

○ MUTUALITY RHETORICS AND FEMINIST INTERPRETATION

EXAMINING PHILIPPIANS AND ARGUING FOR OUR LIVES

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Typically, when scholars have sought to identify Pauline ethics about sexuality, they have turned primarily to letters such as Romans and 1 Corinthians. The Pauline corpus in general has proven to be troubling, though, especially when approached as a source for a feminist, liberating, or progressive sexual ethic. Such a feminist sexual ethic would include, among other things, moving towards founding relationships based on mutuality, respect and consent. Given this dynamic in Pauline interpretation and feminist ethics, this paper proceeds differently in three ways. First, it examines the argumentation of a Pauline letter normally left out of the conversation, Philippians, a text that might especially be relevant given its rhetorics of mutuality. Though the letter does not seem to refer to certain 'bedroom acts,' it does argue rather strenuously for a certain view of communal identity and behaviour. This is relevant for our task in a second way since holistic considerations of sexuality assume that it is expressed by and through our whole selves. That is, sexuality is not divorced from our everyday lives 'in the world,' but is integrated into how we act in community and relationship. Third, rather than placing Paul at the centre of this study as a *source* for sexual ethics, it argues that the act of interpretation itself can be a *resource* for our political-ethical struggles. This paper seeks, then, to critically examine these rhetorics of mutuality as a contribution to the project of building and expanding a vital feminist ethic of sexuality. The test for such a contribution involves assessing mutuality rhetorics in current arguments about gender and sexuality.

A) PAUL'S RHETORICS OF MUTUALITY IN PHILIPPIANS

Turning to the first task, I would like to consider the rhetorics of mutuality in Paul's letter to the Philippians.¹ But, why this task? The topic of mutuality is an important one because of its central place in most current discussions of feminist and generally progressive sexual ethics.² Beverly Harrison declared over two decades ago: 'The moral norm for sexual communication in a feminist ethic is radical mutuality' (Harrison 1985, pp. 149-150). Since then, the value of mutuality has been extolled in feminist and liberating analyses of violence (Fortune 1995; Adams and Fortune 1995), feminist ethical considerations of economics (Robb 1995, pp. 156-159), progressive evaluations of control and masculinity (Ellison 1996, pp. 30-58), critiques of exclusive purposes for sexuality (Harrison 1983; Gudorf 1994, pp. 29-50), and an increased focus on the fruitful gifts of pleasure (Heyward 1989a, pp. 87-118; Gudorf 1994, pp. 81-159; Gilson 1995; Jordan 2002, pp. 163-168).³ If mutuality is such a standard now for our ethical considerations, then why bother with Paul at all? The answer seems obvious to any who take note of how these ethical issues are discussed in the public arena, where biblical sounding proclamations are ceaselessly deployed. We must engage Paul because when we fail to do so, we can be sure others will, most often to legitimise oppressive practices. Following the urgings of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, then, as a biblical scholar and a feminist I must also play the role of public intellectual and advocate (Schüssler Fiorenza 1999, pp. 17-30).

This leaves me with the letter to the Philippians. For the purposes of this occasion, it draws my attention for both of the reasons just stated: because of the value we put on mutuality and the way many argue with biblical (and sometimes Pauline) rationales. In addition, the argumentation of Philippians is a compelling topic because of its apparently ‘harmless’ appearance among other Pauline letters. The acclaim accorded to Paul or the letter to the Philippians by biblical scholars is remarkably widespread. Paul is characterised as ‘very personal and warm’ (Fee 1999, p. 11) and according to at least one interpreter, attempting to console the Philippians (Holloway 2001). The letter is labelled ‘a jewel of the Pauline corpus’ (Osiek 2000, p. 32), since it ‘sparkles with joy... life-giving, heart-refreshing joy’ (Bockmuehl 1998, p. 1). In comparison to other Pauline letters, it is ‘one of Paul’s most eloquent and cordial letters’ (Witherington 1994, p. 137). As Gordon D. Fee and others maintain, ‘many of us like Philippians because we like the Paul we meet here’ (Fee 1999, p. 11).⁴

It should be plain that I begin in a different mode from many of these interpreters, with a properly suspicious stance towards Paul’s arguments (see Schüssler Fiorenza 1999, pp. 50-51; Schüssler Fiorenza 2001, pp. 175-177).⁵ An analysis of Paul’s rhetorics of mutuality in Philippians should, in the end, be a resource for our political-ethical engagement, rather than simply provide us with a repository of definitive statements about normalcy.⁶ The practice of such an analysis should sharpen our engagement in current discourses about sexuality, as both Paul’s arguments and our contemporary debates make claims about the proper way of living in community.⁷

Certain expressions of mutuality recur in the argumentation of Philippians. Paul opens the letter highlighting his *koinōnia* relationship with the community members (1:3-11), calling them ‘partners with me’ (*synkoinōnous mou*, 1:7) and stressing his thankfulness for *all* of them.⁸ The overarching arguments about unity in the letter tend to stress shared joy, joint action, and wide-ranging belongingness.⁹ Paul’s arguments do more than accentuate these qualities, though; they are central in characterising those he sees as opponents. Unlike Paul’s model actions, there are some who act ‘out of envy and rivalry’ (*dia phthonon kai erin*, 1:15) (on anti-models, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969, pp. 366-368). Here, Paul is developing an argument dissociating division from unity, noting the ‘divisiveness’ (*eritheias*, 1:17) of those who do not act in accordance with his vision of the community (on dissociation, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969, pp. 411-459).¹⁰ Next, Paul seeks to establish how his actions, unlike these divisive ones, are primarily oriented toward the benefit of the community.¹¹ Though he might prefer dying, so as to be with Christ (1:21-23), Paul explains to the community how living is ‘more necessary because of you’ (*anankaioteron di’ hymas*, 1:24) and is ‘for your progress and joy’ (*eis tēn hymōn prokopēn kai charan*, 1:25). The train of Paul’s thought establishes a second dissociation, between self-benefit and community-benefit (see Wire 1990, pp. 17-19).¹² Through these dissociative arguments Paul specifies how he presents unity and communal benefit as guiding values in particular ways.

Perhaps the densest expression of Paul’s mutuality rhetorics comes in the second chapter of the letter. Here, Paul tries to address these arguments to the community members directly. After invoking the qualities of love (*agapē*, in both 2:1 and 2:2), partnership (*koinōnia*, 2:1), affection (*splanchna*, 2:1), compassion (*oiktirmos*, 2:1), and joy (*chara*, 2:2), Paul enjoins his audience to act: ‘not according to divisiveness nor conceit but in humility, counting others over yourselves, each looking not to their own interests but to the interests of others’ (2:3-4). This explicit and

lengthy sentence weaves together the two arguments by dissociation already highlighted by my analysis. Division is dissociated from unity as Paul exhorts the community members through the same term used for the anti-models in the first chapter: ‘divisiveness’ (*eritheia*, 2:3; cf. 1:15, 17). Unity is emphasised by describing the love that they should have as the *same* love (*tēn autēn agapēn*, 2:2), with the *same* mindset (*to auto phronēte*, 2:2) and a conjoined spirit (*sympsychoi*, 2:2). Self-benefit is distinctly subordinated to the benefit of the community, as Paul had expressed previously through his own model actions. By repeating this dissociation, Paul hopes to get the Philippians to follow his lead by putting the interests of others (*allēlous*, 2:3; *ta heterōn*, 2:4) ahead of their own (*mē ta beautōn*, 2:4).

This combination of arguments for the community benefit and according to a particular model is not coincidental in Philippians 2; rather, it recurs. Indeed, it is this argumentative interaction that structures the remainder of the letter.¹³ Three more times in this brief letter Paul extols his own model through his apparent concern with the benefit of the community (2:17; 3:1; and 4:17). Seeking a particular response from his audience, Paul hopes his own work (*ekopiassa*, 2:16) will not be ‘in vain’ (*eis kenon*, twice in 2:16), characterising his efforts as a ‘sacrifice and service’ (*tē thusia kai leitourgia*, 2:17) for them. Paul tells the community he continues because it is ‘safe for you (pl.)’ (*hymīn de asphales*), even as he could consider it ‘troubling for me’ (*emoi men ouk oknēron*, 3:1). Even when he accepts support from the Philippians, Paul claims that it is not for himself, but for ‘the fruit which abounds to your (pl.) account’ (*ton karpon ton pleonazonta eis logon hymōn*, 4:17).

In a similar vein, Paul presents two other model figures in support of his own model.¹⁴ Both Timothy and Epaphroditus embody what Paul considers to be the appropriate concern for the community. In keeping with the self-benefit/community-benefit dissociation, Timothy is one ‘who will truly care about the things concerning you (pl.)’ (*hostis gnēsios ta peri hymōn*, 2:20). As has been the letter’s practice thus far, Timothy’s status is also contrasted with another party (an unspecified anti-model): those who ‘seek their own things’ (*ta beautōn zētousin*, 2:21). But Timothy’s character is contrasted to these vague anti-models, since the community members know Timothy’s worth (*tēn de dokimēn autou ginōskete*, 2:22). Epaphroditus also demonstrates this model concern with the community. He had been longing for ‘all of you’ (*pantas hymas*, 2:26), demonstrating a concern (that echoes Paul’s own) with *all* of the community. Epaphroditus yearns because of this common concern and ‘because you heard that he was sick’ (*dioti* clause, 2:26). The seriousness with which his illness is described only heightens Epaphroditus’ status as a model, given what he endured to be their messenger (*hymōn apostolon*, 2:25).

B) FEMINIST RHETORICAL ASSESSMENT

Broadly speaking, then, Paul is arguing for mutuality in the community at Philippi. He supports this goal through several dissociative (division/unity, self-benefit/community-benefit) and model (anti-model, Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus) arguments. But is there a relatable ethic in these rhetorics? Or perhaps more pressing, for what *kind* of mutuality is Paul arguing? Contemporary interpreters of all stripes should be critical of these mutuality rhetorics, as they intersect with Paul’s sacrificial and hierarchical emphasis.

First, though the letter emphasises a concern with the community, it is valorised primarily as a kind of sacrifice (on the argument by sacrifice, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969,

pp. 248-255). Paul's model is itself a sacrificial model. He explicitly calls himself a sacrifice in one instance (2:17), but overall he perceives his actions as sacrifices. Paul gives up a chance to be with Christ (1:21-26) for the benefit of the community, but also sees his current life as characterised by 'a loss because of Christ' (*dia ton christon zēmian*, 3:7; cf. 3:8). Epaphroditus is a model for the community because of the mortal risk (*parabouleusamenos tē psychē*, 2:30) he took in his service to Paul and the community (2:26-30). This mortal risk echoes the sacrificial pattern of the Christ hymn (*mechri thanatou*, 2:8, 30), where Christ became emptied, humble, and obedient (2:6-8). That the community is meant to join in on this sacrificial attitude is made evident by the frequent calls for imitation, unity, and sameness. Immediately preceding the letter's densest expression of its mutuality rhetorics (in 2:1-4), Paul exhorts the community members to have 'one spirit' and 'one mind' (*en henī pneumatī, mia psychē*, 1:27). He contends that they should live in this way because they have been given the task to 'suffer on his [Christ's] behalf' (*to hyper autou paschein*, 1:29). This preparation for sacrificial suffering is linked to being united with Paul in 'the same fight' (*ton auton agōna*, 1:30).¹⁵ Paul argues that what Epaphroditus, Christ, the community, and he should hold in common is some kind of mutually shared sacrifice.

Second, though Paul frames these arguments in terms of mutuality and the common good, the rhetorics work toward hierarchical ends. The arguments involving models, sacrifices, and the community benefit are persistently deployed in order to posit the primacy of Paul's model status. The model quality of Paul is established first (1:3-11, 12-14, 24-26), before turning to other, more truncated arguments by model: Christ (2:5-11), Timothy (2:19-24), and Epaphroditus (2:25-30). But the argumentation returns to the model of Paul throughout the remainder of the letter (3:7-11, 17; 4:2, 9, 11-13), often in their most explicit forms (3:17; 4:9). The other models are nestled into the middle of a series of arguments for Paul's model. There is something inherently hierarchical about arguing through imitation (Castelli 1991).¹⁶ Imitation is based on the superiority of the model in the element to be imitated and proceeds from the assumption that the imitators are inferior or somehow lacking the trait or practice the model provides. By the sheer regularity with which Paul uses himself as a model, it is clear he is trying to claim a position superior to his audience.¹⁷

Paul works for this elevated position in his hierarchy of authority in a variety of ways. He connects the model of Christ's humble obedience (*hypēkoos*, 2:8) with a directed call for the community to obey Paul (*hypēkousate*, 2:12), whether he is present with them or not (Kittredge 1998, pp. 83-86).¹⁸ Paul frequently seeks to shore up his own authority by associating himself with a divine authority (1:8, 20, 28; 2:5, 13, 3:9, 15; 4:7, 9, 13, 19).¹⁹ These types of associations pull Paul into a higher position, while other arguments increase and radicalise the distance between Paul and others. The anti-models in the letter are mostly presented as those who do not embody Paul's kind of mutuality. The strong language used to describe the various figures in these arguments – opponents (1:28), crooked and twisted (2:15), dogs (3:2), mutilation (3:2), and enemies (3:19) – leaves no doubt as to their negative role. There is no middle ground for Paul: if one does not display the right kind of mutuality, as defined throughout the letter by Paul and a few supporting models, then one is more like the anti-models.²⁰ This implies one is outside of the community, or at least Paul's definition of it.

The vigorously oppositional tenor of the rhetorics in Philippians is not reduced when we consider Paul's dissociative arguments.²¹ The dissociation of self-benefit from community-benefit

(1:24-25; 2:3-4, 17, 20-21, 26; 3:1; 4:10, 17) assumes that these two values are in some way distanced from each other. Paul weaves this dissociation into his argument by sacrifice: the common good is brought about by submitting to a sacrificial pattern which subordinates your own self-worth. The dissociation of division from unity (1:15-17; 2:1-3; 3:15) implies that any kind of difference from Paul's normative claims about unity and mutuality are an unhealthy source of contentiousness. All of these arguments intersect with the dissociation between destruction and safety in the letter (1:28; 2:12; 3:1, 15, 18-20). Through this dissociation Paul constructs the options in a zero-sum scenario. The anti-models and those who side with them will be met with destruction (1:28; 3:18-19; cf. 3:15), unlike those who will be safe as they follow the precedent and authority of Paul (1:28; 2:12; 3:1, 20). The starkness of Paul's arguments stressing his kind of mutuality casts the situation as violently foreboding for the audience. The options are limited, as the letter maintains that there is one, better way to be mutual, which is enforced from the top down through a hierarchy of models.²²

C) QUESTIONS OF USEFULNESS; RESOURCES FOR THE STRUGGLE

Now that I have described what kind of mutuality Paul presents in Philippians, this study can turn to the utility of this feminist rhetorical analysis for contemporary ethical-political struggles. Part of the usefulness of this study is in how it engages these Pauline rhetorics, taking the interpretive process as a resource, rather than assuming Paul is a source of ethical norms.²³

This is a fine, but important distinction. For instance, feminist ethicist Carol Robb notes the use of *koinōnia* language in Paul's letters as an indication of mutual relations between members of the early Jesus movement(s) (Robb 1995, pp. 16-19). On the one hand, Robb insists that biblical traditions reinforce a reciprocal or mutual ethic and utilises her examination to ground a thorough consideration of a feminist ethic of economic justice. On the other hand, she mitigates the role of these traditions in ethical thinking: 'Not that people seeking direction in the Bible should *mechanically* prioritise equality; sensitivity to context and attention to fittingness is wise for those who honor the texts, as it was for the people represented in them' (Robb 1995, p. 19). My analysis of Paul's rhetorics of mutuality suggests a level of uncertainty about how positive a role Paul's vision of *koinōnia* can play in this direct way (Robb's first, background assertion). Yet, at the same time, it reinforces Robb's other observation, that 'sensitivity to context and attention to fittingness' is appropriate. I would add that we need to be not only sensitive and attentive, but also suspicious about how mutuality is invoked in argumentation of various kinds. (Indeed, the strength of Robb's analysis is her suspicious attention to the ways women are victimised sexually and economically.²⁴)

To be fair, it is not necessarily the ethicist's task to measure the rhetorics of mutuality and sacrifice in biblical literature. However, there are feminist interpreters of Pauline literature who maintain that Paul's views of mutuality are accessible and liberating.²⁵ For example, in her analysis of Galatians, Brigitte Kahl argues that Paul is subverting hierarchical patterns and building 'patterns of active mutuality and solidarity' (Kahl 2000, p. 46). Kahl holds that Galatians is an extended reconceptualisation of masculinity that leads to a Pauline ethics of mutuality (Kahl 2000, p. 49). Kahl's argument for Galatians echoes Luise Schottroff's proposal that the praxis of mutuality was characteristic for the early Jesus movement(s) (Schottroff 1995, pp. 212-223). Citing six of Paul's letters and Philippians in particular, Schottroff declares: 'On every literary

level, the New Testament affirms that mutuality is basic to every relationship in the Christian [sic] community' (Schottroff 1995, p. 212). Schottroff notes several aspects of the mutuality rhetorics that my own preceding analysis has, including the frequent Greek *syn* expressions (3:17, among other places) and the term *allēlous* (2:3).

However, Kahl and Schottroff can only make these assertions if they also argue that hierarchical terms for service and slavery have a different meaning in the community. This kind of argument depends upon reading texts like the Christ hymn in Phil. 2:6-11 as promoting voluntary sacrifice and valorising this as an act of solidarity (Schottroff 1995, pp. 44-46). However, in the context of Paul's letter to the Philippians (and likely other Second Testament documents), these sacrificial rhetorics are promoted as for the mutual good in order to shore up certain hierarchical patterns of authority. Thus, scholars like Sheila Briggs are suspicious about the liberating capacity of these arguments in Galatians and Philippians (Briggs 1994; Briggs 1989). Briggs sees Paul's exhortations to 'through love (*agapē*) become slaves to one another' (Gal. 5:13) and 'bear one another's burdens' (Gal. 6:2) differently: 'in a patriarchal society the call for self-sacrifice toward others can take on gender-specific forms in which a mutual giving way to one another is transformed into women's subordination to men' (Briggs 1994, p. 230). In a similar vein, Briggs highlights how the hymn primarily encourages obedience, while leaving the ancient slave system mostly unchallenged (Briggs 1989, pp. 142-151). It is not an expression of social leveling, but an implicit affirmation of hierarchical differences.

These disagreements about Paul's mutuality rhetorics highlight the need to ask *whose* mutuality is being proclaimed. This kind of question become especially pressing when we notice how often arguments for mutuality are combined with calls for self-sacrifice or subjection. Academic instances range from Anders Nygren's classic division of *eros* from *agapē*, casting the latter as a distinctively Christian kind of self-sacrificing love (Nygren 1953), to Francis Watson's recent reclamation of a positive Pauline 'mutual subjection' (Watson 2000). More common cultural instances of this combination involve a range of practices oppressive to women: violence against women and children (Gilson 1995, pp. 74-77, 85-106; Brock and Parker 2001, pp. 20-29), self-negating mothering (Brock and Parker 2001, pp. 31-38), patriarchal marriage (Harrison 1985, pp. 108-111), and persistent economic subordination (Robb 1995, pp. 136-159). What each of these has in common is that women are called upon to sacrifice something for the apparent mutual or common good, while it in fact puts them into subordinate social positions, as Briggs warns us above. Each is exhorted with arguments that interrelate mutuality and sacrifice. The abused spouse should 'offer up' her beatings; the long-suffering mother must subsume her identity exclusively to the good of the children. The wife needs to become subordinate to the authority of the husband; the employee is reduced to doing the most demanding and least rewarding tasks in order to keep her job and the company solvent.

When women step out of these circumscribed roles, they are blamed for the destabilisation of family, marriage, economy or country. Such actions are characterised as an attack on the mutual good of the whole: whether the whole is an apparently sexual union or the society at large. Thus, we must be suspicious when people speak of mutuality, as a number of experiences reflect that mutuality often involves things being a bit more mutual for some than for others. Furthermore, when mutuality is paired with sacrifice or subjection, it tends not to be an evenly distributed sacrifice. Rather, it is more sacrificial for some, more mutual for others, typically for

the benefit of the status quo. Tragically, many of our prized religious narratives have been implemented to valorise this kind of thinking.²⁶

These kinds of explanations for which actions are valued has already evoked a response from feminist ethicists. Such circumstances urge them to develop conceptualisations of mutuality that specifically counteract the effects of other versions of mutuality. Speaking to the way Jesus' death is connected to a sacrificial norm for Christians, Beverly Harrison insists that we should be living ethically 'through actions of mutuality and solidarity, not by aiming at an ethic of sacrifice' (Harrison 1985, p. 19).²⁷ Writing on the role of sexuality in founding justice, Briggs notes how an appropriate kind of love 'is simultaneously self- and other-directed' (Briggs 1987, p. 274). Carter Heyward has reflected extensively on the meaning of mutuality, in both the theologies of redemption and the ethics of sexuality (Heyward 1982; Heyward 1989a; Heyward 1989b; Heyward 1999; Cannon and Heyward 1992). For Heyward, mutuality involves being in right relation to each other, respecting each other's integrity and moving out of sexist, racist, and heterosexist modes of relationality (Heyward 1989b, pp. 14-19, 129, 191). Thus, mutuality is more than a value for our most personal and intimate relationships, but it is part of an ethic of relation within the world (see also Gudorf 1994, pp. 2-4, 54; Ellison 1996, pp. 22-23).²⁸ It has fundamentally to do with how we are in community.

This kind of ethical reflection should encourage a thorough assessment of Paul's rhetorics of mutuality (on the hermeneutics of ethical assessment, see Schüssler Fiorenza 1999, p. 51; Schüssler Fiorenza 2001, pp. 177-179). When I argue that Paul articulates a particular vision of the community through the concept of mutuality, I must note what kind of mutuality it is: one that involves hierarchical ordering, exhortations to sacrifice, and the subordination of the community under Paul's authority. Engagement with feminist ethical principles bolsters the process of identifying these rhetorics as well as evaluating their effects. Thus, I can identify mutuality rhetorics in Pauline argumentation as well as in dominant cultural narratives about gender. As a feminist, though, I must do more when I note how these rhetorics are implicated in a troubling sacrificial and hierarchical pattern; I must resist this pattern and envision alternatives.²⁹

Let's try this feminist rhetorical-ethical process once more, this time focusing on the current political subjects of same-sex marriage and the presence of LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer) people in church and society. Indeed, this might be the latest sight of Pauline rhetorics being implemented in the public arena (at least here in the United States).³⁰ Though I do not aspire to provide a catalogue of the precise arguments used by those who seek to constrict queer presence in a variety of ways, it is noteworthy that the topics of mutuality and common good have been and are adopted as appeals in these circles in a potentially analogous way.³¹ Indeed, this might explain some of the effects of internalised homophobia and persistent heterosexism.

Overall, the fear of the queer is promulgated by a series of arguments about the common good, particularly around protection or preservation. A classic homophobic argument involves the notion of 'protecting children', especially from predatory gay males. Ironically, studies have demonstrated that the vast majority of the cases of child abuse or molestation are perpetrated by heterosexual males, often by family members or close friends.³² Despite this sad irony the argument also takes a subtler form in adoption cases involving LGBTIQ parents, where it is claimed that the mutual benefit of the children must be protected from the threats of the stunted

development, 'sex-role confusion,' or social ostracism of a household with LGBTIQ parent(s). By extension, then, a threat to the safety and development of today's children would become a threat to the future society. This narrative indicts queers for the potential endangerment of the social fabric, attempting to convince all parties that it would be mutually beneficial for all (LGBTIQ included) if queers sacrificed their chances to parent (or to continue parenting).

Mutuality rhetorics are also exploited in arguments seeking to 'preserve' certain marriage practices, in churches and in state offices. Expansion of marriage to committed same-sex couples is persistently characterised by its opponents as a 'threat' to marriage. As Cheshire Calhoun carefully demonstrates, this type of argument also makes claims about the social fabric, since marriage has been increasingly viewed as a pre-political 'building block' of society (Calhoun 2000, pp. 107-131). Preserving marriage then becomes akin to preserving society. The mutual good of all can only be maintained by 'defending' marriage and/or preemptively banning same-sex marriages. Even slightly more conciliatory provisions for civil unions display the hierarchical evaluation and preference of certain relationships over others. As a result, some people must sacrifice the presence of a loved one in life-long commitments, in dire health situations, and in child-care support; in other words, in those moments where we are most in need of relationality.

As the previous examples of ethical engagement demonstrate, I must do more than identify these mutuality rhetorics in cultural discourses about queers. This analysis must also evaluate the effects of such argumentation. Already the combination of mutuality rhetorics with sacrifice rhetorics should make us suspicious, and with good cause again. Where these types of arguments gain in prominence, they provide rationales for sacrificial violence and hierarchical exclusion. When one group is persistently presented as a threat to us all, they become scapegoats. Scapegoats become especially susceptible to queer-bashing, as even some ecclesiastical writing note and implicitly approve.³³ This kind of violence can also turn inward. The high incidence of suicide attempts by queer youth highlights a significantly internalised combination of mutuality and sacrifice rhetorics ('it would be better if I weren't alive').³⁴ The fear of coming out and the potential loss of family and friends accompanying it leads to the interpersonal and psychic withdrawal of closeting. Closeted LGBTIQ people sacrifice sharing their whole selves with people, often for fear of how it might hurt those around them ('it will just kill my parents if they found out; it's better for all of us if they just don't know').

Thus, the process of interpreting Paul's rhetorics of mutuality with feminist biblical and ethical tools has encouraged a critical engagement with any series of mutuality rhetorics. This process instigates a number of questions on the topic of mutuality. *Whose* mutuality? *Which* members of the community benefit? If founded upon a sacrifice, *what* kind of sacrifice, and again, *whose* sacrifice? Is it '*more* mutual' for some, while *more* sacrificial for others? Asking such questions facilitates both the identification and assessment of mutuality rhetorics in Pauline argumentation as well as in dominant cultural narratives about gender and sexuality. Now as before, as a bisexual feminist, I must do more when I note how these rhetorics are once again implicated in a troubling sacrificial and hierarchical pattern; I must resist this pattern and envision alternatives.

Thus, even as we work to secure the safety and mutuality of all LGBTIQ people in church and society, we must take these rhetorical-ethical engagements with mutuality rhetorics as a cautionary tale. I suggest that we should remain suspicious and vigilant for how mutuality rhetorics can yet again be repositioned as a normalising discourse. In fact, it is precisely in this process

that both religious and state institutions are currently involved. Both of these institutions are working to set policies and clarify laws and ceremonies. Mark Jordan has suggested that the churches, having lost most of their previous cultural influence to the state, now mimic both their former selves and the current state regimentation by making such proclamations (Jordan 2002, pp. 133-135). As a result, Jordan advises: 'Instead of blaming church members for becoming more sexually immoral, they ought to warn them rather about becoming such docile subjects of the secular bureaucracies for sexual regulation' (Jordan 2002, p. 134). Thus, instead of repeating and accommodating ourselves to analogous Pauline, sexist, and heterosexist mutuality rhetorics, we should seek to be critically engaged subjects of church and society (not the docile subjects they hope for). So that even when and if denominations and states recognise same-sex unions or queer members, we must remain attentive and suspicious for how they do so.³⁵

This leads us to those questions echoed throughout my analysis. *Whose* mutuality is being served by the establishment of this (or any) norm? In any definition of what fits or who belongs, whether it is the ancient community at Philippi, a member of a contemporary faith community, or a participant in a state-regulated institution, we might expect arguments for these 'common goods' to also sacrifice. *Who* is being asked to make that sacrifice and, further, what are we being asked to sacrifice? Since norms involve hierarchical differentiation (what belongs and what does not, who is inside and who is out), we need to examine *what* are we valorising as we are excluding. As Jordan notes (and the feminist biblical and ethical analyses have shown), then, we should remain critical of and resistant to state and ecclesiastical interventions of this kind.

Not only should we continue our critical resistance, but we also need to envision alternatives to these interventions. Rather than installing a new norm, we might want to focus on tasks that encourage the shaping and balancing of values. A priority should be on developing notions of a mutuality that balances self and other, a mutuality that does not violate our safety or integrity. By this balancing it seems possible to imagine submerged possibilities for our mutuality rhetorics. Though mutuality has been implicated in sacrificial and hierarchical patterns, there are other ways.

D) SUBMERGED POSSIBILITIES; POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS?

The possibilities of still submerged alternatives draw my attention back to Philippians, where Paul addresses two women with his mutuality rhetorics. Taking the pairing of Euodia and Syntyche as a missionary couple (4:2-3), not as two women members fighting with each other, raises the option of reading them in partnership with each other.³⁶ The nature, approach and ethic of their partnership cannot be easily concluded from the letter to the Philippians. However, throughout the letter Paul works to identify mutuality primarily with his own authority, creating and maintaining a hierarchical relationship. Here Paul turns to make a specific exhortation for Euodia and Syntyche to accept his view of the community. It seems reasonable to argue that these women are standing in some kind of different view of relations in the community from Paul.³⁷

This view of Paul's rhetorics raises the distinct possibility (though it is still only that, an imaginative possibility)³⁸ that the difference in view could have been *how* to embody mutuality in the community. Does this have to do with a more egalitarian ethic of relatedness? Are Euodia and Syntyche not only leaders, but also co-leaders with strong affectional ties to each other? The possibility of their relationship falling somewhere on a homoerotic continuum has already been

suggested by Mary Rose D'Angelo (D'Angelo 1990, pp. 67-68, 75-77).³⁹ Or is it possible that they and other members of the community do not see their common good as linked to a sacrifice of the self or a hierarchical submission to Paul? This suggestion reminds us that Paul was likely not the only authority or model for the community at Philippi. His rhetorics here show the efforts with which he attempts to even establish this status for himself. Is Paul's view in opposition to a common one in the community more open to a number of views of what 'community' means?

Today, we should ask: how might we mutually benefit from a further consideration of these possibilities? It is hoped that this analysis of the mutuality rhetorics of Paul, gender, and sexuality will be a small resource for these considerations. Just as I am suspicious of a singular norm coming out of the letter of Philippians, I am cautious in the end about declaring any one norm for a vital, critical, and responsive feminist sexual ethics.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Because of a conflict in terms of timing and commitments, I was unable to contribute to the recent Festschrift in honor of Antoinette Clark Wire's career (Hearon 2004). As a result, I dedicate this article to my advisor Anne Wire, especially as she encouraged me to focus not only on the hierarchical way Paul argues (my initial, strongest interest), but also on the content of his hierarchical arguments, which includes the substantive way he locates common good in sacrifice. It should also be noted that an earlier version of this paper was presented to the Paul and Politics group of the Society of Biblical Literature, as part of a panel on 'Paul, Sexuality, and the Politics of Interpretation'. Gratitude, then, is also owed to those who presided, presented, and formally (and informally) responded: Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, Dale B. Martin, Jennifer Glancy, and Abraham Smith.
- 2 Traditional sources for feminist, liberating, or progressive sexual ethics include the work of Beverly Wildung Harrison, Margaret Farley, James B. Nelson, among others (Harrison 1985; Farley 1976; Farley 1983a; Farley 1983b; Nelson 1978; Nelson 1992). For more on Harrison, Carter Heyward, Carol Robb, Marie Fortune, Marvin Ellison, Christine E. Gudorf, Anne Bathurst Gilson, Marvin M. Ellison, Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker, and Mark Jordan, see the notes below.
- 3 The work of Audre Lorde has been particularly influential in this regard (Lorde 1984, pp. 53-59).
- 4 Similarly, Osiek comments about the letter: 'It reveals Paul at his best' (Osiek 2000, p. 32).
- 5 At several key points my study shares the view of Philippians explicated in Cynthia Briggs Kittredge's book (Kittredge 1998). Kittredge demonstrates the relevance and explanatory power of a feminist rhetorical interpretation of this letter; a task to which I hope my project contributes.
- 6 My analysis of Paul's rhetorics draws significantly from the functional approach to argumentation evident in the work of Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca and Chaim Perelman. Typically, Perelman is credited with the work of the New Rhetoric to the exclusion of Olbrechts-Tyteca. Though all indications lead to their full partnership in the conception, research and writing of *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, Olbrechts-Tyteca's name and role are literally being written out of the history of rhetoric. It is for this reason that I list the two authors in reverse order to the title page, following the usual alphabetical order of last names.
- 7 Sexual ethics has as much to do with our everyday lives 'in the world,' as they do with private practices. Sexuality is a particularly social phenomenon. On this point, see, for example, Gudorf (1994, p. 3), Ellison (1996, pp. 17-38), Weeks (1995, pp. 124-154). See even the subtitle of Marjorie Garber's *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (Garber 1995).

8 Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman note that ‘the rule of justice requires giving identical treatment to beings or situations of the same kind’ (Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969, p. 218). For more on the rule of justice in argumentation, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman (1969, pp. 218-220).

9 *Chara* (joy) and related words appear 21 times in the letter (1:2, 3, 4, 7, 18 twice, 25; 2:2, 17 twice, 18 twice, 28, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 4 twice, 6, 10, 23), *syn* appears as a prefix or preposition 20 times (1:1, 7, 23 twice, 27; 2:2, 17, 18, 22, 25 twice; 3:10, 17, 21; 4:3 four times, 14, 21), and *pas, pasa, pan* (‘all’ or ‘every’) appears 36 times (1:1, 3, 4 thrice, 7, 8, 9, 13, 18 20 twice, 25; 2:9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 21, 26, 29; 3:8 twice, 21; 4:4, 5, 6, 7, 12 twice, 13, 18, 19, 21, 22). Paul’s diction could reflect arguments based on the rule of justice, particularly in 1:1, 3-4, 12, 25; 4:4-6, 11, 21-22.

10 Unlike most argumentative techniques based on making new connections, dissociations break connecting links; not simply to dissolve the relation between the elements of the argument, but to modify the previous formulation of their relation.

11 On the argument by model, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman (1969, pp. 362-368). On imitation in Paul’s letters in general, see Castelli (1991), Dodd (1999, pp. 13-32), Fiore (2003). Dodd’s analysis of Philippians, however, is mostly focused on Paul’s self-presentation in Philippians 3 (Dodd 1999, pp. 171-195).

12 For a useful Foucauldian read on Paul’s hierarchical use of mutuality rhetorics, with occasional focus upon Philippians, see Polaski (1999 especially, pp. 26-27, 100-103, 118-121).

13 Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman persistently characterise their argumentative categories as flexible and interdependent. They note that it is only in an ‘interaction of arguments’ that a rhetorical act becomes convincing (Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969, pp. 460-508).

14 The use of further arguments by model can reinforce others, especially when they are compatible with each other. As Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman maintain: ‘[c]lose adherence to a recognised model guarantees the value of the behavior. The person following the model enjoys an enhanced value, and can thus, in turn, serve as model’ (Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969, p. 364).

15 For a similar combination, see also 2:17-18. Through these arguments about himself, Paul defines the way to be a member of the community. On the argument based on the relation between a group and its members, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman (1969, pp. 321-327).

16 Castelli has considered the ambiguous power dynamics of imitation, in terms of both its emulative and authoritative aspects. On this ambiguity, see Castelli (1991, pp. 16, 21-22, 30-31, 68-71, 140-141). Even in these tense qualifications, however, Castelli clearly states the hierarchical element of imitation (Castelli 1991, pp. 16, 21-22, 86-87). On the role of imitation in the master-apprentice model of pedagogy, see Schüssler Fiorenza (2001, p. 30).

17 Dodd notes that Paul uses the first singular adjective or pronoun more than 50 times in this letter (Dodd 1999, p. 171). It also seems remarkable that the references to joy tend to be argued for the purpose of Paul’s own joy or mindset (1:4, 18-19; 2:2, 17-18, 19, 28-29; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10).

18 Kittredge clearly and convincingly demonstrates this point, one of the inventive strengths of her study. For a series of mainstream mitigations as to the hierarchical nature of obedience rhetorics, see her overview in Kittredge (1998, pp. 13-36). Victor P. Furnish’s claims that Pauline obedience is a form of mutuality and love might be particularly relevant for this study. See, for example, the potentially oxymoronic title by Furnish, *The Love Command in The New Testament* (Furnish 1972).

19 For the argument from authority, in general, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman (1969, pp. 305-310). Of all authority arguments, the ‘extreme case is the divine authority which overcomes all obstacles that reason might raise’ (Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969, p. 308). See here also Wire’s categorisation of the ‘argument from God’s calling’ and the ‘argument from the Lord’s command’ (Wire 1990, pp. 30-31, 33-35).

20 Here Paul seems to be following the trend in model (and anti-model) arguments described by Olbrechts-
Tyteca and Perelman: 'writers feel the necessity to embellish or blacken reality, to create heroes and
monsters, all good or all bad' (Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969, p. 369).

21 The argumentative technique of dissociation seems to entail at least some level of differentiation. This
might suggest that there is something distinctly hierarchical about the argument by dissociation. The
devaluation of one term in the dissociation necessarily entails a process of privileging the other hier-
archically. Though their study does not directly address itself to this consequence of dissociative argu-
mentation, Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman do briefly allude to the role of hierarchical thinking
patterns in the argument by dissociation. 'The dissociation expresses a vision of the world and estab-
lishes hierarchies for which it endeavors to provide the criteria' (Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 1969,
p. 420).

22 The other models have a lower status than Paul in the argumentation of Philippians for several reasons.
First, we can identify them as supporting models simply by virtue of their brevity in comparison to
Paul's frequent and developed model status. Second, these models echo qualities previously and
thereafter demonstrated by Paul's model. Third, in the case of Timothy and Epaphroditus, they are
identified as subordinately oriented under Paul's authority (2:22-23, 25, 28-30).

23 In approach, then, this article could be seen as analogous to or allied with Bernadette Brooten's analy-
sis in Brooten 2003. Identifying such rhetorical patterns 'better equips us to oppose these inequalities.
For that is the real ethical challenge facing us today' (Brooten 2003, p. 193). Ethicists have noted
that there are some real difficulties with using biblical materials as just this kind of source. For example,
Mark Jordan notes: 'There are, in short, no self-evident lists of biblical passages about sexual matters'
(Jordan 2002, p. 23).

24 See here, especially, her two summing chapters on sexual ethics and economic ethics (Robb 1995,
pp. 111-159). One recent examination of feminist approaches to Pauline studies treats and evaluates
mutuality rhetorics in a distinctly different fashion (Ehrensperger 2004 especially, pp. 177-194).
Though I have only just encountered this text, it is my hope that the points I make in this article might
lead us to be slightly more suspicious about the prospects of directly applying Pauline argumentation
to feminist interpretation (whether biblically, ethically, or theologically).

25 The following illustrative discussion of a few feminist perspectives on Pauline mutuality is meant to
be neither comprehensive nor dismissive. Detailing differences should be a useful way to enter into
further considerations of these issues, even as the goal is not to arrive at a singular 'correct' feminist
position or identify those who are 'good' or 'bad' feminists. Indeed, we should be suspicious of such
an exclusivist conceit. See, for example, Barbara R. Rossing's description of 'the two-women *topos*'
in moralistic literature and Revelation (Rossing 1999 especially, pp. 17-59) or Michael Warner's
identification of 'Good Gay/Bad Queer' discourse (Warner 1999, pp. 112-116).

26 On this point, see the compelling meditation on the cross in Brock and Parker (2001 especially, pp.
15-85).

27 Harrison underlines the point thus: 'Mark the point well: *We are not called to practice the virtue of*
sacrifice' (Harrison 1985, p. 19, emphasis original).

28 For more definitions of mutuality or expansions upon these definitions, see Robb (1995, pp. 115-
116, 156-159), Gudorf (1994, pp. 96-101, 115-117, 144), Gilson (1995, pp. 107-132), Ellison (1996,
pp. 76-93, 114-122).

29 These tasks seem to be part of a process for change in the hermeneutics of transformation (Schüssler
Fiorenza 1999, pp. 53-54; Schüssler Fiorenza 2001, pp. 186-189).

30 This paper was presented at a panel mere weeks after the 2004 elections, when 11 states overwhelm-
ingly approved state constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage.

- 31 On the arguments lying behind homophobic, or at the very least anti-same sex marriage, movements, see Warner (1999, pp. 1-40); Calhoun (2000, pp. 75-131).
- 32 See, for example, Calhoun (2000, pp. 102-103, 146-154). An additional irony is that some church hierarchies will protect those who actually prey on children, but prey upon those adults in need of protection from hateful practices.
- 33 See, for example, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's claim: 'when homosexual activity is consequently condoned, or when civil legislation is introduced to protect behavior to which no one has any conceivable right, neither the Church [sic] nor society at large should be surprised when other distorted notions and practices gain ground and irrational and violent reactions increase' (Ratzinger 1994, p. 43).
- 34 See Remafendi (1994). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains bluntly: 'This society wants its children to know nothing; wants its queer children to conform or (and this is not a figure of speech) die; and wants not to know that it is getting what it wants' (Sedgwick 1993, p. 3).
- 35 This might mean that we remain critical of the rhetorics of marriage itself, as the feminist critique of patriarchal marriage is extensive. Calhoun suggests that this critique needs to be performed not only by homosexuals, but also by heterosexuals. That is, it cannot be the 'burden' of homosexuals alone to abstain from marriage opportunities, as part of a critique first established by (heterosexual and lesbian) feminists (Calhoun 2000, pp. 112-115).
- 36 On the basis of the description of Euodia and Syntyche as 'co-workers' and 'those who struggled with me in the gospel' in 4:3, many scholars argue for their prominence and possible leadership roles in the community. For further considerations of their roles, see Portefaix (1988, pp. 135-154), D'Angelo (1990), Cotter (1994), Dahl (1995), Kittredge (1998, pp. 91-95, 105-108).
- 37 Most Philippians' scholarship still argues that Paul is trying to reconcile a conflict between the two women, rather than attempting to persuade them of a point of contention between Paul and them. For the most recent examples of the former position, see Peterlin (1995, pp. 101-132), Bockmuehl (1998, pp. 238-242), Fee (1999, pp. 167-171), Osiek (2000, pp. 110-113), Holloway (2001, pp. 146-148), and Oakes (2001, pp. 114, 123-124). In the severe minority, holding the latter position, are D'Angelo (1990, p. 76), Kittredge (1998, pp. 105-108), and myself (dissertation forthcoming).
- 38 On the hermeneutics of imagination, see Schüssler Fiorenza (1999, pp. 52-53), Schüssler Fiorenza (2001, pp. 179-183).
- 39 Here I am somewhat referring (as D'Angelo definitely does) to Adrienne Rich's concept of a 'lesbian continuum' (Rich 1980).

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