

ANCIENT  
RHETORIC  
*and the*  
NEW  
TESTAMENT

*The Influence of Elementary  
Greek Composition*

MIKEAL C. PARSONS  
MICHAEL WADE MARTIN

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# Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament

*The Influence of Elementary Greek Composition*

Mikeal C. Parsons  
Michael Wade Martin

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*For Carey Newman*

In gratitude for his steadfast friendship, unswerving vision, and  
generous spirit

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While the book, in many respects, represents a synthesis of previous work, we hope each chapter also contributes in some small way to a deeper understanding of how these rhetorical exercises shape and are reflected in ancient prose composition, especially in the New Testament writings. We have tried to be generous in citing examples both from the New Testament and from its larger literary environment in order that one may see the connections—and tensions—that exist between rhetorical theory and practice.

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Mikeal's relationship with Carey Newman, director of Baylor University Press, spans some thirty years. In 1988, as a new Baylor faculty member, Mikeal participated in Carey's oral defense of his doctoral dissertation. It was clear even then that here was a scholar whose first-rate mind and boundless energy were matched by an indefatigable enthusiasm. Fast forward to 2002–2003, when Mikeal chaired a search for a director for the Baylor University Press, which was publishing fewer than five books per year and was not even a blip on the radar of university presses. This was hardly the fault of past directors. The institution simply did not view the press as integral to the university's mission, and the press' minimal resources reflected this lack of investment. But the Baylor 2012 Initiative changed that, and the provost at the time was committed to raising the profile of the press. A nationwide search ensued and produced several excellent candidates. Still, Carey rose to the top. The story of the meteoric rise of Baylor University Press in the ensuing fifteen years in which academic publishing has generally languished is a remarkable one and due solely to the energies of Carey Newman and the staff he gathered around him. Anyone who knows Carey Newman recognizes that in him intellectual curiosity reacts with entrepreneurial spirit in an unusually potent alchemy. Michael is pleased to join Mikeal in dedicating the book to our friend, Dr. Carey Newman, the "author's editor" *par excellence*!

*Michael W. Martin, Lubbock Christian University*  
*Mikeal C. Parsons, Baylor University*



## Introduction

Training in the exercises is absolutely necessary, not only for those who are going to be orators, but also if anyone wishes to practice the art of poets or prose-writers, or any other writers. These things are, in effect, the foundation of every form of discourse.

Theon

### **The Place of the Progymnasmata in Graeco-Roman Rhetorical Education**

Literacy in the ancient Graeco-Roman world was inextricably bound to the theory and practice of rhetoric. It is conventional to speak of a tripartite educational system from Homeric times to its fullest expression in the Hellenistic period and beyond into late antiquity.<sup>1</sup> At the primary level, (mostly) boys and (some) girls, ages roughly seven to eleven and presumably mostly of elite status (with an occasional slave or middling-class individual),<sup>2</sup> learned their alphabets, copied lists and short passages (which they could not read), and learned to write their names, all activities aimed at acquiring some basic literary competence and improving handwriting.<sup>3</sup> At the secondary level, aristocratic boys and (fewer) girls, roughly aged eleven to fifteen, continued to practice handwriting, often copying lists “made up of names of gods, Homeric heroes and even philosophers, [which] also supplied students with cultural knowledge.”<sup>4</sup> But now the student began reading, especially Homer and the Greek poets. Study of grammar, noun declensions, inflection (running a sentence or saying through all the cases and numbers), culminated in elementary composition, which might include letters to parents. The third and tertiary level of rhetorical education in the ancient world was populated by an ever-dwindling number of students, now composed almost entirely of the male elite, who were in their mid- to late teens (fifteen to nineteen). The aim now was to prepare orators

for declamation and a public life in the court system or politics, or both.<sup>5</sup> The rhetorical handbooks attributed to luminaries such as Cicero and Quintilian were aimed at this last level of declamation.

Until recently, it was thought that these levels were idealized into uniformly discrete and self-contained units (in separate classrooms, if not separate spaces entirely).<sup>6</sup> Raffaella Cribiore and others, working especially with the material remains (tablets, *ostraca*, papyri) of actual classroom activities, have demonstrated a fluidity in what, when, and how students learned.<sup>7</sup> The implementation of the tripartite educational system varied from locale to locale. The school of Libanius in Antioch, for example, ran all three levels of education concurrently, perhaps even in the same classroom. Thus, older students, working in the tertiary stratum, could serve as models for the younger students at the primary and secondary levels, assisting the teacher, and at times even substituting for him (see Libanius, *Ep.* 1408).<sup>8</sup> In many cases, and anachronistically speaking, the result, perhaps prompted as much by necessity as intention, was something of a cross between the proverbial one-room schoolhouse and the Montessori educational philosophy of the mixed-age classroom.

Within this fluid structure, students would encounter the preliminary exercises, the *progymnasmata*, intended to facilitate the transition between the study of grammar and the engagement of rhetoric proper.<sup>9</sup> Typically, these exercises were associated with the beginning of the tertiary level of education, though it is quite possible that the exercises were introduced at some point during the secondary level, and given what we now know of the fluidity of the educational system, the exact location of the exercises in the system might be viewed as somewhat irrelevant.<sup>10</sup> After all, when the orator Quintilian was asked when a student should be sent to the rhetor, he responded “When he is fit!” (*Inst.* 2.1.7).<sup>11</sup>

The *progymnasmata* were “handbooks that outlined ‘preliminary exercises’ designed to introduce students who had completed basic grammar and literary studies to the fundamentals of rhetoric that they would then put to use in composing speeches and prose.”<sup>12</sup> As such, these graded series of exercises were probably intended to facilitate the transition from grammar school to the more advanced study of rhetoric.<sup>13</sup> Four of these *progymnasmata* from the first to fifth centuries CE, have survived.<sup>14</sup> What is important about these writings is that some of the exercises in the *progymnasmata* are clearly intended to embrace both written and oral forms of communication. The epigraph by Theon at the beginning of this chapter makes that point clear: “Training in the exercises is absolutely necessary, not only for those who are going to be orators, but also if anyone wishes to practice the art of poets or prose-writers, or any other writers. These things are, in effect, the foundation of every form of discourse” (*Prog.* 70.24–30).<sup>15</sup>

Thus, though the rhetorical handbooks and the *progymnasmata* often address the same topics, the *progymnasmata*, aimed as they are to equip young students

with the building blocks of communication, both written and oral, serve as a kind of filter for the handbooks to sift out what comments might be more appropriate for written communication.

Furthermore, George Kennedy has commented:

The curriculum described in these works, featuring a series of set exercises of increasing difficulty, was the source of facility in written and oral expression for many persons and training for speech in public life. . . . Not only the secular literature of the Greeks and Romans, but *the writings of early Christians beginning with the gospels* and continuing through the patristic age, and of some Jewish writers as well, *were molded by the habits of thinking and writing learned in schools.*<sup>16</sup>

If the last part of Kennedy's comment is true, and we think that it is, then a thoroughgoing investigation into the rhetorical conventions of the New Testament writers is warranted.<sup>17</sup> It is important to tease out the implications of this fact for understanding the impact of early Christian writings upon their authorial audience, who presumably also knew how to respond appropriately (if unconsciously) to the effects of persuasive rhetoric.

The progymnasmatists are both descriptive and prescriptive. The forms existed long before the textbooks, as did the names for them and practices associated with them. Many are even pan-Mediterranean, existing outside the confines of Greek and Roman literature—so much so that Philo and Josephus believed the Greeks stole all rhetoric generally from Moses! The correspondence between progymnastic theory and Mediterranean practice, then, is not unidirectional or strictly direct.<sup>18</sup> Theory could directly shape practice or vice versa. They undoubtedly had a mutually formative and standardizing effect on one another as we approach the first century CE. And theory and practice together could—directly or indirectly—shape the subsequent practice of later theory. All of that is to say that a New Testament writer could gain familiarity with and competence in a progymnastic form through any number of means (all of which are complementary and not necessarily exclusive of the others—but none of which is requisite for the correspondences we may see). Rhetoric, as they say, was “in the air,” and some of the air breathed by early Christian writers may well have been in the schoolrooms of the progymnasmatists. Our accounts of correspondence assume from the beginning the possibility of all of these factors, and the certainty of none.

### The Scope and Structure of This Book

The structure, arguments, and comparisons of this book are drawn primarily from the *Progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon of Alexandria (ca. 50–100 CE), the only textbook roughly contemporary to the New Testament writers.<sup>19</sup> We are not, of course, suggesting any kind of literary dependence between the early Christian

writers and Theon but rather that Theon's text conveniently represents the kind of rhetorical exercises practiced in the first century, many of which, in fact, had been practiced as early as the first or second centuries BCE.<sup>20</sup> Thus, we assume that most of what Theon says about these rhetorical exercises was not unique to Theon. This assumption is buttressed by occasional appeal to the discussions in the rhetorical handbook tradition, which, while discussing specifically rhetorical speech, have remarkable similarity to Theon's text at a number of points.

The extant Greek manuscripts of Theon preserve twelve chapters; the Armenian versions add another five chapters.<sup>21</sup> The first two chapters consist of a brief preface, summarizing the contents that follow, and a philosophy "On the Education of the Young" that we have already cited. Theon's presentation is unique among the extant progymnasmata in that it is addressed to the teacher and not the students and in its order and numbering of the exercises. Table 1 conveniently summarizes the differences:<sup>22</sup>

**TABLE 1. Order of Treatment of Progymnasmata in Extant Treatises**

Exercise	Theon (1st c. CE)	Ps.-Hermogenes (3rd/4th c. CE)	Aphthonius (4th c. CE)	Nicolaus (5th c. CE)
Chreia	1	3	3	3
Maxim	1*	4	4	4
Fable	2	1	1	1
Narrative	3	2	2	2
Refutation	3†	5	5	5
Confirmation	3‡	5	6	5
Common-place	4	6	7	6
Ekphrasis	5	10	12	10
Speech-in-character	6	9	11	9
Encomium	7	7	8	7
Invective	7‡	-	9	7
Syncretism	8	8	10	8
Thesis	9	11	13	11
Law	10	12	14	12

\* *Treated as a form of the Chreia.*

† *Refutation and confirmation are discussed by Theon in connection with narrative.*

‡ *Encomium and invective are treated together as parts of one exercise by Theon.*

In this book, we deal extensively with seven of these preliminary exercises, in the order originally preserved by Theon: chreia (chapter 1), fable (chapter 2), narrative (chapter 3), ekphrasis (chapter 4), speech-in-character (chapter 5), encomium

(chapter 6), and syncrisis (chapter 7). We will reserve explanation of these exercises for the chapters devoted to an analysis of their theory and practice. At this point, it is important to observe that we have only treated two kinds of exercises:

1. the preliminary exercises common to all four theorists and Quintilian and thus having a fixed place in the curriculum: chreia, fable, narrative (maxim, too—but we have followed Theon in treating it as part of chreia);
2. the “larger and more ambitious exercises” (Quintilian’s phrase for those exercises that he says are sometimes taught by rhetors, and sometimes—to his great disapproval—by the *grammatici*; *Inst.* 1.9.6) (a) that are attested by all four Greek theorists (thereby eliminating idiosyncratic or late exercises) and (b) that are in our judgment at least as important to the theory and practice of composition as to that of declamation: ekphrasis, speech-in-character, encomium (we follow Ps.-Hermogenes in including invective within encomium), and syncrisis.

Thus, we have joined Quintilian in leaving common-place, thesis, and introduction of the law for the rhetors (*Inst.* 1.9.1–6).<sup>23</sup> And we have joined Theon in including treatment of refutation and confirmation, but only in connection with narrative, and *not* as an exercise unto itself as we find in the other progymnasmata. Finally, because we have focused on what the progymnasmata can teach us about ancient compositional practices, we are not dealing with issues typically taken up in the “third-level” handbooks (e.g., Quintilian and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, inter alia)—namely, figures of speech and thought and the form and function of declamation or speeches.<sup>24</sup>

It is worth pausing, however, to discuss briefly two rhetorical strategies that are not exercises proper but are devices used within one or more exercises and the influence of which can be detected in the New Testament. We will return to these devices as they emerge in our discussion of the exercises.

(1) *Inflection*. Every beginning language student is aware that Greek is a highly inflected language, but, in light of the progymnasmata, the significance of that fact for NT interpretation has not been fully appreciated.<sup>25</sup> Inflecting the main subject or topic (*klisis*) was one of the first exercises taught to beginning students of elementary rhetoric and provided a transition from the study of grammar to the study of rhetoric since the exercise focused on the rhetorical function of inflection.<sup>26</sup> Theon gives a rather full description of how such inflection is to take place in his discussion of chreia and fable and refers back to it in his discussion of narrative (85.29–31). In his chapter on “Fable,” Theon asserts:

Fables should be inflected, like chreia, in different grammatical numbers and oblique cases. . . . The original grammatical construction must not always be maintained as though by some necessary law, but one should introduce some



things and use a mixture (of constructions); for example, start with one case and change in what follows to another, for this variety is very pleasing. (74.24–35, 74–75; cf. also 101.10–103.2)

Quintilian (*Inst.* 9.1.34) also comments briefly on the use of inflection as a rhetorical device.<sup>27</sup> Following a discussion of the effects of repetition, he suggests: “Other effects may be obtained by the graduation or contrast of clauses, by the elegant inversion of words, by arguments drawn from opposites, asyndeton, parallelism, correction, exclamation, meiosis, the employment of a word in different cases (in multis casibus), moods and tenses.” And again at 9.3.37:

At times the cases and genders of the words repeated may be varied, as in “Great is the goal of speaking, and great the task, etc.”; a similar instance is found in Rutilius, but in a long period. I therefore merely cite the beginnings of the clauses. “Pater hic tuus? Patrem nunc appellas? Patris tui filius es?” [“Is this your father? Do you still call him father? Are you your father’s son?”] This figure may also be effected solely by change of cases, a preceding which the Greeks call πολυπτωτον [*polyptōton*].

What Theon calls *klisis*, Quintilian refers to as *polyptōton*; but the phenomenon is the same. Inflection was more than just an ornamental figure of style designed to please the aesthetic tastes of the audience. In fact, Quintilian included inflection in his discussion of figures of thought, a “class of figure, which does not merely depend on the form of the language for its effect, but lends both charm and force to the thought as well” (9.3.28 [Russell, LCL]).<sup>28</sup> The function of inflection was for emphasis (see Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.3.67) and to attract the audience’s attention to the subject under discussion (9.3.27). We should not, however, view the use of inflection as a particularly elegant rhetorical device. Rather, inflection was one of the first rhetorical devices practiced by the beginning student of rhetoric, who quickly passed on to more challenging exercises.<sup>29</sup> In fact, Quintilian recognized that inflection and other figures like it “derive something of their charm from their very resemblance to blemishes, just as a trace of bitterness in food will sometimes tickle the palate” (9.3.27 [Russell, LCL]).<sup>30</sup> But its “ordinary” nature might argue for its effectiveness as a rhetorical device in signaling the importance of the inflected term for the understanding of the narrative in which it is couched. Certainly, this seems to be that for which Theon hoped. In one of the chapters on “Listening to What Is Read,” preserved only in the Armenian versions, Theon comments: “In listening, the most important thing is to give frank and friendly attention to the speaker. Then the student should recall the subject of the writing, identify the main points and the arrangement, finally recall also the better passages” (*Prog.* 105–106).<sup>31</sup>

Any student of elementary rhetoric then would have been accustomed to inflecting the main topic or subject of a chreia, fable, or narrative, and presumably

an ancient audience would have been naturally, almost instinctively, able to identify the main subject by hearing the topic inflected in the various cases of the Greek noun.<sup>32</sup>

(2) *Paraphrase*. This expansion through repetition reflects a well-known rhetorical exercise known as “paraphrase” (*paraphrasis*) in which a writer would “change the form of expression while keeping the thoughts” (Theon, *Prog.* 107). There were four kinds of paraphrase: “variation in syntax, by addition, by subtraction and by substitution” or by any combination of these four (*Prog.* 107–108). In his introduction Theon addresses objections to the practice of paraphrase:

The argument of opponents is that once something has been well said it cannot be done a second time, but those who say this are far from hitting on what is right. Thought is not moved by any one thing in only one way so as to express the idea that has occurred to it in a similar form, but it is stirred in a number of different ways. (*Prog.* 62)

Furthermore, paraphrase could be undertaken “by a poet of his own thoughts elsewhere or paraphrase by another poet and in the orators and historians, and in brief, all ancient writers seem to have used paraphrase in the best possible way, rephrasing not only their own writings but those of each other” (*Prog.* 62).

Theon gives several examples of paraphrase as restatement, even suggesting the device could be used for clarification: “Thucydides (1.142.1) said, ‘in war, opportunities are not abiding,’ while Demosthenes (4.37) paraphrased this, ‘opportunities for action do not await our sloth and evasions’” (*Prog.* 108). In his discussion of *conversio*, Quintilian advises that students of rhetoric

should learn to paraphrase Aesop’s fables . . . in simple and restrained language and subsequently to set down the paraphrase in writing with the same simplicity of style; they should begin by analyzing each verse, then give its meaning in a different language, and finally proceed to a freer paraphrase in which they will be permitted now to abridge and now to embellish the original, so far as this may be done without losing the poet’s meaning. He should also set to write aphorisms, chreiae, and delineations of character, of which the teacher will first give the general scheme, since such themes will be drawn from their reading. In all of these exercises the general idea is the same, but the form differs. (1.9.2–3)<sup>33</sup>

Paraphrase was similar to translation from one language to another, and they are often discussed in relation to each other (cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.5.2–3 on translation, which immediately proceeds a discussion of paraphrase in 10.5.4–11). We will return to the importance of *paraphrasis* for New Testament studies in the subsequent chapters, especially chapter 3 on “Narrative.”<sup>34</sup>

## The Progymnasmata and Moral Formation: “Homer” or “Moses”?

Finally a word about the ethos culture of rhetoric. According to Raffaella Cribiore, education in the ancient world (not unlike today in many quarters) “was based on the transmission of an established body of knowledge, about which there was wide consensus.”<sup>35</sup> The transmission of traditional values included also the formation of the moral character of the students (or audience). Todd Penner has observed:

We need to appreciate fully the kind of pedagogical environment that is being fostered in this environment. Like most, if not all, educational systems, there is an underlying moral vision being perpetuated, wherein both student and material are being closely drawn together so as to mold the student. It is thus a culture of repetition—of one time great moments from the past repeated over and over again in each new student present. It is also a culture of moral suasion—the patterns that are repeated, as well as the act of repetition itself, contain not only an implied theory of psychological development, but, more to the point, also an appreciation and assessment of events and narratives in fundamentally moral terms—as good and bad, in both literary and rhetorical quality, as well as in terms of the value systems being perpetuated.<sup>36</sup>

Theon of Alexandria confirms this point several times: “Surely the exercise in the form of the *khreia* (or anecdote) not only creates a certain faculty of speech but also good character [ethos], while we are being exercised in the moral sayings of the wise” (*Prog.* 60.18; see also 71.6; 78.9). In a similar vein, Pseudo-Hermogenes argues for fable as the first of the exercises to be encountered by students because of its value in moral formation: “Fable (*mythos*) is regarded as the first exercise to be assigned to the young because it can bring their minds into harmony for the better. In this way they think to form students while tender” (*Prog.* 1). Thus, beyond acquiring facility in grammar and rhetoric, a fortunate by-product of the rhetorical exercises from the teacher’s point of view was the shaping of moral habits that reflected the prevailing cultural values of the day.

The anonymous writer of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (first century BCE) agreed with this view: “Even if, in public speaking, we have not reached our goal, we shall miss but little of the wholly perfect life” (4.56.69). In the pursuit of the “wholly perfect life,” negative character traits—dishonoring parents, betraying friends, greed, and shameful behavior, in general—were to be avoided (4.14.20–4.28.38).<sup>37</sup> On the positive side, support of the state was a common feature of moral exhortation among the rhetoricians (see *Rhet. Her.* 4.8.19). Quintilian likewise agrees with the moral goal of rhetorical education: “I am proposing to educate the perfect orator, who cannot exist except in the person of a good man. We therefore demand of him not only exceptional powers of speech, but all the virtues of character as

well" (*Inst.* 1.proem.9 [Rackham, LCL]). For Quintilian, to be a good orator was to be a good man:

What will he do in an encomium, unless he understands honour and shame? How can he urge a policy unless he has a grasp of expediency? How can he plead in the law courts if he knows nothing about justice? Again, does not oratory also call for courage, since we often have to speak in the face of threats of public disorder, often at the risk of offending the powerful, and sometimes even . . . with armed soldiers all around? So, if it is not a virtue, oratory cannot even be complete. (2.20.8 [Rackham, LCL])<sup>38</sup>

Most, if not all, early Christians who were literate acquired the ability to read and write through rhetorical education in some form or fashion, through which they also learned ethos argumentation (i.e., how to shape the moral character of their audiences).

Despite these laudatory exhortations to virtuous living by the rhetoricians, the moral vision propagated by the Graeco-Roman rhetorical tradition, including the progymnasmatists, was—in modern terms—elitist, racist, and sexist. The ideal was the free male Roman citizen against whom all others were deemed inferior.<sup>39</sup> The New Testament writers at times reflect the mores and ethos passed down, and not infrequently forcibly imposed, by the dominant Roman culture. But there is also evidence that, at times, early Christians resisted this moral vision and invoked the methods and categories of rhetorical argument in order to subvert or overturn them, a rhetorical move of ethos-argumentation that they no doubt learned from the very teachers of grammar and rhetoric whose moral vision they so severely challenge.<sup>40</sup> Their use of rhetoric, in these cases, is aimed at forming the moral character and theological vision of the Christian community, already in the process of being shaped by the Jewish Scriptures. Thus, while ancient Graeco-Roman rhetoric is helpful in discerning the mode and method of early Christian communication, the meaning is thoroughly grounded in those Jewish Scriptures and its interpretive streams, in which they (or most of them) understood Jesus to stand. That is why, simply put, the New Testament writers regularly quote and allude to the Jewish Scriptures in their writings (refracted through a christological lens) and only rarely appeal to “pagan” sources (cf. Acts 17:28). Or to put it differently, “Moses,” not “Homer,” was the “Bible”—the source of authority—for early Christian faith and practice, even if that faith and practice were communicated through thoroughly Hellenized rhetorical devices.<sup>41</sup> And this is no small matter, since medium and message are inextricably intertwined. Understanding the medium will assist in tracking the message.<sup>42</sup> So we turn now to a primer in theory and practice of the preliminary exercises.

## Notes

- 1 See H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1956).
- 2 Theresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 150–59, 265–74.
- 3 Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 160–84. Ronald F. Hock, “Observing a Teacher of *Progymnasmata*,” in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, ed. Matthew Ryan Hauge and Andrew W. Pitts (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 39–40.
- 4 Hock, “Observing a Teacher of *Progymnasmata*,” 41.
- 5 Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 232–33.
- 6 Marrou, *Education*, 104; and many others who followed him.
- 7 Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 173–87; Hock, “Observing a Teacher of *Progymnasmata*,” 40.
- 8 Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 38–42. See also Michael R. Whitenon, “The Place and Scope of Composition and Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education: A Literature Review,” (seminar paper for His 4324: Ancient Rome, Dr. Kenneth R. Jones, instructor, fall 2010). This practice apparently existed despite the fact that some rhetors disapproved of mixed-age learning (Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.2.14).
- 9 See Sean A. Adams, “Luke and *Progymnasmata*: Rhetorical Handbooks, Rhetorical Sophistication and Genre Selection,” *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, ed. Matthew Ryan Hauge and Andrew W. Pitts (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 137–63, esp. 139–43.
- 10 Contra Adams, “Luke and *Progymnasmata*,” 142; and Osvaldo Padilla, “Hellenistic Paideia and Luke’s Education: A Critique of Recent Approaches,” *NTS* 55 (2009): 416–37. Padilla (417) has “accused” us of assuming that NT authors, specifically Luke, had achieved the “tertiary level of Hellenistic education.” Nowhere, however, in our previous writings have either of us claimed that Luke, or any other writer, must have completed all three levels of rhetorical education. We remain agnostic on this question, since, in our view, tertiary rhetorical education focuses primarily on oral declamation, and it would be virtually impossible to be certain about Luke’s level of education as a writer beyond the *progymnasmata*, which, as Padilla himself admits, provides no sure evidence of education beyond the secondary level. Some NT writers may have “graduated,” diploma in hand, from the rhetorical schools, but—given what we have said above—that point is not germane to our argument.
- 11 Cited by Whitenon, “Composition and Rhetoric,” 4n16.
- 12 Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14*, SNTSMS 85 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 146.
- 13 Quintilian, in fact, refers to the preliminary exercises as part of the educational curriculum of young boys (*Inst.* 1.9). On the role of rhetoric in the educational curricula of antiquity, in addition to the works by Marrou, Cribiore, and Morgan, already cited, see also S. F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); D. L. Clark, *Rhetoric in Graeco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957).
- 14 In addition to the text of Aelius Theon (cited below), other surviving *progymnasmata* include those by Ps.-Hermogenes of Tarsus (third/fourth century; critical edition in H. Rabe, ed., *Hermogenes opera*, *Rhetores Graeci* 10 [Leipzig: Teubner, 1913], 1–27; English trans. in Charles Sears Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic [to 1400] Interpreted from Representative Works* [New York: Macmillan, 1928], 23–38); Aphthonius of Antioch (fourth century; critical edition in H. Rabe, ed., *Aphthonii progymnasmata*, *Rhetores Graeci* 10 [Leipzig: Teubner, 1926], 1–51; English translation in Ray E. Nadeau, “The *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius in Translation,” *Speech Monographs* 19 [1952]: 264–85); Nicolaus of Myra (fifth century; critical edition in J. Felten, ed., *Nicolai progymnasmata*, *Rhetores Graeci* 11 [Leipzig: Teubner,

- 1913]). English translations of, introductions to, and notes about Theon, Ps.-Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus (along with selections from some others) may be found in George A. Kennedy, trans., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). A fifth document, a commentary on Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata* attributed to John of Sardis, is available in the Teubner edition, *Ioannis Sardiani commentarium in Aphthonii progymnasmata* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928), edited by Hugo Rabe.
- 15 James R. Butts, "The *Progymnasmata* of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1986), 181n36, rightly observes: "This statement is clear evidence that T[heon] understood the *progymnasmata* as providing instruction for literary activity ranging far beyond the technical parameters of rhetoric."
  - 16 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, v (emphasis added).
  - 17 As recently as 1994, Duane Watson was able to write, "A thorough and balanced assessment of the rhetoric of the Gospels has yet to be written." "Notes on History and Method," in *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method*, ed. Duane F. Watson and Alan J. Hauser, BibInt 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 115.
  - 18 The critical consensus seems to be that early attempts to relate rhetoric to the NT sometimes erred in this regard. Hans Dieter Betz' commentary on Galatians, among others, has been roundly criticized for trying to force the structure of Galatians into the form and species of rhetorical declamation. Others have been reluctant to follow the pioneering work of R. O. P. Taylor (*The Groundwork of the Gospels* [London: Basil Blackwell, 1946]) because the rhetorical tradition represented by Cicero, Quintilian, and others was aimed at training orators for declamation and not on writing narratives. That reading of the handbooks, of course, misses the point that Quintilian, Cicero, and the others generously quote examples from various Greek and Latin epics, histories, poetry, etc. Still, the reluctance is understandable, and the *progymnasmata* with their explicit aim to enhance all forms of communication, oral and written, are an adequate antidote to this problem. Over the past thirty years, notable and important works on rhetoric, including the *progymnasmata*, and its relationship to early Christian composition have appeared. Prominent among that literature is the work by Burton Mack and Vernon Robbins; see Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1989); Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996); Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of the Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1996); Stanley Porter, ed., *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). The interest in the chreia tradition has led also to the collection and publication of the chreia exercises of prominent *progymnasmata*; see Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, vol. 1, *The Progymnasmata*, SBLTT 27 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986). Other works are cited in the following chapters. For an assessment of these and other leading scholars in this field, see Troy W. Martin, ed., *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014). There are several other useful histories of research into rhetorical analysis and the New Testament, and we see no reason to reproduce that history here, given that our focus is on early Christian compositional practices in light of the *progymnasmata* and not the secondary literature produced on that topic (though, obviously, we hope the endnotes reflect deep engagement with that literature).
  - 19 Malcolm Heath ("Theon and the History of the *Progymnasmata*," *GRBS* 43 [2002/2003]: 129–60, esp. 141–58), has proposed a fifth-century CE dating for Theon. Here is no place for a sustained engagement with Heath's argument, but in our view, Heath has underplayed the distinctive structure of Theon, in which chreia is placed first among the exercises, a point recognized by Nicolaus (*Prog.* 18) as well as the history of the transmission of Theon's text,



which “corrects” Theon’s order to reflect the dominant tradition (see below). Also, rather than employing the more usual “saying” (*logos*), Theon refers to the chreia as a “statement” (*apophasis*), the term typically used to define a maxim (cf. Aphthonius, *Prog.* 4). Theon, moreover, describes nearly a dozen schemas in his narrative exercise, and so does not reflect the orthodoxy of five established schemas eventually settled upon by the later progymnasmaticists. Nor does Theon join the later theorists in dividing narrative by three or four “species”; he has only two. Theon (*Prog.* 115) also uses the term *prosopopoeia* to cover what the other theorists separate into three distinct terms in this regard. Theon fits with the first-century Quintilian (*Inst.* 9.2.32) who also uses *prosopopoeia* as an umbrella term (see chapter 6). If Theon’s *Progymnasmata* were a fifth-century document, one might expect him to at least explain his choice of *prosopopoeia* in light of the current tripartite division, as, for example, the other theorists were prone to do when discussing the placement of the chreia exercise. Theon also orders encomiastic topics by the three goods in the style Nicolaus deems the “ancient method.” In this regard Theon stands with Cicero and earlier theorists of the centuries BCE, and differentiates himself from theorists of the centuries CE (including even the late first-century Quintilian). The same may be said for Theon’s divisions of encomiastic genres and of “things” that may be encomionized: among the later theorists, the divisions are more numerous, and the related discussion more developed. Heath’s arguments await a full engagement, but we find that Theon is more at home in the rhetorical milieu of the first century than the fifth; thus, we see no compelling reason to depart from a conventional first-century dating. For other arguments in favor of a first-century date, see Michel Patillon, ed., *Aelius Théon: Progymnasmata* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1997), viii–xvi; and Justin King, “Speech-in-Character, Diatribe, and Romans 3:1-9: Who’s Speaking When and Why It Matters” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2016), 46n3.

- 20 Butts, “*Progymnasmata* of Theon,” 7. Theon himself acknowledges that others had written on the subject of preliminary exercises (1.15–16) and can even refer (1.18) to “traditional exercises” (*edē paradedomenois gymnasmasin*).
- 21 We have used the critical edition of the Greek text (along with a French translation) found in Patillon, *Aelius Théon* (see note 19 above). The Patillon text has replaced Leonard Spengel, ed., *Rhetores Graeci* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1853–1856), 2:59–130, as the standard critical edition. Patillon with the aid of Bolognesi has reconstructed from the Armenian manuscript’s five chapters (13–17) missing from the Greek texts. For text and translation of Theon, see also Butts, “*Progymnasmata* of Theon.” It should be noted that both Patillon and Butts have rearranged the chapters in Theon to reflect what they believe to be Theon’s original order of presentation. They have also inserted “On Refutation and Confirmation,” a separate chapter in all extant Greek manuscripts, into the chapter “On the Narrative,” again restoring what is believed to be the original order. Hence, when we cite Theon, we have employed the Spengel numbering system (which is still the standard), supplementing it with the page number where the text can be found in the Patillon edition. For a thorough treatment of the author, text, versions, and critical editions, see Patillon, *Aelius Théon*, vii–clvi; also Butts, “*Progymnasmata* of Theon,” 7–95. Unless otherwise noted we have used Kennedy’s translation, though only after consulting the Greek in Patillon’s critical edition.
- 22 Modified from Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, viii.
- 23 A further word of explanation for those exercises omitted is in order. Common-place, or *topos*, is an important concept in ancient rhetoric and has been usefully explored in relation to the New Testament (see, e.g., James McConnell, *The Topos of Divine Testimony in Luke-Acts* [Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2014]). *Topoi* are a kind of cultural thesaurus of conventional scenarios (hence common-place) that the rhetor/writer can easily draw upon when making a particular point (see Parsons’ comments on the *topos* of the evil tyrant in Luke 18 in *Luke*, PCNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015], 280–82). Showing their usefulness in practice, however, requires leaving the *progymnasmata* behind because the explanations

found there, especially in Theon, are somewhat convoluted and really only tangential to the more substantive and instructive discussions found especially in Cicero's *Topica*. Likewise, the exercises of law and thesis might shed light on the compositional practices of early Christian (or other) writings, especially letters and Hebrews but would require more dependence on the rhetorical handbooks as the primary lens into their argumentation.

- 24 See our suggestions in the conclusion regarding other rhetorical avenues to pursue including not only figures of speech and thought and rhetorical speeches, but also questions of structure and argumentation. On figures in the New Testament, see, e.g. Keith Reich, *Figuring Jesus: The Power of Rhetorical Figures of Speech in the Gospel of Luke*, BibInt 107 (Leiden: Brill, 2011). The literature on rhetorical speeches is voluminous, even on speeches in Acts alone. See, e.g., George Kennedy, "The Speeches in Acts," in *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 114–40. See also Clifton C. Black II, "The Rhetorical Form of the Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian Sermon: A Response to Lawrence Wills," *HTR* 81 (1988): 1–18; Jerome Neyrey, "The Forensic Defense Speech and Paul's Trial Speeches in Acts 22–26: Form and Function," in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar*, ed. C. H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 210–24; Philip E. Satterthwaite, "Acts against the Background of Classical Rhetoric," in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke, vol. 1 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 337–79; Marion L. Soards, "The Speeches in Acts in Relation to Other Pertinent Ancient Literature," *ETL* 70 (1994): 65–90; Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); F. Veltman, "The Defense Speeches of Paul in Acts," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. C. H. Talbert, Perspectives in Religions Studies Special Studies Series 5 (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University, 1978), 243–56; D. F. Watson, "Paul's Speech to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20.17–38): Epideictic Rhetoric of Farewell," in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, ed. D. F. Watson, JSNTSup 50 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 184–208; Bruce Winter, "The Importance of the *Captatio Benevolentiae* in the Speeches of Tertullus and Paul in Acts 24:1–21," *JTS* 42 (1991): 505–31; Winter, "Official Proceedings and the Forensic Speeches in Acts 24–26," in *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Winter and Clarke, 305–36; D. Zweck, "The *Exordium* of the Areopagus Speech, Acts 17.22, 23," *NTS* (1989): 94–103; Derek Hogan, "Paul's Defense: A Comparison of the Forensic Speeches in Acts, *Callirhoe*, and *Leucippe and Clitophon*," *PRSt* 29 (2002): 73–87.
- 25 On the occurrence of inflection in Latin poetry (with some reference to Greek literature as well), see Jeffrey Wills, *Repetition in Latin Poetry: Figures of Allusion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), esp. part 2 on "Polypoton," 188–268.
- 26 Nicolaus (*Prog.* 4.18–19) suggests that more advanced students could skip the exercise of grammatical inflection and move on to elaborating, condensing, refuting, or confirming.
- 27 Aristotle had also commented briefly on *ptōsis*, as he called it (cf. *Poetics*, 20.10; *Art of Rhetoric* 1.7.27; 2.23.2; and esp. 3.9.9), but he used the term generally to refer to similar forms of words whether nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. See also *Rhet. Her.* 4.22.30–31, which like Quintilian views *polypōtōn* as a form of paronomasia.
- 28 The Latin text reads: "... genus, quod non tantum in ratione positum est loquendi, sed ipsi sensibus cum gratiam tum etiam vires accommodat."
- 29 Nicolaus, *Prog.* 4.18–19, e.g., suggests that more advanced students could skip the exercise of grammatical inflection and move on to elaborating, condensing, refuting, or confirming.
- 30 The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, who also cautions that *polypōtōn* is to be used sparingly, considers *polypōtōn* to be merely an ornament of style, more appropriate for entertainment (or at best epideictic speech) than for juridical speech and is less charitable than Quintilian about its aesthetic value (see *Rhet. Her.* 4.22.32).

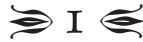


- 31 At this point, we are relying on Kennedy's English translation (50) of Patillon's French translation of the Armenian version of a lost Greek text. As such, as Kennedy rightly observes, these sections "would be of dubious value for detailed interpretation." Nonetheless, our general conclusion seems warranted. At the least, the practice of inflection deserves further reflection both as it was practiced in the ancient world and as it may have been employed in the NT writings.
- 32 For examples of inflection in parables, see ch. 2 on fable.
- 33 Further on paraphrase, see Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1099–121. There are many other examples of paraphrase in ancient literature not noted in the rhetorical tradition. Suetonius cites *paraphrasis* as among the exercises employed since the beginning of rhetoric (*Gramm.* 4). It was also known by other names: the elder Seneca referenced Virgil's *metaphrasis* of a passage in Homer that may have seemed unduly "fabulous" (*Suas.* 1.12; cf. *Od.* 9.481–82; *Aen.* 10.128; 8.691–92; cited in Timothy A. Brookins, "Luke's Use of Mark as παράφρασις: Its Effects on Characterization in the 'Healing of Blind Bartimaeus' Pericope (Mark 10:46-52/Luke 18:35-43)," *JSNT* 34 (2011): 70–89, here 73. Brookins (74) concludes, "The name was less important than the essential skill." See also P. J. Parsons' discussion of a third-century CE paraphrase of the first twenty-one lines of the *Iliad* in "A School-Book from the Sayce Collection," in *ZPE* 6 (1970): 133–49; cf. also Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, 202–26. In the background of all this, there is the Platonic distinction between words (appearance or form) and the subject itself (substance or content; cf. Phaedrus); cf. Brookins, "Luke's Use of Mark," 72n6.
- 34 For examples of the use of the rhetorical device in understanding the reception of Jesus material in the book of James, see John S. Kloppenborg, "The Reception of the Jesus Traditions in James," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. J. Schlosser (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 94–141, esp. 117–41. As an example of dealing with double and triple tradition material in the Synoptic Gospels, see Brookins, "Luke's Use of Mark" (n. 33 above).
- 35 Criboire, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 8.
- 36 Todd Penner, "Reconfiguring the Rhetorical Study of Acts: Reflections on the Method in and Learning of a Progymnastic Poetics," *PRSt* 30 (2003): 425–39, here 433. Elsewhere Penner claims: "A progymnastic poetics thus causes us to think much more seriously about *ethos* argumentation than we are wont to do" (438). See also Craig Gibson, "Better Living through Prose Composition? Moral and Compositional Pedagogy in Ancient Greek and Roman Progymnasmata," *Rhetorica* 32 (2014): 1–30; R. Webb, "The Progymnasmata as Practice," in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, ed. Y. L. Too (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 289–316.
- 37 On the goal of moral formation in the progymnasmata and rhetorical handbooks, see Amanda Brobst-Renaud, "The Elder Brother's Quandary and the Rich Man's Fate: Ancient Characterization, Rhetoric, and Moral Formation in Luke's Parables" (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2018), ch. 2.
- 38 Likewise, Plutarch notes that "the Good creates a stir of activity towards itself, and implants at once in the spectator an active impulse; it does not form his character by ideal representation alone; but through the investigation of its work furnishes him with a dominant purpose. For such reasons I have decided to persevere in my writing of *Lives*" (Plutarch, *Per.* 2 [Perrin, LCL]). On Quintilian's discussion of the qualities of the teacher of rhetoric in *The Orator's Education*, see Brobst-Renaud, "Elder Brother's Quandary," ch. 2.
- 39 Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- 40 See James R. Harrison, "The Seven Sages, the Delphic Canon and Ethical Education in Antiquity," in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, ed. Matthew Ryan Hauge and Andrew W. Pitts (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 71–86, esp. 85–86; Mikeal C. Parsons,

*Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 123–42.

- 41 See Catherine Hezer, “The Torah versus Homer: Jewish and Greco-Roman Education in Late Roman Palestine,” in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, ed. Matthew Ryan Hauge and Andrew W. Pitts (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 5–24; on Jewish education in antiquity, see also Catherine Hezer, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, WUNT 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).
- 42 The above paragraphs should make clear that we find efforts merely to label rhetorical devices as a necessary but not sufficient condition for interpreting the message(s) of the NT writings. The preliminary exercises, in that regard, provide only a preliminary step in the interpretive process.

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## Chreia

### *Revealing Essentials through Word and Deed*

*What is the chreia?*

A concise reminiscence associated with some character.

*Why is the chreia a “reminiscence”?*

Because it is remembered so that it may be recited.

*Why “concise”?*

Because often, once it has been expanded, it becomes a narrative or something else.

*Why “with a character”?*

Because often without a character a concise reminiscence is a maxim or something else.

*Why is it called a “chreia”?*

Because of its being useful, not because the other exercises do not have this quality, but because of its excellence, the name is a proper one instead of a common one.<sup>1</sup>

The chreia was widespread in antiquity. Some estimates put the number of chreia from antiquity in excess of one thousand.<sup>2</sup> Their popularity has continued into the modern period, at least in the form of scholarly analysis. Unlike many of the exercises in the progymnasmata, the classroom exercise on chreia has garnered much attention by New Testament scholars, especially over the past thirty-five years owing to the pioneering work of Ronald Hock and Edward O’Neil under the auspices of the Hellenistic Texts Seminar sponsored by the Claremont Institute for Antiquity and Christianity and the Society of Biblical Literature Pronouncement Stories Seminar under the leadership particularly of Vernon Robbins.<sup>3</sup>

## Theory

### *Chreia Definition(s)*

Theon asserts “a chreia is a brief saying or action making a point, attributed to some specified person or something corresponding to a person” (*Prog.* 96). Later progymnasmata have similar but not identical definitions. Aphthonius, for example, defines a chreia as a “brief recollection, referring to some person in a pointed way” (*Prog.* 23). That this recollection (or “reminiscence,” *apomnēnomeuma*) can take the form of word or deed is made clear by Pseudo-Hermogenes: “A chreia is a recollection of a saying or action or both, with a pointed meaning, usually for the sake of something useful” (*Prog.* 6). Nicolaus is even more precise: “A chreia is a pointed and concise saying or action, attributed to some specific person, reported for the correction of some things in life” (*Prog.* 19). Thus, a chreia shares certain features in common with the extant progymnasmata:

(1) The chreia is *concise*; typically, chreia consist of only one (at times, complex) sentence, though it can be more than a single sentence (as in a question-and-answer chreia; see below).<sup>4</sup>

(2) Distinct from the maxim, which seems to function as a general proverb, the chreia is typically *attributed to a specific character*. Usually the character is a specific person, but occasionally a chreia may be attributed to a group of persons or a representative of a group—for example, “A Laconian, when someone asked him where the Cacedaimonians set the limits of their land, showed his spear” (Theon, *Prog.* 99).<sup>5</sup>

(3) A third characteristic, *aptness*, may apply to the suitability of the chreia for the situation at hand, or it may refer to the aptness of the chreia in disclosing something about the essence of the character to whom the chreia is attributed. Hermogenes and Nicolaus (above) seem to be referring to a “well-aimed” quality of the statement (or action), while Aphthonius (see above) seems to speak of the aptness of the attribution.<sup>6</sup> Kennedy’s translation of Theon (“a brief saying or action making a point”) would fit the former category, although the prepositional phrase *met’ eustochias* (“making a point”) is placed between “brief saying or action” and “attributed to some specific person” and could modify either noun phrase or, conceivably, even both.<sup>7</sup>

Each progymnasmata approaches the classroom exercise of chreia in other, distinctive ways. Only Theon treats chreia as the first of the classroom exercises, reasoning that it “is short and easily remembered” (*Prog.* 6).<sup>8</sup> Nicolaus recognizes that “there are some who assign it [chreia] before both fable and narrative” but attributes the sequence to the rationale that the chreia exercise “should be put first since it shows the way to good and avoidance of evil” (*Prog.* 18). Also, rather than using the more usual “saying” (*logos*), Theon refers to the chreia as a “statement” (*apophasis*), the term typically used to define a maxim (cf.

Aphthonius, *Prog.* 4). Since Theon, unlike the other progymnasmatisists, does not include a separate chapter on maxims, this gesture toward the maxim allows him to indicate the close relationship between the two forms.<sup>9</sup> Aphthonius has the shortest definition of chreia (only nine words in Greek), but he does include an etymology, indicating it is so-called because it is “useful” (*chreiōdēs*). Nicolaus clarifies that while chreia are useful, it is not because “the other progymnasmata do not fulfill some use, but either because it has been especially honored with this common name as characteristic, in the way that Homer is called ‘the poet’ and Demosthenes ‘the orator,’ or because originally someone made use of it primarily from some circumstance and need” (*Prog.* 20; cf. Theon, *Prog.* 97). Nicolaus observes that some theorists claim “chreias are transmitted because of some utility and some only because of their charm” (*Prog.* 21), though he finds that even those that appear designed only for pleasantry “seem to contain good advice” and thus some utility (*Prog.* 21).<sup>10</sup>

### *Chreia Classifications*

All the extant progymnasmata list the principal classifications of the chreia: there are sayings chreias, action chreias, and mixed chreias, which consist of both sayings and action (Theon, *Prog.* 97; Ps.-Hermogenes, *Prog.* 6; Aphthonius, *Prog.* 23; Nicolaus, *Prog.* 20). The following epithet attributed to Isocrates, very popular in antiquity, is an example of a sayings chreia: “The root of education is bitter but the fruits are sweet” (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 23; cf. Ps.-Hermogenes, *Prog.* 7; Libanius, *Prog.* 8.82–97). Theon gives the following as an example of a chreia of action: “When Diogenes the Cynic philosopher saw a boy eating fancy food, he beat his pedagogue with his staff” (*Prog.* 98–99; cf. Nicolaus, *Prog.* 20; Libanius, *Prog.* 1.2).<sup>11</sup> Pseudo-Hermogenes cites a similar chreia to illustrate a mixed chreia that contains both an action and a saying: “Diogenes, on seeing an undisciplined youth, beat his pedagogue and said, ‘Why did you teach him such things?’” (*Prog.* 6; cf. Aphthonius, *Prog.* 23).<sup>12</sup> Theon’s understanding of a mixed chreia differs from that of Nicolaus. For Theon, the verbal aspect of a mixed chreia can occur in the circumstances that prompt the action. So under mixed chreias, Theon cites this chreia: “A Laconian, when someone asked him where the Lacedaimonians set the limits of their land, showed his spear” (*Prog.* 99). The fact that the Laconian’s action of displaying his spear was prompted by a verbal question, for Theon, qualifies the chreia as “mixed”—that is, with both actional and verbal features. For Nicolaus, a similar chreia is a mixed chreia only because the Laconian not only shows his spear but also speaks, “When a Laconian was asked where the walls of Sparta were, holding up his spear, he said, ‘There’” (*Prog.* 20). Pseudo-Hermogenes shares Nicolaus’ view that a mixed chreia “requires both an action and a saying of the character.”<sup>13</sup>

Aphthonius includes only these principal classifications, and Pseudo-Hermogenes and Nicolaus allude to further categories, but only Theon subdivides the categories of chreia into a rather complex system of classification. Theon divides the sayings chreia into two subcategories. There is the unprompted, declarative statement (*apophantikon*) and the responsive statement (*apokritikon*). The declarative statement is typically introduced with a finite verb and without reference to a specific situation.<sup>14</sup> Theon's example is this: "Isocrates the sophist used to say that those of his students with natural ability were children of gods" (*Prog.* 97). The responsive sayings chreia is typically introduced by a participle of seeing:<sup>15</sup> "Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher, seeing a rich young man who was uneducated, said 'He is dirt plated with silver'" (*Prog.* 97).

Theon further divides the responsive chreia into four subdivisions. Three are statements in response to questions, ranging from a simple yes or no to additional information to advice or something beyond an answer to the question. For many modern interpreters "these distinctions seem too finely drawn," despite the fact that Theon gives examples.<sup>16</sup> The fourth subcategory is a chreia made in response to a remark or statement rather than a question.<sup>17</sup> Beyond these four subdivisions is another type or species of sayings chreia, the double chreia, which is "one having statements by two persons where either statement makes a chreia by one person." Theon gives this example: "Alexander, the king of Macedon, stood over Diogenes when he was sleeping and said, 'A man who is a counselor should not sleep all night,' and Diogenes responded, 'A man to whom the people have been entrusted and who has many cares'" (*Prog.* 98).<sup>18</sup>

With regard to the category of sayings chreia, Theon states that they can be expressed in a variety of ways, which he lists (with examples): gnomic sayings, logical demonstrations, a jest or joke, a syllogism, an enthymeme, an example, a prayer or wish, a sign or symbolic expression, a figure or trope, a double entendre or ambiguity, a change of subject or metalepsis, or any combination of two or more of these expressions (*Prog.* 99–100).<sup>19</sup> Some ancient theorists were less than convinced of the pedagogical usefulness of listing various categories of chreia. Pseudo-Hermogenes, for example, says, "Much is said by the ancients about different kinds of chreia, (for example,) that some of them are declarative, some interrogative, some investigative. But now let us come to the point, and this is the elaboration (*exergasia*)" (*Prog.* 7).

Theon proposes that there are two subcategories of actional chreia: active and passive, which function as their names suggest. The protagonist is the main actor in an active chreia of action: "When Diogenes the Cynic philosopher saw a boy eating fancy food, he beat his pedagogue with his staff" (*Prog.* 98–99). The protagonist is acted upon in a passive chreia of action: "Didymon the flute-player, on being convicted of adultery, was hanged by his namesake" (*Prog.* 99).<sup>20</sup> None of the theorists proposes further subdivisions for mixed chreia.

### *Chreia Manipulation*

The ancient theorists do not agree on what the elaboration or manipulation of chreias consists of. Again, Theon stands alone in his understanding. He ends his chapter on chreia with instructions on how to “practice” or manipulate chreias through eight separate exercises: “restatement, grammatical inflection, comment, and contradiction, and we expand and compress the chreia, and in addition (at a later stage in study) we refute and confirm” (*Prog.* 101). The practice of expanding and condensing chreia is especially significant. Theon cites a brief chreia: “Epaminondas, dying childless, said to his friends, ‘I leave two daughters, the victory at Leuctra and that at Mantinea’” (*Prog.* 103–104). He then shows how the chreia can be expanded by adding to the information about its speaker and circumstances.

Epaminadas, the general of the Thebans, was, you should know, a great man in peacetime, but when war with Lacedaimonians came to his fatherland he demonstrated many shining deeds of greatness. When serving at Boeotarch at Leuctra, he defeated the enemy; and conducting a campaign and contending on behalf of his country, he died at Mantinea. When he had been wounded and his life was coming to an end, while his friends were bewailing many things, including that he was dying childless, breaking into a smile, he said, “Cease your weeping, my friends, for I have left you two immortal daughters: two victories of my country over Lacedaimonians, one at Leuctra, the elder, the younger just begotten by me at Mantinea.” (*Prog.* 104)<sup>21</sup>

This complicates the understanding that the sayings of Jesus typically circulated as independent sayings that were later couched in a narrative setting, which eventually was expanded into more elaborate contexts.<sup>22</sup> It is certainly possible that some dominical sayings were transmitted that way but not necessarily the case. For one trained in the rhetorical tradition of expanding and condensing chreia, it is possible that the opposite scenario occurred, namely that a chreia in a longer context was condensed.<sup>23</sup> From the evidence of Theon and the progymnasmata, it is impossible to determine a priori the directional flow of transmission.

For Pseudo-Hermogenes, on the other hand, chreia elaboration consists of a single exercise, including an encomium of the speaker (or actor) of the chreia, a paraphrase, the cause, contrast, comparison, example, judgment (optional), and exhortation (*Prog.* 8). Chreia elaboration for Nicolaus is very similar to that of Pseudo-Hermogenes and consists of (1) praise, (2) paraphrase, (3) statement of probability and truth, (4) judgment, and (5) exhortation (optional) (*Prog.* 24).<sup>24</sup> Chreia elaboration reaches its standard form in Aphthonius and is the basis for most later commentators who try to emulate him.<sup>25</sup>

Following a brief definition of chreia and a simple classification of sayings, actional and mixed chreias, Aphthonius advises that one “should elaborate it [the



chreia] with the following headings: praise, paraphrase, cause, contrary, comparison, example, testimony of the ancients, brief epilogue” (*Prog.* 23). He then gives the following example:<sup>26</sup>

A VERBAL CHREIA ( <i>PROG.</i> 23–25)	
Isocrates said, “The Root of Education is Bitter but the Fruits are Sweet”	
<i>Praise</i>	It is right to admire Isocrates for his art; he made its name most illustrious, and in his practice he showed how great the art was and proclaims its greatness, rather than having been himself proclaimed by it. Now it would take a long time to go through all the benefits he has brought to human life, whether in proposing laws to kings or in advising private individuals, but (we can note) his wise teaching about education.
<i>Paraphrase</i>	One who longs for education, he is saying, begins with toils, but yet the toils end in an advantage. The wisdom of these words we shall admire in what follows.
<i>Cause</i>	Those who long for education attach themselves to educational leaders, whom it is frightening to approach and very stupid to abandon. Fear comes on boys both when they are there and when they are about to go to school. Next after the teachers come the pedagogues, fearful to see and more dreadful when they beat the boys. Fright anticipates discovery, and punishment follows fright; they go looking for the boys’ mistakes but regard the boys’ successes as their own doing. Fathers are more strict than pedagogues, dictating the routes to be followed, demanding boys go straight to school, and showing suspicion of the market place. And if there is need to punish, fathers ignore their natural feelings. But the boy who has experienced these things, when he comes to manhood wears a crown of virtue.
<i>Contrary</i>	If, on the other hand, out of fear of these things someone were to flee from teachers, run away from parents, and shun pedagogues, he is completely deprived of training in speech and has lost ability in speech with his loss of fear. All of these considerations influenced Isocrates’ thought in calling the root of education bitter.
<i>Comparison</i>	Just as those who work the earth cast the seeds in the ground with toil but reap the fruits with greater pleasure, in the same way those exchanging toil for education have by toil acquired future renown.
<i>Example</i>	Look, I ask you, at the life of Demosthenes, which was the most filled with labor of any orator but became the most glorious of all. He showed such an abundance of zeal that he took the ornament from his head, because he thought the ornament that comes from virtue was the best; and he expended in toils what others lavished on pleasures.

<i>Testimony</i>	Thus, one should admire Hesiod's saying [cf. <i>Works and Days</i> 289–292] that the road of virtue is rough, but the height is easy, the same philosophy as found in the saying of Isocrates; for what Hesiod indicated by a “road” is what Isocrates called a “root,” both expressing one thought, but with different words.
<i>Epilogue</i>	Looking at all this, one should admire Isocrates for his wise and beautiful speculation about education.

This lengthy elaboration “more clearly demonstrates to teacher and student alike what the elaboration of a chreia ought to look like.”<sup>27</sup>

### Examples from Ancient Literature

There are multitudes of chreias preserved in writings from antiquity, particularly those attributed to philosophers acknowledged as founders of philosophical schools.<sup>28</sup> There are also extant exercises and commentaries involving the inflection and elaboration of chreia within the rhetorical tradition.<sup>29</sup> Many of the examples that follow are found both in the rhetorical tradition and outside it. For example, Lucian's *Demonax* alone has over fifty chreia attributed to Demonax, a philosopher and Lucian's teacher.<sup>30</sup> Diogenes Laertius' *Lives* contain many sayings attributed to the philosophers whose lives he presents.<sup>31</sup>

#### Sayings Chreia

Declarative. Diogenes Laertius attributes the following declarative statement to the Cynic philosopher Diogenes: “the love of money is the mother-city of every evil” (*Lives* 6.50).<sup>32</sup>

“Isocrates said that education's root is bitter, its fruit is sweet” (Stobaeus 2.31.29).<sup>33</sup>

“[Socrates] used to say that he knew nothing except just the fact of his ignorance” (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.32).

“For R Eliezer used to say, ‘There is a time to shorten [one's prayers] and a time to lengthen [them]’ ” (Mekhilta Ishmael Vayassa 1).<sup>34</sup>

Responsive (to an action). “Damonidas the gymnastic teacher whose feet were deformed when his shoes had been stolen, said: ‘May they fit the thief’ ” (Plutarch, *De aud. poet.* 18D).<sup>35</sup>

Diogenes the Cynic philosopher, on seeing a youth who was the son of an adulterer throwing stones into the crowd, said: “Stop, boy! You may unwittingly hit your father” (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.62).

Responsive (to a question). When Demonax was nearly a hundred years old and death was apparently imminent, a man asked him, “Isn't it shameful that the body of such a man should be exposed as food for birds and dogs?’ [Demonax]