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Metaphor in argument: The Beelzebul-controversy in the Gospel according to Mark

<https://doi.org/10.1515/znw-2019-0010>

Abstract: How do metaphoric texts interact with their argumentative context? After explaining the use and functioning of metaphors in communicative acts, the essay focusses on similes and parables as extended metaphors. Mark 3:22–30 is studied in detail, examining the function of the metaphors used in the argumentative dispute. The example shows that parables and similes can have different functions in arguments. As comparative illustration, they can support the argument, but the solution of the dispute can also be expressed in metaphor only. In both cases however, metaphoric speech is based on analogy and servient to the surrounding argument.

Zusammenfassung: Wie interagieren metaphorische Texte mit ihrem argumentativen Kontext? Nach einer Erörterung des Gebrauchs und der Funktion von Metaphern bei kommunikativen Handlungen konzentriert sich der Aufsatz auf Gleichnisse und Parabeln als erweiterte Metaphern. Dabei wird Mk 3,22–30 detailliert untersucht, um die Funktion der Metaphern in der argumentativen Auseinandersetzung zu überprüfen. Das Beispiel zeigt, dass Parabeln und Gleichnisse verschiedene Funktionen in den Argumentationen haben können. Als vergleichende Versinnbildlichung können sie die Argumentation stützen, jedoch kann die Auflösung der Auseinandersetzung auch allein durch eine Metapher ausgedrückt werden. In beiden Fällen basiert jedoch die metaphorische Rede auf Analogie und dient der sie umgebenden Argumentation.

Keywords: Mark 3:22–30, Metaphor, Simile, Parable, Argument, Beelzebul, Lord of the House, Satan, Holy Spirit, Jesus, Temptation

Although biblical scholars studied the use of metaphoric texts like parables in narrative contexts, the functioning of metaphoric texts in arguments have received little attention. The purpose of this essay is to illustrate how the Markan

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Jesus uses metaphoric texts within larger argumentative texts. More specifically, I want to explore how that what Mark calls “parables”, function in the context of the argument in Mark 3:22–30.¹

1 Metaphor and persuasion

We use language with a purpose. Utterances have a perlocutionary effect. The speaker seeks to persuade, convince, warn, or scare the listener or to affect him or her otherwise. This also applies to metaphor. By interpreting an utterance as metaphoric, the hearer or reader realises that a key expression or phrase in the utterance does not allow a literal interpretation. For example, when the Markan Jesus warns his disciples and says, “Watch out – beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.” (Mark 8:15), the addressees realise that in this context “yeast” (ζύμη) cannot refer to “leaven”. It must be interpreted metaphorically. In the context of Mark’s story, it is a warning, referring to the negative influence of the Pharisees and Herod.

Like other utterances, metaphors transport knowledge and they can be used to persuade. Aristotle left us a hint, how metaphors or similes can be used effectively in enthymemes:² They should be understood the moment they are stated; or, if their meaning is not clear at first, it should become clear a little later. Metaphor thus requires mental effort from the audience.³ The point is, the metaphor could contribute to acquisition of knowledge (μάθησις), but – to move beyond Aristotle – “... the addressee’s cognitive processing in comprehending the metaphor and its relevance is necessary, even if probably not sufficient, for the metaphor to be rhetorically effective.”⁴

Eduardo de Bustos has taken up the principle that metaphor contribute to knowledge.⁵ His article is an example of a recent tendency to investigate the role

1 This essay was presented at the workshop “Figuration as a Line of Argument. From Modern Theories to Ancient Texts” of the DFG cluster of excellence 264 Topoi, Berlin 1–2 June 2018.

2 Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet* 1410b.

3 Superficial are those that demand no enquiry (ἄ μηδὲν δεῖ ζητῆσαι), cf. Aristotle, *Rhet* 1410b.

4 Steve Oswald/Alain Rihs, *Metaphor as Argument: Rhetorical and Epistemic Advantages of Extended Metaphors*, *Argumentation* 28 (2014) 133–159, here 142.

5 Eduardo de Bustos, *Parables: Crossroads between the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor and Argumentation Theory*, in: Paula Olmos (ed.), *Narration as Argument* (*Argumentation Library* 31), Cham 2017, 83–102.

of metaphor in various discourse types and contexts.⁶ As extended metaphors, similes and parables have an epistemic dimension.⁷ Through the narrated or implied action, they convey a concept or message, which is difficult to paraphrase or rephrase without the metaphor in which it is expressed. The knowledge they convey, is thus not purely propositional and only transmittable metaphorically.

This is not the place to go into theoretical description of parables, but it is popular to describe parables as extended metaphors or extended comparisons.⁸ Important to note is that parables extend the basic form of the comparison *x* (*comparatum*) *is like* (*tertium comparationis*) *y* (*comparandum*), by either narration or by non-narrative elements like description or listing. When the *comparandum* is extended through narration, it is best to speak of a narrative parable.

One could also put this in terms of metaphorical mapping and illustrate it by the parable of the mustard seed. In this parable, the narrator has indicated that he is transferring from one domain to another by introducing the parable in Mark 4:30 with the words: “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?”. The introduction πῶς ὁμοιώσωμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ ἐν τίνι αὐτὴν παραβολῆ θῶμεν implies that one looks for something similar, analogous. Note however, that the kingdom of God, the target domain of the metaphorical mapping, is not expressed in the parabolic narrative itself. “Like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade” (Mark 4:31–32). The introduction, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?”, serves as transfer signal through which the narrator explicitly indicates the analogous target domain to his audience. However, in cases where this is not done, the audience must infer the target domain of the metaphorical transfer from the context in which the metaphorical utterance is made or the parable is told.⁹ The fact, however, that it is absurd to interpret the extended metaphor literally, and the context helps the audience. The parable of the sower in Mark 4:3–8 has no transfer signal, but the

⁶ Cf. e.g. Oswald/Rihs, *Metaphor* (see n. 4), 141–143; J. Berenike Herrmann/Tony B. Sardinha (eds.), *Metaphor in Specialist Discourse*, Amsterdam 2015; Elena Semino/Zsófia Demjén (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and Language*, London/New York 2017, 281–367.

⁷ Cf. De Bustos, *Parables* (see n. 5), 84.

⁸ Cf. De Bustos, *Parables* (see n. 5), 85; Rüdiger Zymer, *Gleichnis*, in: Horst Brunner/Rainer Moritz (eds.), *Literaturwissenschaftliches Lexikon. Grundbegriffe der Germanistik*, Berlin ²2006, 334–339.

⁹ Cf. De Bustos, *Parables* (see n. 5), 85.

narrated context sets limits to a literal interpretation of the parable. The Markan Jesus was not giving instruction on husbandry. The parable (in the strict sense of the word) of the sower in Mark 4:3–8 is not only about a man who had sown a seed unto an unploughed field. It is fair to think that most audiences, who heard the story in its Markan context, would not have given a literal interpretation to the parable. They would have understood that the fictional narrative is part of Jesus' teaching about the advent of God's dominion (Mark 1:14) and would have tried to assign meaning to the story, which goes beyond the literal. Interpreting a metaphor requires the collaboration of the audience. "Qualifying a text as parabolic thus implies a requirement of interpreting it in a way that goes beyond the literal meaning."¹⁰

The parables in Mark 4 are used in a narrative context. Mark tells the story of Jesus teaching the crowd on the pier whilst seated in the boat on the lake of Galilee.¹¹ However, how does metaphoric language function within an argument? How should one understand the dynamic relation between the argument, the narrated parables and the audience?

We said above that when the *comparandum* is extended through narration, it is best to speak of a narrative parable. Extended metaphors (parables) or similes ("Bildworte") are not arguments in themselves, but they may be supportive elements of an argument or express analogous argumentation metaphorically.¹² They do not carry the burden of the proof, but they can provide additional support or illustrate the argument. They can act as backings.¹³ Within the macro speech act of an argument, the extended metaphor is a supportive speech act. The crucial question is, in which way the metaphoric text (parable or simile) is relevant to the argument.

In order for the metaphorical text to be relevant, it is necessary that the speaker and the audience must ascribe the same meaning to the extended metaphor. In the case of conventional metaphors, shared knowledge between speaker and addressees can be presupposed. In the case of less conventional metaphors, the context of communication limits and facilitates interpretation.¹⁴ Whether

10 De Bustos, Parables (see n. 5), 88.

11 On this see Cilliers Breytenbach, Galilee and Jerusalem: Rural Villages versus the Cultic City according to Mark's Gospel, in: idem, Gospel According to Mark as Episodic Narrative (NT.S), Leiden forthcoming.

12 Cf. Paula Olmos, Classical Fables as Arguments: Narration and Analogy, in: Henrique J. Ribeiro (ed.), Systematic Approaches to Argument by Analogy (Argumentation Library 25), Zürich 2014, 189–208.

13 Cf. De Bustos, Parables (see n. 5), 94; Oswald/Rihs, Metaphor (see n. 4), 142.

14 Cf. Oswald/Rihs, Metaphor (see n. 4), 137.

extended metaphors like narrative parables or similes are effective within an argument depends on how the argument is constructed. Since the metaphoric text is reigned by the overall argument, the argument as macro speech act guides the audience in assigning meaning to the metaphor. However, the choice of the metaphor is also important. The more plausible the metaphorical mapping from the source to the target domain is, the clearer the analogy is, the more the relevance of the metaphor for the overall argument increases. For the metaphor to play its supportive role in the argument, to act as backing, the content of the metaphor must be interpretable in terms of the argument.¹⁵

The parables (cf. Mark 3:23) in the scene preceding in Mark 4:1–34, when Jesus is accused by the scribes of casting out daemons in the name of Beelzebul, are told in an argumentative context of Mark 3:22–30. This text should serve as example for the use of metaphoric language in an argument.

2 Introducing Mark 3:22–30 as an example

2.1 The broader context: Mark 3:20–35

In typical Markan style, Mark 3:22–30 is framed by 3:20–21 and 31–35. It is a large episode with three subsections: 1. The coming of Jesus' "own people", his family members in vv. 20–21. 2. The advent of the scribes from Jerusalem and their accusations against and their refutation by Jesus in vv. 22–30. 3. The arrival of Jesus' relatives in vv. 31–35. The author intercalated two scenes.¹⁶ At first, Jesus' relatives are introduced; they came to lay hold on him. Nestled in between is the Beelzebul-controversy, before concluding with Jesus' reaction to the appearance of his relatives. We will focus on the middle section, the accusation of the scribes, that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul.

2.2 The Beelzebul controversy: Mark 3:22–30

It is crucial to note that there are three argumentative strands in the accusation of v. 22 and Jesus' dismissal of it in vv. 23–27. The first strand is entailed in the allegation in v. 22. Jesus' rejection in vv. 23–26 represents the second strand of the

¹⁵ Cf. Oswald/Rihs, *Metaphor* (see n. 4), 144.

¹⁶ Cf. Ernst von Dobschütz, *Zur Erzählerkunst des Markus*, ZNW 27.2 (1928) 193–198.

argument. In v. 23a, he calls the people and his opponents to himself. His reply¹⁷ makes use of parables (ἐν παραβολαῖς ἔλεγεν), meaning metaphorical comparisons, and has two parts.¹⁸ At first, he refutes the double claim of the scribes in vv. 23b–26. In v. 27, a third strand of the argument follows, when Jesus himself explains how he could have cast out the demons.

The argument is in narrative form,¹⁹ using a typical contemporary genre, *chreia*, and can be subdivided: Accusation by the scribes (v. 22); refutation of the scribes' claims (vv. 23–26); Jesus' explanation of the state of affairs (v. 27) and his counter-accusation and warning not to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit (vv. 28–29).

3 Analysing the role of the “parables” in Mark 3:21–30

In 3:21, Jesus' family claims that he is out of his mind. Picking up this theme in the next section, the narrator now sets the scene for the action to follow in v. 22. Among the crowd which had come down to Capernaum from Jerusalem (cf. 3:9), there were scribes.²⁰ The situation escalates as these scribes accuse Jesus of being possessed by Βεελζεβούλ, the archon, the ruler of demons. With this thesis, they initiate an argument. The disputed matter is, why Jesus has authority over the daemons (cf. 1:22). The scribes claim that Jesus casts out demons in the name of Beelzebul. Such an accusation fundamentally challenges Jesus' authority. He earned his reputation as a teacher with authority, because he had cast out a demon in the synagogue of Capernaum (1:21–28) and additionally became known as an exorcist of demons through Galilee (1:39). Throughout the narrative, the question with reference to Jesus was, “Who is this?” (1:27). The scribes from Jerusalem give an answer: He is someone possessed by the leader of demons. In

¹⁷ Cf. Maximilian Zerwick, *Untersuchungen zum Markus-Stil. Ein Beitrag zur stilistischen Durcharbeitung des Neuen Testaments* (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici), Rome 1937, 68. According to Boring, it is iterative, cf. M. Eugene Boring, *Mark. A Commentary* (New Testament Library), Louisville 2006, 107.

¹⁸ In vv. 28–30 he evaluates the action of the scribes. Due to the constraints on this essay, this section is not treated here.

¹⁹ Cf. the analysis of Lars Hartman, *Mark for the Nations. A Text- and Reader-Oriented Commentary*, Eugene 2010, 143, 151.

²⁰ Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (KEK), Göttingen ¹⁷1967, 77, calls Jerusalem “the place of the fiercest hostility against Jesus” (translation by C.B.).

their judgement, Jesus does not advocate God's reign (1:14–15), but the dominion of demonic forces. This means, that the scribes from Jerusalem attribute Jesus' ἐξουσία over the demons (which according to 1:22 surpasses the authority of the scribes in the synagogue at Capernaum) to Βεελζεβούλ.

Who is Beelzebul? It is a phrase deriving from the Elijah tradition. The narrator of 2Kings 1:1–17 mocks the God of Ekron and calls him בַּעַל בְּזַי. *Ba'al* means “lord”²¹ and *z'bûb* represents a collective noun, meaning “flies”.²² The LXX and Flavius Josephus (Ant 9:19) also speak of θεός μυῖα – god of the flies. Yet Symmachus, a Christian translator of the Hebrew text from the 2nd century CE, translated 2Kings 1:2 as Βεελζεβούλ.²³ The Testament of Solomon frequently mentions the name Βεελζεβούλ, just like in the NT.²⁴ In Hebrew, this would be בַּלְזַבּוּל. *Z'bûl* means “exalted dwelling place”.²⁵ Possibly, this was the original form of the god's name. Then, *Ba'al Z'bûl* would be the “lord of the exalted house”. It is likely that Israel mocked the god of Ekron as the *Ba'al Z'bûb*. The “lord of the exalted house” was turned into the “lord of the flies”. This old pun was not taken up by early Christian tradition. Matt 10:25 too understands Βεελζεβούλ in the sense of *Ba'al Z'bûl*: τὸν οἰκοδεσπότην Βεελζεβούλ ἐπεκάλεσαν (“they called the lord of the house Beelzebul”).²⁶

Mark 3:22–29 is an argumentative text and in order to interpret it, one has to comprehend the underlying argument.²⁷ Thus, according to Mark 3:22, Βεελζεβούλ, “the lord of the house”,²⁸ is the ἄρχων τῶν δαιμονίων, the ruler of the demons. The accusation that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul, “Lord of the House” – Satan –, serves to explain his authority over the demons. He exorcises in the power of the ruler of the demons. The thesis of the scribes is based on data, which they do not challenge: Jesus casts out demons. Let us call this data ‘a’. So the question is how to explain this ‘a’ – how come this is possible? The scribes accept that Jesus casts out demons and offer an explanation with their thesis: Jesus is possessed by the highest of demons, by Βεελζεβούλ. Let us call this thesis ‘b’. Therefore, in

21 The Hebrew בַּעַל was pronounced בַּעַל in Aramaic.

22 Cf. Ludwig Koehler/Walter Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament (=KB)*, Leiden 1995, s. v.

23 Cf. Frederick Field (ed.), *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt; sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta. Tomus I. Prolegomena. Genesis – Esther*, Oxford 1875, 651 (1:6 βεελζεβούβ) and Henry B. Swete, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices*, London 1898, 64.

24 TestSal 3:1–4, 6; 4:2; 6:1–2, 9–10; 9:8; 16:3, 5.

25 Cf. KB (see n. 22), s. v. II.

26 Klostermann noted the “Wortspiel” between Βεελζεβούλ and οἰκοδεσπότης, cf. Erich Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium (HNT)*, Tübingen 1936, 37.

27 I follow standard argumentative analysis based on Stephen E. Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge 1958.

28 Also Lohmeyer, *Markus* (see n. 20), 78 (translation by C.B.).

the authority of Beelzebul as the ruler of all demons, Jesus can cast them out – ‘a’. If the charge proved to be true, Jesus should have been stoned according to Lev 20:27.²⁹ Thus, the accusation implies great danger for the Markan Jesus.

Jesus begins his refutation in v. 23b by challenging the accusation of the scribes. They had concluded, that because Jesus casts out demons (‘a’), he must be possessed by the lord of the house (=Βεελζεβούλ), by Satan, the leader of demons (‘b’). Thus, he confronts the argument of the scribes and challenges it: If ‘a’ is the result of ‘b’, how could ‘b’ be true? How could Satan (Beelzebul), a demon, cast out another demon?³⁰ In what follows, the Markan Jesus construes an analogous case, making use of metaphors.³¹

V. 23a starts with a transfer signal: “after calling them together, he spoke to them in parables”. What follows in the embedded speech of the Markan Jesus, however, are not narratively extended metaphors like the narrative parables in Mark 4:3–8, 26–29 and 30–32, but two similes formulated as conditional sentences: “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand” (Mark 3:24–25 NRSV). In vv. 24–25 we have a double simile (in Mark’s terms “parables”), but in both cases non-narrative extensions of the *comparandum*.³² What is compared to what? The *comparatum* is entailed in the question in v. 23b: “How could Satan cast out a Satan?”³³ The question implies division between Satan and Satan. This principle of division is analogous to a divided kingdom or divided house, which will both fall (*comparanda*). According to this double aphorism of common wisdom,³⁴ any kingdom or house, which is divided among itself, cannot remain. If Jesus were really casting out demons with the help of the leader of all demons, the realm or house of the demons would have been divided among

²⁹ According to Lev 20:27, men or women who have a spirit of the dead (צִיָּא – LXX ἐγγαστρίμυθος, “ventriloquist”) or spirit of divination (יְצַדֵּק – LXX ἐπαιιδός, “invoker”) in themselves are to be killed. The influence of this law can be traced up to the Mishna; cf. Adela Y. Collins, *Mark. A Commentary*, ed. Harold W. Attridge (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 2007, 228–229, referring to CD 12:2–3 und San 7:7.

³⁰ Πῶς δύναται with Inf. ἐκβάλλειν instead of a deliberative Subj.; cf. Friedrich Blass/Albert Debrunner/Friedrich Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (=BDR), Göttingen 182001, § 366₁₀.

³¹ Cf. Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek. Illustrated by Examples*, Rome 1963, § 320; BDR (see n. 30), § 372₂.

³² On the terminology, see p. 135 above.

³³ Note the absent article; cf. BDR (see n. 30), § 354₅.

³⁴ Klostermann refers to Sophocles, *Ant* 672; Cicero, *Amic* 7,23 and *Billerbeck* I, 653; cf. Klostermann, *Markusevangelium* (see n. 26), 37.

itself and therefore could not remain.³⁵ If divided, neither the dominion nor the community would be sustained (σταθῆναι).³⁶ By way of analogy, Beelzebul (“Lord of the House”), will not endanger his rule or cause his house to collapse. For the argument of the scribes, this has the following implications (which v. 26 states in the *modus realis*):³⁷ If Satan stood up against himself – if ‘a’ were a result of ‘b’, or if the demons had really been cast out by the authority of Beelzebul in the past, just as the scribes claimed (v. 22) – then Satan (or rather his kingdom or house) would be divided and come to an end. Thus, by ascribing Jesus’s power of exorcism on an alleged connection to Beelzebul, the conclusion of the scribes does not add up. The question of v. 23b demands a negative answer. Satan cannot cast out another Satan, and Jesus’ casting out of demons – ‘a’ – cannot be explained by the thesis ‘b’ of v. 22. The thesis is false and the accusation of the scribes unreasonable. In this counter argument, Jesus proves himself as superior and he deconstructs the foundation of their reproach, employing the comparison that Satan driving out Satan would be as if a kingdom is divided or a household stands up against itself. Actually, the argument is developed as a short *chreia* in vv. 23b and 26. By additionally speaking of Satan against Satan in terms of the divided kingdom or house in vv. 24–25, the narrator lets Jesus illustrate his rejection of the claim of the scribes in metaphorical language. The structural relations between a house and internal strife or a kingdom and division on the one hand and those between Satan casting out Satan are aligned. If the claim of the scribes from Jerusalem were true, it would imply severe consequences for the realm of the demons analogous to what happen to the divided house or kingdom. Within the context of the dispute between Jesus and the scribes, the metaphors of the divided kingdom (v. 24) and house (v. 25) function as analogies to illustrate Jesus’s counter argument in v. 23b and 26.

In a brief counter narrative in v. 27, the Markan Jesus offers his own explanation for the undisputed data that he casts out demons (‘a’). The ἀλλ’ at the beginning highlights the contrast of the proceeding argumentation. As *comparatum*, the accusation in v. 22 is still presupposed. The question at stake is still “Why is Jesus able to cast out demons?”. How does one explain ‘a’? Again, the narrator employs figurative speech, but this time as a narrative extension of the *comparandum*: “But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered”

³⁵ Βασιλεία highlights the dominated demons, οἰκία represents their community; cf. Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, London ²1966, 240; Lohmeyer, *Markus* (see n. 20), 79.

³⁶ Cf. Dan 2:40–43; 11:4.

³⁷ Cf. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (see n. 31), § 306; BDR (see n. 30), § 372₂.

(Mark 3:27 NRSV). It is vital to consider the context in order to discern what the imagery stands for. What is compared to what, what is mapped unto what? It is about the house of Satan. This is quite apparent from the meaning of Βεελζεβούλ, “Lord of the House”, who is depicted in v. 27a as a “strong man”, as house owner. Foregrounded, the apodosis is set against the background of the image of the house (“But no one can enter the house of the strong man and plunder his property” – ἀλλ’ οὐ δύναται οὐδείς εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ εἰσελθὼν τὰ σκεύη αὐτοῦ διαρπάσαι, ...).³⁸ The protasis is inserted in Mark 3:27b “...if he has not first bound the strong man” (ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον τὸν ἰσχυρὸν δήσῃ), before he repeats “and then he can plunder his house” (καὶ τότε τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ διαρπάσει). This addition is what the evangelist is really after. By it, he formulates his explanation of why Jesus casts out demons (‘a’). The house is not divided among itself, it is robbed. In order to be able to do this, it is crucial to first bind the strong man whose house it is, otherwise he would hinder the intruder.

In the context, it becomes clear that no one can cast out demons, unless he has first (πρῶτον) tied up the master of the house, who is analogous to Βεελζεβούλ (Lord of the House), the ruler of the demons. Only afterwards, then (τότε), he can rob the house, meaning only then can the daemons be cast out. In contrast to vv. 23–26, where the illustrative similes in vv. 24–25 could be left out, the argument is developed in metaphorical language only in v. 27. The reader has to infer the implication of the imagery, because the narrated Jesus expresses himself only ἐν παραβολαῖς. What is implied? Because Jesus casts out demons, he must already have bound Satan before being able to cast them out. Σατανᾶς is mentioned as early as in 1:13 where Jesus is tested during the temptation. When reading both texts in connection (1:13 and 3:23–26), it becomes clear that Jesus has already restrained Satan at the beginning of his ministry.³⁹ The readers of the gospel know that Satan has been overcome, because after the πνεῦμα had led the baptised Jesus into the wilderness (1:12), he resisted Satan. Jesus is the “stronger one” who was promised (1:7).⁴⁰ The Markan Jesus thus puts forward a new thesis to explain the data. The reason for ‘a’ is ‘c’. Empowered with the Holy Spirit, the Son of God restrained Satan so that he could cast out demons. This is the real reason for Jesus’ power over demons.⁴¹ This is also the reason why the authority

³⁸ PsSal 5:3: οὐ γὰρ λήψεταιί τις σκύλα παρὰ ἀνδρὸς δυνατοῦ ...;

³⁹ This follows Isa^{LXX} 49:24 (“Will someone rob from a strong man?”) and PsSal 5:3 (“Since no one will take any spoils from a strong man”). See Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (BNTC), London 1993, 116.

⁴⁰ With Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (NTD 1), Göttingen¹⁸1998, 42.

⁴¹ This explains vv. 28–29.

(ἐξουσία) with which he teaches, is initially illustrated by an exorcism in the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21–28).

So what purpose do vv. 28–29 – which is not a parabolic utterance – serve? Jesus now evaluates the thesis of the scribes (‘a’). They blaspheme against⁴² the Holy Spirit by ascribing Jesus’ ἐξουσία to the lord of the demons, Satan. The Markan Jesus has this authority on the basis of his baptism with the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus passes judgement on the scribes, whose sin/transgression is not to recognise his authority and ascribing it to a power hostile to God. Rather, his ἐξουσία was given to him by God when he bestowed the Holy Spirit on him. Therefore, the scribes are guilty of the eternal, unforgivable sin⁴³ and will face God’s final judgement without pardon. However, there is more in the text than a condemnation. In the verdict against the scribes the reason for ‘c’ is entailed. The reason for ‘c’ is that Jesus, as the Son of God, acts in the power of the Spirit. Let us call this ‘d’.

4 The history of the composition of the argument

The composition history of the text can explain the difference in the function of the metaphoric extensions. In Mark 3:22–27, 28–29, the evangelist constructed a *chreia* out of a series of figurative speeches and sayings stemming from the early Jesus tradition.⁴⁴

This is one of the few cases where the core of the pre-Markan tradition can be deduced relatively easy. Yet it is impossible to determine the exact wording of the tradition. Already, this becomes clear by comparing it to the other Synoptics. Roughly speaking, Mark 3:22, 24–27 and 28–29 trace back to the tradition which both, Q and Mark, share. Verses 22, 24–27 have parallels in Luke^Q 11:15, 17–18, 21/Matt^Q 12:24–26, 29. In addition, there is another parallel tradition to Mark 3:27 in the Gospel of Thomas 35. More parallels to Mark 3:28–29 can be found in Luke^Q 12:10/Matt^Q 12:32; 2Clem 13:2; Did 11:7 and GosThom 44. In Mark’s Gospel, vv. 21 and 30 enclose the Beelzebul-controversy and the warning not to blaspheme against the Spirit. Matt and Luke pass over both verses. Still, thematically they belong within the frame “lack of understanding”, an important theme in the Gospel of Mark. V. 23 provides the interpretative context for vv. 24–27.

⁴² Εἰς here as “against” (cf. BDR [see n. 30], § 207.3).

⁴³ Ἐνοχος from ἐν + ἔρχομαι. The adjective is a legal term and can denote punitive action.

⁴⁴ Cf. Jens Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte. Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas* (WMANT 76), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1997, 240–299. Taylor: “the residue of a very early tradition”, cf. Taylor, *St. Mark* (see n. 35), 238.

Apparently, the evangelist knew the Beelzebul-accusation in connection with the figurative speeches of the divided kingdom, the house and the strong house-master from oral tradition. Mark takes up this old tradition⁴⁵ in his own wording and adds vv. 28–29 in his modification. Thus, he shapes the tradition, which he received into a *chreia* with the use of vv. 22a, 23. Now, he attaches a narrative frame to it, as he incorporates it into his narrated argument and connects it within the larger context of his overall argument and storyline. Hereby, the leading question of v. 23b circles around the issue of where Jesus' authority over demons comes from. There is no direct reaction to the accusation. By use of figurative speeches in vv. 24–25, the Markan Jesus firstly undermines the charge of the scribes, and secondly provides the correct explanation via the imagery in v. 27: The master of the house is tied up. Jesus is more powerful than Beelzebul. On the basis of vv. 28–29, Jesus' superiority can be traced back to the Spirit of God which he had received at baptism. Thus, the addressees understood the real course of Jesus' authority over the demonic powers and the scribes stand condemned.

5 Conclusion: The function of metaphor in argument

It seems as if the function of the metaphorical language in vv. 24–25 is inseparable from the first part of the argument stretching from v. 22 until 26. The argument frames vv. 24–25. The non-narrative extensions of the *comparandum* in vv. 24–25 are illustrations of the argument expressed in vv. 22–23 and 26. The action expressed in them (A divided kingdom or household cannot stand [but will collapse]) is analogous to Satan expelling Satan. The metaphorical extensions about the divided kingdom or house back up Jesus' counter argument that his success as exorcist cannot be explained by the assumption that Satan expels Satan, making it more persuasive. By way of analogy, the narrative extension in v. 27 (Nobody can rob the house of a strong man without first binding him) gives the correct explanation of what is under dispute: Jesus is able to cast out demons, because he has bound Satan. This thesis however, is expressed only ἐν παραβολαῖς, as narrative extension of the *comparandum*. The reader has to infer the conclusion. Should therefore v. 27 be separated from the "argumentative frame" in vv. 22–23, 26 and 28–29, the condemning utterance in vv. 28–29 can still be seen as refuta-

⁴⁵ The connection between the core of vv. 22–26 and v. 27 presupposes that one knows that Beelzebul means "the lord of the house" in Aramaic.

tion of the accusation in v. 22, but is not substantiated at all. We see thus that the extended comparisons, Mark's Jesus "speaking in parables", can either illustrate his argument and enhance its power to persuade, as in the case of vv. 24–25, or it can entail the solution of the dispute between him and the scribes, as in v. 27, leaving it to the audience to draw the conclusion. In all three cases it is clear however, that the metaphoric utterance is servient to the argument. It is set in an argumentative context.