
Rhetoric and Theology in the Letters of Paul¹

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New Testament scholars have taken different positions about the relationship between “rhetoric” and “theology” in Paul’s letters. The purpose of this contribution is to identify various models from the history of research (part 1), and to discuss some fundamental issues on the basis of these examples (part 2).

1. Conceptions about the Relationship of Rhetoric and Theology in the History of Research

1.1. *Theology without Rhetoric (Hahn, Dunn)*

In many studies of Paul’s theology, rhetorical analysis plays only a marginal role, if any at all. This goes not only for the bulk of literature published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but also for more recent studies. The theology of the New Testament authored by Ferdinand Hahn,² for example, deals with Paul’s theology without giving any attention to rhetoric. Of the studies concentrating primarily on Paul’s theology, I would like to refer only to that of James Dunn.³ Dunn dedicates a small paragraph to the subject (§ 1.2c), but is rather critical of the usefulness of a rhetorical analysis of Paul’s letters. Consequently, in his presentation of Paul’s theology, rhetorical analysis does not play any role.

1. A German variant of this paper has been published in *Aufgabe und Durchführung einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, ed. C. Breytenbach and J. Frey, WUNT 205 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 247–71.

2. *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Band I–II (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

3. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

1.2. *Rhetoric and Theology as Relatively Separate Chapters (Weiss, Lohse)*

1.2.1. Johannes Weiss

Some scholars of Paul's life and theology devote attention both to his rhetoric and his theology, though in separate chapters. The underlying idea is that rhetoric is something external, the form of expression Paul gave to his thoughts. The relationship between theology and rhetoric is seen as one of content and form. Johannes Weiss is a case in point. In his article "Beiträge zur Paulinischen Rhetorik,"⁴ Weiss makes some remarks about the relationship between rhetoric and theology:

At the very least, one should ask whether the demand of sound and the charm of tone do not carry more weight with regard to the choice and arrangement of words than considerations of doctrine. Often, what is truly essential to biblical theology is not the equal treatment of every single passage in paragraphs, but rather a sensitive assessment of the value and scope of a thought for Paul. For that purpose, one should discern between an occasional rhetorical point and a doctrine that is already fixed and pronounced. (4)⁵

In his section on synthetic parallelism, he uses Rom 4:25 as an example:

Here, exegesis and biblical theology will never simmer down, unless it is understood that the distribution of death and resurrection to redemption of sin and justification is not theologically, but entirely rhetorically motivated. (10)

One would expect Weiss to apply these insights in dealing with Paul's theological thinking in his book *Das Urchristentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917);⁶ however, that is not the case. The section on "Paul the Christian and Theologian" opens with a chapter about Paul "The Writer," in which he deals with the epistolary forms of Paul's letters, his literary style, especially his use of antitheses, his affinity for the so-called diatribe, the relationship between conventional rhetorical forms and personal style, and similar topics. This chapter occasionally touches on the relationship between rhetorical form and content:

The preliminary condition for a correct evaluation, and the needful protection against an all too strong systematization (of his doctrine and religion) is a proper feeling for the literary values. (417; German orig., 317)

4. Sonderdruck aus den *Theologische(n) Studien*, FS Bernard Weiss (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897).

5. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations from the German are mine.

6. I quote from the English translation: *Earliest Christianity*, I-II (New York/Evanston: Harper & Row, 1959; orig., 1937).

Weiss regards the speaker's and writer's "sensitivity to the seductive charm of antithesis" as "a real danger for truth":

It must be described as nothing less than fateful that Paul has bequeathed to Christian theology and preaching the tendency to establish conclusions by the method of sharp contradiction, and to fail to take into consideration the transitions at hand and the apparent modifications—with the result that much confusion is furnished for those of fine feeling and tender conscience (413; German orig., 314)

Nevertheless, the chapter about Paul's literary form and method and the chapters about Paul's theology basically end up as separate items. In the chapters about the apostle's theology, Weiss discusses Paul's thought forms and their origins before dealing with the main theological concepts. In his presentation of Paul's christological, soteriological, and eschatological concepts, he never refers back to his chapter on Paul "The Writer." For Weiss, rhetoric is almost identical to *elocutio*. The aspects of *inventio* and argumentation play no essential role within his conception of rhetoric. He is aware of the fact that rhetorical analysis has a bearing on the understanding of Paul's theology, but in practice, rhetoric and theology remain separate chapters.

1.2.2. Eduard Lohse

Among recent literature, Eduard Lohse's book *Paulus: Eine Biographie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996) is another example of this approach. The chapter on "Paul's missionary preaching" contains a paragraph about the "rhetorical fashioning" (*rhetorische Gestaltung*) of Paul's preaching. In it, Lohse deals mainly with issues such as genre and style (108–15). The chapters on theological topics present the contents of Paul's preaching, but devote no attention to rhetorical fashioning. Lohse appears to view the relationship between theology and rhetoric as one of content and form. He sees Paul's rhetorical skills primarily as his capacity for persuasion in presenting his message.

1.3. *Rhetoric Restricted to Polemical Argumentation (Becker)*

In Jürgen Becker's book *Paulus: Der Apostel der Völker* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), the relationship between rhetoric and theology plays a fundamental role in one particular chapter, namely the one on polemical passages in Paul's letters. According to Becker, Paul's struggle with his opponents is qualified by apologetic partiality. The letter to the Galatians, for example, is an apologetic letter with all the characteristics of this genre, not only in the arrangement of the argument, but also in the use of persuasive means. Paul pulls out all the stops in this genre and uses typical polemical strategies (170–79, 288–94). Galatians 3:1–5:12 is not a dogmatically well-balanced treatment about law and faith, but an extremely polemical text. In Becker's view, Paul sometimes goes too far, and even contradicts himself. This rhetoric may provoke criticism. Consequently, to understand Paul, one must

discern between his concern for the subject matter (*Sachanliegen*) and his polemical attacks (320–21).

From this perspective, rhetoric and content are intrinsically interwoven: for rhetorical reasons, Paul uses arguments and defends theological views, which according to Becker, do not correspond with his true *Sachanliegen*. This, however, concerns only one aspect of Paul's theological argumentation. Rhetoric plays hardly any role in the other chapters in Becker's study—either in the chapters regarding the theology in Paul's individual letters or in those outlining Becker's basic ideas about the apostle's theology.

1.4. *Rhetoric as the Contingent Interpretation of the Coherent Core of the Gospel (Beker, Thurén, Hübner, Meyer)*

1.4.1. J. Christiaan Beker

In his book *Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), Christiaan Beker proposes a method that attempts to maintain both the coherence, or inner consistency, of Paul's thought and the contingency of its different expressions. While his book devotes hardly any attention to rhetorical analysis, Beker does broach the subject in his article "Paul's Theology: Consistent or Inconsistent" (NTS 34 [1988]: 364–77). Here, he defends his coherence-contingency method as a *via media* between two extremes: a purely sociological and rhetorical analysis and a dogmatic imposition of a specific focus in Paul's thought. He welcomes the attention recent research devotes to the contingency of Paul's thought, the diversity of his letters and their multiple sociological contents, and the variety of rhetorical devices Paul employed in different "rhetorical situations." He puts forth a warning, however, about a danger this entails: "the contingent situations of the letters threaten to eclipse the abiding message of Paul, i.e. 'the truth of the gospel'" (365).

If we were to regard Paul's gospel as an entirely contingent structure, "Paul [would] degenerate into a purely opportunistic theologian, who, with the help of various rhetorical skills, adapts the gospel to whatever the sociological situation demands" (367–68).

Beker reminds the reader of "the legitimate value of the Reformers' search for a *Mitte* [a center] in Paul's gospel, which they saw as a search to clarify the truth of the gospel" (368). Beker's treatment of rhetoric and rhetorical analysis concentrates only on the contingent aspect of Paul's gospel, not on its coherent core.⁷ As far as it illuminates one aspect of Paul's gospel it is legitimate. In Beker's view, however, it should not dominate the whole field.

7. Typical of Beker's understanding of rhetoric is the following statement: "Paul is a pragmatic hermeneutician—a missionary and propagandist, who interweaves thought with praxis and a convictional basis of *logos* with the rhetoric of *ethos* and *pathos*" ("Paul's Theology," 370). Although *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* are rhetorical categories, Beker seems to suggest that *logos* does not belong to "rhetoric," but to the "convictional basis."

1.4.2. Lauri Thurén

In Lauri Thurén's study *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), we find a similar conception of the relationship between rhetoric and theology. Thurén seeks to steer a course between two outlooks: (1) the dogmatic interpretation that views the theology in Paul's letters as timeless, and universal; and (2) the "contextual" alternative that depicts Paul not so much as a systematic theologian, but rather, as a pragmatic writer who wrote each of his letters for a specific purpose and a specific audience. Thurén admits that Paul "wrote his texts in complex, many-sided tensions of starting-points and goals." He is adamant, however, that the apostle had an indisputably "organized, coherent theological system of thoughts, which is partly reflected in his texts" (13, 17). Thurén's attempt to reconstruct this system appears to be marked by a certain tension: On the one hand, he wants to proceed "from the context to the text itself," and to explain to what extent it is possible to identify theological thoughts "in" the texts of the apostle (14). On the other hand, his book aims to clarify the theology "behind" or "beyond" the texts and the actual expressions, and to uncover the system of religious thoughts "beneath the surface level" (17, 26, 28, 93, 181). This approach requires a "de-rhetorized" text. To achieve that, Thurén tries "to identify the persuasive devices in the text and to filter out their effect on the ideas expressed" (28). His starting point is what he terms a "dynamic view" of Paul's text. In this view, the author does not use the text solely to *inform* the readers about his opinions. Instead, his goal is to *affect* them and to influence their thoughts and actions. We must take into account the fact that in Paul's letters, "strategic goals and tactical moves confuse and exaggerate the thoughts presented, as compared with neutral description" (25). It is doubtful, therefore, whether we can take his expressions at face value. Although Paul's ideas appear to be different, sometimes even within the same letter, in Thurén's view, he was not a sophist without any firm stance nor did he compromise the truth (36, 182). Rather, he expressed himself in a one-sided and exaggerated manner, and operated "with radical images instead of well-balanced, neutral descriptions of reality, though for the sake of rhetoric" (88).

By and large, Thurén creates the impression that there is no problem in distinguishing between rhetoric and theology, or in identifying the "persuasive devices" in the text and filtering out their effect on the "ideas" expressed. Concerning the function of the law in the letters to the Galatians, the Corinthians, and the Romans, he finds "a simple de-rhetorized ideological structure" (130). At the end of his book, he concludes "that Paul's view about the law *per se* is fairly clear and solid, if it is inferred from the conditions of communication in which his statements occur and the internal dynamics of his texts" (185). Throughout Thurén's book, the reader gets the impression that "theology" refers to the coherent system of religious thoughts behind the actual expressions, and that "rhetoric" is mainly a matter of communicating these thoughts in a one-sided and exaggerated manner for the sake of affecting the addressees in their specific situation.

At certain points, however, Thurén seems to be aware of the fact that the matter is much more complicated. In a segment on "Law and Paraenesis," he concludes that Paul does not, *in principle*, accept the moral side of the law as a guideline for

the addressees' life—either in his letter to the Galatians, or in that to the Romans. In practice, however, the apostle does more or less accept that in the latter letter (137). He proposes that “the profound connection between rhetoric and theology may well play a central role in this case.” It can be assumed, he states, “that the rhetorically motivated complete rejection of the law in Gal[atians], viz. failure to use it as a guideline, has resulted in a theological principle in Romans” (137). The reader of this passage may draw the conclusion that the rhetoric in Galatians and Romans affects Paul's theological system on this point in a decisive way. In the same vein, Thurén's principal statement in the summary at the end of his study can be understood as follows: “Paul's theology is not a solid, tension-free theory, which is only expressed in different ways. Obviously, the often overstated and exaggerated manner of speech has its equivalent in his thinking” (181). Here, he appears to view Paul's rhetoric as more than a situation-bound expression of his coherent theology “behind” or “beyond” the texts. The reader gets the impression that Paul's often confusing rhetoric is inherently connected to his thinking. Thurén himself, however, does not draw any fundamental conclusions from this insight. In the next sentence, he suggests “that theology is always rhetorical by nature.” In explaining this statement, however, he implies that rhetoric is no more than a simplified manner of expressing theological or ideological concepts in order to facilitate their understanding (182).

1.4.3. Hans Hübner

In his article “Die Rhetorik und die Theologie,” (in *Die Macht des Wortes. Aspekte gegenwärtiger Rhetorikforschung*, ed. C. J. Classen and H.-J. Müllenbrock, *Ars Rhetorica* 4 [Munich: Hitzeroth, 1992] 165–79), Hübner uses the letter to the Romans as an example to illustrate how rhetoric and theology are connected in Paul's letters. The second volume of his *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), which was published almost simultaneously, is the only theology of the New Testament to use rhetorical analysis systematically in describing Paul's theology. By analyzing his letters in chronological order and by applying rhetorical analysis to each letter, Hübner tries to illuminate the dynamic character of Paul's theology. According to Hübner, theological thinking for Paul meant theological arguing. Argumentation is the *development* of thought about theological questions. In his argumentation, the apostle shows rhetorical competence (*Biblische Theologie*, 26–28).

Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Romans contain clear examples of a development process marked by a considerable degree of modification and rectification. The letter to the Romans is a response to objections about the “unfortunate” letter to the Galatians. Paul has to justify himself against the accusation that he severed the theological tie between himself and the congregation in Jerusalem. He does so by writing a letter, expounding on his “theological essential” (*theologisches essential*), namely, the proclamation of the justification solely by faith, but in such a way as to nullify the antinomian interpretation. Using rhetorical means, Paul makes a theological about-face without revoking his “fundamental religious conviction” (*theologische Grundüberzeugung*). The letter to the Romans is “a rhetorical masterpiece of theological argumentation.” Its dynamic character not only indicates a process of

development in Paul's thought, but also hints at contradictory theologies in his letters. The apostle, however, has a “theological essential,” a “fundamental religious conviction” that he does not renounce: justification solely by faith (“Rhetorik,” 168–69).

Following Wilhelm Wuellner,⁸ Hübner describes Paul's rhetoric in the letter to the Romans as “the rhetoric of faith argumentation,” that is, an argumentation that presupposes the faith and the authority of scripture. Theologizing is basically the process of developing convincing arguments in a given rhetorical situation (*Biblische Theologie*, 29). In the letter to the Romans “the process of theological thinking unfolds while arguments stipulated by the exigency of the historical situation are skillfully presented” (“Rhetorik,” 169). The reader may infer from this statement that the theological content cannot be separated from the rhetorical means.

Hübner, however, does not see theology as totally absorbed by rhetoric. For one thing, he contends that Paul does not use rhetoric to proclaim the gospel but only to explain matters of faith to those who are already believers (“Rhetorik,” 178). Likewise, he makes a distinction between the “theology of justification” and the “proclamation of justification.” According to Hübner, Paul modified his *theology* of justification in the letter to the Romans but retained his *proclamation* of justification (*Biblische Theologie*, 232). It is not entirely clear to the reader, however, how Hübner can maintain this distinction because he views the *proclamation* of the justification solely by faith as Paul's “theological essential” (“Rhetorik,” 169). It would appear that Hübner does not see the *justificatio impii*—be it as a proclamation or as Paul's theological essential—as part of Paul's rhetoric at all.

Second, Hübner makes a distinction between Paul's argumentation and its theological underpinning. In a review of Folkert Siegert's book *Argumentation bei Paulus*,⁹ he poses some fundamental theological questions concerning the relationship between theology and secular science. Can theology arrive at the essence of Pauline theological thinking by means of the concept of argumentation? Where does Paul's argumentation originate? How do argumentation and the understanding of faith inspired by the Holy Spirit belong together theologically? In this context, Hübner does not give explicit answers. Rather, he leaves the reader to infer from his approach that his answer to the first question is negative: theology cannot arrive at the essence of Pauline theological thinking by means of the concept of argumentation, at least not with a secular concept of argumentation.

Summarizing, we can say that Hübner regards rhetoric as an essential part of Paul's theology, where its dynamic character is concerned. His theology is rhetorical insofar as the apostle develops arguments stipulated by the exigency of the historical situation. From this perspective, there is an intrinsic relationship between the theological content and the rhetorical means. Aside from this perspective, however, it appears that rhetoric does not belong to the essence of Paul's theology: it originates from a source inaccessible to human argumentation, and its core, Paul's proclamation of the gospel and his theological essentials, does not fall within the realm of rhetoric. I have dealt here only with one essential element of Paul's theology, justification by faith alone, because Hübner is very explicit about this point. Other points

8. “Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 330–51, esp. 351.

9. “Methodologie und Theologie I,” *KuD* 33 (1987): 150–75, esp. 173–75.

about which the author does not theorize could be added. Actually, Hübner focuses only on the dynamic and rhetorical character of Paul's theologizing in his interpretation of the letters to the Galatians and the Romans, where the question of the law is at stake. In other chapters, Paul's theology seems to be much more static, as Hübner concentrates more on "*existiale Interpretation*" than on rhetorical criticism. A look at Hübner's approach to rhetorical analysis would reveal it to be another variant of the coherence-contingency method.

1.4.4. Paul W. Meyer

Paul Meyer goes a step further along these lines in his contribution to the SBL Pauline Theology Group.¹⁰ In evaluating the material produced by the group since 1985, Meyer discusses several treatments of the coherence-contingency problem in Paul's theology. He concludes that many of these work on the assumption that Paul's relatively coherent thought world "is always the starting point, the storehouse, the repertoire, the competence *out of which* Paul addresses each of the particular crises he confronts" (148). As an alternative, he proposes that instead of assuming that Paul's "theology" or "conviction" is the *resource* or starting point *from* which he addresses the issues placed before him, one should think of where he arrives in the process of his argument: the *outcome*. According to this line of thought, the "coherence" of Pauline theology is itself the product of a historical process and is "contingent." This is demonstrated by the fact that the end result of one line of theologizing is not always logically compatible in all respects with that of another. Nor can it be made to be so (150). The most important implication of this in regard to our subject is "*that no clear line can be drawn in Paul's letters between argument, rhetoric . . . and theology*" (italics mine). According to Meyer, this point of view also raises doubts as to how far we can take the distinction between proclamation and theology in Paul's letters (153). These are exactly the points about which Hübner's statements appeared somewhat confusing.

However, much like Beker, Thurén, and Hübner, Meyer is also looking for something "that not only gives coherence to this multi-faceted body of Pauline literature, but also transcends the contextual situation of that literature, such that it still calls for a hearing today." He is aware that there is no "non-contingent bedrock of Pauline theological convictions" and that every reference to the cross and resurrection in Paul's letters, every "affirmation," "conviction," or "belief" is shaped by historical, cultural, and personal circumstances and context (156). Nonetheless, he feels, at the same time, that a crucial distinction must be drawn between human belief, affirmation, and conviction, on the one hand, and the "compelling datum" that calls forth these human responses on the other (156). The foundational conviction of Christianity is that God raised Jesus from the dead after his crucifixion. In Meyer's view the essential ingredient in this conviction is the certainty that it is not self-generating, that it has been called into being and derives its warrant and authorization from something God has done. As an act of God, this is the "bedrock" that elicits and shapes "convictions," but is not itself a "conviction" (157). God and the Spirit of Christ

10. "Pauline Theology," in *Pauline Theology*, IV. *Looking Back, Pressing On*, ed. E. E. Johnson and D. M. Hay, SBL Symposium Series 4 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997), 140–60.

are at work in the process of human persuasion and confessing (160). In acknowledging the rhetoricity of Paul's theology, Meyer goes a step further than Hübner. Ultimately, however, he, like Hübner, seeks a transcendent warrant for Paul's rhetorical theology by referring to the act of God and the inspiration from the Holy Spirit.

1.5. *Rhetoric as the Construction of a Symbolic Universe (Lincoln)*

In the introduction to his short outline of the theology in the letter to the Ephesians in the series *New Testament Theology*,¹¹ Andrew T. Lincoln poses the question: What does one look for in asking questions about the theology of Ephesians? He finds that this document is not primarily interested in setting out coherent ideas. Rather, it is a letter intended to accomplish pastoral purposes in addressing its readers.

It achieves its purposes by rhetorical means, by adopting a strategy of persuasion. In his attempt to persuade, the writer constructs a symbolic universe, which the readers are expected to share to a large extent, but which is also meant to continue to shape their values, their perception of themselves and their role in the world. (76)

Lincoln announces that questions about the letter's perspective on God, Christ, salvation, the church, and ethics will be asked and answered, but that they will not necessarily provide the determinative structure for the discussion: "Rather the attempt will be made to see these issues as part of the letter's overall symbolic universe, as that serves the writer's pastoral and rhetorical purposes" (76). From this perspective, the relationship between theology and rhetoric is not one of content and form. Nor is rhetoric mainly associated with the dynamic or contingent aspect of Paul's gospel. *Rather, the theological content as a whole is part of the rhetorical strategy.* Lincoln sees the construction of a symbolic universe with its theological topics as part of the author's rhetorical means in attaining his practical goal. In the case of the letter to the Ephesians, this purpose is "strengthening the self-understanding and promoting the distinctive behavior of its readers as members of the Church in the world" (91). Lincoln does not go into the fundamental epistemological questions. We find more reflection on this matter in the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

1.6. *Biblical Theology as a Critical Theo-ethical Rhetoric (Schüssler Fiorenza)*

In her book *Rhetoric and Ethic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999) Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza devotes a chapter to "Pauline Theology and the Politics of Meaning," which

11. A. T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

focuses on the relationship between theology and rhetoric. Here, as in other writings, she understands "rhetoric" in a very comprehensive sense. In her view, "language and knowledge of the world are rhetorical; that is, they are articulated in specific situations, by particular people, for a certain audience, and with certain articulated or suppressed goals and interests in mind" (93). Language is not descriptive, but performative. "It creates and shapes the symbolic worlds it professes to evoke and describe" (93). From this perspective, "theological language is best understood in the classical sense of rhetoric as speech that constructs and shapes reality, rather than reflecting it" (177).

To make clear what this means I will cite two examples related to the theology of the New Testament. Schüssler Fiorenza views the early Christian interpretations of Jesus' death as rhetorical accounts, as interpretative strategies and attempts at "meaning-making," rather than as presentations of historical facts, or as doctrinal reflections on redemption and atonement. "They were articulated in a sociohistorical situation where the followers of Jesus had to 'make sense' out of his brutal death as a condemned criminal." Similarly, she does not conceive the christological titles as definitions of the true being or nature of Jesus. "Rather they are best understood as language models and metaphors that seek to 'make sense' out of the terrible fate of Jesus."¹²

Language is not just performative; it is political (93). Discourse creates a world of pluriform meanings and a pluralism of symbolic universes. This raises the question of power. "How is meaning constructed? Whose interests are served? . . . Which social-political practices are legitimated?" (27). Thus, a critical intratextual analysis of the language and rhetoric of texts must be complemented by a critical systematic analysis of socio-political and religious structures of domination and exclusion (93). Such an analysis concerns not only the texts of the Bible, but also that of the biblical interpreters. To that end, a "rhetoric of inquiry" is needed, which pays special attention to the argumentative discourse of scholars and their theoretical presuppositions.

As Schüssler Fiorenza understands theology not as a system but as a rhetorical practice, she proposes that *the subdiscipline of biblical theology must be reconceptualized in rhetorical terms*. More specifically, since she views the central theological question today as an ethical question as to what kind of God religious communities and their Scriptures proclaim, she understands biblical theology as a "critical theological rhetoric." Biblical theology has the task of critically mapping and reflecting on how the Scriptures speak of the divine. Its task is to inquire "not only as to how the Scriptures construct theological meaning and speak about the living God, but also as to how biblical interpreters construct the theology of biblical writings" (*Rhetoric and Ethic*, 176–79).

Using a "rhetoric of inquiry" to examine the politics of hegemonic biblical theology in order to demonstrate the distinctiveness of her own model, Schüssler Fiorenza discusses three characteristics of the hegemonic politics of theological interpretation, all of which have to do with authority:

1. The politics of "othering" and its tendencies of marginalization and vilification. Scholars understand canonical voices as right and true, but vilify their submerged alternative arguments as false and heretical. The majority of scholars have constructed Paul's argument as "normative" over and against Paul's so-called Gnostic, libertine, or Jewish legalistic "opponents."
2. The politics and logics of identity. The "logic of identity" consists of an unrelenting urge to formulate "an essence that brings concrete particulars into unity."¹³ According to Schüssler Fiorenza, the drive toward coherence, unity, and identity is also the motivating ideological force in the construction of a Pauline theology. By way of illustration, she refers to Christiaan Beker's coherence-contingency model. In her view, his attempt to find a central core in the variety of Paul's theological expressions as "the abiding truth" of the gospel springs from "his concern with safeguarding the theological master-voice of Paul" (*Rhetoric and Ethic*, 185).
3. The politics of identification. Scholars tend to read Paul's letters as authoritative rather than as argumentative interventions in the theological discourses of his audience. According to Schüssler Fiorenza, such an identification with Paul's theological rhetoric allows ecclesial and academic 'fathers' to claim Paul's authority for themselves (180–88).

Schüssler Fiorenza understands biblical theology vis-à-vis the hegemonic politics of interpretation as the rhetoric of *ekklēsia*. She demands that not only early Christian communities but also contemporary reading practices be reconceptualized "as sites of communicative persuasion, emancipatory struggles, and theological visions that are shared by all participants" (188). She propagates a model that "valorizes difference, plurivocity, argument, persuasion, and the democratic participation of all those excluded from or subordinated by theological discourses" (188). In short, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that biblical theology should be revisioned as

both a critical reflection on the religious-communal and social-political practices encoded in Scripture and as a critical rhetoric of inquiry that is able to explore the rhetorical function of biblical texts and contemporary interpretations. The task of biblical theology would then not only be descriptive-analytic utilizing all the critical methods of exegetical, historical, and literary scholarship but also hermeneutic, ideology critical, evaluative, and theological ones. (191)

13. Schüssler Fiorenza quotes Iris Marion Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public," in *Feminism as Critique*, ed. S. Benhabib and D. Cornell (Cambridge: Polity, 1986), 56–76, esp. 61, who for her part refers to Theodor Adorno. Young adds: "It is not the unifying force of concepts *per se* that Adorno finds dangerous. The logic of identity goes beyond such an attempt to order and describe the particulars of experience. It constructs total systems that seek to engulf the alterity of things in the unity of thought."

12. *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 107–19, esp. 108 and 119.

2. Fundamental Issues

2.1. Platonic and (Neo-)sophistic Position in Philosophy and Theology

Broadly speaking, two antipodal positions can be found in rhetorical criticism. The first one is the “Platonic” view, which is characterized by binary oppositions such as inner/outer, deep/surface, essential/peripheral, necessary/contingent, things/words, realities/illusions, fact/opinion, neutral/partisan.¹⁴ In this view, rhetoric is associated with the second part of these oppositions. The *verba* are the contingent representations of the *res*. Rhetoric is subordinate to content and concerns only the way this content is presented. Platonists believe that “truth” exists independently of human opinions about it and the variety of words in which these opinions are expressed. They also assume that there are criteria for the distinction of truth from falsity that are independent of linguistic statements.

The second one is the “(neo-)sophistic”¹⁵ or “social-constructivist” view,¹⁶ which does not accept such a separation between *res* and *verba*. From this perspective, “rhetoric may be viewed not as a matter of giving effectiveness to truth but of creating truth.”¹⁷ It is “speech that constructs and shapes reality, rather than reflecting it.”¹⁸ “Truth” itself is contingent. It is not found but “created moment by moment in the circumstances in which [man] finds himself and with which he has to cope.”¹⁹ It is conceived as what communities are persuaded of at any particular time.²⁰ Arguments are the materials of such a construction of truth. The orator is able to “make the weaker *logos* the stronger”; from a Platonic perspective he does this “seemingly”;²¹ from a sophistic perspective, however, rhetoric has the power to create and transform realities. Stronger arguments mean a stronger cause. Lawyers use every means

14. S. Fish, “Rhetoric,” *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. F. Lentricchia and Th. McLaughlin; 2nd ed. (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 203–22, esp. 205.

15. On the relationship between modern neo-sophistic theory and the historical reconstruction of sophistic doctrines, see E. Schiappa, “Neo-Sophistic Criticism or the Historical Reconstruction of Sophistic Doctrines?” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 23, no. 3 (1990): 192–217; and B. McComiskey *Gorgias and the New Sophistic Rhetoric* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University, 2002).

16. On the relationship between neo-sophism and social constructivism, see S. Fish, in G. A. Olson, “Fish Tales: A Conversation with ‘the Contemporary Sophist,’” in G. A. Olson, *Justifying Belief: Stanley Fish and the Work of Rhetoric* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 85–113, esp. 85–87, 94–96.

17. R. L. Scott, “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic,” *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967): 9–17, esp. 13; cf. idem, “Rhetoric Is Epistemic: What Difference Does That Make?” in *Defining the New Rhetorics*, ed. Th. Enos and S. C. Brown, Sage Series in Written Communication 7 (Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage, 1993), 120–36, esp. 126.

18. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 177.

19. Scott, “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic,” 17.

20. W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 51; Fish, “Rhetoric,” 207.

21. P. Valesio, *Novantiqua: Rhetorics as a Contemporary Theory*, Advances in Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 92.

available to reach their goals, such as obtaining an acquittal for a client. To that end they create realities and truths. In this case, the content is subordinate to the rhetorical goal. In the same way, in philosophy and theology symbolic universes are created with a view to influencing people's behavior. From this perspective, (neo-)sophists are moving “rhetoric from the disreputable periphery to the necessary center.”²²

2.2. Pauline Rhetoric from a Platonic and a (Neo-)sophistic Perspective

2.2.1. A Platonic Perspective

A typical example of a more Platonic view of rhetoric is Lauri Thuren's *Derhetorizing Paul*. Thuren sees rhetoric as the contingent expression of coherent contents. He makes little—if any—mention of the rhetorical character of the “coherent” system of thoughts. He looks behind Paul's words, not only for his belief system, but apparently also for the truth. He is eager to deny that Paul is “a sophist without any firm stance” (38), “an opportunist” or a “situational thinker” (20). Paul may—like other theologians or adherents of any particular ideology—simplify his concepts, but Thuren is adamant that this does not involve “compromising the truth” (182). This truth can be found beyond the texts and the actual expressions. I agree entirely with J. David Hester, who in his review of Thuren's book states that his description of “derhetorization” suggests “a near Platonic view of rhetoric.” Thuren embraces “what Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca describe as the philosophical pair ‘appearance/reality,’ where ‘rhetoric’ is the ‘apparent’ performance of a ‘real’ truth.” According to Hester, this description of ‘derhetorization’ suggests “that rhetoric is something that is tenuous, contextual, an afterthought that strategizes upon an already present theological truth. ‘Rhetoric’ is contingent, theology fundamental.”²³

In a similar vein Peter Lampe questions whether Thuren's attempt to strip the linguistic form from the thinking is not founded on the outdated axiom that *res* and *verba* can be distinguished from each other. From the standpoint of constructivism and the sociology of knowledge, he himself has become skeptical that *res* and *verba* are clearly distinguishable from each other.²⁴

This Platonic view of rhetoric also underlies Beker's attempt to find “Paul's abiding message” in the contingency of its various expressions. Hübner's view is not univocal. On the one hand, the reader gets the impression that in his conception of rhetoric, the *res* or theological content cannot be isolated from the *verba*, the rhetorical means. Hübner views theologizing basically as the process of developing convinc-

22. Fish, in Olson, *Justifying Belief*, 95.

23. Review of *Derhetorizing Paul*, *JBL* 123 (2004): 171–77, esp. 175.

24. Peter Lampe, “Rhetorical Analysis of Pauline Texts—Quo Vadit? Methodological Reflections,” in this volume, 3–21; cf. also P. Lampe, *Die Wirklichkeit als Bild: Das Neue Testament als ein Grunddokument abendländischer Kultur im Lichte konstruktivistischer Epistemologie und Wissenssoziologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2006), 42–43 (Eng. trans. forthcoming by Continuum International Publishing Group).

ing arguments in a given rhetorical situation. This is a creative process that sometimes results in contrasting theologies in Paul's letters. Hübner, on the other hand, can distinguish Paul's theological "essential" or his "fundamental conviction" from its rhetorical presentation. Occasionally, Hübner also makes a distinction between Paul's exaggerated form of expression and "the true core of his argumentation."²⁵ Like Thurén, Beker and Hübner are convinced that Paul is not a sophist, an opportunist or an orator who tries "to make the weaker *logos* the stronger."²⁶

Paul Meyer observes the following regarding such attempts to distinguish between the "contingent" form and the "coherent" elements in Paul's theology:

what is at stake is to identify not only what controls or shapes the apostle's argument at any given moment but also what can so transcend the limitations of historical contingency as to supply warrant for its truth and reliability.²⁷

His own view, however, is also based on the traditional distinction between *res* and *verba*. He seeks the warrant for the truth of the gospel by separating God's act of confirming and vindicating the crucified Jesus on the one hand from the human convictions about this act on the other, and by finding an access to this act of God beyond the human preaching about it.²⁸

2.2.2. A (Neo-)sophistic Perspective

Those with a (neo-)sophistic view of Paul's rhetoric are very reluctant to make a distinction between the *res*, the content or the true core of his theology, and the *verba*, the rhetorical means the apostle uses to reach his goal. In this perception, Paul is very competent in the art of "making the weaker *logos* the stronger." His theological arguments are always a means to an end. Depending on his goal, he creates realities and constructs symbolic worlds. Paul's theological constructions concerning the relationship between the law, sin, and death are a case in point. I see at least four such constructions.²⁹

First, in the context of Rom 1:18–3:21, the law is a primal factor with regard to the origin of sin and death. The basic principle of the law is that those who transgress its commandments deserve to die (Rom 1:32). Death is a consequence of the transgression of the law.

Second, according to Rom 5:12–13, because of to Adam's transgression, sin and death were already in the world before the law was promulgated. To maintain the negative function of the law, however, Paul makes a dissociation between two kinds of sin, namely, between accounted sin and sin that is not accounted: "sin is

25. E.g., *Biblische Theologie* II, 274.

26. Beker, "Paul's Theology," 367–68; Hübner, "Rhetorik," 178.

27. "Pauline Theology," 147.

28. "Pauline Theology," 156–57.

29. Cf. my article "Die Schattenseite der Auferstehung im Evangelium des Paulus," in *Resurrection in the New Testament*, FS J. Lambrecht, ed. R. Bieringer et al., BETL 165 (Leuven: University Press/Peeters, 2002), 301–13, esp. 306–9.

not accounted in the absence of the law." Here, the negative function of the law is a secondary one; we could term it "imputative."

Third, in 1 Cor 15:44–57 we find another model: death is neither a consequence of the transgression of the law nor of Adam's trespass. Because God created the first Adam, in contrast with the second one, not as an immortal, but as a mortal being, death entered the world with the creation of human beings. Nonetheless, Paul depicts the role of the law as a negative one with regard to death and sin: "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." Here also the negative function of the law in the death-sin-law chain is a secondary one. Its function is not "imputative," but rather "activating."

Fourth, in the letter to the Philippians, Paul presents yet another model concerning the function of the law. According to this model, there is no inevitable connection between the law and sin. Before the apostle knew Christ, it was possible for him to be blameless according to the law. To maintain the negative function of the law, however, the apostle makes a dissociation between two forms of righteousness: between the "righteousness of his own that comes from the law" and the "righteousness of God that comes through faith in Christ," that is, between a human and a divine righteousness (Phil 3:2–11). We could term the negative function of the law in this construction "pseudo-soteriological."

The aim of all these constructions is to convince his readers that salvation is only possible through Christ. It seems as though the apostle has a bag of arguments and chooses whatever he needs to that end. In all these cases, he is creating theological realities as rhetorical means with a rhetorical aim. In this particular case, the result is a variety of constructions. From a sophistic point of view, however, the case is not fundamentally different where we find less variety and more fixed theological constructions. A fundamental distinction between essential and less essential points, or between coherent and contingent topics, should not be drawn. We can question the higher aim with regard to each theological topic. I will now present a few examples to illustrate this point.

According to Hübner, the *justificatio impii* ("justification of the ungodly") is Paul's theological essential, and as such, this "fundamental conviction" is not a part of Paul's rhetoric. Hübner's logic does not convince everyone, as the following two examples demonstrate. According to Krister Stendahl, "the doctrine of justification by faith was hammered out by Paul for the very specific and limited purpose of defending the rights of Gentile converts to be full and genuine heirs to the promise of God to Israel."³⁰ Francis Watson contends that it is completely wrong to regard the phrase *sola gratia* as the key to Paul's theology: "Paul does not believe that salvation is by grace alone. The view that he does so springs from a failure to recognize that the faith-works contrast is primarily sociological, rather than theological, in meaning."³¹

30. Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and other Essays* (London: SCM, 1977) 2; cf. also W. Wrede, *Paulus* (1904; reprint in *Das Paulusbild in der neueren Deutschen Forschung*, ed. K. H. Rengstorff and U. Luck; WdF 24 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964], 1–97, esp. 69).

31. Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, MSSNTS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 179.

In both views the doctrine of the justification by faith alone is a rhetorical means to a higher end, be it a practical or a sociological one.

A second example is Paul's so-called *theologia crucis* ("theology of the cross"). Hübner regards this as the focal topic in 1 Corinthians 1–4. In his treatment of these chapters, however, he deals with this topic exclusively in theological categories. The rhetorical situation and Paul's rhetorical strategy play no role in his exegesis. It seems as though Hübner sees the *theologia crucis*, like the *iustificatio impii*, as part of Paul's theological essentials, which fall beyond the scope of his rhetoric. From the perspective of sophistic rhetoric, we gain a totally different picture. In this approach, the questions into the rhetorical situation, the rhetorical aim, and the rhetorical strategy are essential.³² The rhetorical situation is typically one where we can assume that Paul has to defend himself against a group among the Corinthians that does not credit him with the same authority it does the other apostles because it feels he lacks rhetorical ability and makes a weak impression. Accordingly, Paul's rhetorical aim is to strengthen his authority. To that end, he uses two different rhetorical strategies. He begins by admitting that he came to the Corinthians in weakness and that his preaching was not marked by wise, eloquent words. He goes on, however, to justify this deficiency by using the criterion of the *aptum*, the appropriate: the display of power, eloquence, or superior wisdom does not belong to the message of the cross. The real divine wisdom and power is manifested in human weakness and foolishness (1:17–2:5). At this point, however, the apostle changes his strategy: he is the one who preached the gospel with superior wisdom to the Corinthians, but they cannot understand it because they are people of the flesh, who are unable to understand spiritual words and wisdom (2:6–16). In the first part of his defense, Paul adopts the attitude of an *eiron*, a self-deprecator; in the second part, he dons the mask of an *alazon*, a braggart. And while he uses a *theologia crucis* to defend himself in the first part, he adopts a *theologia gloriae* ("theology of glory") in the second. This ability to switch masks to achieve one's aim typifies the sophistic repertory. From this perspective, Paul's so-called *theologia crucis* in 1 Corinthians 1–4 is a rhetorical strategy toward a practical goal: the defense of his authority. Moreover, it is one strategy among others. Paul can use also the opposite strategy. In both cases, Paul's theology is a rhetorical means toward a higher end.

Christology is another case in point. According to Wilfred Knox, Paul substituted cosmogony for apocalyptic in his earlier letters as a means of converting the Gentiles: "The change meant nothing for him, for he was not concerned with philosophy, and any system of thought and language that expressed the position of Jesus as Lord was equally acceptable."³³ But the effect of the Colossian controversy was to substitute philosophy for homiletic as the basis of Christian preaching. The divine Wisdom, the divine Mind permeating the cosmos, was identified with Jesus as an eternal truth in the realm of metaphysics. "For only so could the supremacy of Jesus

be asserted as against such potent beings as the rulers of the stars in their courses."³⁴ Knox sees the different christological conceptions in Paul's letters simply as means toward a higher end, the confirmation of the supremacy of Jesus as Lord.

In this christological example, the question of the authenticity of the letter to the Colossians plays a role in the evaluation of Paul's theology. An interpreter who regards Paul's theology largely as sophistic rhetoric will be reluctant to use theological arguments in a discussion about the authenticity of a particular letter. There are topics in Paul's letters about which his thoughts seem to be more fixed than about others. But that is no guarantee that he would never have constructed another system about some topic.

When theological arguments and theological conceptions are persuasive means toward an end, the question arises: What is the ultimate goal? From a secular neo-sophistic point of view it suggests itself that the ultimate goal is nontheological. If we were to regard theology as a rhetorical system of constructing symbolic worlds in the service of a nontheological goal, then the whole system would be dynamic and we could look for the driving force behind it. The ultimate goal might be identical to the ultimate source that generates the system. According to George Kennedy, rhetoric in the most general sense can be identified with the energy inherent in communication:

Driven by human desires and fears, by a search for meaning in life and above all, by the fear of death, religious and philosophical codes generate great energy, like that of a magnetic field or that induced in a closed circuit. This energy, expressed in language, is what has traditionally been described as rhetoric.³⁵

We can search for this energy, or a driving force of this nature, from any number of angles, including from a psychological, a sociological, or an ideology-critical perspective. I will present a model here that is based on an ideology-critical view. This model combines a constructionist view of Paul's theology with a "rhetoric of power," which raises the question: What systems of power are at work in systems of thought?³⁶ Taking the confession "Jesus is Lord" as a starting point, this model works on the assumption that the driving force behind Paul's theology is the expansion of power, the elementary imperialistic drive that determines most of world history. In Paul's case, it is expressed in the symbol of a national deity that has the ambition to conquer the world. The national God of Israel makes a self-revelation on Mount Sinai as a jealous God who does not tolerate worship of other gods and service to idols. Paul did not see this as a commandment for Jews only. He understood his "revelation"

34. Knox, *St Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, 178.

32. For a detailed analysis, see my book *Die Kunst der Argumentation bei Paulus* (WUNT 1149 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 29–64.

33. Wilfred Knox, *St Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 178.

35. George Kennedy, "'Truth' and 'Rhetoric' in the Pauline Epistles," in *The Bible as Rhetoric*, ed. M. Warner (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), 195–202, esp. 196; see also idem, "A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of Generic Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 1–21, esp. 2; idem, *Comparative Rhetoric* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3–5.

36. Cf. J. David Hester Amador, *Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament. An Introduction to a Rhetoric of Power*, JSNTSup 174 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

tion" on the road to Damascus as an assignment to proclaim the Son of God to the Gentiles. He perceived Jesus Christ, the heavenly son of God, as God's viceroy, who was assigned to destroy the enemies and to establish the universal kingdom of God, "so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:24–28). It was Paul's mission as an apostle of Jesus Christ "to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles" (Rom 1:5), or to win "obedience from the Gentiles" (Rom 15:18). The ultimate aim of Paul's mission was the dominion of Israel's God over the whole world.

Paul's rhetoric is the most powerful weapon of his warfare: "we destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:4–5). The apostle uses every argument that serves this goal. With this goal in mind, he creates a new symbolic universe with its characteristic power structure, building on existing symbolic worlds.

From this perspective the whole world is split into two parts. One is characterized by light, truth, justice, life, and spirit, the other by darkness, falsehood, sin, death, and flesh. Whatever fits Paul's purpose is assigned to the first category: whatever does not fit this purpose is relegated to the latter category. These categories were common in Paul's world, but the apostle applies them in a manner that serves his aim. These categories are means of persuasion. Whether Paul chooses them from his traditions, or puts his own stamp on them, he uses them to convince his readers of his point of view.

From this perspective, Paul pictures the reality of Jews and Gentiles. His concept of the sinfulness of Jews and Gentiles is a construction that fits into the power structure of his symbolic universe: declaring them all guilty is part of the rhetorical strategy that aims at their subjection. Threatening with the wrath of God is a very effective means in the rhetoric of power. Since salvation is possible only through Christ in Paul's gospel, Paul has to deny salvific power for all rival instances, most of all for the Jewish law. As forgiveness of sin, justice, and life come solely through the death and resurrection of Christ, Paul depicts the law as the origin of sin and death. As we have already seen, he uses various models to that end.

A great deal of Paul's soteriology is formulated in terms of dominion and power. He divides the world mainly into two realms of power. People are either "under the law" or "under grace" (Rom 6:15); either "enslaved to sin" or "slaves of righteousness" (Rom 6:17–18); either "slaves to the law of sin" or "slaves to the law of God" (Rom 7:22); either "enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods" or "enslaved to God" (Gal 4:8; Rom 6:22). While he describes the first enslavement as imprisonment, he depicts the second as freedom (Rom 6:20; Gal 3:22; 4:21–31).

In the same way, the work of Christ is depicted in terms of dominion and power. According to Paul, Christ, by his resurrection from the dead, was "appointed as Son of God with power" (Rom 1:4). For Paul, this meant that he had received from God the mandate and the power "to put all his enemies under his feet" and to "destroy every ruler, authority and power." From his place at the right hand of God, the resurrected Son of God exercises his power to establish the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:23–28). The mission of the Son of God will be fulfilled when "at the name of Jesus, every knee will bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Phil 2:10). At first sight, Christ's death on the cross does not appear to fit into this structure of power and dominion. Using his rhetoric, however, Paul transforms the reality of this visible

world into a reality of another order. With his paradoxical logic, he transforms weakness into power. For those who are perishing, the message about the cross is foolishness, but for those who are saved, it is the power of God.

It is possible to give other elements of Paul's theology a place in this structure of power. As an illustration of the combination of a constructionist view of Paul's theology with a "rhetoric of power," however, this sketch may suffice.

Clearly, every model discussed in this paper is the result of the readers' constructions—constructions where their presuppositions and interpretation interests are decisive. In light of this, we must pose certain questions. Is the interpreter's outlook generally Platonic or sophistic? Does the reader champion a secular or a Christian—Paulinist or more catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed—view of the world? All interpretations presented in this paper reflect the worldviews of the interpreters, whether those are explicitly expressed or not. Thus, the discussion about the relationship between rhetoric and theology in Paul's letters invites us to engage in a discussion about our own perceptions of the world.³⁷

37. I fully agree with H. Raisänen (*Beyond New Testament Theology*, 2nd ed. [London: SCM, 2000], 166): "it should be clear after the discussion in hermeneutics and the philosophy of science this century that the person of the scholar cannot be wholly bracketted out in historical work. The scholar's perception is influenced by his or her own situation and interests. A contemporizing concern always exists, consciously or unconsciously. But the concerns of the reader can be kept under control within certain limits." I hope this essay may contribute to the process of keeping these concerns under control.