

DE-AUTOMATISATION IN ROMANS 1-5

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ABSTRACT

In Romans 1-5 Paul foregrounds certain main themes by way of stylistic devices, which effectuate a retardation in the reading process and thus an intensified perception. These devices can all be described as devices of de-automatisation, and include *paradoxon*, rhetorical questions, *anacolouthon* and *parenthesis*, as well as ambiguous sentence structures, newly coined words and a sudden change in person. By way of these devices, Paul draws the attention of his readers/listeners to important themes in his argument, such as justification through faith alone; God's judgement on what man does, not who he is; the benefits of justification through faith; and life for all, who believe in Christ. These themes are foregrounded, due to a careful balance between automatisation and de-automatisation.

It is proposed that, with a view to effective communication, translators should, whenever possible, honour these devices in translating Paul's letters.

OPSOMMING

In Romeine 1-5 beklemtoon Paulus sekere temas deur gebruik te maak van stilistiese middele wat die leesproses vertraag en dus lei tot meer intense waarneming. Die middele kan beskryf word as vorme van de-outomatisasie en sluit in *paradoxon*, retoriese vrae, *anacolouthon* en *parenthesis*, asook middele soos onsekere sinskonstruksies, nuut-gevormde woorde en onverwagte persoonswendings. Op dié wyse vestig Paulus die aandag van sy lesers/hoorders op belangrike temas in sy argument, soos regverdigmaking deur geloof alleen; God se oordeel oor wat 'n mens doen, nie wie hy/sy is nie; die voordele van regverdiging deur die geloof; en lewe vir almal wat in Christus glo. Die temas word uitgelig deur 'n goeie balans tussen outomatisasie en de-outomatisasie te handhaaf.

Met die oog op effektiewe kommunikasie word voorgestel dat vertalers, waar moontlik, hierdie stylmiddele eerbiedig in die vertaling van Paulus se briewe.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Already in 1986 Cronjé introduced the notion of defamiliarisation to the study of the New Testament. In his inaugural address (1990) he preferred to use the term de-automatisation, referring to the same phenomenon. In both publications he argues convincingly that de-automatisation is an important means of foregrounding certain themes in Paul's argumentation.

Since 1990 no one has paid attention to this notion. The only exception is Tolmie (2000:129), who refers to defamiliarisation in his study of Galatians 1:6-10. But the notion as such was not the aim of his investigation. Philip Kern (1998:85), however, is of the opinion that the foregrounding of various aspects in an epistle through *stylistic* choices ought to challenge us. He specifically refers to Cronjé's publication of 1986.

The purpose of this article, then, is to study defamiliarisation/de-automatisation in another authentic letter of St Paul: the letter to the Romans. In the first part the theory that Cronjé used will be summarised, while the second part will deal with its application to Romans 1-5. These five chapters have been chosen since they form an argumentative unit and are rhetorically significant (Anderson 1996:185-6). The ultimate goal of a stylistic study like this one is to engage the pragmatics of the text (Kern 1998:85).

2. DE-AUTOMATIZATION AS STYLISTIC DEVICE

De-automatisation or estrangement is known since antiquity. It was also fundamental to the Russian formalism, where Victor Shklovsky introduced it as *ostranenie*. *Ostranenie* has been translated by, *inter alia*, foregrounding, defamiliarization, alienation, *Entfremdung* and estrangement (Cronjé 1990:8).

In literature, as in all forms of art, de-automatisation takes on the form of the abnormal, the extraordinary. The way in which this is accomplished is by presenting familiar objects in an unfamiliar, striking way. Cronjé (1990:8-9) illustrates this principle by using examples from everyday life: When a teenager cuts his new denim in pieces and appears in public, or when a lady dyes her hair pink, we have to do with de-automatisation or estrangement.

These examples could only be experienced as examples of de-automatisation against its counterpart, automatization. The two examples have one feature in common: they are both abnormal in terms of a specific norm. The norm (automatization) is therefore essential for the existence of the abnormal (de-automatisation). These norms are contextually bound, not general-

ly applicable. In certain countries or communities it might be quite normal to wear torn clothes in public or to dye one's hair pink, while in others it may represent abnormal behaviour. The norm/normal is determined by the context.

Cronjé (1990:9) uses his two examples to illustrate yet another important principle of de-automatisation: It is possible that something unfamiliar can become so familiar, that it is no longer experienced as being unfamiliar. If the majority of people in a community wore torn clothes or dyed their hair pink, it would no longer be noticed as unfamiliar. Shklovsky says that all perception tends to become habitual or automatic. When this happens, the experience of life itself is destroyed.

In literature, likewise, de-automatisation takes on the form of the abnormal, the striking in a specific context. Here de-automatisation is also dependent on automatisisation. Without knowledge of the normal (automatisisation), an instance of estrangement (de-automatisation) will not be recognised. This means that examples of automatisisation and de-automatisation should not be regarded as bad features of a text; the one is indispensable for the existence of the other, on whatever level in the text.

The effect of the techniques of de-automatisation differs in intensity. This was already recognised by the authors of ancient handbooks on rhetoric. All techniques were divided according to the effect they had: some had a rather pleasant effect (i.e. "appeal"), while others had a forceful effect (i.e. "impact"). It would be contra-productive to apply techniques, which have a forceful effect if the message demands a pleasant effect, whereas techniques with a pleasant effect can destroy the impact of a passage where force is required. I Corinthians 13 is an example where appealing techniques can be expected and are used, due to its poetic nature (Snyman 1986:202-213), while the letter to the Galatians is packed with figures of impact (Cronjé 1986:214-227).

It is not possible to discuss de-automatisation without reference to figures of speech. This becomes clear in, for example, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's well-known definition of a figure of speech:

In order that there may be a figure, the presence of two characteristics would seem essential: a discernable structure, independent of the content, in other words a form (which may, under the divisions recognized by modern logicians, be syntactic, semantic or pragmatic), and a use that is *different from the normal manner of expression and, consequently, attracts attention*. At least one of these requirements can be found in most of the definitions of figures that have been advanced over the centuries; the other is there indirectly (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:168).

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca expand on the deviation “from the normal manner of expression” by saying that “there is a figure only when dissociation can be affected between the normal use of a structure and the use to which it is put in the speech, and when the hearer makes a distinction, which seems to him imperative, between form and substance” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:169).

From these two quotations it is clear that all figures of speech are forms of de-automatisation, as discussed above. Their application is directly linked to the functions of language (referential, emotive, connotative, poetic, phatic or metalingual). The New Testament is dominated by the referential function of language, where the focus is on the content of the message. The emphasis (even in poetic passages) is shifted to the receiver of the message in order to bring about a change of conduct. The type of discourse should also be kept in mind, be it narration, description, dialogue or argument. A different type of style is used in each, thus forming a specific paradigm against which de-automatisation will occur (Cronjé 1990:16)

In antiquity all figures of speech were divided into major categories: figures of thought and figures of speech. These distinctions have proven to be untenable. Consequently, Nida *et al* (1983:172-191) made an attempt to classify them anew according to four basic principles, i.e. repetition, omission, shift in expectancies and measurement of units. “Shift in expectancies” is basically the same as the principle involved in de-automatisation and can be divided into five sub-sections:

- A. Shifts in expectancies of word order (*hyperbaton, prolepsis, parenthesis*, etc.)
- B. Shifts in expectancies of the syntax (*anacolouthon, synecdoche*)
- C. Shifts in propositions (*oxumoron, paradoxon, hyperbole, litotes*, etc.)
- D. Shifts with regard to the communication function (*erotema, dialektikon, metaphora*, etc.)
- E. Shifts between meaning and referent (*periphrasis, antonomasia*) (Nida *et al* 1983:172-191).

In principle all figures of speech could be classified under “shift in expectancies”; thus the classification above is not consistent. It does, however, give an indication of the numerous ways in which de-automatisation can be effected in literature.

Before applying the concept of de-automatisation to Romans 1-5, it is necessary to refer to the function of this notion, that is, its effect upon the reader. According to Shklovsky (see Lemon and Reiss 1965:12) it increases

the difficulty and length of perception, causing a retardation in perception. The reader is forced to re-think the meaning of a word or sentence, which is exactly what the author wanted him to do. According to Mukarovsky (1964:21), de-automatisation foregrounds certain components in a work of art. All components (phonetic structure, lexical selection, sentence structure, etc.) are interrelated, but one component emerges as the most important and determines the interpretation of the other, thereby creating unity. De-automatisation is a means of foregrounding a specific component, while at the same time backgrounding the others.

3. Romans 1-5

A global picture of Paul's argument in Romans 1-5 may be schematised as follows:

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| 1:1-17 | Introduction, concluding with the central theme of the letter: People are put right with God through faith. |
| 1:18-32 | The guilt of mankind. |
| 2:1-3:18 | The righteous judgement of God. |
| 3:19-4:25 | Righteousness through faith in Christ. |
| 5:1-21 | Result and implications of righteousness through faith (Louw 1979:143-4). |

Paul's formal argument on justification through faith thus stretches from chapters 1 to 4, while chapter 5 deals with the benefits of justification. These five chapters are loaded with figures involving a shift in expectancies and examples of virtually every figure can be supplied. For the purpose of this study, however, certain figures will receive special attention, since they are highly effective in the process of de-automatisation. Such figures include *parenthesis*, *anacolouthon*, *paradoxon* and rhetorical questions (*erotemata*). De-automatisation can also be effected by means of newly coined or rare words, by an ambiguous sentence structure, a sudden change in person, etc.

In 1:16-17 there are at least three ways in which the reading process is retarded. The first is the *litotes* in 1:16: For I am not ashamed of the good news (οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον). *Litotes* entails a contradiction in content and intent. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969: 292), *litotes* is an effective figure, because the readers are led in a certain direction, only to be drawn away in an opposite direction due to the negation. It could be defined as a frustration of anticipation (Vorster 1993:157), a shift in expectancy. The preceding discourse (1:1 and 1:15) has suggested Paul's pride in the good news. To suddenly use the verb ἐπαισχύνομαι in

1:16 (though negatived), is contrary to the expectation of his readers and compels them to rethink the content of what is said.

A second means of de-automatisation in 1:16-17, is the use of the phrase *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* (righteousness of God) in 1:17. Does the phrase refer to God's faithfulness to his promises made to Abraham (in other words to His moral integrity) or to something that He does (to put someone right with Himself)? The rest of the sentence indicates that the latter is the correct interpretation: God puts people right with Himself through faith (Louw and Nida 1988:452). The fact that the term *δικαιοσύνη* might have caused some confusion at first reading — especially among those readers/listeners not familiar with the Greek of the Septuagint — is a means of de-automatisation.

The same applies to the quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 in 1:17b: *ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται*. The question is: should *ἐκ πίστεως* be linked to *ὁ δὲ δίκαιος*, giving the translation: "The person who is put right with God through faith shall live" (TEV), or should it be linked to *ζήσεται*, translated as: "The righteous will live by faith" (NIV)? This question has haunted translators up to the present, although the majority of them prefer the first option. (For a discussion, see Louw 1976:85). The fact that it is still a problem, might be an indication that the construction of the sentence has created the same uncertainty with the original readers/listeners.

The *litotes* and the ambiguities referred to in 1:16-17 caused an intensification of perception, thus foregrounding the central theme of the letter: justification through faith in Christ.

In Romans 1:18-32 Paul continues his argument by referring to the guilt of mankind: Man turned from God to idols, and now has to experience God's wrath (1:18-23). When man deserted God, God let him go his way, and thus he became totally corrupt. The disgusting sins present in the world are evidence of God's anger against man for his sinful turning away from Him (1:24-32). In 2:1, Paul suddenly changes the trend of his argument. Up until now, the reader/listener may have been expected to be in full agreement with the condemnation of such terrible sins. The first word in 2:1 (*οὕτως*=thus) suggests that Paul is now going to draw a conclusion concerning the sins of mankind ("thus, they who are guilty of such sins will surely be condemned"). In a surprising turn, however, the reader/listener finds himself condemned when Paul writes: "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgement on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself" (NIV). By this sudden turn (*paradoxon*) Paul accuses his readers of falling into the same category of person mentioned in 2:24-32, and therefore being without excuse before God. For

when you judge others and then do the same things that they do, you are condemning yourself.

Because of the intensity of the *paradoxon*, the accusation of the individual reader/listener is all the more forceful. It is the only example in Romans 1-5 where Paul turns directly to his reader/listener in the second person singular (apart from 2:17, see below). It is unexpected, thus creating de-automatisation at its best.

The *paradoxon* in 2:1 is followed by two rhetorical questions in 2:3-4. Cronjé (1986:219) found that Paul reserves the use of rhetorical questions mainly to moments of intense upset. What upsets Paul here is the hypocrisy of the Jews: while condemning other people, they are doing the same things. Since God's judgement is based on what man does, no one will escape His judgement.

In Romans 2:17-24 this theme is continued with virtually the same techniques of de-automatisation: an accusation in the second person singular, now directed specifically at a Jew (17-20), followed by a series of rhetorical questions (21-23). The rhetorical questions in 2:3-4 and 2:21-23 are the best examples of true rhetorical questions in Romans; the other are either *dialektika* (questions and answers, as in 3:1, 3:27, 8:33-37, etc.) or questions strengthening the theme of the argument (3:5, 3:9, 6:1, 7:7, 9:14 etc.). (See Cronjé and Verster 2000: 206-9.)

Romans 2:21-23 reads:

You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?
 You who preach against stealing, do you steal?
 You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?
 You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?
 You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? (KJV).

True rhetorical questions like these are not questions, but strong statements used to create forceful style (Cronjé 1986:219). They represent shifts with regard to the communication function (Nida *et al* 1983:190). The meaning of this unconventional way of making statements becomes clear when the issue at stake is considered: personal status brings no privileges. Not what one is or says, but what he/she does, is the basis of God's judgement.

The argumentative function of the techniques of de-automatisation in 2:1ff. and 2:17ff. is to highlight Paul's contention that the Gentile and the Jew stand on exactly the same place before God's judgement seat. They are both sinners because of what they do.

That the figure of *paradoxon* is frequently used to create de-automatisation in the first few chapters of Romans is evident by now. Understandably so: *paradoxon* represents a shift in propositions, an apparent contradiction. Two more examples of this figure are to be found in 5:2-3, which form part of the pericope 5:1-11. This pericope describes the results of justification in Christ, thereby returning to the central theme of the letter in 1:16-17. The first *paradoxon* is in 5:2, where Paul writes that Christians boast (καυχώμεθα) in hope of the glory of God. The figure takes its effect from 3:21ff., where Paul argued convincingly that, since justification is by faith alone, Christians have nothing to boast about. He immediately goes on to add another *paradoxon* in 5:3 by saying that Christians also boast about tribulations — a rather unexpected and strange thing to boast about. This *paradoxon* is explained in the ensuing climax (5:3-4), which ends in hope, a hope that does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Anderson 1996:199-200).

The function of the *paradoxa* in 5:2-3 is to highlight the benefits of justification.

Other techniques of de-automatisation in chapter 5 is the *anacolouthon* in 5:12, followed by the extended *parenthesis* in 5:13-17. In 5:12 the main clause starts with ὡσπερ = “just as” (“just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin and thus death spread to all men”), but is not completed. The reader expects a completion in periodic fashion, but it does not happen. Instead, Paul inserts a parenthetical exposition concerning the effect of sin between Adam and Moses (5:13-14) and a comparison between Adam and Christ (5:15-17). After the *parenthesis*, the main clause in 5:12 is repeated and completed in 18-19:

As through one man's offence, judgement came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one man's obedience many will be made righteous (KJV).

An *anacolouthon* is a shift in expectancy of the syntax (Nida *et al* 1983:184). The effect produced by such a syntactical distortion is a retardation in the reading process, because the meaning is not as clear as in normally constructed sentences. Closely related to the *anacolouthon* is the *parenthesis* discussed above. The purpose of both techniques is to focus the attention of the reader/listener deliberately on the content of the argument, in this case: life for all who believe in Christ.

Translators should be careful not to translate away the communicative effects of such de-automatisation. Of course, a translation is determined by its target audience, and ambiguities like 1:16-17 compel translators to make a choice. But the communicative function of the *paradoxa* in 5:2-3, for example, which is used to highlight the benefits of justification, should not be translated away.

The translation of *καυχώμεθα* in 5:2 and 5:3 is the matter in question. In 3:27-28 Paul argued that Christians should not boast (*καύχησης*) because justification is only through faith and not by doing what the law requires. In 5:2 and 5:3, however, he uses the same word (*καυχώμεθα*), now to urge his readers/listeners to boast in the hope of the glory of God (5:2) and in their suffering (5:3). The *paradoxa* in 5:2-3 take their effect from 3:27-28, and are highly effective to retard the reading process. To translate *καυχώμεθα* in 5:2-3 with “rejoice” (NIV) or “rejoice” (5:2) and “glory” (5:3) as the KJV did, is to attenuate the communicative function of the device used in the original. The new Afrikaans translation falls into the same trap by translating *καυχώμεθα* in 5:2 and 5:3 with “verheug” (“rejoice”), while the TEV correctly translated it as “boast”.

Translations also differ with regard to the effective *anacolouthon* and *parenthesis* in 5:12-18. The NIV and KJV both honour the *anacolouthon* by using dashes at the end of 5:12, while the KJV puts the whole *parenthesis* of 5:13-17 between brackets. The TEV and new Afrikaans translation, however, impair the communicative function of both devices by ignoring the *ὅσπερ* at the beginning of 5:12 and changing the last part of the sentence into a result clause. By completing the sentence(s) in 5:12 in a translation, the expectation created by *ὅσπερ*, as well as the effect of the *parenthesis* (5:13-17), is lost, with a resultant weakening of the communication function.

4. CONCLUSION

Paul used a great number of stylistic devices in Romans 1-5, which all effectuate a retardation in the reading process. These devices can be described as devices of de-automatisation, used when he really wanted his readers/listeners to pay attention to what he had to say. Most of these devices are forceful (according to Hellenistic rhetoricians) and thus suitable for communicating the content of such an important letter. Translators should be careful not to ignore these devices, thereby impairing the communication of the text.

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