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Chapter 9

BOLD SPEECH, OPPOSITION, AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMAGERY IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Rubén R. Dupertuis

Opposition is a central theme in the Acts of the Apostles. Success in spreading the message of Christianity is not independent from conflict and suffering, but is inextricably tied to it (Marguerat 2002: 39). The account of the death of Stephen is a notable element in the development of the theme, but it runs throughout the narrative. Indeed, as Richard Pervo notes, "confinement, including arrest, incarceration, and bondage, is a literal feature of more than one-third of Acts" (Pervo 2009: 11). Acts' stories of conflict with authorities have played a key role in developing and sustaining the widespread view that persecution and martyrdom have been central to the Christian experience from the earliest days of the Christian movement. The nature and function of the opposition in narrative of Acts, however, has long been the subject of debate. Does the emphasis on opposition and conflict capture the historical realities of the first Christians? Is this emphasis shaped by the author's theology and/or literary strategies? Whatever the historical realities may be, in what follows I suggest that the emphasis on opposition and conflict in Acts has the narrative function of constructing the heroes of the narrative as "true" philosophers. The author of Acts presents the leaders of the Christian movement to Theophilus, the educated reader (whether a person or a larger entity), using widespread philosophical *topoi* that emphasized the conflict between the philosopher and a ruler or authority figure. The use of the figure of the philosopher at odds with a tyrant has a long history in Greek literature, but it becomes particularly prominent in second-century philosophical literature and narratives. Reading Acts alongside some of these texts allows us to see that its stories of conflict and opposition, which are consistently linked to the term *parrēsia* and philosophical imagery, share striking similarities with some of the ways in which Greek authors of the late-first and second centuries imagined themselves into the structures of power.

The term *parrēsia* has been called a "key word" in Acts (van Unnik 1980: 279), appearing twelve times, including in Peter's first speech immediately after the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 and prominently in the final

words of Acts describing Paul, imprisoned in Rome, "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things of Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness (παρρησίας), unhindered" (Acts 28:31). But exactly what the significance of the free or bold speech that is attributed to the heroes of the narrative is remains the subject of continuing debate. While some make a distinction between the secular use of the term in pagan literature and the religious use of the term by New Testament writers (Morrow 1982: 439), as a number of recent studies have shown, the importance of the term *parrēsia* in Acts is probably better understood in relation to the term's enduring significance in Greek literature in a number of different settings, including discussions of democracy, Cynic philosophy, treatises on friendship, and in the self-presentation of philosophers (see Schlier 1967; van Unnik 1980; and the essays in Fitzgerald 1996; Fields 2009). It is the latter that I want to focus on here, as I will suggest in this essay that Acts' use of the term *parrēsia* should be seen in the context of the widespread *topos* of the philosopher willing to speak the truth to the powerful despite the consequences and functions rhetorically, therefore, as a marker of philosophical identity. These features come into focus by reading Acts alongside Greek authors of the late-first and second centuries, such as Dio Chryssostom and Lucian, who use the term and associated philosophical *topoi* as part of a complex appropriation of Greek identity in a Roman world.

Before turning to the use of the term, some brief observations about my approach are in order. The similarities I will put forward allow us to see aspects of Acts—in this case the prominent use of philosophical imagery—not otherwise visible as clearly. However, I do not intend my use of *comparanda* that includes second-century authors such as Lucian to serve as an argument for dating Acts in the second century. While I do find the recent arguments for a second-century date—especially those of Pervo (2006) and Tyson (2006)— convincing, I do not consider the similarities I will suggest between Acts and late-first and second century authors to add to the evidence they have adduced. Similarly, I do not intend to suggest through my use of authors associated with the literary movement known as the Second Sophistic that Acts should to be considered a Second Sophistic text (for discussion of Acts in this context see, Gilbert 2006; Nasrallah 2008; and Chapter 11 in this volume). Rather, reading Acts in the light of authors of the second century is part of a robust contextualization of Acts in the ancient world, and one not constrained by the tendency in the study of the New Testament to limit *comparanda* to Jewish and Greek literature that is earlier than Acts (for similar approaches, see Darr 1998; Penner & Vander Stichele 2007). Whether one dates Acts in the late-first or early-second century, authors of the second century, many of whom can be associated with the Second Sophistic movement, are enough a part of the larger cultural orbit of Acts to shed light on aspects of the narrative other *comparanda* might not allow us to see as clearly (contra Adams 2010).

PARRĒSIA AMONG THE PHILOSOPHERS

The term *parrēsia* first emerges as a key term of Greek (and particularly Athenian) democracy in the fifth century BCE denoting the right of free citizens to participate in politics. Heinrich Schlier (1967: 872–3) identified three ways in which the term is used in this political context: a sense that emphasizes the right to speak or to say anything; a sense that emphasizes the relationship between *parrēsia* and truth, thus connoting the need to say what needs to be said; and a sense that identifies the link between *parrēsia* and opposition, thus suggesting that to say what needs to be said may require the courage to do so despite potentially negative consequences. All three aspects of the term are closely associated with the rights of full citizens of the democratic *polis*. That free speech could be seen as a defining characteristic of the citizen of the *polis* is suggested by Euripides' claim that the hardest part of exile is "not having free speech" (οὐκ ἔχει παρρεσίαν; *Phoen.* 390–91; see also Euripides, *Hipp.* 421–2 and *Ion* 672; Demosthenes, *3 Philip.* 3–4; Aristophanes, *Thesm.* 541; Schlier 1967: 872–3; and Fields 2009: 21–3).

While *parrēsia* as the right to free speech in a democratic context is a possible meaning later, by the mid-fourth century BCE and certainly in later philosophical discourse, the basis of *parrēsia* shifts from a right accorded citizens to a moral virtue. This shift occurs as early as "Socrates as reported by Plato, [for whom] the term signifies not free and frank speech as a contribution in the Assembly or some other institutional context, but the frank and open statement of one's genuine opinion in the context of personal interaction" (Fields 2009: 23; see also Schlier 1967: 874–5). So for Cynics, as citizens of the world and friends of the gods, it is a moral and individual right to speak freely and to speak the truth—and it becomes among philosophers the necessary treatment, however harsh, for the moral ailments of society. Both Philodemus (*Lib.* frag. 64) and Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 33.6; *Or.* 77/78.45), for example, use the image of the philosopher as a physician who uses *parrēsia* to heal the sick of society.

Some philosophers, again particularly Cynics, became associated with abrasive speech and were accused of misusing *parrēsia* to justify *loidoria*, berating or reviling the masses.[1] Epictetus, for example, tells a prospective philosopher that he misunderstands the calling of the Cynic if he sees it as limited to having "a contemptible wallet, a staff, and big jaws; to devour everything you give him or stow it away, or to revile tactlessly [λοιδορεῖσθαι] the people he meets" (3.22.51; Oldfather, trans.). Similar critiques of inappropriate use of *parrēsia* were not uncommon (cf. Philodemus, *Lib.* frag. 72, col. 13; Philo, *Somn.* 2.83.89; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 60.4; Lucian, *Demon.* 48; *Vit. auct.* 10; *Pisc.* 31; and *Peregr.* 18). That an extensive literature on the appropriate use of *parrēsia* in a number of different settings arises, suggests that the legitimating function of the term in cultural or rhetorical terms was significant and worth the effort to be able to claim it for oneself. Put another way, the

importance of the term, as Dana Fields has argued in her fine study, is related to its ability to function as a "tool for self-positioning" (Fields 2009: 200).

I focus here on three related aspects of the function of the term *parrēsia* in the characterization of the philosopher that stand out and will be useful for the subsequent assessment of the function of the term in Acts; they are: (a) the association of *parrēsia* and conflict with ruling authorities; (b) divine commission as the source of *parrēsia*; and (c) the significance of Socrates as the model for later philosophers.

Parrēsia *and opposition*

The association between *parrēsia* and opposition is already present in the Athenian democratic context, but it becomes a central feature of the *topos* of the philosopher's opposition to the tyrant in later periods. As John Darr has noted, "confrontation with tyranny became the *sine qua non* of the true philosopher" (Darr 1998: 107). In Diogenes Laertius's account of the philosophers, *parrēsia* often refers to the bold or outspoken nature of philosophers leading, at times, to rebuke, exile, and death (*Diog. Laert.* 2.102; 2.130; 5; cf. 1.101; 2.123; 2.127; 4.51; 6.69). In the early imperial period there are numerous stories of first-century philosophers suffering in one way or another at the hands of emperors. The most common punishment was exile, although examples of philosophers being sentenced to death exist (see Whitmarsh 2001: 134 n. 5). Whatever the real reasons for the banishing of philosophers, their exile was often linked to the philosophers' *parrēsia*. An example can be seen in Musonius Rufus's challenge to the civic definition of *parrēsia* suggested by Euripides:

> But I should say in rejoinder to Euripides: "You are right, Euripides, when you say that it is the condition of a slave not to say what one thinks when one ought to speak, for it is not always, nor everywhere, nor before everyone that we should say what we think. But one point, it seems to me, is not well-taken, that exiles do not have freedom of speech [παρρησίας], if to you freedom of speech [παρρησία] means not suppressing whatever one chances to think. For it is not as exiles that men fear to say what they think, but as men afraid lest from speaking pain or death or punishment or some other such thing shall befall them. Fear is the cause of this, not exile. For to many people, nay to most, even though dwelling safely in their native city, fear of what seem to them dire consequences of free speech is present. However, the courageous man, in exile no less than at home, is dauntless in the face of all such fears; for that reason also he has the courage to say what he thinks equally at home or in exile."
>
> (Musonius Rufus 9.86–105; Lutz, trans.)

For Musonius the true philosopher's freedom comes from the need to speak the truth regardless of the consequences, which include exile—Musonius's focus in this passage—and possibly death.

Dio Chrysostom also links *parrēsia* and opposition. For Dio, in fact, speaking in such a way as to avoid negative consequences is precisely the opposite of what the true philosopher ought to do. He describes those who abuse *parrēsia* as men who use it "sparingly, not in such a way as to fill your ears therewith nor for any length of time; nay they merely utter a phrase or two, and then, after berating [λοιδορήσαντες] rather than enlightening you, they make a hurried exit" (*Or.* 32.11; Cohoon & Crosby, trans.). An ideal philosopher, in contrast, is one who "in plain terms and without guile speaks his mind with frankness [παρρησιαζόμενον] and neither for the sake of reputation nor for gain makes false pretensions, but out of good will and concern for his fellow-men stands ready, if need be, to submit to ridicule and to the disorder and the uproar of the mob" (*Or.* 32.11, Cohoon & Crosby, trans.; see also *Or.* 8). Dio, like Musonius, makes a connection between the true philosopher and the willingness to speak the truth despite the consequences. Also like Musonius, Dio wears the badge of exile proudly as the mark of his philosophical identity.

Tim Whitmarsh has shown that in the Greek literature of the first and second century CE, "exile was not simply a tool of imperial repression: it was also appropriated by its victims (and no doubt by others, too) as a rhetorical resource through which individual agents could articulate their own philosophical status" (Whitmarsh 2001: 135). He further notes that for some first and second century authors—his primary examples are Musonius Rufus and Dio Chrysostom—exile becomes a kind of badge or marker of philosophical success (*ibid.*: 138). This is, for example, how Lucian understands Dio's exile (*Peregr.* 18).

The close connections between *parrēsia*, opposition, and philosophical identity become evident in Lucian's *Passing of Peregrinus*, which is worth a closer look. Setting aside questions of the accuracy of Lucian's description of the Cynic philosopher, Lucian's sustained attack of Peregrinus turns on the issue of the true vs the false philosopher (something that he tackles specifically in *The Dead Come to Life, or The Fisherman*). In the case of Peregrinus, what is ironically lamentable for the narrator is the way in which Peregrinus's philosophical credentials are created and sustained by followers who misconstrue his actions. Peregrinus's life has all of the right indicators for the title "philosopher" to apply to him, but how he gets them is never quite legitimate. For example, he experiences exile for the first time after news that he murdered his father begins to spread, but rather than being banished by a tyrant, he "condemned himself to exile and roamed about, going to one country after another" (*Peregr.* 10; Harmon & McLoud, trans.). Shortly thereafter he joins the Christians by whom he is revered as a god, lawgiver, and protector, second only to "the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world" (*Peregr.* 11; Harmon & McLoud,

trans.). When he is subsequently apprehended, it is not entirely clear that it is anything Peregrinus has done other than simply join the existing movement (*Peregr.* 12). This arrest, however, results in a growing reputation, the attention and visits of the Christians, and the title "the New Socrates." And his subsequent release takes place precisely because the philosophy-loving governor of Syria does not consider him worthy and recognizes that Peregrinus would gladly die in prison for the reputation that would afford (*Peregr.* 14)—rather than die like a man/Socrates. Peregrinus's arrival in Rome is marked by a confrontation with the emperor, but with a twist: Peregrinus begins "abusing [ἐλοιδορεῖτο] everyone, and in particular the emperor," but does so because he knows himself to be safe given the emperor's mild and gentle manner, and the emperor does not care since he can see through the performance (*Peregr.* 18; Harmon & McLoud, trans.). He is eventually kicked out of Rome, but by a prefect, not the emperor. This, unfortunately, added to Peregrinus's philosophical credentials:

> However, this too made for his renown, and he was on everybody's lips as the philosopher who had been banished for his frankness [παρρησίαν] and excessive freedom, so that in this respect he approached Musonius, Dio, Epictetus, and anyone else who has been in a similar predicament.
>
> (*Peregr.* 18; Harmon & McLoud, trans.)

For Lucian, then, Peregrinus's regrettable reputation as a philosopher depends precisely on his having or at least appearing to have key markers of philosophical identity: arrest, confrontation with the emperor, and banishment. In Lucian's satire, of course, these markers are unearned and unwarranted and more of a joke than anything else. That said, we can learn something about the signifiers of the "true philosopher" none the less.

Parrēsia *and divine commission*

For some philosophers the basis of *parrēsia* is not simply Cynic self-confidence, but rather, divine commission. While the authority of poets can occasionally be linked to a gift of the gods, accounts of divine commissions are most commonly associated with philosophers (see the discussion in Czachesz 2007: 44–52). Immediately following Dio's description of the true philosopher who is willing to speak out regardless of possible derision or worse, he states, "In my own case, for instance, I feel that I have chosen that role, not of my own volition, but by the will of some deity" (*Or.* 32.12; Cohoon & Crosby, trans.). Dio makes a similar claim to divine commission elsewhere, this time with specific Socratic coloring (*Or.* 13.9.12). Epictetus, too, understands the true Cynic as a messenger and a scout

"sent by Zeus to men" (3.22.23–5; Oldfather, trans.; cf. 3.25.56). Diogenes Laertius identifies divine authority as the source for the teachings of some philosophers. For example, he describes Pythagoras as receiving "most of his moral doctrines from the Delphic priestess Themistocleia" (*Diog. Laert.* 8.8; Hicks, trans.). When discussing Epicurus, Diogenes presents an epigram by Athenaeus in which the philosopher's teaching is identified as coming from "the Muses or from the sacred tripod at Delphi" (*Diog. Laert.* 10.12; Hicks, trans.). Diogenes attributes the source of Epimenides' authority, power, and miraculous longevity—he lived to the age of 157 in one tradition, 299 in another—to a fifty-seven-year-long nap that marked him as a favorite of the gods (1.109–15). And Philostratus roots the authority of the teaching of Apollonius of Tyana in his ability to converse with the gods (*Vit. Apoll.* 1.1).

The most well-known and influential divine commission is that of Socrates, whose mission, according to his biographers, is authorized by the oracle at Delphi (Plato, *Apol.* 20e–22a; Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.3.1). This "call," as Loveday Alexander (1993b: 58) puts it, "provided a template for a number of other 'call' stories attached to the lives of philosophers." It is worth noting that the link between Socrates' mission and a divine commission is repeatedly stressed in the *First Epistle of Socrates* (2, 7, 10), which probably dates to the first or second century CE (for the text, see Malherbe 1977).

The Socratic model

The importance of the figure of Socrates in the construction of later philosophical identities is not limited to his divine commission. By the early Roman imperial period, Socrates had become the pre-eminent martyr, the prototype of the philosopher unjustly accused, tried, and executed. Alexander notes that given the substantial literary tradition surrounding him, the figure of Socrates is in an entirely different position than other philosophers (L. C. A. Alexander 1993b: 57–8). Thanks, in part, to the prominence of Plato and to a lesser degree Xenophon in rhetorical and literary training, the influence of Socrates extends far beyond philosophical circles (Dupertuis 2007). Plato's more well-known dialogues were, by the first century CE, dialogues that the cultivated person was expected to know (Trapp 2000: 236–7).

It is not surprising, then, that the death of Socrates was among the most imitated models of how to die nobly (Sterling 2001; L. C. A. Alexander 1993b). When Plutarch recounts the death of Cato the Younger, he does so with the death of Socrates as his literary template (*Cat. Min.* 66.4–70.6). Like Socrates, Cato calms his friends and refuses their efforts to save him. Plutarch also mentions that Cato read through Plato's *Phaedo* twice on the night of his death. Dio draws on the Socratic paradigm explicitly as he takes on Socrates' voice in *Or.* 13 which deals with his banishment by Domitian in

82 CE. Lucian also uses traditions of Socrates' death explicitly in his account of the Stoic philosopher Demonax. For these and other writers, including the authors of Jewish martyrologies (Kloppenborg 1992; Sterling 2001), Socrates became the ideal model of a maligned philosopher willing to die for his beliefs (Whitmarsh, 2001: 133–80; see also Fields 2009).

An interesting second-century example of the way in which Socrates becomes emblematic of the true philosopher's willingness to speak the truth comes from Justin Martyr, who in telling of his confrontation with Crescens—the man accused in later tradition of bringing about Justin's death—calls out the Cynic philosopher for opposing Christianity without having read the teachings of Christ. Justin challenges Crescens to a second public debate, this time before the emperor:

> But if my questions and his answers have been made known to you, you are already aware that he is acquainted with none of our matters; or, if he is acquainted with them, but, through fear of those who might hear him does not dare to speak out, like Socrates, he proves himself, as I said before, no philosopher, but lover of vainglory; at least he disregards the admirable saying of Socrates: "But man must in no wise be honored before truth."
>
> (2 *Apol.* 3; Barnard, trans.)

Although Justin doesn't use the term *parrēsia*, he does underscore the idea that the mark of the true philosopher is daring to speak despite the consequences. Furthermore, Justin's model for the ideal philosopher is Socrates.

PARRĒSIA AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMAGERY IN ACTS

The noun *parrēsia* occurs five times in Acts: once in Peter's post-Pentecost speech in Acts 2:29, once of Peter and John in Acts 4:13, two times of the early Christian community as a whole in Acts 4:29, 31 as they pray for and receive *parrēsia*, and finally as the next to last word of the narrative in Acts 28:31. The term appears in verbal form seven times: twice of Paul in Acts 9:27 and 28, twice of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:46 and 14:3, once of Apollos at Ephesus in Acts 18:26, once of Paul at Ephesus in Acts 19:8, and once in Acts 26:26, as part of Paul's address to Agrippa, before whom he is on trial.

In her fine study of the term, Sara Winter (1996) argues that the way in which *parrēsia* is used in Acts shifts from free speech in a civic context in Acts 2–4 to a meaning consonant with the later association of *parrēsia* with the free speech of philosophers, essentially following the historical trajectory of the term. I suggest below that all occurrences of the term are consonant with the typical use in philosophical *topoi.*

Parrēsia *and opposition in Acts*

In his study of the term in Acts, Willem van Unnik argued that all of the occurrences are the result of opposition or lead to opposition—sometimes a formal trial but not always (van Unnik 1980: 282). This is considered an overstatement by Sara Winter (1996: 186–7), but, in my judgment, the overall context in which the various instances of the term appear generally bears out van Unnik's assessment and is worth stressing.

The term first appears in Acts at the beginning of the third section of Peter's post-Pentecost address in Jerusalem (Acts 2:29). Although Peter's speech meets with some success, it eventually leads to the arrest of Peter and John for "teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2), which is also the subject of Peter's second public speech (Acts 3:11-26).

The term appears next in the setting of a trial of Peter and John before the Jerusalem council (Acts 4:5-21). Following Peter's defense (Acts 4:8-12), the members of the council are surprised by Peter's and John's boldness ("παρησίαν") given their status as "uneducated" and "amateurs" (Acts 4:13). In the trial they are twice charged to stop their public speaking (Acts 4:18, 21), after which they are threatened and released.

Following the trial the Christian community gathers to pray for *parrēsia* (Acts 4:29). The prayer itself places *parrēsia* as a response to opposition by citing Psalms 2:1, thus suggesting that opposition to Jesus by kings and rulers was predicted by David. The prayer then places Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel as the contemporary embodiment of the opposition predicted by the psalmist (Acts 4:26). Furthermore, the opposition is placed "in this city" (ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ), making the opposition encountered by the apostles an extension of that encountered by Jesus. The prayer then continues, "And now, Lord, take notice of their threats and give your slaves the ability to speak your word with all boldness (παρρησίας), while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and portents are taking place through the name of your holy child Jesus" (Acts 4:29-30). In Acts 4:31, the prayer is granted as the narrator notes that "all were filled with the Holy Spirit and were speaking the word of God with boldness (παρρησίας)." The next three scenes focus on the internal life of the community, all of which deal in some way with property arrangements. When we see public activity again in Acts 5:12-16 in Solomon's portico, it is followed by an arrest and a second trial.

In Acts 9 the verbal form of the term appears twice.[2] It appears for the first time as Barnabas describes Saul speaking boldly ("ἐπαρρησιάσατο") in Damascus in order to gain acceptance for Saul with the Jerusalem Christian community (Acts 9:27). Once accepted by the community, Paul is described as speaking boldly ("παρρησιαζόμενος") in Jerusalem as well (Acts 9:28). Both instances are linked to opposition: Paul's public preaching in Damascus

had incited a Jewish plot to kill him, requiring that Paul flee the city (Acts 9:23-25); and Paul's public speaking in Jerusalem takes the form of disputing Hellenists, who similarly seek to kill him, again forcing Paul to flee (Acts 9:29-30).

The term next appears describing the preaching activity of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch and Iconium. In Antioch Paul's preaching is met by opposition from Jews who contradict and revile him (Acts 13:44-45), prompting Paul and Barnabas to speak out ("παρρησιασάμενοι"), and in so doing they signal a shift in the mission to Gentiles (Acts 13:46-47). While this is well received by many Gentiles, some Jews foment persecution against Paul and Barnabas, eventually driving them out of the city (Acts 13:49-50). Similar events take place at the next stop in Iconium: Paul and Barnabas preach in a synagogue and are opposed by "unbelieving Jews" (Acts 14:2), but they remain there for some time preaching boldly ("παρρησιαζόμενοι") (Acts 14:3) until a coalition of Jews and Gentiles seeks to harm them forcing them to flee.

The next two instances occur in the context of missionary activity in Ephesus (Acts 18:26; 19:8). Both present some difficulties. In the first instance the term appears in verbal form as an infinitive with ἤρξατο. It is unclear whether this should be understood as indicating that Ephesus marks the beginning of Apollos's bold speech or whether the point is that Apollos's bold speech is soon interrupted by Priscilla and Aquila.[3] In the second instance Paul, who returns to Ephesus after Apollos's departure (Acts 19:1), encounters twelve disciples who, like Apollos, had only John's baptism, and begins to speak boldly ("ἐπαρρησιάζετο") in the synagogue (Acts 19:8). Winter notes that neither of these instances can be linked to opposition and violence as clearly as previous occurrences: the opposition is absent in the case of Apollos's bold speech, and in Paul's case the narrative indicates only disbelief by some who were stubborn, prompting Paul to withdraw (S. C. Winter 1996: 186–7). But within the larger context of the narrative of events in Ephesus the association of *parrēsia* with opposition continues. Apollos's public speaking in Ephesus, which is continued by Paul, leads to great success (Acts 19:17, 20), which in turn leads to the riot instigated by Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:23-41).

The verb appears again as Paul stands on trial before Festus and Agrippa. After Paul's defense, Festus tells Paul that his learning has made him mad. Abraham Malherbe (1989) has suggested that both the term *parrēsia* and the reference to Paul's activity occurring in public were commonplaces of moral philosophy. It is also worth noting that, while Paul receives some sympathy from Agrippa, the context of the exchange is, in fact, a trial, which is emphasized by the reference to Paul's chains (Acts 26:29).

The final image of Acts has Paul "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness [μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας]," while imprisoned, awaiting a trial before Caesar (Acts 28:31). Many take the "unhindered" aspect of Paul's bold speech as an indication of his

relative freedom while awaiting trial—a form of house arrest (see, for example, Haenchen 1971: 276). Richard Cassidy suggests, I think rightly, that this final image can be read, rather, as showing that Paul continues to speak boldly despite being in prison (Cassidy 1987: 134). This reading is supported also by the fact that the outcome of the trial before Caesar implied in the narrative is Paul's being sentenced to death (Haenchen 1971: 732, Parsons 2008: 366–7).

This brief survey shows that in nearly all occurrences in Acts *parrēsia* is associated with opposition. In a couple of cases the association may not be immediate, but opposition is, nonetheless, not far off. Van Unnik rightly observes that "it is not so much the opposition which provokes 'freedom of speech' on the side of Christians ... but their *parrēsia* which provokes opposition and danger" (van Unnik 1980: 282). In so doing *parrēsia* functions in a way analogous to the *parrēsia* exhibited in the philosophic tradition outlined at the outset of this essay.

Parrēsia *and divine commission in Acts*

As is the case in Dio and Epictetus and others, *parrēsia* and divine commission are closely linked in Acts. The public and miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 could be said to grant legitimacy to all of the subsequent activity of the apostles in Jerusalem. Similarly, the account of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19) functions as an instance of divine commissioning for all of Paul's missionary activity in Acts 9:19-31 and chapters 13–28, in which he is the focus of the narrative. Indeed, divine sanction for the Jerusalem leaders and Paul in the form of the presence of the Holy Spirit or by means of miraculous manifestations is repeatedly stressed in Acts to the point that it borders on redundancy (Barrett 2004: I, 108). Divine commission is, of course, a central part of the prophetic tradition on which the author of Acts draws. The stress the author places on this throughout the narrative can be read as evoking both the tradition of prophets commissioned by God in the Hebrew Bible and claims of divine commission in philosophical discourse.

The first instance of *parrēsia* in Acts 2:29 occurs in Peter's Pentecost speech immediately after the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. Peter's address to the Jerusalem council (Acts 4:8-12) results in the Jewish leaders being surprised by Peter's and John's *parrēsia* in Acts 4:13. The address that occasioned such a response is delivered while Peter is "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8). The community's request for *parrēsia* in Acts 4:29 is granted through a building-rattling manifestation of divine approval (Acts 4:31). Paul's *parrēsia* in Damascus and Jerusalem (Acts 9:27, 29) is preceded by the account of Christ's appearance to him on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). The missionary activity of Paul and Barnabas, which includes the specific notices of their *parrēsia* at Antioch (Acts 13:46) and Iconium (Acts

14:3), is sanctioned in the narrative by the Holy Spirit specifically requesting that the two be set aside and commissioned (Acts 13:2-3).

Apollos's *parrēsia* at Ephesus may be the exception to the pattern. Apollos is introduced as follows: "He was an eloquent man, and a formidable interpreter of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and being zealous in spirit when he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25-26). If the phrase "zealous in spirit" [ζέων τῷ πνεύματι] is taken as referring to a fiery temperament, then this indeed may be an exception to the pattern. However, if the phrase is translated as "boiling with the Spirit," then the pattern of linking divine favor or commission with *parrēsia* is continued (Fitzmyer 1998b: 638–9). The next instance is less ambiguous. After Apollos leaves for Corinth, Paul returns to Ephesus where he properly baptizes twelve disciples who also had only the baptism of John. The Holy Spirit comes upon the men after Paul lays his hands on them (Acts 19:5-6). Paul then enters the synagogue speaking boldly ("ἐπαρρησιάζετο") for three months (Acts 19:8). While the spirit may not fall directly "on" Paul, it is clear that there is an association between divine power and commission and the ability to speak boldly.

Paul's bold speech to Agrippa (Acts 26:26) is preceded by a lengthy apology in the course of which he tells the king of his encounter with the risen Christ on the way to Damascus. That Paul is sent on to Rome by Agrippa is not ultimately the result of Agrippa dutifully following protocol—it is required by the Lord's appearance to Paul following his trial in Jerusalem in Acts 23:11. And while the expected trial before Caesar in Rome never occurs, Paul fulfills his divine commission in the final verses of Acts, preaching the Kingdom of God with *parrēsia*, despite being in prison (Acts 28:31).

The Socratic model in Acts

As in Dio Chrysostom and other philosophers outlined above, in Acts *parrēsia* is used as one element in a complex of philosophical commonplaces, including the evocation of the figure of Socrates directly. Acts' use of philosophical imagery is extensive. Alexander has recently argued that much of the general outline of the portrayal of Paul in Acts is influenced by traditions about Socrates—what she calls the "Socratic paradigm." Alexander identified the following similarities: (a) the prominence of Paul's "call" in Acts 9, 22, 26 as the beginning of Paul's mission is similar to the function of the oracle at Delphi as the beginning of Socrates' mission; (b) Paul's divine call authorizes his mission just as Socrates' call authorizes his mission; (c) both Socrates and Paul have divine guidance throughout their missions; (d) the missions of both involve significant tribulations; (e) both Socrates' and Paul's obedience to the divine call leads to persecution; (f) the careers of both culminate in trials that make up a disproportionate amount of the tradition surrounding each figure;

and (g) both Socrates and Paul end their lives in prison, despite which they continue to teach until the end (L. C. A. Alexander 1993b: 57–63).

A number of smaller scenes in Acts also draw on Socratic or philosophical imagery and commonplaces.[4] Interpreters have long acknowledged, for example, that in describing Paul's visit to Athens in Acts 17:16-21 the author attributed to Paul strikingly Socratic features. Paul arrives at philosophy's symbolic center and, like Socrates, engages in discussions (*dialegomai*) with people he happens to meet (*entungchano*) in the market place (*agora*) and is subsequently accused of introducing strange teachings (see Sandnes 1993; Given 1996; Reis 2002; Barrett 2004: I, 828–9). In addition, the descriptions of the early Christian community in the summaries of Acts 2 and 4 evoke Greek utopian philosophical traditions. More specifically, they evoke Socrates' description of the ideal *polis* in Plato's *Republic* (Dupertuis 2005; Mealand 1977; Sterling 1992b).

At several points the term *parrēsia* appears in Acts in the context of trials or trial-like scenes, which, in my judgment, are all shaped more significantly by Plato's and Xenophon's writings about Socrates than by any historical sources the author might have received. The trial in Acts 4:5-22 is a case in point. The Jewish council's surprise at Peter's and John's *parrēsia* is connected to their being perceived as "ἀγράμματοι" and "ἰδιῶται" (Acts 4:13), which are probably best rendered as "unlettered, unable to write" and "amateurs, non-specialists" (Fitzmyer 1998b: 302). The characterization of Peter and John here as uneducated simpletons serves, as Winter notes, "not only to contrast them implicitly with their educated and refined interlocutors but also to evoke the memory of Socrates' ironic claim to be wise" (S. C. Winter 1996: 190). In the course of the brief trial that ensues, Peter and John are charged to stop speaking and teaching publicly (Acts 4:18), a request similar to the one made by the Athenian jury to Socrates (Plato, *Apol.* 29c–d). Socrates' defense is more specifically evoked when Peter and John refuse to stop teaching with the statement: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge" (Acts 4:19). This statement, essentially repeated in the trial that follows in Acts 5:29, bears striking similarity to Socrates' statement in Plato's *Apology*: "Men of Athens, I respect and love you, but I shall obey the god rather than you, and while I live and am able to continue, I shall never give up philosophy or stop exhorting you and pointing out the truth to any one of you whom I may meet" (*Apol.* 29d; Fowler, trans). The echo of Plato's *Apology* here is probably direct and intentional (Barrett 2004: I, 237). This first formal trial in Acts, then, places the apostles' *parrēsia* in the context of opposition, deems it the result of divine commission, and directly links the Christians' free speech to Socratic imagery and philosophical commonplaces.[5]

The final scenes in Acts 28:23-31—containing the last occurrence of *parrēsia*—are also modeled on Socrates' famous trial. Alexander notes that both Socrates and Paul end their careers in prison after lengthy trials (L. C. A.

Alexander 1993b: 60–63). The similarities can be carried further. After being sentenced to death by the Athenian jury, Plato's Socrates addresses two groups, those who voted for his execution and the large minority that voted to acquit him. He first addresses those who condemned him, prophesying their punishment in the form of numerous followers of Socrates who would continue to push them towards self-examination (*Apol.* 39c–d). The second group consists of his friends, with whom he asks to speak "while the authorities are occupied and before I go to the place where I must die. Men, wait [παραμείνατε] with me for this much time, for nothing hinders [οὐδὲν ... κωλύει] our talking with each other as long as possible" (*Apol.* 39e). Paul also addresses two groups in the final section of Acts. First he addresses the Roman Jewish leaders who, like the Athenian jury's response to Socrates, were split in their response to Paul. He quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 as an oracle predicting their doom. Then, like Socrates, he turns to his friends, spending his final two years in the company of those who came to him. The final two enigmatic verses of Acts are similar to Socrates' request to speak with his friends after his sentencing:

Apol. 39e	Acts 28:30-31
Men, wait [παραμείνατε] with me for this much time,	He resided [ἐνέμεινεν]for two years in his own rented house and received everyone who came to him, preaching the kingdom
for nothing hinders [οὐδὲν ... κωλύει] our talking with each other as long as possible.	of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness [παρρησίας]—unhindered [ἀκωλύτως].

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

I have tried to show that the term *parrēsia* occurs in Acts in ways analogous to the use and function of the term in philosophical imagery in the first two centuries CE. As in writers like Dio Chrysostom, Musonius Rufus, and Lucian it is one part of a set of philosophical commonplaces which include the association of *parrēsia* and opposition, the claim of a divine commission authorizing the right to speak with *parrēsia,* and the cultivation of the philosophical persona by means of explicit assimilation to the figure of Socrates.

The similarities raise a number of questions about the possible function of the philosophical imagery and the implications for reading Acts. On one level it is easy to see the appropriation of philosophical imagery in the narrative in the context of second century apology, illustrated by writers like Justin Martyr for whom philosophical imagery is part of a rhetorical strategy designed to respond to criticism of Christians and secure political rights. Robert Wilken has argued that philosophical imagery is central to the presentation of Christianity in Justin and other second-century Christian authors

because it functioned as the opposite of the label of superstition, a label from which the authors were trying to disassociate (Wilken 1970). Here it is worth noting that the author of Acts places a critique of the Athenians' superstition (*deisidaimonesterous*) on the lips of Paul in Acts 17:22. Malherbe (1989) has suggested that the philosophical commonplaces in Acts 26:26 should be viewed as an early version of this argument. Given the extent of philosophical imagery in Acts, this suggestion should probably be pressed further. But rather than viewing the use of philosophical imagery in Acts simply as a precursor of what was to come with writers such as Justin, it is probably better to see Acts as reflecting a similar cultural environment. One need not assume a second-century date for Acts for such an argument to hold. The influence of the figure of Socrates in shaping the noble death traditions as taken up in Jewish-Hellenistic literature, such as 2 and 4 Maccabees and in Luke's story of Jesus' passion, suggests such deployment was in effect long before the second century (Sterling 2001). Acts, then, might be seen as a roughly analogous narrative counterpart to Justin's argument that Christianity is not a base superstition, but a movement that has from its beginnings been led by true philosophers.

In addition, reading Acts alongside the literature of the second century, including the literature of the Second Sophistic in which the *topos* of the philosopher vs the tyrant functions as a part of a complex cultural negotiation of Greek identity under Roman rule (Gilbert 2006; Whitmarsh 2001; Swain 1996), highlights the choice in Acts to present apostolic agonistic encounters with authorities, be they Jewish or Roman. The literature of the Second Sophistic can certainly be read as an attempt by Greek elites to explore their complex relationship and positioning with Roman imperial structures, and these authors can certainly be critical of Rome, as Lucian appears to be in *Nigrinus*, where he contrasts Rome with an idealized Athens (Gilbert 2006: 95–6).[6] That said, one cannot view the use of philosophical *topoi* in Acts as a straightforward appropriation of Greek identity in the service of "resistance" to Roman rule, however broadly defined.

There is a tendency in scholarship on Acts to limit the "backgrounds" and *comparanda* to first-century texts and materials, but this is limiting given the general paucity of philosophical materials that survive from that era. Reading Acts in the second century, as I have demonstrated, opens up ways of seeing that can highlight aspects, patterns, and emphases in the narrative that might otherwise not be visible as clearly or at all. The more openly and expansively we allow ourselves to read Acts, the more we can learn about the ways in which early Christians imagined themselves into the worlds in which they lived.

NOTES

1. See Fields (2009) for a helpful discussion of a number of terms and their opposites often used in association with *parrēsia*.

2. Although I discuss the noun and verb forms interchangeably, there are some peculiarities in how they appear that are at least worth noting. The noun appears in the cluster of four instances in Acts 2–4 and again describing Paul awaiting trial at the end of the narrative in Acts 28:31. All of the instances of the verb occur in the sections of the narrative in which Paul is the central character (Acts 13–28). And all but one occur in reference to Paul; the exception is Apollos's *parrēsia* in Acts 18:26.
3. This is also the only time in Acts that *parrēsia* is attributed to someone other than Paul in the sections of the narrative devoted to his activity in Acts 13–28. One could also argue that this instance is the only time after Paul's conversion in Acts 9 that παρρησία is attributed to anyone other than Paul. The two instances in Acts 13:46 and 14:3 include Barnabas, but Paul is clearly the principle actor.
4. Given Socrates' later role as the paradigmatic philosopher, making a clear distinction between evoking traditions about Socrates or more diffuse philosophical *topoi* is at times difficult if not impossible.
5. MacDonald has recently argued that the trial scenes in Acts 22–26 are directly modeled on Plato's and Xenophon's accounts of the trial and death of Socrates (MacDonald 2006). It is also worth noting that Luke's changes to Mark's narrative of the trial and death of Jesus serve to place his death in line with traditions of the "noble death" more generally and of Socrates more specifically (Kloppenborg 1992; Sterling 2001).
6. But, as Fields points out, the interpretive difficulties of this dialogue at least open the "possibility that this work may even be mocking grand ideas about 'Greek philosophical resistance'" (Fields 2009: 5).