literal negative evaluation. However, the fact that ὑπεροχή modifies both λόγος and σοφία,⁵ the latter of which is normally a positive term, suggests that a sarcastic reading of the whole is to be preferred. The translation “superabundance of speech or ‘wisdom’” captures both the emphatic function of ὑπεροχή and conveys the negative evaluation implied in Paul’s sarcasm, namely, that such a show of rhetoric is ostentatious.

Overall, Paul’s sarcasm in 2:1 is not a sustained critique, but more of a passing dismissal that succinctly implies that the rhetorical aptitude Paul disavowed in Corinth was not really worth his time in the first place, being a part of the system of worldly wisdom that God has made foolish (1:20).

As a methodological exercise, it will be helpful to clarify why I consider ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας to be sarcastic but not τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου. In constructing our working definition of sarcasm, I agreed with Bailin that implicitness is necessary to verbal irony. In verbal irony “the speaker’s actual attitude is not directly stated by the speaker in the immediate context.”⁶ I also argued for a generous interpretation of “immediate context” that allows for examples such as “Good one! [Pause] Not!” and Rom 6:1–2a to be properly considered sarcastic (Ch.1, §2.6; Ch.5, §2.2). τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου however stretches the boundaries of what may be reasonably termed “implicit.” Here the genitive and its antecedent form a single semantic unit, and as such the negative evaluation associated with “the world” applies to the whole.⁷ Therefore while both ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας and τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου communicate negative evaluation, the former does so implicitly through sarcasm and the latter explicitly.⁸

This understanding of implicitness also suggests that we would be right to read sarcasm in 2:4, but not in 2:5. In 2:4 Paul denies again the use of πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] in

⁵ Cf. Ch.3, §1.2.1.

⁶ Bailin 2015:112.

⁷ The boundaries between implicit and explicit are subjective and cannot always be drawn along grammatical lines. Syntax can also play a determinative role. For example, something like τὴν σοφίαν θαυμασίαν καὶ λαμπράν τοῦ τούτου τοῦ πονηροῦ κόσμου would allow for sufficient distance between the positive and negative affective elements of the broader semantic unit to enable sarcastic pretence.

⁸ Other constructions that express negative evaluation but fail the implicitness condition include: διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας (2:13); ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου (2 Cor 4:4).

his preaching. Although the textual difficulties here are considerable, fortunately for our purposes, some sort of “persuasive wisdom” remains regardless of how the text is sorted out.⁹ As in 2:1, this is none other than the so-called “wisdom” of sophistry,¹⁰ which Paul will term σοφία ἀνθρώπων in the next verse (2:5). Thus, we have sarcasm in 2:4 in the communication of negative affect through ostensibly positive words. 2:5 however, does not meet Bailin’s requirement for implicitness. Paul has already established human wisdom as a negative category (1:17–25, esp. 1:25), so here σοφία ἀνθρώπων is straightforwardly negative, just like σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου (1:20).¹¹

Also on the basis of this explicit/implicit distinction, we may detect sarcasm earlier in the passage as well. Paul explains the fact that among the Corinthians there are few counted among the clever or powerful (1:26) by stating, “but God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise (ἵνα καταισχύνῃ τοὺς σοφούς), and God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (ἵνα καταισχύνῃ τὰ ἰσχυρά)...” (1:27). Paul has already upset the standards of the world, showing their wisdom for foolishness and God’s foolishness for true wisdom. Here Paul is not indicating this reversal explicitly, as he did in 1:20 (οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου;), but we must infer that when he says τοὺς σοφούς, τὰ ἰσχυρά, and τὰ ὄντα (1:27–28), he means their opposite. These references therefore, unlike 1:20, satisfy Bailin’s implicitness condition.

1.2 Conclusions: Sarcasm as Passing Dismissal

Some sarcastic statements are sustained critiques woven together to entrap and tear down their victims. But for every one of these more targeted remarks there are at least several offhand uses of sarcasm, such as a passing, deadpan “Awesome...” or “Brilliant.” which tersely express a subtext equivalent to an eye-roll and an exasperated “whatever.”¹² It is this latter sort that we find in 1 Cor 2:1, 4 and 1:27–28. The critique implied in these cases is not the main point. In 2:1–5, Paul’s primary focus is on the christocentric nature of his ministry

⁹ For text-critical discussion, see Lietzmann 1931:11; Conzelmann 1975:54–55; Collins 1999:119–20; Thiselton 2000:215–16.

¹⁰ See Collins 1999:116, 118; Fee 1987:94.

¹¹ Certain manuscript traditions include ἀνθρωπίνης/ἀνθρωπινούς with the various permutations of πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] in 2:4 (see NA 28 apparatus). These variants show an awareness of Paul’s tone and could represent attempts to make Paul’s implicit evaluation explicit.

¹² For passing sarcasm in Aristophanes, see *Birds*, 176–77, 934; *Frogs*, 1154.

and the way the empowerment of Christ has driven his activity in Corinth. In making this broader point, Paul sarcastically dismisses the rhetorical showiness (ὑπεροχὴν λόγου, 2:1; πειθοῖ[ς] [λόγοις], 2:4) that he wishes to disassociate himself from in emphasizing the activity of Christ in his ministry. This sophistry is symptomatic of the world's wisdom, and Paul inverts the normally positive term σοφία sarcastically in 2:1 and 2:4. He also dismisses σοφία ἀνθρώπων in 2:5, although here Paul's negative evaluation is explicit and therefore not sarcastic. These comments throughout 2:1–5, both sarcastic and sincere, amount to passing dismissals of rhetorical skill, suggesting that this ability is not something the Corinthians should value.

While 1:27–28; 2:1–2:5 by no means contain Paul's most significant instances of sarcasm, our analysis can push back on a trend in scholarly assessments of Paul's critique in these passages. In an article on 2:4, Lim argues that Paul does not seek to discount professional rhetoric, but instead only censures an overdependence thereon in preaching.¹³ Schrage too argues that while Paul's mention of persuasion (πείθω) in 2:4 carries a “negativer Unterton,” Paul only opposes the misuse and overuse of rhetoric by the sophists rather than rhetoric *per se*.¹⁴ Such claims attempt to reconcile what Paul says about professional rhetoric in 1:27–28; 2:1, 4 with a perspective that views him as trained in and making use of the same.¹⁵

These qualifications do not quite do justice to the force of Paul's dismissals. Although I have argued that Paul's sarcastic comments within 1:17–2:5 are only peripheral to the main thrust of the discussion, they do provide insight into his attitude. His sarcastic dismissals suggest that Paul finds practitioners of rhetoric and philosophy irritating, and he writes off their claims to σοφία. Rhetoric (2:1, 4) and philosophy (1:22–23, 27) are parts of a worldly system brought to shame by the wisdom of God, a wisdom the world has taken for foolishness (1:18–25, 27–29).¹⁶

¹³ Lim 1987:148–49.

¹⁴ Schrage 1991:1:225, 232. This is different from arguing that “Paul is not anti-intellectual” (Fitzmyer 2008:148). Paul does not address the role of reason and the intellect in the abstract with his sarcastic quips at the expense of professional rhetors and popular philosophers in 1:27–28; 2:1, 4. On the intellect in Paul, see Bornkamm 1969:29–46.

¹⁵ See Lim 1987:137, 148–49; Schrage 1991:1:225.

¹⁶ For ancient satire on philosophy and rhetoric, see Aristophanes's *Clouds* and Lucian's *Hermotimus*, *Philosophies for Sale*, and *Symposium* (philosophy), as well as *A Professor of Public Speaking* and *Lexiphanes* (rhetoric).

A degree of tension must remain with reconstructions of a rhetorically educated and appreciative Paul and Paul's comments in 1 Cor 1:17–2:5. Such a Paul could see himself as practicing the art of rhetoric “properly” in contrast to others—it is certainly not uncommon for people to seek to distance themselves from groups to which they belong. But even this more generous reading leaves within Paul an element of hypocrisy (or at least situational irony) in disavowing something which he himself practices. Of course, from a historical standpoint there is nothing problematic about asserting that Paul was inconsistent. However, it may also be worth entertaining the possibility that Paul's dislike of rhetors has more to do with the fact that he does not consider himself to be one (2 Cor 11:6; see Ch.7, §2.2.2, §4), and has experienced certain disadvantages as a result of not belonging among this group.

2 Sarcasm and “the Guiltive”: 4:8–13

2.1 Sarcasm in 4:8

To the same congregation where “not many... were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth” (1 Cor 1:26 NRSV), Paul will later declare “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings!” (4:8 NRSV). Sim describes 4:8a as “generally regarded as ironic by biblical scholars.”¹⁷ Indeed, other than 2 Corinthians 10–12, 1 Cor 4:7–14 may be the most treated passage in dedicated studies of irony in Paul.¹⁸

Several lines of evidence support this ironic reading of 4:8. Plank and others argue that the apparent contradiction between 4:8a (“you have become kings”) and 4:8b (“I wish that you had become kings”)¹⁹ suggests irony.²⁰ Furthermore, 4:8 is set within a “climate of

¹⁷ 2016:55.

¹⁸ See Plank 1987:44–51; Holland 1997:243–45; Sim 2016:56. For commentators who take 4:8 as ironic or sarcastic, see Weiss 1910:106; Lietzmann 1931:19; Barrett 1971:108–9; Conzelmann 1975:106; Fee 1987:172; Schrage 1991:1:338; Witherington 1995:136–37; Thiselton 2000:357–59; Arzt-Grabner et al. 2006:172; Fitzmyer 2008:217–18; Ciampa and Rosner 2010:178.

¹⁹ Both NRSV.

²⁰ Plank 1987:45. Cf. Fitzmyer 2008:218; Thiselton 2000:357; Sim 2016:56. Interpreters also point out that Paul's ὅφελον construction, grammatically speaking, suggests an unattainable wish (Fee 1987:174n.45; Thiselton 2000:357; Fitzmyer 2008:218; cf. BDF §359).

criticism” that biases the reader to expect negative evaluation,²¹ and its words also call back and invert Paul’s praise of the Corinthians in 1:4–7.²²

In terms of identification, there is little to add to past scholarship beyond my agreement that 1 Cor 4:8a is clearly ironic, even sarcastic. Paul’s exaggerated, lofty depiction of the Corinthians’ attainment is meant precisely to bring them back down to earth.

2.2 Issues with Ironic Readings of 4:10

Sim, agreeing with Fee and Barrett, also sees irony in 4:10: “We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are [honourable], but we [are dishonourable]” ([modified] NRSV). The basis of her interpretation is that Paul echoes the Corinthians’ assessment of him rather than his own.²³ They see Paul as weak and themselves as strong, Paul as foolish themselves as wise, and Paul parrots this arrogance back to them ironically.

For Barrett, Paul’s ironic assault on the Corinthians is “*ad hominem*,” both “more subtle” and “more devastating” than the previous verses.²⁴ Surely Paul does not consider the Corinthians far wiser, stronger and more honourable than the apostles, at least not in any sense that really matters. Thus irony, with sarcasm couched in the ostensibly positive terminology, and self-deprecating irony, *asteismos*,²⁵ that is, in the negative, seems a reasonable reading.²⁶

While I will argue that 4:10 is close to sarcasm, there are problems with an ironic reading of the text. Because the verse contains two potential forms of verbal irony, sarcasm (“You are wise in Christ, etc.”) and *asteismos* (“We are fools for Christ, etc.”), it will be helpful to treat each form of irony separately to show more clearly where the problem lies.

If “We are fools for Christ... We are weak... We are dishonoured” is *asteismos*, Paul would be using negative language to imply something positive about himself and his co-

²¹ Plank 1987:45.

²² Holland 1997:244; Plank 1987:45–46. Others note the presence of rhetorical devices, such as asyndeton (Fee 1987:172) and hyperbole (Plank 1987:48).

²³ Sim 2016:57; cf. Fee 1987:176; Ciampa and Rosner 2010:182–83. We must be cautious in reconstructing the Corinthians’ assessment of Paul on the basis of 4:10. On mirror-reading ironic statements, see Ch.1, §3.4; Ch.7, §3.1.

²⁴ 1971:110–11.

²⁵ Ch.1, §1.2; Ch.3, §2.6.

²⁶ For others who take 4:10 as ironic, see Origen, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 20; Lietzmann 1931:20; Fitzgerald 1988:137; Schrage 1991:1:343; Collins 1999:184.

workers. His discourse would in some way undercut or invert the negativity associated with foolishness, weakness, and dishonour. This is the opposite of what we find in the surrounding context. In 4:9, which we shall discuss in more detail presently, the apostles are decidedly in last place (ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἐσχάτους ἀπέδειξεν), while 4:11–13 emphasize their weakness (πεινῶμεν καὶ διψῶμεν, ἀστατοῦμεν) and dishonour (γυμνιτεύομεν καὶ κολαφιζόμεθα, λοιδορούμενοι, διωκόμενοι, δυσφημούμενοι, ὡς περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐγενήθημεν, πάντων περίφημα ἕως ἄρτι). With Paul so highlighting his weakness in 4:9, 11–13, it would be somewhat out of place for him to imply the insincerity of the self-deprecatory statements in 4:10 through *asteismos*.

The same problem underlies a sarcastic reading of “You are wise in Christ... You are strong; you are honoured...” Here comparison with the clear sarcasm of 4:8 can be illustrative. We have already noted the way Paul clarifies the sarcasm of 4:8a by contradicting it in 4:8b: “already you are kings!/I really wish you were kings (implies that they are not kings)...” We have seen this means of communicating sarcasm by juxtaposing it with an immediately following, contrastive, literal statement time and time again. It is one of the most common signals of sarcasm in ancient Greek and is also typical of Paul (Gal 1:6–7a; 2:6; Rom 2:17–23; 3:8; 6:1–2a, 15; 11:19–20).²⁷ But this is not what Paul does with 4:10–13. Instead, Paul’s following discourse in 4:11–13 presumes the sincerity of 4:10, as Paul goes on to relate his hardships, weakness and dishonour.²⁸ Now, sincerity does not mean that 4:10 cannot in some way be exaggerated, facetious, or consist of Paul saying something that he does not really mean in one way or another. And the fact that Paul does not use a common signal of sarcasm does not rule out the possibility that he is being sarcastic.

However, read as irony, 4:10 does not fit the surrounding discourse, which earnestly depicts Paul’s suffering and upholds rather than inverts the sentiment that, relatively speaking, Paul has been dishonoured and the Corinthians honoured. Because 4:10, set within

²⁷ Ch.3, §1.1.4.

²⁸ Foolishness/intelligence does not appear to come into play in 4:9, 11–13. If the reference to the apostles as *μωροί* in 4:10 relates to the proceeding, it could be that they are exposed as fools in the spectacle of 4:9—*φρόνιμοι* then, would function as a convenient term of contrast. If Paul does not mention foolishness/intelligence in 4:9, 11–13, he certainly does not invert these assessments there either.

its context, does not appear to communicate the implicit inversion of affect necessary to sarcasm or *asteismos*, it is well worth pursuing an alternate reading.

2.3 Haiman's "Guiltive" and 4:9–13

To address these problems, I will lay out how we might read 4:10 as a speech act that Haiman describes as the "guiltive modality," which is closely related to sarcasm but differs in important ways. This reading avoids the problems of an ironic interpretation and better respects the overall flow of Paul's argument and tone throughout 4:9–13.

2.3.1 The Guiltive

Haiman coins the term "guiltive" to describe a common speech act that comes close but is not quite sarcastic. To illustrate, one might imagine a text message from a hypothetical mother to her son:

Don't worry if you don't have time to call tomorrow, even if it *is* my birthday, I know you're busy with your academic work at Cambridge, and there's the time difference... I only want you to be happy, no sense making a fuss about your old mother.²⁹

Unlike sarcasm, where a speaker communicates their insincerity implicitly through an ostensibly positive statement, in such guilt trips "the guilter... has to sound perfectly sincere." The guilter's subtext communicates only their great virtue and longsuffering, which they exaggerate but do not undermine. It is hyperbole, but without insincerity. It is their target who must infer for themselves the absurdity of the original message on the basis of this exaggeration and other cues and realise that they ought to feel terrible about themselves.³⁰ We may further clarify using our example. Here the original, literal message may be summarized, "Don't worry about calling your mother." The phrasing of this message communicates the metamessage, or subtext, "Though I suffer unjustly, I endure." This subtext is not sarcastic because it does not communicate a negative evaluation of the other party. The guilty must infer this for themselves. From the exaggeration present in the phrasing of the original message coupled with its metamessage, the guilty must themselves infer a further metamessage, namely: "The original message ('Don't worry about calling your

²⁹ Example adapted from Haiman, who illustrates using scenes from *Portnoy's Complaint* (1998:23–25).

³⁰ Haiman 1998:23–25.

mother’) is absurd,” along with the implication “I should feel terrible about not calling my mother (so I should call my mother).”

Thus, the guiltive comes close to sarcasm insofar as both make use of implicit communication and ultimately bring about a negative evaluation of their target, but there are two significant differences. First, although the guilter exaggerates their selflessness, they express their sentiments sincerely. It therefore lacks the pretence of sarcasm. Second, the negative evaluation of the guiltive is generated not by the guilter but by the target, who also produces the guilt.

2.3.2 A Guiltive Reading of 1 Cor 4:9–13

Approaching 1 Cor 4:9–13 through a guiltive lens situates the antitheses Paul lays out in 4:10 within his overall rhetoric better than an ironic or sarcastic reading. The guiltive tone begins in 4:9 as Paul describes apostolic suffering on a grand scale. The first signal that Paul is painting an exaggerated picture of his hardships is his use of *δοκῶ*. He describes things as they appear to be rather than how they necessarily are. The simile Paul uses is literally theatrical; it is as if God has condemned the apostles to death in the arena (*ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἐσχάτους ἀπέδειξεν ὡς ἐπιθανατίους, ὅτι θέατρον ἐγενήθημεν*).³¹ We also see emphasis through Paul’s repetitious description of the audience for this spectacle, a drama that plays out in view of “the world and angels and humanity” (*τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ ἀγγέλοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις*).³² This emphatic depiction of apostolic suffering fits well with the guiltive as Haiman describes it. Paul exaggerates his suffering but does not express insincerity.

The tone of the guiltive continues into 4:10, as Paul contrasts the foolishness, weakness, and dishonour of the apostles with the wisdom, strength, and honour of the Corinthians. Here again emphasis is signalled through repetition,³³ and Paul makes explicit contrast between the qualities of the apostles and qualities of the Corinthians through his use of pronouns and conjunctions: “*we* are this, but *you* are that” (*ἡμεῖς... ὑμεῖς δέ...*). Although his portrayal of both apostolic weakness and the Corinthians’ privilege is exaggerated, Paul

³¹ On the background of this metaphor as the gladiatorial arena, see Schrage 1991:1:342; Barrett 1971:110; Collins 1999:188. Barrett also mentions death by beasts (1971:110; cf. Ciampa and Rosner 2010:181–82).

³² On hyperbole in 4:9, cf. Plank 1987:49.

³³ And chiasm, see Collins 1999:189; Conzelmann 1975:108.

does not imply a negative assessment of the Corinthians in this verse. Indeed, if there is any subtext, it is the implication that the Corinthians have benefited at Paul's expense. It is from this situation that the Corinthians must infer for themselves that they do not deserve to be exalted above the apostles, and ought to be ashamed of sitting idly by while others suffer for Christ.

The guiltive continues throughout 4:11–13, with its sincerity and emphasis on the speaker's suffering. Paul and the other apostles “hunger and thirst and are naked and beaten and homeless” (4:11). These sufferings are described vividly in the present tense, depicted as taking place “up to this very hour” (ἄχρι τῆς ἄρτι ὥρας, 4:11; cf. ἕως ἄρτι, 4:13). In 4:12–13 the focus on suffering continues with an emphasis on the way the apostles behave blamelessly in spite of mistreatment. For every evil suffered the apostles return good: “insulted, we bless; persecuted, we endure” (4:12). This list of trials concludes with the lowest self-description: “We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day” (4:13 NRSV). The emphasis on Paul's blameless endurance of suffering in 4:11–13 is both consistent with and deepens the guiltive tone of the previous verses.³⁴

Following Paul's treatment of his sufferings, 4:14 provides further evidence for why the guiltive has been an appropriate category for thinking about Paul's rhetoric in 4:9–13. Here Paul reassures his congregation, “I'm not writing this to shame you but I'm admonishing you as my beloved children” (Οὐκ ἐντρέπων ὑμᾶς γράφω ταῦτα ἀλλ' ὡς τέκνα μου ἀγαπητὰ νουθετῶ[ν], 4:14). Holland suggests that this verse betrays the fact that shame is precisely Paul's aim.³⁵ But we should also acknowledge that Paul seems to have no trouble

³⁴ One school of thought argues that Paul's list of hardships follows ancient conventions for *peristasis* catalogues. 4:9–13 shows Paul to be the ideal sage through his endurance of suffering (Fitzgerald 1988:145–48; Witherington 1995:143; Collins 1999:183). Conversely, Schellenberg argues that features present in what scholars term *peristasis* catalogues are common throughout ancient catalogue-making in general (2013:125–36). “We certainly need not posit any one particular stylistic influence to account for Paul's tribulation lists” (Schellenberg 2013:136). If Paul does not mean to express the sage's indifference toward sufferings, he is, amongst other rhetorical aims, communicating a degree of real frustration with his sufferings and the role that God “seems” (δοκῶ, 4:9) to be playing in them—or perhaps also the Corinthians' lack of sympathy for them. Both readings fit with the guiltive, the *peristasis*-interpretation emphasising the endurance and blameless forbearance of the speaker, and the latter reading emphasising the sufferings themselves.

³⁵ Holland 1997:246; cf. Sim 2016:57.

intentionally shaming his congregation in 1 Cor 6:5; 15:34. We may then perhaps give Paul's motives the benefit of the doubt, while recognizing two important implications. First, the fact that Paul denies shaming his church shows that he is aware that guilt is a probable response to the proceeding soliloquy. Second, even if Paul has no conscious desire to shame the Corinthians, framing his "admonition" in this way still strengthens its guiltive function. Highlighting again the blamelessness of his motives still has the potential to make the Corinthians feel even worse about themselves by comparison.³⁶

A guiltive reading of 4:9–13 shows the text to be all of one rhetorical piece. Paul does not invert the sentiments expressed in 4:10 through irony. Instead, the guiltive emphasis on and exaggeration of suffering carries from Paul's depiction of the apostles as the cosmos's spectacle (4:9) all the way through his vivid list of hardships in 4:11–13. This description, 4:10 included, is hyperbolic, but not insincere. Paul does not imply that the Corinthians should feel guilty for experiencing relative privilege as he suffers for Christ (4:14), but—as Haiman describes—the Corinthians must infer for themselves that they ought to feel ashamed.

2.4 Conclusions

Many scholars have weighed in on the presence of irony in 1 Cor 4:8, 10. I agree with ironic readings of 4:8 and consider it a clear example of sarcasm. Paul's reference to the Corinthians as already reigning as kings is an implicit critique of what Paul perceives as their arrogance. This criticism is however tempered with humour as Paul jokes about the possibility of really reigning as kings along with his congregation in the latter half of the verse.

This fanciful image of kingship contrasts sharply with the depiction of apostolic suffering that Paul begins in 4:9 and carries through 4:13. Here I have departed from ironic readings of 4:10 in arguing that the whole of 4:9–13 is best described by Haiman's "guiltive." This reading shows the passage to be all of one rhetorical piece, as opposed to Paul interrupting his attempt to gain his audience's sympathies in 4:9 and 4:11–13 with a sarcastic insult in 4:10.

³⁶ Any child who has been chided by a parent who is, "not angry, just disappointed," understands this fact intuitively.

A guiltive reading is not far from a sarcastic interpretation; there are areas of overlap between the two categories but also important differences. Unlike the implicit negative evaluation communicated in sarcasm, the guilter's subtext communicates only their own long suffering. The guilter therefore delivers their guilt trip with full sincerity. However, when I say that Paul is being sincere in 4:10, I do not mean that he really thinks that the Corinthians are wiser, stronger, and ultimately more honourable than the apostles. Haiman writes that in the guiltive, "the speaker... suppresses his or her own emotions, is known to be suppressing them, and still manages to sound sincere."³⁷ Paul is not being sarcastic, but he is still not saying what he really thinks. Paul's actual assessment of his congregation's social standing is doubtless better represented in places such as 1 Cor 1:26.

The other significant feature of the guiltive is a result of its sincerity. The guilter does not imply a negative assessment of their target, but the guilty must infer their culpability in the sufferings of the guilter and consequently feel bad about themselves. The way Paul emphasises the hardships he has endured blamelessly while the Corinthians have been experiencing relative privilege throughout 4:9–13 fits nicely within this model. Thus, in 4:14, Paul need not write to shame the Corinthians. At this point, they should already be shaming themselves.

3 Slogans: Direct Quotation vs Loose Resemblance

"'All things are lawful for me,' but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything" (1 Cor 6:12 NRSV). These antitheses suggest the possibility of sarcasm, as Paul mentions the speech of another group—with no indicators of direct quotation in Greek—before clearly distancing himself from their position. This description sounds close to the echoic definition of irony (Ch.1, §2.3). Considering also the prevalence of feigned concessions in sarcastic speech and the tendency of ancient Greek speakers to follow sarcastic comments with a straightforward declaration of negative evaluation, an ironic reading seems to be a real interpretive possibility for statements such as

³⁷ 1998:24.

the above (Ch.3, §1.1.4, §2.3).³⁸ This sort of re-presented speech³⁹ is worth further investigation, as 6:12 is not the only point at which Paul “cites” the Corinthians’ perspective. Omanson lists 19 such “Corinthian slogans” identified by previous scholars.⁴⁰ Before looking at specific examples, I will make some general comments on these slogans and the likelihood of their being sarcastic.

Generally speaking, Corinthian slogans are more thoroughly discussed than defined. It is common to find scholars assessing Paul’s presentation of these “slogans” with language relating to citation or quotation, without addressing the issue of how literally or loosely Paul has recast the language of others.⁴¹ Such word choice implies an essentially word-for-word reproduction of the Corinthians’ positions.⁴²

Murphy-O’Connor conceives of these slogans as more or less direct citations, arguing that Paul’s rhetorical training was too advanced for him to weaken his position by misrepresenting his opposition.⁴³ Tentatively critical of this position, Smith sees it as reasonable for Paul to have adjusted the wording of the Corinthians while still maintaining a fair representation of their viewpoints.⁴⁴ Synthesizing the work of Siebenmann and Stowers, Smith goes on to define the Corinthian slogan as “a motto [or similar expression that captures the spirit, purpose, or guiding principles] of a particular group or point of view at Corinth, or at least a motto that Paul was using to represent their position or attitudes.”⁴⁵ Smith’s broader definition is to be preferred. Regardless of the actual level of Paul’s rhetorical training, one may conceive of many situations in which reframing the words of one’s interlocutors would present some rhetorical advantage. While both Murphy-O’Connor and Smith see the

³⁸ On these features, see Siebenmann, who writes that Paul presents Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν “as if he agreed with it” (1997:166). Cf. Fee: “in both cases [6:12; 10:23] [Paul] qualifies [Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν] so sharply as to negate it—at least as a theological absolute” (1987:251–52).

³⁹ To borrow Sim’s language (2016:29–51).

⁴⁰ 1992:203–12. Smith helpfully breaks these down in charts according to which major commentators and translators support each reading (see 2010:87–88).

⁴¹ E.g. Naselli 2017:974, 979, 981, 987; Fee 1987:251, 262, 365.

⁴² The language of direct quotation is pervasive in early studies. See Omanson 1992:201–13; Hurd 1965:65–68, 74.

⁴³ 2009:25.

⁴⁴ 2010:83n.51. Cf. Collins 1999:243–45, 312.

⁴⁵ Smith 2010:82, see 82n.51. See Siebenmann 1997:54. Part of the wording [in square brackets] appears also to come from the *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary*, 1996, s.v. “motto,” which Siebenmann cites (see 1997:54n.154). For a similar perspective, see Willis 1985:65–66.

Corinthian slogans as nothing other than fair representations of the views they cite,⁴⁶ I argue that Paul could have intentionally misrepresented or exaggerated certain aspects of the Corinthians' positions for various reasons, including sarcasm, parody, and mockery.

In terms of how the Corinthian slogans function as reproduced speech, we are faced with a range of possibilities from direct quotations of previous written correspondence to mottos formulated by Paul himself to represent their views.⁴⁷ For our purposes, this distinction between direct quotation and looser representation is essential, as it can have a significant impact on whether or not a statement is sarcastic. In the absence of other indices of evaluation, direct quotation may serve no other function than to indicate the topic under discussion. For example, a slogan such as 7:1, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'it is well for a man not to touch a woman'" (NRSV), is a strong candidate for direct quotation indicating the subject to be addressed.⁴⁸ As such, it contains no hint of sarcasm.

In other cases where we find greater looseness in representation on Paul's part, especially when combined with signals of negative affect, sarcasm becomes more likely. Consider where Paul claims, "One of you [Corinthians] says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ'" (1:12 NIV). Mitchell makes a strong case for Paul altering the Corinthians' words in 1:12 by using a genitive of relationship to stress the subservience of the Corinthians to their factions.⁴⁹ Paul intends his rephrasing to be "particularly nettlesome to the Corinthians who prize freedom."⁵⁰ Similarly, Käsemann considers Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ a Pauline invention rather than direct citation; an "ironisierende Überbietung der andern umlaufenden Parolen."⁵¹ While Mitchell and Käsemann rightly note Paul's use of exaggeration, Käsemann's designation of "I am Christ's" as ironic is imprecise.

While the interpreter may read situational irony in the presence of an ostensible Christ faction at Corinth, parody is a more accurate designation for Paul's imitation of the Corinthians in this verse than any form of verbal irony, sarcasm included. Because this

⁴⁶ So too Siebenmann 1997:63–65.

⁴⁷ See Smith 2010:83.

⁴⁸ Thiselton identifies an "increasing consensus" that 7:1 contains a direct citation of the Corinthians (2000:498–99; cf. Schrage 1991:2:59).

⁴⁹ 1991:28:83–86.

⁵⁰ Mitchell 1991:28:85.

⁵¹ Käsemann 1963:1:X. So too Schrage 1991:1:148.

parody is presented as a direct quotation, it contains none of the ostensible positivity necessary to sarcasm. The comment could be made sarcastic if some feigned compliment was added, by placing *καλῶς* between *Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ* and *μεμέρισται ὁ Χριστός*, for example: “One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’... still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Well done! Christ is divided.” However, as the text currently stands, 1:12 is not sarcastic, but does provide a helpful illustration of how Paul need not cite the Corinthians directly and how he may, by recasting their positions in his own words, communicate his (negative) assessment of their actions.

3.1 All Readings Are Permissible: 6:12; 10:23

Where does this leave us with 6:12—and its parallel in 10:23? With a few notable exceptions,⁵² most commentators take these as citations of Corinthian slogans.⁵³ While I agree that they are some form of re-presented speech, just how directly or loosely Paul “cites” the Corinthians is unclear. We have no means of verifying the original words or thoughts underlying what Paul represents as *Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν* and *Πάντα ἔξεστιν* (6:12, 10:23).⁵⁴ Because in this case the sort of “quotation” Paul employs determines whether the statement is sarcastic, one must retain a certain degree of agnosticism in interpretation. We are left with a range of possibilities, conditions under which “all things are lawful (for me)” could be stated sarcastically or non-sarcastically.

If, as we discussed with 7:1, Paul is directly quoting the Corinthians in 6:12; 10:23, taking, for example, their exact words from their letter, Paul is most likely not being sarcastic. Paul’s audience would simply recognize their own words as indicating the subject under discussion without necessarily indicating agreement or disagreement. Paul’s own position would then become evident from the following statements.

It is also possible that Paul has constructed this slogan himself on the basis of his interpretation of the Corinthian position. One could see how Paul, coming across more elaborated statements of the ethical neutrality of bodily actions, such as *πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐάν*

⁵² Dodd 1999:78–90; Garland 2003:225–29.

⁵³ See Hurd 1965:68; Smith 2010:87.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ciampa and Rosner 2010:252.

ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν (6:18),⁵⁵ could summarize their essence with something like Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν. If this or something similar is the case, such a summary would be most recognizable to Paul’s audience as sarcastic—in comparison to the other possibilities we have discussed. Paul’s formulation could be designed to highlight the arrogance of the Corinthian position, casting what they would consider more sophisticated theology as an arrogant and unnuanced declaration that one can just do whatever one wants. This option lies closer to 1:12, which contains a parody of the Corinthians in Paul’s own words. In the case of 6:12; 10:23, such a parody would be sarcastic; an appropriation of the Corinthians’ voice that momentarily feigns acceptance of their position.

Without access to more information about what the Corinthians were actually saying, I am doubtful that we can safely narrow these options and determine to a high degree of probability whether Paul meant Πάντα (μοι) ἔξεστιν sarcastically (6:12; 10:23). Within this continuum of possibilities, the fact that Paul follows these slogans with the sort of negations that one frequently finds in sarcasm is interesting. The way Paul repeats this “slogan” twice each time he references it could also be indicative of hyperbole, but sarcasm is only one of several possible explanations for these features. There is simply not enough evidence extant to determine how directly Paul references the actual words or thoughts of the Corinthians in 6:12; 10:23, or whether in doing so he is being sarcastic.

3.2 Knowledge: 8:1–2

Paul begins First Corinthians 8 by citing another of the letter’s Corinthian slogans: “Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that ‘all of us possess knowledge.’” (Περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων, οἶδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γινῶσιν ἔχομεν, 8:1 NRSV).⁵⁶ In the ensuing discussion of idol-food (8:1–13) we find the highest concentration of sarcastic statements in First Corinthians, which have generally not been identified as sarcasm or irony in scholarship.

⁵⁵ 6:18b is too specifically formulated for Paul to have deliberately (mis)constructed it to imply negative evaluation in and of itself. That evaluation comes in 6:18c. On 6:18b as a Corinthian slogan, see Naselli 2017:969–87. Cf. Murphy-O’Connor 2009:20–22, 26–31.

⁵⁶ See Hurd 1965:68; Smith 2010:87; Thiselton 2000:620n.49–50. The issue of how exactly Paul reproduces his congregation’s words will not factor into our discussion of 8:1–13, where other cues are sufficient to establish Paul’s use of sarcasm.

On the surface, there appears to be a contradiction between 8:1 “we know that ‘all of us possess knowledge’” and 8:7 “It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge” (Ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ γνῶσις, NRSV). Willis sees this contradiction as lying in the fact that Paul apparently claims that all possess knowledge in the first instance and denies it in the latter, and also in the fact that Paul initially appears to agree with those that he will go on to correct.⁵⁷ To resolve these discrepancies, Willis proposes extending Paul’s quotation to encompass οἶδαμεν ὅτι—rendering the full slogan: οἶδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν—thus assigning any words that support the sentiment πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν voices other than Paul’s.⁵⁸

But this solution leads to an unnatural reading of 8:1. “The formula οἶδαμεν ὅτι is frequently used to introduce a well-known fact that is generally accepted.”⁵⁹ We see as much in 8:4, where we have two “slogans” being referenced, each following after ὅτι: “we know that (οἶδαμεν ὅτι) ‘no idol in the world really exists,’ and that (καὶ ὅτι) ‘there is no God but one.’” (NRSV). It is therefore best to see the slogan beginning after οἶδαμεν ὅτι in both cases, and to look elsewhere to resolve the apparent contradiction between 8:1 and 8:7.

Several potential solutions have been suggested. Garland argues that the crucial distinction lies in the difference between “knowledge” (γνῶσιν, 8:1) and “this knowledge” (ἡ γνῶσις, 8:7). He also cites several other commentators who see Paul as differentiating between intellectual and emotive knowledge, respectively, in these two verses.⁶⁰ I propose that a sarcastic reading of 8:1 can do one better. It accounts for the apparent contradiction between 8:1 and 8:7, while still allowing the slogan fall most naturally after the ὅτι in 8:1. It also does not require the interpreter to supply a substantive difference between the knowledge referred to in these verses that Paul himself does not provide.

In our discussion of 6:12, we have already noted the prevalence of sarcastic concessions and the tendency of sarcasts to follow their comments with statements of literal evaluation (§3). Both of these factors are present in 8:1, but what makes this instance of sarcasm clearer than 6:12 is the way that Paul begins with a pseudo-affiliative οἶδαμεν, which

⁵⁷ Willis 1985:68–69.

⁵⁸ Willis 1985:67–70.

⁵⁹ Cited in Fee 2014:403n.33.

⁶⁰ Garland 2003:379–80. For further possible solutions, see Willis 1985:68n.10.

we have seen is often “used to introduce a well-known fact that is generally accepted.”⁶¹ A stock formula for expressing agreement is an excellent means by which to express sarcastic agreement. The ostensible concession “we know that, ‘all of us possess knowledge’” (NRSV) contrasts sharply with ἡ γνῶσις φυσιῶν (8:1), and later with 8:7, making it clear that Paul never endorsed the slogan in the first place.⁶² The apparent contradiction between 8:1 and 7 disappears when we recognize Paul’s sarcasm in 8:1. The contrast between Paul’s (feigned) acceptance of the Corinthian “meat-party’s”⁶³ position and his own (sincerely stated) views are simply the means by which he indicates insincerity.⁶⁴

Paul’s sarcastic use of a quotive formula also contains an element of imitation. Paul mimics the sort of person who would mean πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν seriously, implying the arrogance of such bold and unnuanced appeals to universal knowledge. Paul then straightforwardly calls out the arrogance of this position (8:1b), before calling into question whether those who make such claims actually have meaningful knowledge (δοκεῖ, 8:2).⁶⁵ This is different from negating the content of the message cited, as if Paul were seeking simply to place inverted commas around “knowledge” in 8:1.⁶⁶ Paul may agree with elements of meat-party’s argument (8:4–6), but takes issue with what he perceives as the arrogance and lack of consideration with which such theory is put into practice (cf. Ch.5, §3.2).

Paul’s sarcasm in 8:1 also has an impact on how we understand his tone throughout this discussion of idol-food. For Schlatter, Paul’s concession in 8:1 seeks to avoid casting aspersions on the Corinthian’s “Erkenntnis.”⁶⁷ Thiselton argues that “Paul adopts a common starting point” with the Corinthians in 8:1, as a means of criticizing their position without

⁶¹ n.59 above.

⁶² Knox, in passing, cites οἶδαμεν in 8:1 and 8:4 as meant ironically (1939:136n.7; cf. Collins 1999:311 [on 8:1]). Since Paul agrees with the statements he cites in 8:4, even if he will nuance the perspective (8:5–6), his use of οἶδαμεν in 8:4 is without sarcasm.

⁶³ I have chosen a non-standard designation for this group because it avoids the more common “the strong” and “the ‘strong,’” both of which are evaluative in different ways (I will only use “the ‘strong’” when describing Paul’s assessment of the meat-party). The meat-party was also a party that argued for their right to eat (certain kinds of) meat, as well as a group that ate meat at parties.

⁶⁴ As such, contra Willis, there is no real reason to read the Corinthian slogan in 8:1 as including anything more than πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν.

⁶⁵ See Garland 2003:369.

⁶⁶ Fee rightly notes Paul’s emphasis on correcting the Corinthians’ attitude (2014:399, 401).

⁶⁷ 1928:2:95. For scholars who see Paul as initially conceding πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν, see Weiss 1910:214; Barrett 1973:189; Conzelmann 1975:140.

causing undue offence.⁶⁸ Siebenmann sees such a rhetorical strategy behind Paul's use of slogans more generally, whereby Paul only shifts from affiliation to pushback slowly and only after presenting sufficient argumentation.⁶⁹ Recognising Paul's sarcasm in 8:1, however, shows Paul's rhetoric to be more tendentious from its outset than these readings suggest. Paul's claim to common ground with the meat-party is an act of short-lived pretence; it looks not to avoid offence, but to produce shame.⁷⁰

But what might prompt this more aggressive approach on Paul's part? As we follow the contours of Paul's sarcastic critique of the meat-party through 8:8–11, Paul reveals more about what he sees at stake in the consumption of idol-food, explaining his more abrasive rhetoric.

3.3 “Authority” and that Knowledge of Yours: 8:8–11

After clarifying what has hitherto only been strongly implied, that the *γνώσις* of the meat-party is not ubiquitous, Paul lays out how acting without due consideration for other Christ-followers could be damaging to their consciences (8:7). Then the opposition gets one more word in, as Paul appears to reference a Corinthian argument about the moral neutrality of food (8:8).⁷¹ Paul's response to what he perceives as a cavalier attitude towards idol-meat consumption and the claim to knowledge it represents will occupy 8:9–13. As Paul counters by depicting an ironic situation, his critique is peppered with sarcasm.

Paul warns the meat-party not to let their “authority” become a stumbling block (8:9). The syntax of *ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν αὐτῇ*, “this ‘authority’ of yours,” is reminiscent of the dismissive use of demonstratives discussed in our work on Lucian.⁷² This suggests that Paul

⁶⁸ 2000:621; cf. Collins 1999:309; Fitzmyer 2008:338. In Thiselton's assessment, Paul's tendency to “stand within the projected ‘world’ of [his] addressees” is for him a “fundamental rhetorical strategy” (2000:621; cf. Thiselton 1973:215–18). Murphy-O'Connor however states that, “It is unfortunately typical of Paul in 1 Cor that he consistently refuses to enter the thought-world of those in the community who disagreed with him” (2009:31; cf. Murphy-O'Connor 1996:282–84). I side with Murphy-O'Connor concerning 8:1.

⁶⁹ 1997:63–65.

⁷⁰ Cf. Fee's assessment of Paul's response to the idol-food issue as “combative” (2014:395–96).

⁷¹ On 8:8 as a Corinthian slogan, see Murphy-O'Connor 2009:76–86; cf. Thiselton 2000:647–649; Fitzmyer 2008:345; Fee 2014:421–24.

⁷² Ch.3, §1.2.5. Fee describes *ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν αὐτῇ* as a phrase that Paul “speaks biting” (Fee 2014:278; cf. Garland 2003:387).

is using ἐξουσία sarcastically to imply that this “authority” or “right” to eat idol-food is nothing more than a πρόσκομμα, a term placed in close proximity.

Then, making his critique more personal and sarcastic,⁷³ Paul describes a situation in which other Christians are scandalized by witnessing the “strong” exercise their “freedom” to eat idol-food: “For if someone sees you, The One-Who-Has-Knowledge, dining at an idol feast, won’t their weak conscience be encouraged to eat idol-food?” (ἐὰν γάρ τις ἴδῃ σὲ τὸν ἔχοντα γινῶσιν ἐν εἰδωλείῳ κατακείμενον, οὐχὶ ἡ συνείδησις αὐτοῦ ἀσθενοῦς ὄντος οἰκοδομηθήσεται εἰς τὸ τὰ εἰδωλόθυτα ἐσθίειν; 8:10). The way that Paul juxtaposes the epithet τὸν ἔχοντα γινῶσιν with ἐν εἰδωλείῳ κατακείμενον, an activity that proves to be destructive and therefore not a clever choice in the first place, calls into question the claim of the meat-party to meaningful knowledge. σὲ τὸν ἔχοντα γινῶσιν is therefore sarcastic. Paul’s sarcasm here also deepens the broader irony of the situation he describes,⁷⁴ as those claiming a position of intellectual superiority are doing no more than “encouraging” their brothers and sisters to engage in practices that will lead to their destruction (8:11).⁷⁵ As such, by the end of 8:11, ἐν τῇ σῇ γνώσει (“by that knowledge of yours”)⁷⁶ is terse and sarcastic, implying a sharp negative evaluation of the meat-party’s claim to knowledge, which Paul portrays as the downfall of “the brother for whom Christ died.”

From beginning to end, Paul’s discussion of idol-meat in 8:1–13 has no lack of intensity. His use of sarcasm targets the meat-party’s claim to knowledge, characterizing it as arrogant (8:1) and meaningless when un-tempered by love (8:1–2). This basic critique carries through Paul’s sustained and increasingly sarcastic response to the arguments referenced in 8:8 (see 8:9–11). The eschatological import of the situation Paul lays out in these verses explains his use of more aggressive rhetoric. As Garland puts it, “They might wound others

⁷³ Note the shift from second person plural to singular between 8:9 and 8:10.

⁷⁴ While the situation is ironic from an interpretive standpoint, one should not assume that Paul is consciously employing irony as a rhetorical trope. It is, however, clear that Paul intends show that the actions of the “knowledgeable” entirely miss the point, do not truly understanding the situation, and thus are ultimately foolish.

⁷⁵ Fee asserts that Paul is using the typically positive verb οἰκοδομέω ironically, appropriating the language of a Corinthian argument (2014:427, 427n.135, 399, 399n.23; cf. Conzelmann 1975:149; Schrage 1991:2:265; Garland 2003:388). If Fee is correct about the imitation, then the expression is a sarcastic critique of the meat-party.

⁷⁶ Note the repetition of γνω-language in 8:1–13 (9 occurrences).

eternally and harm themselves eternally.”⁷⁷ Because the actions of the strong threaten to destroy the weak (8:11), Paul has no qualms about resorting to tendentious rhetoric. If the meat-party can be stirred to recognize the urgency of the situation and what is really at stake in the consumption of idol-food, perhaps they will stop sinning against Christ (8:12) and adopt the attitude Paul models in verse 13: “if eating scandalizes my brother, may I never eat meat again!”

3.4 Conclusions

Investigating Paul’s use of sarcasm across various Corinthian “slogans” has led to reflection on different means speakers may use to portray the positions of others. I have argued for the acknowledgement of a broader range of possibilities for how closely Paul references the words and perspectives of the Corinthians. This continuum spans from direct quotation of previous correspondence (7:1) all the way to the strategic misrepresentation of their positions (1:12) for reasons that could include parody, mockery, and sarcasm.

I argued that whether the slogan repeated four times across 6:12 and 10:23, Πάντα (μοι) ἔξεστιν, is sarcastic depends on where it falls on this continuum. If Paul has used his own words to tersely caricature a position that the Corinthians would have articulated with greater nuance, “All things are lawful for me” (NRSV) could be a sarcastic parody designed to push the Corinthians’ logic into absurdity. However, if Paul is directly quoting a phrase the Corinthians were actually saying, he is less likely to be engaging in sarcasm and more likely to be simply indicating the position to be addressed, before providing his assessment in what follows.

Paul’s treatment of idol-food enables more confidence in identifying sarcasm, without having to know how directly Paul cites the Corinthians. Paul begins with the sarcastic concession, “We know that ‘we all possess knowledge,’” a claim which he explicitly characterises as arrogant in the latter half of the verse. A sarcastic reading of 8:1 clears up a number of interpretive difficulties, resolving the apparent contradiction between 8:1 and 8:7 without requiring the interpreter to supply different denotations for γνῶσις in each case. This reading sees Paul taking a hard line throughout his discussion of idol-food rather than beginning by building common ground with the meat-party as some have suggested.

⁷⁷ 2003:386; cf. Schrage 1991:2:265.

The sarcastic tone that begins Paul's treatment of idol-food is resumed in 8:9 with his sarcastic use of ἐξουσία and builds through 8:10–11 with the sarcastic epithet “you-who-has-knowledge” (8:10) and sarcastic reference to τῇ σῇ γνώσει (8:11). These comments are made as Paul depicts an ironic situation in which the “knowledge” of the meat-party leads to the destruction of a fellow Christian. The more tendentious rhetoric that we see in Paul's use of sarcasm throughout 8:1–13 reflects the eschatological implications that he sees as operative in this situation. Because leading another Christian astray is a sin against Christ (8:12), Paul displays indignation and a sense of urgency as he deals with the issue of idol-food.

4 So-Called “Gods”: 8:5

Markers of direct reference, including quotation marks and “so-called,” function as common cues of sarcasm in English.⁷⁸ Although they do not appear to play a significant role in ancient Greek, it is still possible that Paul uses λεγόμενοι θεοί in 8:5 to imply that such “so-called ‘gods’” do not actually exist.⁷⁹ In this case λεγόμενοι θεοί would be sarcastic, and translations would do well to put “gods” in inverted commas, including the references to “many ‘gods’” and “many ‘lords’” in 8:5b (θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί).⁸⁰ Fredriksen, however, argues that despite his exclusive commitment to Israel's God, Paul would have accepted the existence of other gods, considering them δαιμόνια.⁸¹ If this reconstruction is correct, the references to other gods in 8:5 could be concessive rather than sarcastic. But a sarcastic reading is still possible for a polytheistic Paul, if his implied evaluation intends to disparage other gods rather than deny their existence: “Mit λεγόμενοι wird ihre Würde und

⁷⁸ Haiman 1998:49–52.

⁷⁹ λεγόμενος and indicators of direct speech occur seldom as signals of sarcasm in the examples surveyed in this project (cf. Pawlak 2019:548–49, 560–61).

⁸⁰ As in Barrett 1973:192; Conzelmann 1975:143; Fee 1987:372; Thiselton 2000:632; Ciampa and Rosner 2010:381–82. λεγόμενος often indicates that someone/thing is called someone/thing else without implying evaluation (see Arzt-Grabner et al. 2006:330–31). This is less likely in 8:5. If Paul does not consider other gods to exist, he is not only stating that others call them gods, especially in 8:5b which lacks λεγόμενος and where the tone of Paul's sarcastic concession is therefore most clear: “Just as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords!’” (ὥσπερ εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί, 8:5b). Also speaking in favour of a sarcastic reading is Paul's double use of the particle -περ (Ch.3, §1.2.3; cf. Arzt-Grabner et al. 2006:329–30), and the contrast between 8:5 and 8:6 (cf. Ch.3, §1.1.4).

⁸¹ Fredriksen 2017:12, 68–69, 167–74. Cf. 1 Cor 10:19–21.

Gottheit, nicht ihre Existenz und Mächtigkeit bestritten.”⁸² Without space to resolve the issue of monotheism in early Judaism, I will leave both reconstructions of Paul’s worldview open, as well as the possibility of sarcastic and non-sarcastic readings in the case of polytheism. If Paul is being sarcastic, he is so in a passing fashion as we observed in 2:1, 4, dismissing offhand the existence of other gods (or their rank vis-à-vis his own god) as he carries forward his broader argument about the consumption of idol food.

5 On Approval and the Necessity of Division: 11:19

δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι, ἵνα [καὶ] οἱ δόκιμοι φανεροὶ γένωνται ἐν ὑμῖν.

For there surely need to be factions among you, so everyone can see which of you will be vindicated.

Several scholars have argued that 11:19 is ironic.⁸³ This reading offers itself as a solution to a verse that Fee designates “one of the true puzzles in the letter.”⁸⁴ Recourse to irony seeks to explain the apparent contradiction between Paul’s following discussion of the Lord’s supper with its emphasis on unity—not to mention Paul’s argument against factionalism throughout the letter—and the statement that αἰρέσεις are necessary (δεῖ, 11:19).⁸⁵

Sim also notes this contradiction and further develops the case for verbal irony here. She argues that Paul’s use of οἱ δόκιμοι is an echo of wealthier Corinthian believers whose behaviour at the Lord’s Supper was representative of their belief “that there had to be a separation between those who could show the approval of God in material terms and those who could not.”⁸⁶ So described, 11:19 would be an example of sarcasm, communicating implicitly both Paul’s distaste for divisions at the Eucharist and his mocking disapproval of those who consider themselves “approved.” Horsley’s translation reflects this reading: “For

⁸² Schrage 1991:2:239–40.

⁸³ Horsley 1998:159; Garland 2003:538–9; Fitzmyer 2008:433; Ciampa and Rosner 2010:544.

⁸⁴ 1987:538.

⁸⁵ See Campbell 1991:63, 69; Garland 2003:433.

⁸⁶ Sim 2016:61–63; cf. Campbell 1991:69; Ciampa and Rosner 2010:544.

of course there must be ‘discriminations’ among you so that it will become clear who among you are the ‘distinguished ones.’”⁸⁷

δόκιμος is not an obvious choice for a sarcastic echo of a general report that a group has claimed a higher social status and its attending privileges. Campbell only cites one example of the term’s use to describe those of high social status (Philo, *de Josepho* 201).⁸⁸ This contrasts with Paul’s own (positive) δόκιμος use (Rom 14:18; 16:10; 2 Cor 13:7). Elsewhere when Paul is sarcastic about a target’s high social standing or privilege, he engages in far more exaggeration and repetition (Rom 2:17–20; 1 Cor 4:8). These factors make it unlikely that Paul’s audience would detect sarcasm in his reference to “the approved” in 11:19.

But could Paul be directly echoing the Corinthian’s language in his use of οἱ δόκιμοι, indicating his sarcasm in the way that his discourse distances himself from their position? This is even less likely. An improbable set of conditions must be true for Paul’s sarcastic echo of something as understated as οἱ δόκιμοι to be recognizable to his audience. We must imagine a group of rich Corinthians revelling at the Lord’s supper ahead of poorer believers. When criticized, the wealthy defend themselves with (inebriated) theological reasoning about how their greater leisure and wealth is a sign of God’s approval. Then, Chloe’s people, or another party, present their complaint about this behaviour to Paul not in general terms but citing the vocabulary of these elite to such a degree of specificity that Paul feels the very mention of οἱ δόκιμοι will make it clear to his audience that he is referencing their words.⁸⁹

Not only is such a chain of events improbable, an echoic argument for irony here also leads to problematic mirror reading. I see no reason to doubt that, “when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk” (11:21 NRSV), although there could be a degree of hyperbole in the final clause. However, asserting that those of greater means were constructing theological arguments to justify flaunting their wealth and status over poorer believers overreaches the evidence.

Although a sarcastic reading of οἱ δόκιμοι in 11:19 is unlikely, there remain signals of insincerity that should not be ignored. Just before 11:19, having received a report of divisions

⁸⁷ 1998:159.

⁸⁸ 1991:68.

⁸⁹ I agree with Barrett that it is unlikely that the Corinthians would have told Paul about their divisions at the Lord’s Supper in their letter (1971:261).

when the church is assembled, Paul engages in a bit of wry understatement, saying, “and to some extent I believe it” (καὶ μέρος τι πιστεύω, 11:18 NRSV), when his following discussion makes it clear that he does so wholeheartedly.⁹⁰ While 11:19 has none of the hyperbole of the clearly sarcastic 4:8, the adverbial use of καί is somewhat emphatic and could hint at insincerity.⁹¹ Finally, the surface contradiction between Paul’s criticism of divisions at the Lord Supper and the statement that divisions are necessary remains.

With some evidence that Paul is saying something he does not mean but not enough for a sarcastic reading, I advocate a middle course in interpreting 11:19, arguing that Paul is doing something that overlaps with sarcasm but is ultimately different. Understanding Paul as being facetious in stating that factions are necessary in order to challenge the Corinthians to address a problematic situation best explains the features of the text discussed so far.

Because communicative acts that are simple to perform can often be complicated to describe, an analogy drawn from my childhood will be helpful for explaining what I mean by facetious:

My two brothers and I go up to my mom and start pestering her while she is trying to read. “Who’s your favourite son?” Asks my older brother. “It’s me, right?” “Yeah mom, who is it? Who is it!” I add (“Pick me!” cries the youngest). My mother, giving us a bemused look, says, “My favourite child is whoever’s not annoying me at the moment.”

My mother does not really have a favourite child, nor does she believe one ought to. She therefore does not mean what she says. She is engaging in a sort of pretence that presumes the premise that her children have presented her, namely, that she does or ought to have a favourite son. It is the assumption of this pretence that I refer to when I speak of “being facetious.” In this example, this pretence is not sarcastic because it lacks the inversion of affect necessary to sarcasm. “My favourite child is whoever’s not annoying me at the moment” does not imply a negative evaluation of an ostensibly positive message. Instead, it (jokingly) implies an imperative, “Stop pestering me.”

Reading 1 Cor 11:19 as facetious in this way resolves the contradiction between Paul’s apparent acceptance and rejection of factionalism, explains the evidence for pretence

⁹⁰ On 11:18 as “mock disbelief,” see Mitchell 1991:28:263–64; Witherington 1995:247; Horsley 1998:158.

⁹¹ Campbell notes the emphatic role of the (potentially) dual καί in 11:19, taking both as original (1991:69).

in the pericope, and avoids the problems of an ironic interpretation. With “For there surely need to be factions among you” (δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι), Paul engages in pretence, pretending to accept that the situation reported to him (11:18, 11:20–21) is the way things ought to be (δεῖ). Paul does not really consider such divisions necessary, nor does he support them, but he pretends to do so in order to turn the situation to his own rhetorical purposes.

This sort of pretence is not sarcastic because it is not clearly evaluative. To say that division is “necessary” is fairly neutral. It is not ostensibly positive; Paul does not say “I’m glad there are divisions,” which would be sarcastic. It could communicate a resigned acceptance of a bad situation,⁹² but the overall pretence is one that takes the given state of affairs as the way things need to be.⁹³ Instead of the implicit criticism of sarcasm, this facetious statement implies a challenge to the Corinthians’ behaviour—which we shall discuss in more detail presently. To be sure, Paul does make his negative evaluation of the Corinthians’ divisive behaviour at the Lord’s supper clear elsewhere (e.g. 11:17), but the facetious statement itself works on the assumption that division is necessary.

In a similar fashion to how my mother’s facetious comment implied an imperative, “stop being annoying,” Paul implicitly challenges the Corinthians to change their behaviour. Carrying on the premise of his facetious assertion that divisions are necessary, Paul states that the purpose of the divisions during the Lord’s supper at Corinth is to reveal whose actions merit divine approval (ἵνα [καὶ] οἱ δόκιμοι φανεροὶ γένωνται ἐν ὑμῖν). In the ensuing discussion, however, Paul makes it clear that those responsible for these divisions are not δόκιμος (11:20–22, 27), but instead must change their behaviour by testing themselves (δοκιμαζέτω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτὸν, 11:28; cf. 11:31–34) in order to avoid the consequences of disobedience (11:29–30). My mother’s facetious comment, “My favourite child is whoever’s not annoying me at the moment” drew attention to the fact that her children were behaving in a manner that disqualified them from receiving the title “favourite son,” and thereby implied that her boys should stop annoying her. Likewise, Paul draws attention to the fact that the

⁹² Compare Luke 17:1: ἀνένδεκτόν ἐστιν τοῦ τὰ σκάνδαλα μὴ ἐλθεῖν.

⁹³ δεῖ can be used sarcastically when insincerely expressing that an absurd or unhelpful course of action should be taken. We saw this in *DDeor.* 8.4 when Zeus sarcastically argues that Hephaestus would be a better cupbearer than Ganymede (τὸν Ἥφαιστον ἔδει... οἶνοχοεῖν ἡμῖν χωλεύοντα, see Ch.3, §1.1.6). We also see the potential for sarcasm when δεῖ is used in rhetorical questions expressing insincere deliberation (Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.11.23–24; 3.1.44, see Ch.5, n.38). Neither of these features apply to 1 Cor 11:19.

Corinthians' behaviour at the Lord's supper is inappropriate, disqualifying them from meriting the appellation *οἱ δόκιμοι*. The facetious statement "For there surely need to be factions among you, so everyone can see which of you will be vindicated"⁹⁴ is meant to highlight this disjunction between the Corinthians' current behaviour and appropriate observance of the Lord's supper, and thereby challenge them to change their behaviour and become *δόκιμος*.⁹⁵ By pretending to accept the current situation as a necessity, Paul pushes his congregation to eliminate the *αἰρέσεις* among them altogether.

6 Conclusions

Paul's use of sarcasm in First Corinthians is varied in both form and function. In 2:1, 4, and 1:27–28, Paul's sarcasm amounts to a passing dismissal of Hellenistic rhetoric and "wisdom," comparable to the dismissive use of sarcasm in Gal 2:2, 6, 9. In 1 Cor 2:1, 4, the critique implied through sarcasm is elliptical to the main thrust of the argument, used in an offhand manner as more of an aside expressing a negative evaluation of sophistry as Paul seeks more broadly to highlight to activity of Christ in his ministry. This passing use of sarcasm may also be present in 8:5–6, although other readings are possible.

I have argued that two verses often considered ironic in scholarship, 4:10 and 11:19, are neither verbal irony nor sarcasm. The whole of 4:9–13 is best described by Haiman's "guiltive modality." Paul delivers a hyperbolic depiction of apostolic sufferings and the Corinthians' relative privilege with full sincerity, leaving the Corinthians to work out for themselves that they ought to feel ashamed. I have also argued that 11:19 is better described as "facetious" than sarcastic. It is a form of pretence that does not imply a negative evaluation, but instead implicitly challenges the Corinthians to change their behaviour at the Lord's supper in order to become *δόκιμος*. In both cases, Paul's rhetoric shows features that overlap with sarcasm, but this overlap is incomplete. Because these examples do not fully qualify as sarcasm or verbal irony, alternative explanations have been necessary to create a fuller description of Paul's rhetoric.

⁹⁴ With "vindicated" I mean to convey the sense of having successfully tested oneself as Paul describes in 11:28–32.

⁹⁵ Paul's rhetoric here is similar to 2 Cor 2:9: "I wrote this so I could determine if your behaviour is acceptable, whether you are obedient in everything" (*εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ἔγραψα, ἵνα γινῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν, εἰ εἰς πάντα ὑπήκοοί ἐστε*).

But Paul is sarcastic elsewhere, and in a more pointed fashion than in 2:1, 4. He is sarcastic at the Corinthians' expense in 4:8, implying that they are putting on airs, behaving at a level of status above their station. Here this critique is tempered with humour, but in 8:1, 9–11 we see a more tendentious use of sarcasm on Paul's part. Within Paul's discussion of idol-food, his use of sarcasm criticizes the meat-party's arrogance and aims to show how acting without due consideration for Christians of weaker conscience is foolish and destructive. There is also the possibility of sarcasm in 6:12; 10:23 depending on how closely Paul has reproduced the Corinthians' language in the "slogan" Πάντα (μοι) ἔξεστιν. Finally, as discussed in the previous chapter on Romans (§2.2), 1 Cor 6:15 may contain a sarcastic rhetorical question.

Taking these more targeted uses of sarcasm together reveals two significant patterns. First, most of Paul's sarcasm in First Corinthians, and all of his most tendentious sarcasm, is at the expense of his congregation. There is the strongest overlap here with Galatians where Paul is also sarcastic with his church, and a stark contrast with Romans where Paul is only sarcastic with hypothetical interlocutors. Proximity likely plays a role here. Paul is only sarcastic with churches that he knows personally and with whom he already has a rapport. There is also a relationship between proximity and the presumption of authority. Paul's use of sarcasm with his congregation in First Corinthians reflects what we have seen across the Septuagint, Lucian, and other ancient Greek texts as the normal use of sarcasm by superiors as a means of reinforcing social hierarchy by challenging their subordinates' perceived claim to some positive quality—such as status (4:8) or knowledge (8:1, 9–11). For Paul to be sarcastic with his congregation as he is throughout First Corinthians shows Paul secure enough in his status as an apostle and his relationship with the community to use sarcasm like an authority figure.

The second pattern lies in the frequency with which Paul uses sarcasm as a means of criticizing perceived arrogance, both in First Corinthians (4:8; 6:12/10:23?; 8:1, 9–11) and elsewhere (Rom 2:17–20; 11:19–20). We shall address the implications of this pattern more fully in this study's final conclusion in order to include Second Corinthians in the discussion as well. Considering both letters side-by-side will also enable analysis of how Paul's use of sarcasm changes as his relationship with the Corinthians develops over time.

Chapter 7

Sarcasm (and *Asteismos*) in Second Corinthians

The Corinthian correspondence has already provided many examples of sarcastic speech. In this regard, Second Corinthians will not disappoint; 2 Cor 10–13 contains considerable sarcasm spread over a relatively short stretch of text. These chapters will make up the focus of the present analysis. This does not presume any particular partition theory, and this chapter's major arguments are meant to be valid regardless of how one reconstructs the composition history of Second Corinthians. I will not be addressing 2 Cor 1–9 simply because I do not consider it to contain any significant instances of sarcasm.

Within the focus on 2 Cor 10–13 itself, the scope of this chapter may also be somewhat surprising. Previous scholarship on irony in 2 Cor 10–13 has dedicated significant discussion to the irony of the fool's speech in 2 Cor 11:21b–12:10.¹ While there is not enough space here to take a position on the extent to which the fool's speech contains other forms of irony, I do not find sarcasm or other forms of verbal irony therein. This finding is itself significant, and will be discussed in §3.2, but the content of the fool's speech itself will not be a major focus of this chapter.

In previous chapters I have addressed passages considered ironic or sarcastic in scholarship but which do not qualify as sarcasm. This will not be possible with 2 Cor 10–13, as there is too much verbal irony in the text to dedicate space to arguing why certain verses are not sarcastic. For a list of such verses, I refer the reader to Appendix B.

While the above factors narrow the scope of this chapter, our analysis will also broaden. Alongside sarcasm, we will also treat Paul's use of *asteismos*. As discussed previously, *asteismos* is essentially sarcasm's mirror image: a self-deprecating form of irony that implies a positive evaluation of the speaker through ostensibly negative language and that is often used apologetically (Ch.1, §1.2; Ch.3, §2.6). This form of verbal irony has not occurred significantly elsewhere in Paul's letters, but is highly prevalent in 2 Cor 10–13 and essential for understanding Paul's use of sarcasm in these chapters.

Second Corinthians 10–13 has also received the lion's share of scholarly attention when it comes to irony in Paul. We will therefore use previous scholarship as a framing device for our discussion. I will begin by laying out the major conclusions of previous studies

¹ Forbes 1986:18–22; Loubser 1992:514–16; Holland 2000:141–49; Lichtenberger 2017:104–5.

(§1). This will be a short, preliminary sketch, saving more detailed analysis of past scholarship until after our exegesis of sarcasm and *asteismos* (§3.3). This exegesis section will also move quickly for two reasons. First, many examples of verbal irony in 2 Cor 10–13 are broadly accepted as ironic in scholarship, making identification often uncontentious. Second, we will be able to proceed with more detailed analysis of sarcasm and *asteismos* in Second Corinthians once we have collected all of the relevant examples. This analysis will occupy §3, which addresses the role of ironic passages in reconstructing the situation at Corinth and the relationship between Paul’s use of sarcasm and the fool’s speech. Following this, we return to previous scholarship on irony in 2 Cor 10–13 and assess the findings of past studies in light of our data. Here our analysis of sarcasm and *asteismos* will at times reinforce, nuance, or provide pushback on previous scholarship. After this discussion, we will finally draw our own conclusions about the rhetorical functions of sarcasm and *asteismos* in 2 Cor 10–13.

1 Previous Scholarship on Irony in 2 Cor 10–13

Before turning to the text itself, I will sketch out briefly the conclusions of previous scholarship on irony in 2 Cor 10–13. We will assess these findings in more detail in §3.3 after completing our exegesis of sarcasm and *asteismos* in 2 Cor 10–13.

Reumann describes Paul’s motivation in using irony in Second Corinthians as follows: “Paul desired to edify, using irony as a teaching device.”² More recent studies on irony in 2 Cor 10–13 have considered these two motivations, didacticism and edification, as underlying Paul’s use of irony. Holland argues that Paul’s ironic discourse in the fool’s speech “invites the reader to look past the surface meaning of the text in order to find its deeper, true meaning,”³ a task that encourages the audience to apply their “spiritual insight.”⁴ Holland portrays Paul’s use of irony as inciting a didactic process that seeks to bring the Corinthians to a deeper understanding. This process also has a rhetorical end in mind: “Paul’s use of irony in the Corinthian correspondence has no other intention than to persuade his

² 1955:144.

³ 2000:138.

⁴ 1993:251, 258, 264. Schellenberg spends his chapter on irony in the fool’s speech, where he interacts significantly with Holland, arguing that the discourse is not ironic (2013:169–81). Here the irony in question would be a sort of literary or situational irony, and therefore does not factor into our discussion. Schellenberg does allow that Paul “make[s] isolated ironic statements” in 2 Cor 10–13 (2013:170).

readers to be reconciled to him by accepting his divinely sanctioned perspective on wisdom and foolishness, strength and weakness.”⁵ Persuasion is also central to Spencer’s account of irony in 2 Cor 10–12. Here it is irony’s indirectness that lends itself to the persuasion of an unsympathetic audience, functioning to “expertly reinforce [Paul’s] central message.”⁶

Continuing the emphasis on persuasion, but taking a different approach to Paul’s tone, Forbes considers “indignation” (βαρύτης), treated in Hermogenes’s *On Types of Style*, as an important concept for elucidating Paul’s irony in 2 Cor 10–12. Forbes defines βαρύτης as “the quality of speech which is appropriate to a strongly reproachful tone” and considers this tone as being most often conveyed through irony.⁷ Forbes identifies the effect of βαρύτης throughout his analysis of Paul’s irony in 2 Cor 10–12.⁸

We should recognize that these scholars do not all share the same concept of irony, and that their reconstructions of Paul’s aims in being ironic will be based on different datasets consisting of varying proportions of verbal, situational, and other ironies. My conclusions after assessing two forms of verbal irony will not therefore intend to overturn what others have said about irony in general, although some degree of pushback will be possible. Instead, the aim in §3.3 will be to assess the extent to which observations about irony in general hold true when we narrow our scope to sarcasm and *asteismos*.

2 Verbal Irony in 2 Cor 10–13

We now embark on the identification and exegesis of sarcasm and *asteismos* in specific passages throughout 2 Cor 10–13. These ironic utterances will first be considered in isolation and in relationship to their immediate contexts. We will be able to move quickly through the identification-phase, as several cases are widely accepted as ironic in scholarship. Laying out all of the data at once will enable more detailed analysis in the following sections, where we will address places where ironic passages influence our reconstructions of the situation at Corinth (§3.1) and the relationship between Paul’s use of verbal irony and the fool’s speech (§3.2), before putting our findings into conversation with previous studies (§3.3).

⁵ Holland 2000:160.

⁶ 1981:349–51, 360; cf. Loubser 1992:517–18.

⁷ 1986:12–13.

⁸ Forbes recognises βαρύτης in 10:12; 11:1, 5, 11, 21; 12:13 (1986:16–18, 22).

2.1 Self-Deprecating Irony: 10:1

Paul begins by emphatically charging his congregation:⁹ “I myself, Paul (who, face-to-face, behaves timidly with you, but, when away, acts boldly toward you) urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς διὰ τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς, 10:1). The mildness of the exhortation “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” contrasts with what follows, as Paul concedes to being humble in person but bold in print (ὃς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀπὼν δὲ θαρρῶ εἰς ὑμᾶς, 10:1). This tension is resolved a few verses later, where we discover that 10:1b refers to a criticism of Paul by certain persons at Corinth (ὅτι αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μὲν, φησὶν, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενὴς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος, 10:10). The way that Paul plays with this accusation in 10:1–2 displays significant wit. 10:1a flouts the charge of being bold in writing with its mild exhortation, while 10:1b sees Paul apparently accepting the criticism wholesale. Then Paul turns the critique around in 10:2, urging his congregation not to force him to be bold when present in dealing with his critics.

Paul’s use of apparent contradiction and the way he echoes the position of others makes 10:1 suggestive of verbal irony, *asteismos* specifically. There is no feigned praise or ostensible positive evaluation as one would expect in sarcasm. Instead, Paul is self-deprecating. In referring to himself as one “who, face-to-face, behaves timidly with you, but, when away, acts boldly toward you” (10:1), Paul pretends to accept the criticism cited in 10:10 in order to imply its invalidity. “The ironical tone is... manifested in Paul’s pretence of appropriating his opponents’ representation of him.”¹⁰ This self-irony is the *asteismos* we observed in the rhetorical handbooks and Lucian (Ch.1, §1.2; Ch.3, §2.6). This form of irony becomes closely intertwined with Paul’s use of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13. The extent to which Paul will go on to combine sarcasm with self-deprecation in these chapters is unique among Paul’s letters and important for understanding the way Paul negotiates the difficult developments in his relationship with the Corinthian church.

⁹ Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος. Note the emphatic redundancy. Cf. Loubser 1992:513; see also Sundermann 1996:50.

¹⁰ Thrall 1994:2:598; cf. Martin 2014:483; Sundermann 1996:51.

2.2 Paul in Contrast to His Opponents: 11:4–8

2.2.1 Tolerating Another Jesus: 11:4

εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν... καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε.

For if someone comes around preaching another Jesus that we didn't preach... you tolerate it well!

With Gal 1:6, I argued that Paul may have used the normally positive term “gospel” ironically to imply that his opponents’ message is not the true gospel, which he states explicitly in 1:7a (ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο). In a similar fashion, Paul makes reference to “another Jesus,” a “different spirit,” and a “different gospel” in 2 Cor 10:4 before clarifying that these do not amount to the real Jesus, Spirit, or gospel (ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν... ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε... ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε).¹¹ ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν, πνεῦμα ἕτερον, and εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον may therefore convey a touch of dismissive sarcasm implying a critique of Paul’s rivals that reinforces the charge he states in the following clause—namely, that theirs is a false Jesus/Spirit/gospel. However, it is also possible that Paul intends the modifiers other/different (ἄλλος/ἕτερος) to themselves carry negative evaluation, rendering the statement straightforwardly critical rather than sarcastic.

Regardless of whether this negative assessment of Paul’s opponents is sarcastic, the main focus of his critique in 11:4 is the Corinthian church, which he delivers with clear sarcasm. With the final clause of 11:4, Paul tersely implies that the Corinthians would gladly tolerate even the grossest false teaching (καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε). Paul elsewhere, including in 11:1, uses ἀνέχομαι positively as expressing generous forbearance (cf. 1 Cor 4:12; Rom 3:26 [ἀνοχή]; also δέχομαι in 2 Cor 11:16).¹² With reference to the toleration of a false Jesus, Spirit, and gospel, ἀνέχεσθε is clearly not meant to express praise in 2 Cor 11:4, nor does Paul really mean that the Corinthians do “well” (καλῶς).¹³ This sarcastic compliment is reminiscent of Mark 7:9 and analogous to Lucian’s sarcastic use of εὖ γε (see Ch.3, §2.1).¹⁴ It

¹¹ Reumann sees irony in both verses (1955:142).

¹² Cf. Eph 4:2; Col 3:13; 2 Thess 1:4 in the disputed letters. See also LSJ, s.v. “ἀνέχω,” C. II.; “ἀνοχή,” II.

¹³ Cf. καλῶς in Rom 11:20 (Ch.5, §3.2).

¹⁴ For scholars who see irony or sarcasm in 11:4, see Zmijewski 1978:96; Furnish 1984:500; Loubser 1992:514; Sundermann 1996:86–87.

is all the more jarring coming in the final clause of the verse, and on the heels of the more positive language used to describe the Corinthians in 11:1–3 (παρθένον ἀγνήν, 11:2; ἀπλότητος, ἀγνότητος, 11:3).

2.2.2 Very-Super Apostles and the Untrained Apostle: 11:5–6

Λογίζομαι γὰρ μηδὲν ὑστερηκέμαι τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων. εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ’ οὐ τῇ γνώσει...

For I don’t think I lack anything in comparison to those Very-Super Apostles. But if I am unskilled at rhetoric, I am not so when it comes to knowledge...

Across 11:5–6, Paul shifts from sarcasm to self-deprecation. He does not consider himself inferior to τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων (11:5), whom he will go on to call ψευδαπόστολοι and ἐργάται δόλιοι (11:13). In light of these literal negative evaluations and the fact that Paul has implied that these “apostles” preach a false gospel (11:4), it is not hard to catch the sarcasm in this hyperbolic epithet, with its redundant compound adjective ὑπερλίαν. Compared to the lighter, dismissive sarcasm in Paul’s reference to the “pillar apostles” (Gal 2:9; Ch.4, §2), Paul is here much more sharply critical with his opponents.

Paul’s is the earliest extant use of ὑπερλίαν, and those who employ it over the next millennium are almost all Christian authors. Paul may therefore have invented the word,¹⁵ although this is near impossible to prove. Either way, in describing his opponents as “Very-Super Apostles” (ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι), Paul is employing an emphatic expression as a means of communicating insincerity. This compound adjective is an example of both “chunking” (Ch.3, §1.2.1) and the use of uncommon vocabulary or pretentious sounding language as a cue of sarcasm (Ch.3, §2.2).

11:6 shifts from sarcasm to self-deprecation, as Paul admits to being untrained in rhetoric (εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ).¹⁶ Forbes considers 11:6 “elegant ἀστεϊσμός,” analogous to Dio Chrysostom’s strategic downplaying of his own rhetorical abilities (cf. Dio

¹⁵ So Thrall 1994:2:671; cf. Plummer 1915:298–99; Gräßer 1969:2:129; contra Hughes 1961:379n.40. For further discussion of ὑπερλίαν, see Harris 2005:746; Héring 1967:77n.1. On ὑπέρ/ὑπέρ-prefixes in 2 Cor 10–13, see Plummer 1915:299; Barnett 1984:5.

¹⁶ For τῷ λόγῳ as referring to rhetorical skill, see Barrett 1973:279; Furnish 1984:505; Martin 2014:528; Thrall 1994:2:676–78; cf. 1 Cor 2:1.

Chrysostom, *Orat.* 12.15, which Forbes cites).¹⁷ For a professional like Dio Chrysostom to feign a lack of oratorical skill would certainly be *asteismos*, but Paul has already acknowledged criticism of his public speaking (10:10). I therefore agree with Thrall, who argues that Paul was indeed considered “oratorically incompetent” to some extent at Corinth, and therefore his congregation would not have taken the concession of 11:6 ironically.¹⁸ Here Paul is self-deprecating, but because he does not imply a positive evaluation of his rhetorical skill, there is no *asteismos*. Paul is concerned that he not be thought deficient according to measures he considers important (τῇ γνώσει), but rhetoric does not fall into this category (cf. Ch.6, §1.1–1.2).

2.2.3 Stealing from Churches: 11:7–8

Paul’s concessions become increasingly absurd throughout 11:7–8, reaching *asteismos* in 11:8. With respect to his preaching the gospel free of charge, Paul asks, “What sin did I commit in humbling myself so you could be exalted?” (Ἡ ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησα ἐμᾶντὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, 11:7). Several commentators consider this question ironic.¹⁹ Paul certainly does create absurdity in suggesting that such selfless actions and motives—“humbling myself to exalt you, in preaching the gospel to you for free”—could be sinful. While the situation that such virtue could be considered vice can be perceived as ironic, we do not reach verbal irony here. The rhetorical question expects a negative answer (“I didn’t sin, did I?”),²⁰ and therefore the perlocutionary force of the whole is the assertion, “Of course I did not sin!”

Despite the fact that Paul has ruled out the possibility of wrongdoing on his part, the (insincere) suggestion of sinfulness that he raises in 11:7 will create the pretence through which the *asteismos* of the following verse operates. That is, Paul pretends he has sinned in 11:8, even though he just made it clear he did not. If Paul has wronged anyone, he has wronged other congregations: “I stole from *other* churches when I drew my wages, so I could serve you” (ἄλλας ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα λαβὼν ὀψώνιον πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν, 11:8).

¹⁷ Forbes 1986:17; cf. Lim 1987:140. For others who read irony here, see Allo 1937:279; Barrett 1973:279; Sundermann 1996:94.

¹⁸ Thrall 1994:2:677–78; cf. Bruce 1971:237; Harris 2005:748–729.

¹⁹ Furnish 1984:506; Sundermann 1996:102; Matera 2003:249; Gräßer 2005:2:134; Harris 2005:754; Martin 2014:529.

²⁰ Thrall 1994:2:682n.187.

Resultantly, 11:8 appears to answer “yes” to the rhetorical question of the previous verse: Paul did sin. He has plundered his converts for the Corinthians’ sake!²¹ Having already brought the idea of sinfulness into the discussion, Paul may adopt the persona of the egregious sinner he denies being in the previous verse. Thus the statement is *asteismos*, insofar as Paul ironically puts himself down, but at the same time avoids suggesting that Paul’s actions have ever been done for anything other than the Corinthians’ benefit. Paul may be a thief, but only to save their expense (πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν, 11:8). By pretending to accept the suggestion that he has done wrong, Paul creates an absurd picture of himself robbing his churches that is meant to highlight that he has really committed no sin whatsoever.

2.3 Putting up with Abuse: 11:19–21

ἡδέως γὰρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες· ἀνέχεσθε γὰρ εἴ τις ὑμᾶς καταδουλοῖ, εἴ τις κατεσθίει, εἴ τις λαμβάνει, εἴ τις ἐπαίρεται, εἴ τις εἰς πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει. κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω, ὡς ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἡσθενήκαμεν.

For you gladly tolerate fools, clever as you are. For you tolerate it if someone enslaves you, if someone devours you, if someone exploits you, if someone exalts themselves over you, if someone strikes you in the face. It’s shameful, really; seems that we were too weak to treat you that way.

After a not insignificant digression, 2 Cor 11:16–21 sees Paul return to discussion of his impending foolish boasts. As was the case earlier in the chapter, this topic again draws out Paul’s sense of irony.

“For you gladly tolerate fools, clever as you are” is obviously sarcastic (11:19).²² ἡδέως ἀνέχεσθε is close to καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε in 11:4, although here the sarcastic adverbial

²¹ On the military resonance of *συλλάω*, see Furnish 1984:492; Bultmann 1985:205; cf. Gräßer 2005:2:136. See also LSJ, s.v. “*συλλάω*.”

²² Scholars who see irony/sarcasm here include Allo 1937:291; Hughes 1961:398–401; Zmijewski 1978:205–6; Furnish 1984:511; Bultmann 1985:211; Loubser 1992:514; Thrall 1994:2:715; Matera 2003:257; Gräßer 2005:2:154–55; Harris 2005:783; Sim 2016:58–59. Holland’s argument that the Corinthians’ endurance of the insults of fools displays the perseverance of the sage does not hold (2000:142–43). Paul does not depict the Corinthians as wise sufferers, but as party to their own exploitation through foolish inaction.

phrase is in an emphatic first rather than last position,²³ and Paul's play on ἄφρων/φρόνιμος neatly signals incongruity.²⁴

If any of the Corinthians had failed to catch the sarcasm of 11:19 on oral reading, 11:20 would have made Paul's meaning abundantly clear.²⁵ Here hyperbole and repetition drive home the point that enslavement (καταδουλοῖ), exploitation (κατεσθίει, λαμβάνει), pretention (ἐπαίρεται) and abuse (εἰς πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει) have been anything but "wisely" endured (ἀνέχεσθε).²⁶

One might expect that because Paul has just been sarcastic at their expense, that κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω in 11:21 would refer to the dishonour of the Corinthians.²⁷ But Paul subverts this expectation in the next clause, which provides the reason for the "shame" of the previous.²⁸ Paul and the other apostles were too "weak" to abuse the Corinthians after the fashion of 11:20 (ἡμεῖς ἡσθενήκαμεν, 11:21). This "weakness" is the cause for ἀτιμία in the foregoing clause; Paul is speaking about his own dishonour.²⁹ This creates an absurd situation in which not mistreating another party is described as a sign of weakness worth being ashamed about. This absurdity communicates the insincerity underlying Paul's *asteismos*. The negative language Paul uses about himself ironically (ἀτιμίαν, ἡσθενήκαμεν) implies that his honourable treatment of the Corinthians should be counted to his credit, especially compared to the exploitation he portrays his opponents as engaging in (11:20). The Corinthians need not read hard between the lines to catch the implication that their failure to support the innocent Paul over against his abusive opponents is their own weakness and their own ἀτιμία.

²³ See Martin 2014:550.

²⁴ See Furnish 1984:497; see also Harris 2005:783.

²⁵ See Thrall 1994:2:716.

²⁶ We may take ἀνέχομαι as sarcastic in 11:20, after the fashion of 11:4, 19, but the hyperbolic characterisation of Paul's opponents in this verse is unironically negative.

²⁷ So Lietzmann 1949:149.

²⁸ On the options for reading ὡς ὅτι in 11:21 see Harris 2005:787–88. Harris, I think rightly, takes ὅτι as explicative, indicating the content of Paul's ironic confession: "I admit... that..." (2005:788–89; cf. TCNT; Gräßer 2005:2:156).

²⁹ Paul's use of ἡμεῖς "indicates that the apostle has himself in view" (Thrall 1994:2:718; cf. Zmijewski 1978:213). For scholars who see 11:21's ἀτιμία as Paul's, see Allo 1937:290; Furnish 1984:497; Bultmann 1985:212; Klauck 1986:87; Harris 2005:787; Martin 2014:553. On irony here, see Zmijewski 1978:213; Heckel 1993:21; Sundermann 1996:129.

Over these three verses (11:19–21) Paul shifts from sarcasm (11:19) to unironic polemic (11:20) to *asteismos* (11:21). We will discuss how 11:21 can also be considered an example of sarcasm in §2.4.2.

2.4 Paul Reflects on His Foolish Boasting: 12:11–13

2.4.1 Paul as Nothing, but Not in Comparison to the Very-Super Apostles: 12:11

Γέγονα ἄφρων, ὑμεῖς με ἡναγκάσατε. ἐγὼ γὰρ ὥφειλον ὑφ' ὑμῶν συνίστασθαι· οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων εἰ καὶ οὐδὲν εἰμι.

I've become a fool, but you made me do it! For I deserved your commendation, since I lack nothing compared to those Very-Super Apostles, even if I am nothing.

Just as Paul engaged in verbal irony before embarking on his foolish boasts (11:21), he uses sarcasm again just following the fool's speech (12:11), which he also pairs with *asteismos* (12:13).

In 12:11, Paul compares himself to the ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων for a second time (cf. 11:5), and here again the epithet is sarcastic. The more difficult exegetical question this verse raises is whether Paul juxtaposes this sarcasm with *asteismos* when he apparently concedes, “I am nothing.” Spencer considers this remark an example of ironic understatement,³⁰ while Schellenberg takes Paul's claim to be “nothing” sincerely.³¹ Drawing on Betz, who sees a relationship between this verse and Socratic rhetoric,³² Thrall suggests that this passage has both serious and ironic elements: “It is wholly serious, in that, apart from the power of Christ, [Paul] knows himself to be really ‘nothing’. But at the same time, in relation to his opponents, he speaks ironically and with polemical intent. His concession is ‘mock-modest’.”³³

I am sceptical that here Paul is engaging in some sort of Socratic irony. Whether Paul is aware of Socrates's habit of claiming to know nothing and the extent to which Paul's use of irony is similar to Socrates's are questions that need to be answered at greater length than

³⁰ 1981:357.

³¹ 2013:173–74.

³² See Betz 1972:121–23.

³³ 1994:2:836–37; cf. Harris 2005:873.

we have space for here. For now, it must suffice to note that what Paul is doing in 12:11 is far from the sort of irony associated with Socrates (Ch.1, §1.1). Socrates’s didactic approach begins from a posture of feigned ignorance in which he places himself on a level lower than his interlocutors, asks them to instruct him, and then slowly and calmly dismantles their arguments with his questions.³⁴ This is quite the opposite of 2 Cor 12:11, where Paul’s whole point—which he makes with none of Socrates’s calm detachment—is that he is not at all inferior to his rivals (οὐδὲν γὰρ ὑστέρησα τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων).

Laying aside Socrates-like irony as an interpretive option, taking Paul’s claim to be “nothing” either sincerely or as *asteismos* remain as possible readings. Rhetorically speaking, here these two possibilities are not so different. Recall that it is precisely Paul’s nothingness that makes him something. His weaknesses are strengths in Christ (12:7–10, esp. 12:10). Therefore, a straightforward reading of 12:11 implies that Paul’s recognition of his nothingness sets him a cut above his self-aggrandizing opponents. An ironic reading of εἰ καὶ οὐδὲν εἰμι is, in terms of pragmatics, almost the same. Paraphrasing Paul’s statement (with subtext in parentheses) will be helpful to illustrate:

Sincere: “For I lack nothing at all in comparison to those Very-Super Apostles (false-apostles), even if I am nothing (because I am thereby strong in Christ).”

Asteismos: “For I lack nothing at all in comparison to those Very-Super Apostles (false-apostles), even if I am, apparently, “nothing” (but I am not nothing).”

Both readings of 12:11 find Paul indirectly asserting his superiority over his opponents through a combination of comparison, sarcasm, and self-deprecation. Whether through the paradox of weakness-as-strength or through irony, εἰ καὶ οὐδὲν εἰμι ultimately works to Paul’s commendation. Deciding conclusively between these two interpretations requires a level of insight into authorial intent that I am uncomfortable claiming. I shall therefore remain agnostic, though content that the similarity between the two readings leaves little at stake.

2.4.2 Sorry, Not Sorry: 12:13

In 12:13b Paul apologises to the Corinthians, “Do forgive me this injustice!” (χαρίσασθέ μοι τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην). Here the absurdity of what Paul apologises for signals

³⁴ E.g. Plato *Gorg.* 486D–491E. Cf. Warren 2013:13–14.

that he is not in earnest. He then asks rhetorically: “In what way were you made worse off than the other churches—except that *I* was never a drain on your resources?” (τί γάρ ἐστιν ὃ ἡσώθητε ὑπὲρ τὰς λοιπὰς ἐκκλησίας, εἰ μὴ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ οὐ κατενάρκησα ὑμῶν; 12:13). This is the *ἀδικία* Paul begs forgiveness for: not being a financial drain on his church.³⁵ The absurdity of apologising for something that benefits the other party makes it clear that Paul does not mean what he says, and Paul’s apology contains elements of both *asteismos* and sarcasm.

The way Paul insincerely pretends to have wronged the Corinthians qualifies his apology as *asteismos*. Paul’s rhetorical question in 12:13a implies that he has made the Corinthians no worse off in any way (τί γάρ... ἡσώθητε), but with one exception (εἰ μὴ). Paul did not burden them (αὐτὸς ἐγὼ οὐ κατενάρκησα ὑμῶν). Paul inflates the gravity of this “wrong” in 12:13b, using the (exaggerated) language of wickedness (*ἀδικία*) to describe his conduct and apologizing with the (overdone) humility of a repentant sinner. This pretence is transparent and the implication of Paul’s self-deprecating *asteismos*, that Paul has done no wrong, comes through clearly.

A request for forgiveness also normally communicates positive affect, demonstrating a concern for the wronged party’s feelings and a desire to make amends. This positive sentiment can be inverted sarcastically to communicate that the speaker has done nothing wrong and that the notion that they ought to apologize is ridiculous. This is precisely what we see here. The exaggerated tone of the apology, asking for gracious forgiveness (χαρίσασθέ μοι) of Paul’s *ἀδικία*, adds an element of sarcastic hyperformality (Ch.3, §2.2).³⁶

Having identified sarcasm in the feigned apology of 12:13 and *asteismos* in its self-deprecation, we may recognize this same dual irony in 11:21, which we have hitherto discussed only as a case of *asteismos*. When Paul says he is ashamed for having been too

³⁵ The standard reading is that both here and in 11:7–8, Paul is responding to criticism for refusing an offer of financial support from the Corinthian church (for a survey of scholarship on Paul’s motives for rejecting financial support, see Briones 2013:2–19). Schellenberg has recently challenged this perspective, arguing that there is no firm evidence that such an offer existed, and that instead Paul is “appealing to his prior non-pecuniary work among [the Corinthians] as evidence of his sincerity and devotion”—an appeal he makes for apologetic reasons (Schellenberg 2018:312–30, quotation from 329). Neither reconstruction significantly impacts or is impacted by our analysis of verbal irony in 11:8 and 12:13.

³⁶ The sharp, alliterative dental sounds in τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην convey something of the biting tone underlying Paul’s sarcasm here.

weak to mistreat the Corinthians, his utterance is an indirect apology. Not all apologies explicitly contain requests for forgiveness or expressions of remorse. For example, many indirect apologies begin with statements such as, “I feel terrible, I really shouldn’t have done *x*.” κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω, ὡς ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἡσθενήκαμεν in 11:21 follows this pattern—communicating “I’m ashamed that...”—except its indirect apology is insincere and therefore sarcastic. In this way both 11:21 and 12:13 contain both sarcasm and *asteismos*, the former implying that Paul is not sorry and that he should not have to apologize, and the latter that he has done nothing wrong.

2.5 Paul the πανοῦργος: 12:16

Although all of Paul’s sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13 is delivered alongside *asteismos*, this self-deprecating form of irony is ultimately more prevalent. After stressing his paternal love and generosity to his church (12:14–15), Paul writes, “But be that as it may, I have refused to burden you; but since I’m so shiftless I must have cheated you somehow” (Ἐστω δέ, ἐγὼ οὐ κατεβάρησα ὑμᾶς· ἀλλ’ ὑπάρχων πανοῦργος δόλῳ ὑμᾶς ἔλαβον, 12:16). Surrounded as it is by a sincere defence of his actions (12:16a, 17–18), it is difficult to read Paul’s claim to be a πανοῦργος as anything other than *asteismos*, communicating that any suggestion that Paul has behaved dishonestly is ridiculous in light of his blameless conduct.³⁷

3 Analysis

Second Corinthians 10–13 has furnished us with many examples of sarcasm and *asteismos*. These data will enable discussion from multiple angles. We will begin by addressing matters that arise directly from the foregoing exegesis. The first issue is historical. Several of the passages where we have identified verbal irony have been used in historical

³⁷ On irony here see also Martin 2014:641; cf. Sundermann 1996:200–201. Many consider the statement a response to allegations of financial dishonesty with respect to the Jerusalem collection (Harris 2005:889; Martin 2014:641; Plummer 1915:363–4; Klauck 1986:98; Sim 2016:60; Thrall 1994:2:850). This is not a safe assumption on the basis of an ironic statement alone, and we cannot know if the term πανοῦργος was specifically being used in reference to Paul (see §3.1). 12:17–18 can also be read as supporting the presence of allegations of dishonesty (so Barrett 1973:324), but to my mind do neither strictly necessitate nor rule out such a reading.

reconstructions of the situation at Corinth. We will therefore begin by addressing the extent to which the interpreter may safely glean historical information from such ironic statements.

Looking at our examples of sarcasm and *asteismos* in 2 Cor 10–13 *in toto* also reveals an interesting pattern in terms of where verbal irony arises within the overall discourse. Exploring the implications of what subjects bring out Paul’s sarcasm and *asteismos* in these chapters will be the second matter arising from the foregoing exegesis to be addressed. Then, finally, we will consider our data in light of previous scholarship on irony in 2 Cor 10–13.

3.1 Mirror Reading Ironic Statements

Because much verbal irony echoes or refers back to the words or positions of others, Paul’s sarcastic statements have become focal points for scholarship seeking to reconstruct the identity and actions of his opponents in Second Corinthians. Käsemann considers 2 Cor 11:4 a “Schlüsselpunkt für das Verständnis der in Korinth auftretenden Gegner und damit zugleich für die Interpretation von c. 10–13.”³⁸ 11:4 has played a significant role in reconstructions of the theological disagreement between Paul and his opponents. For some, “Another Jesus” becomes a Christological discrepancy,³⁹ πνεῦμα ἕτερον indicates conflicting ideas about the role of the Spirit,⁴⁰ and “different gospel” indicates a Judaizing message.⁴¹

The abuses that Paul portrays his opponents as inflicting on the “tolerant” Corinthians in 11:20—ranging from assertions of superiority (εἴ τις ἐπαίρεται) to enslavement (καταδουλοῖ)—have also featured in historical reconstructions. While some scholars recommend caution in gleaning historical information about Paul’s opponents’ behaviour from this description,⁴² others consider Paul’s characterization of his opponents to be

³⁸ 1942:37.

³⁹ Martin 2014:521, 523, 527. Walter Schmithals sees “another Jesus” as evidence of Gnosticism (1971:132–35; cf. Bultmann 1985:202–3).

⁴⁰ Georgi 1986:4–5, 229, 272–3.

⁴¹ So Allo 1937:279; Bruce 1971:235–36. For further discussion of theological conflict on the basis of 11:4, see Baur 1873:288; Kee 1980:76; Thrall 1994:2:669–70; Gräßer 2005:2:121–25; Murphy-O’Connor 2010:247–52.

⁴² See Furnish 1984:511–2; Bultmann 1985:212.

reasonably accurate.⁴³ Hughes goes so far as to consider εἴ τις εἰς πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει as most likely “alluding to instances of actual physical assault.”⁴⁴

Sim’s discussion of verbal irony in Second Corinthians also purports to see elements of the Corinthians’ perspectives echoed in Paul’s ironic statements. On the basis of her interpretation of the echoic approach to verbal irony (see Ch.1, §2.3, §3.4), Sim sees reflections of the Corinthians’ criticisms of Paul in 11:20c and 12:13, 16b,⁴⁵ and describes 11:20 as “a series of statements that almost certainly reflect what had been happening in [the Corinthian] churches.”⁴⁶

In advising caution with such interpretations, I will begin with Sim’s work, as it most clearly lays out the assumptions underlying other scholarly reconstructions. Sim’s understanding of verbal irony presumes that the interpreter may detect the thoughts or statements of others echoed in ironic speech.⁴⁷ However, even at the genesis of the echoic approach to irony, Sperber and Wilson state that ironic echoes “are not intended to inform anyone of the content of a preceding utterance.”⁴⁸ While sarcastic statements may contain a reasonable approximation of what has been said before, they may just as well be loose enough to make reconstructing the original speaker’s statement or perspective impossible.⁴⁹ For example, ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι is perfectly comprehensible as a sarcastic epithet regardless of whether Paul’s opponents were actually using the term in reference to themselves,⁵⁰ or whether it reflects the Corinthians’ estimation of them,⁵¹ or even if they really were not particularly arrogant at all and Paul only perceived them as such and invented the appellation himself. Without knowing how specific or vague a given ironic echo is, we simply cannot reconstruct the words or thoughts alluded to.

⁴³ Allo 1937:190–1; Hughes 1961:398–401; Bruce 1971:240; Matera 2003:257–8; Harris 2005:784–7. Others recognise the verse as containing elements of irony or hyperbole but also material of historical value (Martin 2014:551–54; Thrall 1994:2:716–18).

⁴⁴ 1961:400–401.

⁴⁵ 2016:58–61. Cf. Harris’s reconstruction of the Corinthians’ criticisms of Paul on the basis of 12:11–13 (2005:870).

⁴⁶ 2016:58.

⁴⁷ 2016:53–55, 61, 70. Cf. Ch.1, §3.4.

⁴⁸ Sperber and Wilson 1981:306. Cf. Ch.1, §2.3.

⁴⁹ For discussion and examples, see Sperber and Wilson 1981:306–8. Cf. Wilson and Sperber 2012:130; Piskorska 2016:61–63.

⁵⁰ See McClelland 1982:84–85; Hughes 1961:397.

⁵¹ See McClelland 1982:84.

We may draw further caution from Pauline studies itself. Barclay argues that intentional distortion is commonplace in polemic, and that caricature and misattribution of motives are not beyond Paul.⁵² This warning applies well to sarcasm, which often functions as a specific form of polemic and lends itself to hyperbole and distortion. Exaggeration is present in nearly all of the instances of verbal irony we have identified in 2 Cor 10–13, but we cannot be sure the extent to which Paul is being hyperbolic without knowing the actual conduct of his opponents.

There is, then, a range of possible positions and actions underlying Paul’s sarcastic remarks. It is more profitable to work within a continuum of probabilities that respect the fact that the scholar can only view Corinth through a (potentially) distorted mirror.⁵³ The interpreter should therefore be wary of making strong claims that ascribe to Paul’s opponents the hubris of inventing the term “very-super apostles” for themselves, or of being in the habit of striking Corinthian Christ-followers in the face (11:5, 20).⁵⁴ There also needs to be a greater allowance for a margin of error in reconstructing the theology of Paul’s opponents (11:4) and in attempting to identify what the Corinthians had been criticising Paul for (11:7–8; 12:11–13, 16).

These considerations suggest that scholars who hesitate to make specific historical claims on the basis of Paul’s ironic statements in 2 Cor 10–13 have done so for good reason.⁵⁵ This caution, however, does not mean total agnosticism. Recognizing the prevalence of hyperbole, distortion, and polemic in sarcasm means acknowledging broader ranges of possibilities and lower levels of certainty.

3.2 Where Paul Is Sarcastic and What It Can Tell Us

The examples of sarcasm identified in 2 Cor 10–13 allow further observations about Paul’s attitude toward his foolish boasting across the discourse. There is an interesting

⁵² Barclay 1987:75–76.

⁵³ For Barclay’s discussion and application of differing levels of probability, see 1987:85–90.

⁵⁴ Concerning 11:20: *δέρω* finds metaphorical use elsewhere in proverbs, including “to beat a dog you’ve already beaten” (*κύνα δέρειν δεδαρμένην*, Pherecrates, *Fragmenta*, 179)—similar to the modern “kicking a dead horse”—and “the man who has not been beaten doesn’t learn” (*Ὁ μὴ δαρὲς ἄνθρωπος οὐ παιδεύεται*, Menander, *Sententiae*, 173; LSJ, s.v. “*δέρω*”). The LSJ also takes in 2 Cor 11:20 metaphorically (s.v. “*δέρω*”).

⁵⁵ On 11:4, see Sumney 1990:170–71; cf. Furnish 1984:500–502; Matera 2003:243–44. On 11:20, see n.42.

correlation between Paul's sarcastic statements in 2 Cor 10–13 and their contexts. Paul first engages in sarcasm shortly after raising the subject of his impending foolish boasts (11:1–5). His next sarcastic statement comes just after raising the subject a second time following a digression (11:16–21). When Paul begins boasting like a fool in 11:21b he does not engage in further sarcasm or *asteismos* throughout the fool's speech (11:21b–12:10). It would be easy to conceive of a fool's speech thick with sarcasm amidst its comparison and polemic, but this is not what we find. Instead, Paul is sarcastic next only following the close of the fool's speech, as he reflects on the necessity of the preceding discourse (12:11, 13). Thus, Paul is only ever sarcastic when in meta-discussion of his foolish boasting; it is only reflection on the necessity of his boastful self-promotion that draws out the sarcastic side of Paul's irony.

I suggest that one may explain this correlation quite simply by taking it as a sign of Paul's frustration. He sees himself as being forced to promote himself in ways that he is not comfortable with,⁵⁶ which irritates him, prompting a sarcastic response when the subject of his boasting arises. This level of irritation and discomfort would also explain why Paul spends so long circling around the subject of the fool's speech before getting on with it (11:1–21).

This explanation for the fact that Paul's sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13 clusters in the meta-discussion of his boasting fits best with Schellenberg's interpretation of the fool's speech as unironic.⁵⁷ If Paul's foolish discourse is not a cleverly ironic⁵⁸ dismantling of worldly self-promotion but a participation in it—that is to say, if his boasting is indeed boasting⁵⁹—then Paul is most likely to be frustrated by the fact that he finds himself engaging in something he considers problematic (11:17; ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ λέγω, 11:21; παραφρονῶν λαλῶ, 11:23; Γέγονα ἄφρων, 12:11). This frustration brings out his sarcastic ire, which targets those Paul sees as responsible for necessitating his self-praise: his congregation and opponents.

These observations suggest that further work on irony in the fool's speech is required. This scholarship must be critically informed and specifically delineate where and how situational and other forms of irony occur in this discourse, and assess the probability that any

⁵⁶ On the constraining factors influencing Paul's boasting, see Schellenberg 2016:512–35. On Paul's discomfort with the boasting of the fool's speech and the ways it transgresses his principles concerning self-promotion, see Pawlak 2018:374–78.

⁵⁷ See n.4; Ch.1, §3.4.

⁵⁸ Or parodic (so Heckel 1993:22).

⁵⁹ So Schellenberg 2013:111, 121, 177; Pawlak 2018:374, 376–378.

form of irony observed by the interpreter is also signalled by Paul himself or exists primarily as a product of our interpretation.

3.3 Assessing Previous Scholarship

We will now consider the data in light of previous scholarship on irony in these chapters. While recognizing that scholars treating irony in general have analysed a broader range of phenomena than the present study, it will still be instructive to consider the extent to which their conclusions about irony hold true for verbal irony. In this section Forbes's work will be treated to the greatest depth, as his use of Hermogenes can further our understanding of sarcasm and *asteismos* alike.

I agree with those who have recognised didactic elements in Paul's irony, insofar as Paul's use of verbal irony clearly intends to persuade his audience to adopt his perspective. There remains however a significant trend within this perspective requiring pushback. Spencer claims that while Paul can be "bitterly ironical," his tone does not approach sarcasm, or "in other words, sneering, caustic, cutting, or taunting."⁶⁰ While this distinction is partly methodological, indicative of the fact that Spencer considers sarcasm to be a quality of tone rather than a form of verbal irony,⁶¹ it is also symptomatic of a tendency to avoid ascribing tendentious rhetoric to Paul. There is altogether too much niceness and cordiality in a Paul seeking merely "to edify"⁶² or build his congregation's "spiritual insight" (cf. §1)⁶³ to do justice to the sharpness of Paul's sarcasm and *asteismos*. Paul not only uses frequent sarcasm, but is also sarcastic at the expense of his addressees (11:4, 19–21; 12:13), and uses self-deprecating irony to imply that they have badly misjudged him (11:8, 21; 12:13, 16). While it may not be "sneering" or "taunting," Paul's sarcasm is clearly cutting and sometimes caustic.

3.3.1 Hermogenes as a Tool for Understanding Paul

Forbes's work on irony in 2 Cor 10–12, with its focus on Hermogenes's *βαρύτης*, provides a more accurate assessment of Paul's use of verbal irony in these chapters and will therefore merit more sustained interaction. At the same time, Forbes's work on Hermogenes

⁶⁰ 1981:351.

⁶¹ Cf. Loubser 1992:509.

⁶² Reumann 1955:144.

⁶³ Holland 1993:251.

still requires further nuancing. We will begin with critical discussion of Hermogenes's utility as a tool for understanding Paul's use of verbal irony. From there, we will address Forbes's treatment of Hermogenes, which can be improved and extended by employing a broader reading of Hermogenes's *On Types of Style*. I will argue that Hermogenes does not associate βαρύτης with sarcasm, but instead considers it to be the tone achieved by *asteismos*. This reading of Hermogenes supports the observations made in chapter 3 (§2.6) about *asteismos* as a primarily apologetic form of verbal irony.

Before discussing Forbes's use of Hermogenes, we must consider the role of this mid-second century writer⁶⁴ as a tool for reading Paul. For Forbes, the fact that Paul uses irony to create a tone of βαρύτης, "achieved according to the method recommended by Hermogenes,"⁶⁵ is part of a cumulative argument that 2 Cor 10–12 provides evidence of Paul's training in Greek rhetoric.⁶⁶ While I shall not address this broader argument here, it is important to recognize that there is no evidence that Paul is or could have been familiar with a treatment of βαρύτης like what we see in Hermogenes. Forbes has not provided citation of the relationship between εἰρωνεία and βαρύτης in earlier authors. Furthermore, as a TLG search shows, no inflection of εἰρωνεία occurs within 50 words of the lemma βαρύτης in any context relevant to our discussion before Hermogenes. Respecting this absence of evidence, the interpreter should not assume that Paul could have had access to a treatment of εἰρωνεία and βαρύτης similar to Hermogenes's. It is safer to assume that theoretical work on the relationship between εἰρωνεία and βαρύτης had no influence on Paul's use of verbal irony in 2 Cor 10–12.

This does not mean Hermogenes is unhelpful. If he succeeds in describing the nature of irony or providing a paradigm that explains Paul's use of sarcasm and *asteismos* in 2 Cor 10–13, it means that in looking back over the rhetorical tradition, Hermogenes's observation has been keen. Haiman's guiltive, the exaggeration of one's selflessness to make one's interlocutor feel bad about themselves which we discussed in the previous chapter (Ch.6, §2.3),⁶⁷ can provide a helpful illustration here. Speakers with and without rhetorical training had been guilt-tripping their friends and relations for years before Haiman ever coined the

⁶⁴ Forbes 1986:12.

⁶⁵ 1986:17, cf. 16, 18.

⁶⁶ 1986:22–24.

⁶⁷ See Haiman 1998:23–25.

term “guiltive modality” to describe it. No one would dream of positing some proto-Haiman literary-theoretical tradition influencing the great guilters of the past. Haiman simply theorized *post hoc* about a common speech act in order to enable more self-reflexive discussion thereabout. In the absence of further evidence, we should default to this assumption when considering later rhetoricians such as Hermogenes.

3.3.2 Forbes, βαρύτης, and Asteismos

Now with a more balanced picture of what Hermogenes can do for our understanding of Paul, we will assess his observations about ancient irony. Here we must clarify what exactly Hermogenes says about βαρύτης and its relationship to irony. Probably because he is working without the benefit of an English translation, Forbes limits his discussion irony in Hermogenes to Hermogenes’s specific discussion of βαρύτης.⁶⁸ But Hermogenes has more to say on both βαρύτης and irony.

When we consider *On Types of Style* as a whole, we discover that the first feature Hermogenes associates with irony is not βαρύτης, but an effect called “vehemence” (σφοδρότης, Herm. *Style*, 1.10; cf. 2.3).⁶⁹ Vehemence is a stylistic element that involves heavy criticism and is explicitly intended for use on parties of lower social status (Herm. *Style*, 1.8).⁷⁰ Interestingly, the examples of irony Hermogenes associates with vehemence are all sarcastic:

Ironic statements make it clear that one can reveal character⁷¹ and be vehement at the same time, as in the following examples from Demosthenes: “How do your affairs stand thanks to these good men?” (3.27) or “She brought you up to be her pretty puppet, her marvelous bit-part actor” (18.129) (*Style*, 1.10 [Wooten]; cf. 2.3).

Although Hermogenes does not use the word σαρκασμός, both of these examples coincide with ancient definitions of sarcasm as expressing dispraise through ostensible praise (“these good men,” “pretty puppet,” “marvelous bit-part actor”; see Ch.1, §1.2). By associating

⁶⁸ See 1986:12–13, 27n.58. Forbes’s translation has several problems. I would instead commend Wooten’s translation to the interested reader.

⁶⁹ I follow Wooten’s translation of Hermogenes’s rhetorical terms, but remove his capitalisation.

⁷⁰ Hermogenes contrasts vehemence with “asperity” (τραχύτης), the milder, less pointed style used to reproach parties of higher status (*Style*, 1.7; cf. 1.8).

⁷¹ See n.72–73 below.

vehemence with sarcasm, Hermogenes provides further evidence for the thesis I have advanced from the outset: that sarcasm is appropriate when used with the grain of social hierarchy.

Hermogenes classifies “indignation” (βαρύτης) as an element of emotive expression that demonstrates what sort of person the speaker is.⁷² Basically, it is a quality of tone. The combination of βαρύτης with (mock) modesty (ἐπιείκεια) results in self-deprecating irony.⁷³

Indignant thoughts are created even out of those that seem to be modest [Γίνονται μέντοι βαρύτητες καὶ τῶν ἐπιεικῶν πως εἶναι δοκουσῶν ἐννοιῶν], whenever they are approached in such a way that the speaker willingly gives up some of his own advantages or agrees to yield an advantage to his opponent or, from what he says in his speech, obviously deems himself or his opponent worthy of deeds or words that are the opposite of those stated. Ironical statements are like this... (Herm. *Style*, 2.8 [Wooten]).⁷⁴

To put it as simply as possible: mock modesty (ἐπιεικῶν... δοκουσῶν ἐννοιῶν) produces βαρύτης.

Although Hermogenes does not use the term, ironic modesty is precisely what other ancient rhetoricians and grammarians describe as *asteismos*. Hermogenes’s primary example of βαρύτης—drawn from Demosthenes—qualifies as *asteismos*: “Perhaps someone wants to think me mad. For it is probably madness to attempt something beyond one’s means” (*Style*, 2.8 [Wooten]).⁷⁵ Hermogenes describes this example as creating considerable βαρύτης: “There is remarkable indignation in this passage.” And writes that, “whenever a speaker uses irony about himself, especially if he is addressing himself to the jurors rather than to his opponent, he creates pure Indignation” (*Style*, 2.8 [Wooten]). Hermogenes also cites an example of sarcasm in his treatment of βαρύτης, but makes it clear that it produces minimal

⁷² Hermogenes considers βαρύτης and other tonal elements to be means of showing “character” (ἥθος, *Style*, 2.2). Vehemence and ἥθος are the two qualities that Hermogenes primarily associates with irony (*Style*, 1.10; cf. 2.3). βαρύτης is therefore related to irony through its association with ἥθος. Hermogenes’s taxonomy of terms is complicated and often difficult to follow (he shows some awareness of this in *Style*, 2.2). What is important for the present purpose is this: βαρύτης is the tone conveyed by irony—*asteismos*, to be specific, as we shall see.

⁷³ βαρύτης cannot express ἥθος on its own, but must combine with another style in order to do so (Herm. *Style*, 2.2; on ἥθος see n.72 above). It is unclear to me why this is a rule.

⁷⁴ For modesty, see Hermogenes, *Style*, 2.6.

⁷⁵ The speaker’s feigned acceptance of a charge of madness creates the *asteismos* in this example.

βαρύτης (σφόδρα δὲ ὀλίγον τι τὸ τῆς βαρύτητος καὶ ἀμαυρὸν ὑποφαίνεται, *Herm. Style*, 2.8). Therefore, just as Hermogenes considers sarcasm appropriate to a vehement style, he describes *asteismos* specifically as conveying the tone of βαρύτης.

This is where Forbes's treatment of Hermogenes becomes misleading. In his block citation, Forbes passes over Hermogenes's example of *asteismos*, consigning it to ellipses.⁷⁶ This truncation leaves only the sarcastic example ("What is your position because of these worthy men?" *Herm. Style*, 2.8 [Wooten]), making it appear that Hermogenes primarily associates sarcasm with βαρύτης, when he explicitly limits βαρύτης to a minor role in this example. Resultantly, Forbes concludes that "straightforward irony was perhaps the most common method of producing the effect [of βαρύτης]..."⁷⁷ However, as we have seen, Hermogenes is more specific in associating βαρύτης with self-deprecating irony rather than irony in general.

Putting everything together, we have now established indignation (βαρύτης) as the tonal or emotive element evoked through *asteismos*, while sarcasm is expressed with a vehement style proper to reproaching subordinates. As an astute ancient observer, Hermogenes provides good evidence that Paul's use of *asteismos* would produce an air of βαρύτης. But we should not therefore conclude that Paul uses *asteismos* primarily in order to produce indignation. βαρύτης is a means, not an end.

Hermogenes is clear that βαρύτης is appropriate to situations where speakers are denied the status they believe they deserve: "Indignation is found in all reproachful thoughts whenever the speaker who is discussing his own benefactions says by way of criticism that he has received little or no gratitude for them..." That honour and status are in question is evident from the next clause, "...or, the opposite when he says that he has in fact been thought worthy of punishment rather than honor." (ὅτι καὶ τιμωρίας ἀντὶ τιμῆς ἡξίωται, *Herm. Style*, 2.8 [Wooten]).⁷⁸ In the face this perceived slight, statements characterized by a tone of βαρύτης seek to reproach those who have misjudged the speaker (Ἡ βαρύτης ἐννοίας μὲν ἔχει τὰς ὀνειδιστικὰς ἀπάσας, *Herm. Style*, 2.8). Though not stated explicitly, the aim of such

⁷⁶ See 1986:12.

⁷⁷ 1986:13. Fortunately, because, as we have seen throughout this chapter, Paul's use of sarcasm and *asteismos* occur in concert throughout 2 Cor 10–13, Forbes' identification of βαρύτης usually still lands on an example of *asteismos* (see 1986:16–22).

⁷⁸ The use of ἀξιώ language continues throughout the pericope.

reproaches must be to induce the speaker's audience to accord them the level of status they have been denied. This evidence from Hermogenes accords well with our earlier discussion of *asteismos* where we outlined its primary rhetorical function as apologetic, a way of rejecting a threatened loss of face (Ch.3, §2.6).

4 Conclusions: Sarcasm and *Asteismos* in 2 Cor 10–13

In the foregoing discussion we weighed Paul's use of sarcasm and *asteismos* against other treatments of irony in 2 Cor 10–13, finding Paul's rhetoric to be at times more tendentious than previous scholarship has recognised. We also developed a clearer picture of Hermogenes's treatment of irony and its utility for our interpretation of Paul. What remains now is to offer an assessment of how sarcasm and *asteismos* function within Paul's broader rhetoric throughout 2 Cor 10–13.

The situation is well-established: Paul's opponents have challenged his authority and his congregation is in danger of shifting their allegiance. Paul's use of sarcasm shows that he does not accept the threatened loss of face, as he responds by presuming the authority that his opponents seek to deny him. We have seen the same pattern played to literary proportions in the book of Job, where Job's use of sarcasm concedes no ground to his interlocutors and seeks to put them into their place (Ch.2, §1.2, §1.5.2). The fact that Paul's sarcasm targets both his congregation and his opponents, then, suggests two things. First, it implies that he seeks to retain the superior, apostolic position from which it is appropriate for him to make sarcastic comments to his churches. Second, Paul's sarcasm aims to challenge his congregation's and rivals' attempts to situate themselves higher than they ought to vis-à-vis himself. These aims are well described in Hermogenes, who associates sarcasm with a vehement style that makes use of strong criticism to reproach one's subordinates.

Of course, sarcasm is only one of several rhetorical moves that Paul makes throughout 2 Cor 10–13. In the broader discourse, much of the argumentative weight comes from the fool's speech itself, which establishes the very weaknesses that appear to disqualify Paul from a position of authority as evidence of his divine empowerment. "So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (12:9 NRSV, cf. 11:21b–12:10). There is much that can and has been said about this discourse, but for our purposes it explains an interesting phenomenon. We have already noted that Paul responds to a situation in which he cannot reasonably assume authority by doing just that. Paul is by no means unaware of the challenge to his authority and what is at stake in the questioning of his apostleship. His conviction that his apostolic authority is divinely mandated, however,

explains his actions. Here the use of sarcasm that we observed in the LXX prophets can provide a helpful parallel. Despite their lower social position, the prophet is often emboldened to criticize their far superiors by the claim “Thus saith the Lord,” the conviction that they are conveying God’s message (Ch.2, §2.3). The appropriation of the divine voice enables the use of rhetoric that presumes a greater level of authority than the prophet could normally claim. In the same way, Paul does not budge from his apostolic position. It is not his on the basis human approval, but comes from God (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1). The argument of the fool’s speech establishes even Paul’s weaknesses as evidence of his apostolic mandate, a divinely ordained position of authority remaining regardless of whether this authority is properly acknowledged. Paul therefore engages in sarcasm with the vehement tone of a superior, even if the reality of the situation makes his standing with the Corinthian church precarious. Whether Paul’s sarcasm will be received as appropriate by his congregation, then, depends on the extent to which they accept his divine mandate. This acceptance is the rhetorical goal throughout the entire discussion.

In concert with the sarcastic side of Paul’s rhetoric with its appropriation of authority and challenge to his opponents and congregation, Paul’s use of *asteismos* adds another layer to his communication. This speech act is apologetic, implicitly rejecting perceived accusations while—if we accept Hermogenes’s assessment—creating a tone of offended indignation. Such βαρύτης should weigh heavily on any conscience that still feels allegiance or sympathy toward Paul, encouraging a recognition that Paul has been shamefully mistreated. While Paul’s sarcasm presumes a position of authority, his more defensive use of *asteismos* shows his awareness of the threat to his position. Indeed, the fact that *asteismos* is more prevalent than sarcasm in Second Corinthians 10–13 testifies to the apologetic thrust of the text. The use of sarcasm and *asteismos* together that we see in 11:5–8, 21; 12:13 creates an interesting pattern of rhetorical attack and defence that aims to reject the charges against Paul (*asteismos*) and reassert his apostolic authority with the Corinthian church (sarcasm).⁷⁹

Having analysed the form and function of Paul’s verbal irony in 2 Cor 10–13, I would like to make two brief qualifications to guard against potential misreadings of the data. First, this analysis shows Paul’s rhetoric to be multi-layered, as streams of direct argument and different forms of implicit speech, each with their own nuanced expression and effects, all

⁷⁹ For sarcasm combined with *asteismos* elsewhere, see Ch.3, §2.6n.89.

seek to draw Paul's audience in the direction he wishes them to go. On this basis, it would be easy to conclude that the complexity of Paul's rhetoric evinces formal training. It would, however, be fallacious to assume that the interplay between sarcasm and *asteismos* that we find in 2 Cor 10–13 is necessarily the product of studied deliberation. What we find here in Paul may well be no more than the regular complexity of human communication, which we could observe in all sorts of conversation should we be inclined to analyse all our interactions to the same degree of detail that I have done here.⁸⁰

Second, our analysis has focused on elucidating the ways ironic speech finds use in navigating and reinforcing social hierarchies and as a means of negotiating which speakers may appropriately adopt positions of authority and the speech patterns that go along with them. With everything broken down as questions of status, it becomes easy to read 2 Cor 10–13 as an agonistic power struggle characterised by posturing and manipulation. This is one possible reading, although it does require us to assume the worst of all parties involved. While we must grant that much is on the line for Paul in this exchange, and he certainly has no trouble resorting to tendentious rhetoric, we ought also to recognize that negotiating hierarchies of social status is a common sort of interaction within Paul's cultural context. Therefore, we need not necessarily interpret Paul's repeated protestations of love and affection as disingenuous or manipulative (11:2, 11; 12:14–5, 19).

⁸⁰ Cf. Gibbs 2012:113–14.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

1 Answering Our Three Central Questions with Reference to Paul

1.1 What is Sarcasm?

The first part of this study focused on answering the three questions: What is sarcasm? How is sarcasm expressed? And what does sarcasm do? The first chapter addressed the first of these questions, producing a working definition of sarcasm on the basis of ancient and modern discussions. This process required bringing Pauline studies up to date on modern scholarship on verbal irony, having found it not to have gone beyond “first quest” treatments of irony. As a result of this methodological shortcoming, it has been common for previous Pauline scholarship to conflate different forms of irony, such as sarcasm and other forms of verbal irony with different types of situational irony. This problem is perhaps most visible in scholarship on the “fool’s speech” in Second Corinthians, which several scholars have identified as an ironic discourse, but which I have found not to contain verbal irony (sarcasm or *asteismos*). Here greater methodological clarity is needed to define what sorts of irony are in view, and the extent to which they might be intended by Paul or exist primarily as a matter of the interpreter’s perception.

To resolve this methodological problem, we first narrowed the scope of our study from irony in general, to verbal irony, and from verbal irony to sarcasm. I defined sarcasm as a subtype of verbal irony in which an utterance that would normally communicate a positive attitude or evaluation implies a negative attitude or evaluation. One of the important features of this definition is that it takes us beyond semantic accounts of verbal irony, that is, of thinking of sarcasm as saying one thing and meaning the opposite. As illustrated by The Parable of the Disgruntled Undergraduate (Ch.1, §2.2), sarcastic statements can be factually true. This insight has been important for our exegesis of Paul. Several cases of sarcasm encountered throughout this study involved the expression of implied negative evaluation through sarcasm, but without negating the truth value of the sarcastic utterance (Gal 2:9; Rom 2:17–20; 11:19–20; 1 Cor 8:1).

1.2 How Is Sarcasm Expressed?

The next chapter on the Septuagint began to address the question “how is sarcasm expressed?” Here we saw a number of cues recur throughout *Job* and the prophets, including repetition, sarcastic politeness, and the sarcastic use of the dubitative—in addition to the prevalence of sarcastic taunts in the prophets. The question of expression was the major focus of our chapter on sarcasm in ancient Greek texts, which brought together 386 examples of

sarcasm across Lucian and other authors to produce the first large-scale study of sarcasm in ancient Greek. Here we identified common linguistic and contextual signals for communicating sarcasm as well as several significant patterns in the use of sarcasm across these texts.

The most common signal of sarcasm identified was the use of contrastive evaluation, that is, following sarcasm with a literal statement expressing negative evaluation that conflicts with a literal reading of the sarcastic utterance and confirms that it was intended sarcastically. Ways of conveying emphasis and exaggeration were also important, especially the use of emphatic particles and the repetition of adjectives. Hyperformality, or exaggerated politeness, was by far the most significant pattern observed in the use of ancient sarcasm. Sarcastic encouragement and sarcastic concessions also occurred with high frequency. This work is relevant to scholars in biblical studies and classics interested in ancient texts containing verbal irony, and contributes to modern research on sarcasm by providing a dataset for comparison with previous studies that is removed from modern English both chronologically and culturally.

The cues identified in this chapter played an important role in the exegesis of sarcasm in Paul, and there was much overlap between the way Paul expresses sarcasm and the signals of sarcasm identified in our dataset.¹ The most common cue in Paul was also contrastive evaluation by a significant margin. Repetition and explicit echoic mention were also significant. Paul appears to have a developed sense of absurdity, as absurdity features significantly in Paul's sarcasm as a means of conveying insincerity. In terms of patterns, Paul employed significant sarcastic encouragement and sarcastic concessions, but used less exaggerated politeness than average. Emphatic particles occurred in Pauline sarcasm significantly less than average, corresponding with a lower breadth of particle-use in Paul generally compared to authors such as Lucian or Aristophanes. This may be a case where Paul's Greek does not show the same level of fluency as other authors in the subtle use of particles to convey tone.

1.3 What Does Sarcasm Do?

Part 1 also addressed the question “what does sarcasm do?” On the basis of *Job* and previous scholarship in classics, I hypothesised that sarcasm normally functions as an implicit

¹ For a full listing of signals of sarcasm in Paul, see Appendix A.

challenge to what the speaker perceives as a claim to some positive quality made by another party. Social hierarchy often plays a role in sarcastic exchanges, because the claim to a positive quality or qualities that sarcasm implicitly challenges is often bound up with social status. Sarcasm is appropriate so long as it is not used against the grain of social hierarchy. That is, persons of high rank may use sarcasm on subordinates without censure. These observations were reinforced in our work on Lucian where 46% percent of sarcastic utterances were spoken by superiors to subordinates and 30% percent were traded between equals.

Lucian also provided data for discerning the typical pragmatic functions of *asteismos*, a self-deprecating form of verbal irony that is essentially sarcasm's mirror image. In Lucian *asteismos* is normally used apologetically as a way of implying the invalidity of whatever challenge to their status or position the asteist is facing. Our conclusions about the pragmatic functions of both sarcasm and *asteismos* were further supported by an analysis of Hermogenes in our chapter on Second Corinthians. Hermogenes associates sarcasm with a vehement style meant for reproaching subordinates, and considers self-deprecating irony to convey a tone of offended indignation proper to the speaker who has not been granted the honour due them.

In addition to these more common uses of sarcasm, our case studies on the prophets and Lucian provided a number of examples where sarcasm was used against the grain of social hierarchy. By appropriating the divine voice, the prophets are emboldened to criticise sarcastically parties of higher status, including nations and kings. Paul's use of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13 was analogous to this, insofar as Paul's foolish boasting established his sufferings as credentials in support of his divinely mandated apostolate. From this position of authority, Paul may use sarcasm in rebuking both his addressees and opponents, even when his authority has been significantly called into question. For both Paul and the prophets, the viability of appropriating divine legitimation to validate their use of sarcasm and other forms of criticism depends on their audience accepting their divine mandate.

Lucian writes several characters with different strategies for using sarcasm subversively. These range from the brashness and impunity of his Cynics to the greater subtlety and feigned politeness of other characters. However, Lucian's most significant strategy for engaging in sarcasm and satire against the grain of social hierarchy is to adjust his use of voice and persona. Lucian uses characters far removed from his own voice when being sarcastic about the gods or famous philosophers, while saving more modest targets for characters meant to represent a version of his own persona. We find analogy to this use of

voice to mitigate the offence of sarcasm in Romans, although with a significant difference. Paul does not distance himself from the voice engaging in sarcasm, but instead consistently uses a hypothetical interlocutor as his victim. This creates a separation between his audience and the position criticized, inviting them to affiliate with Paul without feeling that their own positions are necessarily being targeted.

2 Sarcasm in Paul: A Summary

Part 2 has focused on the identification and exegesis of sarcasm in Paul's letters, paying specific attention to how Paul expresses sarcasm and its rhetorical functions. With Galatians, Paul's use of ambiguous language complicates the detection of sarcasm and opens up possibilities for polyvalence and double entendre. Although Paul's opening in Gal 1:6–7a cannot be considered an epistolary formula for expressing “ironic rebuke,” it may contain sarcasm. Paul's ambiguous references to the “pillar” apostles in Galatians 2 likely have a sarcastic element dismissive of what Paul perceives as an overemphasis on the Jerusalem apostles' special status by certain parties.

Understanding authorial voice in the dialogical back and forth of texts considered examples of ancient diatribe was essential to the identification of sarcasm in Romans. On the basis of Romans and Epictetus's *Discourses*, I laid out a revised understanding of voice in dialogical, diatribe-like texts that accounts for the fact that what we have in Romans is not true dialogue, but a single speaker playing both sides of a conversation without breaking fully from his own voice. This paradigm can explain how some of Paul's rhetorical questions in Romans can be conceived of as sarcastic, such as: “Maybe we should just keep on sinning so we can get even more grace?” (Rom 6:1). We then investigated how sarcasm functions in its use on Paul's “interlocutors” in Rom 2:17–20 and 11:19–20 before addressing how Paul's overall use of sarcasm in the letter works as a means of securing the attention and agreement of his audience.

The final two chapters investigated the use of sarcasm in the Corinthian letters. Our discussion of First Corinthians focused primarily on 1 Cor 4:8–13 and 8:1–11. In the former case, Paul combines sarcasm with the “guiltive modality” to deflate what he perceives as the undue pride of his congregation. Although past interpreters have not normally considered the presence of irony in 1 Cor 8:1–11, I argued that sarcasm permeates Paul's discussion of idol-food, which led to a reassessment of Paul's rhetoric in this section. Our chapter on Second Corinthians focused on 2 Cor 10–13, where Paul is at his most polemical and sarcastic. In 2 Cor 10–13 Paul combines sarcasm with self-deprecating irony to an extent unparalleled in his

other letters. This results in a combination of rhetorical attack and defence that employs *asteismos* to reject the charges against Paul and uses sarcasm to reassert his apostolic authority with the Corinthian church.

Throughout Part 2, I also argued that several passages that previous scholars have considered ironic or sarcastic do not qualify as sarcasm. These discussions have highlighted several different speech acts that share some, but not all, features with sarcasm. Galatians 5:12 is a case of hyperbolic and insincere polemic that lacks the inversion of affect necessary to verbal irony. Romans 13:1–7 was a difficult case, where Paul’s injunction to civil obedience could have been meant sincerely, or left intentionally as an *aenigma*. Haiman’s “guiltive” better explained 1 Cor 4:10 than ironic readings, and Paul’s apparent acceptance of factionalism in 1 Cor 11:19 was facetious, meant to imply a challenge to the Corinthians’ behaviour.

3 Comparing Paul’s Use of Sarcasm Across His Letters

In this section we consider Paul’s use of sarcasm across his undisputed letters. Differences in sarcasm-use between Galatians and Romans likely have to do with the nature of the situations Paul is addressing and Paul’s prior relationships with these congregations. Paul uses sarcasm and other strongly worded forms of rebuke with the church in Galatia, where he is addressing a situation he considers urgent amongst a community with which he already has a significant prior relationship. Conversely, Paul is never sarcastic at the expense of the Roman church, the members of which he has never met in person. In this way Galatians has greater affinity to First Corinthians, both in terms of Paul’s prior proximity with his congregation and his use of sarcasm and other strong forms of reproach with his addressees. In what follows I will focus primarily on comparison of First and Second Corinthians, as these texts provide an opportunity to assess Paul’s use of sarcasm over time with the same congregation in response to a developing situation.

The first significant trend emerges from silence. Although sarcasm occurs in several places throughout First Corinthians and verbal irony is so prevalent in 2 Cor 10–13, I find none in 2 Cor 1–9. This difference may be added to the pieces of evidence in play within the debate over the unity of Second Corinthians. Interested scholars must address the presence of stark overall differences in tone between the two sections,² which we also find reflected in

² For an overview of the issue of the letter’s unity, see Furnish 1984:30–48.

verbal irony use. I will not, however, make an attempt at resolving this issue here, since at best our treatment of verbal irony can only represent one datum in a many faceted conversation.

Moving on to more positive evidence: Paul's sarcastic comments often find their way to specific targets. He very often directs his sarcasm at arrogance (1 Cor 4:8; 6:12/10:23?; 8:1, 9–11; 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11),³ oratory and its practitioners (1 Cor 1:27–28; 2:1, 4),⁴ and those who are arrogant about being skilled at oratory—namely, his opponents (2 Cor 11:5–6). These tendencies are interesting and may give us some insight into Paul's personality, insofar as they could indicate that the Paul had a particular dislike of arrogance and professional rhetoric. Conversely, respecting arrogance, we should consider that the focus on pretention in Paul's sarcasm may also be due to the nature of sarcasm itself. With its ability to challenge and deflate undue claims to status, sarcasm is certainly apt to take the arrogant down a peg. As a result, one would need more evidence to establish arrogance as an especial Pauline pet peeve.

That professional rhetoric is often in the crosshairs of Paul's sarcasm, both as passing dismissals (1 Cor 1:27–8; 2:1, 4) and targeted criticism of his opponents (2 Cor 11:5–6) is more interesting. A Paul with a particular dislike of orators, or at least a tendency to mock the discipline, does not square well with certain reconstructions of the apostle as a highly trained practitioner of rhetoric.⁵ While one must acknowledge that this pattern in Paul's sarcasm reconciles most easily with a Paul of little rhetorical training who can in earnestness claim to be an ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, other interpretive options remain. Lucian himself is an excellent example of an outstanding author and speaker who constantly harangues sophistry and rhetoric (see, for example, *A Professor of Public Speaking*).⁶ Paul's annoyance could well be with those of a different degree of training, or who practice rhetoric in ways he considers misleading. While this explanation is sufficient to explain the pattern, it is difficult not to

³ Cf. Rom 2:17–20; 11:19–20

⁴ Cf. Col 2:4, 8, 23.

⁵ We must also consider the possibility that sarcastic quips about sophistry are also influenced by the specific issues Paul must deal with in his letters. Namely, that Paul is often sarcastic about oratory because he finds himself compared unfavourably to rhetors (e.g. 2 Cor 10:10). This possibility and the possibility that Paul found practitioners of rhetoric particularly irritating are probably best considered mutually reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive.

⁶ Although Lucian, as a Syrian, mocks Greek rhetoric as a cultural outsider to some extent. Regardless, satire targeting sophistry goes back much farther (e.g. Aristophanes, *Clouds*).

detect any inconsistency—or even (situational) irony—in a Paul so simultaneously skilled in and disparaging of rhetoric.⁷

It is also significant that the Corinthians receive the lion's share of Paul's sarcastic remarks in both letters, even with such a sustained polemical focus on Paul's opponents in 2 Cor 10–13.⁸ As discussed with Galatians, this pattern is suggestive of both proximity and the nature of the issues Paul seeks to address. Paul seems to require a certain prior relationship with a given congregation to feel comfortable using sarcasm with them. The fact that Paul is so sarcastic with the Corinthians is also a reflection of the fact that his problems with the church have to do with obedience and authority. If sarcasm is adept at challenging the status claims of others and is most appropriate which used by those of greater authority as I have argued, it is natural that Paul should employ it when he sees his congregation making pretensions to special knowledge (1 Cor 8:1, 9–11) or entertaining those who challenge his authority (2 Cor 11:4, 19–20).

Finally, we have already discussed a singular feature of Paul's verbal irony in 2 Cor 10–13, the presence of *asteismos*. The prevalence of this defensive form of verbal irony in 2 Cor 10–13 reflects an escalation of the situation at Corinth since Paul wrote First Corinthians. As noted above, problems of obedience primarily occasion Paul's use of sarcasm with his congregation in First Corinthians, and indeed such issues are prevalent throughout the letter (see, for example 1 Cor 5–6; 12; 14). Paul's response to these situations, both sarcastic and otherwise, presumes a position of authority. While Paul certainly does not concede his apostolic prerogative in 2 Cor 10–13, his use of *asteismos* shows him concerned to defend it. This apologetic shift reflects the fact that Paul's situation has changed for the worse, apparently due to the influence of his opponents. As such, Paul is not only concerned to defend his apostolic authority to his congregation, but must also discredit his rivals and so stem their influence.

Changes in the way Paul employs verbal irony, especially in his use of *asteismos*, reflect changes in his relationship with the Corinthians. In 2 Cor 10–13, Paul reacts defensively to his more precarious position and cannot presume the degree of authority he did in First Corinthians. His use of *asteismos* and the boasting of the fool's speech are two means

⁷ Cf. Ch.6, §1.2.

⁸ The Corinthian church is the victim of the apostle's sarcasm in 1 Cor 4:8; (6:12/10:23?); 8:1, 9–11; 2 Cor 11:4, 19–21; 12:13, compared to his opponents (2 Cor 11:4–5; 12:11).

by which Paul seeks to defend and reassert his authority. This position must be re-established in order to legitimize his use of sarcasm to challenge the status claims of his opponents and reinforce his apostolic authority with the Corinthians. In the end, it appears that all Paul's irony, arguing, pleading, and polemic eventually paid off, as he would go on to write Romans from Corinth not so long after penning what is now 2 Cor 10–13.

4 Directions for Future Research

There is much profitable work that can be done to broaden the study of ancient Greek sarcasm, expanding to new authors, texts, and dialects. Further work on sarcasm in the Septuagint could make a novel contribution to our understanding of the translation tendencies of different translators, enabling focused observation of the ways in which implicit speech is carried from Hebrew into Greek. As far as Paul is concerned, comparison of sarcasm-use between the undisputed and disputed letters would be especially interesting. *Asteismos* represents a fruitful avenue for future research, as subsequent scholarship has more to uncover in terms of how it was typically expressed and in nuancing our understanding of its pragmatic functions—both on its own and in relation to other forms of verbal irony.

The conception of voice in diatribe that I advanced in our treatment of Romans opens up opportunities for work on texts considered examples of diatribe and for further scholarship on Romans itself. First, further study of “diatribal” texts—such as Teles and Seneca, as well as more systematic treatment of Epictetus—could extend and nuance our understanding of how the speaker of diatribe simultaneously plays both sides of dialogical exchanges, and how these exchanges impact interpretation. A full reading of Romans that acknowledges the extent to which Paul's own voice overlaps with the voice of the “interlocutor” has the potential to further contemporary scholarly discourse on Romans, especially considering the prominence of scholarship on Paul's interlocutor in current debates.

This study has sought to bring much-needed methodological clarity to the concept of irony and demonstrate the importance of drawing distinctions between its various forms. A more critically informed approach to irony can benefit scholarship on Paul and New Testament studies more broadly. For example, I have already mentioned the need for a reassessment of irony in Second Corinthians's “fool's speech” that specifically delineates what forms of irony, if any, are present and the extent to which such irony is a product of features that Paul seeks to draw his audience's attention to, or whether they are the result of the scholar's interpretation. Comparable work on the Gospels could also produce insight into their authors' rhetorical aims. Sarcasm is one form of irony among many, and it is my hope

that a detailed study of sarcasm in Paul can provide a foundation for methodologically rigorous studies of other forms of irony as well, including its more ancient species such as *μυκτηρισμός* in addition to the more recent category of situational irony.

Appendix A: Sarcasm in Paul with Signals and Translations

This appendix lays out the examples of sarcasm in Paul discussed in this study, providing translations. A question mark (?) indicates cases where I have argued that a sarcastic reading is plausible, but uncertain. In such cases, the translation provided represents a sarcastic reading.

Beneath each translation, I list which common signals of sarcasm or patterns in sarcasm use identified in chapter 3 are represented in the example. Abbreviations for these signals are listed below in parentheses. The list is numbered according to the order in which each item appears in chapter 3. Where no abbreviation is listed, the signal or pattern does not occur in Paul.

Abbreviations

- 1.1.1 Narration (**narr**)
- 1.1.2 Victim Recognition
- 1.1.3 Explicit Echoes (**expl.echo**)
- 1.1.4a Explicit Evaluation (**expl.eval**)
- 1.1.4b Utterance Deflater (**udeflate**)
- 1.1.5 Contrasting Evaluative Terms: “Scare-Quotes” Sarcasm (**CET**)
- 1.1.6a Counterfactuality (**cfact**)
- 1.1.6b Absurdity (**absurd**)
- 1.2.1a Hyperbole/Emphasis¹ (**hyperb**)
- 1.2.1b X καί Y
- 1.2.1c Repetition (**rep**)
- 1.2.1d Chunking (**chunk**)
- 1.2.1e Alliteration (**allit**)
- 1.2.2 Adverbs (**adv**)
- 1.2.3 Particles (**ptc**)
- 1.2.4 Interjections and the Exclamatory ὡς
- 1.2.5 Dismissives (**dis**)
- 2.1 Sarcastic Encouragement (**enc**)
- 2.2a Hyperformality (**hypformal**)
- 2.2b Sarcastic Address Forms
- 2.2c Sarcastic Epithets (**epithet**)
- 2.2d Unnecessarily High-Register or Complicated Language (**register**)
- 2.3 Sarcastic Concessions (**concess**)
- 2.4 Mock-Astonishment: θαυμα-Sarcasm (**θαυμ**)
- 2.5 Insult to Injury
- Misc. Sarcastic Dubitative (**dubit**)²

¹ I will only mark an example with “hyperb” where it appears to be the case that Paul is using emphasis/exaggeration to communicate his sarcasm, but in a way that does not fit under any of the other headings that indicate specific forms of emphasis/exaggeration (i.e. 1.2.1b–1.2.4, 2.2, 2.4).

² Cf. Ch.2, §3.

Galatians

(?) 1:6–7a: I marvel at just how quickly you’ve managed to abandon the one who called you in the grace of Christ for a different gospel! Which is not another...

expl.eval (ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο);³ CET; adv (οὕτως ταχέως); enc; θαυμ

2:2: And I went down because of a revelation, and I laid the gospel that I proclaim throughout the nations out before them, but just when I was on my own with those men of repute, so that I shouldn’t be running or have run for no reason.

expl.eval (2:6); diss

2:6: But from those-renowned-for-being-something—whatever they were at one time or other doesn’t at all matter to me; God does not play favourites—since those men of repute added nothing to my message...

expl.eval; diss; rep; epithet

2:9: ...and knowing the grace given to me, James and Peter and John, those reputed to be “pillars,” gave myself and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship...

expl.echo; expl.eval (2:6); rep; epithet

(?) 3:21 (Ch.5 §2.2): Then the is law opposed to God’s promises? Absolutely not!

expl.eval; udeflate; cfact; absurd; dubit

Romans

2:17–20: But if you call yourself a Jew and take comfort in the law and boast in God and know The Will and discern what is best—being taught direct from the law—and you’re convinced that you’re a guide for the blind, a Light for those in darkness, Educator of the Ignorant, Teacher of Infants, possessing the essence of knowledge and of truth in the law...

expl.echo; expl.eval; absurd; rep; allit; hypformal; register

3:7–8: But if through my falsehood the truth of God brings about an abundant increase in his glory, why am I still judged as a sinner? And why don’t we say, as we are slandered and as some say that we say, “let us do what is wrong so that good things may result!”? They deserve what judgement they get!

narr (βλασφημούμεθα); expl.echo; expl.eval; udeflate; absurd; enc

6:1–2a: So, what shall we say? Maybe we should just keep on sinning so we can get even more grace? Absolutely not!

³ A bit of a grey area whether this also qualifies as udeflate.

expl.eval; udeflate; absurd; enc; dubit

6:15: What then? Maybe we should sin because we are not under law, but under grace?
Absolutely not!

expl.eval; udeflate; absurd; enc; dubit

(?) **7:7:** So, what shall we say? The law is sin? Absolutely not!

expl.eval; udeflate; cfact; absurd; dubit

11:19–20: So then you'll say: Other branches got cut off so I could be grafted in! Congrats.
They were cut off for their unbelief; but you got your place by faith.

expl.echo; expl.eval; enc; concess

First Corinthians

1:27–28: But God chose the foolish things of the world so that he might shame the “wise,” and God chose the weak things of the world so that he might shame the “strong,” and the lowly things of the world and the things despised, these too God chose; the things that aren't so that he might abolish “the-things-that-are.”

CET; rep

2:1: I did not come preaching the mystery of God to you with a superabundance of speech or “wisdom.”

hyperb

2:4: But my speaking and my message were not delivered with convincing words of “wisdom,” but with the clear demonstration of the Spirit and power...

expl.eval (2:5)

4:8: You're already satisfied, you've already gotten rich, without us you've started to reign as kings! I wish you really were made kings, so we could all reign with you!

cfact; absurd; rep; ptc

(?) **6:12:** “I'm allowed to do anything!” But not everything is helpful. “I'm allowed to do anything!” But I will not be subjected to the dominion of some external thing.

expl.echo; expl.eval; absurd; rep; concess

(?) **6:15 (Chapter 5, §2.2):** Should I take the parts of Christ and stick them in a prostitute?
Absolutely not!

expl.eval; udeflate; absurd; enc; dubit

8:1: Now, about idol-food; sure, we know that “we all have knowledge.” Knowledge inflates egos, but love is constructive.

expl.echo; expl.eval; cfact (8:7); rep; concess

(?) **8:5(–6a):** For, so what if there are many so-called “gods,” just like *of course* there are many “gods” and many “lords,” but for us...

expl.echo; expl.eval; cfact; rep; ptc; concess

8:9: See to it that somehow this “right” of yours doesn’t become a stumbling block to the weak.

expl.echo; CET; diss

8:10: For if someone sees you, The One-Who-Has-Knowledge, dining at an idol feast, won’t their weak conscience be encouraged to eat idol-food?

expl.echo; rep; epithet

8:11: So then the weak person gets destroyed by that “knowledge” of yours; the brother, the one Christ died for.

expl.echo; CET; rep

(?) **10:23:** “Everything is allowed!” But not everything is helpful. “Everything is allowed!” But not everything is constructive.

expl.echo; expl.eval; absurd; rep; concess

Second Corinthians

In this section, I will differentiate between sarcasm and *asteismos*. Signals will not be provided for *asteismos*, since identifying means of communicating *asteismos* has not been a focus of this study.

10:1 (*asteismos*): I myself, Paul (who, face-to-face, behaves timidly with you, but, when away, acts boldly toward you) urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

11:4 (*sarcasm*): For if someone comes around preaching another Jesus that we didn’t preach, or you receive a different Spirit that you didn’t receive before, or you accept a different gospel that you didn’t accept before, you tolerate it well!

expl.eval? CET?; rep?;⁴ adv (καλῶς); enc

11:5 (sarcasm): For I don't think I lack anything in comparison to those Very-Super Apostles. But if I am unskilled at rhetoric, I am not so when it comes to knowledge...

expl.eval (11:13–15); hyperb; chunk; epithet; register

11:8 (asteismos): I stole from *other* churches when I drew my wages, so I could serve you

11:19–20 (sarcasm): For you gladly tolerate fools, clever as you are. For you “tolerate” it if someone enslaves you, if someone devours you, if someone exploits you, if someone exalts themselves over you, if someone strikes you in the face.

expl.eval; CET; absurd; adv (ἡδέως); rep

11:21 (sarcasm/asteismos): It's shameful, really; seems that we were too weak to treat you that way.

hypformal; concess

12:11 (sarcasm; [asteismos?]): I've become a fool, but you made me do it! For I deserved your commendation, since I lack nothing compared to those Very-Super Apostles, even if I am nothing.

hyperb; chunk; epithet; register

12:13 (sarcasm/asteismos): In what way were you made worse off than the other churches—except that *I* was never a drain on your resources? Do forgive me this injustice!

absurd; allit; hypformal

12:16 (asteismos): But be that as it may, I have refused to burden you; but since I'm so shifty I must have cheated you somehow.

⁴ Question marks here indicate cues relevant to “another ‘Jesus’... ‘Spirit’... ‘Gospel,’” which I have designated as plausibly, but not definitively sarcastic (see Ch.7, §2.2.1).

Appendix B: Passages Considered Ironic or Sarcastic by Other Interpreters that I Do Not Consider Instances of Sarcasm

This appendix lists passages where interpreters have identified irony or sarcasm in the undisputed Pauline epistles, which I do not consider to contain sarcasm. It is important to emphasise that the passages listed may still contain other forms of irony, although several very likely do not. These lists are not meant to be exhaustive. One to two scholars are cited with each reference. Cases where I deal with a given example elsewhere in the dissertation are listed, and further citations and discussion can be found in those sections.

Galatians

Chapter/Verse	Considered	Reference	Dissertation Section
1:13–16	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
1:23–24	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
2:14–18	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
3:1–5	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38; cf. Dahl 2002:129.	
3:2	“A note of irony”	Dahl 2002:126.	
3:3b	“clearly ironic”	Dahl 2002:129.	
3:10–14	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
4:8–20	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
4:9	“irony”	Dahl 2002:129.	
4:21–31	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
4:21	“irony”	Dahl 2002:129.	
5:1–4	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
5:11–12	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
5:12	“caustic sarcasm”	Longenecker 1990:cxix, 234; cf. Lietzmann 1923:36.	§3
5:15	“sarcastic”	Dahl 2002:129.	
5:23	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
6:1	“Half ironic, half serious”	Dahl 2002:128.	
6:3–5	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
6:7–10	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
6:11	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
6:12–13	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	
6:14	“irony”	Nanos 2002:38.	

Philippians

Chapter/Verse	Considered	Reference	Dissertation Section
3:2	“Sarkasmus”	Lichtenberger 2017:104.	
3:19	“ironically”	Reumann 1955:142.	

Romans

Chapter/Verse	Considered	Reference	Dissertation Section
13:1–7	“Irony”	Carter 2004.	§4

First Corinthians

Chapter/Verse	Considered	Reference	Dissertation Section
1:12	“ironisierende Überbietung der andern umlaufenden Parolen”	Käsemann 1963:1:X; cf. Schrage 1991:1:148.	§3
1:18–25	“irony”	Holland 1997:242–43; 2000:131–34.	§1
4:10	verbal irony	Sim 2016:57.	§2.2–2.3
8:4	“ironically”	Knox 1939:136n.7.	§3.2
11:18	“ironic understatement”	Pogoloff 1992:127.	
11:19	verbal irony	Sim 2016:61–63.	§5

Second Corinthians

Chapter/Verse	Considered	Reference	Dissertation Section
4:4	“ironic”	Reumann 1955:142.	Ch.6, §1.1
8:7	verbal irony	Sim 2016:63–65.	
10:12	“εἰρωνεία”	Forbes 1986:16.	
11:6	“elegant ἀστεϊσμός,”	Forbes 1986:17.	§2.2.2
11:7	“ironic exaggeration”	Furnish 1984:506.	§2.2.3
11:21b–12:10	irony	Varia ¹	§3.2

¹ Several scholars consider portions of the fool’s speech ironic (e.g. Loubser 1992; Holland 1993; Lichtenberger 2017:104–5). I will not cite specific verse ranges here.

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