BEHIND KIND WORDS

BEHIND KIND WORDS: SARCASM (AND RELATED DEVICES) IN SECOND

CORINTHIANS 10–13

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Lay Abstract

This thesis analyzes Paul's use of sarcasm in 2 Corinthians 10–13. To this end, the first two chapters seek to answer the questions: What is sarcasm? And, how do we find sarcasm in ancient texts far removed from our own culture? We approach these questions by surveying both ancient and modern thought on sarcasm. The goal at this point is to draw as straight a line as possible from classical to contemporary discussions, so that our analysis of Paul can benefit the insights of recent work while remaining grounded in terms current to Paul's day. With this background, it is then possible to address Paul's use of sarcasm in 2 Corinthians 10–13. The primary aims of this chapter are to identify sarcastic statements and analyze how they contribute to Paul's overall argumentation. Additionally, instances where our analysis can contribute to scholarly debates over certain passages are also addressed.

Abstract

This thesis takes as its subject Paul's use of sarcasm, using 2 Corinthians 10–13 as a case study. While there has been some work done on the related subject of irony in the Pauline corpus, scholarship has not addressed the issue of sarcasm specifically. For this reason, not only is a dedicated work on sarcasm useful for its own sake, but it also has the potential to nuance previous work on irony, as it can be difficult to generalize when dealing with such a broad rhetorical category. Due to the paucity of previous work on sarcasm – or related subjects – in Paul, the second major contribution of the study will be methodological. The goal of this discussion is to generate a working definition of sarcasm and to develop techniques for sarcasm recognition in ancient texts. To this end, I will survey ancient and modern thought on sarcasm so as to benefit from the insights of contemporary research while grounding the work in categories relevant to a Pauline context. Following the question of method, the final task will be an analysis of 2 Cor 10–13. Here the aim is threefold: to identify and analyze sarcastic statements, to address instances where the presence of sarcasm can contribute to the discussion of exegetical issues, and finally, to draw broader conclusions about the rhetorical effects of Paul's use of sarcasm.

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Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
APAACS	American Philological Association: American Classical Studies
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
CBET	*Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology*
CTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
CQ	*The Classical Quarterly*
DP	*Discourse Processes*
DPMJ	*Discourse Processes: A Multidisciplinary Journal*
ÉB	Études Bibliques
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
ETSMS	Evangelical Theological Society Monograph Series
HZKP	*Hermes: Zeitschrift Für Klassische Philologie*
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LQ	*Lutheran Quarterly*
JEPG	*Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*
JLSP	*Journal of Language and Social Psychology*
JP	*Journal of Pragmatics*
JPR	*Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*
JSNT	*Journal For The Study Of The New Testament*
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
MBCB	*Mnemosyne: Bibliotheca Classica Batava*
MS	*Metaphor and Symbol*
MSA	*Metaphor & Symbolic Activity*
NCB	New Century Bible
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTL	The New Testament Library
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PMS	*Perceptual and Motor Skills*
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
RQ	*Restoration Quarterly*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentarry
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche*

Introduction

In an age pervaded by instant messages, the difficulty of discerning sarcasm in writing has become almost proverbial. From tweets and texts all the way to electronic mail, with sarcasm the possibility of misinterpretation is a constant, as vital tonal cues dissolve into cyberspace. This issue is compounded as we approach ancient writings, where the interpreter must not only face a dearth of emoji and hashtags, but significant chronological and cultural distance.

With his apostolic authority under fire, in 2 Cor 10–13 we find Paul in something of a rhetorical corner, and at his most sarcastic. While sarcasm is readily apparent from only a cursory glance at these chapters, difficulties emerge with closer analysis, as it soon becomes clear a study of sarcasm must run into the broader issues of what exactly sarcasm is and how one goes about identifying it. Only once theory on sarcasm has been brought to bear on 2 Cor 10–13, is it then possible to address the intriguing question: Why – at the risk of misinterpretation or offence – does Paul choose sarcasm?[1]

There is, to my knowledge, no dedicated monograph or article on the subject of sarcasm in Paul's letters. Wilhelm Linss touches on sarcasm specifically in his article on humour in the Pauline corpus; however, in this case sarcastic statements are merely identified without further analysis.[2] There has been more work done on the related subject

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[1] While the question of authorial intent is far the more tantalizing, discerning the rhetorical force of Paul's words is the much less chimerical aim, and will therefore be our focus.

[2] Linss's work is useful insofar as it provides a reasonable list of ironic and/or sarcastic remarks in Paul's letters, in addition to other forms of humour. He does not seek to draw conclusions about Paul's use of these rhetorical techniques, nor does he provide much

of irony in the Pauline corpus,[3] but even this scholarship has yet to come into its own.

This body of work would benefit greatly from critical interaction with both ancient and

modern thought on the subject of irony. While some scholars approach Paul's use of

irony from a perspective grounded in ancient or modern theory, it is rare indeed to find a

work that shows a strong grasp of both.[4] In terms of interaction with ancient scholarship,

Forbes's research is perhaps the most exemplary, while Loubser shows the greatest

command of modern research on irony.

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help in distinguishing sarcasm from irony (see Wilhelm Linss, "The Hidden Humor of St Paul" *CTM* 25.3 [1998] 196–7).

[3] I will go into much more detail on distinguishing sarcasm from irony in chapters one and two. For now it will suffice to say that sarcasm is best understood as a form of verbal irony in which a speaker uses ostensibly positive words to express a negative sentiment targeted at some victim.

[4] For scholarship that shows some command of ancient thought, see Christopher Forbes, "Comparison, Self-praise and Irony: Paul's Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric," *NTS* 32.1 (1986), 10–3. Forbes does not seek to ground his work in modern literary theory ("Paul's Boasting," 1); John Reumann, "St Paul's use of Irony," *LQ* 7.2 (1955), 140 n.2. Reumann also cites research on biblical irony ("Irony," 141 n.3). For scholarship more grounded in modern theory, see J. A. Loubser, "A New Look at Paradox and Irony in 2 Corinthians 10-13," *Neotestamentica* 26.2 (1992), 507–11. Not only does Loubser make reference to different theories of irony; he helpfully makes explicit which model he adopts, and also provides a useful discussion of various forms of irony ("Paradox and Irony," 508–11). Jakob Jónsson's work on humour and irony is noteworthy for its discussion of modern, Greco-Roman, and Jewish thought and practice in regards to these subjects (see *Humour and Irony in the New Testament: Illuminated by Parallels in the Talmud and Midrash* [Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóds, 1965], 16–34, 35–40, and 41–89, respectively). While Jónsson's work is admirable for its engagement with both modern and ancient thinkers, it is somewhat out of date and would certainly benefit from interaction with the last sixty years of humour research. More recently, Glenn Holland also cites both ancient and contemporary thought on irony, although his work would benefit from interaction with a greater breadth of sources (see Glenn Holland, "Paul's Use of Irony As a Rhetorical Technique," in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* [JSNTSS 146; ed. Stanley Porter and Thomas Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1997], 235–8).

Perhaps as a result of this inconsistent approach to method, in cases where sarcasm is mentioned in the scholarship on Pauline irony, its treatment – both in terms of its definition and its relationship to irony – is quite uneven.

Aída Besançon Spencer's work deals specifically with the use of irony in 2 Cor 11:16–12:13. Spencer does not see sarcasm as operative in 2 Cor 10–13, but claims that Paul's tone in these chapters is sardonic ("bitterly ironical") rather than sarcastic ("sneering, caustic, cutting, or taunting").[5] Wilhelm Linss also operates under Spencer's definition of irony, and distinguishes sarcasm from this technique insofar as "sarcasm usually has the intention of wounding or ridiculing the opponent."[6] These perspectives treat sarcasm and irony as fully distinct, with no necessary overlap.[7]

Dealing broadly with humour and irony, Jónsson finds these two entities difficult to disentangle. He claims that, "according to my own understanding, humour is always sympathetic, but irony can be either friendly or unfriendly."[8] Since within Jónsson's perspective humour is inherently positive, sarcasm becomes almost its antithesis, occurring when there is no sympathy for the one who is the brunt of a quip.[9]

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[5] Spencer's source for these definitions is *Webster's Dictionary* (Aída Besançon Spencer "The Wise Fool (and the Foolish Wise): A Study of Irony in Paul," *NT* 23.4 [1981], 351). In terms of scholarship on irony, Spencer only interacts with Kierkegaard and Richard Lanham ("The Wise Fool," 349). She provides a slightly fuller definition of irony in her monograph, but still does not discuss more than a few sources (Aída Besançon Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style: A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of II Corinthians 11:16-12:13, Romans 8:9-39, and Philippians 3:2-4:13* [ETSMS; Jackson: Evangelical Theological Society, 1984], 289–91).

[6] Linss, "Hidden Humour," 195.

[7] This is at least Spencer's position. Linss is somewhat more vague on this point, though he seems to imply it. See "Hidden Humour," 195–7.

[8] Jónsson, *Humour and Irony*, 22–3.

[9] See Jónsson, *Humour and Irony*, 17–24.

Loubser sees the distinction between sarcasm and verbal irony as a matter of authorial intent. From his perspective, sarcasm differs from irony insofar as it "intends to hurt," whereas irony seeks "to engage the audience creatively and intellectually by reversing their preconceptions or convictions in a playful manner."[10] Forbes, while only touching on sarcasm very briefly, characterizes it as a subcategory of irony, drawing perhaps the closest connection between the two.[11]

Overall, where Pauline scholarship has touched on sarcasm, definitions have varied widely, ranging from depictions of sarcasm as essentially mean or caustic comments with no relationship to irony, to the perspective that the two are closely interrelated.

In addition to varying views on sarcasm, scholars have also come to different conclusions concerning Paul's use of irony. In her discussion of the fool's speech, Spencer argues that Paul, because of the extent to which his relationship with the Corinthians has broken down, must resort to indirect communication as a means of winning over his audience and employs irony as a means to "expertly reinforce his central message."[12] In a similar vein, Loubser sees Paul's use of irony in 2 Cor 10–13 as a means to "persuade and move the congregation" by using different layers of irony to generate an emotional impact on his audience.[13]

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[10] Loubser, "Paradox and Irony," 509.
[11] Forbes bases this distinction on ancient discussions ("Paul's Boasting," 10–1).
[12] Spencer "The Wise Fool," 349–51, 60.
[13] Loubser argues that this use of irony renders the passage a *peroratio*, supporting the integrity of 2 Cor ("Paradox and Irony," 519).

In his work on the fool's speech, Holland argues that Paul uses irony to ostensibly hide his real message from the Corinthians – while at the same time making it clear that he is being ironic – so as to encourage them to apply their own "spiritual insight" in order to grasp his actual point.[14] This perspective is similar to Reumann's, who sees didactic intentions behind Paul's use of irony.[15]

Holland also discusses the use of irony in 1 Cor 1–4, where he argues that Paul's use of irony seeks to reinforce "normative values" by ostensibly and ironically violating them. The use of irony also creates a connection between the speaker and the members of the audience who "get" the irony, which Paul employs to generate support for his position and strengthen his relationship with his audience.[16] Holland also discusses the potential for irony to encourage a sense of shame in order to provoke a return to the speaker's "normative standards."[17]

Forbes understands the rhetorical technique βαρύτης, discussed by Hermogenes in the mid-second century, as being important for understanding Paul's use of irony in 2 Cor

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[14] Holland, "Speaking like a Fool," 251, 258, 264. Even in the case that Holland's analysis is correct in regards to Paul's "foolish" boasting, his conclusions are limited insofar as Holland's work refers only to the fool's speech and may not capture all possible forms of irony.

[15] "Paul desired to edify, using irony as a teaching device" (Reumann, "Irony," 144). Reumann sees Paul's use of irony as extending to himself and others as well: "Paul engages in an irony of character in his letters. He assumes a pose that overrates others, underestimates himself, and even views his message ironically" ("Irony," 143–4). Reumann also suggests that Paul's use of litotes – a form of irony which entails "the use of a term contrary to the meaning desired, together with a negative to invert the expression" – often functions to soften the edge of Paul's rebukes ("Irony," 141–2).

[16] Holland, "Paul's Use of Irony," 246–7.

[17] Holland sees Paul as using this tactic in 1 Cor 4, but makes no mention of it in his discussion of 2 Cor 10–13 (see "Paul's Use of Irony," 239, 246).

10–12.[18] Although Forbes translates this term as "indignation," the way that βαρύτης is

described as a means of using negativity and self-depreciation to create a strong, even

somewhat insulting effect on a speaker's audience (Ἡ βαρύτης ἐννοίας μὲν ἔχει τὰς

ὀνειδιστικὰς ἀπάσας, Hermogenes, *On Rhetorical Forms*, 2.8.1–2), suggests that "gravity"

may better capture these sides of its rhetorical impact. Forbes writes that "straightforward

irony was perhaps the most common method of producing the effect."[19] Additionally,

Forbes understands the fool's speech as Paul's parody of his opponents' style of boasting,

in which Paul "radically inverts the content" of his boasts by boasting ironically in

weakness.[20] Forbes concludes that Paul's use of the rhetorical conventions of his day

relating to comparison, boasting and irony provides evidence of his rhetorical education.[21]

While Jónsson provides much interesting discussion of potentially humourous and

ironic instances in Paul's letters, since he is explicitly looking for humour – from which

he excludes sarcasm – his work has only limited application to the present study. It is

worth noting briefly that Jónsson observes that Paul often engages in humour even in

serious situations, and that "when he gets extremely hot-headed in the discussions he

cannot withstand the temptation to become rough."[22] While Paul's "roughest 'jokes'" are

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[18] "Paul's Boasting," 12–3. He sees this technique as operative in 10:11–2;11:1, 5, 11, 21 ("Paul's Boasting," 16–8).
[19] "Paul's Boasting," 13.
[20] "Paul's Boasting," 18–9, 21.
[21] "Paul's Boasting," 22–4.
[22] Jónsson, *Humour and Irony*, 242. DuBose Murphy also sees Paul as bringing a humourous touch to serious situations ("The Lighter Side of Paul's Personality," *ATR* 11.3 [1929], 247–8).

targeted at his opponents, Paul is also more than willing to laugh at himself.[23] It will be interesting to see whether or not Paul's use of sarcasm agrees with these general trends that Jónsson identifies.

An analysis of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13 has the potential to contribute to previous work on Pauline irony in a number of ways. As we have observed, it is difficult to find scholarship on Paul's use of irony that is grounded in both ancient and modern theory. Each of these corpora has great value. The ancient material is useful for situating the discussion in thought and in terms current to Paul's day, while contemporary scholarship on irony – and sarcasm – is valuable for approaching the definition, recognition, processing and effects of these rhetorical techniques. To benefit from both of these bodies of work, in the first chapter we shall discuss the way Paul's contemporaries treated the subject of sarcasm, focusing on definition and the way that sarcasm relates to other similar rhetorical techniques. The second chapter will survey contemporary scholarship on sarcasm, discussing both definition and method for approaching its study in written texts. At this stage it will be possible to construct a working definition of sarcasm. This task has the potential to go in two directions. Ideally, the aim is to draw as straight a line as possible from the majority of ancient thought to a major contemporary position, so as to construct a definition that enables us to benefit from the insights of modern scholarship without breaking away from categories that existed in the first century. If, however,

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[23] Jónsson, *Humour and Irony*, 229–30, 238–41. Jónsson divides Paul's use of humour and irony into five categories: comments relating to issues of theology, his opponents, his congregations, other apostles, and himself (*Humour and Irony*, 224).

ancient and modern discussions of sarcasm are too disparate, it will be necessary to draw clear distinctions between sarcasm and σαρκασμός.

The third chapter will be concerned with an analysis of Paul's use of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13. This passage provides an excellent case study, as it is not only a hotbed of Pauline wit, irony and invective, but is also the frequent target of scholars seeking to discuss Paul's use of irony. While the study of irony is not the same as the study of sarcasm and therefore one cannot expect the same conclusions in both cases, an analysis of Paul's use of sarcasm has the potential to nuance previous work on irony. Because of irony's breadth, it can be difficult to generalize about its rhetorical effects.[24] A study of sarcasm can therefore bring out some of the complexities that broader work on irony must necessarily gloss over.[25] The task in the third chapter then becomes threefold. First, we must identify sarcastic passages, making use of our previous methodological discussion. Second, it will be necessary to discuss any instances where reading a passage as sarcasm can contribute to exegetical debates thereupon. Finally, having completed these tasks, we will be able to draw more general conclusions about Paul's use of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13, and compare these results to previous scholarship on Pauline irony.

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[24] For example, unintentional situational irony will obviously function much differently than targeted verbal irony.

[25] That is, of course, assuming there is some relationship between sarcasm and irony. We will discuss this issue in greater detail throughout chapters one and two.

Sarcasm in Ancient Thought

In order to set the stage for our discussion of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13, it is necessary to first place this text against the backdrop provided by ancient discussions. To this end, we will make use of the rhetorical and grammatical texts roughly contemporary with Paul that discuss sarcasm and related techniques.[26] It is, however, important to note briefly what such a contextualization can and cannot accomplish.

By situating Paul's use of sarcasm within the works of the rhetoricians, I am not suggesting that Paul falls under their direct influence, or that he necessarily had any formal rhetorical training. The extent of Paul's education is much debated, and the present study will not come any closer to resolving the issue.[27] Regardless of Paul's familiarity or non-familiarity with the techniques of the rhetors, it seems decidedly unlikely that he would have required or had a copy of *Institutio Oratoria* or *Peri Tropon*

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[26] Of course, Greco-Roman sources make up only one significant portion of Paul's milieu. Unfortunately, there are no Jewish sources within Paul's historical setting that discuss sarcasm specifically. An analysis of sarcasm use in relevant Jewish literature, including other Second Temple Jewish texts and the Hebrew Bible, would provide excellent comparative material for the study of sarcasm in Paul. While this area represents an interesting and useful avenue for future research, it lies beyond the scope of the present research.

[27] Dean Anderson Jr. argues that Paul was neither formally trained in rhetoric, nor do his letters show conformity with ancient rhetorical genres (*Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* [Rev. ed; CBET 18; Leuven: Peeters 1998], 277, 280). For another major work that takes up this position, see Ryan Schellenberg, *Rethinking Paul's Rhetorical Education: Comparative Rhetoric and 2 Corinthians 10–13* (ECL 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 96, 239–41. For scholars who understand Paul as having some level of formal rhetorical training, see Mark Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity Cunning and Deception in Ancient Greece and Rome* (ESEC; Harrisburg: Trinity, 2001), 1 n.1; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 46–51; Forbes, "Paul's Boasting," 22–4. While the former position was dominant for the last several centuries, more recently the latter has become the majority viewpoint (Schellenberg, *Rhetorical Education*, 55–6; Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*, 1).

on his lap when he was making sarcastic comments about the "super-duper apostles" (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11).

While I am not seeking to establish any sort of literary dependency, or even influence, illuminating the theoretical context in which sarcasm was discussed in the ancient world will serve two major functions relevant to our overall purpose. First, understanding how the Greco-Roman authors conceptualized sarcasm will establish what sorts of ideas about this speech act were "in the air" in Paul's day.[28] Of course, it would be fallacious to assume that the categories and techniques of oratory would be representative of broader cultural practice – just as today it is far more common for individuals to employ sarcasm than to theorize about it.[29] The Rhetors can, however, demonstrate the validity of approaching sarcasm as a recognized rhetorical device in ancient texts and can provide background information on some of the ways that it was conceptualized and used. Second, the ancient material will provide an essential starting point for designing method for approaching sarcasm in ancient texts, especially in its

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[28] In order to develop a more complete picture of how sarcasm functioned in the ancient world, a broad survey of speeches, letters, and other writings roughly contemporaneous with Paul would be highly useful. For example, the orations and letters of Cicero and the writings of Lucian would provide excellent comparative material.

[29] Forbes makes a similar point in his discussion of ancient theory on irony:

> Though we cannot hope to argue that all the detail of this material was widely circulated in Paul's time and environment, it is quite clear that irony was a topic of considerable interest for rhetorical writers, and hence, most probably, for students and practitioners of rhetoric ("Paul's Boasting," 10–11).

I would also suggest that one would not have to be a trained orator to use many of the devices discussed by the rhetoricians and that, although designed for aspiring orators, to some extent rhetorical works are engaging in a process of defining, codifying and expounding on techniques that are mainstays of everyday speech.

ability to inform a working definition of sarcasm that will retain its validity through

discussions of modern research and analyses of sarcasm's use in first-century texts.

1.1 Quintilian

  To begin this contextualization, we first turn to the writing of Quintilian.

Composed late in the first century, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* was highly

influential.[30] This work is truly massive. Spanning twelve volumes, it seeks to be

comprehensive in treating the education of the ideal orator, from birth onwards (see

Quintilian *Inst.* Intro.1, 3; 1.1). Although written in Latin, Quintilian's work remains

important for the study of rhetoric in Paul's letters, not only due to Quintilian's influence,

but also on account of the extent to which he depends on Hellenistic rhetoric.[31]

  Quintilian provides us with a brief definition of sarcasm in *Institutio Oratoria*.

Unfortunately, the crucial sentence suffers from textual corruption,[32] but it at least

remains clear that Quintilian seeks to equate the Greek term σαρκασμός with the

description: "[to] disguise bitter taunts in gentle words by way of wit" (Quintilian, *Inst.*

8.6.57 [Butler, LCL]).[33] More fortunately, the data from Quintilian goes beyond this brief

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[30] Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, 92.
[31] Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, 95. Anderson sees Quintilian as useful "for our consideration of the application of ancient rhetorical theory to Greek writings of the first century AD" so long as the interpreter uses his work cautiously, distinguishing between the influences that Hellenistic thought and Cicero each exert upon it (*Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, 95–6).
[32] See Michael Winterbottom. *Problems in Quintilian* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1970), 148–9; H.E. Butler, notes in *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian,* by Quintilian (trans. H.E. Butler; *LCL*; 4 vols; Cambridge: Harvard, 1966), 3:332 n. 3–5, 3:333 n. 4.
[33] *Tristia dicamus mollioribus verbis urbanitatis gratia.* The possible variants for *mollioribus* (*mitioribus* and *melioribus*) do not affect the sense of the passage; see the discussion in Michael Winterbottom, *Problems in Quintilian* (London: Institute of

definition. By analyzing how Quintilian situates sarcasm within his discussion of tropes, we shall be able to identify how sarcasm relates to other rhetorical techniques, and to observe some ways that it works in practice.

Quintilian places sarcasm within his larger discussion of allegory. He defines allegory (*allegoria,* or *inversio* in Latin)[34] as when one "either presents one thing in words and another in meaning, or else something absolutely opposed to the meaning of the words" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.44 [Butler, LCL]).[35] This definition divides allegory into two distinct types. Quintilian dwells longest on this first genus of allegory, which occurs when *aliud verbis aliud sensu ostendit* (*Inst.* 8.6.44),[36] and discusses the extent to which allegory can be mixed with metaphor and other tropes (*Inst.* 8.6.44–49),[37] before going on to situate examples and riddles within this genus (*Inst.* 8.6.52–53).

Quintilian makes his distinction between the two genera of allegory reasonably clear. Although he does not name the first sort, there are strong linguistic grounds for

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Classical Studies, 1970), 148–49. There is a variant for *urbanitatis* that would significantly affect the sense of the passage, see n.45.

[34] Quintilian lists allegory as a trope (as implied in *Inst.* 8.6.58). Quintilian defines a trope as "the artistic alteration of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another" (*Inst.* 8.6.1 [Butler, LCL], see also 8.6.2–3).

[35] *Allegoria quam inversionem interpretantur, aut aliud verbis aliud sensu ostendit aut etiam interim contrarium.*

[36] When one "presents one thing in words and another in meaning" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.44 [Butler, LCL]).

[37] While Quintilian discusses allegory that relies on a series of metaphors (*continuatis translationibus,* 8.6.44), as well as pure and mixed allegory (*Inst.* 8.6.47–48), he sees a blend of allegory and metaphor as being the most common form of allegory (*Inst.* 8.6.48). Overall Quintilian prefers to combine other tropes with allegory, claiming that the most pleasant rhetorical effect comes from a cocktail "of simile, allegory and metaphor" (*Inst.* 8.6.48). For Quintilian's love of metaphor see *Inst.* 8.6.4.

equating allegory's second genus with irony.[38] While the connection is clear, the reader is left with very little definitional information about this type of allegory. In ten Latin words we discover that this genus is called *ironia*, as well as *illusio*, and that it involves expressions in which the meaning is contrary to what is literally expressed.[39] It is within this genus that we find Quintilian's discussion of sarcasm.

Before delving more deeply into Quintilian's own thoughts on sarcasm, it is worth touching briefly on the evidence he provides concerning other ancient discussions of the topic, and on what we can expect from his own. Quintilian provides evidence for a diversity of opinions on the subject of sarcasm amongst his contemporaries, and also gives his reader a sense of the level of rigor with which he seeks to distinguish between the various species of different tropes.

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[38] Quintilian makes this connection explicit by his reference to each *genus* as he discusses them, and his consistent use of *contrarium* when discussing the second genus of allegory (*Inst.* 8.6.44; 8.6.54).

[39] In defining irony, Quintilian furnishes us with, *etiam interim contrarium* ("[Ironic] allegory also simultaneously reveals a contrary meaning (along with the one expressed), *Inst.* 8.6.44), and *eo vero genere quo contraria ostenduntur, ironia est; illusionem vocant* ("irony is in that actual genus, which demonstrates things contrary to what is stated; they also call it *illusio," Inst.* 8.6.53–4). The term's English derivative makes Quintilian's use of the verb *ostendere* especially apt for describing irony. Compared to sarcasm, irony is a broad topic of discussion for ancient rhetoricians. For the purpose of this study, we shall concern ourselves with how irony is treated in texts that also discuss sarcasm, since we are primarily concerned with elucidating the relationship between these two forms of expression. For a brief discussion of how other ancient authors discuss irony, as well as citations of texts that do so, see Dean Anderson, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms: Connected to Methods of Argumentation, Figures and Tropes from Anaxamenes to Quintillion* (CBET 24; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 39–40; Johann Ernesti, *Lexicon Technilogiae Graecorvm Rhetoricae* (Lipsiae: Svmtibus Caspari Fritsch, 1795), 96. For further discussion of irony in Quintilian, see *Inst.* 9.2.44–53. Here Quintilian discusses a tropic and figurative form of irony, the meaning of the former being overt, and the latter being covert (*Inst.* 9.2.44–47).

Following his discussion of irony's sub-categories, Quintilian states, "there are also those who say that these things[40] are not species of allegory but are themselves tropes" (*Inst.* 8.6.58). Although here Quintilian does not engage in any name-dropping in regards to which scholars purport this view, he does provide his perspective on two common arguments against viewing sarcasm (and its cousins) as sub-categories of allegory. The first argument lies in the fact that allegory obscures meaning, whereas in techniques such as sarcasm, one's intention is (insultingly) clear (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.58).[41] Here Quintilian has furnished us with evidence that not only was sarcasm a category for discussion in his time, but also that ancient discussions surrounding sarcasm were nuanced and multi-sided, with different authorities classifying sarcasm in different ways.

Quintilian appears to find these complex discussions around classifying species of allegory overly pedantic, as he tersely states, *Sed utentium nihil refert* ("But this, of course, is a matter of indifference to those that use it," *Inst.* 8.6.58 [Bulter, LCL]). This sentiment, coupled with his love of mixing tropes (see *Inst.* 8.6.48), suggests that one should be cautious in expecting Quintilian to make fine distinctions between sarcasm and related rhetorical techniques.[42] From a methodological standpoint, in order to respect the

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[40] Here Quintilian is referring to σαρκασμός, ἀστεϊσμος, ἀντίφρασις, and παροιμία (*Inst.* 8.6.57 [Butler, LCL]).

[41] The second argument is more technical, and, essentially, is predicated on the idea that because allegory retains elements of its own that its sub-categories do not cover, it must therefore itself be a species, since true genera lack properties not found in any of their species (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.58).

[42] Quintilian is admittedly uninterested in entering into discussions that aim to break down tropes into their proper categories with perfect accuracy, as he seeks to concern himself with only those matters which are useful for the orator's education (*Inst.* 8.6.1–2).

fluidity of ancient discussions of sarcasm, as well as Quintilian's lack of concern with nuanced distinctions, it stands to reason that sarcasm should be studied alongside of and in relationship to other similar techniques. We are looking for overlapping semantic categories rather than stark lines. With this in mind, we shall approach Quintilian's discussion of irony in order to identify what can and cannot be said about how Quintilian perceives sarcasm.

Following his definition of irony, Quintilian provides further information concerning how it is used and expressed, which also sheds light on his conception of sarcasm. Unlike riddles, or *aenigma*, in which one seeks to make the true message of a statement obscure (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.52), even if irony always expresses something contrary to the literal sense of an utterance, the ironist intends the meaning of their statement to be readily understood by their interlocutors (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.54, 58). Quintilian also lists three ways in which ironic meanings can be made evident: when there is a mismatch between one's words and "the delivery, the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.54 [Butler, LCL]), ironical intent becomes clear.[43] It is important to note that Quintilian sees the presence of even one of these conditions as sufficient to generate irony (*qua earum verbis dissentit…*, *Inst.* 8.6.54). These insights are significant for our study of sarcasm. Being a species of irony – which is itself a genus of allegory (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57–58) – sarcasm shares the above properties. Therefore, Quintilian has not only provided us with an important characteristic of sarcasm – namely, that despite its employment of words that oppose what the sarcast

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[43] *Quae aut pronuntiatione intelligitur aut persona aut rei natura; nam, si qua earum verbis dissentit, apparet diversam esse orationi voluntatem.*

intends to say, no one is supposed to miss what is really meant – but also with a number of cues that we may expect to signal its use.

Having seen how sarcasm and irony are similar, it remains for us to discern in what ways sarcasm narrows irony's scope. Our data for this task include both descriptive material and examples. As previously mentioned, Quintilian does provide a brief definition of sarcasm (*Tristia dicamus mollioribus verbis urbanitatis gratia*, *Inst.* 8.6.57).[44] Following this description, he provides quick definitions for other species of irony, which he later lists as σαρκασμός, ἀστεϊσμός, ἀντίφρασις, and παροιμία (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57).[45]

Prior to these definitions, Quintilian provides several examples of irony that he does not explicitly tie to any of the Greek terms that he lists. However, the descriptions that preface these examples suggest that Quintilian had the following Greek technical terms in mind and therefore we have in this case an example of sarcasm in action. The text is worth producing in its entirety:

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[44] "[to] disguise bitter taunts in gentle words by way of wit" (Butler, LCL).

[45] The text as it stands leaves no definition for ἀστεϊσμός or παροιμία. *Aut quaedam contrariis significemus* ("or when we signify something through opposing words") covers ἀντίφρασις. There is a textual variant that reads *aut bonae rei* for *urbanitatis* (see, Butler, "Notes," 3:332 n.4, 3:333 n.4). Should this reading be preferred, Quintilian is essentially describing ἀστεϊσμός as being much like sarcasm, but instead being done "for the sake of a good thing," meaning that it involves the same sort of disconnect that we find in sarcasm between what is said and what is meant, but with ἀστεϊσμός we are moving from the apparently negative to the actually positive. This variant also whittles "by means of wit" off of Quintilian's definition of sarcasm, as translated by Butler (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57 [Butler, LCL]).

> *Et laudis adsimulatione detrahere et vituperationis laudare concessum est: Quod C. Verres, praetor urbanus, homo sanctus et diligens, subsortitionem eius id codice not haberet. Et contra: Oratores visi sumus et populo imposuimus.*[46]

Although there is not a one-to-one equation between Quintilian's first example and σαρκασμός, the way Quintilian describes this example suggests that he had sarcasm in mind. Quintilian's description "to censure with counterfeited praise" (*Inst.* 8.6.55 [Butler, LCL]) accords well with the description of sarcasm as concealing mockery in kind words (*Inst.* 8.6.57). Likewise, the example itself fits both definitions aptly, as a poor praetor is ostensibly lauded for his diligence in a way that makes his incompetence all the more obvious (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55). This connection reveals that we have in Quintilian not only definitional material relating to sarcasm, but also an example of its use.

Quintilian's subsequent examples of irony's species assist in defining the relationships between sarcasm and its close relatives. After relating the anecdote about the inept praetor, Quintilian provides another example where a speaker's intended meaning runs contrary to that which he expresses. Here Quintilian draws on a quip from Cicero, who mocks the idea that orators are imposing themselves on the people, and uses what looks like an insult as commendation (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55). This usage fits with the description "[to] praise under a pretense of blame" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55), and is presented as a foil to sarcasm (*et contra*, Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55). This example accords

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[46] "It is permissible to censure with counterfeited praise and praise under a pretence of blame. The following will serve as an example of the first 'Since Gaius Verres, the urban praetor, being a man of energy and blameless character, had no record in his register of this substitution of this man for another on the panel.' As an example of the reverse process we may take the following: 'We are regarded as orators and have imposed on the people.'" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55 [Butler, LCL]).

well with the textual variant *aut bonae rei gratia* (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57),[47] and is an excellent candidate for ἀστεϊσμός.[48] Such a presentation suggests that Quintilian sees sarcasm as closely related to ἀστεϊσμός, in that both involve the same ironic shift in meaning; they only differ regarding the direction in which that shift occurs.

Quintilian then goes on to provide a third example of one of irony's species, which seems to differ from sarcasm only minutely, if at all.[49] He writes, "we may speak in mockery (*in risu*) when we say the opposite of what we desire to be understood" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.56 [Butler, LCL]). This definition relates etymologically to the term ἀντίφρασις and suits its description in the following lines (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57).[50] While this definition, which highlights the communication of meaning through the opposite of what one desires to express, along with the possibility for humourous mockery, seems to separate this technique from his previous examples, Quintilian's example of ἀντίφρασις is nearly indistinguishable from sarcasm. At first glance, *Integritas tua te purgavit, mihi crede, pudor eripuit, vita anteacta servavit* (Quintilian, *Inst.*

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[47] See Butler, "Notes," 332 n.4. This variant depicts ἀστεϊσμός as performing essentially the same sort of operation as sarcasm, only "for a good purpose," that is, an apparent insult that in actuality amounts to praise (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57).

[48] Although Quintilian does not explicitly connect these examples to the Greek technical terms, nor provide a direct Latin translation for any of them, his three examples map neatly onto σαρκασμός, ἀστεϊσμός and ἀντίφρασις. Interpreting this second example as ἀστεϊσμός also fits well with other ancient discussions of this technique (see Anderson, *Glossary of Rhetorical Terms,* 26).

[49] Quintilian will later add that some would also include μυκτηρισμός as belonging with these species, which he defines as *dissimulatus quidam sed non latens derisus* (*Inst.* 8.6.59).

[50] For further discussion of ἀντίφρασις in Quintilian, see *Inst.* 9.2.47.

8.6.56)[51] appears to be straightforwardly sarcastic. Here is an insult cloaked in praise,

ergo σαρκασμός. Although he does not make it explicit, if Quintilian does see any

differences between this and his prior example of sarcasm, they may lie in a few subtle

areas. First, Quintilian does not suggest that ἀντίφρασις cannot cut in both directions; that

is, while sarcasm must move from the ostensibly positive to the negative, ἀντίφρασις may

be able to begin with an ostensibly positive or negative message.[52] Second, ἀντίφρασις

may be more purely contrasting than sarcasm. In his sarcastic example, Quintilian uses a

quote where although false praise is given, it is coupled with an unambiguous statement

of the target's incompetence (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55); the example of ἀντίφρασις holds a

contrary meaning for its entirety. Of course, these distinctions may read more into these

examples than Quintilian is willing to provide in terms of differentiation.

1.2 Tryphon

    In *Peri Tropon*,[53] Tryphon provides further information regarding ways of

conceptualizing sarcasm. The way that Tryphon presents his subject matter differs widely

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[51] "Believe me, your well known integrity has cleared you of all blame, your modesty has saved you, your past life has been your salvation" (Butler, LCL).

[52] This distinction would appear to leave the only remaining difference between ἀντίφρασις and Quintilian's previous definition of irony as the intention behind ἀντίφρασις being to get a laugh (*in risu*, Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.56). Quintilian's discussion of ἀντίφρασις in his next volume shows that he views ἀντίφρασις as a technique used for negation, namely, when one claims not to do or say something that they actually do (*Inst.* 9.2.47). The examples he gives here are quite different from the one provided in book eight. Anderson suggests that in his later discussion, Quintilian "is thinking more in terms of παράλειπσις" (Anderson, *Glossary of Rhetorical Terms*, 23).

[53] Two works, both of which discuss sarcasm, have come down to us attributed to Tryphon. These works, *Peri Tropon* and *De Tropis,* possibly do go back to Tryphon himself (Anderson, *Glossary of Rhetorical Terms,* 126 n.137), or at least may depend on a tradition stemming from an original Tryphon (M. L. West, "Tryphon De Tropis," *CQ*

from Quintilian. Unlike Quintilian, who has no time for minute distinctions and does not

always make it clear which rhetorical technique he is discussing at a given time, Tryphon

neatly separates his discussion of each τρόπος and φράσις into separate sections.[54] M. L.

West observes that in Tryphon's works, "There is normally no syntactical connection

between the entries."[55] That there are thematic connections between the terms Tryphon

defines, however, is evident, as he clusters all the same terms, with the exception of

allegory,[56] in his list of the λοιποί... τῆς φράσεως that Quintilian places in his discussion of

irony (Tryphon, *Trop.* 198, 21–29; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57). This similarity indicates that

both authors see sarcasm as being closely linked to a number of other speech acts.[57] To

these Tryphon also adds χαριεντισμός and ἐπικερτόμησις (*Trop.* 198, 28).

The introduction of *De Tropis* likewise provides its reader with further data on

how Tryphon conceptualizes sarcasm. In his list of tropes, which is similar to but not the

same as the one in *Peri Tropon*, sarcasm is found between εἰρωνεία and ἀστεϊσμός, which

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15.2 [1965], 231). In this study, the author of these texts will be referred to as Tryphon
for ease of reference, rather than as a commitment to a position on their authorship.
Tryphon's works are relevant for our current purposes, being composed no later than the
second century of the common era; they may also date back as far as the first century
BCE (West, "Tryphon De Tropis," 231). For further discussion of these works see West,
"Tryphon De Tropis," 230–5.

[54] Ultimately, Tryphon is more of a grammarian than a rhetorician, and his works bear
greatest similarity to dictionaries (West, "Tryphon De Tropis," 230).

[55] West, "Tryphon De Tropis," 231.

[56] Tryphon lists allegory as a trope, while listing sarcasm, irony, and other related terms
as φράσεις (*Trop.* 191, 12–16; 198, 21–29). For his definition of φράσις and τρόπος see
Tryphon, *Trop.* 191, 3–7 and 191, 12–15 respectively. Sarcasm and allegory, however,
are both listed as tropes in *De Tropis*, but even in this case their entries fall far apart
([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* p.2.1–5). Quintilian equates φράσις with *elocutio*, that is, style (*Inst.*
8.1.1 [Butler, LCL]).

[57] It is interesting, and potentially telling, that Tryphon lists ἀντίφρασις before irony, and
that these two terms are separated by a number of unrelated entries.

is also where it appears in the subsequent discussion ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* p.2.3; 15–17). However, in the introductory list sarcasm is directly followed by {ἤγουν χλεύη} ("that is to say, mockery" [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* p.2.3). This gloss, coupled with further associations between σαρκασμός and χλευασμός ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.1–2), indicates that for Tryphon, σαρκασμός and χλεύη/χλευασμός are essentially synonymous, to the extent that two separate definitions are not necessary.

An analysis of Tryphon's definitions will provide us with another voice in the ancient discussion of sarcasm and how it relates to other techniques. We shall begin as Tryphon does, taking each term in turn.[58] The first term that Tryphon takes up that is useful for our purposes is ἀντίφρασις. The placement given to antiphrasis in Tryphon's list, where it precedes irony and is separated from it by a number of entries, suggests that he may not see ἀντίφρασις as being so closely related to irony as Quintilian does.[59] This distance is reflected in the definitions as well. Although both ἀντίφρασις and εἰρωνεία bring out a meaning opposed to what is expressed, ἀντίφρασις does so without pretense (Tryphon, *Trop.* 204, 4–6; 205, 2–3).[60] Therefore, in Tryphon's works, sarcasm and ἀντίφρασις find themselves somewhat more estranged than in Quintilian.

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[58] Following the order of *Peri Tropon* for no other reason than that it is necessary to choose one.

[59] The placement in *De Tropis* is somewhat more ambiguous, but overall suggests that while, for Tryphon, ἀντίφρασις has similarities with irony, sarcasm, and other related techniques, overall it covers a semantic range somewhere between εἰρωνεία and ἐναντίωσις. ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 15, 18a–19).

[60] Tryphon defines ἀντίφρασις as a λέξις that uses one of two methods in order to convey an oppositional meaning (τὸ ἐναντίον, *Trop.* 204, 4–5). The first method is simply the use of contradiction, that is, saying the opposite of what one means (*Trop.* 204, 4–10). The

The discussion of irony presented in *Peri Tropon* provides important information concerning the relationships between different sorts of irony, which have implications for our study of sarcasm.[61] Tryphon identifies two separate kinds of irony, stating, "The sort of irony that is used on those with whom we are speaking is called μυκτηρισμός and χλευασμός; the sort that we use on ourselves is called ἀστεϊσμός" (Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 12–15). This description clearly lays out μυκτηρισμός, χλευασμός, and ἀστεϊσμός as subcategories of irony. If we can take the connection drawn between sarcasm and χλευασμός in *De Tropis* as being applicable to *Peri Tropon*, then it would be reasonable to conclude that Tryphon views sarcasm, along with these other rhetorical techniques, as species of irony.[62]

Tryphon's work also goes further in nuancing our discussion of ἀστεϊσμός. In *Peri Tropon* and *De Tropis,* both σαρκασμός and ἀστεϊσμός are discussed within relatively close proximity to each other, suggesting that Tryphon sees these two concepts as related.[63] The first of these two definitions limits the scope of ἀστεϊσμός to self-

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second form of ἀντίφρασις is essentially euphemism, which includes such things as naming the Furies "Kindly-Ones" or salt "seasoning" (*Trop.* 204, 4–6, 15–18). It is only the first of these resonances that shares some semantic territory with irony. For the discussion of ἀντίφρασις in *De Tropis*, see ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 18a–18b). In this definition and its examples there is never any suggestion that ἀντίφρασις is ever used for the sake of praise, dispraise or humour.

[61] For his definition of irony, see Tryphon. *Trop.* 205, 2–3.

[62] This connection is strengthened by the fact that Tryphon's description of sarcasm is "sandwiched" between his definitions of irony and mockery, and by the fact he provides no definition for χλευασμός (*Trop.* 205, 1–26).

[63] In *Peri Tropon* σαρκασμός follows ἀστεϊσμός by a few entries (although it follows it directly in the list of φράσεως), and in *De Tropis* the two are discussed one after the other (see Tryphon, *Trop.* 198, 27–28; 205, 17–21; 206, 12–17; [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16–7).

deprecating comments,[64] "as if someone who is rich says, 'I myself am the poorest of all men'" (Tryphon, *Trop.* 206, 12–15). However, the definition provided in *De Tropis* is potentially more inclusive, stating, "Ἀστεϊσμός is a stylistic device that tactfully indicates something positive through words that mean the opposite"[65] ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 17.2). However, even in this definition, the examples given are all self-deprecating ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 17.2–4). Therefore, while it is clear that, in the works ascribed to Tryphon, ἀστεϊσμός is thought of as sharing a close relationship with sarcasm, essentially fulfilling its opposite operation, self-referential quips are its paradigmatic form.

In addition to those already observed, Tryphon also places a few other terms in close enough proximity to sarcasm to suggest that he sees them as being related. The first of these is χαριεντισμός, which Tryphon defines as "a clever manner of speaking, in which both the one speaking and the one hearing are put into good humour" (*Trop.* 205, 28–9). The second term, ἐπικερτόμησις, "is allegory brought out using mockery (χλευασμοῦ) in order to bring pleasure to those who prosper by its use" (Tryphon, *Trop.* 206, 5–6). Χαριεντισμός can hardly be said to have much in common with σαρκασμός, as it lacks the "flesh-tearing" aspect of sarcasm. However, ἐπικερτόμησις may provide a more promising connection, as it not only involves allegory and χλευασμός, but also leaves one party

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[64] ἀστεϊσμός ἐστὶ λόγος ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ διασυρτικὸς γενόμενος

[65] ἀστεϊσμός ἐστι φράσις διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων τὸ κρεῖττον ἠθικῶς ἐμφαίνουσα. Tryphon goes on to add, "some have defined ἀστεϊσμός as occurring when one pretends that what they are saying is true" (ἔνιοι δὲ τὸν ἀστεϊσμὸν ὡρίσαντο προσποίησιν εἶναι τῆς ἀληθείας, [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 17.4).

insulted and the other laughing.[66] Beyond these qualities, Tryphon does not provide any

further information concerning the possible connection between σαρκασμός and

ἐπικερτόμησις, nor does he provide enough information to discern clearly what the

distinctions between the two might be.[67]

Tryphon's definition of sarcasm in *Peri Tropon* is unfortunately terse and

provides very little specific information concerning how sarcasm is formed. His example

of its use is likewise obscure. The definition is as follows, Σαρκασμός ἐστι μέχρι τοῦ

σεσηρέναι τοὺς ὀδόντας παραφαίνειν (Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 17–18).[68] Tryphon does not

provide his reader with a description of what sorts of statements are sarcastic, but instead

seeks to convey the sort of attitude that accompanies sarcastic messages. Here Tryphon,

as he does in his following definition of mockery (μυκτηρισμός), has essentially described

a facial expression. A comparison of these two expressions should serve to elucidate the

type of attitude that Tryphon sees as being conveyed through sarcasm.

Concerning mockery, Tryphon writes, "Mockery occurs with a certain sort of

motion and gathering of the nostrils" (*Trop. 205*, 23–4). The difference between this

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[66] The example Tryphon provides for ἐπικερτόμησις is also decidedly sarcastic (Tryphon, *Trop.* 206, 8–10). Additionally, the verb ἐπικερτομέω (or κερτομέω) is often used in Homeric texts as a means of signaling sarcasm (see Elizabeth Minchin, "The Expression of Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*" *MBCB* 4.63 [2010], 540–1, 545).

[67] Especially when compared to the definition of sarcasm in *De Tropis*, see n.73. If there is any discernible difference between σαρκασμός and ἐπικερτόμησις, it may be that sarcasm is the more bitter device, as it does not necessarily bring ἡδονή to any party (compare Tryphon, *Trop.* 206, 5–6; *Trop.* 205, 17–8; [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.2–3).

[68] "Sarcasm is showing the teeth while grinning." σαίρω is often associated with derisive laughter but need not necessarily carry negative connotations. Interestingly, the term is also used to describe open wounds (H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones, "σαίρω," *LSJ*, 1580).

facial expression and a sarcastic one is that sarcasm is related to a display of the teeth (μέχρι τοῦ σεσηρέναι τοὺς ὀδόντας παραφαίνειν, Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 17–8) while mockery involves movement of the nose (τὸ μετὰ ποιᾶς κινήσεως καί συναγωγῆς τῶν μυκτήρων γινόμενον, Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 23–4). Regarding what these expressions could mean, we can only engage in guesswork. The facial expression associated with sarcasm appears complex, involving both a grin, and the flashing of teeth, perhaps indicating both hostility and an (insincere) attempt to conceal it behind a smile. This combination would make it more hostile than the haughty, derisive snort of mockery. Of course, one should not read too much into these descriptions, as it is difficult enough to discern the facial expressions of a person not a meter away; how much more so the description of faces removed by many centuries!

The example that Tryphon provides for sarcasm in *Peri Tropon* further complicates the issue of how to understand the treatment of sarcasm in this text. This example is drawn from the *Iliad*, and relates an instance where Achilles complains about the injustice of Agamemnon absconding with his concubine (Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 20–1; see Homer, *Illiad*, 9.307–429). There is no irony or pretense here, nor any mention of a forced grin, only a straightforward complaint.

There are a number of ways of understanding Tryphon's depiction of sarcasm in *Peri Tropon*, which depend on the history and authorship of the text. It is possible that here we have a conceptualization of sarcasm that is altogether different from what we find in Quintilian, and that for Tryphon sarcasm refers to any derisive comment accompanied by a sneering grin. This view is problematic if both *Peri Tropon* and *De Tropis* can be

traced back to the thought of an original Tryphon, as the definition of sarcasm in *De Tropis* does not follow this conception ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.2–3). In light of the general similarity that exists between the two Tryphonic texts,[69] it is perhaps better to see the definition of sarcasm presented in *Peri Tropon* as incomplete rather than representing a different school of thought. The author/compiler of *Peri Tropon* has chosen to focus on the sarcastic facial expression, just as he has with μυκτηρισμός, and is not concerned to give a more definitive definition of sarcasm.[70]

In *De Tropis*, Tryphon's definition of sarcasm is more descriptive than what *Peri Tropon* presents.[71] Since it is placed side by side with irony and is similarly described, it will be useful to consider both definitions together, they are:

> Εἰρωνεία ἐστι φράσις τοῖς ῥητῶς λεγο<μένοις αἰνιττο>μένη τοὐναντίον μεθ ὑποκρίσεως ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 15.2–3).[72]

And,

> Σαρκασμός ἐστι φράσις τοῖς ῥητῶς λεγο<μένοις αἰνιττο>μένη τοὐναντίον μετὰ χλευασμοῦ ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.2–3).[73]

Evidently, based on these definitions, Tryphon sees little variance between sarcasm and irony. Both are φράσεις, are suggestive rather than overt (αἰνιττομένη), and express an

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[69] Only a cursory reading is necessary to see that the two texts are more similar than different (see Tryphon, *Trop.* 191, 3–18; 206, 11–17; [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* p.; 17.1–4).

[70] The drawback of this position is that it leaves the example of sarcasm in *Peri Tropon* as more of an enigma than it would perhaps be if the text were purporting a wholly different understanding of sarcasm.

[71] Of course, these differences could exist for any number of reasons, including the possibility of differing authorship or interpretations of Tryphon's work.

[72] "Irony is a stylistic device that uses what is expressed literally to hint at the opposite meaning, while engaging in pretense."

[73] "Sarcasm is a stylistic device that uses what is expressed literally to hint at the opposite meaning, while engaging in mockery."

oppositional meaning through words that would literally mean something different. It is difficult to tell from his wording whether Tryphon sees sarcasm and irony as using some incongruity within the literal meaning of the words employed as a means of signaling that they are not to be taken at face value, or whether τοῖς ῥητῶς λεγομένοις simply indicates that the literal words are the vehicle for expressing τοὐναντίον ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 15.2, 16.2).

As important as the connections these definitions draw between sarcasm and irony are, it is also essential to note the ways in which the two terms differ. As mentioned previously, the two definitions are essentially word for word, with the exception of the preposition μετά's objects ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 15.1–2; 16.1–2). While irony occurs μεθ ὑποκρίσεως ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 15.1–2) sarcasm happens μετὰ χλευασμοῦ ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.1–2). It seems unlikely that here the distinction is intended to suggest that sarcasm does not entail pretense, as it, like irony, hints a meaning contrary to what is expressed ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.1–2). Instead, it is preferable to see Tryphon as distinguishing sarcasm from irony insofar as sarcasm narrows irony's scope, consisting of expressions that employ irony to create a mocking effect.

In *De Tropis*, Tryphon provides an example of sarcasm unique from what is presented in *Peri Tropon*. The reference is from *The Odyssey*, and, divorced from its context, may appear quite innocent. Of course, it is not:

> Now indeed Melantheus, you will keep watch the whole night long,
> lying on a soft bed ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.4–5).

At this point in Homer's narrative, poor Melantheus is being hung by his limbs, awaiting a slow and painful death (Homer, *Od.* 22.170–200). Here sarcasm creates a clear disjunction between the actual situation and the words used to describe it, and, as in Tryphon's definition, the intent to mock is clear. Although Tryphon has not stated explicitly that sarcasm must move from the ostensibly positive to the negative, his example, coupled with his emphasis on mockery, suggests that he likely thinks in this way.

1.3 Vitae Homeri

There is also a discussion of sarcasm in *Vitae Homeri*. Spuriously attributed to Plutarch, this text is difficult to date with any certainty.[74] Keaney and Lamberton suggest a date sometime between Plutarch's life and the close of the second century CE, leaning towards the second century.[75] This text represents a "rambling, encyclopedic work" that discusses everything from Homer's origins to the sorts of rhetorical devices found in his writings.[76] The definition of sarcasm in this text falls within the author's discussion of irony, which is word for word what we find in Tryphon:[77] "Irony is… a rhetorical technique (λόγος) that uses the opposite of what one intends as a means to express the opposite of what one says, while employing a certain element of pretense (ὑποκρίσεως)" ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 699–700; cf. Tryphon. *Trop.* 205, 2–3).[78]

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[74] J. J. Keaney and Robert Lamberton, *[Plutarch] Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* (APAACS 40; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 2.
[75] Keaney and Lamberton, *[Plutarch]*, 7–9.
[76] Keaney and Lamberton, *[Plutarch]*, 10, 45–53.
[77] Tryphon's word order is, however, slightly different.
[78] Or perhaps more literally: "Irony is… a thing making the opposite (meaning) evident through (its) opposite, with a certain element of pretense."

The first ironic example given in this section has elements of both sarcasm and ἀστεϊσμός, as our author cites an example where Achilles engages in both the false praise of Agamemnon and pretended self-deprecation ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 701–705). However, the author of *Vitae Homeri* does not separate irony into different categories until after this first example, where he goes on to divide irony into two distinct subcategories.[79] The first involves the pretended depreciation of something in order that one might actually praise it, and the second entails the use of ostensible praise in order to blame ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 706–709).[80] This description sounds very much like what we find in Quintilian, and, like Quintilian, our author is not interested in explicitly linking these different species of irony to a specific rhetorical term. Certainly, the first sort of irony sounds a lot like what we have seen elsewhere described as ἀστεϊσμός, except perhaps that it is more general,[81] involving not just pretended self-deprecation, but any act of praising through false blame, presumably whether directed at the self or another.

Although the second form of irony described in *Vitae Homeri* suggests an equation with sarcasm, the text is somewhat unclear. The author goes on to give two examples of this seemingly sarcastic irony, the first of which is identical to what we find in Tryphon (*Trop.* 205, 7), and well suits what the author's definition seeks to exemplify ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 707–711). The second example for this second form of irony seems

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[79] This differentiation is signaled by the μέν... δέ construction in [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 706–9.

[80] The second of these types of irony is defined as follows: ἕτερος δέ, ὅταν τις ἄλλον ἐπαινεῖν προσποιῆται, τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ψέγων.

[81] Only when compared to more narrow definitions of ἀστεϊσμός that limit it to self-deprecating comments (such as Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 12–15; 206, 12–15).

hardly to fit the description it seeks to elucidate, relating an instance from the *Odyssey* where Penelope's suitors mock Telemachus, as they jokingly accuse him of planning their murders ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 713–715). This passage sounds little like sarcasm, and even less like false praise.[82]

It is after this hazy example that the author sets out his definition of sarcasm itself, saying, "There is a certain kind of irony, namely sarcasm, in which someone, using the opposite of what they mean, insults someone else whilst pretending to smile" ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 716–717).[83] Here the use of sarcasm to insult, as well as to display a pretense of positivity, stand out most starkly. This definition is similar to the second sort of irony described above as well as to what we see in Tryphon, the key difference being the terms used for mocking/insulting.[84] The overall similarity between this definition and what precedes it is suggestive of a link between sarcasm and the second kind of irony discussed earlier. Although different words may be used, pragmatically speaking, it is hard to see much difference between blaming through false praise and insulting by means

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[82] The only way I can see it fitting the author's description is if the suitors are mocking Telemachus by exaggerating his abilities and propensity for action. In colloquial English sarcasm, the sense would be something like: "Wow, check out the tough guy!" It is quite possible that the way Homer has chosen to introduce this text has influenced the author of *Vitae Homeri*'s selection of this passage as an example of irony. In this instance, the narrator introduces the quip by stating that the suitors "mocked and taunted" Telamachos (ἐπελῶβευον καὶ ἐκερτόμεον, Homer, Od. 2.323). For the use of κερτομέω as a common means of signaling sarcasm, see n. 67.

[83] Ἔστι δέ τι εἶδος εἰρωείας καὶ ὁ σαρκασμός, ἐπειδάν τις διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων ὀνειδίζῃ τινι μετὰ προσποιήτου μειδιάματος.

[84] This text associates sarcasm with the verb ὀνειδίζω, while Tryphon ties sarcasm to χλευασμός ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 716–717; [Greg.Cor.] *Trop*. 16.2–3)

of its opposite (i.e., praise).[85] If our author had sarcasm in mind in both cases, we may

safely add the two previous ironic examples to our collection of sarcastic statements

identified by ancient authors. At the very least, the author sees so close a connection

between εἰρωνεία, specifically his second type of irony, and σαρκασμός that the discussion

of the former prompts his treatment of the latter. As in other cases, here sarcasm remains

closely tied to other rhetorical tropes within its "family," including allegory, which the

author goes on to describe as a close neighbor of both sarcasm and irony ([Plutarch]

vit.Hom. 721).

Interestingly, the author of *Vitae Homeri*, like Tryphon, includes in his definition

of sarcasm not only descriptive material, but also an associated facial expression. He

describes sarcasm as occurring "with a false smile" (μετὰ προσποιήτου μειδιάματος,

[Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 717). This statement not only provides interesting material for how

sarcasm was cued in the ancient world,[86] but also tersely expresses the idea that sarcasm

consists of negative meaning veiled under positive pretense. The similarities between

these and Tryphon's definitions of sarcasm and irony, as well as the fact that many of the

same examples are used in both cases,[87] suggests some sort of literary relationship

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[85] English translation may make this distinction appear greater than it is. The issue is the nuance between ψέγω and ὀνηδίζω. In this case, the two terms do not differ greatly in meaning (see H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones, "ψέγω," and "ὀνηδίζω," *LSJ*, 2019, 1230).

[86] Of course, for our purposes nonverbal communication will not be of use.

[87] Compare Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 20–1 with [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 718–20 and Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 7 with [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 710. See also [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.4–5; [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 723–4.

between the two.[88] This relationship raises the possibility that the author of *Vitae*

Homeri's may be interpreting Tryphon's definition of sarcasm. If this is the case, *Vitae*

Homeri's definition of sarcasm provides evidence that an ancient reader has taken

Tryphon's flashing of the teeth (μέχρι τοῦ σεσηρέναι τοὺς ὀδόντας παραφαίνειν, Tryphon,

Trop. 205, 17–8) as a false smile.

1.4 Alexander Numenius

In his grammatical work *De Figuris*,[89] Alexander Numenius provides some

limited information about sarcasm. Here the mention of sarcasm falls within a discussion

of irony and reads as follows: "There are four sorts of irony: ἀστεϊσμός, μυκτηρισμός,

σαρκασμός, (and) χλευασμός" (Alex. *Fig.* 23, 9–10). Alexander does not go on to

specifically define any of these sorts of irony. This almost passing mention is worthy of a

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[88] Determining the nature of this literary relationship, who used whom or whether both used someone else, lies beyond the scope of this study. However, the plausible date ranges for these texts make it most likely that Tryphon's work is earlier. The use of the same examples and similar definitions suggests that the author of *Vitae Homeri* may have known Tryphon's work. Additionally, the definition of sarcasm in *Vitae Homeri* looks much like what one would expect from someone trying to combine the two definitions of sarcasm found in the works attributed to Tryphon (see Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 17–9; [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.2–3; [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 716–7). The example that *Vitae Homeri* provides for sarcasm is the same as the one presented in *Peri Tropon*, differing only in the amount of the quotation it provides (see [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 718–20; Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 20–1). The author of *Vitae Homeri* also provides a brief definition of ἀντίφρασις that is very close to what we find in *Peri Tropon* – although both its definition and placement in the work suggest that the author does not see ἀντίφρασις and irony as related – or he is at least uninterested in connecting the two ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 307–9; Tryphon, *Trop.* 204, 4–10; see also [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 18b).

[89] The Greek title is: ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΛΕΞΕΩΣ ΣΧΗΜΑΤΩΝ. The full Latin title is: *De Figuris Sententias et Elocutionis*. Alexander composed this work sometime during the second century CE (Leonhard Schmitz, "ALEXANDER NUMEʹNIUS" in *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* [ed. W. Smith; 3 vols.; London: John Murray, 1873], 1:123).

few brief observations. First, here, as in Quintilian, sarcasm is presented as a kind of irony and therefore we can expect it to share irony's traits while also narrowing its scope. Second, in this passage, sarcasm is again paired with 'the usual suspects,' reinforcing the connection between it and similar techniques such as μυκτηρισμός, ἀστεϊσμός, and χλευασμός.

Alexander's definition of irony, which likewise captures traits present in sarcasm, is similar to what we find in Tryphon: "Irony is a rhetorical technique (λόγος) that pretends to express the opposite of what is meant" (Alex. *Fig.* 22, 30).[90] Although he does not discuss the differences between the various species of irony, the examples Alexander chooses are apt, touching on each of the four types of irony he identifies at least once:

> That, doubtless, is why you have made me so happy in the eyes of many Greek women, in return for these favors. I, poor wretch, have in you a wonderful and faithful husband… (Alex. *Fig.* 23, 1–3; Euripides, *Medea.* 509–511 [David Kovacs]).

As well as the following:

> And as in Demosthenes, "For it is clear that you are grieving over those unfortunate Thebans, having property in Boeotia, but I am rejoicing, who was pursued immediately by those who had done these things" (Alex. *Fig.* 23, 4–8).

In these few short lines we have ἀστεϊσμός ("but I am rejoicing"), and a great deal of σαρκασμός ("you have made me so happy," "favors," "a wonderful and faithful husband," "you are grieving"). Μυκτηρισμός and χλευασμός perhaps fit best with "a wonderful and faithful husband," but one could make a case for mocking elements in the other sarcastic examples.

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[90] Εἰρωνεία δέ ἐστι λόγος προσποιούμενος τὸ ἐναντίον λέγειν.

1.5 Conclusion

A survey of ancient perspectives on sarcasm that fall into a timeframe relevant for the study of Paul reveals a diversity of opinions, as well a level of consistency on certain points.

Classification is one area in which our ancient sources on sarcasm are split. Quintilian provides a clear genealogy for sarcasm, tracing its descent from the trope allegory, through allegory's second genus, irony, before listing it as one among several species of irony. This situation is roughly mirrored in *Vitae Homeri*, which establishes sarcasm as a type of irony and as a neighbor of allegory. On this point the data from Tryphon is somewhat ambiguous, with *Peri Tropon* listing sarcasm not as a trope but as a φράσις. However, *De Tropis* retains sarcasm in its list of tropes, and both texts ascribed to Tryphon agree that sarcasm has no real relationship to allegory.

If there is anything that our ancient sources agree on, it is sarcasm's situation within the broader category of irony. In the works of Quintilian, Alexander, and in *Vitae Homeri*, sarcasm is clearly defined as a subcategory of irony, sharing its qualities and narrowing its scope in various ways. Again, Tryphon is somewhat of an outlier in this regard, not making a subordinate relationship between irony and sarcasm explicit, but connecting them strongly so as to still suggest that sarcasm belongs within irony.

In addition to situating sarcasm within broader rhetorical categories, these ancient sources provide significant definitional material for sarcasm, which reveals a number of important characteristics that the authors of these texts considered as integral to sarcasm. For Quintilian sarcasm is irony that expresses something negative about a person or

persons through words that are ostensibly positive. Sarcastic statements, like other forms

of irony, are not designed to be subtle, but are instead clearly signaled by certain tonal or

contextual cues (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.54).[91] This basic description of sarcasm as using

positive words to convey negative meaning is essentially what we find in *De Tropis* and

Vitae Homeri, with these texts describing sarcasm as conveying a message in opposition

to one's literal words for the sake of either mockery or insult. *Peri Tropon* and *Vitae*

Homeri are noteworthy for their use of facial expression, as they describe sarcasm as

occurring with the accompaniment of a false smile. The idea of pretense features heavily

in *Vitae Homeri* and in Tryphon's work.[92] This emphasis on pretending, coupled with the

use of the verb for "hinting" in *De Tropis* could indicate some conflict with Quintilian's

assertion that sarcasm is not meant to be hidden, but is made plain by certain cues –

although, it is still possible to engage in pretense while giving enough signals that it is

indeed all just an act. Finally, Tryphon's work provides a potential synonym for

σαρκασμός in χλευασμός.

 In addition to defining sarcasm, our ancient sources also describe its relationship

to a number of other rhetorical techniques. There is perhaps no term so frequently linked

to sarcasm in the literature as ἀστεϊσμός. Quintilian, Tryphon and Alexander all place

sarcasm in close connection with ἀστεϊσμός, essentially defining it as performing

sarcasm's opposite operation – that is communicating a positive message through

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[91] Quintilian mentions two contextual cues: discrepancies between the speaker's *persona* and what is said, and conflict between a statement and *rei natura* ("the nature of the subject" [Butler, LCL]).
[92] Signal by the use of the verb προσποιέω.

ostensibly negative words. There is, however, evidence that ἀστεϊσμός was viewed more narrowly, especially the definition in *Peri Tropon*, coupled with the fact that all of our examples of ἀστεϊσμός in these texts portray it as being self-deprecating. It is, therefore, possible that either ἀστεϊσμός was technically conceived as "positive" sarcasm, but self-deprecating irony was its more paradigmatic form, or that there were simply conflicting opinions on the subject circulating in the ancient world.

The relationship between sarcasm and ἀντίφρασις is somewhat more complicated than its relationship to irony or ἀστεϊσμός. While Quintilian sees quite a strong connection between the two, Tryphon leaves the relationship ambiguous at best, and still others ignore it entirely. Indeed, one almost gets the sense that, though they are using the same word, Tryphon and Quintilian are defining entirely different concepts when they employ the term ἀντίφρασις.[93] Finally, sarcasm also finds points of connection with other terms, such as χλευασμός, μυκτηρισμός, and ἐπικερτόμησις.

Our survey of the relevant ancient discussions of sarcasm has revealed diversity as well as agreement in different areas. Overall, the literature does not present rigid categorizations or sharp distinctions between sarcasm and other related rhetorical techniques.[94] The ancient authors appear unconcerned with making pedantic distinctions between sarcasm and its relatives. What we have instead are overlapping and interrelated signs used to signify various common sorts of speech acts. These connections raise an interesting methodological point. In order to respect the fluidity of these categories in the

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[93] See Anderson, *Glossary of Rhetorical Terms,* 23.
[94] Quintilian, for one, explicitly expresses his disinterest in such things.

ancient world (not to mention the modern) as well as the diversity of opinions on the subject, it will be important not only to identify and discuss sarcastic statements in our analysis of Pauline texts, but also to discern how these expressions interact with other related rhetorical techniques.

Sarcasm in Contemporary Research: Definition and Method

Having surveyed ancient thought on sarcasm, we may now turn to modern research. While sarcasm was certainly not the most frequently discussed topic for ancient rhetoricians, and is even less for contemporary scholars of Paul's letters, there is no shortage of current work on the topic across the humanities and social sciences. This body of research not only contains significant scholarship on sarcasm's definition, but also has generated a number of broader paradigms for understanding sarcasm as a speech act. It is with a brief survey of these paradigms that we shall begin, taking note of how ways of conceptualizing sarcasm impact an exegesis of Paul. From this point, we will move on to constructing a working definition of sarcasm that balances the need to operate within categories current to Paul's context while enabling us to benefit from the insights of modern scholarship. This task will necessarily involve the comparison of sarcasm to similar rhetorical techniques. Finally, we shall address the issue of method in order to discern to what extent contemporary discussions can assist us with the recognition of sarcasm in ancient texts.

2.1 Approaching Sarcasm

When it comes to broadly conceptualizing sarcasm, there are a number of competing viewpoints. These paradigms are generally constructed in order to provide a framework for understanding verbal irony, and for this reason are useful for our

discussion of sarcasm.[95] Broadly speaking, these conceptualizations fall into three major

categories: Grician perspectives, echoic mention hypothesis and pretense theory.[96]

The work of H. P. Grice has been highly influential, not only within discussions of

language, meaning and conversation, but also on the way scholarship has approached

irony and sarcasm.[97] Grice lists four "conversational maxims" that he understands as

present in reasonable, purposeful communication. These include the maxims of quantity,

quality, relation and manner.[98] Quality is itself divided into two maxims: the first refers to

not engaging in falsehood, and the second to not saying something for which one does not

have appropriate evidence.[99] Grice understands irony as the flouting of the first maximum

of quality, that is when a person says something that they know to be false.[100] In the case

of irony, because what the speaker says is obviously not true, they must be attempting to

convey an attitude related to the one that they display, namely, something contrary to it.

Was this not their aim, there would be no reason to make the statement in the first

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[95] If, that is, sarcasm represents a more restricted form of irony as we have seen in the Classical sources.

[96] See Marta Dynel, "Linguistic Approaches to (Non-)Humorous Irony Special Issue," *Humor* 27.4 (2014), 538.

[97] For discussion of Grice's life and work, see Siobhan Chapman, *Paul Grice: Philosopher and Linguist* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[98] Quantity refers to contributions of appropriate amount (for example, if I had three cavities and my dentist only filled one, he would be flouting the maximum quantity). Quality refers to the sincerity and honesty of the contribution. Relation refers to whether or not a contribution is contextually appropriate (James 2:15–16 is a good example of the flouting of this maxim). Manner refers to the expectation for one's conversation partner to identify the contribution that they are to make and to perform it appropriately (H.P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989], 28).

[99] Grice, *Way of Words,* 28, 34.

[100] Grice, *Way of Words,* 34.

place.[101] This perspective is not without its critics, who point out its failure to account for all the various forms of ironic/sarcastic utterances, such as cases in which sarcastic irony occurs without falsehood.[102]

Sperber and Wilson describe irony as occurring through the use of echoic mention. Echoic mention involves the explicit or implicit reference to a proposition, not for the sake of reporting information, but to express the speaker's feelings concerning the original message.[103] In this conception, the target of an ironic utterance is simply the individual whose speech is "mentioned."[104] Sperber and Wilson go on to describe sarcasm as cases where the ironic utterance echoes the sarcast's interlocutor.[105]

Paul Simpson sees echoic mention as pragmatically flawed, since in order to make

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[101] Grice, *Way of Words,* 34.

[102] Such as certain sarcastic requests (e.g., "Would his majesty like the crusts cut off of the Royal Sandwich?"). For a fuller critique of Grice's work, see Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, "Irony and the Use–Mention Distinction," in *Radical Pragmatics* (ed. Peter Cole; New York: Academic Press, 1981), 296–7, 309, 315–6.

[103] This "proposition" can take a number of forms, including reported or expected speech (Sperber and Wilson, "Irony," 306–7, 309–10, 316–7). For an example of echoic mention, consider the case where Lisa decides to carpool with Tim, who claims to be an excellent driver, but then backs into a fire hydrant on the way out of the driveway. Lisa then says, "Wow, you're such a great driver!" In this case, the sarcastic utterance recalls and pokes fun at Tim's previous assertion. For a list of scholars who adopt the echoic mention position, see Dynel, "Linguistic Approaches," 538. Echoic mention hypothesis has begotten other similar perspectives. Roger Kreuz and Sam Glucksberg are proponents of "echoic reminder theory," which argues that sarcastic statements harken the listener back to "some antecedent state of affairs" in order to be recognized as sarcastic. However, this state of affairs need not refer to speech or be made explicit ("How to be Sarcastic: The Echoic Reminder Theory of Verbal Irony," *JEP* 118.4 [1989]), 374, 376. For distinctions between echoic mention and echoic reminder, see "How to be Sarcastic," 383–4.

[104] They see there as being no victim when the mention is impersonal. The self can also be the victim of echoic mention (Sperber and Wilson, "Irony," 314).

[105] Sperber and Wilson, "Irony," 314. This description seems to limit sarcasm to statements where the sarcastic insult is targeted only at the individual the sarcast is speaking with. I, however, see no reason to exclude comments that reference absent third parties from sarcasm.

sarcastic and ironic statements fit the paradigm, the analyst must "come hell or high water" invent a previous message that the ironic/sarcastic person is mimicking.[106] Herbert Clark and Richard Gerrig do not see mention as being sufficient to cover the breadth of ironic utterances, such as Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, which mocks a position that no one actually purports and therefore cannot be said to "mention."[107]

Another major paradigm for understanding irony and sarcasm sees them as involving an element of pretense. In Clark and Gerrig's understanding, irony occurs when a speaker "is pretending to be an injudicious person speaking to an uninitiated audience."[108] The speaker adopts the persona of someone who would seriously mean what they are really saying ironically or sarcastically. The utterance is ostensibly spoken to a real or imagined portion of the audience who takes it seriously, while the person the actual ironist is actually speaking to is "in" on the pretense.[109] Pretense also generates imbalance, creating an in-group consisting of those who – for one reason or another – understand the statement as ironic and an out-group of those who do not.[110] Kreuz and

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[106] Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a stylistic model of satirical humour* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), 116.

[107] Herbert Clark, and Richard Gerrig, "On the Pretense Theory of Irony," *JEP* 113.1 (1984), 125. See also John Haiman, *Talk is Cheap: Sarcasm, Alienation, and the Evolution of Language* (New York: Oxford, 1998), 25–6.

[108] Clark and Gerrig, "Pretense Theory," 121. For other scholars who adopt the pretense view see Gregory Currie, "Why Irony is Pretence," in *The Architecture of the Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford, 2006), 111–133; Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 25–6.

[109] Clark and Gerrig, "Pretense Theory," 122.

[110] Clark and Gerrig, "Pretense Theory," 124–5. For example, I and two colleagues attend a lecture that Colleague A knows I have no interest in (clearly this is all purely hypothetical) and Colleague B does not. Afterwards, over a beverage, I comment to the two: "That was truly intriguing" (while firing a knowing glance at Colleague A). In this case I have both made a quip for the amusement of one friend while alienating another (of course, he is not aware of the fact, at least, until I feel guilty and let him in on the joke).

Glucksberg find pretense theory too broad to be a useful model, arguing that, since it can be applied to all non-literal speech, pretense is not useful as a theory of irony and sarcasm.[111]

Overall, the school of thought that sees sarcasm as an act of pretense will be the most useful to adopt as a working paradigm for approaching the study of sarcasm in Paul. Not only is this view one of the most prevalent, but this perspective also does not suffer from some of the difficulties and pitfalls of the Gricean approach and echoic mention perspectives discussed above.[112] More importantly, sarcasm as pretense well suits what we find in the ancient material, which often associates the two (προσποιέω and its derivatives, see Alex. *Fig.* 22, 30; [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 708, 717; Tryphon associates προσποιήσις with ἀστεϊσμός, see [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 17.4). It will, therefore, be important when approaching Pauline writings to keep in mind that when Paul is being sarcastic, he is pretending to be someone else, and in doing so is also expressing a certain attitude toward some person(s) or thing(s). Likewise, it will be important to observe the dynamics between who is "in" on the pretense and who is not; who is laughing with Paul and who Paul is laughing at. Doubtless it will be intriguing to observe what Paul's adoption of a

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[111] For Kreuz and Glucksberg's critique of the pretense model, see "How to be Sarcastic," 384. For an example of non-ironic pretense see Bilbo Baggin's use of "Good morning!" as an attempt to get rid of an intrusive wizard (J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* [New York: Random House, 1937], 5).

[112] Kreuz and Glucksberg may well be correct that speakers using other figures of speech, such as metaphor, are also engaging in pretense. Indeed, much of what we do is performative. However, this does not preclude this model from being a useful way of discussing sarcasm and irony. As to how the concept of pretense should be applied to other figures of speech, I am more than content leaving this question to scholars of metaphor and the like.

persona enables him to do – or perhaps it may be better to say "get away with doing" – rhetorically.

Opting for pretense over mention also has an impact on what historical insights may be drawn from cases where Paul engages in sarcasm. If sarcasm always hearkens back to previous speech or attitudes, we can safely make deductions about the situations that Paul addresses. Paul's sarcastic echo could be traced back to its source to reveal a message expressed by another group such as his opponents or congregations. To adopt pretense as a working paradigm is to acknowledge that while such cases of mention are possible, they cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, the interpreter must be cautious about "mirror-reading" Paul's sarcasm.

2.2 Defining Sarcasm

Having briefly discussed which broader paradigm for conceptualizing sarcasm is most useful for the study of Paul, we shall now move onto the issue of definition. It is almost impossible to divorce the issue of sarcasm's definition from its relationship with irony. Therefore, how sarcasm relates to irony will be discussed along with perspectives on what sarcasm itself entails. After surveying scholarly perspectives on sarcasm, we will then be able to address how sarcasm compares to other similar rhetorical techniques.

Some scholars adopt the perspective that sarcasm and irony are so interconnected that there is no clear way to distinguish between the two, and therefore treat them as if the

terms were essentially synonymous.[113] Sarcasm has been also been called "the crudest

form of irony."[114]

Others seek to be somewhat more descriptive, opting for a definition that

emphasizes the discrepancy in sarcasm between what is said and what is meant. David

Kovaz, Roger Kreuz and Monica Riordan Define sarcasm as:

> A form of nonliteral language in which a statement means something different
> from the literal meaning of the statement (typically an opposite meaning). It can
> be considered a subtype of verbal irony and frequently involves negativity and
> humour.[115]

Unlike the ancient material (see Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57; [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.2–3;

[Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 716–717), by not making negativity an essential facet of the

definition, such a definition allows the possibility for sarcastic statements to engender

positivity.[116] This perspective has the advantage of describing sarcasm in a way that

coincides well with colloquial English usage.[117]

In his book *Talk is Cheap: Sarcasm, Alienation, and the Evolution of Language*,

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[113] See S. Attardo et al., "Multimodal markers of irony and sarcasm," *Humor* 16.2 (2003), 243. See also Geoffrey Nunberg, *The Way We Talk Now: Commentaries on Language and Culture from NPR's "Fresh Air."* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001, 91–3.

[114] See D.C. Muecke *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen & Co, 1969), 54.

[115] Kovaz, David, Roger Kreuz, and Monica Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm from Literal Language: Evidence from Books and Blogging," *DPMJ* 50.8 (2013), 599 n.1.

[116] Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan's study on discerning sarcasm in written text found that statements identified as sarcastic more frequently describe negative situations in positive terms than vice versa ("Distinguishing Sarcasm," 607). For other scholars who see sarcasm as encompassing both positive and negative statements, see Daniel Voyer and Janie P. Vu., "Using Sarcasm to Compliment: Context, Intonation, and the Perception of Statements with a Negative Literal Meaning," *JPR* (2015), 1–10; Kreuz and Glucksberg. "How to be Sarcastic," 374, 382–3.

[117] For example, if a smart friend were about to write a test and I say, "You'll probably bomb it," I would sooner explain myself by stating that I was being sarcastic rather than by launching into a technical discussion of whether it would be better to classify my quip as a sort of ἀστεϊσμός or more broadly as verbal irony.

John Haiman enters into a significant discussion of the definition, recognition and distinguishing of sarcasm from other similar rhetorical techniques. Haiman views sarcasm as a form of linguistic play;[118] an unnecessarily peripatetic sort of expression that is not a given from person to person, time to time, culture to culture, or place to place.[119]

Haiman's definition runs as follows:

> Sarcasm is characterized by the *intentional production* of an *overt and separate* metamessage "I don't mean this" in which the speaker expresses hostility or ridicule of another speaker, who presumably *does* "mean this" in uttering an *ostensibly positive* message. The "other speaker" may be the sarcast's present interlocutor, an absent third person, or conventional attitude.[120]

This definition highlights intentionality, asserts that sarcasm is not meant to go undetected and allows for the victims of sarcasm to be either personal or impersonal.[121] In contrast to scholars who understand sarcasm as capable of conveying positive or negative sentiments, Haiman's definition confines sarcasm to acts of "verbal aggression."[122]

In this understanding, sarcasm remains closely tied to, yet distinct from irony. Haiman claims that sarcasm requires human action. One can be ironic without being

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[118] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap,* 16–7, 25.

[119] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 12. Fortunately, for our purposes, we have already established that sarcasm was not only a cultural norm in Paul's day, but also a topic for reflection amongst ancient scholars.

[120] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 25.

[121] Lee and Katz argue that a specific, personal victim is necessary in sarcasm (but not in irony), see "Ridicule in Sarcasm," 9–10; for the impact of having an explicit victim on sarcasm recognition, see Kreuz and Glucksberg. "How to be Sarcastic," 382–4.

[122] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 19–20, 26. For other scholars who take the position that sarcasm must consist of ostensibly positive statements with negative intent, see Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 534, 537; John Campbell and Albert Katz, "Are there Necessary Conditions for Inducing a Sense of Sarcastic Irony?" *DP* 49.6 (2012), 459; Christopher Lee, and Albert Katz, "The Differential Role of Ridicule in Sarcasm and Irony," *MS* 13.1 (1998), 1–3.

aware of the fact, but not sarcastic.[123] For Haiman, "what is essential to sarcasm is that it is overt irony *intentionally used by the speaker as a form of verbal aggression.*"[124] Minchin classifies sarcasm as a variety of verbal irony, on a scale that can range from affectionate teasing to bitter sarcasm.[125] Much like Quintilian, these perspectives understand sarcasm as being a part of irony while also narrowing its scope in a number of important ways.

The perspective on sarcasm represented by scholars such as Haiman and Minchin leaves utterances that employ the same means of expression as sarcasm (a message that communicates that the speaker does not mean what they say) but operate in a different direction (an ostensibly negative message meant to express something positive) without a home in their description of what qualifies as sarcastic. To cover this category of statements, Haiman adopts the terminology of "affectionate insults."[126] Making this sort of distinction is consonant with what we find in much of the ancient material, which tends to portray ἀστεϊσμός as fulfilling sarcasm's opposite operation (see Quintilian *Inst.* 8.6.55, 57; [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 17.2).[127]

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[123] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 20.

[124] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 20.

[125] Elizabeth Minchin, "From Gentle Teasing to Heavy Sarcasm: Instances of Rhetorical Irony in Homer's *Iliad.*" *HZKP* 138.4 (2010), 387–8. For general discussion on irony, and work on the distinctions between various sorts of irony, see Muecke, *Compass of Irony*; Hutcheon, Linda, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (Florence: Routledge, 1994); Loubser, "Paradox and Irony," 509–11.

[126] *Talk is Cheap*, 22–3.

[127] As previously discussed, it is worth noting that ἀστεϊσμός is often depicted as referring to self-reflexive ironic statements (see Tryphon, *Trop.* 206, 12–15), a connotation that terms such as "affectionate insults" and "ironic teasing" do not share.

There remains still another perspective that sees no necessary overlap between sarcasm and irony. Marta Dynel argues that there are two major factors involved in humorous irony, namely "overt untruthfulness (typically explicit, but sometimes only implied) and implied negative evaluation of the referent."[128] This negative evaluation depends on the "the flouting of [Grice's] first maxim of Quality."[129] This definition of irony covers much of the same semantic territory as a number of ancient definitions of sarcasm as wells as what we have seen already in Haiman's work.

With such a definition of irony, one may wonder what linguistic ground Dynel leaves open for sarcasm to occupy. Dynel conceptualizes sarcasm and irony as distinct, such that it is possible to be sarcastic without being ironic and vice versa, while the two can potentially overlap in "sarcastic irony."[130] In this understanding, the distinction lies in the fact that "sarcasm inheres in negative evaluation, which may be conveyed implicitly or explicitly but typically recruiting wit, yet it is not based on the overt untruthfulness typical of irony."[131] Kreutz and Glucksberg further differentiate between sarcastic and negative irony. From their perspective, it is the intent to insult or cause verbal injury to a

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[128] Marta Dynel, "Isn't it ironic? Defining the scope of humorous irony." *Humor* 27.4 (2014), 622, see also 635. For her discussion of different varieties of irony, see "Isn't it ironic?" 624.

[129] Dynel, "Isn't it ironic?" 625.

[130] Dynel, "Isn't it ironic?" 634. For other scholars who see sarcasm and irony as not necessarily overlapping, see D.C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony*, 54; Kreuz and Glucksberg. "How to be Sarcastic," 374. Kreuz and Glucksberg's example of non-ironic sarcasm is the insincere, "Thanks a lot!" ("How to be Sarcastic," 374). However, even in this case it is hard to see how this generally positive expression of thanks could not be ironic, even under the definition they themselves provide: "in verbal irony a speaker expresses an attitude toward some object, event, or person by saying something that is not literally true" (Kreuz and Glucksberg. "How to be Sarcastic," 374).

[131] Dynel, "Isn't it ironic?" 634.

[131] Kreuz and Glucksberg. "How to be Sarcastic," 374.

specific individual or individuals that distinguishes ironic sarcasm from simple negative irony.[132] Essentially, these positions identify sarcasm is a means of wounding with words, a way of poking fun that only sometimes overlaps with irony.[133]

A brief survey of modern scholarship on sarcasm's definition has revealed a great diversity of opinions. Some see sarcasm and irony as essentially synonymous, while others see it as possible to produce sarcasm without a hint of irony. Still others, following more in the lineage of Quintilian, Alexander and the author of *Vitae Homeri,* classify sarcasm as a variant of verbal irony, and differ only in the range of expressions that they consider sarcastic. This project does not seek to solve the problem of sarcasm's definition. Indeed, there may be no actual solution and the denotation of sarcasm may ever remain just as clear-enough-yet-always-somewhat-elusive as sarcastic statements themselves. The present aim, then, is to select a definition that best suits the task at hand. To this end, our working definition of sarcasm should be as consonant as possible with as much of the ancient material as possible, while retaining continuity with at least some major strand of contemporary research.

At this point, to anticipate a possible objection (in Pauline style), we must ask the question: What then is the advantage of interacting with contemporary definitions of sarcasm? Or what is the value of modern research? πολὺ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον! First, modern research enables critical reflection on sarcasm by greatly broadening the limited

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[132] Kreuz and Glucksberg. "How to be Sarcastic," 374. Such a perspective does not allow for impersonal victims of sarcasm. Allowance for such victims (as in Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 25), would make the distinction Kreuz and Glucksberg are making here superfluous.
[133] See Dynel, "Isn't it ironic?" 634.

ancient discussion and can help fill conceptual gaps left by the imprecision of ancient

scholars. Second, working with a definition of sarcasm that retains continuity with

modern scholarship on sarcasm will enable us to make use of recent methodological gains

in terms of sarcasm recognition, which will be invaluable in our discussion of ancient

texts. The task then is to draw as straight a line as possible from Tryphon to the present,

while remaining conscious of areas where deviation between ancient and modern notions

occurs.

 To this end, Haiman's definition provides the most useful bridge between ancient

and contemporary definitions of sarcasm. The major elements of this definition –

including "*intentional production*,"[134] overtness (see Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.54, 58),[135]

"verbal aggression" (see [Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 716–717; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57;

[Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.2–3) and an "ostensibly positive message" that the speaker does not

mean (see [Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 706–9, 716–7; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.57)[136] – find parallels in

ancient sources. This way of conceptualizing sarcasm has also found successful use in

scholarship on sarcasm in classical studies.[137]

 The only major difference between this definition and the ancient material is the

distinction between sarcasm expressing the metamessage "I don't mean this" in Haiman's

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[134] While intentionality is not stated explicitly in our ancient sources, it is difficult to see how one could expect an individual to accidently "censure with counterfeited praise" (*Inst.* 8.6.55 [Butler, LCL]).

[135] It is word noting that intention for sarcasm to be understood as sarcastic does not mean that there cannot be any level of ambiguity in sarcasm (as one would expect from [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.2–3), only that the sarcast perceives that they have done enough to make their meaning detectable (at least to that portion of the audience that the sarcast wishes to be "in" on the comment).

[136] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 25.

[137] See Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*"; "Rhetorical Irony."

definition and its expression of the metamessage "I mean the opposite of this"[138] in the majority of the ancient material. However, even this distinction may be overstated. It would perhaps be reading our ancient sources too literally to suggest that expressing a very-different-but-not-technically-opposite idea could not fall under the terms *contrarium* or ἐναντίον.[139] Nevertheless, in our discussion of Paul, it will be useful to distinguish between sarcasm expressing the opposite of what is stated and sarcasm expressing simply that what is stated is not meant. With a definition of sarcasm in hand it remains to discuss briefly how sarcasm, within this understanding, relates to similar rhetorical techniques that we have not yet had occasion to mention.

2.3 Related Devices

Despite its reliance on stating what is untrue, sarcasm remains distinct from outright lying, as the sarcastic person has no intention to create deception.[140] Additionally, in lying there is continuity between text and subtext – the speaker wants to communicate what they say, even if they do not believe it – whereas in sarcasm the speaker's true message disparages the original statement.[141] Sarcasm is also distinct from facetious un-truths, as these, although they can make fun, do not ridicule.[142]

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[138] *contrarium* (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.54), τὸ ἐναντίον ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 716–717; [Greg.Cor.] *Trop*. 16.2–3).

[139] Or even an opposing sentiment (e.g., ridicule rather than praise, see Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6. 55, 57; [Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 707–708), rather than the exact opposite of the expression.

[140] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 21.

[141] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 21.

[142] See Dynel "Isn't it ironic?" 632. Dynel understands the critical distinction between sarcastic irony and humorous boldfaced lies as the necessity of negative evaluation in irony (which also applies to sarcasm) that is not necessary in lying ("Isn't it ironic," 632, 634).

Sarcasm and parody also share overlapping semantic territory. Parody involves the use of imitation and exaggeration to create a humorous effect.[143] Sarcasm can often employ some form of imitation, but need not always.[144] Additionally, there is a different sort of disconnect between text and subtext in sarcasm than in parody.[145] Finally, although it often is, sarcasm, unlike parody, need not be humorous.

Another relative of sarcasm worthy of note is what Haiman describes as the "guiltive."[146] This neologism describes the classic "guilt-trip," in which the "guilter" emphasizes their own goodness, selflessness and general righteousness without betraying a hint of pretense.[147] Unlike sarcastic speakers, who supply their own literal message and oppositional subtext, in the guiltive, it is the guilter's interlocutor who must supply the metamessage "That makes me the worst person ever" and feel accordingly.[148]

Haiman also distinguishes sarcasm from what he calls the "put-on." Haiman describes the "put-on" as occurring when all the factors generally included in sarcasm are present, but there are no cues given to signal sarcastic intent.[149] In this "deadpan act of

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[143] Sperber and Wilson, "Irony," 311; Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 21–2. For Dynel's distinction between irony and parody, see "Isn't it ironic?" 629.

[144] Unless one subscribes to some form of echoic mention theory.

[145] Sarcasm expresses "I don't mean this," while parody expresses "this is silly." See Sperber and Wilson, "Irony," 311; Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 22.

[146] See *Talk is Cheap*, 23–5.

[147] The lack of any indication that the guilter means something other than what they say is one of the key distinctions between the guiltive and sarcasm (Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 24). Take the following hypothetical message a person might receive on their answering machine as an example of the guiltive: "You never call your mother anymore! After fourteen hours of labour, what do I get? You could be face down in a ditch somewhere, why bother to let me know you're all right? I'm only an old woman, I just raised you, patched you up and took care of you when you were sick…"

[148] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 24–5.

[149] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 18–20.

sarcasm," only a select few members of the speaker's potential audience are expected to understand the utterance's true meaning.[150] Contrary to this position, Attardo et al. understand sarcasm and irony as remaining present even when stripped of overt cues, arguing that what matters for the existence of sarcasm is the presence of its "constituent factors."[151]

Whether or not it is useful to distinguish it from sarcasm, the "put-on" becomes problematic when applied to the study of first century authors for a number of reasons. First, what one perceives as overt cues of sarcasm is highly subjective and differs greatly from person to person.[152] Second, there is research to suggest that a "blank face" can be a typical way of signaling sarcasm.[153] If, therefore, even a lack of emotive cues can itself signal sarcasm, it becomes very difficult to distinguish between whether a person has given enough information for an utterance to "count" as sarcasm or not. Third, distinctions between sarcasm and "put-ons" depend on the intentionality of the speaker. Under normal circumstances, most interpreters are, and should be, very hesitant to claim that they have uncovered the original intentions of an author. It will be enough of a challenge to detect sarcastic pretense in ancient texts themselves without worrying about whether the author intends his audience to catch the sarcasm. Finally, even overt cues of

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[150] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 18. For example, were I to print the following in my memoirs: "I look back with especial fondness on my days in middle school French, as they fostered in me a love of learning and conjugating verbs which I shall ever carry with me," some – who do not know me well – would believe me sincere. Those who know me would know better.

[151] Attardo et al. "Multimodal Markers," 244.

[152] I am sure I am not the only one so blessed with friends who "cue" their sarcasm in ways that are almost entirely incomprehensible and imperceptible, and yet still suppose that they have made their true meaning as plain as day.

[153] See Attardo et al. "Multimodal Markers," 243, 254–8.

sarcasm can easily be lost over time or in transcription. If Paul, while dictating, did ever

roll his eyes or sneer so as to raise a snicker from his amanuensis, some of the cues that

made his sarcasm obvious would be lost as soon as his words were written down.[154] It is

not that Haiman's distinction between sarcasm and the "put-on" necessarily lacks

technical accuracy, only that it is without utility for the present task. This issue does,

however, raise an important point concerning sarcasm recognition. One may expect that,

as we approach the study of Paul's writings, the overtness of the cues that signal sarcasm

will, as they do in our everyday interactions, occupy a range from the eye-rolling,

intonation-shifting, air-quotes-followed-by-"haha jk" sort of obvious sarcasm to the

subtleties of a blank face.

2.4 Method

Now that we have discussed the issue of definition, we turn to the question of

method: How does one detect sarcasm in written texts, removed from our own context by

time, culture and language? Our ancient sources furnish us with some degree of

methodological discussion. We shall begin with their work before supplementing this

material with modern research.

In Quintilian's conception of sarcasm, one should expect sarcastic statements to

be overtly cued, and therefore discernible to a reasonable audience member familiar with

the speaker's context (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.58,[155] 8.6.55[156]). As mentioned previously,

Quintilian provides three potential cues for recognizing ironic or sarcastic statements,

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[154] See n.159.

[155] Concerning the obvious nature of irony, and by extension sarcasm: *in his omnibus aperte appareat quid velimus.*

[156] On the importance of context.

namely, *Quae aut pronuntiatione intelligitur aut persona aut rei natura; nam, si qua earum verbis dissentit, apparet diversam esse orationi voluntatem* (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.54).[157] Of these three cues, the two contextual signals – relating either to the speaker or the message itself – are useful for our discussion of ancient texts, while tonal cues would be lost in transcription. As Quintilian reminds us, it takes only one signal to convey ironic intent (*qua earum*, *Inst.* 8.6.54),[158] and, therefore, there may be cases in texts where our ability to discern sarcasm in written texts is hampered by the loss of important cues.[159]

Aside from Quintilian, the other ancient sources provide only sparse data when it comes to sarcasm recognition. The "false smile" of *Vitae Homeri* and *Peri Tropon* provides evidence for facial means of indicating sarcasm (Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 17–18; [Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 716–717). This expression, though interesting, is unfortunately not useful when it comes to approaching written texts, at least not directly.[160] This "false smile" is, however, strongly linked to an emphasis on pretense and implication in these texts (αἰνιττομένη, [Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.2–3; προσποιήτου, [Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 716–717)), which suggests that for these authors sarcasm may not be blatant, but could be potentially

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[157] "[irony] is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery, the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.54 [Butler, LCL]).
[158] See Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 39.
[159] This would only really occur if the author was dictating carelessly, or for some reason did not want or care whether he managed to convey the sarcasm latent in his statement. It is more likely that cases would exist where an author thinks he has given reasonable indication that a comment is sarcastic when in reality he is too subtle for the majority of readers. There are, however, some indicators of sarcasm that modern interpreters would not have access to – such as ones that depend on shared background and expectations – that ancient readers would have recognized without difficulty (a similar phenomenon is discussed in n.110).
[160] See n.195.

covert. One should therefore expect the discerning of sarcasm in ancient texts to be a plausible task, but by no means a simple one.

With the assurance of our ancient authorities that seeking sarcasm in first century texts will be doable, if difficult, we now turn to the issue of how to approach sarcasm's recognition. In a 2012 study, Campbell and Katz seek to test experimentally whether certain facets of sarcasm, often theorized as being necessary for its production,[161] are truly necessary to convey a sarcastic message.[162] Their experiments revealed that none of the factors tested, although they remained important and under certain circumstances sufficient, were necessary to bring about a sarcastic interpretation.[163] Overall, Campbell

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[161] The factors tested included allusion to failed expectations, pragmatic insincerity, negative tension and the presence of a victim. See the discussion in Campbell and Katz, "Necessary Conditions," 460–62. For the importance of failed expectations, see Sachi Kumon-Nakamura, Sam Glucksberg and Mary Brown, "How about another Piece of Pie: The Allusional Pretense Theory of Discourse Irony," *JEPG 124.1* (1989), 3. For pragmatic insincerity, see Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown, "Another Piece of Pie," 5; Akira Utsumi, "Verbal Irony as Implicit Display of Ironic Environment: Distinguishing Ironic Utterances from Nonirony." *JP* 32.12 (2000), 1785–7. Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown understand pragmatic insincerity as being roughly equivalent to pretense ("Another Piece of Pie," 5 n.2). For negative tension, or "indirect expression of negative attitudes," see Utsumi, "Implicit Display," 1785, 1787. For the presence of a victim, see Lee and Katz, "Ridicule in Sarcasm," 1, 9–10.
[162] Campbell and Katz, "Necessary Conditions," 459. For their experimental design, see "Necessary Conditions," 462–3.
[163] Campbell and Katz, "Necessary Conditions," 476–77. These findings have ramifications for our discussion of definition. The definition of sarcasm we have adopted includes the presence of some sort of victim or target (see Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 25). However, Campbell and Katz's study suggests that it is not necessary for there to be an identifiable victim (or pretense for that matter) for sarcasm to be discernible ("Necessary Conditions," 473). What then is one to do in the case where one, or several, facets essential to sarcasm's definition are not necessary for its recognition? It is important to note that even if no "identifiable victim" is perceived, that does not mean that the original speaker did not have one in mind, that is, listeners can miss one or several elements of sarcasm and still perceive it. This study also raises the interesting methodological issue of who gets to define sarcasm. By using a sample of individuals' perceptions to test what

and Katz's findings suggest that sarcasm is not perceived by a methodical ticking of "boxes," but instead, like other forms of linguistic processing, "involves utilizing all of the information that a person has at his or her command at any one point in time."[164] Sarcasm, then, is identified when an individual sees most of the numerous factors at play pointing in the same direction.[165] I argue, therefore, that when attempting to identify sarcasm, method should mimic how sarcasm recognition occurs generally. Instead of seeking out *x, y* and *z* criteria, the researcher must begin by gathering the broadest possible sample of potential cues before deciding from their overall impression whether a sarcastic reading is most likely.

Attardo et al. provide a useful means of conceptualizing different ways of cuing sarcasm. They divide such cues into overt indicators, or "metacommunicative" cues, and cues that signal ironic and/or sarcastic intent implicitly – "paracommunicative" cues.[166] This terminology will be useful for looking beyond simply discerning sarcasm, to analyzing how it is expressed. Making these sorts of distinctions between different levels

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conditions are necessary for creating sarcasm (see Campbell and Katz, "Necessary Conditions," 462–3), this experiment is making the implicit claim that sarcasm is whatever most people think of when they use the term. While this approach maximizes ecological validity, and may be useful when approaching modern research on sarcasm, it must be applied only with great caution to ancient texts, where one cannot assume cultural continuity.

[164] Campbell and Katz, "Necessary Conditions," 477.

[165] Campbell and Katz, "Necessary Conditions," 478.

[166] "Metacommunicative alert[s]" can be both verbal or non-verbal, ranging from a wink to a texted "jk" (or perhaps even a μὴ γένοιτο). The "paracommunicative alert" involves the creation of a discrepancy between a statement and part of its surrounding context that induces the audience to detect ironical and/or sarcastic intent (Attardo et al., "Multimodal markers," 256–7). Here, Attardo et al. cite examples of tonal and facial paracommunicative cues, but there is no reason to discount the possibility that semantic or other linguistic cues can provide non-explicit indication of sarcasm.

of clarity in cuing sarcasm opens up the question why an author would choose to be more explicit in some places than in others, while also providing a forum for discussing whether a particular author has a certain "style" when it comes to expressing sarcasm.

There is a great deal of scholarship on identifying sarcasm through tonal and nonverbal cues.[167] Unfortunately, this rich collection of research is not applicable for the task at hand, as only those cues that can be conveyed through written texts will be useful for identifying sarcasm in Paul's letters. However, there is a study by David Kovaz, Roger Kreuz and Monica Riordan that focuses entirely on methods for determining sarcasm in written texts. This study involves the analysis of statements from books and twitter posts that were explicitly marked as sarcastic.[168] While it is hard to conceive of a body of writing more starkly different from Paul's letters, it is worth pausing briefly to discern what, if anything, Twitter posts can tell us about sarcasm.

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[167] Attardo et al. tentatively suggest that as markers of irony or sarcasm, "behavioral cues > intonational cues > semantic cues." (Attardo et al., "Multimodal markers," 254). When it comes to Paul's letters, we are only furnished with the last of these sorts of cues. However, this is not to say that indicators of sarcasm that can be discerned in writing are insufficient (see Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 611–3). For vocal cues used to signal sarcasm, see Patricia Rockwell, "Vocal Features of Conversational Sarcasm: A Comparison of Methods." *JPR* 36.5 (2007), 367–8; Attardo et al., "Multimodal markers," 243–6, 252; Haiman, Tallk is Cheap, 32–9, 52; Roger Kreuz and Richard Roberts, "Two Cues for Verbal Irony: Hyperbole and the Ironic Tone of Voice." *MSA* 10.1 (1995), 21–4, 28–9. For the impact of facial cues on expressing sarcasm, see Patricia Rockwell, "Facial Expression and Sarcasm" *PMS* 93.1 (2001), 47–50; Attardo et al., "Multimodal markers," 243, 254.
[168] Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 598. For their experimental design, see "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 602–6. This study raises the same methodological issue that Campbell and Katz's study does (see n.163 above), as it leaves it up to authors and twitter users to define what sarcasm is. For a further caution about their method, see Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 613.

In their analysis, Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan argue that there are cues present within texts themselves that play a key role in communicating sarcasm, such as "interjections, adverb–adjective combinations, or positive affective terms."[169] They also find that adjectives and adj/adv combinations are used with greater frequency in sarcastic tweets, than in the data collected from Google Books.[170] Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan interpret this result as partially supporting a connection between these kinds of constructions and the use of hyperbole in sarcasm. They also suggest that the lack of this feature in the Google Books results could be due to the reliance on context to indicate sarcasm in this medium.[171] Also of interest is the fact that Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan put their data to the test using the features identified in their study and discovered that a computer was able to identify sarcasm at an accuracy level 15% higher than a coin toss.[172] The study concludes: "This finding shows promise toward future work toward automatically identifying sarcasm in text."[173] Whether or not machines will ever be able

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[169] "Positive affective terms" are expressions of positivity that are stated insincerely in sarcasm, such as: "This is amazing!" (Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 598, 600–1, 611). For further work on the use of adjective-adverb combinations, see Kreuz and Roberts, who see these expressions as functioning to create hyperbole ("Two Cues," 24–5); see also Jeffrey Hancock, "Verbal Irony use in Face-to-Face and Computer-Mediated Conversations." *JLSP* 23.4 (2004), 453. For the use of adverbial clauses in Pauline irony, see Spencer "The Wise Fool," 355–7.

[170] Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 611–2

[171] Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 611–2. It is probable that Pauline texts would share more resemblance to Google Books results than to tweets in their reliance on context to convey sarcastic meaning.

[172] Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 612. At this task humans performed only slightly better (<5%) than computers. Of course, this does not indicate how a comparison between a computer and individuals trained in recognizing sarcasm would play out, as participants were drawn indiscriminately from the internet (Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 609–11).

[173] Kovaz, Kreuz and Riordan, "Distinguishing Sarcasm," 598.

to outperform humans in recognizing sarcasm, this research does provide some optimistic

data for approaching the study of sarcasm in Paul's letters, as it suggests that there are

indeed important cues for generating sarcasm that are discernible in written text.

There has also been work done in Classics that is especially pertinent to

approaching the study of sarcasm in ancient texts. Elizabeth Minchin discusses the use of

sarcasm in Homer, finding many parallels between sarcasm use in the modern and ancient

worlds.[174] Minchin does not look only for sarcasm in texts, but traces out examples of

what she terms "rhetorical irony,"[175] ranging from harmless teasing amongst friends to

bitter sarcasm.[176] This approach acknowledges the fact that sarcasm is not an isolated

speech act, but is closely related to other rhetorical techniques. I propose that this

approach, which acknowledges and identifies the interplay between sarcasm and its

neighbours, is best for dealing with ancient texts, although I would argue that it could be

further improved by using the ancient terms that correspond to the techniques under

discussion.[177]

When it comes to identifying sarcasm in ancient texts, portions of Minchin's work

are not useful to our purposes, due to differences in genre. Minchin notes that it is often

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[174] Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 533.

[175] "The term 'rhetorical irony' refers to the discourse option that speakers occasionally take up, in conversation or in more formal contexts, of indirectly conveying a message (whether positive or negative) through an utterance that appears on the surface to express its opposite." Minchin, "Rhetorical Irony," 387. Essentially, what Minchin terms the positive side of rhetorical irony is equivalent to Haiman's "affectionate insults" (*Talk is Cheap,* 22–3) or ἀστεϊσμός.

[176] Minchin, "Rhetorical Irony," 398–400. For teasing, see "Rhetorical Irony," 396–8. For more biting sarcasm, see "Rhetorical Irony," 390–3.

[177] Of course, Homeric texts are too early for the ancient discussions previously surveyed to have an effect thereon. Indeed, the ancient grammarians and rhetoricians were greatly shaped by Homer, rather than vice versa.

the case that Homer signals oncoming sarcasm to his audience through various means imbedded in the narration.[178] Despite these kinds of differences, Minchin identifies some cues that would be useful in a Pauline context, such as "sarcasm's propensity for word-play."[179] Additionally, sarcastic statements are often accompanied by "prosodic cues" such as assonance or alliteration.[180] Minchin also notes that sarcasm is most prevalent in places of highest conflict, namely on the battlefield.[181]

Minchin's work also points out some of the social aspects of sarcasm use. Sarcasm has the ability to construct a dichotomy between those who are laughing and those who are laughed at, between an in-group and an out-group.[182] Minchin argues that Homer uses sarcasm to "shape character, to establish mood" and that sarcasm "conveys *attitude* rather than *information*."[183] Social status also has an interesting impact on the use of sarcasm. In the *Illiad*, "superior rank permits a speaker to choose heavy irony, or sarcasm," but when subordinates employ sarcasm, the social hierarchy is flouted.[184] In

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[178] See Minchin, "Rhetorical Irony," 392, 399. For ways that Homer uses the introductory narration prior to direct speech as a means of indicating sarcasm, see Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 540–1, 545; Minchin, "Rhetorical Irony," 392–3.

[179] Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 549; see also Minchin, "Rhetorical Irony," 392.

[180] Minchin sees these elements as means of expressing "exaggerated politeness and inappropriately lofty diction" ("Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 553–4). Forms of alliteration and other devices could also function as ways of creating hyperbole.

[181] Minchin, "Rhetorical Irony," 398–9. This observation is particularly poignant in approaching the high stress situation underlying 2 Cor 10–13.

[182] Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 549.

[183] Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 533, 544, see also 554. In a similar fashion, we can expect sarcasm in Paul to tell us something about the tone of a situation and the relationships between Paul, his audience and others.

[184] She also suggests that use of sarcasm "reflects a state of mind," and is therefore useful for determining a character's emotional state. It can be especially telling when the sarcasm is employed against the grain of social hierarchy (Minchin, "Rhetorical Irony," 399). Minchin's comments on social hierarchy and sarcasm are worth reproducing in full:

this way, sarcasm can both reflect and become a means of defining social relationships.

Quintilian's assertion, that a discrepancy between the words used and the contextual reality (*rei natura*, *Inst.* 8.6.54) can signal irony and sarcasm, furnishes us with a signal for recognizing sarcasm that is echoed in modern scholarship. Kreuz and Glucksberg's research demonstrates that a clearly counterfactual message can be an important cue that a statement is sarcastic.[185] Simply put, if a statement is clearly not true, sarcasm becomes a major possibility.[186]

Kreuz and Roberts see hyperbole as an important cue for signaling irony.[187] Their research finds that not only is hyperbole a major signal of ironic intent; it also increases the likelihood that a given statement will be perceived as ironic.[188] They also suggest that certain verbal cues, such as the "ironic tone of voice," may also be a form of hyperbole.[189] Hyperbole, therefore, also plays a major role in the recognition and expression of sarcasm, as sarcasm falls under the umbrella of verbal irony. Haiman identifies

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> 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. (Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 554)

[185] Kreuz and Glucksberg, "How to be Sarcastic," 382. See also Kreuz and Roberts. "Two Cues," 27.

[186] Tryphon's example of sarcasm ([Greg.Cor.] *Trop.* 16.4–5), provides an instance of the use of counterfactual statements in sarcasm. The disconnect between the message "[you are] lying on a soft bed" and the reality of the narrative (the man is slowly hanging to death) is about as oppositional as one could imagine (see Homer, *Od.* 22.170–194, 195–199).

[187] For their understanding of the relationship between hyperbole and verbal irony, see Kreuz and Roberts. "Two Cues," 24–6.

[188] Kreuz and Roberts. "Two Cues," 27–8.

[189] Kreuz and Roberts. "Two Cues," 21, 27–9.

exaggeration as a typical means of communicating sarcasm.[190] In Haiman's

understanding, the element that is most often exaggerated in sarcasm is one of the

"target's" weaknesses that the sarcast seeks to point out.[191] Interestingly, Kreuz and

Robert's research found that, in cases where ironic statements were not also

counterfactual, the presence of hyperbole had a significant positive impact on the

recognition of irony.[192]

Another form of exaggeration, excessive politeness, can also indicate sarcasm.[193]

Of course, in order for this over-politeness to be perceived, it must exceed the level of

politeness expected in a given social situation.[194] For an ancient example of hyper-

politeness we need look no further than *Vitae Homeri* ([Plutarch] *vit.Hom*. 710–1).

Minchin identifies Telamachos's words to Antinoös in this portion of the *Odyssey* as

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[190] This exaggeration includes but is not limited to tonal and emotional exaggeration (Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 33–4). For the use of literary devices to create sarcastic exaggeration, see Minchin, "Rhetorical Irony," 392, 399; "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 553–4. It is also important to note that exaggeration requires a baseline for comparison in order to be recognized as exaggerated (Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 34–5). Haiman also identifies an inappropriate flatness of tone as potentially indicating sarcasm (*Talk is Cheap*, 35); see also Attardo et al.'s work on the "blank face" ("Multimodal Markers," 243, 254–8). One might expect this sort of understatement to be communicable through linguistic means as well. Consider the following comment a disgruntled tenant might say to his landlord: "Your evicting me is really no trouble. I'm sure I shall adjust to life on the street quite quickly." There may also be a connection between this sort of understatement and exaggerated politeness.

[191] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 40.

[192] The presence of hyperbole also increased the perception of irony in counterfactual statements (Kreuz and Roberts. "Two Cues," 27–8).

[193] See Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 41–4. For Sperber and Wilson's account of exaggerated politeness in irony, see "Irony," 311–2. See also Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown, "Another Piece of Pie," 3.

[194] See Kreuz and Glucksberg, "How to be Sarcastic," 383. 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 girlfriend.

sarcasm via exaggerated politeness, which is all the more striking as it contrasts with Telamachos's earlier treatment of Antinoös and runs against the grain of age.[195]

We have already noted that mention, repetition and allusion all play a major role in the production of sarcasm, to the extent that many scholars see them as absolutely essential to irony and sarcasm's existence. While we are primarily operating from a position that understands sarcasm as pretense, different forms of mention can still be important for signaling sarcasm. Quotation can be used as a means of signaling that a speaker is no longer serious,[196] and therefore can also indicate sarcasm. One can sarcastically mock other speakers or cultural attitudes (i.e., clichés) through the use of quotation.[197] Speakers can also engage in quotation that expresses that they are not to be

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[195] Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 542–4. Quintilian's example of sarcasm, taken from Cicero – *Quod C. Verres, praetor urbanus, homo sanctus et diligens, subsortitionem eius id codice not haberet* ("Since Gaius Verres, the urban praetor, being a man of energy and blameless character, had no record in his register of this substitution of this man for another on the panel," Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.55) – also fits the bill of exaggerated politeness. Here Cicero lists the target of his sarcasm's full name and title, before pretending to laud him in a fashion altogether too kind, polite and sarcastic. There may also be a link between exaggerated politeness and the "false smile" of *Peri Tropon* and *Vitae Homeri* (Tryphon, *Trop.* 205, 17–18; [Plutarch] *vit.Hom.* 716–717), in which mockery is conveyed through a pretense of amiability.

[196] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 47. The kinds of quotation that function in this manner are distinct from the two extremes of acting (where the speaker seeks to almost "become" the source quoted) and plagiarism (where the speaker attempts to remove the voice of the original speaker so that the message appears to be their own), in that this kind of quotation expresses the voices of both the quoter and the quoted (Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 45).

[197] For using quotation to mock other speakers see Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 49–52. For the sarcastic quotation of clichés, see Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 52–3. While the use of quotation has become a grammatical indicator of sarcasm in English, through quotation marks, air/scare quotes, or the phrase "quote-unquote," this trend is by no means universal (Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 47). Although Haiman discusses a number of languages and cultures where sarcasm can be indicated through quotation, he cautions

taken literally through their neglecting to "translate" the original speaker's utterance to make it fit the grammar of their own statement, through the "repetition rather than automatic translation of a referential expression," or through the quotation of "nothing but the illocutionary act itself."[198]

Haiman also discusses a number of other ways that sarcasm is expressed that are visible in writing, some of which may apply to Paul's letters. Common amongst such signals is "chunking," which, to use a technical term, "squishes" words together to express insincerity or that they are a "fixed banality."[199] Another important cue for our study of Paul is what Haiman describes as "the utterance deflater '… not'"[200] – as in, "what a clever argument… Not!" I can think of no clearer way to express this rather obvious signal of "this is not what I mean!" in Greek than with the expression μὴ

that this means of conveying sarcasm is not necessarily universal (see *Talk is Cheap*, 47–9).

[198] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 50–1. Take the following as examples of the first (A: "Would you TAs like to mark this stack of essays?" B: "No 'you TA's' would not."), of the second ("Four out of five Canadians do not see flossing daily as important; four out of five Canadians are idiots"), and of the third (A: "Is it prudent to submit my thesis without proofreading it?" B: "Is it prudent to take a nap on a set of train tracks?") forms of quotation mentioned here.

[199] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 52, see also 45. Minchin points out an example of chunking in the *Odyssey*, as the suitors create the compound κακοξεινώτερος in a fit of delirious and sarcastic mockery ("Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 549–50). H. D. Betz cites a number of other ancient examples of sarcastic compounds, such as Plato's πάσσοφοι, and Lucian's ὑπεράνθρωπος and τρισόλβιος (See Plato, *Theaet.* 149D; Lucian, *Cat.* 16.11. For further examples, see H. D. Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition; eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner Apologie 2 Korinther 10-13* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972), 121 n.570.

[200] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 53–4. He also cites a version of this kind of negation in German (Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 54).

γένοιτο.[201] Other cues include "like/as if,"[202] "…or anything,"[203] "give me a break,"[204]

Finally, in English, syntactical changes can also signal sarcastic intent,[205] as in "what a

great friend *you've* turned out to be."[206] This sort of syntactical cuing may not be as

evident in Greek where word order is much more variable, but shifts in emphasis that

come from syntactical decisions may still be useful for discerning sarcasm in Greek

texts.[207]

    The presence of a clear victim can also be important for sarcasm recognition.

Kreuz and Glucksberg's research suggests that sarcastic statements are more readily

identified when it is clear who the "target" of the utterance is.[208]

    Seeking to discern sarcasm in ancient texts is no doubt a complicated matter, with

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[201] There may also be an argument to be made that the use of μή in rhetorical questions expecting a negative answer could provide a similar cue of sarcasm in some cases.

[202] I.e., "Like I care." This expression is also present in French and German (Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 53).

[203] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 54–5. For example, a disgruntled TA might say the following concerning a large quantity of grading that needs to be done for the next day: "Not like I had anything better to do or anything." This cue appears to be idiomatic to English.

[204] Specifically when it follows a repeated statement that a person finds ridiculous, as in, "You thing I'm going to let you drive my new car, gimme a break!" Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 55. This cue appears to be idiomatic to English, but shares similarities with "…not!"

[205] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 57–8.

[206] Here the more natural and not (necessarily) sarcastic syntax ("you've turned out to be a great friend") has been altered in a way that makes a sarcastic reading the more likely one.

[207] For example, syntactical choices could assist in creating the hyperbole used to signal a statement as sarcastic, or an author could choose to position the part of the clause that most clearly signals sarcastic intent in a location that optimizes its rhetorical effect.

[208] Their findings showed that having a clear victim was more important for the recognition of "negative sarcasm" than "positive sarcasm" (Kreuz and Glucksberg, "How to be Sarcastic," 382). For their experimental design, see Kreuz and Glucksberg, "How to be Sarcastic," 377–8. From our perspective "negative sarcasm" is not sarcastic, but rather ἀστεϊσμός or affectionate insult.

sarcastic statements ranging from the blatantly obvious to the subtle. Important cues for signaling sarcasm can be lost in the medium of writing and over chronological and cultural distance. However, both ancient and modern insights suggest that a number of indications of sarcasm should be readily detectable in first century texts. I argue that the method for discerning sarcasm in this body of literature should mimic the way sarcasm is discerned in everyday interactions. It is necessary to base the recognition of sarcasm in texts on a broad analysis of all of the potential cues present, instead of simply creating a list of criteria that must be identified in order to substantiate a sarcastic reading. Sarcasm can be indicated by a host of cues, or only one. Once the various potential signals of sarcastic intent have been identified, their overall impression must be weighed to determine if a sarcastic interpretation is best fit for the given situation.

A survey of modern research on sarcasm has identified several cues that have the potential to signal sarcasm in Pauline texts. Some of these indicators, such as the use of positive affect terms, counterfactual statements, quotation and the presence of a clearly identifiable victim, are closely related to at least one broader paradigm for defining sarcasm. A number of these cues are stylistic and function overall to create hyperbole. Such cues include the use of interjections, the emphatic combination of adjectives and adverbs, alliteration, and syntactical decisions. Sarcasm can also be expressed by over-politeness or through obvious metacommunicative cues such as utterance deflators.

With the means of discerning sarcasm at our disposal, we shall now turn to 2 Cor 10–13. As we approach instances where Paul becomes sarcastic in this text, it will also be important to note how Paul's use of sarcasm interacts with other similar rhetorical

techniques, and how Pauline sarcasm both impacts and is impacted by Paul's relationship

with the Corinthians and other parties.

Sarcasm (and Related Devices) in 2 Cor 10–13

Second Corinthians 10–13 provides an excellent case study for Paul's use of

sarcasm. Within this stretch of text, Paul covers great emotional distance, ranging from

tenderness to outright hostility.[209] Here Paul faces a congregation with flagging loyalties

and is willing to go to great lengths to get them back on his "side." Within Paul's

rhetorical arsenal, sarcasm comes into play in a number of instances. I argue that Paul's

use of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13 clusters around three sections of text: 2 Cor 11:4–8, 19–21

and 12:11–13. Our analysis of these passages will focus on the recognition of sarcasm

and the way that sarcastic statements relate to other forms of verbal irony found within

their context.[210] With this information, it will then be possible to gain a broader

impression of the way that sarcasm fits into Paul's argumentation in 2 Cor 10–13.

Additionally, a detailed analysis of Paul's use of sarcasm will enable us to comment on

instances where exegetical issues depend on passages where Paul employs σαρκασμός.

3.1 Another Jesus, Super-Duper Apostles and Plundering Churches: 2 Cor 11:4–8

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[209] Although Loubser understands Paul's use of irony in this section as playing a key role in the debate over the integrity of the letter (see "Paradox and Irony," 519), the way that he applies the categories of ancient oratory across genres to Paul's letters may be problematic. Paul's use of sarcasm in this section could have a role to play in the discussion of the unity of 2 Cor, insofar as it contributes to the discussion of the tone of the letter (for a summary of the debate over the unity of 2 Cor, see Victor Furnish, *II Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 34A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1984], 30–48). However, such a contribution will not be possible until a detailed analysis of Paul's use of verbal irony in the whole of 2 Cor has been undertaken.
[210] Especially ἀστεϊσμός, sarcasm's opposite operation. There are a number of instances where Paul uses ἀστεϊσμός without also getting sarcastic (see 10:1; 12:16–18. Possibly also 11:1). While these passages are important for understanding Paul's overall use of verbal irony in these chapters, the present focus will be on those passages were Paul's use of ἀστεϊσμός overlaps with his use of σαρκασμός.

Käsemann calls 2 Cor 11:4 "Schlüsselpunkt für das Verständnis der in Korinth auftretenden Gegner und damit zugleich für die Interpretation von c. 10–13."[211] It is from this verse, in which we find Paul's first use of sarcasm in 2 Cor 11–13, that scholars have argued for Paul's rivals being already present in Corinth, and as having arrived from without.[212] More controversially, some scholars have attempted to discern information regarding the theology of Paul's opponents on the basis of Paul's accusations that these interlopers preach "another" Jesus or a "different" Spirit and gospel (11:4).[213] Martin argues that "another Jesus" indicates that the primary point of theological tension between Paul and his opponents is a Christological discrepancy.[214] Other perspectives view this "different gospel" as a Judaizing message,[215] or, taking a cue from "another Jesus," argue for the presence of Gnosticism.[216] Although Murray Harris does not attempt to discern the

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[211] Ernst Käsemann, "Die Legitimität des Apostels: Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10–13," *ZNW* 41 (1942), 37.

[212] This point of information is based on the designation ὁ ἐρχόμενος. See Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 520; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 500. The singular ὁ ἐρχόμενος need not refer to a single individual, but is likely a generic reference to Paul's rivals (Harris, *Corinthians*, 742; see also Bultmann, *Corinthians*, 202). Regardless of how one reads Paul's use of sarcasm in this verse, this particular historical point remains a legitimate inference.

[213] Furnish sees no variation in meaning between ἄλλον and ἕτερον in this verse (*II Corinthians*, 488; see also Bultmann, *Corinthians*, 202).

[214] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 521, 523, 527. For Martin's discussion of what "different Spirit" and "different gospel" suggest, see *2 Corinthians*, 521. Dieter Georgi uses this verse to argue that, in addition to Christology, Paul and his opponents had different understandings of "*pneuma*" (*The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* [trans. Harold Attridge, et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 4–5, 229, 272–3.

[215] See E.B. Allo, *Saint Paul: Seconde Épître aux Corinthiens* [ÉB; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1937], 279; F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1971), 235–6.

[216] Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (trans. John Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 132–5. Bultmann too takes Paul's opponents as "Gnostic pneumatics" (*Corinthians*, 202–3). Jerome Murphy-O'Connor argues that Paul's opponents are preaching an exalted earthly Jesus that

specifics of Paul's rival's theology from this verse, he does see 11:4 as indicative of a

significant disjunction between Paul's message and the preaching of his opponents.[217]

While hypotheses regarding what can be gleaned about the theology of Paul's rivals from

11:4 abound, some are hesitant to mine Paul's polemic for historical information.[218]

The way that Paul uses sarcasm in 2 Cor 11:4 suggests that that interpreters who

have cautioned against reading into the theology of Paul's rivals on the basis of this verse

have done so for good reason. John Reumann suggests that in both Gal 1:6–7 and 2 Cor

11:4 Paul uses the term "gospel" in ironic fashion that does not conform to its standard

usage.[219] Paul makes this point clear in Gal 1:6–7, as he immediately qualifies "a different

gospel" as a non-gospel (ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο). In the same way, Paul takes pains in 2 Cor

11:4 to indicate that he does not seriously mean that there could possibly be any other

Jesus, Spirit or gospel.[220] Since these three terms are typically positive ones for Paul, here

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contrast's with Paul's suffering savior (*Keys to Second Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* [Oxford: Oxford, 2010], 247–52).

[217] Murray Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 742–5. For others who see 11:4 as indicative of theological disagreement between Paul and his opponents, see F. C. Baur, *Paul, The Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teaching: A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity*, [2d ed.; trans. A. P.; London: Willians and Norgate, 1873], 288; Doyle Kee, "Who Were the 'Super-Apostles' of 2 Corinthians 10–13." *RQ* 23.2 (1980), 76. Thrall suggests that 11:4 indicates that the mission of Paul's opponents has affinities to the Matthean Great Commission (see Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:669–70).

[218] See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 500–2; Frank Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (NTL; London: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 243–4.

[219] John Reumann, "Irony." *LQ* 7.2 (1955), 142.

[220] As in Galatians, here Paul follows each term with a relative clause that makes it clear that this so-called other Jesus, Spirit and gospel do not originate from his (legitimate) authority (ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν… ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε… ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε). Of course, for Paul there cannot really be any other Jesus, Spirit or Gospel. The correct understanding of any of these three entities is not up for debate. Therefore, the absurdity of phrasing this verse in

the irony is sarcastic.[221] Paul makes full use of sarcasm's rhetorical capabilities in this instance,[222] dismissing and disparaging his opponent's message through his sarcastic presentation of it, while simultaneously communicating the foolishness of anyone who might accept it.[223]

Seeking historical insights amidst the sarcasm of 11:4 becomes problematic for two reasons: the issues of echoic mention and hyperbole. While much sarcasm involves quotation or allusion to previous speech, it need not necessarily.[224] In other words, Paul's critique of ὁ ἐρχόμενος may go back to a point or points of doctrine, or it may not.[225] In the same way, it is difficult to discern the extent to which Paul's description of his opponents' message is hyperbolic without knowing what they were preaching in the first place.[226] Without knowing the content of Paul's rivals' teaching, it is equally plausible

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terms that even suggest that there could be any other legitimate perspective on these subjects, makes it sufficiently clear that here Paul means something other than what he says.

[221] The way Paul uses these terms in 11:4 is often accomplished in English writing through the use of scare quotes, making their use here an astute translation choice (e.g. "For if someone comes proclaiming another 'Jesus,' whom we did not proclaim…").

[222] See Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 19.

[223] Including the Corinthians, as we shall soon see.

[224] See Chapter 2.1: Approaching Sarcasm.

[225] If there was no major doctrinal difference between Paul and his rivals, Paul's comments here would be best understood as polemic. Ultimately, the reality most likely lies somewhere between the two extremes of pure polemic and the statement of unadorned facts. However, Paul's use of sarcasm and invective makes discerning the location of the historical reality on this spectrum problematic.

[226] See also Loubser, "Paradox and Irony," 512. For the role of hyperbole in sarcasm, see Kreuz and Roberts. "Two Cues," 24–8; Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 33–4. Typically, hyperbole provides a major cue for the recognition of sarcasm. However, in this case, one cannot tell if Paul is employing hyperbole without knowing what exactly his rivals were preaching, and one cannot tell what Paul's rivals were preaching without knowing if Paul is employing hyperbole. This instance, therefore, provides an excellent example of a case where an important cue for discerning sarcasm has been lost to the passage of time.

that Paul is greatly exaggerating non-existent or minute theological differences or that the

rival missionaries' message really did amount to another Jesus. Without the necessary

information to decide between these two extremes, or anything in between them, it is best

to avoid making strong historical claims based on Paul's sarcastic critique of his

opponents in 11:4.

While Paul takes sarcastic jabs at his rivals throughout 11:4, the full blow does not

come until the end of the verse (καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε), where the target of Paul's sarcasm

changes.[227] Paul has already employed forms of ἀνέχομαι as if it were a virtue, a tolerance

that comes as a favour from another party (see 11:1).[228] As we have seen, Paul is not at all

pleased with the message of his rivals. Therefore, Paul pretends to laud the Corinthians

for tolerating those who have preached another "Jesus,"[229] when he in actuality views

their "tolerance" as anything but "well done."[230] Paul's placement of this clause at the end

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Depending on the degree to which Paul is exaggerating his opponents' position, there
may be μυκτηρισμός and/or χλευασμός here as well. Josef Zmijewski sees 11:4 as having
a verse-like structure (*Der Stil der paulinischen „Narrenrede": Analyse der
Sprachgestaltung in 2 Kor 11,1–12,10 als Beitrag zur Methodik von Stiluntersuchungen
neutestamentlicher Texte* [BBB 52. Köln–Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1978], 93). This overly
formalized structure could provide some evidence that Paul is employing hyperbole, or is
at the very least being highly emphatic.

[227] Furnish states that while Paul's irony here is mild when compared to 11:19–21a, "the
criticism of the Corinthians it contains is clear enough" (*II Corinthians*, 500).

[228] For a similar use of δέχομαι, see 11:16. For this more positive use of ἀνέχομαι in the
undisputed Pauline letters, see 1 Cor 4:12; and in the disputed, see Eph 4:2; Col 3:13; 2
Tim 1:4.

[229] In Paul's estimation.

[230] Despite Paul's sarcasm, he is not beyond employing the literal meaning of his
pretended attitude to other rhetorical ends. Thrall writes that here Paul "seems also to be
giving grounds for his plea for toleration in v. 1. If the Corinthians put up with his
rival(s), they ought to extend the like forbearance to their founding apostle" (*Corinthians*,
2:664).

of the sentence creates an optimally dramatic effect. From 11:1 to this point, Paul has

expressed concern for the Corinthians, but has also characterized them positively

(παρθένον ἁγνήν, 11:2; ἁπλότητος, ἁγνότητος, 11:3). He then mocks his rivals (11:4) and

only at the last second turns the tables to reveal that the same foolishness and absurdity

also applies to his audience.[231]

Just as the theology of Paul's opponents has become a major topic of discussion

regarding 11:4, 11:5 has been a hotbed for debate concerning their identity. How one

understands the sarcastic epithet ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων is essential to this debate (11:5;

12:11), as is the relationship between this group and the ψευδαπόστολοι of 11:13. While

the majority of interpreters see these two groups as one and the same, Paul's

opponents,[232] one major perspective understands τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων as referring to

the Jerusalem apostles. From this perspective, the ψευδαπόστολοι are a separate group,

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[231] For further discussion of the tonal escalation in 11:4 and the function of καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε, see Zmijewski, *Narrenrede,* 92–3; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 521.

[232] See Bultmann, *Corinthians*, 203; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 502–5, esp. 505; Jerry Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians* (JSNTSS 40; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1990) 158–61; Philip Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1961), 378–80. For a contextually based argument for this perspective, see Matera, *II Corinthians*, 246–8. Betz sees a "doppelten Ironie" as operative in this passage, whereby Paul ironizes both his opponents and himself, with even his self-irony ultimately working against his rivals (see Betz, *Apostel Paulus*, 121). Thrall's perspective on the relationship between the super and false apostles takes something of a middle ground. She opts for seeing ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων as both a term for the Jerusalem apostles and as being used to refer to Paul's opponents in Corinth. Thrall suggests that Paul does not have complete information regarding the identity of his rivals. Therefore, he is unsure whether or not members of the Jerusalem apostolate number among them, causing him to adopt a means of referring to them that bears some level of duality (*Corinthians*, 2:675–6; Margaret Thrall, "Super-Apostles, Servants of Christ, and Servants of Satan," *JSNT* 6 [1980], 42, 55–6). For a critique of Thrall's perspective, see S. E. McClelland, "'Super-Apostles, Servants of Christ, Servants of Satan': A Response," *JSNT* 14 (1982), 82–7.

Paul's rivals present in Corinth, who claim to derive their authority from the Jerusalem apostles.[233] This viewpoint depends on several lines of argumentation, many of which are directly related to how Paul's ironic remark functions in this case. First, some have found it improbable that Paul would claim equality with those he will go on to describe as Satan's servants, or even refer to them as apostles in the first place.[234] Second, unlike his interaction with the "false apostles," whom he sharply and directly denounces, Paul only deals with the "super apostles" indirectly[235] using "gentle irony,"[236] or even showing them some level of deference.[237]

I argue that the sarcasm of 11:5 is caustic to the point of making it unlikely that Paul uses the appellation ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων to refer to the Jerusalem apostles.[238] Thrall cautions that there is a level of subjectivity inherent in determining the strength of Paul's irony in this verse.[239] While the degree to which Paul is being sarcastic is by no means

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[233] For scholars who distinguish between super and false apostles, see C.K. Barret, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973), 30–2, 277–9; Käsemann, "Legitimität," 41–8; Harris, *Corinthians*, 75–7, 747; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 520, 527–8; Baur, *Paul*, 288–9. Furnish states, "most of the patristic commentators seem to have distinguished the *super-apostles* from Paul's Corinthian rivals" (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 502).

[234] Käsemann, "Legitimität," 42; Harris, *Corinthians*, 75–7, 747.

[235] See Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 527; Harris, *Corinthians*, 75–7, 747.

[236] Harris, *Corinthians*, 75–7, 747. Barrett call Paul's attitude here "ironical but unaggressive" (*Corinthians*, 278).

[237] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 526.

[238] A number of scholars adopt this perspective or one very like it. Alfred Plummer characterizes Paul's tone in 11:5 as "contemptuous" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* [ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1923], 298); Allo calls ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων a "*terme de derision*" (*Saint Paul*, 279). Hughes calls the epithet "satirical" and "vibrant with sarcasm" (*Corinthians*, 379, 380 n.41). It is worth noting that these sources do not go into detail concerning why Paul's sarcasm ought to be viewed in this way.

[239] *Corinthians*, 2:674.

quantifiable, an analysis of the cues Paul provides to signal his utterance as sarcastic may

shed light on just how insulting he is being in this case. The use of the compound

adjective ὑπερλίαν is itself hyperbolic to the point of redundancy.[240] Here the level of

Paul's exaggeration is indicative of the negativity of his actual feelings toward the super

apostles.[241] Additionally – assuming for a moment that 11:4 and 11:5 refer to the same

group – Paul's sarcastic and hyperbolic characterization of his opponents in 11:4 serves to

heighten the sarcasm of verse five. By accusing his rivals of preaching another Jesus,

Spirit and gospel, Paul has portrayed his opponents as entirely without credibility. To

then turn around and call them "super-duper apostles"[242] is nothing other than ridicule.

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[240] This is the earliest occurrence of this term in extant Greek literature. It may be a
Pauline neologism (Thrall, 2:671), or not (Hughes, *Corinthians*, 379 n.40). For an
analysis of this term, see Harris, *Corinthians*, 746; Jean Héring, *The Second Epistle of
Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock; Eugene: Wipf &
Stock, 1967), 77 n.1. For the use of ὑπέρ and ὑπέρ-prefixes in 2 Cor 10–13, see P. W.
Barnett, "Opposition in Corinth," *JSNT* 22 (1984), 5. For the use of running words
together to communicate sarcasm, or "chunking," see n.199.

[241] For example, a person who sarcastically says, "This is hands down the best day of my
life!" is demonstrating greater negativity than a sarcast who states, "What a great day." In
the same way, Paul could have expressed less biting sarcasm had he opted for merely
ὑπεραπόστολοι. Baur points out a parallel between Paul's use of ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων and
Paul's quip about the "pillar" apostles in Gal 2:9 (*Paul,* 288–9). Although both of these
appellations are sarcastic, the former is far more disrespectful. In calling certain apostles
"pillars" in Galatians, Paul implies that some may think of these apostles more highly
than they ought. To call them ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι not only implies that they are arrogant,
but also calls into question whether they should be called apostles at all.

[242] Many translations of ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων have been advanced by scholars (see Harris,
Corinthians, 746). To these I would like to add "super-duper apostles." This translation
has a number of advantages over the standard "super apostles" or more wooden
translations such as "superlative." "Super-duper" captures the compound and hyperbolic
aspects of the adjective ὑπερλίαν in idiomatic English. More importantly, it, like Paul's
original epithet, cannot reasonably be taken seriously in this context.

There is no serious comparison between Paul and his adversaries in this case either.[243] Instead, Paul – displaying significant wit – understates what he actually sees as his superiority over those he will go on to call ψευδαπόστολοι.[244] Overall, the congruity between Paul's sarcastic description of the ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι in 11:4–5 and Paul's honest opinion of them expressed in 11:13–5 is such that there is no reason to postulate two separate referents.[245]

Within the majority position on 11:5, a number of scholars argue that Paul, in characterizing his opponents as ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων, alludes to and parodies their own self-designation,[246] or the way that the Corinthians perceive them.[247] Approaching Paul's use of sarcasm from the perspective of pretense theory suggests that caution should be taken with this sort of reading, as sarcasm can, but need not refer back to previous speech.

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[243] See also Forbes, "Paul's Boasting," 17–8.

[244] Although Paul has made his thoughts on these missionaries clear in 11:4, his use of a verb of thinking (λογίζομαι) coupled with a complementary infinitive adds an element of self-deprecatory pseudo-uncertainty. The following paraphrase attempts to capture Paul's subtext here: "Those interlopers are absolute heretics (thanks for being so welcoming to them, by the way). I, your founding apostle and the one who introduced you all to Christ, might, *just maybe*, not be worse than those 'super-awesome' apostles." Paul's use of self-deprecating humour in this case is not surprising, as this form of expression occurs time and time again throughout 2 Cor 10–13 in Paul's use of ἀστεϊσμός. Additionally, the similarity between 2 Cor 11:4 and Gal 1:6–7, coupled with Paul's opinion concerning those who preach other gospels (Gal 1:8–9), make it clear that although Paul is sarcastically using the term "apostles" to refer to his opponents in 11:5, he does not for a moment actually view them as such.

[245] 11:4, though sarcastic, also conveys much of Paul's actual opinion of his rivals. Hans Lietzmann points out 11:20 as another instance where Paul's attitude towards his opponents shows through (*An die Korinther I-II* [HNT 9; Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr, 1949], 146).

[246] McClelland, "'Super-Apostles," 84–5; Hughes, *Corinthians*, 379. Furnish sees the appellation as stemming from Paul's rival's "exaggerated claims" (*II Corinthians*, 505).

[247] McClelland, "'Super-Apostles," 84.

It is possible that Paul's opponents were guilty of the same bombastic self-promotion that he accuses them of, and it is also possible that their defense of their apostolic status was little different from Paul's own. Either of these two extremes, or anything in between them, would provide sufficient occasion for Paul's sarcastic quip.

Following his sarcastic dig at the "super-duper apostles," Paul launches into a series of three self-deprecatory statements. There is a build up at this point in Paul's rhetoric, as he begins with an actual concession, and then follows with ἀστεϊσμός. In 11:6, Paul concedes that he is untrained τῷ λόγῳ, that is, when it comes to oratory.[248] Some commentators have understood this concession as ἀστεϊσμός, in line with a tendency amongst orators to strategically downplay their own rhetorical skill.[249] However, in this case Paul appears to be citing an actual criticism leveled at him by his opponents – and

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[248] Most commentators take τῷ λόγῳ as referring to rhetorical aptitude (Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:676–8; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 505; Barrett, *Corinthians*, 279; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 528). Noteworthy exceptions include Käsemann, who takes it as pneumatic speech ("Legitimität," 35), and Bultmann, who sees it as "Gnostic speculations" (*Corinthians*, 203–4).

[249] Christopher Forbes calls 11:6 "elegant ἀστεϊσμός," comparable to Dio Chrysostom's denial of his own rhetorical abilities (Forbes, "Paul's Boasting," 17. For Forbes's citation of Dio, see "Paul's Boasting," 29 n.81). For commentators who interpret Paul's concession ironically, see Barrett, *Corinthians*, 279; Allo, *Saint Paul*, 279. This verse is another case where an important cue for discerning ironic intent has been lost to the passage of time. The only difference between Dio Chrysostom's ἀστεϊσμός and Paul's concession is that the former is a trained speaker (making the assertion that he is not counterfactual), while the latter (probably) is not. Whether or not Paul had rhetorical training would have been readily known to his audience, making his comment in 11:6 far simpler for them to understand. Had Paul not cited a criticism of his aptitude as a speaker (10:10), determining whether or not 11:6 contains ἀστεϊσμός would be a far more difficult matter.

probably also some of the Corinthians – which he mentions in 10:10.[250] Paul does not

appear at all concerned to correct anyone's opinion about his talents as a speaker, so long

as he is not thought deficient in areas he finds important (οὐ τῇ γνώσει, 11:6). While there

may not be irony in this verse, Paul's concession in 11:6 – like the ἀστεϊσμός to come –

ultimately seeks to raise the Corinthian's opinion of him. Paul seeks to accomplish this

task here by reorienting his audience toward a criterion of apostolic legitimacy that works

in his favour.

Throughout 11:7–8, Paul's concessions move from the actual to the feigned. With

mock concern, Paul asks rhetorically if his humility was sinful (11:7).[251] Thrall does not

adopt an ironic reading of this passage – though she concedes "sin" (ἁμαρτίαν) may be an

overly strong term in this case[252] – but argues that the Corinthians actually have taken

offence at Paul's rejection of their financial support.[253] While Thrall is most likely correct

about the Corinthians being offended, this point does not preclude 11:7 from being an

example of ἀστεϊσμός. Here Paul engages in pretense by adopting a persona that is an

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[250] Thrall rejects the presence of ἀστεϊσμός in this case, arguing that the Corinthians did indeed view Paul as somewhat "oratorically incompetent," and would not therefore have detected irony in his concession (*Corinthians*, 2:677–8). For others who see this as a straightforward concession, see Harris, *Corinthians*, 748–9; Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 237).

[251] For Paul's use of rhetorical questions beginning with ἤ to anticipate a response in the negative, see Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:682 n. 187.

[252] For Paul's use of strong language in this verse, see Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 531. This is the only point at which Paul uses ἁμαρτία to refer to a single act of wrongdoing (Matera, *II Corinthians*, 249).

[253] *Corinthians*, 2:683. For commentators who see Paul as engaging in irony in 11:7, see Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 529; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 506; Matera, *II Corinthians*, 249; Harris, *Corinthians*, 754.

exaggeration of his audience's worst estimation of his character.[254] This persona is very like the πανοῦργος of 12:16. Paul does not actually see himself as having done any wrong,[255] but feigns concern that he has erred, while at the same time citing all the reasons why the Corinthians' complaint is absurd.[256]

Paul continues to play the πανοῦργος in 11:8. He claims to have stolen from other churches (ἐσύλησα) to support his ministry in Corinth.[257] Here Paul ups the ante of his ἀστεϊσμός, appropriating the role of the conquering soldier who rapes and pillages his poor converts. 11:8 restates the same idea as the previous verse (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, 11:7), only more dramatically. Now, not only are the Corinthians the beneficiaries of the actions they had misunderstood as "sin," but if any wrong has been done, they are its cause (πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν, 11:8).[258] Through his use of ἀστεϊσμός in 11:7–8, Paul makes an implicit argument that he has committed no sin whatsoever against the Corinthians, indeed, he has acted only for their benefit. If anyone has any right to complain – which no one actually does – it is the congregations Paul has "plundered."

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[254] This exaggeration is made clear by Paul's use of hyperbolic language (see n.252, n.257).

[255] As indicated by the nature of the rhetorical question.

[256] In this way Paul manages to engage in ἀστεϊσμός while simultaneously expressing his actual perspective on the issue. Paul renders the notion that his behavior is sinful absurd by portraying it as an act of humility (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν), done for the Corinthians' benefit (ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, 11:7).

[257] συλάω has a military resonance, carrying connotations of plundering the conquered or stripping the arms of the vanquished. ὀψώνιον also has military overtones here, referring to a soldier's wages (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 492). Bultmann notes both the use of exaggeration – in the use of ἐσύλησα – and military terminology in this verse (*Corinthians*, 205).

[258] Or at least its beneficiary. Cf. 12:11.

There is also a relationship between 11:7–8 and Haiman's "guiltive."[259] Although Paul makes it clear that he is here engaging in pretense, he does quite sincerely claim to be acting for the Corinthians' benefit (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε, 11:7; πρὸς τὴν ὑμῶν διακονίαν, 11:8). This serious declaration that what the Corinthians took as a slight was meant for their benefit continues through 11:9–11. Paul's strong and pretenseless emphasis on his blamelessness and sincerity of motives is a close fit with Haiman's discussion of the "guiltive."[260] There is also an element of guilt for the Corinthians to find in Paul's ἀστεϊσμός proper. By appropriating his audience's criticism – exaggerated to an absurd degree – Paul make's the Corinthian position appear foolish, thus inducing those who might seriously purport it to feel that they are in the wrong for doing so. Combined with other "guiltive" qualities, Paul's use of ἀστεϊσμός in 11:7–8 functions to induce shame in his audience. Thus the offended become the offenders, and should feel bad about it.

Paul's use of σαρκασμός and ἀστεϊσμός in 2 Cor 11:1–11 forms an intriguing and rhetorically effective pattern. Beginning with sincere and heartfelt concern for his congregation (11:2–3), Paul then takes sarcastic shots at his opponents and at the Corinthians (11:4–5). Paul's use of verbal irony continues in the following verses, but with a change of direction, as he goes on to employ a series of escalating self-deprecatory statements that crescendo as he ostensibly berates his own rhetorical skill and financial

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[259] See *Talk is Cheap*, 23–5.
[260] Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 24–5.

practices.[261] Having implicitly mocked anyone who might criticize him along these lines

and after sufficiently guilting his audience, Paul then defends himself in earnest

throughout 11:9–11.[262] Like 11:2–3, 11:9–11 sees Paul concerned to show himself as

sincerely interested in his audience's benefit, as he builds to the terse and impassioned

appeal of 11:11.[263] The whole of 11:1–11 forms a sort of emotional chiasm that turns on

Paul's use of verbal irony. While doubtless the Corinthians would not be pleased to hear

much of what Paul says and implies in 11:4–8, Paul cushions his more harsh words on

both sides with the assurance that his actions are and have always been in the

Corinthians' best interests.

3.2 Wisdom, a Slap in the Face and an Apology: 2 Cor 11:19–21

In 2 Cor 11:16–21, Paul prepares himself for a sustained act of pretense, the so-

called "fool's speech" of 11:21b–12:10.[264] Paul could just as easily have started this

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[261] Zmijewski notes a similar instance of intensifying irony in 11:19–21 (see *Narrenrede*, 230). It is also interesting to note that though there is a shift in subject matter between 11:6 and 11:7, Paul's use of irony transcends this transition. It is Paul's tone that connects the passages.

[262] While Paul drops his irony in 11:9–11, there is no abrupt change in tone between 11:7 and 11:8, which are part of the same sentence. Instead, it is a change of subject matter that alters Paul's approach. Paul speaks ironically of robbing other congregations, while implying that the responsibility for any wrongdoing lies with the Corinthians (11:7). When he moves to discuss his conduct in Corinth, he emphases his own selfless working for his congregation's benefit (11:8). Paul's skillful application of guilt bridges this shift in rhetorical technique. Forbes argues that Paul's defense of his refusal of financial support achieves "the indignant tone of βαρύτης," ("Paul's Boasting," 17).

[263] Thrall writes concerning 11:11: "The considerable degree of abbreviation adds force to his response" (*Corinthians*, 2:690). This verse may also contain an "oathlike formula" (Matera, *II Corinthians*, 251; see also Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 493).

[264] For discussion concerning the parameters of the fool's speech, see Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 513; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 498.

section with 11:18 and it would have remained clear that he is adopting a persona.[265] He does not however, and in 11:16–7 Paul makes his engagement in pretense explicit even to the point of redundancy.[266] The role that he plays is that of his opponents,[267] the "many" who "are boasting according to the flesh" (11:18). As one might expect based on 11:1–5, now that Paul has made it clear that he intends to boast after the fashion of his opponents, sarcasm is not far off. If Paul's persistent insistence that his boasting is not κατὰ κύριον can be taken as indicative of his discomfort with this type of self-promotion, he lets his annoyance show in 11:19–21. Paul cannot help getting some sarcasm in before beginning the fool's speech in earnest.

In 11:19, with ἡδέως γάρ ἀνέχεσθε τῶν ἀφρόνων φρόνιμοι ὄντες, Paul engages in obvious sarcasm.[268] Again we have the sarcastic use of ἀνέχεσθε, intensified adverbially (ἡδέως).[269] Additionally, both the incongruity inherent in the glad toleration of fools being associated with wisdom and the φρόνιμοι/ἀφρόνων wordplay provide clear signals of

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[265] Furnish takes 11:17–8 as parenthetical (*II Corinthians*, 511).

[266] 11:16 makes Paul's engagement in pretense clear; 11:17 further emphasizes this point (see Bultmann, *Corinthians*, 210–1).

[267] By appropriating the style of boasting that he sees as characteristic of his rivals, Paul quite conveniently deflects any offence that might be caused by his actions onto his opponents.

[268] Many scholars adopt an ironic and/or sarcastic reading of this verse. See Allo, *Saint Paul*, 291; Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:715; Harris, *Corinthians*, 783; Matera, *II Corinthians*, 257; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 511; Hughes, Corinthians, 398–401; Bultmann, *Corinthians*, 211. Holland argues for a non-ironic reading of this verse, claiming that the Corinthians are behaving in the way that the wise were expected to behave when abused or insulted (Holland, "Speaking like a Fool," 256–7). However, the parallel Holland attempts to draw here does not fit the situation. The Corinthians are not innocent sages suffering abuse that they cannot control. Instead, they are actively bringing about their own exploitation through their stupidity.

[269] See Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 550.

Paul's sarcastic intent.[270] As was the case in 11:4, here too Paul uses syntax to lend

sharpness to his sarcasm, as he saves the most insulting phrase until the bitter end

(φρόνιμοι ὄντες, 11:19).[271] Harris argues that in this case Paul is ironically attempting to

correct the Corinthians' attitudes, but does not engage in sarcasm.[272] While this position

betrays a lack of critical interaction with ancient discussions on sarcasm,[273] it does raise

questions of rhetorical intent and effect. Namely, why would Paul choose sarcasm at this

point, and what would the likely effect on his audience be? We shall turn to these

questions after a fuller analysis of Paul's use of verbal irony in 11:19–21. In the interim, it

is important to note that here Paul's sarcasm contains a dual slight against the

Corinthians, as it both criticizes their putting up with fools and implies that, though they

may think that they are φρόνιμοι, they are ἄφρονες in actuality.[274]

    In 11:20, Paul continues in a sarcastic vein.[275] Thrall suggests that the irony of

11:19 may not have been fully apparent to those who first heard the letter until 11:20 had

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[270] See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 497; see also Harris, *Corinthians*, 783.

[271] Spencer suggests that φρόνιμοι is positioned emphatically so as to optimize the contrast between what Paul says and what he means. She also sees the use of asyndeton (rhetorical omission of conjunctions) to create a sense of surprise as operative in 11:19–20 (Spencer "The Wise Fool," 353, 358). For more on the use of stylistic choices to create surprise in 2 Cor 11:16–12:13, see Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style*, 204–5.

[272] *Corinthians*, 783.

[273] The use of positive terminology to engender opposing, negative meaning is textbook σαρκασμός according to the vast majority of ancient definitions, as well as most modern ones.

[274] This verse also contains a non-sarcastic insult directed at Paul's opponents (see Bultmann, *Corinthians*, 211).

[275] Beginning with another sarcastic use of ἀνέχεσθε.

been read.[276] Indeed, 11:20 removes all doubt that Paul is being sarcastic, as he goes on to list all of the abuses that his congregation so "wisely" puts up with.

Just as 11:4 has been a focal point for discussion concerning the theology of Paul's opponents, 11:20 has been significant for reconstructions of their conduct in Corinth. Some scholars are hesitant to place historical value on Paul's characterization of his opponents in this verse,[277] while others see Paul as at least to some extent providing an accurate portrayal of his rivals' conduct.[278] As is the case with 11:4, the validity of seeking historical information in 11:20 depends greatly on the extent to which Paul's sarcasm employs mention and hyperbole. While we no longer have access to information that would determine whether Paul is "echoing" real events, we do have strong indications that Paul is making significant use of hyperbole. It is impossible that these itinerant missionaries have literally "consumed" the Corinthians and (almost) impossible that they have "enslaved" them (κατεσθίει, καταδουλοῖ, 11:20).[279] The use of these

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[276] *Corinthians*, 2:716. While there is more than sufficient evidence that Paul is being sarcastic in 11:19, it is quite possible that some listeners would miss these cues on a first oral reading.

[277] See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 511–12; Bultmann *Corinthians*, 212; Sumney, *Paul's Opponents*, 153.

[278] Allo, *Saint Paul*, 190–1; Bruce, *1 and 2* Corinthians, 240; Hughes, *Corinthians*, 398–401; Matera, *II Corinthians*, 257–8; Harris, *Corinthians*, 784–7; Martin sees irony as operative throughout the verse, but still sees historical value in Paul's statement for reconstructing the situation in Corinth (*2 Corinthians*, 551–4). Thrall sees this verse as containing exaggeration, but also some useful historical material (*Corinthians*, 2:716–8). Some (Allo, Hughes, Harris, Harris and Martin) even see πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει as a potentially literal description of events in Corinth.

[279] Mark Seifrid sees military imagery throughout 11:20, which carries "overtones of battle and contention" (*The Second Letter to the Corinthians* [PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 2014], 422–3). Laurence Welborn argues that Paul's language in 11:20 characterizes his opposition as a parasite, a common archetype from ancient comedy "who puts on airs and abuses his hosts and other guests" ("Paul's Caricature of his Chief

hyperbolic terms, coupled with Paul's tendency – as we have observed – to save the most

cutting remark for last suggests that πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει is also highly hyperbolic. Paul's

exaggerated depiction of his rivals' behavior is, therefore thick with

μυκτηρισμός/χλευασμός.

 While Paul is clearly using exaggeration to drive his sarcasm home in 11:20, the

interpreter is left with a broad range of historical possibilities regarding the actual

situation in Corinth.[280] It is best, therefore, to avoid reading anything into 11:20 that

cannot be reasonably demonstrated based on other evidence.

 In 11:21, Paul closes the section with humorous ἀστεϊσμός. After his sarcastic and

hyperbolic account of what the "wise" Corinthians put up with, Paul states κατὰ ἀτιμίαν

λέγω (11:21). At this point, one would expect that Paul – since he has just been criticizing

them – is speaking concerning the Corinthians' shame.[281] However, again Paul pivots on

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Rival as a Pompous Parasite in 2 Corinthians 11.20," *JSNT* 32.1 [2009], 39). For an
example of a παράσιτος in the Greek novelistic genre, see Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*,
4.10–20, esp. 11. While Seifrid's identification the presence of contention in this verse is
legitimate, Welborn's interpretation better accounts for the language of overeating
(κατεσθίει) and the flouting of social hierarchy (καταδουλοῖ, ἐπαίρεται, πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς
δέρει). Spencer does not detect hyperbole this passage, arguing that Paul favours less
overt rhetorical devices in his fool's speech (Spencer "The Wise Fool," 353). We have
already identified a number of instances of hyperbole in 2 Cor 10–13, this instance being
perhaps the most obvious.
[280] Paul's sarcasm in 11:19–20 is readily discernible regardless of whether the
Corinthians' relationship with these itinerant missionaries is truly abusive or really rather
cordial. However, the efficacy of Paul's remarks in swaying his audience could vary
widely depending on the historical reality.
[281] Some have taken the ἀτιμία as the Corinthians'. See John Chrysostom, *Homilies on
the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* 24 (NPNF I-XII, 392); Lietzmann, *Korinther I-II*,
149. Paul does, as we shall see, imply that the Corinthians should be ashamed. However,
it is best to understand the ἀτιμία here as Paul's (following Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 497;

the final clause, as he goes on to express that he is the one who is ashamed that he has been too "weak" to enslave, maltreat, and abuse the Corinthians (11:20–1). While the obvious absurdity of considering one's lack of wrongdoing a dishonour is more than sufficient to establish this verse as ἀστεϊσμός, other cues are present as well.[282] By pretending to claim weakness, Paul asserts the integrity of his own conduct compared to the "abuses" of his rivals. Additionally, this ἀστεϊσμός seeks again to bring about feelings of guilt in Paul's audience, implying that it is the Corinthians who should be ashamed for ever questioning Paul's character vis-à-vis that of his opponents.[283]

While 11:21 functions primarily as ἀστεϊσμός, it also contains an implicit sarcastic apology, lending the text a multivalent rhetorical function. While Paul does not explicitly ask for forgiveness at this point, as he will in 12:13, κατὰ ἀτιμίαν λέγω communicates the

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Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 553; Harris, *Corinthians*, 787; Bultmann, *Corinthians*, 212; Thrall, 2:718; Allo, *Saint Paul*, 290).

[282] Such as Paul's use of syntax to invert expectations and the emphatic use of ἡμεῖς (on the emphatic use of ἡμεῖς, see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 498). Thrall understands ὡς ὅτι as indicating indirect speech, in which Paul is quoting his understanding of the Corinthians' attitude towards him (*Corinthians*, 2:719–20). Harris likewise takes ὡς ὅτι as indicating reported speech, opting for a redundant ὡς (Harris, *Corinthians*, 788). If this is indirect discourse, then the use of mention/quotation provides further signal that Paul here means something other than what he is saying. He could be citing the Corinthians' opinion of him, as Thrall suggests, or appropriating the criticism of his opponents. A redundant ὡς – used only as further means of expressing insincerity and pretense – could also provide some evidence for a means of cueing verbal irony in Greek somewhat analogous to the use of "as if" or "like" in English (see Haiman, *Talk is Cheap*, 53).

[283] Especially if "we were weak" (11:21) is a citation of a criticism of Paul leveled by the Corinthians (see n. 282 above), as in this case Paul would be turning their very words against them.

message "I'm sorry."[284] While an apology is not a compliment, it is an inherently

positive message that engenders goodwill, thus making it fertile ground for sarcasm.[285] In

this way, Paul's feigned apology implies that he is the one from whom forgiveness should

be sought.

Throughout 11:19–21 we find a series of sarcastic statements that crescendo

through 11:19–20 before closing with a quip that blends sarcasm and ἀστεϊσμός.[286] Seeing

this passage as ironic correction[287] does not do justice to the force of Paul's rhetoric in

this instance. Paul has for some time been indicating that he intends to do some "foolish"

boasting (11:1, 16–8), but has been taking his time getting on to it. He clearly wants the

Corinthians to accept what he says, and to elevate their opinion of him (11:1; 12:11, 14).

Yet, just prior to listing the reasons why his audience should accept the legitimacy of his

apostleship, he insults them sarcastically. It is possible that Paul's hesitation with

initiating his boasting could display sincere discomfort with the enterprise. He is annoyed

with the situation, with what he sees himself as having been forced to do (12:11), and so

gives vent to his anger sarcastically.[288] It is also plausible that 11:19–21 could have a

guiltive function, and that by characterizing his opponents as parasites and his audience as

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[284] It is also quite common in modern English to construct an apology without a request
for forgiveness, or even the use of "sorry." Take for example apologies beginning with
"I'm so embarrassed…" or "I feel so bad…"

[285] Such sarcastic apologies are readily observable amongst – and stereotypical of –
children who are forced to "say sorry" to one another by an authority figure.

[286] Zmijewsi notes that the intensity of Paul's use of irony in 11:19–21 escalates from
"witzige Satire" (11:19) to "unsinnig „verfremdende" Selbstkarikatur" (*Narrenrede*, 230).

[287] As in Harris, *Corinthians*, 783. See also Reumann, "Irony," 144.

[288] Murphy-O'Connor states concerning 2 Cor 10–13: "Here the rigid control [Paul]
normally imposed on his passionate nature dissolves in the heat of his anger" (*Paul*, 320).

fools Paul hopes that the Corinthians will recognize their actions as shameful and absurd, and will then change course.[289]

3.3 Concerning Nothing. Along with Guilt and Further Apologies: 2 Cor 12:11–13

Following the fool's speech, Paul closes with further sarcasm. 12:11 sees again the use of the sarcastic epithet ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων. As was the case beforehand, this sarcastic dig at Paul's rivals is a good predictor that there will be more sarcasm to follow shortly.[290]

In the interim, however, Paul calls himself, "nothing" (εἰ καὶ οὐδέν εἰμι, 12:11), raising the exegetical issue of whether he is being serious, or engaging in further ἀστεϊσμός. Thrall understands the quip as simultaneously serious and ironic: serious insofar as Paul does not see himself as having any inherent ability without Christ's empowerment,[291] and ironic in the sense Paul actually does compare favorably to his

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[289] These two options are not mutually exclusive. If 11:19–21 is a calculated rhetorical move, one must question its efficacy. Would it have not have been more effective to begin one's argument without first insulting those one hopes to convince? Apparently, the general reception of irony in general in the ancient world was mixed. Forbes cites examples of cases where the εἴρων is perceived positively – as in Plato's assessment of Socratic irony – and cases where the ironic person is depicted as something of a self-flatterer ("Paul's Boasting," 10–11). Doubtless, Paul's use of sarcasm here contains an element of risk.

[290] Harris sees it as probable that in 12:11–13 Paul is answering criticisms leveled by his opponents in Corinth. These criticisms include the accusation that Paul is less of an apostle than the "super apostles," that he is "nothing" (12:11), that he has not displayed the typical apostolic traits (12:12) and that his ministry has left the Corinthians "worse off" in comparison to other churches (*Corinthians*, 870). While Paul's opponents certainly were questioning his apostolic validity, we must be cautious attempting to read the specifics of their criticisms in Paul's words.

[291] See also Matera, *II Corinthians*, 288.

rivals[292] and his show of modesty is designed to induce the Corinthians to support the validity of his apostleship.[293] Paul's tendency to pair sarcastic statements with ironic self-deprecation (as observed in 11:4–8, 21) makes it probable that here Paul is engaging in ἀστεϊσμός.[294]

Martin suggests that Paul is speaking ironically when he says, "How have you been worse off than the other churches, except that I myself did not burden you?" (12:13 NRSV).[295] Certainly the question is rhetorical and Paul does not see the Corinthians as being "worse off" in any way. However, unlike 11:7–8 where Paul fully assumes the role of the πανοῦργος and claims to have been a plunderer, there is no ἀστεϊσμός in this case. Paul simply does not claim – even ostensibly – to have engaged in wrongdoing.[296] Martin's assertion remains correct, however, as this case is best understood as situational irony. By suggesting that the Corinthians are worse off by their not being burdened, Paul uses absurdity to create an ironic situation.

The situational irony present in 12:12–13a falls well in line with Haiman's "guiltive."[297] Throughout 12:12, Paul emphasizes the way that the Corinthians have

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[292] See also Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 623, 629.

[293] Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:836–7. Harris also sees both serious and ironic readings of "nothing" as simultaneously plausible (*Corinthians*, 873). Spencer opts for an ironic reading of "nothing," seeing here an example of meiosis (understatement) (Spencer "The Wise Fool," 357), whereas Schellenberg takes the remark at face value (Schellenberg, *Rhetorical Education,* 173–4. Betz seeks to draw a connection here between Paul's claim to be "nothing" and the rhetoric of the Socratic tradition (see *Apostel Paulus*, 121–3).

[294] This does not preclude the quip from having a double meaning; such complexity is easily within the range of Paul's wit.

[295] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 634.

[296] At least, not until 12:13b

[297] See *Talk is Cheap*, 23–5.

benefited through his enactment of "the signs of the apostle,"[298] and then cites the fact

that he has not burdened them (12:13a). "Not at all" is, therefore, the obvious answer to

the rhetorical question: "In what way were you worse off?" and the Corinthians are left

themselves to supply the message: "We have horribly misjudged Paul and feel terrible

about it."

In 12:13b Paul once again offers an insincere apology that combines sarcasm and

ἀστεϊσμός, as Paul asks the Corinthian's to forgive him the "wrong" of not being a

financial burden on them.[299] In this case, Paul makes it clear that he means something

other than what he says by the obvious absurdity of apologizing for something that

benefits the other party.[300] Additionally, the plea for forgiveness, and the alliteration

therein,[301] adds an air of exaggerated politeness to the request that drips sarcasm. Finally,

the strong language Paul uses is indicative of hyperbole.[302]

The sarcastic element of Paul's request for forgiveness in 12:13b lies in the

ostensible positivity of the request for forgiveness, when Paul so obviously sees himself

as having done nothing wrong. The statement therefore not only ridicules anyone who

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[298] Here Paul not only claims to have worked signs among them "with all endurance," but also reiterates the point by listing these works (σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν).
[299] Both Furnish and Martin take τὰς λοιπὰς ἐκκλησίας as Pauline churches (Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 634; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 553), while Thrall sees these as non-Pauline congregations (*Corinthians*, 2:841).
[300] Including not being a financial burden and performing signs and wonders (12:12–3).
[301] The staccato of the dental sounds in τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην.
[302] Both καταναρκάω and ἀδικίαν are strong terms for this situation (Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:842). Thrall also points out that the irony of this request is further emphasized by the fact that Paul has just claimed that the Corinthians have wronged him (12:11; *Corinthians*, 2:842).

would criticize Paul for his financial conduct,[303] but also implies that it is the Corinthians who should be asking Paul's forgiveness. With ἀστεϊσμός, in 12:13b Paul ostensibly claims to have committed some great wrong as a means of displaying innocence. As in Paul's previous feigned apology (11:21), the combination of σαρκασμός and ἀστεϊσμός blends insult with guilt. Additionally, as was the case with 11:4–8, here too Paul uses verbal irony as a means of transitioning into a more serious and impassioned appeal (12:14–5).[304]

3.4 Conclusion

An analysis of Paul's use of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13 yields a number of interesting patterns. In these chapters, Paul's sarcastic statements tend to cluster together and are always accompanied by other forms of verbal irony, especially ἀστεϊσμός.[305] Overall, Paul tends to be quite overt when using sarcasm, and makes use of a number of different cues to signal to his audience that what he is saying is not meant to be taken literally.[306]

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[303] Even if the Corinthians felt that they had a legitimate reason for criticism of Paul along these lines, the way Paul phrases his rhetorical question makes their concerns appear not only unwarranted, but also ridiculous (see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 556).

[304] By "serious" I mean without pretense, rather than to imply that Paul is at all flippant throughout 12:11–3.

[305] When Paul engages in μυκτηρισμός/χλευασμός it has the function of emphasizing his sarcastic statements. Overall, Paul uses ἀστεϊσμός more frequently than he uses σαρκασμός (especially when one takes into account instances of ἀστεϊσμός that occur independent of Paul's use of sarcasm, such as 10:1 and 12:16–18).

[306] Most noteworthy among these cues are hyperbole and the use of counterfactual or absurd statements (this analysis conflicts with Spencer, who sees no hyperbole in 2 Cor 11:16–12:13 ["The Wise Fool," 353]). Paul's ἀστεϊσμός can be somewhat more difficult to detect, as is the case in 12:11b, 13a. It is worth noting that Jónsson's general observations concerning Paul's sense of humour also apply to Paul's use of verbal irony:

Employing a theoretically grounded approach to sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13 has also contributed to the discussion of exegetical issues on select passages. A sarcastic reading of 11:5 and 12:11 supports identifying the ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων with the ψευδαπόστολοι (11:13–15) as a single group of opponents. Additionally, I have advocated caution in seeking historical information in places where Paul's description of his opponent's theology or actions intersects with his use of sarcasm, due to our inability to ascertain the extent to which Paul engages in echoic mention and hyperbole in these cases (11:4; 11:20).

In each of the passages studied, Paul uses sarcasm in concert with emotional escalation. In 11:4–11 and 12:11–5 Paul's use of verbal irony crescendos before leading into an impassioned emotional appeal. Elsewhere (11:19–21), it is the intensity of Paul's sarcasm and ἀστεϊσμός that escalates.

Also noteworthy are the places within Paul's discussion where he becomes sarcastic. Without fail, whenever Paul mentions his intention to engage in "foolish" boasting – or, after completing it, brings up its necessity (12:11) – sarcasm follows shortly (11:1, 16). I argue that this trend is best explained by viewing Paul's use of sarcasm in these instances as being brought about by his frustration with the situation in Corinth. Not only is Paul concerned that the Corinthians will be unfaithful to their commitment to Christ (11:2–3); there is also a sense in which he sees himself as the party in danger of being "cheated on." As the Corinthians' spiritual father (1 Cor 4:15), Paul feels threatened by their acceptance or even preference of other apostolic figures (2 Cor

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Paul uses verbal irony in serious situations and his remarks are often targeted at himself and at his opponents (see Jónsson, *Humour and Irony*, 224, 242)

11:4). Angered by the situation and uncomfortable with the kind of boasting he sees as necessary to defend himself, Paul lashes out at the parties responsible for this annoyance, his opponents and his audience, whenever the subject comes up.

This view represents a more plausible account of Paul's use of verbal irony in these chapters than positions that argue that Paul employs irony in 2 Cor 10–13 as either a teaching tool,[307] or as a calculated use of indirect speech to more readily persuade an unreceptive audience.[308] These analyses do not take into account the fact that Paul, even at critical points, insults his audience. Hardly cordial didacticism.

Forbes's discussion of the relationship between irony and the rhetorical technique βαρύτης – or indignation, as discussed by Hermogenes – is helpful for approaching Paul's use of verbal irony.[309] Hermogenes writes that while irony is a major tool for creating a sense of βαρύτης, not all irony produces this effect to the same extent. It is self-irony that most strongly produces this "weighty" tone (Hermogenes, *Rhet*. 2.8.47–59). Doubtless, this heavy or indignant tone is present in much of Paul's ἀστεϊσμός throughout 2 Cor 10–13. Overall, βαρύτης appears to be a tonal characteristic; it describes the manner in which an author chooses to communicate. The presence of βαρύτης in Paul's writing raises an intriguing question that neither Forbes nor Hermogenes discusses: What does a speaker hope to achieve in employing βαρύτης?[310] Paul's use of ἀστεϊσμός to encourage a sense of

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[307] Harris, *Corinthians*, 783; Reumann, "Irony," 144.
[308] Spencer "The Wise Fool," 349–51, 60.
[309] See "Paul's Boasting," 12–3, 16–8.
[310] In regards to effect, Hermogenes describes βαρύτης as consisting of reproachful/insulting statements (Ἡ βαρύτης ἐννοίας μὲν ἔχει τὰς ὀνειδιστικὰς ἀπάσας), and also states that βαρύτης, like irony, often involves ostensible confusion (*Rhet*. 2.8.1–

guilt in his audience has already been noted. On account of this correlation between

Pauline self-irony and the intention to produce a sense of shame, I suggest that the major

rhetorical payoff of βαρύτης is its "guiltive" function.

In addition to the expression of frustration, if there is a more calculated rhetorical

move behind Paul's use of sarcasm in 2 Cor 10–13, these statements are most likely

designed to encourage a sense of guilt and shame in the Corinthians.[311] This usage would

fall in line with the function of much of Paul's ἀστεϊσμός. Paul's sarcastic statements not

only portray the positions and actions of his opponents as harmful, but also depict the

Corinthians' criticisms of him as absurd. Should the Corinthians come to a remorseful

recognition of the foolishness of their position and shift their support to Paul, the sarcastic

comments will no longer apply, and Paul's audience can join him in mocking the folly of

the ψευδαπόστολοι. However, if they do not adopt his perspective, Paul alienates his

audience through sarcastic insult.[312] At best this tactic is a gamble, the result depending

on the extent to which Paul's relationship with the Corinthians has degenerated. If the

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2, 86–9). These descriptions are more useful for describing what βαρύτης is and how it is
expressed rather than relating what its use hopes to achieve.

[311] This finding concurs with Holland's discussion of irony's propensity to induce a sense
of shame (see "Paul's Use of Irony," 239). Holland does not, however apply this
observation to 2 Cor 10–13, but argues that Paul's use of irony in the fool's speech is
designed to encourage his audience to apply their "spiritual insight" in order to grasp his
true meaning (Holland, "Speaking like a Fool," 251, 258, 264). This conclusion can not
be viewed as truly representative of Paul's broad usage of irony, as it does not explain the
function of Paul's less than cordial forms of irony – such as sarcasm – that lie on the
fringes of his boasting.

[312] Holland, Clark and Gerrig, and Minchin all discuss the propensity of sarcasm to create
in-group/out-group distinctions (see Holland, "Paul's Use of Irony," 246–7; Clark and
Gerrig, "Pretense Theory," 124–5; Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 549). Of course,
in this case, Paul runs the risk of the Corinthians falling on either side of this dichotomy.

Corinthians still view Paul as a legitimate authority figure, he may get away with his sarcasm; if not, he will more likely than not offend his audience.[313]

Overall, in 2 Cor 10–13 we see Paul as a person whose capacity for wit increases along with his frustration, and who is more than willing to make risky rhetorical choices so as not to concede any ground to those whom he views as Satan's servants.

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[313] See Minchin, "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*," 554.

Conclusion and Discussion

Since scholarship on irony in Paul is still in the process of development, while work on Pauline sarcasm is largely non-existent, definitional and methodological concerns have occupied a major place in our study. Our survey of ancient discussions of sarcasm has demonstrated that this speech act was a considerable topic for discussion in Paul's day, with a number of theorists weighing in on the subject. The early grammarians and rhetoricians, while displaying a diversity of opinions on the subject of sarcasm, also show broad agreement on a number of points. For most ancient authors, sarcasm shares a close relationship to εἰρωνεία, ἀστεϊσμός and other rhetorical techniques, and is a means by which a speaker can reproach or insult under a pretense of praise.

Interestingly, it is this same notion of pretense that provides one of the clearest connections between ancient and modern discussions of sarcasm. Having surveyed a number of broad paradigms for understanding sarcasm, we found pretense theory to be the most useful working paradigm for approaching sarcasm in Paul, as it not only matches the classical concept of προσποίησις, but also avoids the historiographical issues that would arise from adopting a perspective that views sarcasm as echoic mention.

An analysis of modern work on definition also found great similarity between certain contemporary perspectives on sarcasm and the majority of our ancient sources. Having adopted Haiman's definition as a working model – for its explanatory power and affinity with ancient thought – we then moved to the question of method. Contemporary research has much to say on the subject of sarcasm recognition, though a great deal of work is not applicable to a study of sarcasm in Paul for a number of reasons. However, by

sifting modern work with an eye on the present task, we were able to compile a significant number of cues and techniques for discerning sarcasm in writing that is chronically, culturally and linguistically removed from our own context.

2 Cor 10–13 has proved itself to be an apt case study for Paul's use of sarcasm. Within this stretch of text, Paul becomes sarcastic a number of times as he reflects on the "foolish" boasting that he sees as necessary to defend the legitimacy of his apostleship. Previous scholarship on irony in these chapters has generally not taken the diverse forms of irony that Paul employs into account. This study seeks to contribute to this body of research, by providing a more in-depth analysis of some of the forms of verbal irony that Paul makes use of, specifically sarcasm and ἀστεϊσμός. Overall, I argue that Paul's use of sarcasm, and related devices, functions to generate a sense of guilt in his audience – in addition to being a means of expressing frustration.

It is worth noting briefly that while the present analysis is useful for nuancing previous scholarship on irony in 2 Cor 10–13, our work has only skirted the periphery of the most-discussed passage in research on Paul's use of irony: the fool's speech. It is highly interesting that while Paul's discussion of his foolish boasting is thick with sarcasm and ἀστεϊσμός, we have not found any significant instance of verbal irony in the fool's speech proper. While contributing to the much broader discussion of the extent to which other forms of irony are present in 2 Cor 11:21b–12:10 is beyond the scope of the present study, it seems clear that Paul approaches his actual boasting in a very different

manner from the way that he discusses the topic.[314] Further analysis of the distinctions between different forms of irony in these cases would, therefore, provide an interesting avenue for future research.

While 2 Cor 10–13 is certainly a best-case scenario for addressing the presence of sarcasm in Paul, a broader study of sarcasm and related devices across the Pauline corpus would be fruitful for a number of reasons. I have argued that Paul's use of sarcasm has a role to play in discussions of Pauline rhetoric and argumentation, can shed light on the tone of Paul's relationships with his congregations, and can be useful for approaching exegetical issues. Without launching into another major research project, I would like to suggest that a number of passages throughout Paul's letters would benefit from such an analysis – for example, Gal 1:6; 1 Cor 1:13; and Rom 6:1.

A larger study of verbal irony across the Pauline corpus would also open up the possibility of comparative study. Weighing Paul's use of sarcasm against the work of his near contemporaries – such as Lucian and Cicero – has the potential to address the question of the extent to which Paul's use of sarcasm either reflects a more personal style and sense of humour, or is simply drawn from rhetorical conventions. Most of the work necessary to undertake such a comparative study remains to be done, as research on sarcasm remains only somewhat less uncommon in Classics than it is in Pauline

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[314] There are a number of diverging possibilities for explaining this distinction. For example, it could be that Paul becomes so enwrapped in the "foolish" persona he adopts for the duration of the speech that it would not be "in character" to be sarcastic any longer. It could also be the case that Paul does not take long to drop his pretense after beginning to boast, following which point he very seriously discusses the ways that his weakness supports the legitimacy of his apostleship.

studies.[315] However, the ancient and modern work that we have surveyed would be a

useful starting point – with some modification – for research on sarcasm in roughly

contemporary non-Pauline texts.

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[315] In addition to Minchin's work (see "Sarcasm in the *Odyssey*"; "Rhetorical Irony."), Mary Beard's *Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up* (Berkeley: University of California, 2014) is a useful starting point for approaching verbal irony in Greco-Roman texts.

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