Galatians and the περὶ ἰδεῶν λόγον of Hermogenes: A rhetoric of severity in Galatians 1–4

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to investigate whether the περὶ ἰδεῶν λόγον (‘On types of speech’) of Hermogenes1 may contribute towards a better understanding of the rhetoric of Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

Interestingly enough, Hermogenes, like Paul, came from Tarsus, famous as a centre of Greek learning. However, Hermogenes lived and worked in the latter part of the 2nd century.2 Paul could, therefore, not have been familiar with his work. On the other hand, rhetorical models, as a rule, do not appear out of the blue. They often have a long prehistory. The rhetorical theorists were not the prime originators of rhetorical tradition. They studied the speeches of illustrious practitioners of rhetoric, as well as the works of other theorists. From these and various traditions available to them, they took their textbook examples, adding their own insights.3 Pupils at school practised these examples and admonitions when they wrote their progymnasmata.4

Hermogenes is an eminent example of this process, drawing his illustrations mostly from Demosthenes. He makes no secret of his admiration for this famous orator. Referring to the exemplary style of the latter, he says: ‘Now the man, who, more than anyone else, practised this kind of oratory and was continuously diversifying his style, is in my opinion, Demosthenes’ (Per Id p. 215 l. 19–22). Another staunch admirer of Demosthenes was Dionysius of Halicarnassus, on whom Hermogenes may have been dependent (vide infra). Dionysius speaks of Demosthenes as ‘the one to whom I assign the first prize for oratorical brilliance’ (Comp 18). It is difficult to determine to what extent Hermogenes depended on other rhetorical models, but even if he borrowed considerably from others, he definitely played a major role in ‘generalizing, clarifying and systematizing’ their insights (Patillon 1988:106).5

Taking the protracted development of rhetorical traditions in account, it cannot summarily be ruled out that Paul, as a young scholar, may have become acquainted6 with traditional elements, either in written or oral form, which one and a half centuries later also reached Hermogenes.

1. For purposes of easy reference, I refer to the pages and lines from Rabe’s ([1913] 1969) Greek edition of the περὶ ἰδεῶν, henceforth abbreviated as Per Id. Unless otherwise stated, I quote from Wooten’s English rendering (Wooten 1987). It should be mentioned that, as a result of the obscure style of Hermogenes, Wooten had to resort to a somewhat free translation; otherwise the text would have been incomprehensible. Wooten (1987:xxii; cf. also xviii) says of Hermogenes: ‘He is a brilliant critic of style, whose own style is really quite atrocious.’

2. He was such a child prodigy that emperor Marcus Aurelius, on a visit to the East in 176 CE, made a special point of hearing him, then 15 years old (Philostratus, Vit Soph 2.577).

3. There are universal and timeless aspects to rhetoric, which can be readily recognised and utilised (cf. the astute remarks of Hermogenes, Per Id p. 213 l. 14 – p. 214 l. 12). A teenager need not study a rhetorical treatise to know that tears may manipulate parents and politicians need not attend a course on rhetoric to know what works with their audiences and what not. Rhetorical theorists observed, documented and commended many of these spontaneous universals of human communication.

4. School exercises, in the writing of rhetorical compositions.

5. Cf. also Hermogenes’ own characterisation of his work as reflected in n.13 infra.

6. Against Van Unnik (1962), there are important arguments for the traditional view that Paul grew up in Tarsus; see Du Toit (2000). However, even in Jerusalem he could have appropriated at least the basics of Greek style and rhetoric. As far as the use of severe language is concerned, it is one of the universals of human communication. Paul would not have needed rhetorical expertise to know that in certain instances the only option to counter wrong behaviour was to address it rigorously. However, knowledge of rhetoric could have helped him to apply forceful language more effectively.

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Nevertheless, however fascinating historical possibilities may be, that is not of decisive importance for this enquiry. The actual conclusive issue is whether any approach, ancient or modern, may help us to better understand ancient documents. For instance, contemporary sociological models are regularly used to study social issues of the New Testament era. Also, New Testament scholars make ample use of the so-called New Rhetoric to unravel the persuasive artistry of early Christian writings.

The Hermogenic model

The work of Hermogenes not only became the foundation of Byzantine rhetoric (Patterson 1970:6-8) and soon established itself in the East as the standard work on style, but it significantly influenced Renaissance writers and critics even in the West (Patterson 1970:xi; Kennedy 1980:104–105; Wooten 1987:xvii). This is especially true of his περὶ ἱδεῶν, which is his most mature work.8 The reference to ‘ideas’ is rather confusing. According to Wooten (1987:xvi–xvii), this term may have derived from Platonic philosophy and could indicate that Hermogenes had an ideal type of style in mind.10 In reality, however, Hermogenes concentrated on actual stylistic patterns. It is for this reason that Wooten (1987) preferred to translate the περὶ ἱδεῶν λόγον as ‘On Types of Style’.

According to Lausberg (1998:§1078–1082), these types of style belonged to what was called in Latin the genera elocutionis or genera dicendi and should be differentiated from the well-known three genres of speech topics, the judicial, the deliberative and the epideictic (Lausberg 1998:§59–65). By expanding the existing threefold division of the genera elocutionis, consisting of the plain, the middle and the grand styles, to seven basic types of style, and subdividing these into a number of sub-styles,9 Hermogenes followed a tendency in Greek rhetoric to continually refine the concept of stylistic virtues; a tendency already associated with Theophrastus by the end of the 4th century BCE and further expanded by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Wooten 1987:xvii), who lived in Rome from circa 29–7 BCE. Significantly, Hagedorn (1964) contended that practically all the ‘ideas’ of Hermogenes can be traced back to Dionysius, whilst Wooten (1987:xvii) surmised that a rhetorical treatise identifying 12 ‘ideas’ of style, possibly written by Basilicus of Nicomedia (2nd century CE), may have been one of Hermogenes’ sources.

As a result of the relative unfamiliarity of the stylistic model of Hermogenes, it seems appropriate to briefly present it here (cf. Figure 1; Patterson 1970:45; Wooten 1987:xii).

1. Σαφήνεια
   - καθαρότης
   - εύκρινεια

2. Μέγεθος
   - σεμνότης
   - τραχύτης
   - σφοδρότης
   - λαμπρότης
   - ακμή
   - περιβολή

3. κάλλος
4. γοργότης
5. ἦθος
   - ἀφέλεια
   - γλυκύτης
   - δριμύτης
   - ἐπιείκεια

6. ἀλήθεια
   - μέγεθος
   - κάλλος
   - ἀπαθεία

7. διενότης
   - ἀκμή
   - λαμπρότης
   - τραχύτης
   - εὐκρίνεια

Clarity
- purity
- distinctness

Grandeur
- solemnity
- asperity
- vehemence
- brilliance
- vigour
- abundance

Beauty
- rapidity
- beauty
- simplicity
- modesty

Sincerity
- gravity
- purity
- distinctness

Vehemence
- gravity
- purity
- distinctness

Asperity
- gravity
- purity
- distinctness

Brilliance
- gravity
- purity
- distinctness

Vigour
- gravity
- purity
- distinctness

Abundance
- gravity
- purity
- distinctness

Figure 1: Outline of the model of Hermogenes.

This scheme certainly has serious deficiencies. From a modern stylistic viewpoint, the criteria applied to determine the various ‘styles’ can be seriously questioned. Furthermore, Hermogenes’ distinctions are not always clearly defined. This, combined with his eagerness to create new categories, causes overlap and complicates the effort to assign a specific text to a specific category. As far as this investigation is concerned, his distinction between asperity, vehemence, vigour, sincerity and even indignation causes great difficulties.11 Moreover, his seventh ‘style’ is not really an additional one, but indicates the ideal appropriation and use of all the other styles and sub-styles, as pre-emminently applied by Demosthenes, who was the perfect orator in his opinion.

On the other hand, the stylistic scheme of Hermogenes has certain important advantages over the older, more traditional models. Although he over-indulged in creating additional styles, the breadth, richness, flexibility, subtlety and adaptability of his model, compared to the rigidity and other shortcomings of the traditional three styles, greatly increased its functionality and popularity (Patterson 1970:27–35; Wooten 1987:131–133). Although Hermogenes is not immune to self-praise,13 he is not dogmatic about his ‘styles’. He would, for instance, allow readers leeway.

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8. Michael Grant (1980:193) even called him ‘the most important rhetorical writer of the entire Roman imperial age’.

9. Of his three most important works, the περὶ στάσεως, the περὶ εὐρύσεως and the περὶ ἱδεῶν, I limit myself to the latter, which is an extensive treatment on rhetorical style and the most relevant to this enquiry.

10. Patterson (1970:xii) remarks that the seven ‘ideas’ of Hermogenes ‘are a subtle and suggestive expansion of the idea of the perfect orator as defined by Cicero in imitation of Plato’s pre-existent Forms or Ideas, the perfect orator who exists only in our minds as an aggregate of all the fine speakers we have ever heard, and whose total rhetorical ability is inevitably connected to his existence as a good man’.

11. In her sketch of the Hermogenic model, Patterson (1970:45) mentions only 10 substyles, whereas Wooten (1987:xii) identifies 13. Compared to Patterson, he adds purity (καθαρότης) and distinctness (εύκρινεια) under clarity (εὐκρίνεια), and under sincerity (ἀλήθεια) he adds indignation (ἀφέλεια). However, in her detailed discussion of the various styles, Patterson (1970:46–51, 65) also mentions these three subcategories.

12. That he himself felt this problem becomes clear when he concedes for example about vehemence and asperity: ‘... unless you think that vehemence and asperity are the same style,’ only to affirm afterwards (in my opinion unconvincingly) that they are different (cf. Per Id p. 257 l.18–20).

13. In his introduction, he claims: ‘I think that if one will pay close attention to what follows, he will find me worthy of admiration, especially for my clarity of arrangement, rather than criticism’ (Per Id p. 216 l. 2–5). See also his critique of predecessors: ‘Nor is there anyone, as far as I know, who has yet dealt with this topic with precision and clarity. Those who have undertaken it, have discussed it in a confused and hesitating way, and their accounts are totally muddied’ (Per Id p. 216 l. 17–22).
to differ from him.\textsuperscript{14} There is a certain playfulness to his model, which probably increased its popularity with later writers, especially poets. He sensed that language may certainly be schematised, but that it should not be forced into watertight categories. By increasing his categories, he tried to accommodate the rich variety of human communication. That brings out nuances that more rigid models, such as the three of Cicero, Dionysius and Quintilian and the four of Demetrius, cannot reflect. He also insists that the different styles ‘are interwoven and interpenetrate one another’ (\textit{Per Id} p. 218 l. 1–2) and should therefore be combined or mixed.\textsuperscript{15} That is what made Demosthenes such a master of oratory (\textit{Per Id} p. 215 l. 19 – p.216 l. 16; p. 279 l. 24–26).

Although we cannot exactly determine the extent of Hermogenes’ personal contribution, the strength of his model probably does not lie in his originality. His main contribution was rather to integrate so many dispersed rhetorical insights and stylistic features into a really comprehensive and meaningful whole. Another advantage of his model is that he thought in terms of smaller units, rather than whole speeches (Wooten 1987:133) and that he paid attention to ‘choice of diction, figures of speech and thought, clauses, word order, cadences and rhythm’ (cf. \textit{Per Id} p. 218 l. 18 – p. 224 l. 2) (Patterson 1970:27; Wooten 1987:xi, 133). All of these characteristics were of great help to students of oratory, still whetting their skills (Patterson 1970:26).\textsuperscript{16}

It could be asked whether Hermogenes’ scheme sufficiently provides for the rhetorical triangle of Aristotle, which is widely accepted as reflecting the most important modes of persuasion. \textit{Logos}, the first member of the Aristotelian triangle, could have received more attention. \textit{Ethos} figures prominently, being the fifth of the seven styles. Wooten describes the basic aim of the Hermogenic \textit{θὸς χαρακτήρ}, or \textit{character}, as ‘to exhibit the orator’s character in such a way to win the goodwill of the audience’. It is ‘simply a collection of approaches whose basic goal is to effect what Aristotle ... calls the ethical appeal’ (Wooten 1987:xxv). Hermogenes does not single out \textit{pathos} as a separate type, but it figures strongly in the subtypes of \textit{grandeur} such as \textit{asperity}, \textit{vehemence} and \textit{vigour}.\textsuperscript{17} It is also integral to \textit{sincerity}, where anger is mentioned 12 times, and particularly in its subtype \textit{indignation}, given that Hermogenes considers vehement diction, indicating anger (which brings \textit{sincerity} close to \textit{vehemence}) as proof of the sincerity of the orator (\textit{Per Id} p. 359 l. 16. 361 l. 4) (Patterson 1970:64). It would therefore be fair to say that, in Hermogenes, \textit{pathos}, and particularly anger, is well taken care of. In fact, it may even be over-represented.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Severity in Galatians 1–4 as read from a Hermogenic perspective}

**Motivating severity as a rhetorical instrument in Galatians**

I use severity, and occasionally harshness, as cover terms to characterise the entire spectrum of agitated emotions in Galatians. Theoretically, all the confrontational styles which I identified in Hermogenes, could therefore come into play. I hope to follow the manifestations of severity or harshness in Galatians 1–4 and to determine how far the Hermogenic model may contribute to a better understanding of this fascinating letter.

\textsuperscript{14}Of rhythm, he concedes that musicians would argue that it is more important than style and then continues: ‘... we shall not quarrel with them. Put rhythm first or last in importance or in the middle, as you wish’ (\textit{Per Id} p. 223 l. 17–19).

\textsuperscript{15}Another of many such remarks appears in his introduction to \textit{Practical Oratory} (\textit{περὶ ἰδεῶν ποιῆσαι}): ‘The orator who effects the best blend of these styles will create the best practical speech’ (\textit{Per Id} p. 380 l. 14–16).

\textsuperscript{16}See also the positive remarks of Kennedy (1980:164–165).

\textsuperscript{17}Wooten’s (1987:xx) decision to translate \textit{ἰσχύς} as \textit{florescence} is less fortunate, as he himself states that \textit{ἰσχύς}, together with \textit{asperity} and \textit{vehemence}, is a reflection of ‘anger and impatience’ and therefore basically still a form of reproach.

\textsuperscript{18}This will be mainly due to his infatuation with Demosthenes.

In the model of Hermogenes, there are five styles or sub-styles dealing with harsh language. Due to the nature of his work, we can only differentiate between these in broad outlines:\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Asperity}, \textit{vehemence} and \textit{vigour} belong closely together and are used in reproaching someone else (Hermogenes, \textit{Per Id} p. 254 l. 1. 264 l. 4; p. 269 l. 10 – p. 277 l. 20). In all three, the language used is harsh and reveals anger or impatience. \textit{Asperity} applies when the speaker addresses someone more important than himself, and \textit{vehemence} when he addresses an inferior. Short, staccato-like phrases or clauses are used, sounds that clash and figurative language. \textit{Vehemence} is, understandably, even harsher than \textit{asperity}. Compared to \textit{asperity} and \textit{vehemence}, \textit{vigour (ἰσχύς)} represents a mitigated form of impatience. Sentences are longer and figures of speech with a pleasing effect soften the criticism (Hermogenes, \textit{Per Id} p. 269 l. 10 – p. 277 l. 20; cf. Wooten 1987:xiv). \textit{Sincerity} must convince the hearer that the speaker is speaking spontaneously. Emotional outbursts such as anger, expressed in short clauses and uneven rhythms are typical of \textit{sincerity} (Hermogenes, \textit{Per Id} p. 352 l. 15 – p. 363 l. 24). Indignation, as a specific manifestation of \textit{sincerity}, deals with anger owing to wrongdoing against the speaker (Hermogenes, \textit{Per Id} p. 364 l. 1– p. 368 l. 21).

As would have become clear by now, the prominence of stylistic forms that deal with variations of harshness is a salient feature of the \textit{ποιῆσαι}\. It will therefore not be wrong to conclude that the \textit{ποιῆσαι} gives such remarkable recognition to confrontational language, particularly anger, that, in this particular sense, we could speak of a rhetoric of severity in Hermogenes. Furthermore, it is precisely this prominence of confrontational styles in Hermogenes that invites us to read Galatians, which is so strongly confrontational in character, through the lenses of the \textit{ποιῆσαι}.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19}Some more details will be given when the relevant passages in Galatians are discussed.

\textsuperscript{20}There is of course much more to the rhetoric of Galatians than severity; see for example the well-balanced survey of Tolmie (2005). The critically important theological passages, for example, not only outline Paul’s position; their primary function is to convince the Galatians of the truthworthiness of his gospel. The prevalence of harsh language in Galatians has been scrutinised from various angles: L. Thürin (1999), for example, drew special attention to it, but he was more particularly interested in the relation between Paul’s impassioned rhetoric and his theology. Nanos (2002) made a special study of ‘ironic rebuke’ in Galatians. Relying heavily on the epistolary theorists, White (2003) investigated it from the perspective of ‘friendly rebuke’, while Sampley (2003; see esp. pp. 299–304) took the angle of ‘frank speech among friends’. Hopefully, this venture, reading Galatians through the eyes of Hermogenes and giving special attention to the micro and macro-structural importance of harshness in Galatians, will further stimulate the discussion.
Any study of severity in Galatians will be superficial if the root cause for Paul’s use of it is not identified. As this matter has been investigated so often, I shall summarise: In a nutshell, the rhetorical situation in the Galatian churches, as reflected in Paul’s letter to them, is that certain unnamed persons ‘aiming at perverting the gospel of Christ (θέλοντες μετατρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ)’ were ‘confusing (τωράσαντες)’ the Galatians by teaching ‘another gospel’ (1:6–7). This other gospel required acceptance of circumcision and other legal stipulations (4:10, 21; 5:2–4; 6:12–13). Influenced by these Judaising Christian agitators, as Paul perceives them, they may already have begun practise some of these requirements (4:10) and are now on the verge of succumbing to all of them (4:9), the culmination of which will be accepting circumcision (5:2–4).

In Paul’s opinion, this would mean a deathblow to the gospel of sheer grace that he had been preaching. Concomitant to the attack on Paul’s preaching goes the discrediting of his apostolic credentials (1:1, 10, 11–23). The crisis in Galatia therefore threatens both Paul’s message and the integrity of his apostleship. A critical situation such as this requires desperate measures. Dealing severely with the problem is part of these measures. The Galatian Christians find themselves in a stupor (3:1) and must be brought back to rational behaviour. Paul’s ‘anger’ is intended to shock them into appropriate action. Gentle treatment and kind words will not suffice. But the apostle is walking on a tight-rope. He must apply harshness and anger in such a way that he does not finally alienate the Galatian Christians, but convince them of their folly and of the necessity to re-align themselves with their spiritual founder.

Paul’s decision to use harsh language agrees with the position of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (who may have influenced Hermogenes). Dionysius defended Demotheistes against criticism that he used ‘harsh and laboured words’ by stating that harsh language was in order when the occasion demanded harshness and that the orator, in these circumstances, ‘deserves praise rather than blame’ (Dem. 55). Paul was clearly convinced that severe language was called for in the critical situation in which the Galatian churches found themselves. Only in this way could he bring his erstwhile converts to their senses.

In following the footprints of severity through Galatians, it will become evident that we have a two tiered trajectory before us, depending on the targeted group. The first group would be the Galatian congregations, the direct recipients of Paul’s letter. The second group is the Judaising adversaries. Paul does not address them directly, but they are nevertheless also objects of his invective.

The letter-opening (GI 1:1–5)

Compared to Paul’s other letters, his self-introduction in Galatians 1:1, consisting of a staccato-like piling up of short phrases, emphasising or contrasting each other, is unusually elaborate, almost verbose. Instead of his normally sober self-identification as Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰουνίου ίησού (or small variations thereof – Romans being an exception), two negative phrases, viz. ὁ ἂν άνθρωπον and πόετε άνθρώπου, abruptly interrupt the flow of the statement. The following observations are to the point:

1. Paul’s elaborate presentation of himself serves to counter the severe language called for in the critical situation in Galatia. Only in this way could he bring his erstwhile convertees to their senses. Gentle treatment and kind words will not suffice. But the apostle is walking on a tightrope. He must apply harshness and anger in such a way that he does not finally alienate the Galatian Christians, but convince them of their folly and of the necessity to re-align themselves with their spiritual founder.

2. Both the negative and positive qualifications of Paul’s apostleship contribute towards establishing a rhetorical persona for the author. An authoritative platform is created with a view to the sensitive rhetorical situation that must be addressed. The description of God the Father as the one who raised Jesus from the dead, further accentuates Paul’s apostolic authority; ultimately, it is sanctioned by the God who manifested his almighty power in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (cf. Rom 4:24; 8:11; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 1:9; 4:14). There is universal agreement that, in order to be effective, a public speaker should be forceful. To be experienced as forceful, his authority should not be in doubt.

3. There is, however, more to the rather unusual and stilted way in which Paul qualifies his apostleship: Longenecker (1990:4) notices an ‘aggressive explication’ in these words, whilst Dunn (1993:25) finds a ‘degree of agitation’ and even an element of ‘rebutting and rebuking’ in them. I have to agree with both of them. Paul’s unusually strong self-presentation, starting with two negatives, the short phrases and the interrupted, uneven flow of the wording indicate not only a refutation but are also due to a sense of dismay and agitation.

When we compare Paul’s self-description in Galatians 1:1 with the model of Hermogenes, some telling correspondences with the Hermogenic category of vehemence (σφόδρητας) can be observed. Both involve criticism and refutation (cf. Hermogenes, Per Id p. 260 l. 17–18). Linguistically, there is a significant degree of correspondence: Hermogenes observes that utterances which produce vehemence (as well as asperity) are not really clauses (cola) but phrases (commata) (Per Id 263 l. 11–13; cf. p. 259 l.13–14), which is the case here. He adds that, in a harsh style (such as, for example, vehemence):

words should be put together in such a way that sounds clash and are dissimilar to those that precede and follow, and form metrical patterns that are inconsistent, so that there will be no hint of meter and no charm produced by the order of the words and no appearance of harmony. (p. 259 l. 19–23; cf. p. 263 l. 18–22)
This would to some extent also apply here. He also states that \textit{vehemence}, in contrast to \textit{asperity}, involves criticism ‘against less important persons’ on the part of the more important ones (\textit{Per Id} p. 260 l. 21) (read: Paul the apostle of Christ vs. the Galatians). All this fits well into Hermogenes’ depiction of \textit{vehemence}. On the other hand, Hermogenes emphasises that in a vehement passage ‘one must make reproaches openly and clearly and in a straightforward manner’ (\textit{Per Id} 2621 l. 4–5), which is not the case here. Criticism is more implicit than openly expressed. We therefore do not have as yet \textit{vehemence} in the full sense of the word, only rumblings of the approaching storm.

Paul’s vexation is also reflected by the soberness of his reference to his addressees in contrast to his other letters (cf. \textit{Rm} 1:5–7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Philp 1:1; 1 Th 1:1). Lietzmann (1913:227) referred to the ‘deliberate coldness’ (‘gewollte Kälte’) of the \textit{adscriptio}, whilst Bertz (1979:40) remarked that Paul’s address ‘is rather brief, lacking the usual epithets and polite compliments in references to churches.’ In contrast to Paul’s Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; cf. 1 Th 1:1), even an honorific qualification of the Galatian churches as belonging to God (τοῦ θεοῦ) is denied them.

The use of \textit{vehemence} is almost the same as that which produces \textit{asperity}. That is, in a vehement passage one must make reproaches openly and clearly and in a straightforward manner without including in the passage any sentiments that tone down its severity. (\textit{Per Id} p. 262 l. 3–7)

The transition to the letter-body (exordium) (\textit{GL} 1:6–10)\textsuperscript{24}

If harshness is still subdued in the letter-opening, all the stops are pulled out in this section. Compared to the transitions to the letter-body of Paul’s other letters, one would have expected some attempt at a ‘meeting of minds’ or at least some form of rapprochement, but that is not the case. No kind words are spoken. The author is highly upset and is launching a severe attack.

In contrast to the lofty tenor of his foregoing doxology (\textit{GL} 1:5), Paul’s anger surfaces immediately in 1:6. He substitutes his usual thanksgiving (\textit{Rm} 1:8 etc.) or benediction (\textit{Gl} 1:5), Paul’s anger surfaces immediately in 1:6. He launching a severe attack.

Discussing \textit{asperity}, he remarks that it is the opposite of \textit{sweetness}: ‘For a harsh passage is bitter and very critical’ (\textit{Per Id} p. 255 l. 20–22). This will also be true of \textit{vehemence}. Of the latter, he declares: ‘The thoughts that produce \textit{vehemence}, like those that produce \textit{asperity}, involve criticism and refutation’ (\textit{Per Id} p. 260 l. 17–18). He further states that the figures producing \textit{vehemence} ‘include, first of all apostrophe or direct address’ (\textit{Per Id} p. 260 l. 15). Paul immediately tackles his addressees upfront, without mincing any words. There is no ‘tuning down’ and his reproach is ‘bitter’ and shockingly ‘direct’.

Hermogenes also recommends that the diction producing \textit{asperity} and \textit{vehemence} should be ‘metaphorical (or tropical), using language which is harsh in itself’ (\textit{Per Id} p. 258 l. 7–8; cf. p. 262 l. 9; see further p. 258 l. 8–18). The verb \textit{μετατίθετε} in Galatians 1:6 is indeed such a harsh metaphor, indicating a foul deed of desertion.\textsuperscript{27} In connection with \textit{vehemence}, Hermogenes adds: ‘Here too it is a good idea to invent words that sound harsh’ (\textit{Per Id} p. 260 l. 10; my emphasis). The repeated use of the letters \textit{tau} and \textit{theta} in \textit{μετατίθετε}: not only causes this verb to sound harsh, but makes it very difficult to pronounce.\textsuperscript{28} Those responsible for reading the letter aloud in the Galatian congregations would have found it a real tongue-twister!

As it happens, the content of Paul’s reproach in Galatians 1:6 also contains elements that agree with Hermogenes’ definition of \textit{indignation}.\textsuperscript{29} In his opinion, \textit{indignation} is

\begin{itemize}
  \item 24.\textit{The disclosure formula in Galatians 1:11 indicates that verse 10 still belongs to this section.}
  
  \item 25.\textit{The doxology of 1:5 may have been intended to compensate for this omission.}
  
  \item 26.\textit{The use of \textit{θαυμάζω} at this stage certainly was not unusual (Koskenniemi 1956:65–67; Mitternacht 1999:196–200). It usually expressed strong disappointment or even dismay. In view of the former positive relationship between Paul and his addressees (\textit{GL} 4:13–15), the Galatians would have experienced Paul’s expression of dismay indeed as very shocking. For its rhetorical effect, cf. also Thûrin (1999:307).}
  
  \item 27.\textit{Μετατίθημι literally means ‘to transfer to a different place’; figuratively, its medium may mean ‘to have a change of mind in allegiance, to turn away, desert’ (BDAG, s.v. \textit{μετατίθημι} 1, 3). This could easily develop into a jee. According to Athenaeus (\textit{Deipn} 7.281d), Dionysius of Heraclea, who left the Stoics and adopted Epicureanism, was named ‘turncoat’ (\textit{Μετατιθεμένος}). Ironically, as Athenæus informs us, Dionysius was pleased with this appellation!}
  
  \item 28.\textit{Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Comp 16 cf. 14), on whom Hermogenes may have been dependent (vide supra), speaks of the ‘voiceless letters’, amongst them the \textit{t} and the \textit{θ}, which are ‘the most difficult to pronounce’. Four of these ‘voiceless letters’ appear in \textit{μετατίθετε}: Was it a school example?}
  
  \item 29.\textit{To my knowledge, Christopher Forbes (1986:12–13, 16–22), in discussing irony in 2 Corinthians, was the first to point out the importance of \textit{indignation} in Hermogenes.}
\end{itemize}
found ‘in all reproachful thoughts whenever the speaker complains that his own beneficial actions are considered worthless or have been depreciated’ (Per Id p. 364 l. 2–4; my translation). Grammatically speaking, the primary agent of the action of calling (καλέσαντος) can be either Paul or God himself. Given that it was Paul who actually proclaimed the gospel to the Galatians, one would be inclined to opt for the first possibility: By calling the Galatians to faith in the gospel, Paul led his addressees to embrace the grace of Christ; but instead of staying loyal to their benefactor, they are now turning their backs on him (deserting him)! On the other hand, as God is elsewhere in Paul usually the agent of the act of calling (cf. particularly Gl 1:15; also 5:8, 13; Rm 8:30; 9:12, 24; 11:29; 1 Cor 1:9, 26; 7:15 etc.), it may also be the case here. In that case, indignation is directed at the Galatians for disdaining the beneficial actions of God.30 Also, in this strongly rhetorical context the ‘so soon’ (οὕτως ταχέως) may be, not an indication of time, but rather a hyperbolical expression of indignation. Seen through the eyes of Hermogenes, this combination of different styles would be perfectly in line with his recommendation that styles should be mixed.

In Galatians 1:7 we find the first innuendos of vituperatio. The author starts a vilifying process that will escalate further in Galatians 2. Although Hermogenes does not specifically mention vilification in this context, his examples indicate that he regards vilification as typical of vehemence: An opponent is labelled as ‘the poisoner, the pestilence’ (Per Id p. 261 l. 8–9; my translation) or ‘your father was a thief if he was like you’ (Per Id p. 261 l. 15–16). He is asked ‘why do you not take a dose of hellebore?’ (Per Id p. 261 l. 15).31 Vilification in 1:7 is clearly intended to picture the opposition as negative characters, thereby evoking the resentment of his addressees against these intruders (Du Toit 1992:285). The indefinite pronoun τοὺς may be simply a reference to people whom the author does not know personally or whose identities do not need mentioning. On the other hand, it could be a deliberate blurring of the faces of the Judaising opposition in order to picture them as shadowy characters.32 The description of the adversaries as ταρασσόντες and τότες μεταστρέψαντες τὸ εὐαγγέλιον also falls in this category. To be accused of confusion-mongering is certainly not a compliment! And to be labelled as people who are intentionally perverting the gospel is a severe accusation.33

Paul’s damming outburst in Galatians 1:8, which is even repeated, and thus further corroborated, in 1:9, confirms his absolute perturbation. The double invocation of God’s anathema, which even includes a self-curse, together with Paul’s grim joke in 5:12, is arguably the strongest manifestation of apostolic outrage in the entire Pauline letter corpus. From a rhetorical perspective it should, however, be kept in mind that this curse36 is also intended as a severe deterrent to the Galatian Christians (Tolmie 2005:42).

Compared to the foregoing outburst, the agitation of the author is toned down in Galatians 1:10. Paul’s short and stern direct questions and his equally stern answer, however, indicate that, in terms of Hermogenes, vehemence is still active. Quite to the point, Hermogenes states that direct address and questioning produce vehemence and carry with them an element of refutation. It is used in ‘assertions that cannot be contradicted’ (Per Id p. 262 l. 15–20). This is certainly true of 1:10. After Paul’s crude anathema against anyone, including himself, who preaches a deviant gospel, nobody would any longer dare to label him a pleaser of men.37

First major section: Confirming the truth of Paul’s gospel (Gl 1:11–4:11)

First argument: Divine revelation and other past experiences (Gl 1:11–2:21)

Several instances of subdued or open severity can be identified in this section.

Galatians 1:11–12

The οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον and οὐδὲ παρὰ ἄνθρωπον formulations in the body-opening of Galatians echo the agitated tones of 1:1 and 1:10. In various forms, the stern and direct negation of any human involvement in the origin of Paul’s gospel and his apostolic office has now been repeated, in fact seven times (2x in 1:1; 3x in 1:10; 2x in 1:11–12)! Severity is continuing.

Galatians 1:20

The flow of Paul’s narrative is suddenly interrupted by a solemn oath (Gl 1:20). Rhetorically, this affirmation of truth is very effective. In discussing sincerity, which overlaps significantly with asperity and vehemence, Hermogenes (Per Id p. 354 l. 19–23) mentions the effectiveness of an unexpected oath:

[7]There is one approach that is typical of almost every spontaneous passage, and that is not to give any advance indication that you will use an oath or a prayer but simply to slip into it naturally, as it were.

There is another indication of sincerity in 1:20. In line with Hermogenes’ description of sincerity, the jerky presentation, an interruption within an interruption, reveals strong emotion and reproof. Hermogenes states that it is typical of a spontaneous passage, particularly one spoken in anger, that

30. However, Tolmie (2005:39–40) may be correct in surmising that Paul had both God and himself in mind, ‘due to the close connection between Paul’s gospel and God’s calling’.

31. A plant supposed to cure madness.

32. These are of course extreme examples, according to Hermogenes almost bordering on slander (Per Id p. 261 l. 3).


34. ἀνατρέπω may simply mean ‘to change’ or ‘to alter’, but within this context that is unlikely. Therefore the majority of translations correctly render μεταστρέψας with ‘to pervert’ or ‘to distort’ (BAGD s.v.).


36. Regarding cursing, see especially Betz 1979:52–54.

37. For this understanding, see particularly Burton [1948:31]: ‘It is as if one reproved for undue severity should reply: “My language at least proves that I am no flatterer.”’
the natural sequence of thought is not preserved, as one seems to 'lose control because of emotion' (Per Id. p. 357 l. 23–27). James Dunn (1993:78) aptly remarked: 'The stilledness of the Greek indicates that Paul’s syntax could not fully cope with the strength of his feeling on the point at issue.'

Galatians 2:4–5

The apostle’s invective in these two verses is quite drastic. As we have already seen, Hermogenes regarded vituperatio as typical of vehemence. Vilification is here at its peak (cf. Du Toit 1992:287): the Judaising party at the Jerusalem meeting were sneaky, ‘smuggled-in’ characters (παρεισῆλθον), ‘make-believe brothers’ (ψευδαδελφοί) who ‘slipped in to spy on our freedom’ (παρεισῆλθον κατασκοπῆσαι τὴν ἔλευθεριαν ἡμῶν). Their evil intent was to ‘reduce us to slavery’ (ἐξάξαμεν) and they put Paul under strong pressure to yield (cf. εξάζεσθε) to their demands (2:5). Although Paul vilifies the Judaising party who attended the Jerusalem convention, he is simultaneously, as the πρὸς υἱόν at the end of 2:5 reveals, castigating those preachers in Galatia who advocated a return to the Jewish lifestyle (Du Toit 1992:287). As previously in 1:20, his Greek becomes awkward when his emotions surface. Grammatical rules are flouted. The participial phrase at the beginning of 2:4 remains in midair, leaving it to his audience to guess how it should be completed – a nightmare to commentators. This is harsh language. In Hermogenic terms, these two verses fully conform to vehemence.

Galatians 2:11–14

Hermogenes singles out vehemence, even more than asperity, as the style for open and severe attack. This is certainly the case here. Paul confronted Cephas ‘face to face’ (κατὰ πρόσωπον 2:11; cf. also ἔμπροσθεν πάνων 2:14) given that the latter ‘stood condemned’ (κατεγιγομένος ἤ) (2:11). In harsh terms, Cephas is accused of cowardice (υπόστασσεν 2:12) and, together with his followers, he is emphatically blamed for hypocrisy (cf. συναπεκρίθησαν and τῇ ὑποκρίσει 2:13). Within the context of Galatians, it should be kept in mind that Paul’s biting attack is simultaneously intended to bring the Galatians to their senses. They should realise that the gospel of sheen grace allows no Judaising compromise.

Second argument: The activity of the Spirit (Gl 3:1–4:11)

Galatians 3:1–5

In order to prove the truth of his gospel, Paul now turns to the activity of the Spirit in Galatia. After the relative lull in Galatians 2:15–21, he now again applies what in Hermogenic terms would be vehemence.

According to Hermogenes, vehemence is the style which, together with asperity, ‘involves criticism and refutation’ (Per Id. p. 260 l.17–19). However, in vehemence reproaches are made ‘more openly’, whilst the figures producing it are, ‘first of all, apostrophe or direct address’, including questions, the advantage of a question being that ‘it has an element of refutation about it’; it contains an assertion ‘that cannot be contradicted’ (Per Id. p. 261 l.2–3; 262 l.3–7, 15–20). He adds that in vehemence the tendency is to prefer phrases and even mere harsh words, rather than clauses, as such passages are more ‘quick-paced’ (Per Id. p. 263 l. 11–17; 264 l. 1–4).

Almost all these characteristics are present in Galatians 3:1–5: direct address, reproaches made openly, and repeated questions that expect no contradiction. Although mere phrases are not dominant, the asyndetically connected questions are short, fired almost like a salvo, causing the whole passage to be ‘quick-paced’. The harshness of this passage is obvious. It opens with the biting: ‘Oh foolish Galatians!’ (3:1). The introductory ‘oh’ is laden with emotion. The Galatians are labelled as ‘stupid’ (ἀγνώστοι). In 3:3 their ‘stupidity’ is even further castigated: ‘Are you so stupid …?’ To be labelled ἀγνώστοι was shocking and hurting.38 Hermogenes would without any doubt have identified this aggressive form of address as a clear indication of vehemence. He, for instance, quotes as an example of vehemence Demosthenes addressing an adversary upfront as: ‘Oh most troublesome Boethus’ (Per Id. p.289l.272–274; my translation). Rhetorically speaking, this would be on a par with Paul’s addressing the Galatians as ‘Oh stupid Galatians.’

As we have already seen, Hermogenes commended the use of metaphors in confrontational rhetoric. Paul’s use of βασκαίνω in Galatians 3:1 exemplifies this. The Galatians are ‘bewitched’ (τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν), as if by an evil eye.39 They find themselves in a stupor, which prevents them from thinking straight. Those who ‘bewitched’ them certainly are the primary culprits, but they are not to be enonetered; they allowed themselves to be lured into this situation, even though Jesus was portrayed so realistically ‘before their eyes … as crucified’ (3:1b). Once again Paul, as in 2:19–21, focuses on the cross. The implication is clear: How could people who heard the message of Jesus Crucified so clearly allow themselves to be misled by imposters who set aside God’s grace and minimise the meaning of the cross (2:21)? This is unbelievable stupidity! According to Luther, Paul’s reference to the cross was in fact a severe implied reproach; through the apostasy of the Galatians, Christ was crucified in them again.40

Paul’s agitation becomes even more apparent in 3:2 when he corners them with the scorching question: ‘This one thing I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?’ In Hermogenic terms, this is indeed an upfront question ‘that cannot be contradicted.’ The next two shots in the questioning salvo follow immediately: ‘Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?’

38.Betz (1979:130) affirms that this was an insult but then adds that it should not be taken too seriously, given that such addresses were a commonplace amongst the diatrib speakers of Paul’s day. However, Paul is here addressing his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, and even repeats his accusation in 3:9. That would certainly hurt.


40.In Epist. ad Gal. on Galatians 3:1.
(3:3). To have begun with the wonder-working Spirit (cf. 3:5), only to end up with the flesh in its weakness and incapability to fulfil the law would be plain stupidity. The vexing interrogation continues in 3:4. Traditionally, ἐπάθετε has been translated in the negative sense of experiencing suffering. However, within this context, it should be understood positively, as referring to the beneficial work of the Spirit in the Galatian churches (cf. 3:3, 5) (Longenecker 1990:104). BAGD (s.v. πᾶσχω) translates accordingly: ‘Have you had such remarkable experiences in vain?’ In Hermogenetic terms, the obvious answer to this ‘irrefutable’ question should have been: ‘Certainly not.’

**Galatians 4:8–11**

Paul preceded his extensive argumentation in Galatians 3:6–4:7 with a severe frontal attack in 3:1–5. Now he concludes it in more or less the same vein. He is somewhat less severe, but this passage is still in concord with Hermogenes’ requirements that in harsh language the audience should be addressed upfront and battered with ‘irrefutable’ questions. Galatians 3:1–6 dwelled on the stupidity of the behaviour of the Galatians (cf. esp. 3, 3–4) and Galatians 4:8–9, with wry irony, implicitly repeats this theme: Formerly, when they had no knowledge of God, they were enslaved to the no-gods. Now that they have come to know God and have experienced real freedom, how could they even consider becoming enslaved to these weak and worthless basic forces all over again? How stupid can one be!

In 3:4 Paul applied the ‘in vain’ motif (ζεϊκτ). In 4:11 it is repeated, but now the author’s concern is spelled out further: ‘I fear for you that my hard work for you may have been in vain’

Would Hermogenes have assigned this passage to vehemence? The direct tête-à-tête, the unsparring questions, once again point to vehemence. However, sincerity may also be a possibility. Hermogenes says specifically that vehemence and sincerity agree in the case of direct questioning ‘mainly because of the tone of cross-examination that they display’ (Per Id p. 360 l. 13–17). The asyndeton between 4:9 and 4:10 may perhaps point to sincerity in the light of Hermogenes’ observation that making a basic point ‘without a formal appeal, Paul proceeds with the enigmatic statement: οὐδέν με ἠδικήσατε: (4:12b). The somewhat unexpected appearance of ἠδικήσατε here is very significant: In the model of Hermogenes, the ἀδίκια/ἀδικία motif is typical of indignation (βαρύτης).44 He (Per Id p. 364 l. 5–8) states: A passage becomes especially indignant if the speaker brings up those who have done little or no good or in fact have done wrong (ἡδικήσατε) [my italics], but have received those honours of which he himself was not thought worthy.

Very illustrative is his example from Demosthenes:

‘I used to think that because of my accomplishments in politics I would surely not suffer such things, since I have never wronged you in any way (οὐκ ἤδικεν ὑμᾶς ἄδικαιν)’ (Per Id p. 364 l. 15–16).

This is as close a parallel to οὐδέν με ἠδικήσατε in Galatians 4:12b as one could wish. ἀδίκωμαι/ἀδίκωμα being the cue to indignation, Paul’s somewhat awkward introduction of ἠδικήσατε at this point shows that he is now moving to indignation.45 When we take indignation as the key, the rhetorical argument of 4:12–20 becomes clear: Paul wants to impress on the Galatians that their present behaviour is worsening him severely. But he does not start there. Using the friendship theme, he begins with the generous way in which they treated him originally. Translations tend to soften or ignore the full semantic force of ὄδειν με ἠδικήσατε. Οὐδέν is not a mere negation, viz. ‘You did not wrong me.’ It is an accusative of respect that means ‘in no respect’ or ‘not.

Second major section: Appeal to re-embrace Paul’s gospel (Gl 4:12–5:12)

**Galatians 4:12–20**

Paul’s fear that all his hard work may have been in vain (4:11), now turns into an urgent appeal (cf. δίώκω ὑμῖν 4:12). He starts with language of friendship43 and ends with a motherly entreaty. The tenor of this passage has become less harsh, but severity is still a reality. As we shall indicate, it has now taken the form of what Hermogenes called indigation.

Galatians 4:11 already rang a note of fear and frustration. In line with Hermogenes’ description of a rhetoric of severity, 4:12–20 reflects a passionate, somewhat erratic and grammatically uneven outburst which has caused exegetes all sorts of problems (Dunn 1993:231). However, reading this passage from the perspective of indignation brings us considerably nearer to a solution.

Having started in 4:12a with a plea based on the topos of friendship (Betz 1979:221–223), and adding to it a brotherly appeal, Paul proceeds with the enigmatic statement: οὐδέν με ἠδικήσατε: (4:12b). The somewhat unexpected appearance of ἠδικήσατε here is very significant: In the model of Hermogenes, the ἀδίκωμαι/ἀδίκωμα motif is typical of indignation (βαρύτης).44 He (Per Id p. 364 l. 5–8) states: A passage becomes especially indignant if the speaker brings up those who have done little or no good or in fact have done wrong (ἡδικήσατε) [my italics], but have received those honours of which he himself was not thought worthy.

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Paul describes how they treated him originally (ignoring his repulsive physical condition, they treated him ‘like an angel of God’, ‘like Christ Jesus’ [4:14]; they called themselves blessed [4:15a]; they would have sacrificed even their eyes for him [4:15b]) the statement οὐχὶ ἤκοψατε may even be understood as a litotes: ‘You did not wrong me at all – to the contrary, you were very kind to me!’ But now things have gone ugly. They no longer view themselves blessed by being associated with Paul (4:15a). They may even now regard him as an enemy (4:16). Treating a friend as an enemy was to wrong him immensely. Instead of remaining loyal to their friend, they were playing into the hands of those who wanted to drive a wedge between Paul and his convertees (4:17–18); hence, the reasons for indignation.

Subsequently, as if in desperation, Paul assumes the role of a mother, once again being in labour and pleading with her Galatian ‘children’ (4:19). Realising the dangers of his letter being misunderstood, the apostle wishes that he could be present with them (4:20). His change in tone46 could refer to the motherly tenderness with which he would address them. However, the motivational ὅτι followed by a sigh of perplexity (ἀποροῦμαι ἐν ὑμῖν, points in a different direction; being with them, he will change his tone in order to reflect his absolute exasperation: ‘I am at my wits end with you.’ Hermogenes specifically mentions being perplexed as typical of indignation and in fact recommends its use to heighten its rhetorical effect (Per ld. p. 367 l. 14–15; cf. p. 361 l.4–5).47 This is precisely what Paul is doing here.

Galatians 4:21
The upfront, challenging question in 4:21: ‘Tell me, you that are anxious to be under the law, do you not listen to what the law says?’ is certainly severe. It abruptly begins with ‘a more upbeat, even bantering tone’ (Dunn 1993:245), reminding us of Galatians 3:2 (Burton 1948:252), and has the ring of vehemence. Hermogenes stated that direct address and questioning produce vehemence and carry with them an element of refutation. It is used in ‘assertions that cannot be contradicted’ (Per ld. p. 262 l. 15–20). On the other hand, the insinuation that the Galatians want to be ‘under the law’, but are seemingly not prepared to really listen to the law (cf. τὸν νόμον οὗκ ἔκοψατε) contains a note of irony (Betz 1979:241); a figure that Hermogenes associated particularly with indignation (Per ld. p.364 l.22–p. 366 l.12). Nevertheless, as the styles of Hermogenes overlap and he even advocates their combination, a choice would not be necessary.

Galatians 4:30
The Old Testament quotation in Galatians 4:30, [‘]throw out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall definitely not share the inheritance with the son of the free woman’, forms the rhetorical climax of the Sarah-Hagar allegory. It provides us with an extreme example of harshness.

Paul’s quotation of Genesis 21:10 differs in some telling details from the Septuagint. The demonstrative pronoun τῇσι is omitted after the first occurrence of παύσιν. The deictic is again omitted after τῆς παύσιν, in the second half of the citation. After οὖ γὰρ an intensifying μή is inserted. The reference to Isaac (μου Ἰσαὰκς) is replaced by τῆς ἡλικίας. It is clear that all these deviations, at least partly from Paul himself, served the apostle’s rhetorical intent, namely to make the Genesis injunction transparent towards the Galatian situation. Sarah’s command to Abraham, in scriptural garb, now becomes a divine requirement. The directive to ‘throw out’ or ‘expel’, whilst on the surface directed against Hagar and her son, becomes a stern suggestion, in fact a command, about what the Galatians should do with the opposition: drive them out! Drastic language indeed.

In conclusion, it can be said that severe language occurs repeatedly throughout Galatians 1–4. The different styles and sub-styles of Hermogenes aided us considerably in identifying and understanding the nature and function of a rhetoric of severity in these chapters. The very harsh Hermogenic category of vehemence set the tone (cf. Gl 1:6–10; 2:4–5, 11–14; 3:1–5; 4:8–11[?]; 4:21). Sincerity, and particularly its subcategory indignation, also play an important role (cf. Gl 1:6[?]; 1:20; 4:12–20). In the case of Galatians 4:12–20, indignation helped solving the riddle of that difficult passage.

(A fuller overview and evaluation of the περὶ ἰδέων λόγοι as an aid towards understanding the forceful rhetoric of Galatians will be presented in a subsequent article.)

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46. Dionysius of Halicarnassus has a most informative passage on how modulation of voice [pitch, tone] facial expressions, manual gestures and bodily movements should reflect emotions such as indignation, anger, grief; see Dem 53–54.

47. Hermogenes uses ἀπορία, but in rhetorical treatises ἀπορία and ἀποροῦμαι were variants; cf. Lassberg (1998:776). The rhetorical strategy of ἀπορία or ἄγωρος (Latin dubitato) was used for hesitation on the part of the speaker about a point that was in fact quite clear and served to convince the audience of the unaffectedness and sincerity of the speaker.


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