

RETHINKING PAUL'S RHETORICAL EDUCATION

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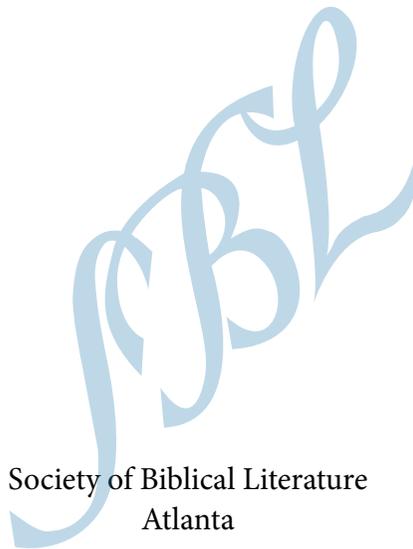
RETHINKING PAUL'S RHETORICAL EDUCATION

Comparative Rhetoric and 2 Corinthians 10–13

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COMPARATIVE RHETORIC
AND 2 CORINTHIANS 10-13

Ryan S. Schellenberg



Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta

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For Rick Schellenberg

What governs the inflections that make any utterance unmistakably the words of one speaker in this whole language-saturated world?

—Marilynne Robinson, *Absence of Mind*



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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations follow, in order of priority: Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999); *L'Année philologique on the Internet*. Cited 14 July 2011. Online: <http://www.annee-philologique.com>; Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Exceptions and additional abbreviations are provided below.

BSGRT	Bibliotheca scriptorum graecorum et romanorum teubneriana
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
HTKNTSup	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament Supplementband
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
PaSt	Pauline Studies
Colloquy	Protocol of the Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture
RG	<i>Rhetores Graeci</i> . Edited by Leonhard von Spengel. 3 vols. BSGRT. Leipzig: Teubner, 1854–1885.
SBLECL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Christianity and Its Literature
SGLG	Sammlung griechischer und lateinischer Grammatiker
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SSCFL	Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language
TCH	Transformation of the Classical Heritage
UTB	Uni-Taschenbüch für Wissenschaft
WGRW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World

WGRWSup Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the
Greco-Roman World Supplement Series
ZKNT Zahn-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament



INTRODUCTION

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

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

1. Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (trans. William E. Wilson; New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 47; orig. *Paulus: Eine kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Skizze* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1911).

2. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (3rd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

3. On Thessalonians, see esp. Richard S. Ascough, “The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 311–28; Ascough, *Paul’s Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians* (WUNT 2/161; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). On Corinthians: Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. John H. Schütz; SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982); Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, eds., *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

But in one key respect it appears we are right where Deissmann left us: we have not sufficiently troubled ourselves about the problem of Paul's "social class"—or, to use language with less ideological baggage, Paul's place in ancient society. Indeed, although what we have learned about life in the cities of first-century Achaia and Asia Minor has certainly enriched our understanding of the so-called "Pauline communities," it has not had much influence on our conception of Paul himself. Paul now speaks into a social context, but the exigencies of his own existence are seldom explored.

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

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

In contrast, recent treatments of the passage tend to leave the nature of Paul's own investment in the Corinthian community unremarked, focusing instead on his apparently dispassionate use of rhetorical strategies. Now Paul does not boast, he "uses boasting";⁷ he does not plead, he "uses

4. See Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle's Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 209.

5. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine* (ed. Eduard Zeller; trans. Allan Menzies; 2 vols.; 2nd ed.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1876), 1:302. Cf. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul* (2 vols.; New York: Dutton, 1879), 2:99.

6. See further the first section of chapter 2 in the present volume.

7. Duane F. Watson, "Paul and Boasting," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2003), 90.

many of the means rhetoricians recognized as ways to affect the *πάθος* of his hearers.”⁸ What such readings accomplish, it is important to note, is the erasure of precisely that “humanity” that so fascinated Baur. Paul has been reduced to the sum of his rhetorical intentions.

Likewise, for example, in his analysis of Gal 4:19, where Paul appears to express anguished concern for his Galatian converts (“My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you”), Troy Martin gives no consideration at all to Paul’s experience of his relationship with the Galatian community or what it might tell us about Paul’s social and religious subjectivity. No, Martin’s Paul simply chooses “pathetic persuasion” as a “strategy” that allows him “to achieve his ends.”⁹ Certainly this is one way to account for such a text, but it represents an interpretive decision—specifically, the decision to read Pauline discourse as a series of tactical maneuvers—that surely cannot go unexamined.

In practice, then, the last few decades of rhetorical criticism have facilitated the evasion of a whole set of questions concerning the nature of Pauline discourse—namely, all those questions that concern Paul himself as a human subject. In short, with the rise of rhetorical criticism Paul has gone from being a mind to being a mouth; we still pay scant attention to the rest of him.¹⁰ Indeed, despite all our effort to understand Paul’s rhetoric, too often we ignore the fundamental problem: Who speaks?—or, if I may borrow the evocative question posed by Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe, “Where is the voice coming from?”¹¹

8. Jerry L. Sumney, “Paul’s Use of *Πάθος* in His Argument against the Opponents of 2 Corinthians,” in *Paul and Pathos* (ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney; SBLSymS 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 159.

9. Troy W. Martin, “The Voice of Emotion: Paul’s Pathetic Persuasion (Gal 4:12–20),” in *Paul and Pathos* (ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney; SBLSymS 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 201.

10. There are, as always, exceptions: e.g., Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); John Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); David J. A. Clines, “Paul, the Invisible Man,” in *New Testament Masculinities* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson; SemeiaSt 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 181–92; Jennifer A. Glancy, “Boasting of Beatings (2 Corinthians 11:23–25),” *JBL* 123 (2004): 99–135; Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy*; and, of course, Deissmann, *Paul*.

11. Rudy Wiebe, *Where Is the Voice Coming From?* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974).

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

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

Bolstering this perspective—or perhaps deriving from it¹⁵—are recent claims that Paul was the beneficiary of formal education in classical rhetoric. What is more, it is this putative rhetorical education that now sponsors most assertions that Paul was a man of relatively high social status. Dale Martin’s verdict illustrates the logic:

12. Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), 381. The translator’s note here is worth reproducing: “The prophet Amos is fairly recognizable, but English readers may be reminded that Jakob Böhme, the mystic, 1575–1624, lived and died at Görnitz, Gerhard Tersteegan, the devotional writer, 1697–1769, at Müllheim” (381 n. 2).

13. *Ibid.*, 385.

14. The extent to which this is a reflection of our own discursive context is surely worthy of consideration. When Albert Schweitzer, for example, calls Paul “the patron saint of thought,” one suspects that Paul has become—despite Schweitzer’s own oft-cited warning against such projection in historical Jesus research—a cipher for his own self-understanding (*The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* [trans. William Montgomery; London: Black, 1931], 377).

15. The circular nature of the implicit argument is noted by C. J. Classen: “Es wird vom Text ausgegangen, um auf die Bildung zu schließen, und dann das erschlossene Bildungsniveau genutzt, um den Text zu interpretieren” (“Kann die rhetorische Theorie helfen, das Neue Testament, vor allem die Briefe des Paulus, besser zu verstehen?” *ZNW* 100 [2009]: 155).

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

As we will see in chapter 1, this conception of Paul's rhetorical ability represents a break with previous scholarly consensus. As Mark Edwards has quipped, "Commentators from the patristic era to the present have acknowledged that the New Testament teems with literary devices; only in recent years has it been customary to argue that the authors must have acquired these arts at school."¹⁷ Paul's earliest exegetes simply could not imagine a tentmaker with rhetorical training. And although for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars Paul's tentmaking was overshadowed by his prestigious Roman citizenship, still his letters sounded more like "rhetoric of the heart" than the careful compositions of an educated orator. Only in the last few decades have we seen confident claims that Paul was the recipient of a formal rhetorical education.

An initial problem with these claims is that much of the evidence adduced does not withstand careful scrutiny. Using as a test case 2 Cor 10–13, a text that is widely lauded for its creative manipulation of rhetorical conventions, part 2 of this study takes recent rhetorical criticism on its own terms and examines the credibility of its proposals. Here I demonstrate that many of the alleged parallels between Paul and the rhetoricians derive from superficial or misleading treatments of the rhetorical manuals and exemplars, and, further, do not adequately describe what we find in Paul. Those parallels that remain are few—I isolate four—and rather general; nevertheless, they do merit further explanation.

I seek to provide such explanation in part 3, where I examine the possibility that such figures, tropes, and rhetorical strategies as are found in Paul's letters derive not from formal education but from informal

16. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 52.

17. Mark J. Edwards, "Gospel and Genre: Some Reservations," in *The Limits of Ancient Biography* (ed. Brian McGing and Judith Mossman; Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 51.

socialization. I am not the first to raise this possibility; indeed, its proponents represent a substantial minority among Pauline scholars, and it has been a persistent thorn in the flesh of those who would attribute to Paul a formal education in rhetoric. But it has not been examined critically, and thus assertions to this effect have amounted simply to that: assertions.

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

This repertoire differs, of course, from one speech community to another. Nevertheless, as the work of Kennedy and others makes clear, there are a number of informal rhetorical features that are, if not universal, at least ubiquitous, recurring, albeit with local variation in usage and meaning, across a range of societies. Importantly, among these aspects of what Kennedy calls "general rhetoric" we find many of the same tropes and figures as those codified in the classical rhetorical tradition. Indeed, using diverse comparators from a variety of cultures, I demonstrate that the four rhetorical features identified in part 2 as being common to 2 Cor 10–13 and the formal classical tradition in fact belong to the domain of general rhetoric. Sensitivity to the inappropriateness of self-praise (what Plutarch called *περὶ αὐτολογίας*), use of warnings or disclaimers prior to potentially offensive speech (what the classical rhetorical tradition knows as *προδιόρθωσις*), strategic use of an interlocutor's voice (the broader strategy of which *προσωποποιία* is a single instance), and the use of figures

18. Dell Hymes, "Ways of Speaking," in *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer; 2nd ed.; SSCFL 8; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 433–54.

19. Dell Hymes, "On Communicative Competence," in *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader* (ed. Alessandro Duranti; 2nd ed.; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001), 60.

associated with “catalogue style” (figures known to rhetorical theorists as anaphora, isocolon, asyndeton, etc.) all are found in speakers who demonstrably have no formal rhetorical training. Accordingly, lacking specific indicators in the mode or manner of their use, their appearance in Paul’s letters does not constitute evidence of formal rhetorical education. Yes, this is rhetoric, but there is no evidence that it is formal rhetoric.

There are, further, a number of positive indicators in 2 Cor 10–13 that Paul’s voice should be located elsewhere—not least his own confession to that effect in 2 Cor 10:10 and 11:6. In addition to providing a detailed exegesis of these contested verses, chapter 12 addresses two key indicators that are often ignored in current scholarship. First, as patristic readers already recognized, Paul’s train of thought frequently must be read into the text and his usage is sometimes suspect. Indeed, until the recent rise of rhetorical criticism, it was all but universally acknowledged that Paul’s letters lacked rhetorical polish. Analysis of Paul’s syntax in 2 Cor 10–13 shows why.

Second, Paul’s “voice”—that is, his rhetorical comportment—differs tellingly from that cultivated among recipients of formal rhetorical education. Here I revisit a number of the comparators introduced in parts 2 and 3, attending to the way each voice negotiates his or her particular social location. In this regard, Paul does not resemble self-possessed aristocrats like Plutarch, Quintilian, or Demosthenes, or, for that matter, the Iroquois orator Red Jacket, who, though he received no formal education, occupied what was in one key way an analogous social location: he was accustomed to deference. Paul, on the contrary, speaks as one accustomed to ridicule, derision, and subjugation. His is an abject rhetoric, characterized by insecurity and self-abasement—and vigorous bursts of defiance.

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

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

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

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

20. Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (HUT 28; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 6.

21. *Ibid.*, 7.

tocracy and their cultural retainers. In other words, given the state of the evidence, Mitchell's model provides no way of knowing what is particular to the formal Greco-Roman tradition; and, until we know what is particular to this tradition, we are in no position to determine the manner and extent of Paul's indebtedness to it.

Put another way, what confronts us here is a question of comparative method. As is adequately demonstrated by a glance at the studies listed above—*Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition* et alia—the attempt to locate Paul's place in the ancient world necessarily involves comparison. But what, exactly, is the descriptive work such comparison accomplishes? And what are the theoretical assumptions that underlie it?

These questions seldom rise to the surface of the discussion, but it seems to be taken for granted in much New Testament scholarship, as in ancient historiography more generally, that a significant comparison is one that establishes a relationship of historical dependence. In other words, what we find probative is the mode of comparison Jonathan Z. Smith, following Deissmann, calls genealogical.²² It is on account of this methodological presupposition that, whereas my comparison of Paul with Red Jacket is sure to be deemed idiosyncratic and thus demanding of an explanation, comparison of Paul with Plutarch, say, is seldom thought to require theoretical justification. Of course, this is not because Plutarch is thought to have influenced Paul directly; rather, the underlying logic is that similarities between Paul and Plutarch can be attributed to shared intellectual inheritance. In other words, both are located on the same branch of a history-of-ideas family tree, and we can establish the precise nature of their kinship by means of comparison.

But there is a fundamental problem with this genealogical mode of comparison, at least as usually practiced in the study of ancient history

22. On the distinction used herein between genealogical and analogical modes of comparison, see Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 265–66; Ashton, *Religion of Paul*, 11–22; Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (CSJH; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 46–53; Gregory D. Alles, *The Iliad, the Rāmāyaṇa, and the Work of Religion: Failed Persuasion and Religious Mystification* (Hermeneutics: Studies in the History of Religions; University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 4–7. A similar distinction is made, independently, it would seem, by Karel van der Toorn, “Parallels in Biblical Research: Purposes of Comparison,” in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, June 22–29, 1993: Division A, The Bible and Its World* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1994), 1–8.

and the New Testament, for embedded within it are unstated anthropological presuppositions that govern our conceptualization of the relationship between the extant sources and the ancient lives to which they attest—presuppositions that, being unexamined, inevitably do so anachronistically. In particular, we have failed to interrogate our conception of the role of literary activity in human societies, and to reflect on the specific social space it occupies within the broader phenomenon of human communication. We tend to operate with the assumption that this one realm of discourse serves as an adequate proxy for the whole. But what do we actually know when we know the literary sources of societies like those of the ancient Mediterranean?²³ In a discipline such as ours, the question surely merits consideration; and, to address it, we should need to undertake not genealogical but what Smith calls analogical comparison.²⁴ That is, we should need comparisons that enable us to establish adequate theoretical categories for conceptualizing those realms of human communication to which our sources do not directly attest.

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

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

23. Cf. Justin J. Meggitt, "Sources: Use, Abuse and Neglect," in *Christianity at Corinth: The Scholarly Quest for the Corinthian Church* (ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 241–53.

24. See esp. Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 50–53; Alles, *The Work of Religion*, 4–7.

specific rhetorical practices Pauline scholars otherwise have located in 2 Cor 10–13.

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

First, they falsify the logic by which scholars have inferred formal education from the resemblance between Paul's letters and ancient rhetorical theory and practice. To illustrate with an example, if Red Jacket, who demonstrably had no formal education in the classical rhetorical tradition, used *prodiorthōsis* as clearly as did Paul, then its appearance in Paul's letters cannot in itself serve as evidence of his formal rhetorical education. Since the resemblance between Red Jacket and formal Greco-Roman rhetoric in this regard evidently derives not from genealogy but from analogy—specifically, from an analogous response to a similar social exigency—we cannot deduce from Paul's use of *prodiorthōsis* the direct influence of rhetorical theory unless first we rule out the possibility that it too represents an analogical similarity—in other words, that it too derives from what Kennedy would call general rhetoric or attests to Paul's familiarity with an informal rhetorical tradition. Therefore, in order to conclude that Paul was directly dependent on formal rhetorical theory, it is not sufficient for us to observe that he uses *prodiorthōsis*; no, we should need also to identify specific indicators of formal education in the manner of Paul's use thereof. At the very least, his rhetorical usage would have to resemble the ancient exemplars more closely than does that of Red Jacket.²⁵

But this set of comparisons does more than falsify the prevailing mode of argumentation; it also has a second and constructive role, providing an alternative context within which to conceptualize Paul's rhetoric. More precisely, having demonstrated the untenability of locating Paul's rhetoric within a particular genealogical context—namely, the formal tradition of classical rhetoric—I use comparison to establish for it an analogical context and thus to sponsor its redescription by means of the theoretical category of informal rhetoric.

25. On the comparative logic here, see further the final section of ch. 9 in this volume.

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

Third, the comparisons I undertake in this study undergird my effort to describe what I will call Paul's "voice." Before elaborating on the nature of this final mode of comparison, it will be useful briefly to explain what I intend "voice" to indicate.²⁶ Here Pierre Bourdieu's conception of *habitus* provides a useful starting point: Like other modes of comportment, speech is structured by what Bourdieu refers to as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" that represent the embodiment of social history.²⁷ Bourdieu refuses to ascribe significance to the comportment of individual subjects, preferring instead to speak of "structural variants,"²⁸ but of course he cannot deny the existence of individual difference: If comportment is, as Bourdieu insists, the embodiment of the history of social relations, and if, as he acknowledges, "it is impossible for all members of the same class (or even two of them) to have had the same experiences, in the same order,"²⁹ then no two individuals will comport themselves identically. Therefore, even after sociology (thus conceived) has done its explanatory work, during the process of which such individual difference is, as a matter of principle, ignored, we are left with a remainder of human behavior—a remainder that I, for one, find interesting, and think it worthwhile to describe, if not to explain.

26. For further discussion see the conclusion in this volume.

27. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (trans. Richard Nice; Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72.

28. *Ibid.*, 86.

29. *Ibid.*, 85.

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

Those speakers selected as comparators in this study have a range of voices, as, of course, do the ancient rhetorical theorists and practitioners discussed in part 2. As I will emphasize, each seeks room to maneuver within the constraints of a given social location; each adopts a persuasive *ethos* that is available within those bounds. I use these diverse voices as a comparative sounding board, noting particular similarities and differences, in order to highlight specific characteristics of Paul's voice that tend otherwise to escape notice. What I undertake here, then, is the sort of "kaleidoscope-like" comparison that, says Smith, "gives the scholar a shifting set of characteristics with which to negotiate the relations between his or her theoretical interests and data stipulated as exemplary."³⁰

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

30. Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 53.