

INTERIOR MONOLOGUE AS A NARRATIVE DEVICE IN THE PARABLES OF LUKE

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Six of the parables told by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke use a narrative device that is otherwise rarely if ever employed in the gospel tradition.¹ When faced with a moment of decision, usually in a moral crisis, the central characters in each of these little stories address themselves through the use of the literary technique of "interior monologue." The Rich Farmer, the Unfaithful Servant, the Prodigal Son, the Crafty Steward, the Unjust Judge, and the Owner of the Vineyard all think out their plans and strategies in private moments that are nonetheless simultaneously displayed for other characters in Luke's story to see and hear. The motivations and personal viewpoints of these actors in the parables are laid bare to give the reader direct access to their unspoken thoughts. The use of this device grants privileged insight into the human dilemma in a fashion not ordinarily available.

I. Interior Monologue in Narrative

Luke has characters in Jesus' parables voice their inner thoughts as a way to dramatize their private interior debate. The "soul" disputes with itself, but its arguments are broadcast through Jesus' special insight. The true feelings and inner workings of the characters within these stories are made transparent, not only to the reader but to Luke's other characters as well, who act as the parables' audience within the larger story. This and similar techniques of self-address had long been employed in Greek mimetic or dramatic literature, especially in epic poetry, tragedy, and the Hellenistic novels, as well as in some of the biblical tradition, as a means for an author to paint more vivid and poignant portraits.² But the use of such a device in writings of a more

¹ The Foolish Farmer (Luke 12:16-20), the Unfaithful Servant (12:42-46), the Prodigal Son (15:11-32), the Crafty Steward (16:1-8a), the Unjust Judge (18:2-5), and the Owner of the Vineyard (20:9-16).

² See, e.g., George B. Walsh, "Surprised by Self: Audible Thought in Hellenistic Poetry," *Classical Philology* 85 (1990) 1-21; Stephen Halliwell, "Traditional Greek Conceptions of Character," in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (ed. Christopher Pelling; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) 32-59. In ancient drama as it survives, it is often difficult to tell whether the chorus is meant to be present to hear a monologue.

historical, philosophical, or rhetorical flavor is rare. When a Thucydides or a Xenophon (or the Luke of the NT Acts) composes a public speech by an individual character, this is very different in intent and effect from presenting the private thoughts of a Pericles or a Paul, even when we realize that the speeches are the creation of the historian rather than of the presumptive orator.

When a narrator renders his or her characters' thoughts and decision-making processes so directly, the reader or dramatic audience is able to grasp their self-understanding and moral dilemmas with increased psychological depth and empathy.³ Awareness of this technique and its effects is not just a modern event. The distinction between a distanced or "plain" narration (ἀπλή διήγησις) and imitative narration (μίμησις), where the narrator speaks in the person of a character, was already a matter of interest for Plato.⁴ The philosopher was primarily concerned with the moral effects of imitation of unworthy persons, emotions, or forms of behavior. His chief example was Homeric epic. Heroes in the *Iliad* will at times speak inner monologues to express their deepest emotions, especially fear.⁵ The Homeric characters are pictured as "disputing with their hearts" (ἀλλὰ τί μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός), a phrase that has its echo in some of Luke's portrayals. Achilles, a man of wrath rather than of fear, will question in his heart about his unburied friend Patroclus (*Il.* 22.385). The interior monologues of the *Iliad* show how the heroes struggle from unworthy emotions to worthy actions.

Hellenistic epic and romance preferred to reserve the interior monologue for desperate lovers at moments of crisis. All of our known examples are from women. Medea in Apollonius's *Argonautica* attempts to resolve her dilemma of torn loyalties between her lover, Jason, and her father, King Aeetes, in a lengthy interior monologue (3.772–801). There is a similar scene in Vergil's *Aeneid*: when Dido is confronted with conflicting demands, she considers her difficulties in interior monologue before ultimately choosing

³ "Soliloquy" or "stream of consciousness" thinking by characters within narrative is a current topic of discussion in literature on literature, especially studies of the modern novel, here I need cite only Wayne C Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1961, 2nd ed 1983), Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1978)

⁴ See esp *Rep* 392c–395 For discussion, see Franz Dirlmeier, "Vom Monolog zum 'inneren' Logos bei Platon und Aristoteles," *Gymnasium* 67 (1960) 26–41, G M A Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics* (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1965) 50–55, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (London Oxford University Press, 1966) 160–206, Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse An Essay in Method* (orig Paris Seuil, 1972, trans Jane E Lewin, Ithaca, NY Cornell University Press, 1980) 162–63, and more generally Elizabeth Belfiore, "A Theory of Imitation in Plato's *Republic*," *TAPA* 114 (1984) 121–46

⁵ Odysseus at 11 402, Menelaus at 17 97, Agenor at 21 565, Hector at 22 122 (for these and the following references, see Scholes and Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, 179–84)

suicide as her only escape (4.534–52). Ovid and the novelists Xenophon of Ephesus and Longus use the same technique.⁶

Narrative in the Hebrew Bible is typically more laconic (or “reticent”) and more hesitant to provide direct access to its characters’ thoughts, but self-address is sometimes used in interesting ways.⁷ The deteriorating relationship between David and Saul as portrayed in 1 Samuel 18, for example, and especially their negotiations about Saul’s daughters Merab and Michal, is described for the most part using the techniques of distanced, external narration (techniques that will be discussed below). The exception is when the narrator begins to use the device of the interior self-address to expose the deceitful thoughts and strategies of King Saul (18:17b, 21a).⁸ Saul expects that David will fall in battle against the Philistines while displaying his valor for his prospective royal father-in-law.⁹ The reader is told precisely what is so crucially left unsaid to the other characters in the story.

Though this focus on the inner workings of an unheroic character will also find echoes in Luke’s parables, the technique for the most part remains alien to gospel narration. Luke is the exception, and indeed only a partial exception: his Jesus will occasionally employ the device of inner speech when one of his characters is at a point of crisis or decision, but these are only very brief “conversations,” running but a sentence or two in length, like Saul’s in 1 Samuel 18, unlike the often very lengthy soliloquies or inner debates of classical mimetic literature. Luke’s descriptive narrative is broken only briefly, within a few parables, a break made possible perhaps by the parables’ more dramatic or fictive mode of presentation as contrasted with their surrounding, more matter-of-fact narration.

One of the few writers to take much notice of the use of this literary convention in Luke’s parables has been John R. Donahue: “For Luke, the human condition is a stage on which appear memorable characters. . . . Luke invites us into this world by frequent use of soliloquy . . . where we are made privy to the inner musings of the characters. Luke eschews allegory and expresses realistic sympathy for the dilemmas of ordinary human existence.”¹⁰ This is

⁶ Ovid *Metam.* 10.319–33; Xen. Eph. *Habrocomes (Ephesian Tale)* 1.4.1–7; Longus *Daphnis* 1.14, 18.

⁷ For discussion of narrative technique in the Hebrew Bible, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

⁸ Alter has a fine discussion of this passage in his chapter “Characterization and the Art of Reticence,” *Art of Narrative*, 114–30; cf. also Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989) 63–64.

⁹ This episode is an ironic foreshadowing of David’s own actions, once he has become king, in his treatment of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11).

¹⁰ J. R. Donahue, *The Gospel as Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 126. John Drury also mentions Lucan “soliloquy” (*The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory* [New York: Crossroad, 1985]), but he does not

very well put, but I cannot agree with how Donahue then continues: “His memorable characters offer paradigms of discipleship for ordinary Christian existence.”¹¹ This may well be true for some of the parables in Luke, but is generally not the case for those in which interior monologue is employed, including those classically labeled “example stories.” What great difficulties the leading characters of precisely these stories have long posed for those seeking exemplary Christian heroes—including the gospel writer! None of the personalities whose thoughts are described is particularly commendable; indeed they tend to embody anything but noble characteristics. The self-satisfied, amoral, or even immoral individuals who star in these portrayals, who are looking out for their own interests above all, sometimes encounter unexpected divine intervention or retribution (the Farmer, perhaps also the Owner of the Vineyard), but more often they seem able to use their craftiness or amoral reasoning to escape punishment (the Prodigal, the Steward, and the Judge).

II. Techniques of Characterization in Descriptive Narration

The Gospel of Luke, together with its companion literature both within and outside of the New Testament, has ordinarily only two means of letting its readers learn of its characters’ thoughts, intentions, or motivations. (1) The characters can speak their minds aloud or act in a decisive manner that will itself clarify their feelings and intent; or else (2) the narrator can inform the reader of the characters’ moods or motivations through third-person description.¹² These are the techniques commonly employed by the ancient historians and biographers, practitioners of the literary art of διήγησις, the ancient term for “narrative description” (Luke 1:1). The intentions and opinions of characters in third-person narration are made clear only externally.

Contemporary literary analysis speaks of variations in depth of characterization in narrative texts, ranging from the two-dimensional cardboard figures found in stock folk tales to the fully realized psychological portraiture expected in the modern novel “Characterization in the Gospels tends toward the ‘flat’ and ‘static’ end of the spectrum.”¹³ Third-person description *tells* us

develop the observation except to make the important point that it is a mark of Luke’s personal style. The few other recent studies that mention interior monologue as a device in Luke’s parables will be mentioned when discussing individual instances.

¹¹ Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 126, a definition of the Christian *Beispielzahlung* as understood in parables research since A. Julicher. I prefer Donahue’s later summary: “In the parables [of Luke] real people make real decisions, and it is their actions which determine their fate. The parables offer an imaginative world where reflection is translated into action, for better (15:17–18) or for worse (12:15–21)” (*Gospel in Parable*, 210).

¹² Sternberg considers “summarized indirect discourse” to be similar in its effects to directly quoted inner speech, but the voice of the narrator in that case is still a mediating presence.

¹³ Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New

about a character; first-person speech or thought *shows* us a character's inner life. Accordingly, as we read Luke's story of Jesus, the narrator will frequently provide a general statement about individuals who "wonder," "ponder," or become "amazed" or "astonished," but the specific content or wording of those thoughts or emotions is revealed only by having the characters utter them aloud or take some illustrative action. In contemporary terms, Luke *tells* us about his characters.

Luke's use of this common narrative technique can be briefly illustrated by surveying the infancy stories. In the opening scene of the Gospel, we learn of Zechariah's terror at the appearance of the angel through the narrator's description (1:12). The people's wonder outside the Temple is related in similar fashion (1:21–22). Elizabeth's understanding of her conception at an old age is expressed through her voiced opinion (1:25), even though the narrator does not mention any other character to whom she might be speaking. Her voicing of a statement out loud is the customary way in which the Gospel writers can allow a character to express internal judgments. Mary's perplexity at Gabriel's announcement is expressed indirectly by the narrator (1:29) and then voiced aloud through the question she puts to the angel (1:34). In the later scene of the naming of Zechariah's and Elizabeth's son, the wonder of those who heard the temporarily mute father now speak is expressed not as thought but as speech: "All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?'" (1:66).

In chapter 2, we learn by means of the narrator's descriptions of the shepherds' fright before the angels (2:9), the amazement of Jesus' parents at their report (2:18) and at the prophecy of Simeon (2:33), and the wonder of the crowds listening to the adolescent Jesus in dialogue with the teachers at the Temple (2:47). Other thoughts are expressed through direct speech. We learn of his parents' worry at losing track of their son Jesus in Jerusalem from Mary's words of consternation in 2:48. And twice in this section we read of Mary "keeping and pondering" events in her heart (2:19, 51b), but tellingly the specific content of her thoughts is neither described by the narrator nor voiced by the character. The narrator knows *that* Mary is thinking, and probably *what* she is thinking too; but we are left in the dark.

III. Lucan Parables That Employ Interior Monologue

The external descriptive technique just described is employed throughout the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles and needs no further discussion here. I shall now turn instead to the more interesting topic of how and why at a few specific moments the Lucan narrator has Jesus the Parabolist move beyond third-person narration to employ the more direct

Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 15; cf. the statement of Scholes and Kellogg: "Characters in primitive stories are invariably 'flat,' 'static,' and quite 'opaque'" (*The Nature of Narrative*, 164).

mimetic device of giving voice to his characters' inner debates. Our understanding and appreciation of Luke's literary artistry can be deepened by doing some comparative and historical analysis. Luke did not invent the device of self-address, of course, but a few comparisons will show that this author has at places emphasized or elaborated his characters' internal monologues to good effect. Our ability to see Luke's technique at work will be enhanced by starting with a parable that is also attested in an independent source. The other three full examples are known to us only from this Gospel.

The Foolish Farmer (Luke 12:16–20)

In Luke 12 we encounter our first example of how a character in one of Luke's parables thinks out his strategy of action when faced with a dilemma: the story of the rich farmer who foolishly expects to be able to live to store and enjoy his wealth. Luke includes the parable in the context of a discussion about proper attitudes toward possessions, daily sustenance, indeed toward threats of bodily harm or even death. After an exchange with "someone from the crowd," in which Jesus refuses to act as mediator in a dispute over inheritance (12:13–15), he addresses the parable "to them," meaning either his "friends" the disciples (present for the remarks about fear in 12:4–7 and then in 12:22–31 for the words on anxiety), or the crowd, or both.

The land of some wealthy person (ἀνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου) has prospered beyond expectation. First we hear the inner thoughts of this landowner, described specifically as διελογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῷ, that is, either "thinking" or "disputing" with or within himself: "What shall I do?" (τί ποιήσω, 12:17). The farmer has such an abundant harvest that he has no place to put his crops. This is a practical rather than a moral dilemma. The farmer's error comes when he then inwardly boasts of his many goods, which he expects to enjoy for many years. The landowner addresses himself through the convention of talking to his soul: "I shall do this. . . . And I shall say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years—relax, eat, drink, be merry!'" (12:18–19). This self-address is introduced not by a verb of thinking, but a verb of saying (εἶπεν), which can serve both for inner as well as the customary external speech. Ancient understanding of the thinking process considered "thoughts" to be self-address through internally spoken speech (in contrast with many modern notions of unformed, nonverbal, even unconscious patterns of thinking). Thought "is the talk which the soul has with itself about any subject which it considers."¹⁴

Studying the parallel attestation of this story in the *Gospel of Thomas* will help us perceive Luke's technique more exactly!¹⁵ In *Gos. Thom.* 63 the

¹⁴ Plato *Theat.* 189e; *Soph.* 263e; for discussion, see Scholes and Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, 180.

¹⁵ Quoting the translation of Marvin W. Meyer as printed in the *Q-Thomas Reader* (John S. Kloppenborg, Marvin W. Meyer, et al.; Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1990) 129–54.

story is told using the customary methods of third-person narration: "Jesus said, 'There was a rich person who had a great deal of money.'" The rich man's plans are conveyed through ordinary external speech: "I shall invest my money," though, as is characteristic, this speech is then labeled the person's "thoughts": "These were the things he was thinking in his heart" (ΝΑΕΙ ΝΕΝΕΨΙΜΕΕΥΕ ΕΡΟΟΥ ΨΙ ΠΕΨΗΤ). God does not enter the story except as an unseen force: "That very night he died." The rich person's thoughts are either voiced aloud or described by way of narrative summary. There is no explicit mention of interior debate or monologue. Presumably this difference helps confirm the judgment that *Thomas's* version of the parable is closer to what both gospel writers received in their traditions.¹⁶ It is Luke who has developed the story to paint a more memorable psychological portrait through the device of inner dialogue.¹⁷

It may be that after the fool's inward thoughts in 12:17, the boasts of v. 18 are then spoken aloud ("Then he said . . .). It is only when he tells us how he will address his soul that he provokes a response from God about what *he* plans to do with that soul (12:20). Does the God of this story only learn about, or at least only notice, the landowner's plans when they are spoken aloud? It is difficult to be sure, but the possibility is intriguing. Such an inference would make some sense, since the privilege of "hearing" or "reading" the farmer's thoughts should be granted not to other characters within the parable, but only to Jesus' audience and the reader. "God" as a character is not a very direct actor in the Gospel drama as a whole, which prefers to have the divinity appear through the more conventional devices of heavenly voices (as in the scenes of baptism and transfiguration, Luke 3:22; 9:35) or messengers (as in the annunciation, 1:26–38) or dreams (as in Acts 10). Perhaps Jesus the Narrator can or will get God more directly involved in his stories than would the ordinary Gospel narrator.

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32)

Another parable in Luke's story employing interior monologue features the Prodigal Son and Forgiving Father, the third in a triad of pictures of

¹⁶ For the argument in favor of the autonomy of the Thomas tradition, see Ron Cameron, "Parable and Interpretation in the Gospel of Thomas," *Foundations & Facets Forum* 2.2 (1986) 3–40; Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990) 84–124; Stephen J. Patterson, "The Gospel of Thomas in the Development of Early Christianity" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1988). Those arguing for *Thomas's* literary dependence on Luke have not noticed the Lucan signature of interior monologue.

¹⁷ Bernard Brandon Scott sees Luke's use of interior monologue as more a matter of formal presentation than of outright new composition: "Although in the parables of A Rich Man Had a Steward and The Land of a Rich Man, Luke conforms the introduction of the interior monologue to his style, there can be no question of his creating the content, as distinct from the form, of the monologue" (*Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989] 129–30).

“something lost.” At least the first in this series, the Lost Sheep, is a traditional parable (cf. Matt 18:12–14). Perhaps the “Lost Son” is Luke’s variation on the common two-sons theme.¹⁸ When the younger son of this version of the story has spent his inheritance, Jesus says that he “came to himself and spoke” (εἰς ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἐλθὼν ἔφη, Luke 15:17), at which point he faces his dilemma and begins to plot out his strategy for return and rehabilitation (vv. 18–19).¹⁹ What does “coming to himself” mean here? I doubt the common opinion that implies that the words mean something suggestive of their modern psychological import, that the prodigal has regained his true nature, has emerged from a period of uncharacteristic behavior²⁰—quite the contrary! On his return the son in fact will follow the script that he has worked out word for word: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you: I am no longer worthy to be called your son!” (v. 20). The son’s “repentance” may not be authentic. At the close of the two earlier parables in Luke 15 we find a note about a sinner’s repentance (ἐνὶ ἁμαρτωλῶ μετανοοῦντι, 15:7, 10), but not here.²¹

Instead of signaling repentance, the phrase εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐλθὼν ἔφη in 15:17 means something like, “The son came to and said to himself. . . .” It is another way for Luke to introduce inner debate. Confirmation of this meaning is found in the sole instance of inner self-address in Luke’s Acts, the story of Peter’s delivery from jail by an angel. On recovering his senses (καὶ ὁ Πέτρος ἐν ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος εἶπεν, Acts 12:11) Peter says to himself, “Now I truly know that the Lord sent out his angel and delivered me from the hand of Herod. . . .” The expressions εἰς δὲ ἑαυτὸν ἐλθὼν (Luke 15:17) and ἐν ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος (Acts 12:11) are virtually synonymous; neither indicates repentance.

The feelings and reactions of the other main characters in the parable, the elder son and the father, are conveyed in the ordinary externalized fashion. It is the crisis moment facing the prodigal that Luke chooses to illuminate with his interior monologue. The prodigal’s reception is surely

¹⁸ Scott compares the instances of Cain/Abel, Ishmael/Isaac, Esau/Jacob, Joseph/Benjamin, Aaron/Moses, Absalom/Solomon, and others (*Hear Then the Parable*, 112).

¹⁹ A few writers have noted the presence of interior monologue in this parable: Charles E. Carlston, “Reminiscence and Redaction in Luke 15:11–32,” *JBL* 94 (1975) 368–90, who in looking to discriminate Lucan language from traditional material notes that “rhetorical monologue” is characteristic of Luke (p. 371); Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 115–16; George W. Ramsey, “Plots, Gaps, Repetitions, and Ambiguity in Luke 15,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 17 (1990) 33–42, an analysis of “narrational strategies.”

²⁰ Joachim Jeremias finds behind Luke’s Greek an Aramaic expression for repentance (*The Parables of Jesus* [2d rev. Eng. trans.; New York: Scribner, 1972] 130); Carlston agrees that the phrase means something like “to have second thoughts” (“Reminiscence and Redaction,” 371, 381); Donahue, though he too sees a “change of heart,” more persuasively terms the son’s actions “somewhat[!] self-serving” (*Gospel in Parable*, 153).

²¹ Ramsey, “Plots, Gaps, Repetitions,” 38–39. Scott’s comment is characteristically on target: “To term this development repentance is to turn the narrative into a theologoumenon. After all, his stomach induced his return” (*Hear Then the Parable*, 116).

undeserved by ordinary standards. The very transparency of the son's motivation in smoothing his return is of course a deliberate and ironic emphasis of the story line, permitting a contrast with his elder brother's justified protests and his father's generous response. The use of interior speech by a character in a moment of decision should be recognized as a contribution by the gospel writer, though more frequently it is imputed to the sublimity of "Jesus' original parable."²²

The Crafty Steward (Luke 16:1–8a)

When the wealthy landowner interrogates his steward about reports of his wasteful management of the estate, we see a third example of Luke's use of the device of interior monologue.²³ Unlike the stories of chap. 15, this parable is addressed by Jesus to his disciples, though the Pharisees mentioned in 15:2 are still present at 16:14 to scoff at the tale and its implications. When the Crafty Steward is confronted with his master's charges, he responds to this threat by self-examination: "What shall I do?" (τί ποιήσω, 16:3), the very question the Rich Farmer had posed to himself in 12:17. This individual knows his limits—too weak to dig, too proud to beg—and so answers himself in v. 4, "I know what I shall do! . . ." When confronted with apparent grounds for dismissal, the steward devises a way to ingratiate himself with his master's debtors. As we saw earlier with Luke's characters of the Farmer and the Prodigal, this person too, when faced with a dilemma, plots out his strategy, and his thoughts and motivations are revealed to us by means of internal speech: εἶπεν δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὁ οἰκονόμος.

The Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1–5)

The fourth example of interior speech in a Lucan parable is found in the story of the Widow and the Unjust Judge. When worn down by the widow's persistence, the judge assesses his options in self-address: μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ (18:4). His true feelings and motivations are laid bare to the reader and to Jesus' audience, though probably not to the widow, his fellow character in the story within the story. He immediately concedes the qualities that Jesus the narrator had ascribed to him at the start of the parable:²⁴ "Even

²² Cf. Donahue: "The use of the soliloquy and the switch from narrated action to narrated discourse underscore the importance of vv. 17–19 for interpreting the parable" (*Gospel in Parable*, 153–54). Drury lists "soliloquy" along with many other factors to argue that the entire parable is a Lucan composition (*Parables in the Gospels*, 141–43); Ramsey hesitates to answer the question of who is responsible for the use of inner speech (cf. "Plot, Gaps, Repetitions," 41–42 n. 21).

²³ Scott notes "Luke's fondness for interior monologues" in this connection, but otherwise treats the story as a parable of Jesus (*Hear Then the Parable*, 262).

²⁴ So also Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 185.

if I do fear neither God nor human being, I am ashamed . . ." (18:4, cf. v. 2). His strategy for coping with his shame is worked out for us to see in the rest of this brief interior monologue (18:5). The widow will be recompensed to save the judge any further trouble.

The Owner of the Vineyard (Luke 20:9–16)

A less obvious example of interior monologue is found in the parable of the Owner of the Vineyard in Luke 20:9–16, preserved independently in both Mark 12:1–9 and *Gos. Thom.* 65. Here we have an instance of a traditional story in which Luke has made a minor modification in the direction of self-address. In Mark's version we find the ordinary methods of descriptive narration: the intentions of the characters are conveyed through third-person summary (Mark 12:2) or through statements spoken out loud. "They will have regard for my son," says the owner in Mark 12:6, and the tenants say "This is the heir, come on, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours" (Mark 12:7). Exactly who is being addressed by the owner in v. 6 is left unclear. *Thomas's* version is quite similar to Mark's in this respect.

Luke appends a prefatory remark to the hopeful or deluded statement of the owner of the vineyard when he decides to send his son for the rent, creating the impression of self-address. His words in Luke 20:13 begin with the question "What shall I do?" (τί ποιήσω) that we heard from the Farmer in 12:17 and the Steward in 16:3. Luke may have found inspiration for his device of rhetorical self-address in this parable's famous source text, the vineyard allegory of Isaiah 5, where God as the vineyard owner twice asks "What shall I do with my vineyard?" (τί ποιήσω τῷ ἀμπελῶνι μου; Isa 5:4, 5 LXX). Luke does not explicitly say that the owner is speaking "to himself," but he does help create the atmosphere of crisis found in the other interior monologues. The owner is certainly faced with a dilemma here: his three previous agents, all slaves, have been severely beaten and sent away empty-handed (20:10–12). In the face of this steady violence the perplexed landowner ponders his options in inner speech, asking himself what he might do. His chilling response is the decision to send his "beloved son" in hopes that he at least will be respected. He finds out otherwise, of course, when the tenants turn to murder. Has the owner been blind to the warnings already received, or is he too intent on getting that rent to perceive the danger? Why is he willing to risk his son's well-being?

The effect is similar to what we saw in the case of the Rich Farmer, where human planning and expectations fail miserably. Neither the Farmer nor the Owner of the Vineyard is portrayed as being patently immoral in the fashion of the Prodigal, the Steward, or the Judge, of course, but both are certainly seen as unrealistic and overreaching. If this interpretation of Luke's reading of the parable is correct, some interesting questions arise about the theology implicit in the parables that Jesus tells in this Gospel: theology in

the strict sense. The quick and unexpected Divine Reaper of Luke 12:15–21 has in the transparent allegory of the Vineyard become the naïve or at least tragically impelled Father of Luke 20:8–16.

The Unfaithful Servant (Luke 12:42–46)

There is one remaining traditional parable included in Luke's Gospel where the element of self-address is present: the story of the Unfaithful Servant in 12:42–46 (from the Sayings Gospel Q: cf. Matt 24:45–51).²⁵ The self-address was apparently present already in the Q version of the story, since the wording of Luke is identical to that of Matthew at this point, but neither version completely fits the category of interior monologue as discussed here. When his master has been long delayed, the servant is pictured in 12:45 as at least potentially "speaking in his heart": ἐὰν δὲ εἴπη ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ, χρονίζει ὁ κύριός μου ἔρχεσθαι. This single instance shows that Luke was not the first in the Gospel tradition to have characters speak thoughts to themselves. But no authentic interior debate ever develops in the Q story. The servant is not working out his plans or strategy of action in view of some dilemma or unexpected event, but is simply voicing his estimation of the situation at hand.

IV. Some Questions

Although the Lucan narrator likes to employ interior monologue when Jesus is portraying moments of moral crisis, he is not always consistent in his use of inner speech, nor does he always employ the device even when it might have been expected. The characters in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–35, for example, make their thoughts and feelings known only through their actions. The victim lies badly weakened or insensate in the ditch; the priest and Levite pass by on the other side; the Samaritan comes to the rescue. We get no glimpse of any of their motivations, except through Luke's interventions to make the parable into an example of Christian neighborliness.²⁶ When those originally invited to the banquet in 14:16–24 convey their regrets in the conventional external fashion, readers (and exegetes) are left to wonder about the legitimacy or sincerity of their excuses. In the story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in prayer at the

²⁵ Luke 12:47–48a, 48b are expansions of the traditional parable that represent Luke's equivalent to the typically Matthean language in Matt 24:51b.

²⁶ I agree with those who argue that the pre-Lucan parable focused on the perspective of the victim and that it was Luke who converted the story into a *Beispielerszählung*: Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 212–14; idem, *Parables and Presence: Forms of the New Testament Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 29–34, 55–65; John Dominic Crossan, "Parable and Example in the Teaching of Jesus," *NTS* 18 (1971–1972) 285–307. Scott disagrees (*Hear Then the Parable*, 194).

Temple (18:10–13), the two men stand apart, but address their speech to God, presumably aloud, and their attitudes and self-assessments seem clear to all.

I have found only two occasions when the Lucan narrator directly quotes a character's inner thoughts outside of a parable. The example in Acts 12 has already been mentioned in passing. There we read that Peter has been arrested and is asleep in chains. When an angel appears and frees him, the two guards remain asleep despite the brilliant light infusing the cell. Apparently Peter is unsure of the reality of his escape: "He thought that he was seeing a vision" (Acts 12:9). Perhaps it was nothing but a prophetic dream. Only after they are out in the street and the angel disappears does Peter "come to himself" and reassure himself—and the reader—through self-address. Peter's surprise and his tardy recognition of the reality of his rescue heighten the drama of the story and underline the effectiveness of the miracle.

The other example of inner speech is found in the Gospel: Simon the Pharisee hosts Jesus at a dinner party in which a "woman of the city" comes in to anoint him (Luke 7:36–50). The thoughts and motivations of the unnamed woman are left unspoken, though her tears and kisses speak volumes in their own way. It is the disapproving Simon who is shown "speaking to himself" (εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ λέγων, v. 39). Simon doubts privately that Jesus has the ability to perceive the moral qualities of those around him. Elsewhere Jesus' opponents seem typically to be "murmuring" their objections: when Luke repeats the story about the forgiveness and healing of the paralytic in 5:17–26, we read that Jesus "knew their thoughts" (5:22; cf. Mark 2:8). But here in chap. 7, Simon's doubts are not merely mumbled but are directly expressed in interior speech. His questioning is answered ironically when Jesus addresses him with a brief parable about who is more worthy of forgiveness in God's sight. Jesus' insight illuminates Simon's true feelings and shifts the question of propriety onto the Pharisee's failures as a host. The favorite theme of the banquet²⁷ is one clue that this story likely represents Luke's rewriting of the Marcan episode of Jesus' anointing by the woman in the house of Simon the leper in Bethany (Mark 14:3–9).²⁸ The disciples in the parallel in Mark 14:4–5 voice their reproaches aloud; Luke transforms their external speech into Simon's private self-address.

The Lucan narrator is also able to portray Jesus' own thoughts and intentions, though not exactly with the device of interior monologue. The closest that Luke comes to portraying soliloquy outside of the parables is the scene of Jesus in prayer on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39–46). Jesus' moment

²⁷ On Luke's interest in banquets, see Dennis E. Smith, "Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke," *JBL* 106 (1987) 613–38, Philip Sellew, "The Last Supper Discourse in Luke 22 21–38," *Foundations & Facets Forum* 33 (1987) 70–95

²⁸ Cf. also John 12 1–8. For discussion of this possibility with additional literature, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX* (AB 28, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981) 684–86. Fitzmyer himself thinks that Luke got the story from "L."

of personal crisis is shown to the reader with great clarity and emotion.²⁹ Within the constraints of the story line, of course, Jesus is addressing not himself but his father, yet the dramatic effect is very similar. “God” does not appear in the scene (unless his indirect appearance by means of the angel in v. 43 is original³⁰). The disciples are carefully left offstage, and the reader is granted direct access to Jesus’ inner feelings and resolve by overhearing his request to be spared his agony if possible within the divine plan (22:42). Another means of showing the mettle and motivations of Jesus is found in the temptation story taken over from Q just at the start of Jesus’ public ministry in Luke 4:1–13. Through this dialogue with the devil, the reader first gains insight into Jesus’ resolve and values, though his interlocutor is not his “soul” but instead the mythic Tempter. A modern writer might have used interior monologue to create the same effect.

At one point we can watch Luke seemingly avoid even the appearance of self-address when narrating a story. In Luke 8:40–56, Mark’s twofold story of Jairus’s daughter and the woman with a flow of blood (Mark 5:21–43) is retold. Luke’s version is typically more concise than Mark’s; one of the things that Luke omits is any suggestion that the woman with the hemorrhage is speaking to herself. At Mark 5:28, the woman says (ἔλεγεν γὰρ ὅτι . . .) “If I could just touch his clothes, I’ll be cured!” Mark may have meant this to portray outwardly voiced speech, but Matthew chose to report her statement as interior address by adding the phrase “to herself”: ἔλεγεν γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ (Matt 9:21). Luke makes no mention of her statement at all.

V. Literary-Historical Implications

Analysis of the particular examples involved has shown that interior monologue is a signature device of Luke the author. But this is not a mode of discourse that we would expect to find in light of the overall perspective and tone of the work. Most of Luke’s distanced, third-person narration fits more or less smoothly within the parameters of the expected style of an ancient historian or biographer.³¹ Luke explicitly invokes the canons of

²⁹ The very similar Gethsemane scene in Mark’s Gospel has been analyzed by Mary Ann Tolbert as an example of interior monologue in *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) 214–16. I prefer the term “soliloquy” for the garden scene, since Jesus’ words are expressed aloud, though they certainly do provide unusually direct access to his inner thoughts.

³⁰ Verses 43–44 are included in the bulk of the tradition, but are transposed or asterisked in some witnesses, and omitted altogether in the group p⁷⁵ ⱼ A B T W 1071 cop *et plur*.

³¹ Discussing the literary form and intent of Luke-Acts is part of the vexed question of the genre of the Gospels at large, a problem that I do not wish to address here. Instead I would simply state the view that Luke’s two-volume work fits rather well within the generic categories of *sacred history* and *heroic biography*. Recent contributions of note, with full bibliography, include Klaus Baltzer, *Die Biographie der Propheten* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975), Dieter Lührmann, “Biographie des Gerechten als Evangelium,” *WD 14* (1977) 23–50,

Hellenistic historiography in his famous preface, promising to provide an “orderly account” of events for Theophilus, with rhetorical appeal to “eyewitnesses” and other authoritative sources.³² The matter-of-fact narrative tone adopted for most of the work is in accord with this basic historical or biographical orientation.

In ancient history and biography, characters are typically portrayed in defining moments, exhibiting their particular virtues and faults through speech and action. Various defining episodes are included to convey a general and realistic impression of the hero's overall character. Such moments in the life of Jesus, considered now as the main subject of Luke's first volume, include his disputing with the Temple elders as a precocious youth (2:41–52), his time of testing and affirmation of identity (4:1–13), his first public appearance in his hometown (4:16–30), his first call of disciples (5:1–11), and so on. At various of these key moments the narrator can show aspects of Jesus' inner life, his resolve and resources, whether in debate with the devil, in a showdown with hostile neighbors in Nazareth, in the moral crisis of the garden scene, or ultimately in his serenity on the cross. The boundaries of distanced, third-person narration are not broken, even during the portrayal of Jesus' private prayer on the Mount of Olives.

Luke's use of the technique of interior monologue specifically when Jesus is telling his own stories is a very different matter and can be no coincidence. The perspective adopted shifts from the distance of third-person narration to that of authentic interior debate. In these brief moments of Jesus' own narration, we listen or eavesdrop as individual characters confront unexpected crises and reveal their true values and motivations. The use of this more dramatic or fictive (mimetic) mode when the character “Jesus” becomes the narrator must be a deliberate device on the part of the author, intended at least in part to portray his hero's special virtues of discernment and illumination.

When the Gospel of Luke employs the technique of interior monologue within these parables of Jesus, we see a dramatic confirmation of the claim made within the larger story that Jesus has specially insightful powers. Luke invests his central character with the power not only to read the minds of those around him, as in the case of Simon the Pharisee, but even to make

Albrecht Dihle, “Die Evangelien und die biographischen Traditionen der Antike,” *ZTK* 80 (1983) 33–49, David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), Detlev Dormeyer, *Evangelium als literarische und theologische Gattung* (Erford, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 1–48

³² Luke 11–4 consider the tone of the words employed διήγησιν . . . πραγμάτων . . . αὐτόπται . . . ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς σοι γράψαι . . . ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς . . . τὴν ἀσφάλειαν. The research of Henry J. Cadbury remains fundamental “Appendix C Commentary on the Preface of Luke,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I The Acts of the Apostles* (ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, London: Macmillan, 1922) 2: 489–510

those thoughts explicit, thus exhibiting greater insight and narrative dexterity than the Gospel's leading narrator can otherwise muster. Although "Luke" the narrator has all the omniscience we expect in gospel literature, he must stick to the distanced techniques of narrative description even when portraying Jesus' private thoughts. When "Jesus" becomes the narrator, more dramatic and vivifying devices are brought into play.

Two interests are thus met when Jesus takes on the narrating role within the larger Gospel drama and makes his own stories' characters come to life with all their inner thoughts. "Luke," as narrator of the story as a whole, is thereby able to characterize his hero with specially sharp and penetrating insight, as glimpsed in his masterful storytelling. "Jesus," when he comes to narrate those stories, paints realistic portraits of ordinary people caught being themselves, quick sketches of authentic, though troubled individuals, grasping for help or advantage in life's crucial moments. Jesus is shown as someone who is able time after time to pierce people's hearts³³ — to lay bare their full humanity, and thus their failings, in a mode aimed at reaching not only his fictive audiences within the Gospel drama, but us too, as the readers of the larger story. The characters of most of Jesus' parables are not heroic by any measure, but they are ultimately plausible and thus successful as characters, because the portrayal of their inner debate brings them to life in such a sudden and unforgettable way. We see ourselves reflected in his little people caught in awkward places. The frantic thoughts and calculations, the desperate attempts to claw out of trouble, these defining moments of the Farmer, the Lost Son, the Judge or the Steward, could just as well be our own.³⁴

³³ Cf the oracle spoken over the infant Jesus at his presentation at the Temple, where we are informed through the prophet Simeon of his future: "This one is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and as a sign opposed that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (2:34–35)

³⁴ This essay was written while I spent a sabbatical leave as a Visiting Scholar at the Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in fall 1990. Later it was read in a condensed form at the Trial Balloon Society (Twin Cities New Testament Colloquium) at Macalester College in October 1991, and in the Synoptic Gospels Section of the SBL at its annual meeting in Kansas City, November 1991. I would like to thank these institutions for their support as well as several colleagues for their aid and stimulus in conversation, including especially Betty Belfiore, David Fredericksen, Nita Krevans, Calvin Roetzel, and Fernando Segovia. At the proof stage Professor François Bovon of Geneva kindly informed me of a recent monographic treatment of the theme of self-address in Luke's parables: Bernhard Meininger, *Metaphorik, Erzählstruktur und szenisch-dramatische Gestaltung in den Sondergutgleichnissen bei Lukas* (NTAbh 24, Münster: Aschendorff, 1991).