

CHRIST AS THE *TELOS* OF LIFE:
MORAL PHILOSOPHY, ATHLETIC IMAGERY, AND
THE AIM OF PHILIPPIANS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of Paul's letter to the Philippians has been understood in various ways: e.g. reassurance, consolation, advance of the gospel. This thesis presents a new analysis of Philippians that challenges these proposals and offers a new way of thinking about Paul's overarching argumentative aim in this letter.

After demonstrating the need to examine three areas (viz. moral philosophy, athletics, and vivid speech) in an historical analysis of Philippians and addressing methodological issues pertinent to this investigation (Part I), I turn to map out the historical context relevant for this project (Part II): viz. the broad structure of thought in ancient moral philosophy, ancient athletics and its association with virtue, and the use of vivid description to persuade an audience. The final part of this thesis (Part III) is an exegetical analysis of Philippians that interprets the letter in light of the contextual material discussed in Part II, exploring how this contextual material contributes to and is interrelated in Paul's persuasive appeal to morally form the Philippian Christians in a particular way.

In this analysis I argue that Paul's pattern of thought in Philippians is structured similarly to the broad structure of thought in ancient moral philosophy, which is oriented toward an ultimate *τέλος* and views the virtues as necessary in attaining this goal. Paul's use of athletic language, framing his argument in the letter (1:27–30; 4:3), fills out this perspective on life by presenting the nature of Christian existence in terms of a contest of virtue, which is similar to how moral philosophers used this language. This perspective on life is vividly depicted and summed up in the image of the runner in Phil 3:13–14. As a vivid description this imagery would have had a powerfully persuasive effect and rhetorically plays a significant role in Paul's argument. With this imagery, Paul is presenting himself as striving toward Christ, the *τέλος* of life, which entails thinking and living in a particular way to make progress toward this goal—the final attainment of which is complete transformation to become like Christ. It is this vivid description of the runner that encapsulates Paul's overarching argumentative aim in the letter, persuading the Philippians to pursue Christ as the *τέλος* of life.

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Abbreviations

Conventions for citations and abbreviations follow Patrick H. Alexander, et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999). Abbreviations not listed in the *SBL Handbook* are given below.

<i>FD</i>	<i>Fouilles de Delphes III: Épigraphe</i> . Fasc. 1–6. Edited by George Daux et al. Paris, 1929–
<i>IvO</i>	<i>Inscripfen von Olympia</i> . Edited by Wilhelm Dittenberger and Karl Purgold. Berlin, 1896
JRSM	Journal of Roman Studies Monographs
<i>LD</i>	<i>A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrew's Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary</i> . Revised, enlarged, and rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879
<i>OLD</i>	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> . Edited by P.G.W. Glare. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982
OSAP Supp	Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy: Supplementary Volumes
PAST	Pauline Studies
PCPS Supp	Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society: Supplementary Volumes
P.Lond.	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> . 7 vols. Edited by Frederic G. Kenyon. London, 1893–1974

INTRODUCTION

There are many fruitful ways to interpret Paul's letters: e.g. treating Paul as a Jewish apocalyptic theologian or as a Hellenistic moral philosopher. This thesis, more in line with the latter perspective, examines Paul's letter to the Philippians in light of a Greco-Roman context, exploring how Paul makes use of terms, concepts, imagery, and rhetorical strategies from this world. The project is therefore an historical investigation, one where I map out a particular context and use this contextual material to elucidate Paul's argument in Philippians. There are good reasons, which will be established below, for viewing the Greco-Roman context as the one that is most helpful in understanding the shape of Paul's argument in Philippians, not least of which is the confluence of terms, concepts, and imagery that are more firmly connected to specifically Hellenistic traditions. As just intimated, I view Paul's letter to the Philippians as an argument, an attempt to persuade them in a particular way. While arguments can have many aims, it is the contention of this thesis that Paul has one overarching aim in this letter, which, as indicated in the title, is to persuade the Philippians to pursue Christ as the *τέλος* of life.

There is little that is needed by way of introduction, except to alert the reader to how this thesis proceeds. What follows is divided into three parts: approaches to Philippians and methodological considerations, historical context, and exegetical analysis. The first part sets up the investigation by reviewing previous approaches to Philippians (ch. 1). This will establish the need to address three areas in an investigation of Philippians: the structure of thought in moral philosophy in its own terms and concepts, ancient athletics, and how the verbal and the visual were interrelated in the ancient world. After establishing the need for my investigation I turn to critically reflect on my approach to an historical investigation (ch. 2). This will signal the perspective that is shaping my approach to the historical material and will address other pertinent methodological issues.

The second part of this thesis maps out the historical material necessary for addressing the areas identified in the overview of research, which, as will be demonstrated, are interrelated in Paul's argument in Philippians. I begin with the broad structure of thought in ancient moral philosophy (ch. 3), which provides the framework

for understanding the moral philosophical terms and concepts that are found in Philippians. Then I examine ancient athletics (ch. 4), exploring common associations with athletics and how moral philosophers used these associations for their own projects of moral formation. Next I examine the interplay between the verbal and the visual in the ancient world (ch. 5). This will provide important material for understanding the rhetorical force of Paul's most vivid imagery in Philippians, the image of the runner in Phil 3:13–14.

The third part of this thesis is an exegetical analysis of Philippians. The last three chapters (chs. 6–8) examine this letter in light of the historical context just established. In this exegetical section—which examines the entire letter, beginning with the thanksgiving section and concluding with the letter closing—I demonstrate how Paul's pattern of thought is structured similarly to the thought pattern in ancient moral philosophy. The material examined in ch. 3 does most of the exegetical work in the overall analysis of Philippians, providing the logic by which Paul's argument unfolds. The material examined in ch. 4 comes into play in understanding the force of Paul's athletic metaphors, which occur at crucial places in his argument (1:27–30; 3:12–14; 4:3) and are important in how he is conceptualizing the nature of Christian existence. The material discussed in ch. 5 is most crucial in understanding the rhetorical force of Paul's image of the runner in Phil 3:13–14, which, as it will be demonstrated, encapsulates Paul's overarching argumentative aim in the letter.

PART I

APPROACHES TO PHILIPPIANS AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH: INTEGRITY, GENRE, AND THE AIM(S) OF PHILIPPIANS

1.1. Partition Theories

In seeking to ascertain the aim(s) of Philippians it is necessary first to establish if the letter is a compilation of several letters stitched together or if it is a single letter in the canonical form that we have it. If the letter is a compilation then the separate letters would address different issues and thus have different aims. If, however, the letter is viewed as a single unit, then the letter could plausibly have more coherence and possibly have an overarching aim. Arguments for partitioning Philippians fall into two categories: arguments from external evidence and arguments from internal evidence. The stronger case for partitioning the letter rests upon the internal evidence,¹ and will therefore be the focus of our attention here.

Partition theories typically argue that Philippians is a composite of three letters.² The first letter is designated Letter A (Phil 4:10–20) and is viewed as Paul's initial response to the arrival of Epaphroditus with their gift. Letter B (Phil 1:1–3:1; parts of 4:1–9, and all of 4:21–23) then followed and was written while Paul was in prison (usually at Ephesus) and Epaphroditus was returning to Philippi. It expressed Paul's dire situation and his encouragement to the Philippians to unite in the face of opposition. Letter C (Phil 3:2–

¹ The strongest external evidence is the statement by Polycarp (*Phil.* 3.2) that Paul wrote letters (*ἐπιστολάς*) to the Philippians. This was countered early on by J.B. Lightfoot (*The Apostolic Fathers* II Vol. 3 [2nd edn.; London: Macmillan, 1889], 327) who argued the plural was epistolary and did not indicate there were multiple letters. Others have continued to maintain, however, that it refers to letters, e.g. lost correspondence (Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* [ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902], 91). It has also been suggested that Polycarp made the inference that there were letters due to Phil 3:1 and Paul's close relationship with the Philippians (Walter Bauer, *Die apostolischen Väter*, vol II: *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochien und der Polykarpbrief* [HNT 18; Tübingen: Mohr, 1920], 287). The other external evidence given to support the claim of multiple letters are the reference to two Philippian letters in the *Catalogus Sinaiticus*, the mention of the first letter to the Philippians by Georgius Syncellus in his *Chronographia*, and the way in which the *Epistle to the Laodiceans* draws on Philippians omitting material from Letter A (Phil 4:10–20) and Letter C (Phil 3:2–4:3, 4:7–9). For a response to these pieces of evidence see Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (SNTSMS 112; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 8–11.

² Exceptions are Gerhard Friedrich (*Der Brief an die Philipper* [15th edn; NTD 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965], 126–28) and Joachim Gnllka (*Der Philipperbrief* [HTKNT 10.3; Freiburg: Herder, 1968], 7–10) who both argue for a two-letter hypothesis.

21, parts of 4:1–9) was written sometime after Paul was released from prison and is a polemical letter warning against opponents to the gospel.³ There are three major arguments for taking Letter A as a separate letter: 1) the unlikelihood that Paul would not substantially mention the gift of the Philippians until the end of the letter; 2) this pericope follows the conventions of a letter and can be removed from its place and not hinder the flow of the argument; 3) it breaks up the concluding phrases in Phil 4:7–9 and 4:21–23. There are also three arguments for viewing Letter C as a fragment: 1) the formal elements in Phil 2:14–3:1 signal the end of a letter; 2) there is an abrupt shift in tone at Phil 3:2; 3) the circumstances appear to be different in Phil 3:2–21.

Several scholars have responded to partition theories by proposing an overarching structure of the letter based on rhetorical analysis,⁴ epistolary analysis,⁵ or analyzing the chiasmic shape of the letter.⁶ While these approaches have some merit, they vary widely in their arrangement of the letter and thus are not entirely persuasive in establishing its unity.⁷ In what follows, I will engage specifically with the arguments provided above in order to demonstrate why the partition theories are unconvincing and then provide an

³ Those arguing for a three-letter hypothesis: Walter Schmithals, *Paul & the Gnostics*, (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1972), 65–172; J. Müller-Bardorff, “Zur Frage der literarischen Einheit des Philipperbriefes,” *WZJena* 7 (1957–58): 591–604; B. D. Rahtjen, “The Three Letters of Paul to the Philippians,” *NTS* (1959–60): 167–73; F. W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1959), 1–5; Günther Bornkamm, “Der Philipperbrief als paulinische Briefsammlung,” *Neotestamentica et Patristica: Eine Freundesgabe Herrn Professor Dr. Oscar Cullmann* (NovTSup 6; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 192–202; Jean-François Collange, *The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians* (trans. A. W. Heathcote; London: Epworth, 1979), 4–8; F. F. Bruce, “St. Paul in Macedonia: 3. The Philippian Correspondence,” *BJRL* 63 (1981): 260–84; Rudolf Pesch, *Paulus und seine Lieblingsgemeinde: Paulus – neu gesehen: Drei Briefe an die Heiligen von Philippi* (HerderBücherei 1208; Freiburg: Herder, 1985); Lukas Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (NovTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 87–136; Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 216; Nikolaus Walter, “Der Brief an die Philipper,” in *Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon* (eds. Nikolaus Walter et al.; NTD 8.2; 18th edn.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 19–20; John Reumann, *Philippians* (AB 33B; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 3.

⁴ E.g. Duane F. Watson, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question,” *NovT* 30 (1988): 57–88.

⁵ E.g. Loveday Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians,” *JSNT* 37 (1989): 87–101.

⁶ E.g. Peter Wick, *Der Philipperbrief: Der formale Aufbau des Briefs als Schlüssel zum Verständnis seines Inhalts* (BWANT 135; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994).

⁷ Cf. Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: Hendrickson, 1998), 23.

additional discussion of verbal and thematic parallels that add weight to viewing Philippians as one letter.

There are three main reasons for rejecting the arguments that Phil 4:10–20 is a separate letter. First, while according to modern epistolary conventions leaving the mention of gratitude for a gift until the end of a letter would be highly unusual, in the ancient world this was practiced. For instance, as Craig Wansink points out, in Cicero's letter to his brother Quintus (*Quint. frat.* 1.3), Cicero only mentions the financial help he received from Quintus at the end of the letter.⁸ Wansink argues that Cicero does this in order to place his relationship with Quintus in a particular context. Once this is established he mentions the gift which is to be understood in light of how Cicero has framed their relationship. Given this practice, it is not inconceivable that Paul is doing something similar in Philippians. He has purposefully placed his mention of the Philippians' gift at the end of the letter in order to frame how it should be understood. Secondly, Phil 4:10–20 fits in better with Paul's letter closings than the partition theorists have allowed. Jeffrey Weima has argued that Phil 4:8–23 accords with the features of other Pauline letter closings.⁹ There is a closing hortatory section signaled by the formula τὸ λοιπὸν, ἀδελφοί (4:8–9a), a peace benediction (4:9b), an expression of joy (4:10–20), greetings (4:21–22), and a grace benediction (4:23). The main difference between Philippians and Paul's other letters is that the expression of joy is greatly expanded, which may indeed be due to Paul wanting to respond specifically to their gift.¹⁰ Thirdly, there are significant verbal and thematic parallels between Phil 4:10–20 and the rest of the letter. William Dalton and others have called attention to this, listing the similarities between Phil 1:3–11 and 4:10–20.¹¹ The linguistic and thematic parallels also show up in

⁸ Craig S. Wansink, *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul's Imprisonments* (JSNTSup 130; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 129–32.

⁹ Jeffrey A.D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings* (JSNTSup 101; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 191–94.

¹⁰ Cf. Rom 16:19a; 1 Cor 16:17.

¹¹ William J. Dalton, "The Integrity of Philippians," *Bib* 60 (1979): 101; cf. Robert Jewett, "The Epistolary Thanksgiving and the Integrity of Philippians," *NovT* 12 (1970): 53; Gerald W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift-Exchange and Christian Giving* (SNTSMS 92; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 91–92; Holloway, *Consolation*, 27.

the so-called Letter C, for instance, the usage of $\phi\rho\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ in 3:15 and the way in which Paul presents himself as an example (cf. 3:17).

There are also good reasons for rejecting Letter C as a separate letter fragment. First, the formal elements of the travelogue (Phil 2:14–30) and closing formula (3:1a) occurring in the middle of a letter can be shown not to depart severely from the Pauline letter form. As Alan Culpepper has demonstrated, Paul will mention travel plans at various places in his letters (cf. 1 Thess 2:17–3:13).¹² The formulaic $\tau\acute{o}$ $\lambda\omicron\iota\pi\acute{o}\nu$ does not have to indicate a letter closing. As Margaret Thrall has indicated, it can function as “a transitional particle, to introduce either a logical conclusion or a fresh point in the progress of thought.”¹³ This is indeed how it is functioning in 1 Thess 4:1 which as widely agreed does not signal the letter closing. Secondly, the change of tone is not as sharp as some have made it out to be. Paul’s more acerbic tone is only evident in Phil 3:2–4 and 3:18–19. The rest of ch. 3 presents Paul as re-evaluating all in order to gain Christ (3:7) and thus serving as a model to be imitated (3:17), which coheres with his reflection on his circumstances in Phil 1:12–26. The change in tone is due to the subject matter he introduces to set up his argument and is not a strong indicator that this is a separate letter.¹⁴ Thirdly, there is little evidence in Phil 3:2–21 that indicates a different situation than what is presented in Phil 1:1–3:1. Paul identifies the opposition in the latter section as similar to the kind of opposition he is facing, i.e. some type of hostility from authorities (1:30). This is a present danger for the Philippians. It is often assumed that the “opposition” mentioned in ch. 3 is a present threat as well which would be of a different nature than that mentioned in Phil 1:27–30. This, however, is unnecessary. Paul does not indicate that these groups are there, only that they are to “consider” them.¹⁵ His focus is not on engaging with the arguments of the opposition—which one would presume he would if they were a present threat—but on presenting himself as a positive model to be imitated

¹² R. Alan Culpepper, “Co-workers in Suffering: Philippians 2:19-30,” *RevExp* 72 (1980): 350.

¹³ Margaret E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 28.

¹⁴ Cf. Stanley K. Stowers, “Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven: Reading Theology in Philippians,” in *Pauline Theology, Vol 1* (ed. Jouette M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 115.

¹⁵ Some have argued this is to “beware of” them, for a fuller discussion see 8.1 below.

(cf. 3:17). There are therefore no substantial reasons to see a significant change in circumstances between Phil 1:1–3:1 and 3:2–21.

To give further weight to the unity and coherence of Philippians, we can also point to the verbal and thematic parallels throughout this letter. This was noted above with respect to Phil 1:3–11 and 4:10–20, but it is also evident in how the Christ hymn shapes the letter. Dalton and David Garland have provided substantial evidence for this, demonstrating the linguistic and thematic parallels in Philippians, especially between 2:6–11 and 3:18–20.¹⁶ Added to this is the argument that the Christ hymn plays a central role in Philippians, shaping Paul's reflection on his own circumstances, how he exhorts the Philippians, the way he narrates his own biography, and how he offers his gratitude for the Philippians' gift.¹⁷

The cumulative evidence of the above provides strong grounds for treating Philippians as one letter. Having established this, it is now necessary to explore what kind of letter Philippians is and what it aims to do.

1.2. Epistolary Approaches

In seeking to ascertain the genre and aim(s) of Philippians several have turned to Greco-Roman letter writing conventions. We will examine three epistolary approaches which treat the letter as: a family letter, a friendship letter, and a letter of consolation.

1.2.1. A Family Letter of Reassurance

Loveday Alexander argues that Philippians is best understood as a family letter. She analyzes the structure of the letter based on the pattern found in several Hellenistic family letters¹⁸ and proposes the following structure: Phil 1:1–2: address and greeting,

¹⁶ Dalton, "Integrity," 99–100; David E. Garland, "The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors," *NovT* 37 (1985): 158–59; cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 29–31.

¹⁷ Cf. Wayne A. Meeks ("The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philippians," in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays* [eds. Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2002], 111–12) who states, "[T]he hymn's story of Christ is the master model that underlies Paul's characterization of his career and of the mediating Epaphroditus. This model sets the terms of thinking and acting expected of the Philippians in the face of conflict inside and hostility from outside the community."

¹⁸ See John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 196–97.

Phil 1:3–11: prayer for the recipients, Phil 1:12–26: reassurance about the sender (and notes the disclosure formula is “the main information-bearing focus of the letter”), Phil 1:27–2:18: request for reassurance about the recipients, Phil 2:19–30: information about the movements, Phil 4:21–22: exchange of greetings with third parties, Phil 4:23: closing wish for health.¹⁹ She does caution that we should not be too rigidly tied to theoretical structures in the formal analysis of the letter and that the body of the letter is “fluid, flexible, and adaptable to a wide variety of situations and subjects.”²⁰

In discussing the relevance of the letter form for identifying the “real focus” of Philippians, she argues that like a family letter its primary purpose is to strengthen the familial ties between Paul and the Philippians (*Verbindungsbrief*).²¹ The disclosure formula in Phil 1:12 (only used once in this letter), as used in family letters, states the main reason for writing, which is chiefly to do with reassuring the Philippians.²² The Philippians know Paul is in prison and need reassurance that everything is all right, which Paul provides in three moves: 1) the gospel is advancing (1:12–18), 2) death is not to be feared (1:19–23), and 3) Paul will probably be released soon (1:24–26). The opening exhortation (1:27–2:18) is where Paul expresses his request for their welfare, which leads into his discussion of intermediaries (2:19–30) that maintain contact between Paul and the Philippians. Here she suggests the occasion for writing: Epaphroditus is returning to Philippi, and Paul is taking advantage of this to “renew his contact with the church in writing.”²³ Starting in Phil 3:1 Paul goes beyond the structural form of a family letter and presents a “sermon-at-a-distance,” stating what he would like to tell them if he were present at Philippi.²⁴ He then returns to the epistolary form in Phil 4:21 after offering his thanks for their gift (4:10–20). Alexander notes that the formal pattern of the family letter provides nothing “more than a launching-pad” for Paul’s deeper exhortation, which is bound up with that found in the pattern of the Christ

¹⁹ Alexander, “Hellenistic,” 94.

²⁰ Alexander, “Hellenistic,” 90.

²¹ Alexander, “Hellenistic,” 95.

²² She states (“Hellenistic,” 95), “[T]his apparently casual reassurance is really the clue to the functional centre of Paul’s thought in Philippians.”

²³ Alexander, “Hellenistic,” 96.

²⁴ Alexander, “Hellenistic,” 99.

hymn.²⁵ Yet, she maintains that the formal pattern of the family letter is the best guide to understanding the structure of the letter and its primary purpose, and thus gives the admonitions and warnings a more subordinate role.²⁶

Alexander's analysis of Philippians helpfully calls attention to many of its epistolary features. There are, however, serious limitations to her approach for ascertaining the letter's primary purpose/aim and its genre. With respect to the former, the focus on Phil 1:12 places too much emphasis on the disclosure formula as the key to understanding Paul's primary purpose, and for ascertaining what she describes as the "functional centre" of his thought. One of Paul's purposes was likely to reassure the Philippians, but to elevate this concern to the primary purpose without further support from the argument in the letter is too restrictive. There is more that needs to be considered in the letter to ascertain what the functional center of Paul's thought is and what he is aiming to do in this letter. For instance, attending to his opening exhortation in Phil 1:27–30 would need more consideration. Describing this section as a request for information about the recipients does not do justice to the hortatory nature of the material and how Paul is seeking to form this community in a particular way. There is also a need to address more substantially how the thematic links that she calls attention to in discussing the relationship between Phil 2 and 3²⁷ play an important role in what is central to Paul's thought and to what he is aiming to accomplish. Another limitation of Alexander's approach to Philippians, related to the question of genre, is that the categorization of it as a family letter fails to do justice to other features of the letter, which many have connected with the conventions of friendship. This brings us to another attempt to ascertain the genre and aim(s) of Philippians.

²⁵ Alexander, "Hellenistic," 99.

²⁶ Alexander, "Hellenistic," 99.

²⁷ Alexander, "Hellenistic," 99.

1.2.2. A Letter of Friendship for Moral Formation

Several have drawn on Greco-Roman conventions of friendship to identify the genre and aim(s) of Philippians.²⁸ In setting forth the places where friendship language occurs, John Fitzgerald begins with phrases indicating oneness of soul (μία ψυχή) found in Phil 1:27, 2:2, and 2:20.²⁹ This designation highlights the closeness of friends; as a common saying indicates, they have “one soul indwelling two bodies (μία ψυχή δύο σώμασιν ἐνοικοῦσα).”³⁰ Another expression of friendship is that of thinking the same thing (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν) found in Phil 2:2 and 4:2.³¹ This is captured in Cicero’s comment on the “entirety of friendship” being seen in “most complete agreement in wants, in pursuits, and in opinions (*id in quo omnis vis est amicitiae, voluntatum studiorum sententiarum summa consensio*).”³² Friends were also described as having all things in common (κοινὰ τὰ φίλων), which is found in Philippians in the κοινός-terms that are used (1:5, 7; 4:14, 15), the σύν compounds (1:7, 27; 2:17–18, 25; 3:17; 4:3, 14), and the αὐτός statements (1:30; 2:2; 4:2).³³ Aristotle indicates this when commenting on the proverb κοινὰ τὰ φίλων; he states that this is correct because “friendship depends on sharing (ἐν κοινωνίᾳ γὰρ ἡ φιλία),” i.e. having things in common is the essence of friendship.³⁴ It is also widely agreed that Phil 4:10–20 uses a constellation of friendship ideas (e.g. mutual exchange, sharing dangers) and is viewed as “the culmination of a letter that employs such language from its very beginning.”³⁵ The Christ hymn too is presented as a moral paradigm that reflects “the supreme virtue of friendship,” which is the “all-surpassing act

²⁸ Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (LEC 5; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 60; idem, “Friends,” 105–21; L. Michael White, “Morality between Two Worlds: A Paradigm of Friendship in Philippians,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (eds. David L. Balch et al.; Minneapolis, Fortress, 1990), 201–15; the essays by Ken L. Berry, Abraham J. Malherbe, and John T. Fitzgerald in *Friendship, Flattery, & Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; NovTSup 82; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 107–60; note also Peter Marshall, *Enmity at Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT 2.23; Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 157–64.

²⁹ John T. Fitzgerald, “Philippians in the Light of Some Ancient Discussions of Friendship,” in *Friendship*, 144–45; cf. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 9.8.2; Plutarch, *Mor.* 96F.

³⁰ Diogenes Laertius 5.20 (my trans.).

³¹ Fitzgerald, “Philippians,” 145–46; cf. Cicero, *Planc.* 2.5; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.20.

³² Cicero, *Amic.* 15 (my trans.).

³³ Fitzgerald, “Philippians,” 146; cf. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8.12.1; 9.8.2; Cicero, *Off.* 1.51; Diogenes Laertius 8.10.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8.9.1–2 (trans. Broadie and Rowe).

³⁵ Abraham J. Malherbe, “Paul’s Self-Sufficiency (Philippians 4:11),” in *Friendship*, 128.

of selfless love.”³⁶ The epistolary theorists add to the discussion in that they present a central feature of friendship letters as wanting to be with a friend even though one is absent, which is evident in Phil 1:8, 25, 27; 2:24; 4:1.³⁷

The prominence of friendship language and *topoi* in Philippians leads Stanley Stowers to classify it as a hortatory letter of friendship³⁸ and to explore how it uses the discourse of friendship to encourage the moral progress of the Philippians. He argues that Paul presents himself as a psychagogue, much like Seneca to Lucilius, and is a model of the kind of person that he desires the Philippians to become.³⁹ The discourse of friendship is seen not just in friendship language, but also in Paul’s presentation of the community as an alternative ideal *polis* where there is *δμόνοια*, which is an ideal discussed in the moral philosophical tradition of friendship and in the context of politics.⁴⁰ The final aspect of this discourse he takes up in connection with Philippians is the way in which Greek friendship was agonistic. He states that it could not have been thought of apart from competition, specifically in connection with enmities/enemies.⁴¹ This is seen in how Paul presents the Philippians in a common struggle against enemies (1:27–30), and in the “fundamental architecture of the letter.”⁴² He argues that Philippians is patterned by its presentation of positive and negative models, which is used to encourage the Philippians to embrace a particular way of behaving, i.e. that patterned after the good behavior of their true friends. In a similar way Fitzgerald views

³⁶ White, “Morality,” 213; cf. Lucian, *Toxaris*, 29–34. White uses the story of Demetrius lowering himself to serve Antiphilus as an example of selfless love parallel to that of the Christ hymn. White, however, incorrectly labels the Antiphilus as the slave of Demetrius. They were Athenian friends and schoolmates—Antiphilus was not socially lower than Demetrius. Antiphilus is falsely accused of a crime and imprisoned for it. Demetrius expresses his friendship for Antiphilus in that he not only serves him while he is in prison; but also when he is denied admission to the prison, gets arrested so that he can be with his friend. While this parable of friendship is actually a satire on the paradox of the philosophical view on friendship, it does capture something of the way in which friendship was viewed in their world (see David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 119).

³⁷ Fitzgerald, “Philippians,” 147. Ps.-Libanius speaks of letters in general as making one present that is absent (*Epist.* 2), and states that this is a specific characteristic of the friendly letter (*Epist.* 58; cf. Ps.-Demetrius, *Epist.* 1).

³⁸ Stowers, “Friends,” 107; cf. White, “Morality,” 206.

³⁹ Stowers, “Friends,” 108–9.

⁴⁰ Stowers, “Friends,” 111–13; cf. Plato, *Alcib.* 126–27.

⁴¹ Stowers, “Friends,” 113; cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 96A–B (Babbitt, LCL): “Enmities follow close upon friendships, and are interwoven with them, inasmuch as it is impossible for a friend not to share his friend’s wrongs or disrepute or disfavor.”

⁴² Stowers, “Friends,” 114–15

Philippians as a letter of friendship where Paul is encouraging this community of friends to make moral/spiritual progress. He suggests that throughout the letter Paul is seeking to raise their understanding of friendship to a higher plane. They have a view of friendship that is akin to what Aristotle describes as the friendship of utility, and Paul is aiming to get them to embrace friendship that is based on virtue.⁴³ L. Michael White also argues that Paul takes up the conventions of friendship to instruct the Philippians “to live the virtuous life in Christ,” which entails embracing the moral paradigm of selflessness seen in the Christ hymn.⁴⁴

These studies have helpfully called attention to the prevalence of friendship *topoi* in Philippians, which had been neglected until the mid 1980s. The identification of this language along with the social conventions that accompany it has proved helpful for understanding the nature of this letter. There are issues, however, with classifying Philippians as a letter of friendship. John Reumann points out that it is better to speak of how Philippians uses friendship *topoi*, than it is to rigidly classify it as a letter of friendship.⁴⁵ As Troy Martin has argued, Paul’s letters do not fit into the categories set forth by the epistolary theorists.⁴⁶ Not all agree on a specific genre for any of Paul’s letters, and various sections of his letters contain the features of different genres. This is evident in Philippians in that it uses elements from the genres of family letters, friendship letters, letters of exhortation and advice, letters of mediation, and so on.⁴⁷ Another positive contribution from those who have treated Philippians as a friendship letter is that they have helpfully related it to moral formation. All of the treatments mentioned above indicate that the moral/spiritual formation of the community is Paul’s primary aim in writing. While this is discussed in terms of moral paradigms, psychagogogy, and virtue, it is not fully developed in connection with the pattern of

⁴³ Fitzgerald, “Philippians,” 156–60.

⁴⁴ White, “Morality,” 215.

⁴⁵ John Reumann, “Philippians, Especially Chapter 4, as a ‘Letter of Friendship’: Observations on a Checkered History of Scholarship,” in *Friendship*, 83–106. Fitzgerald (“Philippians,” 142–44) also notes that calling Philippians a letter of friendship is problematic since it is much more than this. Cf. Todd D. Still, “More Than Friends? The Literary Classification of Philippians Revisited,” *PRSt* 39 (2012): 53–66.

⁴⁶ Troy W. Martin, “Investigating the Pauline Letter Body: Issues, Methods, and Approaches,” in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams; PAST 6; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 194–96.

⁴⁷ Cf. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 60, 155–56.

thought in moral philosophy. Their focus is on the elements of friendship in Philippians and how this plays a role in living a virtuous life. More attention is needed in analyzing the specific moral philosophical language in Philippians in connection with the structure of thought in moral philosophy, which brings us to the next treatment of Philippians.

1.2.3. A Letter of Consolation to Discern the Things that Matter

Paul Holloway has sought to spell out more specifically the connection between moral philosophy and Philippians by relating the language that Paul uses to ancient theories of consolation. While he classifies Philippians as a letter of consolation, his focus is on the content and function of the letter rather than on the formal elements of genre. There are two primary reasons why Holloway treats the letter as one of consolation: 1) what he identifies as the rhetorical situation, and 2) what he identifies as the programmatic prayer report in Phil 1:9–10. These will be addressed in turn.

The rhetorical situation is identified from what Holloway labels as “basic and generally accepted observations” about Philippians.⁴⁸ Most of what he lists is basic and generally accepted (e.g. Paul’s imprisonment, arrival of Epaphroditus with a gift, issues of disunity and suffering), but there are elements of the situation that he takes for granted that are not widely held. For instance, he emphasizes that Paul’s imprisonment has been particularly distressing to the Philippians and that when this is combined with the difficulties they are facing, it produces a deep anxiety within the church.⁴⁹ Holloway focuses on the situational issue of the Philippians’ distress and frail emotional comportment as that which has given rise to the other pertinent issue of disunity.

Holloway argues that the way in which Paul addresses the “controlling exigence” of their distress over Paul’s imprisonment and their situation is through employing the

⁴⁸ Holloway, *Consolation*, 41.

⁴⁹ Holloway, *Consolation*, 42. Cf. Nicholas Walter, “Die Philipper und das Leiden: Aus den Anfängen einer heidenchristlichen Gemeinde,” in *Die Kirche des Anfangs: Festschrift für Heinz Schürmann zum 65. Geburtstag* (eds. Rudolf Schnakenburg et al.; Leipzig: St. Benno, 1977), 417–33; David E. Garland, “Philippians 1:1-26: The Defense and Confirmation of the Gospel,” *RevExp* 77 (1980): 331. Many who argue that Paul’s imprisonment was a problem for the Philippians follow this line of thinking, but those who argue Paul’s concerns in the letter are mainly to address the Philippian situation which involved suffering and disunity do not argue for this. See, e.g., Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 103; Meeks, “Man from Heaven,” 110.

rhetorical strategy of consolation, which is programmatically set forth in Phil 1:9–10 and is also evident in the motif of joy, which is the antithesis of grief.⁵⁰ The strategy of discerning the things that matter, he contends, is most closely aligned with the Stoic theory of consolation. This theory posits that grief arises because people fail to distinguish between that which matters and that which does not. For example, Seneca in *Ad Helviam* consoles his grieving mother by arguing that his exile is not something bad. For Seneca it does not constitute what really matters, and is therefore not viable grounds for grief.⁵¹ This theory of consolation also held that those grieved by various circumstances were to rejoice, and the consoler who had experienced misfortune is presented as rejoicing in what others would think miserable.⁵² Paul uses this strategy of consolation—directing the second party to that which really matters so that they will not be grieved by that which does not matter—to instruct the Philippians that they are grieved over things that do not really matter. The first half of the letter addresses Paul’s imprisonment and death, indicating that these do not matter, whereas the things that do matter are the advance of the gospel and salvation. In the second half of the letter Paul presents one thing that matters, the knowledge of Christ, while all else does not matter, which is related to both things accomplished prior to one’s conversion and things achieved after it as well.⁵³ The consolatory nature of the letter is the reason for Paul’s emphasis on joy, both in his presentation of himself and in his instructions to the Philippians.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Holloway, *Consolation*, 47–48.

⁵¹ Holloway, *Consolation*, 49, 77–78. See Seneca, *Helv.* 4.2, 5,1; cf. Seneca *Ep.* 107; Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.31.76.

⁵² Holloway, *Consolation*, 81–82. See Seneca, *Ep.* 23 and 59.

⁵³ Holloway, *Consolation*, 50–51.

⁵⁴ Holloway (*Consolation*, 50, 83) notes that reading the letter as one of consolation is found in one of the earliest commentators on Paul: John Chrysostom. He cites *Hom. Phil.*, praef. 1, and hom. 3.1–3 as support of this where he argues in the former Chrysostom states with respect to Phil 1:12–18 that Paul offers the Philippians much consolation about his chains (*παράκλησιν ὑπὲρ τῶν δεσμῶν*) and that they should not be grieved but rejoice (*οὐ μόνον οὐ χρὴ θορυβεῖσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ χαίρειν*), which is what is emphasized in homily 3.1–3 where he states Paul is not being vexed by misfortunes but rejoicing instead. It is significant that Chrysostom largely relegates his comments about consolation to the opening of the letter (*ἐν τοῖς προοιμίαις τῆς Ἐπιστολῆς*) and to the end of the letter. In the main body of the letter he indicates (praef. 2) that Paul gives them counsel about other matters, viz. *ὁμόνοια*, *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, and dealing with their enemies. Chrysostom does discuss Paul’s discourse in Philippians in demonstrably moral philosophical terms, stating that Paul speaks at length on moral matters (*περὶ ἠθικῶν πολλὰ διαλεχθεῖς*) and

Holloway has helpfully brought to the fore a discussion of consolation that had not been treated in connection with Philippians,⁵⁵ and he has rightly taken seriously the moral philosophical nature of Paul’s language in this letter. There are, however, limitations with Holloway’s approach. First, the controlling exigence of distress/grief is based on what he presumes Epaphroditus would have told Paul and is not widely accepted as the rhetorical situation of the letter. There is no mention that Epaphroditus brought this kind of report to Paul. Furthermore, what he takes as indicating that the Philippians are distressed, i.e. because they might not see Paul again (Phil 1:26–27; 2:12, 24), are actually friendship *topoi* that can be read in connection with Paul emphasizing his bonds with them. Moreover, the two issues that are widely agreed upon and that are repeatedly mentioned in the letter are disunity and suffering, not discouragement. Another limitation pertains to his identification of Phil 1:9–10 as setting forth the strategy of consolation. The strategy of discerning what really matters is central to moral philosophy and is more broadly connected with what living a virtuous life entails.⁵⁶ In all of the ancient moral philosophies, one is to discern what living in accordance with what the desired *τέλος* consists in, and choose that, i.e. that which really matters. It is thus a broad strategy that should not be restricted to consolation.

1.2.4. Summary

From an examination of these epistolary approaches, we can conclude that identifying the specific genre of the letter is a misguided approach. Philippians (or any of Paul’s letters) does not fit any of the formal classifications of ancient letters. Thus, classifying the letter as a family letter, friendship letter, or letter of consolation does not do justice to the nature of the material found in it. I thus agree with Holloway that attention should

that the Philippians have proof of virtue (*ἀρετή*). It is this latter aspect that is repeatedly emphasized as the main focus of what Paul says (cf. hom. 4.2, ‘Ὁρᾶς ὅτι διὰ τοῦτο εἶπε πάντα, ἵνα εἰς τοῦτο αὐτοὺς προτρέψῃ ἐπιδοῦναι πρὸς ἀρετήν).

⁵⁵ Stowers (*Letter Writing*, 145) suggests 1 Thess 4:13–18 is a consolatory section of that letter, but does not mention Philippians in this regard.

⁵⁶ Alan C. Mitchell (review of Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy*, *JR* 83 [2003]: 435–36) calls attention to this in his review, citing Seneca, *Ep.* 9.22 where this strategy is employed in connection with friendship. See 6.1 below for a fuller discussion of how this text can be fruitfully read in light of the broader strategy of discerning that which is virtuous, especially as it is presented in Epictetus.

be given to the content of the letter rather than the formal questions of genre. However, as I argued above it is not ancient consolation that provides the most useful way of understanding the nature of Philippians. The focus of the letter is on the moral/spiritual formation of the Philippians, as those who argue for the importance of friendship have pointed out. However, more is needed to explore how the moral philosophical language in the letter functions to achieve this.

1.3. The Pattern of Thought in Philippians

There are several who have sought to address the aim(s) of Philippians from exploring the structure of thought in the letter rather than attending to questions of genre. In what follows I will examine three approaches which have some overlap with each other. The first approach focuses on the internal concentric structure of the letter to identify the structure of thought and Paul's aim(s) in writing. The second approach emphasizes the centrality of the Christ hymn for understanding Paul's aim(s), and the third approach understands the letter in terms of moral philosophy, viz. Stoicism.

1.3.1. Chiastic Structure of Philippians

A. Boyd Luter and Michelle V. Lee argue that Philippians is a large (A–B–C–D–E–D'–C'–B'–A') chiasm with the pivotal section at Phil 2:17–3:1a and that the theme of the entire letter is partnership in the gospel.⁵⁷ They follow Craig Blomberg's criteria for identifying chiastic structures and group the layers of the chiasm according to various themes.⁵⁸

Their structure of the letter is:

A (1:3–11) prologue where the theme of partnership in the gospel is introduced with gratitude;

A' (4:10–20) epilogue where partnership from the past is renewed with gratitude;

B (1:12–26) comfort/example: Paul's safety and right thinking in the midst of a difficult (guarded) situation;

B' (4:6–9) comfort/example: the Philippians (guarded) peace of mind and right thinking in the midst of an anxious situation;

⁵⁷ A. Boyd Luter and Michelle V. Lee, "Philippians as Chiasmus: Key to the Structure, Unity and Theme Questions," *NTS* 41 (1995): 89–101.

⁵⁸ See Craig Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7," *CTR* 4 (1989): 4–8.

C (1:27–2:4) challenge: stand fast and be united, fulfilling Paul’s joy;
 C’ (4:1–5) challenge: stand fast and accentuate joy by the reconciliation of two past gospel partners;
 D (2:5–16) example/action: Christ’s example and behavioral instructions;
 D’ (3:1b–21) example/action: Paul’s example and then instructions;
 E (2:17–3:1a) midpoint: caring models of partnership which are sent to help immediately.⁵⁹

They posit that the theme of partnership in the gospel governs the entire letter in that A and A’ introduce this theme, B and B’ describe the results of Paul’s partnership with them, C and C’ present Paul’s challenge for them to stand united in their partnership with one another, D and D’ call them to follow the examples of humility and sacrifice since by doing this they will be able to unite together in a partnership, and E provides them with exemplary partners in the gospel who will be present with them shortly.⁶⁰ They contend that the midpoint of the chiasm (Phil 2:17–3:1a) is the focal point where “the central thrust of the letter is to exhort the Philippians to cooperate with and follow the examples of these two partners [Timothy and Epaphroditus] and servants of Christ.”⁶¹ This stands in contrast to how scholars have treated this section as a travelogue or a *digressio*, and differs from the chiasmic structure of others.⁶²

Peter Wick has argued for an alternative chiasmic structure identifying ten parallel units largely based on thematic and linguistic links. He finds legitimation for his chiasmic approach to Philippians by pointing to the OT practice of parallelism, viz. as it is found in Eccl 1:3–3:15, 2 Sam 9–20, and 1 Kings 1–2.⁶³ He structures Philippians as follows:

unit A (a¹ 1:12–26; a² 3:1–16): is a *Selbstbericht* with the overarching themes of *Freude* and *Gegner*;

⁵⁹ Luter and Lee, “Philippians as Chiasmus,” 92.

⁶⁰ Luter and Lee, “Philippians as Chiasmus,” 92–94.

⁶¹ Luter and Lee, “Philippians as Chiasmus,” 98.

⁶² See below. Cf. Philippe Rolland (“La structure littéraire et l’unité de l’Épître aux Philippiens,” *RSR* 64 [1990]: 213–16) who gives a simpler chiasmic structure than Luter and Lee paralleling Phil 1:3–11 with Phil 4:10–23, and Phil 1:12–2:18 with Phil 3:1–4:20, and treating Phil 2:19–30 as an interlude. He focuses primarily on vocabulary parallels in making his argument.

⁶³ Wick, *Philippenerbrief*, 175. He agrees with Ernst Lohmeyer that there is a “tiefe Verankerung des Philippenerbriefes im jüdischen und alttestamentlichen Denken,” (174) which is found not only in the thematic and linguistic aspects of the letter, but also in its parallel arrangement.

unit B (b¹ 1:27–30; b² 3:17–21): the theme is focused on *Lebenswandel* in the face of *Gegner*;
 unit C (c¹ 2:1–4 [+5–11]; c² 4:1–3): the theme is *Dieselbe Gesinnung* with an emphasis on *Freude*;
 unit D (d¹ 2:12–18; d² 4:4–9): the theme is *Unverfügbarkeit des Heils* with an emphasis on *Ehrfurcht* in the first half and *Freude* in the second half;
 unit E (e¹ 2:19–30; e² 4:10–20): the theme is *Korrespondenz* with an emphasis on *Freude*.⁶⁴

Phil 3:1b acts as a hinge where Paul signals that he is going to repeat the same things again.⁶⁵ The second half of the letter therefore mirrors the first half, not where he repeats everything in a one-to-one manner, but where there is “komplementäre Ergänzung und Entfaltung.”⁶⁶ Wick argues that Paul wrote these ten parallel units at five different occasions each responding to distinct issues. In connection with this Wick identifies five reasons that Paul wrote Philippians: “Er berichtet über sein Ergehen, er ermahnt die Leitung, er kündigt die baldige Ankunft des Timotheus an, er erklärt die Ankunft des Epaphroditus und er dankt für die Gabe der Philipper.”⁶⁷

Paul has taken these five different reasons for writing and skillfully organized the letter under two *Gesichtspunkten*: *die Gesinnung in Christus* and *die Freude im Herrn*.⁶⁸ These two *Gesichtspunkten* are emphasized at a formal and a thematic level. The Christ hymn, which occurs in the third of five thematic blocks, is the “exakte thematische Zentrum des Briefes.”⁶⁹ Wick argues that the Christ hymn, systematized under the *Gesinnung Christi*, relates to all of the other units in the letter in that this attitude is found in every section.⁷⁰ *Freude im Herrn* also has a central position in the formal structure of the letter, coming between the two large parallel parts (e¹ and a²) at Phil 3:1a.⁷¹ Its thematic importance is evident in the repetition of calls to rejoice and in the mention of joy. These two *Gesichtspunkten* are not isolated elements of the letter, but

⁶⁴ Wick, *Philipperbrief*, 39–53.

⁶⁵ Rolland makes a similar observation (“La structure,” 214).

⁶⁶ Wick, *Philipperbrief*, 57.

⁶⁷ Wick, *Philipperbrief*, 138.

⁶⁸ Wick consistently praises Paul’s writing style, e.g. “Paulus hat mit dem Philipperbrief auf formaler Ebene ein sprachliches Kunstwerk geschaffen” (*Philipperbrief*, 62).

⁶⁹ Wick, *Philipperbrief*, 58.

⁷⁰ Wick, *Philipperbrief*, 64–81.

⁷¹ Wick, *Philipperbrief*, 61, 82–85.

are bound together in that the “Grund zur Freude im Herrn ist die gelebte Gesinnung Christi.”⁷² Wick also identifies an overarching theme, which is “Gemeinschaft im Evangelium.”⁷³ He subsumes both the *Gesinnung Christi* and *Freude im Herrn* under it. He suggests this primary theme of the letter relates to both of these *Gesichtspunkten* in that “Koinonia” results from a reciprocal relationship, from “freiwilligem Dienen (Agape) und aus gegenseitigem Annehmen des Dienens (sich freuen).”⁷⁴

John Paul Heil has also argued that Philippians is a macro-chiasm made up of ten units. He views each of these units as containing a micro-chiastic structure, all of which support the main hortatory emphasis of the letter: to rejoice in being conformed to Christ. His macro-chiastic structure of the letter is as follows:

- A (1:1–2) grace from the Lord Jesus Christ to the holy ones;
- A' (4:21–23) greeting from holy ones and grace from the Lord Jesus Christ;
- B (1:3–11) prayer that you may abound and be filled to glory and praise of God;
- B' (4:6–20) glory to God who will fulfill you as I am filled and abound;
- C (1:12–18) I rejoice and I will be joyful;
- C' (4:1–5) rejoice in the Lord, rejoice;
- D (1:19–30) death in my body is gain but remaining is for your faith;
- D' (3:1–21) gain in faith in the death of Christ and the body of his glory;
- E (2:1–16) joy in humility for the day of Christ who humbled himself to death;
- E' (2:17–30) rejoice with those who neared death for the work of Christ.⁷⁵

The central pivot of the chiasm is found in the progression from E to E' which highlights respectively the twin emphases of conformity to Christ (2:1–16) and rejoicing with Paul for those who are living in this way (2:17–30).⁷⁶ Heil's methodology is what he calls “entirely and rigorously text-centered,” in which he seeks to determine “Paul's rhetorical or persuasive strategy by carefully and closely listening to the chiastic structures of the text as they unfold within the letter to the Philippians.”⁷⁷ He, like Luter and Lee, uses Blomberg's criteria, albeit slightly modified, and he legitimates reading Philippians as a

⁷² Wick, *Philippianerbrief*, 85.

⁷³ Wick, *Philippianerbrief*, 147.

⁷⁴ Wick, *Philippianerbrief*, 151.

⁷⁵ John Paul Heil, *Philippians: Let Us Rejoice in Being Conformed to Christ* (Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 13–31.

⁷⁶ Heil, *Philippians*, 80–113.

⁷⁷ Heil, *Philippians*, 7.

chiasm because chiasms “were apparently very common in ancient oral-auricular and rhetorical cultures.”⁷⁸ In order to mitigate the subjective element of finding chiastic structures, Heil focuses on “very precise linguistic parallels found objectively in the text” and transitional words that give the chiastic structure cohesiveness.⁷⁹

These chiastic approaches have made some useful observations in arguing for connections between various passages of the letter. Wick’s discussion of Phil 3:1 as a pivot in the letter which functions to signal the midpoint of two halves mirroring each other is worthy of consideration and further development. There are, however, some limitations with a chiastic approach. First, it seems that the observations about parallel material in the letter are stretched too far in connecting them with a more intricate overarching chiasm. As Stanley Porter and Jeffrey Reed have argued there is no support that this practice was widely used among the Greeks and Romans, who would have been Paul’s audience in Philippi.⁸⁰ The variation between chiastic structures also highlights an issue with this approach. There are some similarities between the various proposals, but each one finds a different center.⁸¹ Finally, there are problems with using themes like joy and the attitude of Christ and linguistic parallels as a way of blocking off material. These themes and words can be found throughout various sections, making it difficult to group material around them in a neat fashion.⁸² These limitations make it difficult to accept that the letter is structured in an intricate macro-chiastic way.

1.3.2. The Christ Hymn and Philippians

There are a few studies that focus on the Christ hymn as key for understanding the pattern of thought in Philippians. Stephen Fowl in examining the function of hymnic

⁷⁸ Heil, *Philippians*, 12.

⁷⁹ Heil, *Philippians*, 12–13.

⁸⁰ Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, “Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm and its Exegetical Significance,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 217. They also approvingly cite George A. Kennedy’s (*New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984], 28–29) comments indicating that discussions of chiasm are not found in the rhetorical handbooks and that rhetoricians and literary critics do not mention it either (217).

⁸¹ Cf. John W. Welch (“Chiasmus in the New Testament,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* [ed. John W. Welch; Hildersheim: Gerstenberg, 1981], 226) who finds chiastic structures in a number of books, but argues that Philippians contains no macro-chiastic structure.

⁸² Porter and Reed, “Philippians,” 225–26.

material in Paul's letters argues that Phil 2:6–11 supports Paul's ethical exhortation in Philippians, which directs the Philippians how to live faithfully in the midst of hostility and supports Paul's polemic against the opponents in Phil 3.⁸³ The Christ hymn relates to 1:27–2:5 in that it presents an account of the founder of their community to which the Philippians must conform. By analogously drawing on the story of Christ Paul directs them how to face their situation. They are to humble themselves and show selfless concern for others, as Christ did in Phil 2:6–8. If they adopt these Christ-like virtues, then they can be assured of vindication, just as God vindicated Christ in Phil 2:9–11.⁸⁴ The exhortation in Phil 2:12–16 is also formulated based on the exemplar of Christ. Fowl relates the language of salvation in this passage (as well as that in Phil 1:28) to the Philippians' obedience and to the activity of God in stating, "God will also work to bring about the salvation 'worked out' by the Philippians in obedience to Paul's commands."⁸⁵ The basis for this is the Christ story where Christ was obedient and God vindicated him. Paul's polemic against the opponents in Phil 3 is based on the precedent of the Christ story in that Paul presents himself as reflecting the way of salvation which embraces humility and suffering. This path stands in contrast to the way of the opponents who are claiming spiritual superiority by adherence to the Law and are unwilling to embrace humility and suffering.⁸⁶ The story of Christ is therefore in an "analogous relationship to the various aspects of the Philippians' situation," which Paul utilizes in formulating his response to their present circumstances.⁸⁷ William Kurz similarly argues for a connection between the Christ hymn and the rest of Philippians.⁸⁸ He emphasizes that the kenotic imitation of Christ is the central feature of the letter which stands behind Paul's exhortation to the Philippians as well as Paul's self-presentation. His focus is more on imitation than it is on an analogous relationship, and he also presses for linguistic

⁸³ Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus* (JSNTSup 36; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 77.

⁸⁴ Fowl, *Story of Christ*, 90–92.

⁸⁵ Fowl, *Story of Christ*, 97.

⁸⁶ Fowl, *Story of Christ*, 98–100.

⁸⁷ Fowl, *Story of Christ*, 101.

⁸⁸ William S. Kurz, "Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ in Philippians 2 and 3," in *Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 103–126.

parallels in arguing for a connection between the story of Christ and its relationship to the rest of the letter.⁸⁹

Wayne Meeks also argues that the Christ hymn plays a central role in Philippians in that Paul uses it “to interpret the experience of the community and thus to shape and reinforce certain attitudes and patterns of behavior in that community.”⁹⁰ He connects this christological motif to the overarching purpose of the letter, which Meeks argues is “the shaping of a Christian *φρόνησις*, a practical moral reasoning that is ‘conformed to [Christ’s] death’ in hope of his resurrection.”⁹¹ This relates the Christ hymn to the moral philosophical concept of practical reasoning. Paul’s prayer for the Philippians to discern *τὰ διαφέροντα* (Phil 1:9–11) captures this, highlighting Paul’s concern that they develop their moral knowledge. This is related to the rest of the letter in that this way of reasoning is to produce a civic life—one loyal to the *πολίτευμα* in heaven—that is worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27).⁹² Paul’s self-presentation also provides a model of this kind of reasoning, which addresses the two major areas of concern: unity and harmony and facing opposition and suffering with confidence. Meeks is careful to point out that Paul’s exemplary self-presentation does not match the Christ story in a one-to-one fashion, but that “the dramatic structure of the two ‘plots’ is analogous.”⁹³ Timothy and Epaphroditus are also models of those reasoning in a similar way. Meeks adds to the arguments of Fowl and Kurz in that he connects the role of the Christ story in Philippians to the language of moral philosophy. He emphasizes this not only in pointing out its relationship to practical reasoning, but also in highlighting its connection to friendship *topoi* and self-sufficiency.⁹⁴

These studies have rightly brought to the fore the centrality of the Christ hymn for understanding the pattern of thought in Philippians. Meeks’ work is most helpful in drawing out the implications of this in connection with the moral philosophical language in the letter. It is limited, however, in its scope. More needs to be done in exploring the

⁸⁹ Kurz, “Kenotic Imitation,” 118–21.

⁹⁰ Meeks, “The Man from Heaven,” 108.

⁹¹ Meeks, “The Man from Heaven,” 110.

⁹² Meeks, “The Man from Heaven,” 110.

⁹³ Meeks, “The Man from Heaven,” 109.

⁹⁴ Meeks, “The Man from Heaven,” 110–112.

relationship between the moral philosophical language and the Christ hymn, as well as other aspects of the letter. How is Paul using moral philosophical terms and concepts and in what way do they relate to moral philosophy and Paul's overarching argument in Philippians? Troels Engberg-Pedersen, whose work we turn to next, has taken up this question.

1.3.3. Stoicism and Paul's Pattern of Thought

Troels Engberg-Pedersen's work has, more than any other, called attention to the way in which Philippians contains many moral philosophical, specifically Stoic, elements. He demonstrates this in his earliest essay on this aspect of the letter, highlighting how Paul uses τέλος language, speaks of a σκοπός for which he is striving, prays for the Philippians to discern τὰ διαφέροντα, presents himself as αὐτάρκης, depicts the heavenly πολιτεύμα as a utopian city, uses the notion of προκοπή, emphasizes the affection of joy, and has a cognitive focus throughout.⁹⁵ In this essay Engberg-Pedersen argues that these Stoicizing terms with their technical background make best sense of how all of the different motifs, including the non-Stoic ones (e.g. the day of Christ motif and the κοινωνία motif), have coherence and form the backbone of Paul's *parakletic* aims to form this community in a particular way. He presents Paul's formulation of Christian existence in this letter in the form of a short story, where Christians are focused on an end (σκοπός), being in the heavenly πολιτεύμα, which is made up of all those who share the same mindset; that is, those who have been grasped by Christ and are patterning their lives after his example. This ideal community will be realized in the future, but the κοινωνία modelled on this ideal is to be lived out in the here and now as much as possible. This can be achieved by sharing the mindset that was modelled by Christ and Paul, which is one that relinquishes egoistic claims for the sake of others. Such a mindset is marked by joy in the face of hostility and by self-sufficiency with respect to human goods. It is a life that is focused on others and living in κοινωνία with them. Those who have received Paul's gospel have already entered into this kind of κοινωνία, sharing the mindset of Christ, and are making

⁹⁵ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoicism in Philippians," in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 269–74.

progress toward living in the ideal *πολίτευμα*.⁹⁶ Engberg-Pedersen argues that this story, which conceptualizes the end as an ideal community and uses it to inform and shape people's understanding and behavior in the here and now, is centrally and specifically Stoic in nature, more specifically of the Chrysippean version. He posits that there is no conflict between the Stoic elements and more specifically Christian ones in the letter, and he even concludes "that when Paul is at his most Christian, he is also at his most Stoic."⁹⁷

In Engberg-Pedersen's later work, *Paul and the Stoics*, he develops the ideas set forth in his earlier essay and argues that the pattern of Paul's thought follows the same structure as that in Stoicism. His goal in this work, which is more Bultmannian in nature, pertains to making sense of Paul's thought from the outside with a model that we can accept. The abstract model he formulates to facilitate this consists of three stages. At the first stage (I) one is dominated by a subjective perspective and one's focus is concerned with fulfilling one's own individual desires. The second stage (X) occurs when one is "struck" by something. This produces a shift in one's self-understanding where one no longer identifies with the I-pole, but now identifies with the X-pole. One moves to the third stage (S) due to the cognitive content of what one acquired at the X stage. At the S stage one identifies oneself with others and forms a social "we," i.e. all of us who are participating in X.⁹⁸ Drawing on his previous work on the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis*, in large part an interpretation of Cicero's presentation of it in *De Finibus*, he presents the Stoic reading of the I-X-S model.⁹⁹ It is this Stoically understood model that Engberg-Pedersen then uses to elucidate Paul's letter to the Philippians.

He begins by presenting Paul's call in Phil 3:2–11 as one where Paul moves from the I-pole because he is struck by X (Christ). This is an experience where Paul came to know Christ by direct acquaintance, but it is also an experience where he acquired propositional knowledge, i.e. that Christ Jesus is my Lord. Paul now completely identifies with Christ (X) and has a new self-understanding that re-values his former self (i.e. the I-

⁹⁶ Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoicism in Philippians," 278–79.

⁹⁷ Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoicism in Philippians," 289.

⁹⁸ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 33–36.

⁹⁹ Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 53–79.

pole).¹⁰⁰ It is due to the normative knowledge attained from Paul's experience of Christ that he is able to rejoice in suffering and be self-sufficient with respect to worldly goods.¹⁰¹ Engberg-Pedersen then takes up how Paul, the possessor of normative knowledge and functioning like a sage, bends down toward the Philippians to get them to move up to his level. This is the nature of being struck by Christ; it issues forth in a concern for others (the S-pole), which is evident in the model of Christ and the maxim in Phil 2:4. Paul seeks to impart to the Philippians new normative knowledge that will enable them to leave behind their former subjective position (I), identify fully with Christ, and move toward the S level, i.e. become the Christ community where there is a radical concern for others.¹⁰²

Engberg-Pedersen has helpfully drawn attention to the Stoic nature of the language that Paul uses in Philippians and has raised the possibility that Paul's thought might be structured similarly to Stoicism. There are, however, several limitations with his work. These pertain to his usage of the I-X-S model, his reading of Stoicism, and his analysis of Philippians. It has been pointed out by Kathy Gaca that the abstract model Engberg-Pedersen uses is a conversion model that could fit several groups in the ancient world.¹⁰³ It does not therefore provide an account of Paul's pattern of thought that is specifically Stoic. While his earlier essay gets closer to this, it suffers first from his designation of the end as life in the cosmic utopian city, which one never finds in Stoicism or any other ancient moral philosophy, and second from the limited scope of this work. While he has made some interesting connections between Stoicism and Paul's terms and concepts in the letter, he has not fully developed this into an overall reading of Paul's argument that takes into account the entirety of the letter. Another issue with his work is his interpretation of Cicero's account of *oikeiōsis*. The main issue with his presentation of Cicero's account is that it begins from a subjective orientation. As Christopher Gill has cogently argued, this is an inappropriate description of this developmental theory

¹⁰⁰ Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 92–96.

¹⁰¹ Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 96–103.

¹⁰² Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 105–130.

¹⁰³ Kathy L. Gaca, review of Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, *RBL* 9 (2002): at <http://www.bookreviews.org>.

(known as the “cradle-argument”), which owes more to Kantian and Cartesian concepts than it does to the ancient Stoics. Gill characterizes this theory of development as both “objectivist’ in its methodology and ‘objective’ in its conceptual language.”¹⁰⁴ There is no explicit reference or special status given to an “I” or an “individual subject” in Cicero’s account.¹⁰⁵ Engberg-Pedersen transfers this subjective perspective onto Paul, which is questionable as well. Ultimately his reading of Philippians fails fully to do justice to the way in which Paul employs moral philosophical language in his argument because it is too colored by the I-X-S model. An approach is needed that takes seriously the pattern of thought in moral philosophy in its own terms and concepts allowing this to elucidate Paul’s pattern of thought. This will enable us to explore more precisely the function of this language in Philippians.

1.3.4. Summary

These approaches have contributed to our understanding of Philippians in that they have noted parallel material in the letter and have rightly called attention to the centrality of the Christ hymn for understanding what Paul is aiming to do. Meeks convincingly related this latter aspect of the letter to moral philosophy, but more is needed to develop this connection. Thus I agree with Engberg-Pedersen that greater attention to the moral philosophical character of the letter is needed, but as argued above this needs to be explored in the categories and structure of thought drawn specifically from moral philosophy in the ancient world.

1.4. Thematic and Rhetorical Approaches

There are several studies that focus on one central theme in Philippians as a way of understanding what Paul is seeking to accomplish in this letter. These can be grouped

¹⁰⁴ Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 362.

¹⁰⁵ See Gill’s analysis of the passage and critique of Engberg-Pedersen in *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 364–70; *The Structured Self*, 129–66, 359–70. Note specifically p. 368 in the latter volume, where he highlights the fact that even though the account in Cicero (*Fin.* 3.16) is described in terms of a single agent that this does not entail “special weight is being given to the role of individual reflexivity or, more broadly, that changes in self-understanding are pivotal in ethical development.”

broadly into three categories: the advance of the gospel, disunity among the Philippians, and addressing the problem of opponents/suffering.

1.4.1. The Advance of the Gospel

There are three major studies on Philippians that emphasize the advance of the gospel as the central theme of the letter. All three of these place an emphasis either on the thanksgiving section (Phil 1:3–11) or on the disclosure formula (Phil 1:12) as crucial for identifying the letter’s primary purpose. These three studies each highlight a different area in connection with the advancement of the gospel (e.g. suffering, a financial partnership, missionary activity), but all of them focus on its advancement which warrants categorizing them together.

Gregory Bloomquist argues that Philippians is primarily about the advance of the gospel which is related to Paul proving that suffering does not hinder it. Bloomquist’s primary focus is on the function of suffering in Paul’s message to the Philippians, which he explores by examining how the epistolary structure and rhetorical conventions of the letter communicate that message. From his structural analysis he identifies the disclosure formula in Phil 1:12a and the *narratio* in Phil 1:12–14 as crucial for understanding the *causa* of the letter. He argues that this section of the letter conveys Paul’s occasion for writing, which is “first of all with the congregation’s communication to Paul of some form of concern over his personal fate.”¹⁰⁶ The Philippians are presented as having a problem with Paul’s imprisonment and impending death. Paul responds in this opening section of the letter addressing this and thus presenting the primary purpose of the letter, which is “intended as an authoritative letter of comfort in which Paul reassures the Philippian believers of the gospel’s advance in the light of Paul’s imprisonment.”¹⁰⁷ Paul argues for this case after presenting two ways of responding to his situation (Phil 1:15–18), which centers the point of conflict on Paul. The argument focuses on the triumph of the gospel, which is rooted in Paul’s confidence in God to be victorious even in death,¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ L. Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians* (JSNTSup 78; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 148.

¹⁰⁷ Bloomquist, *Suffering*, 149.

¹⁰⁸ Bloomquist, *Suffering*, 155–56.

which he later relates specifically to the vindication of Christ and the resurrection of believers.¹⁰⁹

The opening exhortation (Phil 1:27–30) includes the Philippians in the argument, not just as the jury, but also as co-defendants since they too are experiencing suffering.¹¹⁰ Paul exhorts them “to follow his example: in the midst of their suffering and pressed by circumstances, they are to choose what is honourable and worthy, even as Paul does, confident of God’s victory.”¹¹¹ In what follows Bloomquist presents Paul’s argument as providing types that reflect Paul’s own ministry and exemplary conduct. The Christ type (Phil 2:6–11) in its context is explained as “intentionally pointing to Paul’s own ministry,” and is viewed as a *prosopopoeia Christi*.¹¹² The Paul type makes visible the Christ type, and so do Paul’s co-workers (e.g. Timothy and Epaphroditus).¹¹³ Paul exhorts the Philippians to view their experience in these same terms. All of this Bloomquist states relates to the advance of the gospel: “As Christ advanced the gospel and the gospel had not ceased with his death, so Paul—and believers, including the Philippians—advanced a gospel that will not cease with their death.”¹¹⁴ This relates back to the case as set forth in Phil 1:12–14 proving that Paul’s suffering and death will not hinder the advance of the gospel.

Gerald Peterman also argues that the gospel and its advance is the primary theme of Philippians, but differs from Bloomquist in that he understands one of the main reasons for writing the letter to be Paul’s response to the financial support of the Philippians which he identifies in the thanksgiving section.¹¹⁵ He makes the connection between the advance of the gospel and the Philippians’ gift by demonstrating the close verbal and conceptual parallels between Phil 1:3–11, where Paul sets forth the main themes he will

¹⁰⁹ Bloomquist, *Suffering*, 184–85.

¹¹⁰ Bloomquist, *Suffering*, 159.

¹¹¹ Bloomquist, *Suffering*, 160.

¹¹² Bloomquist, *Suffering*, 168.

¹¹³ Bloomquist (*Suffering*, 195) states that Christ is “the cipher in whom the experience of all God’s servants is most clearly reflected.”

¹¹⁴ Bloomquist, *Suffering*, 168.

¹¹⁵ Peterman (*Paul’s Gift*, 101) identifies the counterpart of Phil 1:5 with Phil 4:15 where partnership in the gospel and giving and receiving “open and close the main ideas around which the themes of the letter are structured.”

cover, and Phil 4:10–20.¹¹⁶ He argues that Paul begins the letter by giving thanks for the Philippians’ remembrance of him, which is a specific reference to their financial support. This is based on his interpretation of ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνήμῃ ὑμῶν in Phil 1:3 as “because of your every remembrance (of me),” understanding the force of the ἐπὶ as causal and the genitive as subjective.¹¹⁷ From this specific motivation grounding Paul’s thanks, he moves to the broader motivation of partnership in the gospel in Phil 1:5, which “includes their support ... their prayers for him (1.19), their own witness in Philippi (1.27–8, 2.15), their suffering with him (1.30) and their taking part in his affliction (4.14).”¹¹⁸ Peterman contends that after initially mentioning the gift Paul begins “immediately to define the true meaning of this exchange” by rooting it in a broader notion of active partnership in the advance of the gospel.¹¹⁹

The rest of Philippians Peterman understands in terms of the main theme of the advance of the gospel. This is evident in Phil 1:12–26 where “the gospel, its advance and Paul’s subordination of all his energies and desires to the accomplishment of this one goal” are the themes of the section. He argues that the letter body, marked off by the use of similar vocabulary (1:27–4:3), utilizes terms that are associated with how “the Philippians are to be Christian witnesses in Philippi.”¹²⁰ The Philippians are to be a “missionary-minded church” committed to the advance of the gospel in their own context as Paul is in his. This entails suffering for this cause, and it means that they should live in harmony with one another so as not to jeopardize their reputation and thus hinder the gospel advancing. The Christ hymn is understood as providing the basis for Paul’s ethical exhortations undergirding his call for them to do away with selfish ambition and be like-minded. Peterman’s exegesis moves from Phil 2 to Phil 4:10–20, where he examines how what is said in the latter teaches “the Philippians the proper meaning and significance of their gift.”¹²¹ While he argues this is the focus of Phil 4:10–20, he does suggest that everything that has preceded it serves in a sense as prolegomena

¹¹⁶ Peterman, *Paul’s Gift*, 91.

¹¹⁷ Peterman, *Paul’s Gift*, 94–98.

¹¹⁸ Peterman, *Paul’s Gift*, 100.

¹¹⁹ Peterman, *Paul’s Gift*, 103.

¹²⁰ Peterman, *Paul’s Gift*, 111.

¹²¹ Peterman, *Paul’s Gift*, 121.

to Paul's response to their gift.¹²² This portion of the letter uses terms from the "semantic complex of friendship," but it is actually from Christian presuppositions informed by Paul's Jewish tradition that he makes sense of the meaning of their gift.¹²³ Their financial giving is not that of a benefit to an individual that involves one in a relationship of social obligation where one displays social power and virtue, but rather their gift is a spiritual sacrifice to God from whom they will receive a reward and is a demonstration of their mature partnership in the advance of the gospel.¹²⁴

James Ware, like Peterman, identifies the central theme of Philippians from the thanksgiving section and states that it is "the Philippians' partnership for the spread of the gospel";¹²⁵ however, he more emphatically emphasizes the missionary activity entailed in this partnership. His reading is based on how he understands *εὐαγγέλιον*, which he consistently treats as a *nomen actionis* that "does not merely refer to the gospel message," but to "the activity of extending the gospel."¹²⁶ The many instances of this noun along with the specific references to preaching (1:12–18) and other terms associated with it (e.g. 1:22; 2:25; 2:30; 3:2; 4:3; 4:17) provide warrant for understanding that Philippians has "an extraordinary level of interest in the preaching of the gospel."¹²⁷ All of the other sub-themes of the letter (e.g. suffering, unity, their gift) are to be understood in light of the central idea of "the Philippians' cooperation with Paul for the extension of the gospel," which unites them.¹²⁸ Ware's exegesis of Phil 1:12–2:18 (omitting an examination of the rest of the letter) attempts to demonstrate this.¹²⁹

In arguing that the main purpose of the letter is to provide direction and encouragement for the Philippians who are suffering and are threatened by spiritual

¹²² Peterman, *Paul's Gift*, 103.

¹²³ Peterman, *Paul's Gift*, 141, 157.

¹²⁴ Peterman, *Paul's Gift*, 156–60.

¹²⁵ James P. Ware, *The Mission of the Church in Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (NovTSup 120; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 168.

¹²⁶ Ware, *The Mission*, 166. Cf. Peter T. O'Brien, "The Importance of the Gospel in Philippians," in *God Who is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to Dr. D. B. Knox* (eds. Peter T. O'Brien and David G. Petersen; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 213–33.

¹²⁷ Ware, *The Mission*, 166.

¹²⁸ Ware, *The Mission*, 169.

¹²⁹ Ware, *The Mission*, 169–70.

dangers,¹³⁰ Ware posits that the opening of the letter body (Phil 1:12–14) introduces the topic of “the progress of the gospel through the joint missionizing activity of Paul and the Roman Christians.”¹³¹ He points to Phil 1:14 and specifically the phrase τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν as proof that missionary activity was not relegated to apostles and their co-workers, but that it indicates spreading the gospel was a “*general Christian activity*.”¹³² In Phil 1:15–18 Paul reflects on his situation in a way that is conducive to addressing the needs he perceives among the Philippians. He presents contrasting examples in hopes of encouraging the Philippians to embrace the positive example of proclaiming the gospel motivated by love and to unite together for the extension of the gospel.¹³³ Phil 1:19–26 presents Paul as an example of this kind of behavior. He, like Job, boldly proclaims the gospel in spite of the threat of suffering, and Paul also selflessly subordinates his desires for the sake of extending the gospel.

Paul’s reflection on his circumstances sets up his exhortation to the Philippians (1:27–2:18) where he calls them to unite together and actively engage in spreading the gospel despite the threat of opposition. Ware argues that the reason Philippians contains this unique exhortation to spread the gospel—which he avers is presupposed between Paul and his converts and thus not typically mentioned in his other letters—is because this church is experiencing opposition and thus “the church’s message was in danger of being silenced.”¹³⁴ Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians is anchored in the Christ hymn, which he reads as an “exegesis of the Isaianic portrayal of the suffering Servant.”¹³⁵ The hymn not only provides an example of self sacrifice and suffering, but more importantly the exaltation of Christ presents the “eschatological time of restoration” which was intimately bound up with the conversion of the gentiles.¹³⁶ Indeed the exemplary conduct of Christ is to be embraced by the Philippians precisely for the fulfillment of this missionary activity, as the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus demonstrate. Phil

¹³⁰ Ware, *The Mission*, 172–73.

¹³¹ Ware, *The Mission*, 183.

¹³² Ware, *The Mission*, 181 (italics in original).

¹³³ Ware, *The Mission*, 196–98.

¹³⁴ Ware, *The Mission*, 223. He also points to this same phenomenon in 1 Thess 1:5–8.

¹³⁵ Ware, *The Mission*, 225.

¹³⁶ Ware, *The Mission*, 228.

2:12–18 “spells out the hortatory consequences” of the hymn which is directly related to the spread of the gospel in Philippi. Working out their salvation entails suffering for the sake of spreading the gospel,¹³⁷ and the phrase λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες in Phil 2:16 is best understood as “holding forth the word of life” and is uniquely an explicit command to engage in missionary activity.¹³⁸ The Philippians are presented in Phil 2:15 and 17 as priests for the world around them serving in the same mediatorial role as Israel in the second temple texts depicting the end time conversion of the gentiles.¹³⁹ This section ends on a strong emphasis on missionizing activity which is tied to Paul’s joy throughout the letter. In his conclusion Ware sums up Philippians as being suffused with “the language of proclamation, gospel, and mission” and as standing out from Paul’s other letters as having a “focus on an active mission of the church,” which “pervades the epistle.”¹⁴⁰

These three investigations of Philippians helpfully call attention to aspects of the letter that had hitherto not received such full treatment. One of the purposes of Philippians is indeed to reassure the Philippians given Paul’s circumstances. It is likely also that Paul connects the Philippians’ gift to the advance of the gospel and that there is an element of spreading the gospel in this letter that is not as pronounced as elsewhere (esp. Phil 1:12–18). However, to argue that these aspects of the letter set forth Paul’s overarching aim has limitations. A crucial limitation of all of these approaches is the focus on the thanksgiving section or Phil 1:12 as key for understanding what Philippians is primarily about. As discussed above this does not adequately take into account the hortatory nature of the letter and the way in which Paul’s opening exhortation sets forth the main thesis.

Bloomquist’s analysis also suffers from too rigidly arranging Philippians according to the epistolary and rhetorical formal structural schemes. While some sections of Paul’s letters can function in ways similar to various portions of a letter or a speech, to utilize a pre-formed arrangement to identify Paul’s primary purpose is an inappropriate approach

¹³⁷ Ware, *The Mission*, 242.

¹³⁸ Ware, *The Mission*, 269–70.

¹³⁹ Ware, *The Mission*, 273.

¹⁴⁰ Ware, *The Mission*, 287.

to interpreting his letters.¹⁴¹ It puts them in constraints that do not fit the nature of his material nor the material of many of the letters from the ancient world. The analyses of both Peterman and Ware suffer from only treating a portion of Philippians. Neither of them substantially addresses the material in Phil 3 and its relation to Paul's primary purpose in writing. They also have a particular understanding of what partnership in the gospel entails that limits their work. Whereas both of them relate it to missionary activity, Ware emphasizes the role of proclamation, reading every usage of εὐαγγέλιον as conveying the activity of spreading the gospel. This too narrowly defines partnership in the gospel. Several have convincingly argued that for Paul the gospel is about the narrative of the Christ story (viz. his life, death, and resurrection), and that ministry for Paul is intimately bound up with embodying the pattern of this narrative.¹⁴² This connection is made repeatedly in Paul's other letters¹⁴³ and needs to be considered in Philippians where Paul provides the most detailed version of that narrative. These limitations highlight the weaknesses of focusing on the advance of the gospel as Paul's primary purpose in writing.

1.4.2. Disunity among the Philippians

There are several studies that view disunity as the main topic of Philippians and therefore understand Paul's primary purpose for writing the letter to be that of restoring unity among the Philippians by dealing with tensions that are causing problems. Davorin Peterlin's treatment of Philippians is by far the most thorough investigation of the letter in this fashion. He begins his analysis by examining the importance of unity throughout the letter. The various usages of πᾶς and ὑμεῖς/ἡμεῖς in the thanksgiving section are said to allude to the discord in the community and are Paul's way of emphasizing the need for

¹⁴¹ See Troy Martin, "Invention and Arrangement in Recent Pauline Rhetorical Studies: A Survey of the Practices and the Problems," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (eds. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 74–75.

¹⁴² Cf. Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (SBLDS 56; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983), 29, 247; Morna D. Hooker, "A Partner in the Gospel: Paul's Understanding of His Ministry," in *Theology & Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish* (eds. Eugene H. Lovering and Jerry L. Sumney; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 83–100.

¹⁴³ See Rom 1:3–6 and 1 Cor 15:3–5 for the gospel as the narrative of the Christ story, and see 2 Cor 4:1–12 for Paul's ministry.

unity.¹⁴⁴ Peterlin argues that the problem of disunity arises due to Paul's circumstances. Some in the Philippian church, shaped by their prior pagan conceptions about God and the nature of religious existence, have a triumphalist view of Christianity and therefore do not think that Christians should suffer. They therefore have a negative view about Paul given his current circumstances. Another group does not hold such a view and are more positive about the apostle. These two groups are opposed to each other and correspond to the factions that Paul discusses in Phil 1:12–18.¹⁴⁵ Paul's exhortation in Phil 1:27–2:18 is specifically related to addressing the disunity between these two groups. Because the disagreement had reached a level of personal discord and inappropriate attitudes Paul calls on all of them in Phil 2:1–4 to embrace the way of humility and love in their dealings with one another.¹⁴⁶ The Christ hymn that follows “addresses and echoes aspects of the Philippian dissension” providing an example for the Philippians of humility and renunciation of status that will assist them in addressing the discord between them.¹⁴⁷ Peterlin contends that Paul connects himself to the Philippian situation in the personal expression found in Phil 2:2. Paul is the cause of division in the church and this robs him of his joy, and thus he exhorts them to end their discord which is what will return his joy to him.¹⁴⁸

Peterlin argues that Phil 3 “addresses tendencies present among the Philippian Christians” and sets up the issue between Euodia and Syntyche which is “the climax and real concern of the whole of Phil 3,”¹⁴⁹ and is in fact the “central conflict within the whole situation” of the Philippian community.¹⁵⁰ The “opponents” in Phil 3 are understood as negative examples who display latent tendencies (excessive self-confidence and a propensity toward libertinism) which are present among the Philippians and whose practical manifestation would exacerbate the disunity between them. The central issue, however, that Paul is concerned to address in this section of the letter is that of

¹⁴⁴ Davorin Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (NovTSup 79; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 19–30.

¹⁴⁵ Peterlin, *Philippians*, 31–51.

¹⁴⁶ Peterlin, *Philippians*, 64.

¹⁴⁷ Peterlin, *Philippians*, 67.

¹⁴⁸ Peterlin, *Philippians*, 71–75.

¹⁴⁹ Peterlin, *Philippians*, 98.

¹⁵⁰ Peterlin, *Philippians*, 131.

perfectionism. The inclination toward it produces a reluctance to accept suffering and is parallel to the triumphalism identified in Phil 1:12–18.¹⁵¹ Peterlin argues that Euodia and Syntyche are leaders of different house-congregations as well as the respective leaders of the pro-Paul group and the anti-Paul group. The collection for Paul gave the groups an opportunity to display their discord and their view of Paul. The anti-Paul group withheld their financial contribution, while the pro-Paul group sent a small gift, which Epaphroditus, a wealthy member of the pro-Paul group, added to out of his own expenses.¹⁵² Paul attempts to deal with this situation, thanking them for their gift, but doing so in a way that downplays financial support so as not to present himself as being partial to one group.

David Garland also argues that the central concern of the letter is to address the issue of disunity, particularly that which has developed between Euodia and Syntyche. Garland does not connect this with a problem over Paul and suffering or understand their gift as an opportunity to display their conflict, but he does view the women as leaders and argues that their conflict “was having disastrous repercussions for the unity of the church.”¹⁵³ Bruce Winter agrees with Garland that Phil 4:2–3 is the climax of the letter and that disunity is the key concern Paul is addressing. He suggests that the issue between Euodia and Syntyche is a struggle for primacy and that they might have been using their connections to outdo the other. The conflict, Winter argues, should not just be seen as internal strife, but as something that was a public matter and which could possibly end in civil litigation.¹⁵⁴ Nils Dahl similarly views the disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche as the central problem that Paul is addressing in this letter, and understands their conflict, akin to Winter, in terms of “recognition and honor for their work in the gospel.”¹⁵⁵ He suggests that their conflict was likely due to “questions about who had suffered the most for her faith or who had contributed the most to the gift to

¹⁵¹ Peterlin, *Philippians*, 99.

¹⁵² Peterlin, *Philippians*, 221–24.

¹⁵³ Garland, “Composition,” 173.

¹⁵⁴ Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (First Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 101–2.

¹⁵⁵ Nils A. Dahl, “Euodia and Syntyche and Paul’s Letter to the Philippians,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (eds. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 14.

Paul.”¹⁵⁶ David Alan Black using discourse analysis explores “the various text-sequences in relation to the whole text” and also concludes that “the letter is directed toward solving the issue of disunity arising from the exigence reflected most clearly in 4:2–3.”¹⁵⁷ He thus argues that Paul’s primary rhetorical aim is to persuade the Philippians to put aside their differences and unite for the sake of the gospel.¹⁵⁸ Casey Wayne Davis uses oral biblical criticism to come to a similar conclusion. He argues that the letter is concentrically shaped and uses positive and negative examples to call for unity.¹⁵⁹ Following Garland and others, he views Euodia and Syntyche as the major source of conflict, which he argues is supported by the concentric patterning of the letter. This is seen in its use of negative examples which begins in the unit (Phil 3:2–4:3) with a broad focus and then narrows to these two women and their specific problem.¹⁶⁰

The issue of disunity is indeed a major concern of Philippians as these studies rightly emphasize. However, there is a crucial issue that warrants questioning whether it is the primary concern of the letter. This pertains to how it can account for the problem of suffering, which is a prominent issue recurring throughout the letter. It is much more plausible that disunity would arise from suffering than it is suffering would arise from disunity, as Peter Oakes has pointed out.¹⁶¹ Peterlin’s analysis suffers from further limitations. He argues that the issue of disunity arises from a problem over Paul’s situation. This position, along with others who view Paul’s imprisonment as a critical problem for the Philippians, fails to take seriously how Paul is exhorting the Philippians to think and live in a particular way in this letter. Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians focuses on their situation rather than on his, i.e. he calls them to live a life worthy of the gospel. This is the primary focus of the letter body which indicates his central concern is about addressing their progress in the faith (cf. Phil 1:25). Further limitations of

¹⁵⁶ Dahl, “Euodia and Syntyche,” 14.

¹⁵⁷ David Alan Black, “The Discourse Structure of Philippians: A Study in Textlinguistics,” *NovT* 37 (1995): 16.

¹⁵⁸ Black, “Philippians,” 16, 45.

¹⁵⁹ Casey Wayne Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism: The Influence of the Principles of Orality on the Literary Structure of Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (JSNTSup172; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 160.

¹⁶⁰ Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism*, 133–34, 158.

¹⁶¹ Oakes, *Philippians*, 124.

Peterlin's work involve the way in which he stretches his points to make his case and builds his reconstruction on an unverifiable scenario. Paul indeed uses the word $\pi\alpha\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ to address everyone, but to extrapolate from this that it points to the issue of disunity seems to go too far. His reconstruction has some compelling elements, but none of it is actually provable. While historical reconstruction is an imaginative act, the scenario he envisages needs stronger support than what is simply conceivable. There are thus compelling reasons for rejecting Peterlin's analysis of the letter and that of others who view disunity as the central concern Paul is addressing.

1.4.3. Addressing the Problem of Opponents/Suffering

There are several who identify the rhetorical situation of the letter as arising from opposition to the Philippians. Through rhetorical analysis it is typically argued that Paul utilizes deliberative rhetoric to persuade the Philippians to meet this exigence and adhere to a particular pattern of life and faith. Duane Watson's rhetorical analysis of Philippians has been widely accepted by those using a rhetorical approach. He argues for the above understanding of the letter and contends that the specific exigence was "the appearance of a rival gospel in Philippi."¹⁶² This rival gospel came from Judaizing Christian itinerants, who while not deeply entrenched in the Philippian community were nevertheless the source of problems Paul addresses in this letter.¹⁶³ Watson designates Phil 1:27–30 as the *narratio* that contains the proposition which is developed in the rest of Paul's argument. In this section Paul sets forth his main thesis that he will prove, answering the question "What is a manner of life worthy of the gospel?" The Judaizers argue that this consists in observing Jewish laws, while Paul argues it is in "love, fellowship, mutual concern, and single-minded purpose to live for the gospel, all in reliance upon the righteousness of Christ."¹⁶⁴ The *exordium* (Phil 1:12–26) is viewed as setting up this central concern providing the Philippians with an example from Paul's life of one who is "living a life worthy of the gospel in spite of opposition."¹⁶⁵ The *probatio*

¹⁶² Watson, "Philippians," 58.

¹⁶³ Watson, "Philippians," 58–59.

¹⁶⁴ Watson, "Philippians," 60.

¹⁶⁵ Watson, "Philippians," 65.

(Phil 2:1–3:21) provides proofs “through mustering arguments and examples” to persuade the Philippians to live in this kind of way.¹⁶⁶ The *peroratio* (Phil 4:1–20) recapitulates the argument and provides an emotional appeal eliciting a positive feeling for Paul and his case and the opposite for the opposition.¹⁶⁷

Mikael Tellbe in large part follows Watson’s rhetorical arrangement of the letter and identifies the central concern of it as Paul arguing for what living in a manner worthy of the gospel entails, which he specifically designates as Paul’s call “to perseverance and firmness by standing united in the face of opposition.”¹⁶⁸ Tellbe argues that the opposition the Philippians are facing comes from “the civic community and the local magistrates” and from Judaizing Christians within the community.¹⁶⁹ To confirm the former he uses the material from Acts and the terminology used in Philippians, highlighting the ways in which converts to Paul’s message presented a challenge to Roman ideology and values, specifically in their rejection of local gods and the imperial cult. This led to conflict between those embracing the gospel and those in charge of Roman Philippi, which has in turn triggered the disharmony among the Philippian Christians.¹⁷⁰ Tellbe argues that the group of Judaizing Christians present in the Philippian church had an appealing message theologically, but that its main appeal was sociological. The Philippian Christians could find social and political protection from the persecution they were experiencing at the hands of civic authorities by embracing the Judaizers’ teachings.¹⁷¹ By doing this, which Euodia and Syntyche were promoting,¹⁷² they would have been considered part of the Jewish community which was granted a special status (the supposed *religio licita*) in Roman society. Paul thus frames his argument in political terms to affirm the Christian identity of the Philippians and to argue that they should not return to the practices of civic religion or take on Jewish

¹⁶⁶ Watson, “Philippians,” 67.

¹⁶⁷ Watson, “Philippians,” 76.

¹⁶⁸ Mikael Tellbe, *Paul between Synagogue and State: Christians, Jews, and Civic Authorities in 1 Thessalonians, Romans, and Philippians* (ConBNT 34; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001), 232.

¹⁶⁹ Tellbe, *Synagogue and State*, 233, 260–61.

¹⁷⁰ Tellbe, *Synagogue and State*, 226–230, 237–38.

¹⁷¹ Tellbe, *Synagogue and State*, 264; cf. Mikael Tellbe, “The Sociological Factors Behind Philippians 3.1–11 and the Conflict at Philippi,” *JSNT* 55 (1994): 97–121.

¹⁷² Tellbe, *Synagogue and State*, 266.

teachings in order to mitigate the conflict they are experiencing.¹⁷³ They have a distinct political identity as citizens of heaven and are promised the highest honors for their identification with Christ.¹⁷⁴

Demetrius Williams for the most part follows Watson and Tellbe in his understanding of the central reason Paul writes Philippians. He follows Watson rather than Tellbe however, in identifying the opponents as Jewish throughout the entire letter.¹⁷⁵ He also takes the political language and Paul's polemics against the Judaizing opponents further than both Watson and Tellbe understanding Paul's rhetoric to imply the Philippians are the true Israel while the rivals are placed outside of the covenant.¹⁷⁶ The main contribution of Williams' work though is that he argues that the cross-terminology in Philippians (only specifically found in Phil 2:8 and 3:18) is Paul's argumentative find, which he uses as a rhetorical tool on the one hand to "promote his views of the nature and destiny of the eschatological community" and on the other hand to argue against his opponents and their negative example.¹⁷⁷ He understands Paul as persuading the Philippians primarily by utilizing this governing metaphor of the cross. The Christ pattern (Phil 2:6–11) provides the model of behavior that living worthily of the gospel entails, while those who do not live according to this pattern are enemies of the cross of Christ.¹⁷⁸ He argues that Paul's example in Phil 3 is patterned after that in the Christ hymn. This is evident in Paul's renunciation of privileges, the verbal parallels between the two accounts, and the description of the eschatological goal.¹⁷⁹ The opponents are counter-examples who do not embrace the Christ pattern and whose destiny is therefore destruction. Paul uses cross-terminology to argue against his opponents because "they do not see the message of the cross as excluding obedience to the Law and circumcision."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³ Tellbe, *Synagogue and State*, 273–74.

¹⁷⁴ Tellbe, *Synagogue and State*, 272, 274.

¹⁷⁵ Demetrius K. Williams, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ: The Terminology of the Cross and Conflict in Philippians* (JSNTSup 223; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 118.

¹⁷⁶ Williams, *Enemies*, 116–17, 158, 159, 180.

¹⁷⁷ Williams, *Enemies*, 148 n.1, cf. 222–23, 227, 250.

¹⁷⁸ Williams, *Enemies*, 145–47.

¹⁷⁹ Williams, *Enemies*, 239–42.

¹⁸⁰ Williams, *Enemies*, 248.

Edgar Krentz and Timothy Geoffrion, following the rhetorical analysis of Watson, further describe the nature of Paul’s argument making the case that he uses military language as part of the political *topos* to encourage the Philippians to remain steadfast in the face of opposition.¹⁸¹ They point to the way in which military language was used by the moral philosophers who present the ethical life in terms of a faithful soldier facing difficult circumstances as a conceptual background for Paul’s usage of the same language.¹⁸² They also contend that this language would have been easily understood and favorably viewed by the Philippians because of their heritage as a Roman military colony.¹⁸³ It is argued that Paul therefore used this language because it would have had a certain persuasive appeal conducive to making his case and encouraging his audience.

Identifying Phil 1:27–30 as the *narratio*, Krentz seeks to demonstrate how the language used in this passage “corresponds to a general’s military harangue before battle, encouraging his soldiers to fight bravely with a common purpose on behalf of family, city and fame.”¹⁸⁴ The opening imperative *πολιτεύεσθε* combined with *εὐαγγέλιον* sets the stage for what follows. It is argued that these terms are related to the demands made on citizens as members of a Roman colony and having obligations in the imperial cult.¹⁸⁵ These duties get spelled out in specifically militaristic terms where Paul calls them to unite as soldiers standing side by side in battle formation. The verb *στήκετε* is viewed in military terms as the opposite of *φεύγω*, and resembles the courageousness of one on the battlefield.¹⁸⁶ The verb *συναθλέω* emphasizes the joint action of the soldiers in war, and the expression *ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ* presents the mindset of unity needed for military action.¹⁸⁷ The expression *τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* indicates the pledge of loyalty they are

¹⁸¹ Edgar M. Krentz, “Military Language and Metaphors in Philippians,” in *Origins and Methods: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd* (ed. Bradley H. McLean; JSNTSup 86; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 105–27; Timothy C. Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose and the Political and Military Character of Philippians: A Call to Stand Firm* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1993).

¹⁸² Krentz, “Military Language,” 106–9; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 38–42.

¹⁸³ Krentz, “Military Language,” 111–12, 127; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 25, 36–38.

¹⁸⁴ Krentz, “Military Language,” 127.

¹⁸⁵ Krentz, “Military Language,” 115–18; cf. Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 47–53.

¹⁸⁶ Krentz, “Military Language,” 121–22; cf. Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 55.

¹⁸⁷ Krentz, “Military Language,” 122–23; cf. Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 60–62.

to make as soldiers did indicating that they would remain loyal and not revolt.¹⁸⁸ The verb πτύρω was frequently used of horses that became startled and fled in battle. Here it is used to encourage the Philippians not to be intimidated by their opponents (ἀντικειμένοι) and flee in this way.¹⁸⁹ Their opponents are presented as soon to face destruction (ἀπωλεία), but those standing firm will experience victory (σωτηρία) in this military contest (ἀγών).¹⁹⁰

Geoffrion's work expands that of Krentz and seeks to demonstrate how the militaristic imagery in Phil 1:27–30 relates to all of Philippians, providing the dominant organizational motif in calling the Philippians to steadfastness in the face of opposition. He begins by examining the sub-themes of the letter, specifically Paul's κοινωνία with the Philippians and the motif of joy. The former is described in terms of the need for them to remain steadfast together, which is understood in light of the political/military imagery.¹⁹¹ The latter is connected to the expectations of the soldier to remain joyful doing his duty, even in the face of difficulties, just as Paul does.¹⁹² Geoffrion then examines how Paul rhetorically uses examples to promote steadfastness. The positive example of Christ is viewed as modeling the way of humble obedience which is the same kind of qualities needed in the military.¹⁹³ Paul too models these values and virtues, but also acts like a military commander calling for obedience.¹⁹⁴ Timothy and Ephaphroditus are also viewed as positive models of steadfastness.¹⁹⁵ These positive examples are set off in contrast to the negative examples in the letter which recalls the two sides of battle evoking the imagery in Phil 1:27–30.¹⁹⁶

The focus of all of these studies on the conflict the Philippians are facing as the central issue that Paul is addressing is persuasive. They take seriously the hortatory

¹⁸⁸ Krentz, "Military Language," 124; cf. Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 62–63.

¹⁸⁹ Krentz, "Military Language," 124–25; cf. Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 66–70.

¹⁹⁰ Krentz, "Military Language," 125–26. Geoffrion (*Rhetorical Purpose*, 81), following Victor Pfitzner, notes that the noun ἀγών could be used in either an athletic or military way. He does not explore the athletic nature of the term in any detail, and states that the term was chosen "to represent the fundamental 'battle' Christians must wage due to their loyalty to Christ and the Gospel."

¹⁹¹ Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 82–84.

¹⁹² Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 118–120.

¹⁹³ Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 134–40.

¹⁹⁴ Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 85, 100–104, 129–33.

¹⁹⁵ Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 140–46.

¹⁹⁶ Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 152–58.

nature of the letter and focus on Phil 1:27–30 as the key text for identifying Paul’s reason for writing. While Watson’s rhetorical arrangement of the letter suffers from the same criticisms levied against Bloomquist’s approach, there are strong reasons for identifying Paul’s opening exhortation as the place where he sets forth his reason for writing. There are problems, however, with identifying the opponents as Judaizing Christians that are within the Philippian Christian community and with identifying the language that Paul uses in thoroughly militaristic terms on the basis that the community is full of military veterans. The former issue is explored in more detail in an essay by Morna Hooker and the latter issue is addressed in Peter Oakes’s study of the nature of the Philippian community.

Hooker argues that there is no evidence in the letter for opponents within the Philippian Christian community. She contends that the language in Phil 1:27–30 indicates the Philippians were suffering from a threat outside of the community, and that the opponents mentioned in Phil 3:2 and 3:18–19 refer only to potential threats.¹⁹⁷ She argues that Paul is primarily reflecting on his own circumstances in Rome, which involves personal conflict over his imprisonment, in order to address what he perceives to be a similar conflict in the Philippian community.¹⁹⁸ Paul is writing not only to reassure the Philippians and to defend himself against those who misunderstand his imprisonment, but also, since the verdict on his life might be unfavorable, to give a final testimony where he is “explaining the underlying principle of his ministry: ‘to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain’” and is calling the Philippians to adopt the same manner of life; i.e. a life modeled on the gospel story.¹⁹⁹ Paul introduces the opponents in Phil 3:2 and 3:18–19 not to address opposition within the community, but given that he may not see the Philippians again to warn them against possible threats, which have constantly troubled his ministry: Jewish Christians who teach that gentiles must practice certain elements of Judaism and a group which argues that the gospel entails freedom to live an

¹⁹⁷ Morna D. Hooker, “Philippians: Phantom Opponents and the Real Source of Conflict,” in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity. Essays in Honor of Heikki Räisänen* (eds. Ismo Dunderberg et al.; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2002), 377–78.

¹⁹⁸ Hooker, “Philippians,” 381, 394.

¹⁹⁹ Hooker, “Philippians,” 387, cf. 393.

antinomian life.²⁰⁰ Paul warns of these groups and presents them as contrasting examples. He mentions the first group in Phil 3:2 and moves directly to his example of what he has done in response to the gospel, “becoming like Christ and sharing his attitudes.”²⁰¹ He drops the Judaizing issue immediately and does not argue against their position like he does in polemical texts elsewhere, which indicates they are not a present threat within the community and that the Philippians would largely be in agreement with him. The same is true for the second group. Paul is warning the Philippians against the antinomian manner of life rather than addressing people present within the Philippian community.²⁰²

Hooker’s arguments about the lack of evidence for opposition within the Philippian community are compelling. She also makes a strong case for tying Paul’s exhortation to living in a manner patterned after the gospel story—for which we have already argued above (1.3.2) is an important feature of Paul’s argument—and is what informs how Paul ministers and lives. Her argument that the letter is primarily shaped by Paul’s circumstances in Rome, however, has limitations. Paul knows of the circumstances in the Philippian Christian community due to Epaphroditus’ recent arrival. He even addresses two people specifically by name indicating a depth of awareness of what is happening there. Paul may take some time to reflect on his circumstances, and his situation would indeed inform how he exhorts the Philippians, but it is more than likely that his main concern is to address issues within the Philippian community. It is this situation that is the real source of conflict that Paul is addressing rather than that at Rome. Peter Oakes helpfully fills out the nature of this conflict and discusses the likely social makeup of the community.

Oakes’s work challenges the received tradition that Philippi was a relatively affluent city full of Roman citizens and military veterans. He models the social structure of the

²⁰⁰ Many have argued that the group mentioned in Phil 3:18–19 is the same as that in Phil 3:2: e.g. Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco: Word, 1983), 166; Chris Mearns, “The Identity of Paul’s Opponents at Philippi,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 194–204; Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul*, 229. Hooker argues against this and for identifying them as an antinomian group. This is a much more compelling argument for which Karl Olav Sandnes (*Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* [SNTSMS 120; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 136–64) has also convincingly argued.

²⁰¹ Hooker, “Philippians,” 391.

²⁰² Hooker, “Philippians,” 392.

city that presents about 60% of the population as non-Roman citizens and Greek speakers with the remaining 40% as Roman citizens. The amount of veterans in the city he estimates to be at the most around 3%. Philippi was an agrarian colony, and by the middle of the first-century CE the Roman settlers would have been in charge of most of the land and resources. The non-Roman Greek speakers would have largely comprised the service community, the poor, and the slaves.²⁰³ Of course, some of the Romans could enter into these situations due to various circumstances. In applying his model of the social structure of Philippi to the Philippian church, he argues that most of the people in the church would have been non-Roman citizens and Greek speaking, and that it is extremely unlikely that there were any military veterans in the church. The Christians would have been largely from the service community (craftspeople, traders, etc.), the poor, slaves, and peasant farmers.²⁰⁴

Oakes argues that suffering is the central issue the Philippians are facing, which was primarily economic and would have increased the need for unity. He demonstrates this by pointing out that when people living near to a subsistence level joined the unpopular Christian movement and removed shrines to cherished local gods, and so forth, from their shops, relationships with those much needed for business would have suffered. Local rulers would have been suspicious of this new movement and considered the adherents of it as well as those associating with them as troublemakers. This would lead to a withdrawal of clientele from shops owned and operated by Christians, and thus have long-term economic consequences for them.²⁰⁵ This situation is related to the need for unity in that new economic relationships are needed for those suffering to survive, i.e. other Christians are to join in economic relations with those who have been sanctioned in this way. This has great risk for those who are not suffering: depletion of their wealth, breaking of existing relationships, and incurring of guilt by association.²⁰⁶

Paul addresses the Philippian situation by presenting himself as a model of the right way to approach suffering. He writes about himself, and Timothy and Epaphroditus, in a

²⁰³ Oakes, *Philippians*, 49.

²⁰⁴ Oakes, *Philippians*, 60.

²⁰⁵ Oakes, *Philippians*, 89–91.

²⁰⁶ Oakes, *Philippians*, 100–101.

way that calls attention to how he wants the Philippians to live.²⁰⁷ Christ provides the ultimate model that stands behind the exemplary behavior Paul is emphasizing. But, the depiction of Christ in Philippians does more than demonstrate how to approach suffering. It also remaps the universe. Paul presents Christ's exaltation (Phil 2:9–11) in terms reminiscent of the enthronement of the emperor, albeit in a way that also reflects the vision in Isaiah of God's sovereignty over everything in the universe.²⁰⁸ This relativizes the authority of the Romans, legitimates further the kind of behavior exemplified by Christ, and moves the marginalized Philippian Christians to the center.²⁰⁹ In making the connection between imperial ruler-ideology and the presentation of Christ in Philippians, Oakes is careful to argue that the problem the Philippians are facing is not participation in the imperial cult. There is little evidence that this was obligatory or done on an individual basis. The more likely issue is the rejection of other cults in which they have previously participated which has triggered economic sanctions.²¹⁰

Oakes's analysis of the social structure of the Philippian Christians seriously calls into question the idea held by Krentz and Geoffrion that military language would have been familiar to the Philippians because they were veterans and proud of their military heritage. While military language had a wide currency, as reflected in the moral philosophers, the social situation of the Philippian Christians as Oakes presents it warrants considering the possibility that the language used in Philippians might be functioning in another way. The terms that Krentz and Geoffrion identify as specifically militaristic can be understood in other terms. For instance, *συναθλέω* and *ἀγών* can be understood in connection with athletics. Another contribution of Oakes is his connection between suffering and economic sanctions. Instead of viewing the pressures arising from failure to participate in the imperial cult, he connects them with the concrete issue of economic hardships due to the breakdown of relationships needed for business. This is a very plausible reconstruction of the problems the Philippians were facing.

²⁰⁷ Oakes, *Philippians*, 103–28.

²⁰⁸ Oakes, *Philippians*, 147–74.

²⁰⁹ Oakes, *Philippians*, 204–7; cf. Peter Oakes, "Re-mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians," *JSNT* 27 (2005): 320.

²¹⁰ Oakes, "Re-mapping," 312–14, 319.

1.4.4. Summary

The above has demonstrated that focusing on the advance of the gospel or disunity as the central organizing theme that everything else in Philippians is formulated around has serious limitations. From the above we can, however, conclude that Phil 1:27–30 is crucial for understanding Paul’s aim(s) in this letter, and that the central issue facing the Philippians that has given rise to other problems is that of suffering. As Hooker has argued though, the opposition is from those outside the Christian community and not from false teachers present within it. Oakes’s analysis of the social structure of the Philippian community also brings to the fore the possibility that those in the Christian community would not have been as familiar with or as favorably disposed toward militaristic language as Krentz and Geoffrion have argued. Given that the terms identified as militaristic in Phil 1:27–30 may not have been so readily received in light of militaristic categories, it is worth exploring another option. As mentioned above, the terms that they identify as militaristic can be understood in terms of athletics. What could very likely be athletic language occurs at crucial places in the letter, specifically in the thesis statement (Phil 1:27–30), Paul’s concluding thoughts about how he lives (Phil 3:12–14), and Paul’s specific exhortation to two women in the Christian community at Philippi (Phil 4:3). With Paul’s most extended metaphor in the letter being that of a runner (Phil 3:12–14), which he uses to sum up his self-presentation leading into a specific exhortation for the Philippians to imitate him (Phil 3:17; cf. 4:9), there is strong support for examining how the discourse of athletics can contribute to our understanding of what Paul is seeking to accomplish in Philippians. The possibility that athletic imagery might be in view rather than militaristic imagery is also supported from the centrality of athletics in the ancient world, both in the popular form of games and in how it was used by moral philosophers to sum up aspects of their moral philosophical projects. For Greek people in the first-century CE there were strong connections between politics, athletics, contests, and virtue, which made this imagery conducive to depict how to live a good life (this is developed more fully in ch. 5 below). Given that these were common associations it is worth examining how something similar might be in force in Paul’s use of these terms and concepts in Philippians.

1.5. Athletic Imagery and Its Function in Philippians

There have been a few studies that address the athletic imagery in Philippians. These projects are mostly concerned with athletic language across Paul's letters and therefore do not provide a complete analysis of Philippians, except for Russell Sisson's two essays. I will first discuss the way in which these analyses broadly approach their investigation of athletics and then I will examine their contribution to understanding Philippians.

1.5.1. Paul's Apostolic *Agōn*

Victor Pfitzner's seminal work on the *agōn* motif in Paul has been one of the most influential studies of this subject. He addresses three primary issues in this work, which he introduces in the introduction and returns to definitively answer in his conclusion. They are 1) locating the sources for Paul's use of the *agōn* motif, 2) highlighting Paul's distinctive use of it, and 3) identifying Paul's concerns in using it.²¹¹ In examining these issues Pfitzner argues against the prevalent position of many scholars before him who located Paul's use of the *agōn* motif in the Cynic-Stoic diatribe and viewed Paul's references as comparable to the moral *agōn* found there. Instead, he understands Paul to be using a common and popular metaphor of the day and filling it with his own theological meaning. In connection with this he treats the athletic imagery in Philippians as part of Paul's apostolic ethos where he is striving for spiritual perfection in Christ, not moral perfection.

Pfitzner begins by tracing the *agōn* tradition from the origin of the Greek games through the Hellenistic philosophers. He argues that this development demonstrates a "profanation or secularization of the Greek games in the thought of hellenistic popular moral philosophy."²¹² This allows him to present the *agōn* motif as a popular metaphor that was disconnected from the games and with which anyone would be familiar, including Jewish people who would have had no contact with athletics.²¹³ Pfitzner continues to explore the *agōn* tradition by turning to its development in Hellenistic

²¹¹ Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* (NovTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 1, 187.

²¹² Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon*, 35.

²¹³ Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon*, 3, 187, 188.

Judaism, which he suggests is a more appropriate context given that the material is closer to Paul's own thought. He emphasizes in this section how one might take the common *agōn* metaphor, exhibiting some similarities with the diatribe, and import one's own theological thought into it. Philo most readily illustrates this in his description of the *agōn* as one of piety (εὐσέβεια) and something that is done for God.²¹⁴ The importance of this development in the *agōn* tradition highlights how Jewish authors can take up the athletic imagery without adopting the Cynic-Stoic attitudes attendant with their philosophical use of it. Furthermore, it demonstrates how authors can fill the image with their own theological ideas.

This background sets the stage for Pfitzner's examination of Paul's use of the *agōn* motif. He has traced the development of the tradition to drive a wedge between the *agōn* found in the moral philosophers or the Greek games and Paul's usage of it.²¹⁵ He can now explore the distinctiveness of the image in Paul's writings, which he situates in Paul's apostolic ministry for the gospel. This is seen in Phil 3:12–14 where he understands the athletic imagery as specifically related to Paul's response to those who are attacking his authority.²¹⁶ He argues that the image of the athlete Paul employs highlights his present state of imperfection, the not yet character of the present. The emphasis, as Pfitzner has argued throughout his work, is on the goal, not the effort or self-exertion to attain the goal.²¹⁷ In answering his opponents, Paul sketches his apostolic ethos which delineates the true course to spiritual perfection in Christ.²¹⁸ Due to Paul's apologetic concerns in this passage it is only in a secondary sense that the imagery is to be applied to every believer. Pfitzner follows a similar line of thought with respect to Phil 1:27–30 where he argues that the Philippians are here being included in "Paul's own

²¹⁴ Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon*, 44.

²¹⁵ Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon*, 80.

²¹⁶ Pfitzner (*Paul and the Agon*, 141–42) baldly states, "The Apostle's interest is not centred on enunciating a general principle of Christian life and ethics—whether the accent lie on the 'not yet', or on the necessity of striving for the goal of perfection—but on providing a pointed answer to a specific problem in hand."

²¹⁷ Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon*, 149.

²¹⁸ Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon*, 151.

wrestling for the spread of the faith of the Gospel,” which he finds further support for in Phil 4:3 as well.²¹⁹

Pfitzner’s work has made a significant contribution to the study of athletic imagery in Paul, but it suffers from several limitations. The first pertains to his overly simplistic understanding of how the *agōn* motif developed throughout history. To posit a disconnect between athletic practices and a discourse related to it, neglects how the moral philosophers’ and Paul’s athletic language is indebted to actual athletic practices of the time, and it minimizes the way in which language and practices are dialogically related in a society. A second issue is Pfitzner’s presumption that faithful Jewish people would have no familiarity with Greek athletics. This seems to be coloring his construal of the historical situation for Paul.²²⁰ A third limitation of Pfitzner’s work is his insistence that the athletic imagery in Paul could not have entailed any form of effort or exertion. This again seems highly suspect given the nature of the imagery and is an instance of Pfitzner’s particular theological biases shaping his reading of Paul’s texts.²²¹ Flowing from this same tendency, Pfitzner also separates what he calls the spiritual struggle from the moral struggle. This forces a distinction upon Paul’s thought that does not seem present in the text. Spiritual and moral formation are more closely intertwined in Paul’s letters.

²¹⁹ Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon*, 119.

²²⁰ He states (*Paul and the Agon*, 188), “Considering the deep-lying abhorrence of Palestinian Judaism for Greek athletics and gymnastics as typical phenomena of heathendom, one must question Paul’s so-called love for, and familiarity with Greek sports!” See Rainer Metzner’s challenge to Pfitzner’s assumption that Paul could only have come into contact with the athletic metaphor indirectly in “Paulus und der Wettkampf: Die Rolle des Sports in Leben und Verkündigung des Apostels (1 Kor 9.24-7; Phil 3.12-16),” *NTS* 46 (2000): 565–583.

²²¹ This is not to say that we do not all have theological biases that influence how we interpret texts. My point here is to point out how Pfitzner throughout his work allows his theological view of Paul, which emphasizes grace to the exclusion of any form of human effort, to play a role in shaping his argument. For instance, he states “as in all Paul’s words on the mystery of election and predestination, the emphasis lies on the unfathomable and inexplicable grace of God which is determined by nothing which man is or does.” And again, “The gift of faith puts an end to the old moral Agon and sets the believer on the new course of dependence on God” (*Paul and the Agon*, 136, 194).

1.5.2. The *Agōn* in Its Jewish Context

Martin Brändl's work follows much of Pfitzner's, especially in that he argues Paul's usage of this language is more indebted to Hellenistic Judaism, which Brändl connects specifically with the tradition of the suffering righteous one found particularly in the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, and 4 Maccabees.²²² He, however, connects Paul more closely to the games than Pfitzner does, arguing that it was Paul's exposure to the Isthmian Games held at Corinth that gave Paul's athletic language its specific coloring.²²³ He discusses the athletic imagery in Philippians under two broad categories: *Siegeskranz-Metaphorik* and *Der Agon als Dienst für das Evangelium*. In the former he analyzes Phil 3:12–14 and emphasizes that the language is used to depict Christian existence in terms of goal orientation toward the eschatological future/reward and the necessity of remaining steadfast in persevering toward it. He argues that the terms in Phil 3:12–16 are taken over from 1 Cor 9:24–27 and are thus colored by the Isthmian Games, but the way in which they are given an eschatological meaning is thoroughly indebted to the early-Jewish apocalyptic tradition.²²⁴ The roots of the *Siegeskranz* metaphor he situates particularly in the tradition found in 4 Macc 17:11–16 where the faithful suffering martyrs are rewarded with eternal life.²²⁵ In the latter category he places the athletic language in Phil 1:27–30 and 4:3. Here again the language is connected with the need for perseverance in the midst of suffering, but it is used more specifically in connection with the missionary work of Paul.²²⁶ He argues that the connection with suffering is also to be understood in light of the Jewish tradition of the suffering servant. Brändl is careful to point out that the athletic language is used in a paradigmatic way to instruct the audience to imitate the example of Paul as they conform their lives to the destiny of Christ.²²⁷

²²² Martin Brändl, *Der Agon bei Paulus: Herkunft und Profil paulinischer Agonmetaphorik* (WUNT 2/222; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 85, 137.

²²³ Brändl, *Der Agon*, 236–44.

²²⁴ Brändl, *Der Agon*, 289–305.

²²⁵ Brändl, *Der Agon*, 318–19.

²²⁶ Brändl, *Der Agon*, 337–44.

²²⁷ Brändl, *Der Agon*, 352.

Brändl has helpfully connected Paul's usage of athletic language to the games, and has shown how the language could have been understood in a particularly Jewish context. The question that needs to be answered is whether or not the audience at Philippi would have made these connections, and if Paul would have played on these connections if he knew that his audience would not be familiar with them. The makeup of the community at Philippi can safely be identified as thoroughly gentile in nature (see Oakes' analysis discussed above, 1.4.3). The archaeological record, the account in Acts, and even Paul's letter to the Philippians point in this direction. It is therefore problematic to argue that the Jewish tradition associated with athletic language would have been the most readily heard or in play. While Paul definitely employs categories that are indebted to his Jewish apocalyptic tradition, he can also use language that is not. An exploration of athletic language that takes seriously the common associations it had in non-Jewish contexts is needed to better understand how this thoroughly gentile audience would have made sense of this very popular Hellenistic imagery.

1.5.3. The *Agōn* in Its Greco-Roman Context

Philip Esler has addressed this need and analyzed how Paul's ancient audience would have understood the athletic language that he uses. Esler engages with both literary and visual evidence from the Greco-Roman world as he constructs a context to make sense of this language. He prefaces his analysis of the evidence with a discussion of the Mediterranean cultural script, which he states that he only utilizes as a model to raise questions about the material he is considering. This cultural script locates the *agōn* squarely within the widespread phenomenon of competition for honor, group-orientation where identity was bound up with significant groups to which one belonged, and the idea of limited good which posits that all goods are limited and thus one person's acquisition is another person's loss.²²⁸

After setting forth the ancient athletic evidence, Esler examines Paul's usage of athletic language in 1 Corinthians and Philippians. He argues that in Phil 3:12–16 Paul,

²²⁸ Philip F. Esler, "Paul and the *Agon*: Understanding a Pauline Motif in Its Cultural and Visual Context," in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images* (eds. Annette Weissenrieder et al.; WUNT 2/193; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 363–64.

unlike in 1 Cor 9:24–27, connects the presentation of himself as an athlete with his audience (Phil 3:17) in an attempt to exercise his leadership over them. They are to imitate Paul as a group and find their group identity in the example of Paul, who as an athlete is not looking back over his shoulder, as the visual evidence indicates was a normal practice, but is straining for what lies ahead, which is the upward call of God. Esler argues that the athletic imagery in Phil 1:27–30 is also used in the construction of the Philippians’ group identity. They are *συναθλοῦντες*, which may have been understood in connection with one of the combat sports, in the same *ἀγών* in which Paul is engaged. Esler notes that there are some issues with using these more individualistic athletic metaphors for the formation of group identity, but suggests that they are overcome in that what is emphasized is not just the accrual of honor for the victor and the group to which that one belongs, but more specifically in Paul putting himself forth as the prototypical athlete and involving the Philippians in the same race and contest in which he participates.²²⁹

Russell Sisson has also examined the athletic *topoi* in Philippians in light of a Greco-Roman context.²³⁰ He notes the central position of athletic language in Philippians which he argues in Phil 1:27 “functions as an analytical topos by providing the basis for a line of thought,” which picks up the themes presented in 1:12–26, viz. Paul’s inspirational fearlessness in the face of his difficulties and the honor associated with dying in a contest.²³¹ The imagery in Phil 3:12–16 also picks up previous themes in the letter, presenting Paul’s apostolic mission in terms of a contest for which he will receive honors for successfully completing (cf. Phil 1:6).²³² Sisson is careful to point out that Paul’s contest is similar to but different from the Philippians’ contest. Paul has an apostolic calling and mission which has brought him to the point of death. The Philippians are

²²⁹ Esler, “Paul and the Agon,” 379–81.

²³⁰ Russell B. Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos* in Philippians: The *Agōn* Topos in Paul and the Hellenistic Moralists,” in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference* (eds. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson; London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 238–54; idem, “A Common *Agōn*: Ideology and Rhetorical Intertexture in Philippians,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (eds. David B. Gowler et al.; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003), 242–63.

²³¹ Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos*,” 242.

²³² Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos*,” 243.

facing opposition, but they do not have the same calling and are not facing death like Paul. Furthermore, “Paul presents himself as further along, or more experienced, in the ‘contest,’” which reinforces his hierarchical vision for the community, which is ordered: God, Christ, Paul, and then the Philippians.²³³

Sisson at various places helpfully discusses the Greco-Roman context of athletics. He notes how Hellenistic moral philosophers used athletics to urge their audiences to live virtuous lives, and highlights how they used the *agōn topos* in an analytical fashion, i.e. as “a true metaphor, inviting the hearers or readers to see for themselves the points of similarity in the things compared.”²³⁴ He also discusses how death in athletic competitions was considered one of the highest honors.²³⁵ These associations with athletics, Sisson argues, form the tacit cultural knowledge on which Paul draws, but Paul, however, further extends these associations for his own apostolic purposes. Sisson also approvingly discusses Troels Engberg-Pedersen’s work, which he argues highlights Stoic motifs which give “the letter a rationalistic veneer.”²³⁶ While these motifs relate to the rhetorical aim of the letter, presenting a way of thinking about suffering and death (cf. Phil 2:5–11), he argues that the *agōn* motif shifts from the rationalistic motifs of wisdom to “a ‘prophetic’ discourse where the topics are divine calling and following the example of chosen leaders.”²³⁷ This discourse, he contends, is best understood in terms of *eros*, which lies beneath the Stoic-like discourse and is what drives Paul and unites him to the Philippians. Sisson argues that Paul primarily establishes his authorial *ethos* in Philippians through athletic *topoi*—marking Paul’s character as a genuine apostle reflected in his deeds—which give cohesion to lines of thought in the letter, viz. Paul’s exemplary ways of thinking, his attitudes, and his emotions, which the Philippians are to imitate.²³⁸

²³³ Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos*,” 253; cf. idem, “Common *Agōn*,” 252–56.

²³⁴ Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos*,” 241; cf. 240–41, 243. The Hellenistic moral philosophical sources he uses are: Epictetus, *Ench.* 29; *Diatr.* 3.20.9; Philo, *Somn.* 1.129–30; *Agr.* 177; *Migr.* 133; Seneca, *Ep.* 34.

²³⁵ Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos*,” 247–49, citing Philostratus, *Imag.* 2.6.

²³⁶ Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos*,” 252.

²³⁷ Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos*,” 252.

²³⁸ Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos*,” 253.

Both of these essays make important contributions and emphasize the Greco-Roman context of athletics to which Paul's athletic language was indebted. This situates Paul's language more squarely in the Greco-Roman world and provides a way of making sense of how a predominately gentile audience would have heard this speech. There are, however, in both essays some limitations and areas where further development is needed. Esler's work, while usefully calling attention to the formation of group identity in Philippians, fails to discuss more fully the relationship of Paul's athletic language to the rest of the letter. This limitation is in large part due to the nature of his essay and space restrictions. Sisson's essay insightfully provides this kind of analysis and rightly gives athletic language a central place in Paul's argument. However, Sisson, even after addressing the connections between virtue and athletics, moves to connect the athletic *topoi* in Philippians with *eros*. Given the connections between virtue, athletics, and the moral philosophical terms and concepts in Philippians, a stronger argument could be made for more fully exploring the interrelationship between virtue, athletics, and moral philosophy, and how they contribute to Paul's overarching aim in the letter. Instead of seeing a shift in discourse from what he calls the Stoic-like "rationalistic" elements to the driving force of *eros* in the athletic *topoi*, a more fruitful exploration, given the close relationship in the moral philosophical tradition between virtue and athletics, could be offered from examining the "Stoic-like" aspects in connection with the athletic elements of Paul's argument. By exploring the connection between athletics and virtue, as found in ancient moral philosophy, a more coherent and cogent reading of the letter could be offered.

Another area which Esler's work has brought to the fore is the role of the visual in the ancient world. A few scholars have recently sought to develop this neglected area in NT studies. The approaches to this have varied, but most of them are interested in how the visual material provides a context for understanding various themes or metaphors.²³⁹ An underdeveloped inquiry is in exploring how the verbal and the visual were interrelated in

²³⁹ E.g. Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010); Davina Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); Weissenrieder et al., eds., *Picturing the New Testament*.

the ancient world.²⁴⁰ With respect to athletic imagery in Philippians, there is therefore a need to investigate further not just the various athletic images in the ancient world that reflect and shape constructions of the athlete, but also the interplay between words and visual images. By exploring this latter connection we could identify how Paul is using language in a visual way to persuade his audience.

1.5.4. Summary

These studies have approached athletic language in Paul from examining Paul's own distinctive usage of this language, rooting it in a Jewish context, and in a Greco-Roman one. As I have argued there is a stronger case in Philippians for identifying the Greco-Roman context as the more appropriate one within which to examine Paul's athletic imagery. While Esler and Sisson go some way toward providing an analysis of Philippians in light of this, more needs to be done in exploring the relationship of athletic imagery to Paul's overarching argument and his pattern of thought in this letter. More specifically, this thought pattern needs to be addressed by exploring the close connections between athletics, virtue, and other moral philosophical terms and concepts which are prominent in the letter. Esler's essay has brought to the fore the importance of visual images in understanding athletics. As intimated above there is also a need to explore how Paul's verbal athletic imagery was connected to the visual. More precisely, how is Paul using athletic imagery to depict his life and what kind of "visual" effect would this have had on his audience? Questions like this one have scarcely been explored in NT scholarship. The interrelationship between the verbal and the visual was an important part of ancient rhetoric (as will be demonstrated more fully in ch. 5 below), which the proliferation of scholarship among classicists in this very area has recently called attention to.²⁴¹ It is, therefore, an important and neglected area that is worthy of

²⁴⁰ E.g. Jane M.F. Heath, "Absent Presence of Paul and Christ: *Enargeia* in 1 Thessalonians 1-3," *JSNT* 32 (2009): 3-38; Peter Lampe, "Quintilian's Psychological Insights in his *Institutio Oratoria*," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (eds. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; New York/London: T&T Clark, 2010), 180-99, esp. 185-87.

²⁴¹ See, e.g., the issue of *Classical Philology* 102 (2007), which is entirely devoted to *ekphrasis*, and note the bibliographic references cited throughout.

examination, especially in connection with Paul's athletic image of the runner, which has a vivid quality that can easily be "seen."

1.6. Conclusion: Aims of the Thesis

From the above overview of research I have identified several contributions to the study of Philippians and have also highlighted areas where further development and investigation is needed. Agreeing with a growing trend in the study of the letter, I argued that there are strong reasons to take Philippians as one letter rather than three or two. While some have sought to classify Philippians in terms of a particular letter genre, I argued that this has serious limitations and posited that the focus should instead be on the content of the letter. One of the central features of the content of the letter, as those discussing friendship motifs in the letter have pointed out (e.g. Stowers and White), is the emphasis on moral formation. I argued that Holloway's argument, while making important connections between moral philosophy and Paul's community forming project, is lacking due to the insufficient evidence that the Philippians are grieving and emotionally frail. Given the importance of moral formation and the prominence of moral philosophical terms and concepts in the letter, more needs to be done in exploring further how the moral philosophical language in the letter functions to achieve the moral formation of the Philippians.

This brings up the question of the logic of Paul's argumentation, or how his pattern of thought is structured in the letter. Some have identified a thought pattern that is chiasmically shaped. While noting the parallel features of the letter, I argued against understanding Philippians as an intricate chiasm. Agreeing with Fowl and Kurz I argued that the Christ hymn plays an important role in Paul's argument, and contended along with Meeks that this is connected with Paul's use of moral philosophical terms and concepts in the letter (note especially Phil 2:5). In agreement with Engberg-Pedersen I argued that the many moral philosophical elements in the letter are important in understanding Paul's pattern of thought; however, this needs to be done in a manner that takes seriously the structure of thought in moral philosophy in its own terms and concepts rather than superimposing a model upon its pattern of thought.

Several in attempting to identify the aim(s) of Philippians have called attention to important themes in the letter. While I agree that suffering coming from opposition outside the community (e.g. Hooker), rather than the advance of the gospel (e.g. Ware) or disunity (e.g. Peterlin), was the primary issue Paul is writing to address (e.g. Oakes), I disagree that Paul was using militaristic imagery to deal with this issue. Given the makeup of the community, the common associations of athletics with politics, virtue, and moral philosophy, I argued that there are strong reasons for examining the connections with athletics and moral philosophy in Paul's argument. While Sisson has begun to address the importance of athletics in Paul's argument, more is needed to develop this connection more specifically with moral philosophy. In connection with the importance of athletic imagery in Philippians (e.g. Esler), there is a need to explore further how the verbal and the visual were interrelated in Paul's world and what kind of rhetorical force the image of the runner in Phil 3:13–14 could potentially have.

1.6.1. Aims of the Thesis

The aims of this thesis are to investigate Philippians addressing the needs set forth above. In light of the many moral philosophical terms and concepts in this letter as well as how the letter focuses on the Philippians' moral formation, I aim to demonstrate 1) how the pattern of thought in moral philosophy, in its own terms and concepts, correlates with the pattern of thought in Philippians. By identifying the common pattern of thought in moral philosophy we will be in a position to elucidate how Paul is using moral philosophical terms and concepts in his argument. Given the prominent placement of athletic language in Philippians (e.g. 1:27–30; 3:12–14; 4:3) and how this language was used in moral philosophy, I aim to demonstrate 2) how athletic imagery is used in Philippians to encapsulate the overarching aim of the letter. Given the importance of vivid verbal imagery in ancient discussions of rhetoric, I aim to demonstrate 3) how the verbal and the visual were interrelated in the ancient world, and, in connection with this, the rhetorical significance of vivid speech. This will enable us to examine Paul's image of the runner in Phil 3:13–14 as a vivid description and to explore how it functions in Paul's argument. These three aims of the thesis are all interrelated. The pattern of thought in

moral philosophy will provide the correlative material needed to explore Paul's logic of argumentation, and will be the primary material in view in the exegesis of Philippians. The importance of athletics in understanding Philippians will be explored in connection with moral philosophy, especially since it was used to depict various aspects of their moral philosophical projects. This brings up the need to examine how Paul's athletic language functions in his argument, which highlights the need to understand the rhetorical force of Phil 3:13–14. Before exploring the historical context (Part II) necessary to address these aims, it will be beneficial to briefly set forth the theoretical framework shaping my approach to the material (ch. 2).

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR AN HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

Introduction

Having established from the overview of research that there are three areas that need to be addressed in a study of Philippians, which can be stated as moral philosophy, athletics, and rhetoric (viz. vivid speech), it is necessary here to reflect critically on what is involved in an historical investigation. Broadly put, the kind of historical investigation that I am concerned with in this thesis is an attempt to understand the world of the NT, particularly that which Paul and the Philippians inhabited, and how this world shapes the nature of the language and argument in Paul's letter to the Philippians. This chapter will clarify my approach to interpreting Paul's letter to the Philippians by establishing: 1) my approach to history in general, 2) the processes by which knowledge is produced and the significance of this for my historical investigation, and 3) the extent to which the three areas I am concerned to address in this study would have been familiar to the early Christians.

2.1. A Critical Approach to History

In NT studies an historical investigation would have traditionally been performed from the perspective of historical positivism, an historical investigation done in a detached neutral manner in order objectively to identify the (singular) truth about what happened, or what was being argued. In the twentieth-century this approach to an historical investigation began to be seriously questioned, particularly from three areas. The first area involved a move in many disciplines away from foundationalism and toward approaches that recognize all objects of investigation are understood in light of certain perspectives, which are "historically contingent, situated, local, and personal," challenging the notion of some objective truth "out there" that is securely accessible from proven methods that establish a foundation on which to build certain facts.¹ The second

¹ F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Rethinking Historical Criticism," *BibInt* 7.3 (1999): 240, cf. 239-41. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (2nd edn.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1965).

area pertains to a move to historicize not just the object which one was investigating, but also the interpreter, highlighting the historical contingency of the critic and problematizing notions of detached neutrality.² The third area, following on from the previous two, has been a move to emphasize the constructed nature of all knowledge; i.e. “meaning is not found but made” by people in various social, cultural, and political contexts using the symbols available to them (more on the processes by which this takes place below, 2.2).³

The traditional approach to historical investigations presents on one side an “objectivist determinism and positivist naïveté,” while the twentieth-century postmodernist developments could lead, on the other side, to “subjectivist free-play and nihilism.”⁴ F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp argues for a middle path between these two poles and contends that this is best done with a “[c]ritical historicism,” which combines “a poststructuralist reading strategy with the historicist respect for the other and belief that the cultural and social milieu in which past literary works originated is likely to be relevant for understanding those works.”⁵ The question becomes, however, how does one engage with this relevant material (the cultural and social milieu) while at the same time holding a position that contends that all knowledge, including the interpreter’s understanding of this material, is constructed?⁶ Dobbs-Allsopp argues, following Lee Patterson, that this takes place through dialectic, or negotiation. Quoting Patterson, he

² Dobbs-Allsopp, “Historical Criticism,” 241–45.

³ Dobbs-Allsopp, “Historical Criticism,” 245–49. Cf. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966).

⁴ Dobbs-Allsopp, “Historical Criticism,” 251. Cf. Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York/London: Norton & Company, 1995), 246, commenting on the dichotomy bequeathed by positivism, they state positivism’s “principal legacy [is] an enduring dichotomy between absolute objectivity and totally arbitrary interpretations of the world of objects.”

⁵ Dobbs-Allsopp, “Historical Criticism,” 252.

⁶ Recognizing the constructed nature of interpretations does not necessarily entail that an historical reconstruction is entirely arbitrary and leads to indeterminacy. As Stanley Fish points out in “Commentary: The Young and the Restless,” in *The New Historicism* (ed. H. Aram Veveser; New York/London: Routledge, 1989), 308 (italics in original): “The belief that facts are constructed is a *general* one and is not held with reference to any facts in particular; particular facts are firm or in question insofar as the perspective (of some enterprise or discipline or area of inquiry) within which they emerge is firmly in place, settled; and should that perspective be dislodged (always a possibility) the result will not be indeterminacy of fact, but a new shape of factual firmness underwritten by a newly, if temporarily, settled perspective. No matter how strongly I believe in the constructed nature of fact, the facts that are perspicuous for me within the constructions not presently under challenge (and there must always be some for perception even to occur) will remain so.”

states, “in attempting to understand the past, we inevitably enter into elaborate and endless negotiations, struggles between desire and knowledge that can never be granted closure.”⁷ It is an ongoing dialogue with the past out of respect for its otherness accompanied by a rejection of sure theoretical foundations, which are believed to provide neutral objective interpretations, that provides the starting point for historical investigations. This entails that there is a certain contingency (based on the perspective of the interpreter) and tentativeness to historical claims, and that all interpretations are caught up in the process of “reading and rereading, interpreting and reinterpreting.”⁸

A similar approach to historical investigations has been made by Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob. They argue for a “practical realism” that also steers a course between the Charybdis of positivism and the Scylla of relativism. They contend that the objectivity of the interpreter is qualified from “the undeniable elements of subjectivity, artificiality, and language dependence in historical writing”; and instead, they argue that “historical objectivity [is] an interactive relationship between an inquiring subject and an external object.”⁹ Something similar has been advocated by Wayne Meeks, who stated:

When we try to understand another culture—or subculture—we involve ourselves in a series of dialectical moves: between distance and empathy, between the unique and the general, between theory and observation, between the way others conceived of their world (as well as we can imagine it) and the way we must try to make sense of that world within *our* socially constructed world.¹⁰

Dobbs-Allsopp, Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, and Meeks all maintain that there is an historical world which an interpreter can investigate and posit that this kind of investigation is best done in a dialectical manner. While recognizing the contingency, tentativeness, and imperfections of an historical investigation, they contend that

⁷ Dobbs-Allsopp, “Historical Criticism,” 252–53, quoting Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 72–73.

⁸ Dobbs-Allsopp, “Historical Criticism,” 260.

⁹ Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, *History*, 259.

¹⁰ Wayne A. Meeks, “Taking Stock and Moving On,” in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later* (eds. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell; London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2009), 137 (italics in original).

historical investigations are not arbitrary and that something meaningful about history can be offered by those engaging in this dialectical process.

If this dialectical position is taken as an approach to historical investigations, then a pertinent question arises as to how one decides for or against various interpretations? Given that there will be “a lively, contentious struggle among diverse groups of truth-seekers,”¹¹ how do we gauge the validity of different interpretations? Dobbs-Allsopp begins to answer this question in his discussion of the goal in critical historicism, which he states is not the “correct meaning,” but “[v]alid interpretations” which “are able to persuade the larger interpretive community of their validity.”¹² There are a number of valid interpretations of texts that are cogent for a variety of reasons, which does not entail that every interpretation is valid. Some of the reasons for the validity of different interpretations involve: accuracy in handling primary sources, completeness (i.e. not selectively using material), non-contradictory claims (i.e. internal coherency of an argument), underpinning of arguments with evidence, and elucidation (i.e. perspectives are brought to bear on material that illuminate it), which can all be judged by the interpretive community in which one participates.¹³ From this paradigm of doing historical research, the interpreter, through a dialectical process, engages with external objects (texts, images, artifacts, and so forth), and from this interaction, which is bound up with particular perspectives for understanding the material, produces an historical reconstruction. The validity of this reconstruction is evaluated from the accepted norms established by the interpretive community. Some reconstructions will be more persuasive than others based upon how well the interpretation handles the primary sources and argues for a certain understanding of the material in question.¹⁴

My approach to the historical investigation in this thesis follows this paradigm for historical research. I recognize the contingent, tentative, and imperfect nature of the claims that I am making, and yet I agree that something productive and not arbitrary is

¹¹ A phrase from Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, *History*, 254.

¹² Dobbs-Allsopp, “Historical Criticism,” 260.

¹³ See Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, *History*, 257; Peter Lampe, *New Testament Theology in a Secular World: A Constructivist Work in Philosophical Epistemology and Christian Apologetics* (trans. Robert L. Brawley; London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 149–151.

¹⁴ Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, “Historical Criticism,” 261.

produced from engaging in the interpretive dialectical process. What is produced is a reconstruction from a particular perspective that is constrained by the primary sources with which I engage.

2.2. The Processes of Constructing Knowledge

Having established my broad approach to an historical investigation, here I will explore the processes by which knowledge is constructed. Since my investigation is concerned with the world in which Paul and his audience lives, it is necessary to examine how it is that which is taken as knowledge, or “reality,” in this world could come into existence and gain acceptance. That is, what are the processes at work in the production and reception of knowledge? This will, on the one hand, signal the perspective that is shaping my approach to the ancient material, and on the other hand, it will enable us to think more fully about the world Paul and his audience inhabits and how Paul could be making use of shared knowledge for his own purposes. Peter Lampe has insightfully discussed the processes by which “reality” is constructed in *New Testament Theology in a Secular World*. After briefly discussing his epistemological position, I will address his discussion of the processes by which constructs come to be accepted as “reality,” and then turn to address how this is useful for my purposes.

In *New Testament Theology in a Secular World* Lampe is concerned to address the epistemological question about what is presumed to be “reality” and the significance of this for theological discourse. After demonstrating the failure of epistemological realism with its correspondence theory of truth as well as logical empiricism with its empirical foundations of reasoning for ascertaining ontic reality, Lampe argues that constructivism provides a solution to this epistemological situation. Constructivism views “reality” not as “purely external, but” as “*mentally constructed* by humans *when they interact with the external world.*”¹⁵ As humans interact with the world, bumping up against ontic reality and it posing certain barriers, they cognize a construct of what is “real.” The truthfulness of this “reality” is not decided on the basis of an objective view of ontic reality, but rather it is found immanent in the subject. Thinking and speaking subjects construct a reality

¹⁵ Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 15 (italics in original).

that is plausible to them and the communities of which they are a part. What is taken as objective and real is that which is intersubjective and shared socially. This position is shared with that found in work done in the sociology of knowledge which holds that “the social, that is, culture-specific constructions appear to be ‘external,’ ‘objective’ realities to the individual.”¹⁶ Some of these constructions are more comprehensive than others, such as religion, which provides a symbolic universe that gives meaning to all aspects of life, shaping social interaction and legitimating and sustaining a particular social order.¹⁷ NT scholars have richly made use of this perspective as they have explored how Paul’s letters function as attempts to create a symbolic universe that gives meaning to and orders the praxis of the communities to whom he is writing.¹⁸

Lampe draws on the work of Horst Stenger and Hans Geißlinger to explore the processes of construction. This aids in filling out further what is involved in humanity’s projects of constructing new contexts of meaning. These sociologists have provided empirical evidence from their fieldwork that presents the processes of construction as arising from an axiomatic foundation with its concomitant categories of perception, and is legitimated and sustained by three sources of evidence. The axiomatic foundation involves those presuppositions that are taken as givens, i.e. established knowledge already in existence. In a theological context this would entail such propositions as God exists and reveals God’s self. In a psychoanalytical context it would entail the assumption that there is an unconscious. These established pieces of knowledge, axioms, make available certain categories that enable people to perceive their experience in light of the

¹⁶ Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 45, quoting Horst Stenger and Hans Geißlinger, “Die Transformation sozialer Realität: Ein Beitrag zur empirischen Wissenssoziologie,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 43 (1991): 250.

¹⁷ See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York/London: Doubleday, 1967).

¹⁸ E.g. Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 44–72; John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975); Howard C. Kee, *Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective* (London: SCM, 1980); Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul’s Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

content of the axioms.¹⁹ The three pieces of evidence, which are used to build upon the axiomatic groundwork and confirm and authenticate the new context of meaning that it establishes, are sensory perception, cognitive construction, and social confirmation. Lampe also mentions a fourth, emotional evidence, which is not a necessary condition of a construct, but is something that often accompanies the acceptance of it.²⁰ These sources of evidence will be addressed in turn.

Evidence from sensory perception involves that which is empirically experienced, i.e. external sensory stimuli. Sensory experience is not received, however, in a disinterested manner detached from what one already knows. As sensory experience interacts with one's pre-existing categories of perception, one begins to produce new meanings and thus construct new knowledge. It is the categories of perception that enable the subject to perceive something differently. Stenger and Geißlinger demonstrated this in that a group was enabled to experience "strange dreams" after this category was given to them and accepted as a possibility. Lampe suggests another example; those who have lived in the jungle can perceive more shades of green than those who have lived in the desert. Both have the same sensory experience, rays of light shining on the retina, but because they have different categories of perception, they construct meaning differently.²¹ When the new contexts of meaning are relevant for addressing one's experience, and when the experience is connected to this context of meaning repeatedly and by a wide group of people then the new context of meaning has a greater chance of success.

Evidence from cognitive construction involves linking together different elements of knowledge in order to make meaning. Lampe discusses two rules of construction that are involved in this cognitive combinatory process: coincidence and congruence. The former relates to the concurrence of two phenomena from which something is inferred. For example, when it rains and someone at the same time notices a back pain. This person can then construct a plausible connection that causally combines the two: I have back pain because it rains. The latter relates to the congruence of a particular construct with other accepted elements of knowledge. This involves not contradicting something that is

¹⁹ Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 51.

²⁰ Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 54–56.

²¹ Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 54–55.

already accepted and corresponding to or being similar with what is accepted. If there is this kind of non-contradictory and analogous relationship then the construct becomes more plausible and is more readily accepted. This pertains not just to already held constructs, but also is important when others are discovered and related to the construct in question.²²

Evidence from social confirmation pertains to the judgment of others, especially that of experts. When one cannot rely on one's own sensory experience in the production of meaning, one turns to the statements of others. For example, before photographs people relied on the expertise of physicists in establishing that the world was spherical and not flat. This has however become accepted knowledge so that experts are no longer needed to provide confirmation. Instead, the language community to which one belongs legitimates and sustains this element of knowledge. Social evidence typically comes from some source of authority and gets expanded into a broader social context where it is shared intersubjectively and thus taken as objective reality. Usually denying something that is widely shared in one's language community places one in a precarious relationship with that community, or leads to expulsion from it.²³

Evidence from emotional experience relates to the positive experiences associated with the production of meaning. If something arouses positive feelings or if a construct is useful for one's life, then it is more likely that these constructs of reality will be accepted.²⁴ Conversely, if something is conducive to producing negative feelings and generating negative experiences then these constructs are typically rejected.

To summarize, the process of construction begins with the acceptance of an axiomatic groundwork. Elements of knowledge are taken as givens: e.g. God exists, there is an unconscious. These axioms provide categories of perception that enable people to make connections between their experience and the content of the accepted axioms, beginning the actual work of constructing meaning. This creates a new context of meaning whose continued success is contingent upon sensory experience, cognitive construction, and social confirmation. The first category aids in the continued acceptance

²² Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 55.

²³ Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 56.

²⁴ Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 56–57.

of a construct when the categories remain relevant for understanding one's experience, when the experience and interpretation of it are repeated, and when it is widespread. The second category provides further support in that elements of knowledge are joined together which establishes a closer relationship between already accepted knowledge, one's experience, and the new context of meaning. The third category provides further support in that as this new context of meaning gains wider acceptance, especially when validated by experts, it becomes taken as a consensus, and accepted as objective reality, i.e. intersubjectively shared. Further support is gained when the new context of meaning provides positive emotional experiences and is useful for one's life.²⁵ This new construct of meaning could appear rather static and unchangeable once it is formed, but Lampe is careful to point out that it is actually more fluid in nature. Constructs can be held with greater or less intensity and they will constantly change when new categories of perception are introduced, new experiences had, and new cognitive connections discovered.²⁶

There are two major implications from how "reality" is constructed for a study of Paul's letters: on the one hand, it embeds Paul and his audience in a world where there are various constructs of meaning; and on the other hand, it views his letters as attempts to construct new meaning, i.e. the creation of a new symbolic world which is "community-forming, meaning-giving and praxis-shaping."²⁷ From this framework we can posit that Paul is inevitably utilizing the constructs available to him and the audience to whom he writes to create new ways for his audience to make sense of and to respond to their experience and their world. The truthfulness, or plausibility, of this new construction of meaning is contingent upon the factors mentioned above: is it relevant for their experience (e.g. making sense of suffering), how well does it cohere with already accepted elements of knowledge (e.g. living a virtuous life), is it supported by others, especially those in authority positions (e.g. Timothy, Epaphroditus), and does it produce positive emotional experiences (e.g. a sense of hope, giving meaning to their lives)?

²⁵ See the summary of the model in Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 64–66.

²⁶ Lampe, *New Testament Theology*, 61, 63.

²⁷ David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 84, discussing the contribution of Berger and Luckmann's approach to religion for understanding Paul's letters.

In utilizing this approach in my investigation of Philippians I will thus have two areas of focus: exploring the constructs available to Paul and his audience, and exploring how these constructs are being brought together in this letter in the creation of meaning. Paul and the Philippians share a cultural world where there are broadly accepted axioms and constructs of meaning. Given that the makeup of the Philippian community is gentile, it is safe to presume that this group to whom Paul is writing is more familiar with Greco-Roman constructs of meaning than they are with Jewish ones. This is further supported from Philippians, which does not contain many references to the LXX, and from Acts as well, which presents no synagogue in Philippi.²⁸ Indeed, the analysis of Peter Oakes has demonstrated the thoroughly Greek makeup of those in the Christian community.²⁹ Paul, as a Jew who has lived and travelled widely in the Greco-Roman world, would also be familiar with many axioms and constructs of meaning that the Philippians share. These constructs would pertain to the social, cultural, and political areas of life. The important point to note is that the constructs of meaning shared by Paul and the Philippians would be more gentile in nature. Of course, this group would have heard and responded to Paul's message when he arrived in Philippi—given the nature of Philippians, which does not indicate that there was any major theological disagreement between this Christian community and Paul, there would have been broad agreement about this message—and thus they would share the gospel message and the narrative needed to make sense of this message in common.³⁰ Given that this message is something newly accepted by the Philippians (i.e. compared with those axioms and constructs already held apart from the gospel), it is important to remember that the constructs of meaning from their broader world would be more deeply entrenched and firmly accepted as “reality.” In light of the above discussion about how constructs of meaning are successfully maintained, it is very

²⁸ Cf. L. Michael White, “Visualizing the ‘Real’ World of Acts 16: Toward Construction of a Social Index,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (eds. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 241–51, who discusses the sociographic context of Philippi, arguing that it was not a military colony, the makeup of the community was predominantly gentile, and the religious milieu was comprised of local and foreign cults.

²⁹ Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); see 1.4.3 above.

³⁰ For a helpful discussion of this narrative in terms of myth, see Horrell, *Solidarity*, 85–90.

plausible that Paul would draw on that which they already accept as “reality” and reshape this in view of the gospel and his ideas about what is needed to live faithfully to it.

The focus of my historical investigation in this thesis is to explore how Paul is bringing together these broader constructs of meaning that would have been widely shared by the Philippians (i.e. knowledge about moral philosophy, athletics, and rhetorical practices) with their more newly accepted construct of the gospel message in order to construct a new symbolic world to give meaning to and order the praxis of the Philippians.

2.3. Shared Knowledge across Socio-Economic Levels

From the overview of research I identified three areas that needed further examination in a study of Philippians: moral philosophy, athletics, and rhetoric (viz. vivid speech).

While arguing above that the Greco-Roman cultural world is the best place to explore the nature of the shared constructs that we find utilized in Philippians, it needs to be demonstrated to what extent these areas would have been familiar to the Philippians and Paul. Would everyone have access to knowledge about moral philosophy, athletics, and rhetoric? Or, are these areas (or some of them) only familiar to certain groups of people in the ancient world?

Some scholars have argued that the majority of early Christians came from the lower echelons of society; and that because of this, we cannot assume that they would have the kind of cultural knowledge that is present in elite sources. For example, in NT studies Justin Meggitt has most forcefully argued that the culture of the elites was distinct from that of the non-elites. In using sources to get at constructs available to the earliest Christians, he argues that we should only use those that are helpful for understanding popular culture.³¹ Jerry Toner, a classicist, has argued similarly with respect to the non-elite in Roman society.³² These scholars have helpfully pointed out some of the distinctive features of the non-elite subcultures in the Greco-Roman world. Meggitt,

³¹ Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 11–40; cf. idem, “Sources: Use, Abuse, Neglect. The Importance of Ancient Popular Culture,” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (eds. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 241–53.

³² Jerry Toner, *Popular Culture in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

however, has been rightly criticized for working with binary categories (elite and non-elite) and placing all of the early Christians at a low socio-economic level (i.e. non-elite).³³ Several scholars have argued that more diversity is needed in understanding the socio-economic profile of the early Christians.³⁴ Oakes has argued for a similar level of diversity for those in the Philippian Christian community.³⁵ Another problem with the analysis of Meggitt and Toner is that they impose too rigid categories that minimize the ways in which those across the socio-economic spectrum shared some aspects of cultural life in common.

Gerald Downing makes a case that there were many aspects of cultural life in the Greco-Roman world shared across society at large. He importantly points to how in the Greco-Roman world contemporary culture was oral and public, so it could be broadly shared “even if its literary crystallizations should in fact be shown to have had a restricted circulation.”³⁶ In early Christianity he argues that this is seen in the ways in which the Gospels share similarities with other contemporary writings,³⁷ how the language of the NT would have been “accessible both to the masses and the litterati,” and how some Christian texts present interaction across the socio-economic spectrum which reflects some level of social mixture.³⁸ More widely in the Greco-Roman world Downing points to the writings of Dio of Prusa to demonstrate the public nature of cultural life (e.g. performance of plays, poetry, public lectures and discussions, and other entertainments).³⁹ An element of this is seen in Dio’s depiction of what was taking place at the Isthmian festival:

³³ See, e.g., Dale B. Martin, “Review Essay: Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*,” *JSNT* 84 (2001): 54; Steven J. Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 339; Bruce W. Longenecker, “Exposing the Economic Middle: A Revised Economy Scale for the Study of Early Urban Christianity,” *JSNT* 31 (2009): 247; idem, “Socio-Economic Profiling of the First Urban Christians,” in *After the First Urban Christians*, 43.

³⁴ E.g. Longenecker, “Socio-Economic Profiling,” 36–59; see also Dale B. Martin’s and Steven J. Friesen’s essays cited above (n.33).

³⁵ Oakes, *Philippians*, 55–76.

³⁶ F. Gerald Downing, “A bas les aristos: The Relevance of Higher Literature for the Understanding of the Earliest Christian Writings,” *NovT* 30 (1988): 216.

³⁷ Cf. Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³⁸ Downing, “A bas les aristos,” 216–18.

³⁹ Cf. Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament Vol. 1: History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 93–97.

[O]ne could hear crowds of wretched sophists around Poseidon's temple shouting and reviling one another, and their disciples, as they were called, fighting with one another, many writers reading aloud their stupid works, many poets reciting their poems while others applauded them, many jugglers showing their tricks, many fortune-tellers interpreting fortunes, lawyers innumerable perverting judgment, and peddlers not a few peddling whatever they happened to have. (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.9; Cohoon, LCL)

Downing's argument helpfully highlights that in the ancient world we should not too rigidly separate "high" culture from "low" culture. The oral and public nature of society meant that many constructs of meaning were available to a wide range of people. In what follows I will argue specifically that a strong case can be made for viewing moral philosophy, athletics, and rhetoric as areas where there was a large degree of shared knowledge across the socio-economic spectrum.

There is much evidence that moral discourse occurred in the public sphere making some aspects of moral philosophy accessible to a large part of Greco-Roman society. The Cynics and the Stoics were the best-known schools (if the Cynics can be classified in this manner) for sharing their philosophy in a public setting. Dio of Prusa consistently depicts the Cynics as gathering at public places in the city sharing their ideas with all.⁴⁰ For example, in both his oration on virtue and his Isthmian oration he presents the Cynic Diogenes as talking to those gathering for the Games.⁴¹ In this large and diverse social gathering Diogenes engages the people, pointing out the follies of their way of life and providing the remedy for them with his Cynic teachings. Lucian too speaks of Cynics talking to the popular masses about virtue and even drawing on classical myths to make their points.⁴² The Stoics were also known for meeting in public places and sharing their ideas. Their name comes from the Stoa, an accessible public space where they

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.9. This is contained within a speech Dio gives to the Alexandrians who are gathered at the theater.

⁴¹ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.5–8 and 9.1–7.

⁴² Lucian, *Peregr.* 3–4. In going up to Elis he (*Peregr.* 3; Harmon, LCL) speaks of a Cynic "bawling out the usual streetcorner invocations to Virtue in a loud, harsh voice, and abusing everyone without exception." His discussion of what the Cynic says uses figures like Proteus, Heracles, Asclepius, Dionysius, and Empedocles. Cf. Dio Chrysostom, who also portrays Diogenes using Odysseus, Heracles, and Achilles as examples (*Or.* 8.9, 17).

originally gathered to discuss philosophy. Their ideas had a popular appeal, as Jo-Ann Shelton indicates with respect to Roman society, stating that “Stoic ethics became widely known and were frequently adopted as popular philosophy by people with no interest in or knowledge of Stoic logic and physics,” and that their ethics “were, in fact, easily assimilated into traditional Roman culture.”⁴³

The accessibility of moral discourse can be further substantiated from the work of Teresa Morgan. Her book *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* is dedicated to examining popular morality in its own terms apart from the philosophical schools of the time, but she dedicates one chapter to analyzing the relationship between the two.⁴⁴ She points out that when the two are compared in terms of philosophical doctrine, they “look widely divergent.”⁴⁵ High philosophy is “interested in ideals, in theoretical accounts of ethical lives,” which were inaccessible to most, while popular morality is “concerned with getting by in a conflict-ridden everyday world.”⁴⁶ She argues, however, that in spite of this that the two are likely engaged with one another and that they shared a mutual degree of influence. This is due to the fact that in the imperial period philosophy was focused more on a pattern of life than it was on a system of doctrines. Therefore, ethical exemplars played a significant role in their construal of living a virtuous life. They were often more concerned with practical everyday issues as well. Both of these aspects of moral philosophy are seen at a popular level.⁴⁷ She also demonstrates how the high philosophers likely drew their questions from popular morality⁴⁸ and relied on popular material to make their arguments, which can be seen in Seneca where he appeals to *exempla* and what is taken as natural from the everyday world and common experience.⁴⁹ Morgan therefore concludes her comparison of the two by stating, “The best we can do

⁴³ Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 431.

⁴⁴ Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 274–99.

⁴⁵ Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 274, see also 333–40.

⁴⁶ Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 337.

⁴⁷ Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 275–76.

⁴⁸ Cf. how Socrates begins from commonly accepted Athenian views on various topics and shows their difficulties and potentials. Aristotle also begins with what ordinary people say, assumes it is roughly correct, and builds upon it. See Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 298.

⁴⁹ Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 285–97.

to characterize the relationship is probably to say that in high philosophy and popular ethics we find two streams of culture, ultimately rising from many of the same sources, which sometimes mingle, each influencing the other, and sometimes run separately, along roughly parallel terrain.”⁵⁰ Julia Annas’ discussion of the entry point for ancient ethical theories also provides some grounds for seeing a connection between high philosophy and popular morality. She argues that the key notions of ancient ethical theories’ formal structure are “easily available to any intelligent person who begins to reflect on the implications of what he is doing.”⁵¹ She demonstrates how “thoughts about my life as a whole lead to thoughts about my final end, about the kinds of aims I have developed and pursue, and the way that these hold together.”⁵² Morgan and Annas thus present at least some aspects of moral philosophy as open to a wider public. This is found not in the area of specific doctrines, but in the more general area of what it means to live a good and virtuous life.

It can be easily established that the majority of Greco-Roman society also shared a high level of cultural knowledge about athletics. Public entertainments, consisting of athletic competitions, were open to the entire public. The elite paid for these festivities out of their own funds, but people across the socio-economic spectrum attended them.⁵³ These entertainments took place across the Greco-Roman world. If cities did not have a stadium in which they could host athletic competitions, they at least had a *gymnasium* or a *palaestra*. There is also evidence that Romans, Greeks, Jews, men, and women would have been familiar with athletics (for citations and further support see 4.1 below).

That rhetoric was also something many in the Greco-Roman world were familiar with can be inferred from how most people would have been exposed to public speeches. This is evident in how Dio of Prusa depicts an ethnically diverse group of people at the public gathering assembled to hear his speech in the theater at Alexandria.⁵⁴ This presents citizens and non-citizens gathered in one place listening to the same speech.⁵⁵ It is also

⁵⁰ Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 299.

⁵¹ Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 34.

⁵² Annas, *Morality*, 27–34, the quote is from 34.

⁵³ See, e.g., Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 332.

⁵⁴ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.40.

⁵⁵ Cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31–34, where he gives public speeches in Rhodes, Alexandria, and Tarsus.

evident in judicial contexts where orators are not just attempting to persuade a judge and jury, but the masses of people who are gathered to watch the trial. Therefore, Quintilian, while acknowledging that one has to present a case before uneducated people, because the courts were public, states that one must understand the nature of one's audience and appeal to the crowd to win a case.⁵⁶ Cicero even mentions, with respect to defending Flaccus, how he would lower his voice in order not to be heard by a group of Jews, who are gathered nearby the judicial proceedings, so that they would not influence the decision of the case.⁵⁷ Pliny the Younger also presents court cases as a form of public entertainment where there is interaction between the educated and non-educated.⁵⁸ While training in rhetoric was relegated to the upper echelons of society, from exposure to public speeches we can at least say that many people would have been aware of certain rhetorical practices even if they could not enter into theoretical discussions about them.

From this evidence we can conclude that in the areas of moral discourse, athletics, and rhetoric there would have been a high level of shared cultural knowledge. This legitimates using sources from the upper echelons of society in order to ascertain what was largely held in common for these areas with the given caveat about which aspects of moral discourse were accessible to all. We can thus agree with Downing's conclusion with respect to these areas of cultural life when he states that ordinary people would

⁵⁶ For the nature of the audience see Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.8.2 (Russell, LCL). In discussing the essential feature of deliberative speeches, he states that in addressing the good and wise the themes of expediency and dignity can be combined, but "With the inexperienced however (to whom one often has to give advice) and especially with the people, which contains an uneducated majority, we have to keep the two things separate and conform more to ordinary understandings." For understanding the audience see *Inst.* 3.8.7, 11. For appealing to the crowd to win a case see *Inst.* 8.3.3 (Russell, LCL). In discussing the power of ornaments in speeches Quintilian discusses how if "Cicero had simply given the judge the facts and spoken with practical sense in clear, good Latin, would he have made the Roman people show their admiration not only by acclamation but by clapping their hands? No, it was the sublimity and the splendour, the elegance and the authoritative manner that evoked that storm of applause." Cf. *Inst.* 11.3.131; 12.5.6, 9.4.

⁵⁷ Cicero, *Flacc.* 28.66 (Lord, LCL): "There follows the odium that is attached to the Jewish gold. This is no doubt the reason why this case is being tried not far from the Aurelian Steps. You procured this place and the crowd, Laelius, for this trial. You know what a big crowd it is, how they stick together, how influential they are in informal assemblies. So I will speak in a low voice so that only the jurors may hear; for those are not wanting who would incite them against me and against every respectable man. I shall not help them to do this more easily."

⁵⁸ Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 2.19.2 (Radice, LCL). In discussing how it is better to hear a speech than to read it, he states that when read they "lose all their warmth and spirit, almost their entire character, since their fire is always fed from the atmosphere of court: the bench of magistrates and throng of advocates, the suspense of the awaited verdict, reputation of the different speakers, and the divided enthusiasm of the public." Cf. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 4.16.

“have had plenty of opportunities to ‘consume’ in oral form the cultural products emanating from above,”⁵⁹ and thus, “*Prima facie* these writings [high literature of the Greco-Roman world] tell us something of what people had to chew on, intellectually and aesthetically and morally, they are part of the cultural ‘*langue*’.”⁶⁰ While we should always be aware of differences between subcultures with respect to various aspects of cultural life, we should also be cognizant of how certain areas may be shared in common and how “high” literature can be used to ascertain what that was.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has established my broad approach to an historical investigation and has indicated my perspective in handling the ancient material. I have argued that the Greco-Roman world is the best context in which to explore the constructs of meaning that we find in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, and I have established that many in Greco-Roman society would share in common some knowledge of moral philosophy, athletics, and rhetoric. In what follows (Part II, chs. 3–5) I will turn to explore the historical material relevant for understanding these three areas. This will provide the context that is necessary for understanding how these constructs of meaning are being utilized and reshaped in Paul’s argument in Philippians, which will be the focus of Part III (chs. 6–8).

⁵⁹ Downing, “A bas les aristos,” 229.

⁶⁰ Downing, “A bas les aristos,” 230.

PART II

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

MORAL PHILOSOPHY, ATHLETICS, AND VIVID SPEECH

Part II of this thesis examines the areas identified in the overview of research that needed further investigation in a study of Philippians: moral philosophy, athletics, and vivid speech. Having established the need to examine these areas in ch. 1 and outlined my theoretical approach to an historical investigation in ch. 2, I am now in a place to map out the historical context relevant for this investigation. The following chapters will address each area respectively and I will signal at the end of each chapter the directions in which this material will be used in analyzing Philippians. As indicated in 1.6.1 above the three areas addressed in this part of the thesis are interrelated in Paul's argument in Philippians, which will be further demonstrated in Part III below.

Chapter 3

THE STRUCTURE OF THOUGHT IN ANCIENT MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

This chapter will outline the broad structure of thought in moral philosophy in its own terms and concepts in order to provide material to correlate with Paul's pattern of thought in Philippians. As I noted in the overview of research, many have utilized moral philosophy to understand Paul's argumentative strategy in this letter: e.g. friendship *topoi*, theories of consolation, the Stoic pattern of thought, and practical moral reasoning. I argued in ch. 1 that these approaches, while in many ways helpful, have some limitations that warrant further treatment of this topic. In what follows I will address certain aspects of ancient moral philosophies to spell out their broad pattern of thought. The goal is not to identify a structure of thought that is acceptable to moderns (Engberg-Pedersen's approach), but rather to tease out the ancient pattern of thought in moral philosophy so as to provide correlative material to understand the ways in which the moral philosophical terms and concepts Paul uses in Philippians could have been plausibly heard and understood in the first-century CE.

In what follows I will explore the structure of thought in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and will then examine the same in Hellenistic moral philosophies, specifically Epicureanism and Stoicism. These ethical theories all have distinctive features that make them different. However, they also share much in common and, it will be argued, they share a common pattern of thought that gives them a similar structure. One of the reasons for this structural affinity has to do with what Julia Annas calls their "entry point for ethical reflection."¹ Broadly put, the entry point for ancient ethical theory has to do with reflecting on one's life as a whole and attempting to address whether or not one is satisfied with how his/her life has developed and will continue to develop. The primary concern in ancient ethical theories is how to organize one's life as a whole in order to be satisfied with it, rather than how to maximize happiness for the greatest number

¹ Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 27.

(utilitarianism/consequentialism) or to establish rules by which to live (deontological theories). Seneca nicely captures the concern for one's life as a whole in *Ep.* 12.

The whole of our lifetime consists of sections formed by concentric circles (*Tota aetas partibus constat et orbis habet circumductos maiores minoribus*). The outermost one covers the time from birth to death and encloses all the others. The next one marks off the years of our early manhood (*annos adulescentiae*). The next contains all our boyhood (*totam pueritiam*). Then there is the year-circle, containing the whole sequence of seasons whose periodic repetition makes up our lives (*quorum multiplicatione vita componitur*). Then there is the smaller circle of the month; and then the tiniest circuit of the day, but this too has a beginning and an end, a rising and a setting. For this reason Heraclitus ... said 'One day equals all', a remark which has been understood in different ways. ... [One perspective] is that one day equals all by analogy (*unum diem omnibus similitudine*). For not even the longest period of time has more than the two elements you find in one day, light and darkness, so that these cosmic alternations are just more numerous, not different, and the length of the period determines the number of days and nights. So every day should be regulated as if it rounded off and closed the series and completed our life (*Itaque sic ordinandus est dies omnis tamquam cogat agmen et consummet atque expleat vitam*). (Seneca, *Ep.* 12.6–8; trans. Costa)

The concern for life as a whole is the entry point for ancient ethical theories which gives them their structural similarities. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* provides an excellent introduction into this way of thinking about ethics.

3.1. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

There is debate as to how well known Aristotle's works were in the ancient world. Strabo indicates that his works were lost and therefore did not play an influential role in philosophical circles until they were recovered and published in the first-century BCE.² There are questions about the reliability of this statement from Strabo,³ but many still

² Strabo 13.1.54 (Jones, LCL), speaking of Aristotle's library states: "The result was that the earlier school of Peripatetics who came after Theophrastus had no books at all, with the exception of only a few exoteric works, and were therefore able to philosophise about nothing in a practical way, but only to talk bombast about commonplace propositions, whereas the later school, from the time the books in question appeared, though better able to philosophise and Aristotelise, were forced to call most of their statements probabilities, because of the large number of errors." Cf. Plutarch, *Sulla* 26.

³ Jonathan Barnes, "Roman Aristotle," in *Philosophia Togata II: Plato and Aristotle at Rome* (eds. Miriam Griffin and Jonathan Barnes; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1–69.

maintain that after the death of Theophrastus the Aristoteleian school was in decline and therefore not as influential.⁴ Some, however, still argue that his ideas circulated and formed the main starting points for many Hellenistic philosophies.⁵ While this debate is important in understanding the roots of Hellenistic philosophies (viz. in ascertaining the influential ideas that shaped them;⁶ e.g. Socratic ideas as presented in the works of Plato or those ideas found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*), what is important for our purposes is that Aristotle uses terms and concepts and frames ethical discourse in a way that is present in the moral philosophies after him (as will be demonstrated below). Whether the Hellenistic philosophies were familiar with his work or not, they are all concerned with the same large questions and answer them in similar ways. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is the most thorough and systematic presentation of an ancient ethical theory, which makes it a good place to begin for our purposes.

The basic idea of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is to search for the ultimate goal in life through examining what the characteristic activity of humanity is. There are a number of argumentative moves Aristotle makes in setting up his investigation into this topic that are found in ethical discourse from his time on. The first is the connection between goods and goals. Aristotle assumes that because choices and actions seek a good they are end/goal oriented (i.e. they aim at something, a *τέλος*).⁷ He expresses this idea in the opening sentence of his work:

Every sort of expert knowledge and every inquiry, and similarly every action and undertaking, seems to seek some good. Because of that, people are right to affirm

⁴ E.g. Michael Frede, "Epilogue," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (eds. Keimpe Algra, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 771–97, see 772–5. Cf. F. H. Sandbach, *Aristotle and the Stoics* (PCPS Supp 10; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1985), who is highly sceptical about Aristoteleian influence on Hellenistic philosophies.

⁵ E.g. Annas, *Morality*, 17, 27–46; Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 9–17.

⁶ See David Sedley, "The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. Brad Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7–34, who argues that the most influential strands of thought in Stoicism come from Socratic ideals found in Plato's writings. See also Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 20–22.

⁷ Throughout this work Aristotle uses *σκοπός* and *τέλος* interchangeably to indicate the end/goal. The Stoics, however, make a distinction between these two terms (this will be addressed below).

that the good is “that which all things seek.” (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.1.1; trans. Broadie and Rowe).

Whether or not the goal aimed at is actually good is beside the point, the relevant point he is making here is that for something to be a good means that it is also to be considered a goal/end.⁸ This sets up what follows in that he talks about goods in terms of goals.

The second move he makes is to argue that there could potentially be one end/goal, toward which one’s actions aim, and which is choice-worthy for its own sake, i.e. it is not a means to getting something else. Many moderns would probably take issue with this assumption arguing that there are many different ends that are choice-worthy for their own sake, and do not have to be oriented and subsumed under one ultimate end. However, Annas has argued that because Aristotle is concerned with one’s *single* life as a whole, for him there must be only *one* end under which all other ends are subsumed.⁹ This one end, which everything is done for the sake of, is the chief good, i.e. the supreme good that one could ever attain.

If then there is some end (τέλος) in our practical projects that we wish for because of itself, while wishing for the other things we wish for because of it, and we do not choose everything because of something else (for if *that* is the case, the sequence will go on to infinity, making our desire empty and vain), it is clear that this will be the good, i.e. the chief good. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.2.1; trans. Broadie and Rowe, italics in original)

Knowledge of this good is necessary therefore in order to know how to organize one’s life to attain this goal. One must know what the target is in order to appropriately aim one’s life at it and hit the mark. As Aristotle asks, “So in relation to life, too, will knowing (γνώσις) it have great weight, and like archers with a target (σκοπός) would we be more successful in hitting the point we need to hit if we had this knowledge?”¹⁰ Here reflection on life as a whole comes together with the framing of Aristotle’s ethical project as a

⁸ I.e. one might actually seek something that is bad as a goal, but in attaining it one would consider that they are getting a good of some sort, whether it is fulfilling a desire or whatever.

⁹ Annas, *Morality*, 33.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.2.2 (trans. Broadie and Rowe).

concern for the ultimate goal in life. By ascertaining what the ultimate goal is, one is then in a position to organize one's life in such a way that is conducive toward attaining this goal. As Annas argues, the final end is like "a life-plan, the idea that all my activities make sense and are ordered within an overall plan for my entire life."¹¹ It is the end/goal that structures how one is to live, mapping out a course of life where one can make decisions and act in ways that lead to the attainment of the goal.

The third move in Aristotle's argument is to accept the common opinion that the supreme good is *εὐδαιμονία*:

Pretty well most people are agreed about what to call it [i.e. the supreme good]: both ordinary people and people of quality say 'happiness' (*εὐδαιμονία*), and suppose that living well (*εὖ ζῆν*) and doing well (*εὖ πράττειν*) are the same things as being happy (*εὐδαιμονεῖν*). (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.4.2; trans. Broadie and Rowe)

While he accepts this specification of the supreme good, he rejects the common opinions as to what this consists in, e.g. pleasure, wealth, or honor. It is important to note that in his discussion of *εὐδαιμονία* he is thinking in terms of a "way of life" where one structures his/her life as a whole with respect to some final good, rather than a passive state where one is made happy by someone else or some turn of events.¹² This is evident in how he identifies each supreme good with a particular way of life: e.g. pleasure is the goal of a life of consumption, honor is the goal of the life of politics.¹³ For Aristotle, in what *εὐδαιμονία* consists cannot be something that is received from someone else, rather it must be some kind of activity that one achieves. Thus, as Michael Pakaluk indicates, the supreme good is thought "to be a *kind* of thing or activity, which is acquired or achieved at intervals, with respect to which everything else that one seeks may reasonably be taken as directed, and which one may in turn reasonably regard as not directed to anything beyond it."¹⁴ In asking what this good might be, Aristotle illustrates this perspective:

¹¹ Annas, *Morality*, 38.

¹² See Michael Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 53.

¹³ See Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.5.

¹⁴ Pakaluk, *Ethics*, 54 (italics in original).

For it appears to be one thing in one activity (πρᾶξις) or sphere of expertise (τέχνη), another in another: it is different in medicine and in generalship, and likewise in the rest. What then is the good that belongs to each? Or is it that for which everything else is done? In medicine this is health, in generalship victory, in housebuilding a house, in some other sphere some other thing, but in every activity and undertaking it is the end (τέλος); for it is for the sake of this that they all do the rest. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.7.1; trans. Broadie and Rowe)

Aristotle then gives two criteria for specifying the supreme good: completeness (τέλειον) and self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια).¹⁵ It is debated as to exactly what is meant by τέλειον, which could entail something final (i.e. most goal-like), comprehensive, or both.¹⁶ It seems that the nature of what we find in *Nicomachean Ethics* favors understanding it as entailing both finality and comprehensiveness.¹⁷ At the beginning of his work the emphasis seems to be on that which is most goal-like, whereas in the later portion of his work finality and comprehensiveness are presented together.¹⁸ Aristotle possibly plays on the ambiguity of this term because he wants ultimately to argue, “Happiness for us ... would be to engage in that first-ranked activity [finality/selection], while having all the other virtues and putting them into practice as appropriate [comprehensiveness/collection].”¹⁹ The second criterion of self-sufficiency indicates that the supreme good must be living a life that lacks nothing. This does not mean that it contains everything, which can be seen from how most in the ancient world connected αὐτάρκεια with a life of austerity. Rather, as Annas argues, “it must contain everything

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.7.3–8, as he states in 1.7.8 (trans. Broadie and Rowe): “So happiness is clearly something complete and self-sufficient, being the end of our practical undertakings (τέλειον δὴ τι φαίνεται καὶ αὐτάρκες ἢ εὐδαιμονία, τῶν πρακτῶν οὐσα τέλος).”

¹⁶ This is a much-debated topic concerning *Nicomachean Ethics*, typically discussed in terms of selection and collection. Is Aristotle arguing that there is one virtuous activity that is to be selected as the ultimate goal, or is it the collection of all of the virtuous activities that are our ultimate goal? See the helpful discussion in Pakaluk, *Ethics*, 8–10.

¹⁷ See Annas, *Morality*, 40.

¹⁸ E.g. in the early part of his work (*Eth. nic.* 1.7.15–16, trans. Broadie and Rowe), he states, “[T]he human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with excellence (and if there are more excellences than one, in accordance with the best and the most complete).” In the later part of his work (*Eth. nic.* 7.13.9–14, trans. Broadie and Rowe), he states, “Given that there are unimpeded activities of each disposition, then whether happiness is the activity of all of them or of one of them, it is perhaps even a necessary conclusion that this activity, provided it is unimpeded, be most desirable.”

¹⁹ Pakaluk, *Ethics*, 10. Cf. Annas, *Morality*, 40.

that is required by the deliberated projects that that life contains.”²⁰ For a life to be *αὐτάρκεια* means that it is not dependent on those things that are external to living the kind of life that one has chosen. In this sense it is lacking in nothing.

Aristotle, having established the relationship between goods and goals and argued that there is one supreme good—which can be called *εὐδαιμονία*, that must be complete (final and comprehensive) and self-sufficient, and is to structure one’s choices and actions in life—is now in a position to begin to examine what the supreme good could be. He sets this up with a fourth argumentative move known as the function argument. The first part of this argument is about how each kind of thing has a function, a characteristic activity that it can do better than anything else.²¹ He introduces the argument in the following manner:

But perhaps it appears somewhat uncontroversial to say that *happiness* (*εὐδαιμονία*) is the chief good, and a more distinct statement of what it is is still required. Well, perhaps this would come about if one established the *function* (*ἔργον*) of human beings. For just as for a flute-player, or a sculptor, or any expert, and generally for all those who have some characteristic function or activity, the good—their doing well—seems to reside in their function, so too it would seem to be for the human being, if indeed there is some function that belongs to him. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.7.9–10; trans. Broadie and Rowe, italics in original)

Aristotle argues that if the characteristic activity (*ἔργον*)—which he takes as the essential nature of something; i.e. for the sake of which it exists—of humanity can be identified, then the supreme good of a human could be more precisely established in the doing of this activity well. After rejecting two options (being alive and having sense-perception), he argues that for humanity this characteristic activity is “activity of soul in accordance with reason (*ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον*).”²²

In order for a certain kind of thing to carry out its characteristic activity well, it must have the features that enable it to do so. These features are the virtues/excellences (*ἀρετή*) of the kind of thing in question, and are what make it good. To illustrate what

²⁰ Annas, *Morality*, 41.

²¹ Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 352E. See Pakaluk, *Ethics*, 4.

²² Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.7.14 (trans. Broadie and Rowe).

this means Pakaluk gives the example of a knife whose blade has the virtues of “*taking a sharp edge; its holding a sharp edge; its having the right shape and size, for the sort of cutting it is supposed to do.*”²³ These features enable the knife to carry out its function/characteristic activity (i.e. cutting) well and are what make it good. So, one could say that the function of a knife is to cut, but the function of a good knife is to cut well; that is, to carry out its characteristic activity of cutting with the excellences (i.e. virtues) that enable it to perform this in the best way possible.²⁴ Therefore, a good knife attains what is good for it. Similarly, Aristotle argues the same for humans.

[A] human being’s function we posit as being a kind of life, and this life as being activity of soul and actions accompanied by reason, and it belongs to a good man to perform these well and finely, and each thing is completed well when it possesses its proper excellence (*ἀρετή*): if all this is so, the human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with excellence (*ἀρετή*) (and if there are more excellences [*ἀρεταί*] than one, in accordance with the best and the most complete [*τελειοτάτη*]). (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.7.14–15; trans. Broadie and Rowe)

A good human, through carrying out humanity’s characteristic activity well (activity of soul accompanied by reason), is able to attain what is supremely good for humans. This activity is that which is carried out through having the virtues, which is what makes something good and enables it to perform its characteristic activity in the best way possible. This locates the supreme good (as well as *εὐδαιμονία*) in virtuous activity and sets up Aristotle’s examination of the virtues in the rest of this work. Through examining the virtues he will be in a position to identify what is the first-ranked among them, satisfying the criteria introduced above (*τέλειον* and *αὐτάρκεια*). This will be the supreme good of humanity; i.e. the ultimate goal in life.

With this broad structure of Aristotle’s ethical theory in place, it is necessary here to briefly address his discussion of the virtues, which he broadly divides into two parts corresponding to his partitioning of the soul: the character virtues, which are in the part

²³ Pakaluk, *Ethics*, 5 (italics in original).

²⁴ This is the point of Aristotle’s parenthetical comment about the citharist (*Eth. nic.* 1.7.14; trans. Broadie and Rowe): “for what belongs to the citharist is to play the cithara, to the good citharist to play it well.”

of the soul without reason, but listens to reason, and the intellectual virtues, which are in the part of the soul that has reason. After I address what it means for a virtue to be a disposition, it will be important for our purposes only to explore the affective aspects of the virtues and the way in which reason, particularly φρόνησις, plays a crucial role in uniting all of the virtues; since these are areas that are shared with other moral philosophies and are also found in Philippians.

Aristotle argues that virtues are dispositions rather than feelings or capacities. This is primarily due to his view that the virtues involve a choice (προαιρετική) that one makes for which he/she is responsible.²⁵ Neither feelings nor capacities fit this understanding. For Aristotle, having a virtue means one is disposed to act in certain ways rather than others. The disposition to act rightly, which Aristotle identifies in terms of intermediacy (i.e. avoiding the extremes of vice, deficiency and excess, in all of the particulars involved in an action),²⁶ comes from the choices that one has made over the course of a lifetime. As Annas indicates, a “virtue, or a vice, is the way I have *made myself* and chosen to be.”²⁷ This is something stable where one continues to choose and act in a certain way. Virtues, therefore, have a past—the choices one has made that makes one disposed in a particular way—and they have a future—how one will continue to be disposed. This presents the nature of living virtuously as something always in progress. It also highlights the need to have been brought up in a way where one has been trained in having the right kind of disposition.²⁸

Even though Aristotle is careful to argue that the virtues are not feelings, he maintains that being virtuous involves one’s affections. It is not enough to be disposed in the right kind of way and make the right choices; one must also have the right feelings in

²⁵ See Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.5, and 2.6.15 for the definition.

²⁶ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.6.13–14. See the discussion in Pakaluk, *Ethics*, 109–113.

²⁷ Annas, *Morality*, 49 (italics in original).

²⁸ Aristotle emphasizes the need for a proper upbringing as crucial for living a virtuous life; see *Eth. nic.* 2.1.8 (trans. Broadie and Rowe): “So it does not make a small difference whether people are habituated to behave in one way or in another way from childhood on, but a very great one; or rather, it makes all the difference in the world.” The Hellenistic moral philosophies much more than Aristotle emphasize the possibility of conversion in adult life, and do not place such a strong emphasis on the need for a proper upbringing.

making these choices. If one does the right thing, but is pained in doing it, then this is not a virtuous action. One should do the right act and take pleasure in doing it.

The pleasure (ἡδονή) or pain (λύπη) that supervenes on (ἐπιγίνομαι) what people do should be treated as a sign of their dispositions; for someone who holds back from bodily pleasure and does so cheerfully (χαίρω) is a moderate person, while someone who is upset at doing so is self-indulgent, and someone who withstands frightening things and does so cheerfully, or anyway without distress (μὴ λυπούμενος), is a courageous person, while someone who is distressed at them is cowardly. For excellence of character (ἡθικὴ ἀρετὴ) has to do with pleasures and pains. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.3.1; trans. Broadie and Rowe)

After examining the character virtues, Aristotle turns his attention to the intellectual virtues. Whereas the former are developed from habituation, the latter are formed through education.²⁹ It is not enough to be disposed to do the right act with the right feelings, but a virtuous person must also be able to understand why this act is right and to explain to others reasons for a given action. Aristotle broadly divides the rational part of the soul into two categories: theoretical and practical, which each have a principle virtue: σοφία and φρόνησις respectively.³⁰ One of the crucial distinctions Aristotle makes between φρόνησις and σοφία is that the former is concerned with ascertaining truth relative to the species in question, whereas the latter is able to ascertain truth anywhere.³¹ In book 10 Aristotle will conclude that it is activity in accordance with the highest virtue (viz. σοφία), which he defines as contemplation (θεωρητική),³² that is indeed the supreme good. But in book 6 he emphasizes the importance of φρόνησις, even arguing that it has more authority than σοφία because it plays such an important role in

²⁹ See Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.1.1 (trans. Broadie and Rowe): “Excellence being of two sorts, then, the one intellectual and the other of character, the intellectual sort mostly both comes into existence and increases as a result of teaching (which is why it requires experience and time), whereas excellence of character results from habituation—which is in fact the source of the name it has acquired, the word for ‘character-trait’ being a slight variation of that for habituation.”

³⁰ See Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 6.12.4.

³¹ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 6.7.3–4.

³² Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 10.7.1.

directing virtuous choices and actions,³³ albeit this is a delimited authority since its importance is in promoting and actualizing σοφία.³⁴

Part of the reason for the importance given to φρόνησις is due to its concern with reasoning about what is ultimately good or bad for humans. He begins his discussion of it in the following way:

[I]t is thought characteristic of a wise person (φρόνιμος) to be able to deliberate (βουλεύω) well about the things that are good and advantageous to himself, not in specific contexts, e.g. what sorts of things conduce to health, or to physical strength, but what sorts of things conduce to the good life in general (τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως). ... It remains therefore for it to be a true disposition accompanied by rational prescription (μετὰ λόγου πρακτικῆν), relating to action in the sphere of what is good and bad for human beings. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 6.5.1, 4; trans. Broadie and Rowe)

Annas describes φρόνησις as “the state of the developed virtuous person, who not only makes the right judgments and decisions on particular occasions, but does so from a developed intelligent disposition, which is the basis for doing so reliably and correctly.”³⁵ This virtue plays such a crucial role because it is concerned with understanding what conduces to the good of one’s life as a whole. In being able to reason in such a way, one must therefore have all of the virtues and understand their place in one’s life and how they function in relation to one another in attaining what is supremely good. Aristotle indicates this in stating,

if wisdom (φρόνησις), which is one, is present, they will all [i.e. the virtues/excellences] be present with it. And it is clear, even if it did not lead to action, that there would be a need for it because of its being an excellence (ἀρετή) of its soul-part, and because a decision (προαίρεσις) will not be correct in the absence of wisdom (φρόνησις), or in the absence of excellence (ἀρετή); for the one causes us to act in relation to the end (τέλος), the other in relation to what forwards the end. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 6.13.6–7; trans. Broadie and Rowe)

³³ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 6.12.3.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 6.13.8.

³⁵ Annas, *Morality*, 73.

The role of φρόνησις is present in his discussion of the character virtues as well, in that it is the person who has this virtue that is able to determine what the intermediate action is.

Excellence (ἀρετή), then, is a disposition issuing in decisions (προαιρετική), depending on intermediacy (ἐν μεσότητι) of the kind relative to us, this being determined by rational prescription (λόγος) and in the way in which the wise person (φρόνιμος) would determine it. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.6.15; trans. Broadie and Rowe)

φρόνησις is what determines the morally good thing to do, which necessitates having all of the virtues and understanding the ways in which they relate and contribute to the good of one's life as a whole.

To summarize, Aristotle's ethical theory begins with reflection on one's life as a whole. He talks about goods in terms of goals and posits that there is one goal toward which one's life should aim that is to organize all of life. That is, this goal provides the point of orientation mapping out a life course that shapes all of one's choices and actions. In attempting to identify what this one goal is, he accepts calling it εὐδαιμονία, but he rejects commonly held ideas about in what this consists. He argues instead that it must be constrained by the two criteria of completeness and self-sufficiency, and that it is to be located in the doing of the characteristic activity of humanity well. Because the virtues are needed to carry out the characteristic activity of humanity well, Aristotle ultimately locates the supreme goal of life in living virtuously. These virtues are dispositions that involve choice, which give them a past and a future, highlighting the progressive nature of living a virtuous life. They also involve one's affections, where one not only is disposed to do the right act but also has the appropriate feeling in doing it. Also, living a virtuous life cannot be done apart from reasoning correctly. The virtue of φρόνησις is the most important in doing this because it is concerned with making correct moral judgments about one's life as a whole. Having once identified the ultimate goal in

terms of activity in accordance with the highest virtue (viz. contemplation), it is argued that all of the virtues are needed to enable one to carry out this activity.³⁶

3.2. Hellenistic Moral Philosophies

In the Hellenistic period the eudaimonistic and teleological framework for ethics were an assumed part of moral philosophy as can be seen from how the different schools were characterized by what they specified the τέλος/supreme good consisted in. For example, Cicero has Piso state that

when you have settled that point [i.e. the *summum bonum*] in a system of philosophy, you have settled everything. ... [W]hen we have ascertained the Ends of things (*rerum finibus*), knowing the ultimate Good and ultimate Evil (*bonorum extremum et malorum*), we have discovered a map of life (*vitae via*), a chart of all the duties (*omnium officiorum*); and therefore have discovered a standard to which each action may be referred; and from this we can discover and construct that rule of happiness which all desire. (Cicero, *Fin.* 5.6.15–16; Rackham, LCL)³⁷

He goes on to address six of these. I will examine two of them in what follows because of their prominence in the Greco-Roman world in the first-century CE: Epicureanism and Stoicism. These ethical theories make their own distinctive contributions, which will be discussed below, but they do this within the broad framework that we have seen in Aristotle.

3.2.1. Epicureanism

The Epicureans posit that the τέλος/supreme good consists in living according to pleasure. Pleasure is to structure one's choices and actions and in doing such bring εὐδαιμονία, which they also call μακαρίως ζῆν. That pleasure is the final end is taken as

³⁶ It should also be noted that Aristotle argues that some good fortune is needed in order to live virtuously. That is, one must come from a family of some means in order to enjoy the kind of leisure needed to devote oneself to contemplation, and to have the kind of upbringing that shapes one appropriately. This stands in contrast to the Epicureans and Stoics who argue that anyone, regardless of socio-economic status, can live a virtuous life.

³⁷ Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 1.4.11 (Rackham, LCL): “For what problem does life offer so important as all the topics of philosophy, and especially the question raised in these volumes—What is the End, the final ultimate aim, which gives the standard for all principles of well-being and right conduct?”

self-evident for the Epicureans because this is what every animal naturally does: seeks after pleasure and avoids pain. They argue in this manner by what has become known as the cradle argument:³⁸

[A]s soon as every animal is born, it seeks after pleasure and rejoices in it as the greatest good (*summum bonum*), while it rejects pain as the greatest bad (*summum malum*) and, as far as possible, avoids it; and it does this when it is not yet corrupted, on the innocent and sound judgment of nature itself. (Cicero, *Fin.* 1.30; trans. Long and Sedley, 21A)

The kind of life lived in accordance with pleasure, however, is not one of fulfilling any and every desire that one may have. Rather, pleasure is understood in terms of freedom from pain and ultimately attaining tranquility (*ἀταραξία*).³⁹ In making their argument that pleasure is really freedom from distress they make a distinction between different kinds of pleasure: kinetic and katastematic (i.e. static). This distinction is not fully explicated in the Epicurean sources and there is some disagreement. Cicero presents the distinction in terms of kinetic pleasures involving the fulfilment of a lack or need, and katastematic pleasures as the static state that occurs when pain is removed.⁴⁰ Kinetic pleasures in this view are seen as the fulfilment of lesser goals on the way to fulfilling the ultimate goal, katastematic pleasure. Epicurus presents the distinction in a different manner portraying katastematic pleasures as freedom from disturbance and absence of pain, and kinetic pleasures as joy and delight.⁴¹ Christopher Gill argues that the idea behind Epicurus' distinction is that being alive and living free from bodily pain and mental distress is "fundamentally pleasurable," and can be called katastematic, and "[o]ther pleasures are *variations* of this," such as joy and delight.⁴² There is support for this in Cicero as well where he indicates that kinetic pleasures vary the katastematic

³⁸ See Jacques Brunschwig, "The cradle argument in Epicureanism and Stoicism," in *Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics* (eds. Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 113–44.

³⁹ Diogenes Laertius 10.131.

⁴⁰ Cicero, *Fin.* 2.9 (trans Long and Sedley, 21Q): "Quenched thirst involves static pleasure, but the pleasure of the actual quenching is kinetic."

⁴¹ Diogenes Laertius 10.137 (trans. Long and Sedley, 21R): "Freedom from disturbance and absence of pain are static pleasures; but joy and delight are regarded as kinetic activities."

⁴² Gill, *The Structured Self*, 110.

pleasures without increasing them.⁴³ Whatever the distinction may have been, the crucial point is that the static state of freedom from distress is not a neutral state, but is a type of pleasure, and is in fact the pleasure that constitutes the final end and is that to which all other pleasures are subordinate.

Epicurean hedonism is mainly concerned with understanding the nature of one's desires and how these relate to the attainment of living free from distress. The preface of Epicurus' letter to Menoeceus outlines this framework:

We must reckon that some desires (ἐπιθυμίαι) are natural (φυσικαί) and others empty (κενά), and of the natural some are necessary (ἀναγκαῖαι), others natural only; and of the necessary some are necessary for happiness (εὐδαιμονία), others for the body's freedom from stress, and others for life itself. For the steady observation of these things makes it possible to refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body (ἡ τοῦ σώματος ὑγεία) and the soul's freedom from disturbance (ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀταραξία), since this is the end belonging to the blessed life (τοῦτο τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν ἐστι τέλος). For this is what we aim at in all our actions – to be free from pain and anxiety. (Diogenes Laertius 10.127–28; trans. Long and Sedley, 21B)

In reflecting on one's life as a whole and attempting to organize it in such a way that attains freedom from distress, one must decide what desires can be fulfilled that will be conducive to achieving this end, and conversely which ones are not. Epicurus classifies desires into three categories to aid in facilitating this (as can be seen in the quotation above): natural and necessary, natural and not necessary, and empty (i.e. not natural or necessary).⁴⁴ Natural and necessary desires are those that are natural for humanity to have (e.g. for food, drink, shelter) and would include the desire for a life free from distress. Those that are natural and not necessary are desires that vary pleasure, do not remove pain, and are not needed, such as expensive food. Those desires that are empty are those based on false opinions about what is needed, which has been mediated to one from a corrupt society. The examples of “crowns and erection of statues” are given.⁴⁵ In order to live a life free of distress one only needs to fulfill the natural and necessary

⁴³ Cicero, *Fin.* 2.10.

⁴⁴ Cf. Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 29; Epicurus, *Vatican sayings* 21.

⁴⁵ Scholion on Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 29 (trans. Long and Sedley, 21I).

desires. These are understood as coming from human nature, which are presented as something humans are “hard-wired” for, they are easy to fulfill, and they are generic (e.g. food, drink, etc.) rather than specific (e.g. lobster, falernian wine).

The reason all humans do not enjoy living a life free of distress is because they try to fulfill desires that are not natural as if they are. One of the reasons for this is due to empty beliefs that corrupt one’s desires. As indicated in the *Key doctrines* of Epicurus:

Whenever intense passion is present in natural desires which do not lead to pain if they are unfulfilled, these have their origin in empty opinion; and the reason for their persistence is not their own nature but the empty opinion (*κενοδοξία*) of the person. (Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 30; trans. Long and Sedley, 21E)

As Annas argues, *κενοδοξία* are not just false beliefs, but they are actually “harmful and dysfunctional for the agent.”⁴⁶ Gill suggests that there are two ways in which empty beliefs are mistaken: 1) that the fulfillment of empty or non-necessary desires will produce static/katastematic pleasure, and 2) that the pleasures of finite humans can be increased infinitely (e.g. from enhancing natural desires with more extravagance like eating luxurious food, etc.).⁴⁷

What are needed to attain static pleasure and thus bring about *εὐδαιμονία* are therefore correct beliefs (i.e. correct ways of reasoning). As Epicurus states,

For what produces a pleasant life is ... sober reasoning (*νήφων λογισμός*) which tracks down the causes of every choice and avoidance, and which banishes the opinions (*δόξα*) that beset souls with the greatest confusion. (Diogenes Laertius 10.132; trans. Long and Sedley, 21B)

It is chiefly through thinking rightly about human nature and what is a natural desire and necessary that one can live a life free from distress.⁴⁸ The way in which one’s reasoning develops to be able to banish false beliefs and have correct ones is predominantly through the memorization of Epicurean sayings and doing certain social

⁴⁶ Annas, *Morality*, 190.

⁴⁷ Gill, *The Structured Self*, 113. Cf. Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 7, 15, 18–20.

⁴⁸ Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 1089D; Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 20; Cicero, *Fin.* 1.42–43.

activities that inculcate the kinds of attitudes needed to live a life free from distress (hence the importance of the Garden community and friendship in Epicureanism).⁴⁹

With this focus on correct reasoning, it is understandable why Epicurus argues that φρόνησις is the greatest good and source of all the other virtues, even being more precious than philosophy.

Of all this the beginning and the greatest good (τὸ μέγιστον ἀγαθόν) is prudence (φρόνησις). Therefore prudence is even more precious than philosophy, and it is the natural source of all the remaining virtues (ἀρεταί): it teaches the impossibility of living pleasurably without living prudently, honourably and justly, <and the impossibility of living prudently, honourably and justly>⁵⁰ without living pleasurably. For the virtues are naturally linked with living pleasurably, and living pleasurably is inseparable from them. (Diogenes Laertius 10.132; trans. Long and Sedley, 21B)

Cicero emphasizes the importance of wisdom in his presentation of Epicureanism, and in many ways discusses the virtues (wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice) in terms of making correct judgments about pleasure and pain.⁵¹ For example, the virtue of courage, which enables one to realize that there is nothing to fear in death, combats the distress (pain) caused from the fear of death.⁵² As can be seen from this discussion, the Epicureans do not view the virtues as good in themselves; rather, they are understood solely as the means to attaining pleasure. They also emphasize the possibility that anyone at any stage in life can begin to live in a way that is virtuous and can procure εὐδαιμονία, i.e. freedom from distress.⁵³ While they still regard the need for training as important, there is less emphasis on the necessity of a good upbringing and habituation, as was seen in Aristotle.

The affective aspects of living virtuously are not widely discussed in the Epicurean sources. When this is mentioned it is typically in connection with beliefs, either correct

⁴⁹ See Annas, *Morality*, 55.

⁵⁰ Long and Sedley use angle brackets to signal their reconstruction of lacunae in the texts.

⁵¹ Cicero, *Fin.* 1.42–54. See the discussion in Tim O’Keefe, *Epicureanism* (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 129–37.

⁵² Cicero, *Fin.* 1.49; cf. Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 2.

⁵³ Diogenes Laertius 10.122.

or empty ones.⁵⁴ Empty beliefs are connected with distressing emotional states: e.g. fear of death, grief.⁵⁵ Correct beliefs are connected with pleasurable emotional states. As Plutarch indicates in describing the Epicurean view: “The comfortable state (*κατάστημα*) of the flesh, and the confident expectation of this, contain the highest and most secure joy (*χαρά*) for those who are capable of reasoning (*ἐπιλογίζομαι*).”⁵⁶ By reasoning with a view towards attaining the final end of freedom from distress and structuring one’s life as a whole with respect to this, pleasurable emotional states such as joy will be secured.

The kind of life that is structured according to attaining pleasure is further defined as the self-sufficient (*αὐτάρκεια*) life. Epicurus describes *αὐτάρκεια*

as a great good, not with the aim of always living off little, but to enable us to live off little if we do not have much, in the genuine conviction that they derive the greatest pleasure from luxury who need it least, and that everything natural (*φυσικόν*) is easy to procure, but what is empty (*κενόν*) is hard to procure. ... Therefore the habit of simple and inexpensive diet maximizes health and makes a man energetic in facing the necessary business of daily life; it also strengthens our character when we encounter luxuries from time to time, and emboldens us in the face of fortune. (Diogenes Laertius 10.130–31; trans. Long and Sedley, 21B)

The person who is self-sufficient is one who is satisfied in fulfilling the natural and necessary desires. This is not an ascetic way of living, but one that fulfills desires informed by correct beliefs about what is truly pleasurable, i.e. freedom from distress. Living in such a contented way maximizes pleasure in that those who are satisfied without luxury can enjoy it more when they have it, and not be distressed when they do not.

The kind of life advocated by Epicureanism was often viewed as embodied in Epicurus. He was not only considered the founder of the school who taught the nature of the supreme good, but he is also presented as the exemplary paradigm of how one should live. This is most evident in Lucretius who presents Epicurus as embodying the virtuous life that is conducive toward living free from distress. He presents the courage

⁵⁴ There is small discussion of natural emotional states. See Annas, *Morality*, 194–95, who discusses Philodemus’ view on natural anger.

⁵⁵ Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 1–4; cf. also Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 30 quoted above.

⁵⁶ Plutarch, *Mor.* 1089D (trans. Long and Sedley, 21N).

of Epicurus in taking a stand against the traditional understanding of the gods and daring to think and live differently than what others were doing.⁵⁷ He is also presented as a godlike benefactor accomplishing the greatest feat of all, purging the mind of vices.⁵⁸ Lucretius often expresses how he wants to follow in the footsteps of Epicurus, embodying his way of reasoning and living. This is expressed most clearly in his poem to Epicurus at the outset of book 3.

O you who first (*primus*) amid so great a darkness were able to raise aloft a light so clear (*clarum extollere lumen*), illumining the blessings of life, you I follow (*te sequor*), O glory of the Grecian race, and now on the marks (*signis*) you have left I plant my own footsteps firm, not so much desiring to be your rival, as for love, because I yearn to copy you (*quod te imitari avelo*). (Lucretius 3.1–5; Rouse, LCL)

Epicurus was viewed as an exemplary figure by those after him, whose teachings were not only worth embracing, but whose life was also worth imitating.⁵⁹

To summarize, the Epicureans present pleasure as the final end/supreme good of life. It is the one goal toward which one is to aim his/her life and is therefore that which structures all of life's choices and actions. In doing this one will live the most pleasurable life and attain *εὐδαιμονία*. The static state of freedom from distress (*ἀταραξία*) is presented as the most pleasurable way of living. Because of their focus on living a life free from distress the Epicureans are chiefly concerned with addressing the desires that humans have which play a role in determining the amount of anxiety in one's life. Their goal is to pare down one's desires so that one can live a tranquil life. The corrupting influence of false beliefs often enter into one's reasoning leading one to think that non-necessary or empty desires are actually needed. For this reason, the Epicureans focus on correct reasoning to militate against this deleterious thinking. The virtues are important for the Epicureans in that they enable one to think correctly about human nature and desires so that they can choose the pleasurable and reject the painful. The virtue of

⁵⁷ Lucretius 1.69–75.

⁵⁸ Lucretius 5.13–54.

⁵⁹ See Diogenes Laertius 10.22 for his death-bed letter that played a role in making him a symbolic figure on par with Socrates. See Gill, *The Structured Self*, 101–102, and bibliography provided in 102 n.121.

φρόνησις is singled out as particularly important in this regard. Correct reasoning is also connected to pleasurable emotional states, such as joy, whereas empty beliefs are connected to distressing emotional states, such as fear or grief. Living in a way that takes pleasure to be the final end is further described as living a self-sufficient life. It is living in a way that is not dependent on externals, but only concerned with fulfilling the desires that are natural and necessary and thus living a life free from distress. The Epicurean way of life is ultimately seen as embodied in Epicurus. His life is presented as the paradigmatic example which his followers should imitate.

3.2.2. Stoicism

The Stoics argue that the τέλος/supreme good consists in living according to virtue.⁶⁰ Living virtuously is what will bring about εὐδαιμονία, which they also describe as εὖ ζῆν, and having a εὖροια βίου.⁶¹ The Stoics sometimes further explain living in accordance with virtue as living in agreement with nature. As Diogenes Laertius indicates:

Therefore Zeno ... was the first to say that living in agreement with nature is the end, which is living in accordance with virtue. For nature leads us towards virtue. ... Further, living in accordance with virtue is equivalent to living in accordance with experience of what happens by nature, as Chrysippus says ... for our own natures are parts of the nature of the whole. Therefore, living in agreement with nature comes to be the end, which is in accordance with nature of oneself and that of the whole, engaging in no activity wont to be forbidden by the universal law, which is the right reason pervading everything and identical to Zeus, who is this director of the administration of existing things. And the virtue of the happy man and his good flow of life are just this: always doing everything on the basis of the concordance of each man's guardian spirit with the will of the administrator of the whole. (Diogenes Laertius 7.87–88; trans. Long and Sedley, 57A)

⁶⁰ Unlike Aristotle, the Stoics make a distinction between τέλος and σκοπός. The former is the activity of aiming at the end, that is, everything one would do to structure one's life according to it. The latter is the actual target to be hit. See Cicero, *Fin.* 3.22; Stobaeus 2.47.8–10.

⁶¹ See Cicero, *Fin.* 3.10–11; Diogenes Laertius 7.127.

Many have taken Stoic statements like this as indicating that their cosmology/physics is a foundation for their ethics.⁶² However, others have argued for a more holistic approach to Stoic teaching that rejects this foundationalism.⁶³ It is significant that some of the Stoic sources do not present cosmic nature as foundational for ethics.⁶⁴ Furthermore, there is evidence that in some places physics was taught last after ethics, and only retroactively was ethics then explained in terms of physics.⁶⁵ Moreover, as Annas argues the Stoic sage is ultimately to have an integrated philosophy where logic, ethics, and physics are brought together providing “one overall synoptic and unified view.”⁶⁶ Each area of philosophy has its own distinctive features and one is not necessarily a foundation for the other, which is a rather modern way of conceptualizing the material that we should be cautious of. In the passages like that quoted above, what is presented is more than likely “mutual illumination between ethical and physical claims.”⁶⁷ Stoic ethics can therefore be rightly understood in its own terms within a eudaimonistic framework, apart from foundational claims about cosmic nature.⁶⁸ This will be my focus in what follows.

The Stoics, like the Epicureans, employ the cradle argument to support their designation of virtue as the goal of life. They present the process of development (what they call *οἰκείωσις*) to establish that living virtuously is a natural development, something ideally that all humans are naturally disposed to do. There are two parts in this process: the personal⁶⁹ and the social.⁷⁰ Our focus will be on the first part since it highlights some

⁶² See, e.g., Gisela Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 225–31. In NT studies see Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.

⁶³ See, e.g., Julia Annas, “Ethics in Stoic Philosophy,” *Phronesis* 52 (2007): 58–87; eadem, *Morality*, 159–79; Gill, *The Structured Self*, 146–66.

⁶⁴ Such as the description of Stoic ethics found in Stobaeus and Sextus Empiricus.

⁶⁵ See Jacques Brunschwig, “On a Book-Title by Chrysippus: ‘On the Fact that the Ancients Admitted Dialectic along with Demonstrations,’” in *Aristotle and the Later Tradition* (eds. Henry Blumenthal and Howard Robinson; OSAP Supp 9; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 81–96.

⁶⁶ Annas, “Ethics,” 63.

⁶⁷ Annas, “Ethics,” 68.

⁶⁸ With that said, it could also be presented in terms of physics, as many have done. There were different ways of presenting Stoic ethics, each of which makes its own contribution. My point in this discussion is to argue that one way it can be presented is apart from a cosmological foundation.

⁶⁹ See Cicero, *Fin.* 3.17–21.

⁷⁰ See Cicero, *Fin.* 3.62–68. The second part of the theory is a move toward extending the process of ethical development to others. That is, just as one is naturally disposed to preserve one’s own life and

of the core ideas about their ethical theory. The basic idea of this developmental theory is that humans, and all animals, have the natural propensity of self-preservation. This is evident in that humans naturally pursue those things that are needed for life (e.g. food, drink, shelter). Cicero describes this as preserving “oneself in one’s natural constitution.”⁷¹ As one develops, one’s constitution changes, i.e. one becomes a rational being.⁷² The natural impulse to preserve one’s constitution now consists of doing that which would further rationality. This culminates in coming to acquire the

understanding (*intelligentiam*), or rather, the conception (*notionem*) which the Stoics call *ennoia*, and has seen the regularity (*ordinem*) and, so to speak, the harmony of conduct (*concordiam*), he comes to value this far higher than all those objects of his initial affection; ... that good which is the standard of all things, right actions (*honesta facta*) and rectitude (*honestum*) itself, which is reckoned the only good though later in origin, is the only thing desirable through its intrinsic nature and value, whereas none of the first objects of nature is desirable for its own sake. (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.21; trans. Long and Sedley, 59D)⁷³

While the term virtue (*virtus*) is not explicitly used in this passage, Cicero makes the connection earlier in this work presenting it as the only good, and speaking of it in terms of rectitude (*honestum*), the same language used in the passage just quoted.⁷⁴ The Stoic theory of development culminates in acquiring a singular commitment to a fully reasoned moral way of life, which establishes for them why virtue is the *summum bonum* rather than pleasure or something else.⁷⁵

constitution, so one is naturally disposed to preserve the life of others. This is demonstrated from the way in which parents care for their children. This natural impulse can be extended to ever widening circles that encompass all humanity, and gives impetus toward acting in ways that benefit others.

⁷¹ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.20 (trans. Long and Sedley, 59D).

⁷² See Seneca, *Ep.* 121.

⁷³ What causes the shift in understanding is a debated issue. Due to the reasons mentioned above, I think it can be appropriately understood apart from foundational claims about cosmic nature. I also think that it is best understood apart from viewing it as a form of subjective-individualistic self-realization as is done in the work of Troels Engberg-Pedersen. For criticisms of his view see Gill, *The Structured Self*, 359–70.

⁷⁴ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.10–11; cf. *Fin.* 3.36.

⁷⁵ See Brad Inwood and Pierluigi Donini, “Stoic ethics,” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (eds. Keimpe Algra et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 677–682, for further connections between the development of reason and virtue.

One of the distinctive features of Stoicism is that they do not just argue that virtue is the supreme good, but they make the radical claim that virtue *alone* is good. In order to more fully appreciate what this entails it will be helpful to address the Stoic theory of value and indifference. The Stoics classified objects and states of affairs into three categories: good, bad, and indifferent. Virtue and that which participated in virtue was alone considered good (e.g. practical wisdom, justice, courage, moderation, etc.). That which was considered bad was vice and that which participates in vice (e.g. foolishness, injustice, cowardice, etc.). Everything else was considered indifferent (e.g. life, death, health, wealth, strength, weakness, reputation, etc.); that is, such things did not make a difference in attaining the goal of life and thus having *εὐδαιμονία*.⁷⁶ The Stoics made further distinctions between indifferent matters. Some of these were to be preferred, others dispreferred, and some were considered neutral. A preferred indifferent was one that had value and was something that would be rationally chosen and according to nature (e.g. health, freedom from pain, wealth). A dispreferred indifferent was the opposite and considered of negative value (e.g. sickness, pain, poverty). Something that had no value and did not matter to a rational person was considered a neutral indifferent (e.g. whether the number of hairs on one's head was odd or even).⁷⁷ The Stoics argued that virtue was the only good and that it alone was sufficient for *εὐδαιμονία*, while on the other hand vice was the sole constituent of misery. Virtue was therefore the *only* thing that was to be chosen, vice was always to be rejected, and all other matters (indifferents) were to be properly selected, viz. choosing them, or doing without them, in the right way.

The process through which one acquires virtue is often discussed in terms of learning a skill. The Stoics argued that the virtues were a special kind of skill, “an expertise (*τέχνη*) concerned with the whole of life.”⁷⁸ A skill was thought of as something where one had to acquire knowledge about what to do and coherently and consistently integrate this knowledge through practical training for the purpose of attaining some goal. Zeno described a skill as “a systematic collection of cognitions unified by practice for some

⁷⁶ See Diogenes Laertius 7.101–3; cf. Cicero, *Acad.* 1.36–7.

⁷⁷ See Diogenes Laertius 7.104–5; cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.44, 50–51; Stobaeus 2.79.18–80.13; 2.83.10–84.2.

⁷⁸ Stobaeus 2.67.3 (trans. Long and Sedley, 61G).

goal advantageous in life.”⁷⁹ Learning a craft and playing an instrument were often used as examples to illustrate this. By understanding virtue as a skill, there are two areas that are brought to the fore: knowledge and practice. As knowledge becomes more refined through practice and one integrates and organizes this into a coherent system, then one will be able to make choices and act rightly consistently.⁸⁰ This way of living is what Cicero called “regularity” and “harmony of conduct” in the quote above.⁸¹ Diogenes Laertius also describes virtue similarly, stating:

Virtue is a consistent character, choiceworthy for its own sake (Τὴν τ’ ἀρετὴν διάθεσιν εἶναι ὁμολογουμένην· καὶ αὐτὴν δι’ αὐτὴν εἶναι αἰρετήν) and not from fear or hope or anything external. Happiness consists in virtue since virtue is a soul which has been fashioned to achieve consistency in the whole of life (ἐν αὐτῇ τ’ εἶναι τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν, ἅτ’ οὔση ψυχῆ πεποιημένη πρὸς τὴν ὁμολογίαν παντὸς τοῦ βίου). (Diogenes Laertius 7.89; trans. Long and Sedley, 61A)

This understanding of virtue highlights the same emphasis on integrating knowledge and practice into a consistent whole in aiming to live virtuously.

The Stoics also viewed the virtues as inseparable from one another.⁸² They had distinctive perspectives, but shared the same end and were thus “inter-entailing (ἀντακολουθεῖν ἀλλήλαις).”⁸³ Some Stoics gave a central place to φρόνησις, treating it as the skill of life that was peculiar to the sage. Sextus Empiricus highlights this stating,

the Stoics assert outright that “wisdom (φρόνησις), which is the science (ἐπιστήμη) of things which are good and evil and neither, is an art of life (τέχνην ὑπάρχειν περὶ τὸν βίον), and only those who attain this become fair, only they rich, as only they are wise.” (Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 11.170; Bury, LCL)⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Olympiodorus, *On Plato’s Gorgias* 12.1 (trans. Long and Sedley, 42A): σύστημα ἐκ καταλήψεων συγγεγυμνασμένοι πρός τι τέλος εὐχρηστον τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ.

⁸⁰ See Annas, *Morality*, 69–70.

⁸¹ This is also described as living in agreement (ὁμολογία). See Cicero, *Fin.* 3.21.

⁸² Stobaeus 2.63.6–8 (trans. Long and Sedley 61D): “All the virtues which are sciences and expertises share their theorems and, as already mentioned the same end. Hence they are also inseparable.”

⁸³ Plutarch, *Mor.* 1046E (trans. Long and Sedley, 61F): “They [the Stoics] say that the virtues are inter-entailing, not only because he who has one has them all but also because he who does any action in accordance with one does so in accordance with them all (Τὰς ἀρετάς φασιν ἀντακολουθεῖν ἀλλήλαις, οὐ μόνον τῷ τὸν μίαν ἔχοντα πάσας ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ τὸν κατὰ μίαν ὀτιοῦν ἐνεργοῦντα κατὰ πάσας ἐνεργεῖν).”

⁸⁴ Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrr.* 3.240.

The prominence given to φρόνησις is present in the founder of the Stoic school as well. Zeno views all of the individual virtues as an application of φρόνησις:

courage (ἀνδρεία) is prudence (φρόνησις) <in matters requiring endurance, moderation is prudence in matters requiring choice, prudence in the special sense is prudence> in matters requiring action, and justice (δικαιοσύνη) is prudence (φρόνησις) in matters requiring distribution – on the ground that it is one single virtue (ὡς μίαν οὖσαν ἀρετήν), which seems to differ in actions according to its dispositions relative to things. (Plutarch, *Mor.* 1034C–D; trans. Long and Sedley, 61C)⁸⁵

The Stoics also gave an important place to one’s emotions in living virtuously. The Stoics, much more than others, emphasize the cognitive aspect of emotions. They effectively argue that emotions are judgments, or opinions.⁸⁶ This is rooted in their theory of motivation, which presents the idea that when impressions (φαντασία) are received they call forth impulses (ὀρμή).⁸⁷ For rational beings, before the impulse is carried out, assent must be given to the propositional content that accompanies the impression.⁸⁸ An emotional response is created when one adds a value judgment to one’s assent to an impression. As John Sellars illustrates, it is when one does not just say, “there is a wave above my head,” (something value-neutral) but adds “there is a wave above my head *and this is a terrible thing*.”⁸⁹ Emotions for the Stoics are assents to impressions, which contain a value judgment. These emotions can be either positive or negative in character, both of which are to be rejected because they are not rationally informed. In fact, the Stoics define all πάθη as irrational and contrary to nature, thus the sage is to be ἀπαθής.⁹⁰ However, the Stoics do not argue that the virtuous person should be completely devoid of emotions. They argue instead that assent to impressions should be rationally informed. When this is done then good emotional states will occur. Diogenes Laertius defines these εὐπάθειαι of the virtuous person as joy (χαρά),

⁸⁵ Plutarch also presents Chrysippus as agreeing with this formulation (*Mor.* 1034D).

⁸⁶ Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 5.1.4; Stobaeus 2.88.22–89.3.

⁸⁷ Origen, *Princ.* 3.1.2–3; cf. Gill, *The Structured Self*, 138–39.

⁸⁸ Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 8.70; Stobaeus 2.88.2–6.

⁸⁹ John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), 116 (italics in original).

⁹⁰ Stobaeus 2.88.8–90.6; Diogenes 7.117.

watchfulness (εὐλάβεια), and wishing (βούλησις).⁹¹ These are emotions that are endorsed by reason.⁹² Seneca also calls attention to the good emotional state of the virtuous person, presenting joy (*gaudium*) as the chief emotion of the sage.⁹³

As with the Epicureans, the Stoics argued that the primary reason why people were not virtuous were due to mistaken judgments, primarily about what was good, bad, and indifferent. Each person, whatever their background, could correct these faulty beliefs and make progress toward becoming virtuous.⁹⁴ The Stoics used special terms to differentiate between the beginner, the person who performed a proper function (καθήκον), and the fully virtuous person, the one who performed the proper function perfectly (κατορθώματα). Stobaeus indicates the distinction in the following manner, summarizing the view of Chrysippus:

“The man who progresses (προκόπτω) to the furthest point performs all proper functions (τὰ καθήκοντα) without exception and omits none. Yet his life,” he says, “is not yet happy (εὐδαιμονία), but happiness supervenes (ἐπιγίνομαι) on it when these intermediate actions acquire the additional properties of firmness and tenor and their own fixity.” (Stobaeus 5.906.18–907.5; trans. Long and Sedley, 59I)

A proper function is the kind of action that is natural for the animal in question to do and enhances its life. These are sometimes equated with preferred indifferents. In performing these, however, one does not bring about εὐδαιμονία. It is only the fully virtuous person who performs the right actions in the right way who is able to experience εὐδαιμονία. Cicero illustrates the Stoic distinction between the beginner and the fully virtuous person by pointing out that a person is still drowning and unable to breathe no matter how close he/she gets to the surface. Even if one is making progress toward becoming virtuous, the Stoics argued that person is still in vice and therefore in misery.⁹⁵

The central way in which the beginner learns to become virtuous is through learning from the choices and actions of others and analogously applying what one learns to one's

⁹¹ Diogenes Laertius 7.116.

⁹² See Annas, *Morality*, 62–63.

⁹³ Seneca, *Ep.* 59.

⁹⁴ This again is similar to the Epicurean view, and is different from the Aristoteleian which places a strong emphasis on the need for proper habituation and upbringing.

⁹⁵ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.48.

own life.⁹⁶ Seneca's *Ep.* 120 most fully demonstrates this. In this epistle Seneca is answering the question posed by Lucilius pertaining to how we get our knowledge of what is good and honorable (*boni honestique*).⁹⁷ Seneca answers this question by pointing out these are comprehended by analogy (*analogia*).⁹⁸ He discusses this first in terms of how we naturally amplify those traits that are praiseworthy.⁹⁹ He uses two heroes, Fabricius and Horatius, who exemplify certain virtuous qualities, but who were not considered perfectly virtuous.¹⁰⁰ By amplifying their virtuous traits they reveal a picture of virtue.¹⁰¹ Next he demonstrates further how one can learn what is virtuous from examples of vice.¹⁰² From the counter-examples of virtue, which sometimes might resemble virtue, one can build up a picture of the opposite and thus what is truly virtuous.¹⁰³ Lastly, Seneca argues that the sage who embodies perfect virtue can directly communicate what is good and honorable.¹⁰⁴ He calls attention to the sage's consistent character and how the sage demonstrates *perfectam virtutem* attracting the attention of everyone.¹⁰⁵ As Brad Inwood points out, for Seneca, "The sage is a whetstone for our analysis of moral experience."¹⁰⁶ Not only does the sage provide a contrast to all of the inconsistent non-virtuous people in the world, but also from the sage's virtuous acts, one can reason by way of abstraction what is *boni honestique*.

To summarize, the Stoics posit that the final τέλος/supreme good is virtue, which alone is good and alone is sufficient for attaining εὐδαιμονία. Virtue is the one thing that is to be chosen, vice is always to be rejected, and all else (the indifferents) are to be properly selected. The Stoics discuss virtue as a skill, where knowledge is integrated through practice and organized into a consistent pattern of living. The virtues had both

⁹⁶ The Stoics also viewed principles (*decreta*) and rules (*praecepta*) as playing a role in helping one to become virtuous. See Seneca, *Ep.* 94 and 95; cf. Annas, *Morality*, 98–99.

⁹⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 120.1. Brad Inwood, *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 271–301, argues that this epistle fills in what is missing in the Ciceronean account of how one comes to grasp the good.

⁹⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 120.4.

⁹⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 120.5: *natura iubet augere laudanda*.

¹⁰⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 120.6–7.

¹⁰¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 120.8: *haec et eiusmodi facta imaginem nobis ostendere virtutis*.

¹⁰² Seneca, *Ep.* 120.8–11.

¹⁰³ Seneca, *Ep.* 120.11.

¹⁰⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 120.12–22, with what has been called a "platonic" excursus at 15–18.

¹⁰⁵ Seneca, 120.10, 13: *advertitque in se omnium animos*.

¹⁰⁶ Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 295–96.

intellectual and affective aspects. The former is evident in their stress on the importance of φρόνησις, which is the skill of life giving one knowledge of good, bad, and indifferent. The latter is present in their discussion of εὐπάθειαι, the good emotional states endorsed by reason. Among these, joy was often emphasized as the emotional state of the virtuous person. The Stoics, like the Epicureans, emphasized that people did not live virtuously because of mistaken beliefs. These could be corrected, regardless of one's upbringing, and a person could begin to make progress toward becoming virtuous. One of the crucial ways in which someone could learn what the virtuous life entailed was from observing the exemplary behavior of others and the contrasting patterns of a life of vice. Exemplars could be imperfect people who display some virtuous quality, but ultimately it was the sage's virtuous behavior that provided the exemplar *par excellence*. By way of analogy, one could come to know the good from their choices and actions and by structuring one's life similarly, one could make progress toward becoming virtuous.

3.3. Conclusion

Ancient moral philosophies all shared the same broad structure of thought. I have examined Aristotle, Epicureanism, and Stoicism, but the same could be said of the Cynics, Sceptics, and other schools.¹⁰⁷ In brief, this broad structure can be summarized as follows: There is one goal at which one's life should aim and this goal is to map out a life-course for how one should live. The virtues play a central role in enabling one to attain this goal and structure one's life accordingly. They have both intellectual and affective aspects. In discussions of the former, φρόνησις is viewed as particularly important in uniting and underlying the virtues. In discussions of the latter, χαρά is typically emphasized as playing an important role.¹⁰⁸ The life that is oriented toward the final end/*summum bonum* and is lived virtuously is one that is sufficient for attaining εὐδαιμονία, i.e. it is αὐτάρκεια and therefore not dependent on anything external to the kind of life that one has chosen to live. This kind of life does not come about

¹⁰⁷ Annas, *Morality*, 329, argues that only the Cyrenaics depart from this broad structure, and that in the way that they do so actually proves the rule for how ancients broadly conceptualized ethical theory.

¹⁰⁸ The Epicureans and Stoics have a more integrated view of one's emotions and reasoning than Aristotle does—due in large part to Aristotle's division of the soul and activities that correspond with different parts—but nevertheless, they both consider emotions important in their ethical theories.

immediately; rather, it takes time to develop. One makes progress toward living virtuously and attaining the final end. In order to know how to live in such a way and make the right kind of progress one learns from exemplars, and ultimately from the sage who embodies perfect virtue and who has completely structured his/her life according to the final end.

This pattern of thought will provide the correlative material with which to analyze the moral philosophical language in Philippians. With an understanding of how terms like φρόνησις, χαρά, αὐτάρκεια, τέλειον, προκοπή, as well as how *exempla* were used in moral philosophy we can be in a better position to explore how they function in Paul's argument. This will allow us more fully to understand the logic of Paul's argument and specifically how he is using moral discourse prominent in his world in order to form the Christian community at Philippi in a particular way. The moral philosophical pattern of thought will also be useful as an important context for understanding the ways in which moral philosophers used athletic imagery. It is to a discussion of ancient athletics that we now turn.

Chapter 4

ANCIENT ATHLETICS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A GOOD LIFE

Introduction

This chapter examines athletics in the ancient world, particularly how it was connected with constructions of the good life both in civic and moral philosophical discourse. In the overview of research I argued that an important, but neglected, feature of Philippians was athletic imagery. It is used in crucial places in Paul's argument—e.g. in the thesis statement (Phil 1:27–30), concluding his self-presentation (Phil 3:13–14), and in his exhortation to Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:3)—and therefore a fuller understanding of how this language is functioning is needed. In order to facilitate this what follows explores some of the common associations connected to athletics in the ancient world. I will begin this discussion with a brief survey of the prominence of athletics in the Greco-Roman world and some of the elements of the games and festivals in order to establish a broad context for athletic discourse. Then I will examine the athletic ideal and how it was bound up with ideas of virtue and being a good citizen. Next I will explore the ways in which moral philosophers utilize athletic imagery in their presentation of what living the good and virtuous life entails. This will provide important material for understanding Paul's athletic language in Philippians.

4.1. Prominence of Athletics: The Games

Athletics in the first-century CE was a popular and prominent part of the Greco-Roman world. People all across the Roman Empire would have had many opportunities to go to the games and to be exposed to athletics. There is evidence that Greeks, Romans, and Jews all showed some interest in them.¹ Greek interest in athletics is of course overwhelming. It was one of the central ways in which Greeks could assert their Hellenic

¹ I recognize that there were many more ethnic groups in the Roman Empire than these three. My point is to demonstrate the widespread popularity of athletics across the Empire, and these three ethnic groups suffice for this purpose.

identity under Roman rule.² There were many Greek cities that regularly had festivals which included games with running, boxing, wrestling, and other events.³ There were also the four Panhellenic Games which were a staple of Greek heritage and identity (Olympic, Isthmian, Pythian, and Nemean),⁴ and were widely popular. Fanoula Papazoglou demonstrates this popularity from an epitaph of a baker from Beroia, which records that he went to Olympia twelve times to see the games.⁵ The Romans have a more complex relationship to athletics. Evidence for an interest in them comes from a few inscriptions from Pompeii that advertise not only *munera*, but also *athletae* (i.e. Greek athletics).⁶ Julius Caesar also held athletic contests in Rome in 46 BCE turning the Campus Martius into a stadium,⁷ and Augustus in his *Res Gestae* boasts of how he put on three athletic spectacles.⁸ The Romans also established games, which was a way of asserting their imperial power and influence. For instance, the quadrennial Actium games were established at Nicopolis in Greece in 28/27 BCE and the quadrennial Augustalia Isolympic games were established at Naples in 2 CE.⁹ The elites in Rome had a mixed response to Greek athletics. Some saw taking an interest in them as a way of demonstrating their cultural sophistication, an example of this is Nero's interest and participation in the games in Greece where he "won" many crowns,¹⁰ but it is also evident in the statues and mosaics in Rome, and more widely in Italy, that display Greek athletes. On the other hand, other elites in Rome viewed athletics as something that was conducive to effeminacy and was responsible for weak men, immoral behavior, and even

² See Onno van Nijf, "Local heroes: athletics, festivals and elite self-fashioning in the Roman East," in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (ed. Simon Goldhill; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 306–34.

³ See, e.g., Stephen Mitchell, "Festivals, Games, and Civic Life in Roman Asia Minor," *JRS* 80 (1990): 183–193.

⁴ Other festivals took on the name Iso-Olympic, Iso-Pythic, and so forth signaling that they were copying these prestigious Games.

⁵ Fanoula Papazoglou, "Macedonia Under the Romans: Intellectual Life," in *Macedonia: 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization* (ed. M.B. Sakellariou; Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1988), 203.

⁶ See *CIL* 4.1177, 10.1.1074.

⁷ Suetonius, *Jul.* 39.1–4.

⁸ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 22.1–3.

⁹ For the Actium games see Dio Cassius 53.1.4–5; for the Augustalia games see Suetonius, *Aug.* 98.5; Dio Cassius 55.10.9; 56.29.2.

¹⁰ Suetonius, *Ner.* 12.3–4; 23–24.

the downfall of Greece.¹¹ While there were diverse attitudes to athletics among Romans, this material at least points to some familiarity with athletics across a wide spectrum.

The evidence for Jewish interest in the games is smaller, but is nonetheless present. The Maccabean literature presents some Jews in Palestine, and the surrounding area, adopting Hellenic ways and training in the *gymnasion*.¹² This interest was probably restricted to certain pro-Hellenic elites, which can also be seen from Herod the Great who sponsored the Olympic Games, became president of them in 12 BCE, and completed the Caesarea Sebaste in 10/9 BCE which had a theater and a stadium.¹³ Herod the Great dedicated this new capital with contests which would have been open to the public.¹⁴ Another piece of evidence for Jewish interest in the games comes from Alexandria. This is a letter that the emperor Claudius wrote to the Alexandrians addressing issues about cultic honors, favors, and Jewish unrest.¹⁵ While the passage that contains the important reference pertaining to Jewish interest in athletics has a text-critical and translation difficulty affecting the historical reconstruction, it can at least be said from this document that the Jews in some manner were showing an interest in Greek athletics, either by trying to force their way into certain contests or through causing a violent disruption at the larger public gatherings.¹⁶ Both in Palestine and in the Diaspora Jewish people would have come into contact with athletics, and thus they would naturally have had some familiarity with them. Of course, as the Maccabean literature demonstrates, among some Jews there was fierce opposition to athletics and anything Hellenic. This, however, does not entail that all Jews would have been opposed to athletics, and it also does not mean that Jewish people would not have had any idea of what was involved in athletic contests.

It is important to note that the games were open to people across the socio-economic spectrum and that both men and women would have been familiar with athletics as well.

¹¹ See, e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.20; Caesar, *Bell. civ.* 7.269.

¹² 1 Macc 1:14; 2 Macc 4:9–15, 18–19.

¹³ Josephus, *B.J.* 1.426–8.

¹⁴ Josephus *A.J.* 16.136–41; cf. *B.J.* 1.421.

¹⁵ *Letter of Claudius*, P.Lond. 1912.

¹⁶ See the discussion in Hans-Josef Klauck and Daniel P. Bailey, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 96–99.

The Greek contests were open to all people, as Demosthenes indicates when providing a list of places where a murderer cannot go: “Why is he excluded from the Games? Because the Games in Greece are open to all (κοινὸν πᾶσιν), and the victim took part in them because everyone takes part in them. Therefore the murderer must absent himself.”¹⁷ In ancient Greek society there were gendered domains of life, where the public was in large part male and the private female. Athletics were no less excluded from this patriarchal organization of space. Men were the athletes who performed at the major public competitions. However, there is evidence of females competing as well. There were all female competitions at Olympia in honor of Hera.¹⁸ There were also female races at Isthmia,¹⁹ Naples,²⁰ Rome,²¹ and Antioch;²² and Sparta²³ was of course known for allowing females to train and compete in athletics.²⁴ There is also a dedicatory inscription that mentions three females competing in different athletic competitions at Delphi, Nemea, and Isthmia.²⁵ So while there were some restrictions on women due to the highly gendered society of the Greco-Roman world, this evidence indicates that athletics was not solely a male activity and that females would have participated in them as well, especially the running events.²⁶

¹⁷ Demosthenes, *Aristocr.* 40 (trans. Miller, 91); cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.45. See also van Nijf, “Local heroes,” 329–33. The *ludi* in Rome were open to all as well. See Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 332–33; cf. Jerry Toner, *Popular Culture in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 155–61.

¹⁸ Pausanias, *Descr.* 5.16.2–7.

¹⁹ John H. Kent, *Corinth: The Inscriptions 1926–1950*, Vol 8.3 (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies, 1966), no. 153.

²⁰ *IG XIV* 755. This inscription is fragmentary, but there appears to be a reference to a race for daughters in section g.

²¹ Suetonius, *Dom.* 4.4; Dio Cassius 67.8.1.

²² John Malalas, *Chronographia*, 12.379.10–11. This takes place in a festival founded by Commodus.

²³ Plutarch, *Lyc.* 14.2–15.1.

²⁴ See Stephen G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 150–59, who discusses not only the literary sources, but also presents pottery and statuettes of female athletes.

²⁵ *SIG*³ 802, dated 47 CE.

²⁶ Whether or not females attended the male competitions is difficult to ascertain. Women were specifically prohibited from attending the historic Olympic Games (see Pausanias, *Descr.* 5.6.7–8), but there are no prohibitions that I am aware of excluding women from attending the other games. There is evidence that unmarried females would go to the games, see the quote from Xenophon of Ephesus below describing a festival where maidens are present, and note also the reference to women spectators at Olympia, which stands in tension with the prohibition and might refer to maidens (Pausanias, *Descr.* 6.20.8–9). The Romans were much more open to allowing female attendance at the games, see Hugh M. Lee, “Women’s Athletics and the Bikini Mosaic from Piazza Armenia,” *Stadion* 10 (1984): 45–76; idem, “*SIG*³ 802: Did Women Compete Against Men in Greek Athletic Festivals?” *Nikephoros* 1 (1988): 103–17;

At the games there were typically three footraces and three combat events. The races were the *stadion* (ca. 200 meters), the *diaulos* (ca. 400 meters), and the *dolichos* (ca. 7.5 to 9 kilometers).²⁷ The combat events were wrestling, boxing, and the *pankration*.²⁸ The stadiums were equipped with a stone starting line (*balbis*) which had grooves for the runners to put their toes in.²⁹ A starting gate (*hysplex*) was attached to this which had cords keeping the runners back until they were dropped thus ensuring an equal start.³⁰ The finish line (*terma*) was another *balbis* installed at the opposite end of the stadium. The *stadion* races would finish at the opposite *balbis*. The *diaulos* (literally “double channel”) races had an empty lane spacing the runners and a turning post (*kampter*) for each runner. They make the turn at the post and return in the lane next to them finishing where they started. The *dolichos* had a single *kampter* that the runners would all turn tightly around as they made their laps around the track.³¹ The combat events were held in what was called the *skamma* (literally “dug-up place”) in the stadium. This was likely at the end of the stadium where the *kampter* was. This is inferred from the fact that many of the images of wrestlers have this in the background.³² The goal in wrestling was not to pin an opponent, but to make one’s opponent fall. The first to cause their opponent to fall three times won.³³ Boxing was a bloody and brutal sport, which is

Kanstantinos Mantas, “Women and Athletics in the Roman East,” *Nikephoros* 8 (1995): 125–44. For female participation in the running events, see Thomas F. Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98–120, who argues that the races, which were restricted to girls prior to marriage, functioned as rituals of transition symbolically representing the move from an untamed wildness prior to marriage to a tamed place in marriage.

²⁷ Miller, *Athletics*, 31–32. There was geographical variation and some places had other running events, but these three were the most common. The three combat sports mentioned below were the most common as well. The other prominent events were associated with the pentathlon, viz. the javelin throw, the discus throw, and the long jump. There would have also been chariot racing, if the city had facilities for such. Some places held music contests (especially the Pythian Games and those associated with it); others held a heralding competition (*keryx*), the winner of which announced the victors at the end of the games. There were also trumpet competitions (*salpinx*), as well as poetry, prose, acting, and painting competitions. See Miller, *Athletics*, 84–87, and the primary sources he cites.

²⁸ For a full discussion of these events see, Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence, and Culture* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1987).

²⁹ Miller, *Athletics*, 35–38.

³⁰ Miller, *Athletics*, 38–43.

³¹ Miller, *Athletics*, 44–45.

³² See Miller, *Athletics*, 47, fig. 68.

³³ Cf. *Greek Anthology* 11.316, where Milo slips and falls coming to receive his crown and the crowd shouts that he should not be crowned since he fell. Milo responds that this was not the third fall and invites anyone to come and throw him two more times. See also Miller, *Athletics*, 47–50, figs. 68–79

prominently depicted in images where boxers are shown with bloody noses and disfigured faces.³⁴ The gloves the boxers used changed over the years and contributed to making the sport more brutal. Early on the glove was the *himantes*, soft leather strips. This changed to the *oxys*, hard leather strips, and eventually by the Roman period there was the *caestus*, which was known to be filled with metal and glass pieces.³⁵ The goal in boxing was to get one's opponent to signal defeat. This was often done simply by raising one's finger to the judge or to the boxer in waiting who would then relay it to the judge.³⁶ Sometimes, as Pausanias notes in a fascinating tale, boxing could end in serious injury or even death.³⁷ The most violent sport, however, was the *pankration* (literally "all powerful"). It was a form of wrestling, but one where the contestants could punch, kick, strangle, and contort the opponent in almost any way.³⁸ The goal in the *pankration* was the same as in boxing, to get your opponent to signal defeat.

The prizes that were given varied according to the event and the nature of the games. Most separate the games into two categories: the Crown Games (*stephanitic*) and the Money Games (*chrematitic*). The former were the Panhellenic Games and those associated with it, e.g. the Iso-Olympic, and so forth. The latter were contests like the Panathenaic Games and other more local games. These categories separate non-monetary prizes from monetary prizes, which can be misleading. It has been substantially demonstrated that while a foliage crown was awarded at the Crown Games, there was also the expectation of financial compensation for the victory. This would come in the form of services awarded to the victor by the city the athlete was from. This developed into what was officially known as the *obsonion* (literally a food allowance, which became associated with the athlete's pension) and the Games became labelled as *eiselastic* (signalling the welcome the athlete would receive when he came home).³⁹ While there

³⁴ See Miller, *Athletics*, fig. 80, 86, 87, 93; cf. *Greek Anthology* 11.75–81.

³⁵ Miller, *Athletics*, 51–54.

³⁶ See Miller, *Athletics*, fig. 91, 92.

³⁷ Pausanias, *Descr.* 8.40.4–5.

³⁸ See Philostratus, *Imag.* 2.6; cf. Miller, *Athletics*, figs. 96, 98, 100, 101, 102, and note 97 where the pankratiast is trying to gouge out the eyes of his opponent.

³⁹ Miller, *Athletics*, 207–8. See the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Trajan about this issue (*Ep.* 10.39, 40, 118, 119). Cf. also *IvO* 56.11–28 where the *obsonion* is to be given before the competition, and Aelian, *Var. hist.* 12.58 for an example of an *eiselasis*.

was only one crown to give at the competition, often on inscriptions a draw or even second place was noted, which would indicate that this was not something to feel too humiliated about.⁴⁰ The Money Games also gave prizes not just for first place. There are lists delineating the prize money for second place and even lower.⁴¹ For instance, an inscription listing the prizes given at the Panathenaic Games lists prizes for five places for *kithara*-singers, two places for *aulos*-singers, two places for the boy's *stadion*, pentathlon, wrestling, boxing, *pankration*, and the same for the young men and the men's categories.⁴²

The games were part of festivals that were connected to the worship of certain deities. For instance, the Isthmian Games were associated with the sanctuary of Poseidon and the worship of him. Each festival had similar associations, for example the Pythian Games were dedicated to Apollo and the Olympic Games were dedicated to Zeus. At the start of the festival there would be a procession where the sacrificial animals, priests, leading locals, honoured guests, athletes, trainers, fans, and slaves would walk through the city to the sanctuary of the god. Xenophon of Ephesus provides an excellent description of a procession that illustrates what one would have seen:

The local festival of Artemis was in progress, and the procession moved from the city to the shrine; the distance was seven furlongs. Usage required that all the maidens of the region, richly attired, and all the lads of Habrocomes' age join in the procession. ... A great concourse had assembled for the spectacle; there were many Ephesians and many visitors, for it was customary for bridegrooms to be found for maidens at that festival, and wives for cadets. And so the procession moved past. In the van were sacred objects, the torches, the baskets, and the

⁴⁰ Pace Philip F. Esler, "Paul and the Agon," in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images* (eds. Annette Weissenrieder, et al.; WUNT 2.193; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 367–9. The Pindaric ode he mentions (*Pyth.* 8.82–88) where Pindar is ridiculing the losers of a competition, is actually meant to heighten the praise of the victor, which would honor the winner for whom Pindar was writing the poem, and was being paid by supporters of the victor for such heightened praise. This should not be taken as a reference that proves only the winner received honor and everyone else was shamed. The situation was more complex than this. First place was greatly prized, but the inscriptional record portrays a different situation where second and third could be valued as well, see Jason König, *Athletics and Literature in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 127. *SEG* 7.825 even contains a reference to an *agonothetēs* entertaining winners and losers. See also the discussion of Money Games below where prizes are given to second, third, and so on.

⁴¹ See Nigel Crowther, "Rounds and Byes in Greek Athletics," *Stadion* 18 (1992): 68–74.

⁴² *IG* II² 2311.

incense. Following these were horses and dogs and hunting gear; there was some display of military equipment, but more of the arts of peace. ... When the procession finished the entire multitude approached the shrine to offer sacrifice, and the order of the march was broken up. (Xenophon of Ephesus 1.2.2–5; trans. Hadas)⁴³

At the shrine the animals would be sacrificed and offered to the god, while the remaining meat would be distributed to the crowd.

The sacred element of the games was seen not only in the sanctuary complex where there were images of the deity and where sacrifices were offered, but also in the beliefs about the god's active role in the games. This is poetically displayed in one of Pindar's odes:

And you, Far-shooter [i.e. Apollo], who govern the all-welcoming [i.e. Panhellenic] famous temple in the vales of Pytho, it was there that you granted the greatest of joys, and earlier at home you bestowed the coveted gift of the pentathlon during the festivities for you both [i.e. Apollo and his sister Artemis]. (Pindar, *Pyth.* 8.61–66; Race, LCL)

There is evidence that athletes believed the gods aided them and gave them victory as well. Again, Pindar poetically captures this sentiment describing Apollo as the one who rouses and drives on (*αὐξάνω*) the performance of the athlete. The contestant's efforts, from beginning (*ἀρχά*) to end (*τέλος*), are even completely attributed to the workings of Apollo and the outcome is described as determined by the god's plans.⁴⁴ A small statuette of a young athlete found in Olympia also corroborates this belief. It has a dedication to Zeus inscribed on the athlete's leg stating, "I belong to Zeus." The statuette is likely a votive offering given by the athlete after a victory thanking Zeus for his divine help.⁴⁵

While the festivals maintained this sacred core throughout their history, they also became shaped by political, cultural, and other changes in society. The most significant

⁴³ Cf. Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 2.34–3.6; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.70–3. See also Miller, *Athletics*, 118–119. These festivities were also opportunities for gatherings of all sorts of people with varying interests. Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 8.9–12) records that at the Isthmian festival there were philosophers, students, magicians, fortune tellers, historians, poets, and peddlers of various sorts.

⁴⁴ Pindar, *Pyth.* 10.10–12. See Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics*, 27.

⁴⁵ Olga Tzachou-Alexandri (ed.), *Mind and Body: Athletic Contests in Ancient Greece* (Athens: Ministry of Culture, 1989), 222 (fig. 112).

change in the festivals came in the imperial period. Some cities combined the honoring of the emperor with the honoring of the gods at their regular festivals,⁴⁶ while others held special celebrations just to honor the emperor.⁴⁷ As Simon Price has demonstrated, these were communal affairs open to all the public not just the elite.⁴⁸ Even though participation was not mandatory, many would have turned out for the festivities.⁴⁹ It was an event that held out the possibility of free meat, entertainment, religious celebration, and break from work responsibilities.

As a Roman colony Philippi would have had festivals that honored the emperor.⁵⁰ These festivals would have involved processions and probably spectacles in the theatre. There was no stadium in Philippi so it is unlikely that athletic competitions were held. Philipp II had the theatre built in the fourth-century BCE and in the second and third centuries CE it was significantly expanded to accommodate the growing population and altered so that it could more easily be used for *munera* and *venationes*.⁵¹ These events are likely what would have been put on during the festivals.⁵² There is, however, also some evidence for an interest in athletics in Philippi. In the second-century CE, roughly the same time as the changes to the theatre (the Antonine period), a *palaestra* was built next to the commercial *agora*. The best preserved aspect of the complex is the latrines, which can easily be seen today. The *palaestra* consisted of a colonnaded exercise ground with small rooms on its western side and a small seven-row amphitheatre on its eastern

⁴⁶ The Demostheneia held in Oenoanda was to honor both the emperor and Apollo. See Mitchell, "Festivals," 185 (section 3.50–55 of the inscription).

⁴⁷ These festivals were given the name Sebasteia, Caesarea, and so forth. See Simon Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 104.

⁴⁸ Price, *Rituals*, 101–132.

⁴⁹ See Peter Oakes, "Re-mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians," *JSNT* 27 (2005), 312, citing Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, II.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 530–31.

⁵⁰ There are a few inscriptions indicating the presence of *augustales* and *flamines* at Philippi, whose primary responsibilities were the maintenance of the imperial cult, but it is difficult to say how robust the cult was in the first-century CE. See Peter Pilhofer, *Philippi: Band II Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi* (WUNT 119; 2nd edn.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 45.

⁵¹ Chaido Koukouli-Chrysanthaki and Charalambos Bakirtzis, *Philippi* (3rd edn; Athens: Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Receipts Fund, 2000), 23–24; cf. Paul Collart, "Le théâtre de Philippi," *BCH* 52 (1928): 74–124.

⁵² There are inscriptions listing *munerarius* (i.e. one who is responsible for putting on *munera*) in the description of honors for leading men. See Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 127b/L942 (second-century CE); 252/L467 (second to third century CE); 253/L447 (first-century CE); 395/L780 (second-century CE).

side.⁵³ While there is no archaeological evidence indicating that there was an athletic training ground in Philippi prior to this, it is highly plausible that a *gymnasion* would have existed where the *palaestra* was built.⁵⁴ The Roman building in the second-century CE covered over much of what was there, making it difficult to reconstruct what was exactly present in the first-century CE. Even though there is not strong archaeological evidence for athletics in Philippi (such as a stadium), it is highly likely that knowledge of athletics would have been widespread given that the majority of people in Philippi, and particularly those to whom Paul is writing, had some form of Greek heritage.⁵⁵ In the face of Roman rule and the dominant influence of Roman culture in the forms of *munera*, the imperial cult, and so forth, athletics could have even been viewed by the Greeks who lived there as a central way of reclaiming and asserting their Hellenic identity. It was one of the few ways Greeks could maintain their distinctive identity in a situation where Romans had taken control of the land, the wealth, and the cultural capital in the city.

4.2. The Athletic Ideal: Virtue and the Making of Perfect Citizens

With this broad understanding of the prominence of athletics in the ancient world and what was involved in the games and festivals in place, I will now address some of the prominent associations that were connected to athletics and will focus on the athletic ideal as a way of teasing out some of these associations. Central to ancient athletics, and the athletic ideal, is the notion of ἀρετή. This concept was introduced in the discussion on moral philosophy where it was viewed as the excellences of a human that makes a human good. The moral philosophers all discuss these virtues/excellences in terms of character traits such as practical wisdom, courage, justice, and so forth. The concept of

⁵³ Koukouli-Chrysanthaki and Bakirtzis, *Philippi*, 45–46; cf. Paul Lemerle, “Palestre romaine à Philippes,” *BCH* 61 (1937): 86–102.

⁵⁴ There are inscriptions that list *gymnasiarchos* in describing honors for leading men. See Pilhofer, *Philippi*, 311/G411 (third-century CE), which also includes the only reference to *agonothetēs* in the inscriptional record, and here it is connected with the great Asklepeion Games; cf. 680/M663; 689/M672 (both of which are difficult to date, ranging from the second to fourth century CE, and are from the Pangaion area).

⁵⁵ See Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1–70; and 1.4.3 above.

ἀρετή, however, was much broader than this. It was used more generally of the excellence of anything that made it good and was particularly connected to the ancient idea of ἀγών. The word ἀγών was associated with a gathering or an assembly, which can be seen from its root ἄγω which is also the basis for ἀγορά, the central public gathering place.⁵⁶ It was contests (assemblies) which provided the Greeks with occasions for the display/performance of ἀρετή. The connection between ἀρετή and ἀγών can be seen in Homer's Achilles who displays ἀρετή in various communal settings and ultimately dies in battle attaining the highest honors.⁵⁷ The central area where this connection was made, however, was in athletic contests (ἀγῶνες).⁵⁸ For example, the horses in the funeral games for Patroclus and Odysseus' athletic abilities are both described as displays of ἀρετή.⁵⁹ It is the bodily display of excellence in a contest that forms the foundation for thinking about the athletic ideal.⁶⁰ This ideal was thought of in terms of the display of external excellence (e.g. beauty) and internal excellence (e.g. goodness), both of which were perfected through training in the *gymnasion*, were viewed as essential characteristics of good citizens, and when successfully displayed in public were awarded with prizes/honors. In what follows I will expand on these aspects of the athletic ideal demonstrating the connections between them and the display of ἀρετή.

The *gymnasion* was viewed as the place where elite male identity was fashioned through the formative educational practice known as *paideia*. It was through this

⁵⁶ LSJ, 18; see also Debra Hawhee, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 15–16. The classic formulation of ancient Greece as an agonal society was given by Jacob Burckhardt in the late nineteenth-century (*Griechische Kulturgeschichte*). His argument has been severely critiqued, but classicists have maintained the basic idea that Greek society was dominated by an agonistic impulse. See Poliakoff, *Combat Sports*, 104–107, 178–79 n.49; cf. David Cohen, *Law, Violence and Community in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 61–86.

⁵⁷ Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 17.

⁵⁸ Miller (*Athletics*, 13) argues that the word ἀγών eventually became associated with the athletic competitions because of the pervasiveness of this connection, and then it came to refer to the act of competing itself, struggling for victory.

⁵⁹ Homer, *Il.* 23.276, 373–4; *Od.* 8.237–39. Cf. Pausanias, *Descr.* 6.13.4; 8.40.1; Isocrates, *Big.* 16.32–35; Lucian, *Anach.* 9–14; Aeschines, *Ctes.* 179–180; Diodorus Siculus 17.100–101; Pindar, *Ol.* 7.80–93; Scholion to Pindar, *Nemean Ode* 5.1; *IvO* 225.

⁶⁰ The connection between ἀγών and ἀρετή is also important for understanding the communal nature of athletic competitions. It is through competing with others in assemblies (contests) that one develops ἀρετή; that is, one is challenged exposing weaknesses so that excellence can develop. ἀρετή is intimately connected to one's relational existence in society. It is only through gathering together with others that excellence is forged, both in the athletic realm and the moral philosophical. This calls into question the view held by some that ancient athletics was a thoroughly individualistic pursuit.

educational training that one developed virtues/excellences and was formed to be a “perfect citizen.” As Plato states, “the education (παιδεία) that we speak of is training from childhood in goodness (πρὸς ἀρετήν), which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming a perfect citizen (πολίτης τέλειος), understanding how to rule and be ruled righteously.”⁶¹ Aristotle also argued that training the body, mind, and soul was necessary in the education of the young for them to develop ἀρετή and to prepare them to participate as citizens of a *polis*.⁶² In the *gymnasion* one received this kind of education, which was, at least initially, associated primarily with athletic and military training.⁶³ It was believed that this training was essential for shaping the citizen body, inculcating the values needed to participate in and to defend one’s *polis*. This can be seen from the Spartan *agogē* and the Athenian *ephebeia*.⁶⁴ These were both connected with the values and ideals that won Sparta and Athens great victories and were thought to be central for fashioning ideal citizens.⁶⁵

The viability of the *gymnasion* as a center for military training was questioned in the Classical period: how exactly did running, wrestling, boxing, and pentathlon training prepare one to line up and fight in the hoplite formation?⁶⁶ After the military was professionalized and when Rome ruled Greece, the notion that the *gymnasion* was needed for military training became even more tenuous. Jason König notes that people in

⁶¹ Plato, *Leges* 1.643E–644A (Bury, LCL).

⁶² See Aristotle, *Pol.* 1337A–1339A.

⁶³ The connection between athletics and military fighting is wonderfully portrayed on an Attic black-figure *krater* from the late sixth-century BCE. The top band shows gods in chariots with spears fighting the giants, while the band below it has athletes with their trainers practicing the javelin, wrestling, and so forth to musical accompaniment. See Nigel Spivey and Michael Squire, *Panorama of the Classical World* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2004), 33 (fig. 43).

⁶⁴ See Zahra Newby, *Greek Athletics in the Roman World: Victory and Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 143–201. Aristotle in *Constitution of the Athenians* (42) even makes *ephebic* training compulsory for all potential citizens.

⁶⁵ Cf. Onno van Nijf (“Athletics, *Andreia* and the *Askēsis*-Culture,” in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity* [eds. Ralph M. Rosen and Ineke Sluiter; Leiden: Brill, 2003], 272–6) who makes the connection between self-discipline and being a good citizen. The citizen’s body needed to demonstrate that it conformed to a particular model of perfection in order to display that one was a perfect citizen. The connection between inner and outer goodness will be discussed more fully below.

⁶⁶ See Mark Golden, *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 25–28; cf. Euripides, *Autolykos*, fr. 282.16–19, 21–24 (Collard and Cropp, LCL): “What man who has wrestled well, what man fleet of foot or that has thrown the discuss or boxed a jaw well, has defended his ancestral city by winning a wreath? ... No one is this stupid when standing near a sword! Wreathing with leaves should be for men who are wise and brave.” Cf. Xenophanes, fr. 2.186–7; Isocrates, *Paneg.* 1–2.

the east would have had some need for military training, especially those who lived on the fringes of the Empire, but he finds that the connections between training in the *gymnasion* and military activity are incredibly sparse in the imperial period.⁶⁷ The absurdity of athletic training for military purposes is seen most explicitly in the kinds of questions and remarks made by Anacharsis to Solon in Lucian's satirical text about athletics. For instance, after Solon has just finished his many proofs of the value of athletic training for military purposes (24–28), Anacharsis responds,

Then if the enemy attack you, Solon, you yourselves will take the field rubbed with oil and covered with dust, shaking your fists at them, and they, of course, will cower at your feet and run away, fearing that while they are agape in stupefaction you may sprinkle sand in their mouths, or that after jumping behind them so as to get on their backs, you may wind your legs about their bellies and strangle them by putting an arm under their helmets. Yes, by Zeus, they will shoot their arrows, naturally, and throw their spears, but the missiles will not affect you any more than as if you were statues, tanned as you are by the sun and supplied in an abundance with blood. (Lucian, *Anach.*, 31; Harmon, LCL)⁶⁸

It seems that training in the *gymnasion* in the first-century CE was no longer viewed in association with developing military skill, but rather was viewed as a marker of high status and was connected to what was needed to prepare men to participate in their community.⁶⁹ The training in the *gymnasion* remained the same, but it was considered useless for military purposes now that the militaristic circumstances had changed. There was still a certain prestige connected to training in the *gymnasion*, and specifically with being a member of the *ephēbeia*. This opened up local and extra-local civic possibilities. As König states, “*Gymnasion* training was an important stepping stone to membership of one’s local citizen elite, ... but the benefits of status it conferred also seem to have been transferable in some circumstances beyond the city of one’s birth.”⁷⁰

The excellences associated with civic success were celebrated in gymnastic contests. There were typically three contests of physical conditioning that were held in the

⁶⁷ König, *Athletics*, 55–56.

⁶⁸ Cf. Lucian, *Anach.* 32–33, 35.

⁶⁹ König (*Athletics*, 47) highlights this change stating, “The most conspicuous shift was the change in the *gymnasion*’s military significance.”

⁷⁰ König, *Athletics*, 60.

gymnasion which awarded prizes for good form (*euexia*), good order (*eutaxia*), and love of training (*philoponia*).⁷¹ While there are no explicit criteria for what these contests measured, it appears that they pertained to behavior throughout the year.⁷² Of particular interest for the connection between training in the *gymnasion* and civic success is the contest of *eutaxia*. This virtue, as König points out, is “a quality regularly valued in other types of honorific inscription in the second century AD, particularly associated with political achievement.”⁷³ It is also mentioned in Plutarch’s letter of consolation to Apollonius where Plutarch describes Apollonius’ son using the adverbial form of this noun. He connects it with excelling in the virtues, and being a perfect youth, envied and admired by all.⁷⁴

The training of the athletic body had an historic association with inculcating virtuous ideals. The ancient Greeks assumed that there was a special connection between the body and one’s virtuous state. Essentially they believed that if one looked good, then one was a good person. If the body was not controlled then it was believed that the person was uncontrolled in other areas, and thus open to all sorts of vices. *Gymnasion* training was important for shaping the body in order to become beautiful (*καλός*), and therefore, in their understanding, virtuous. This connection is seen in the common description of someone as *καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός*, which was often elided to *καλοκάγαθία* (beautiful and good).⁷⁵ The emphasis on beauty can be seen from a competition held in Athens at the Panathenaic Games, which tested *euandreia*. This was a competition not only of athletic ability but also, and primarily, of beauty. A *kylix* (drinking cup) from the fifth-century BCE has a depiction of a young man who has won such a contest and has ribbons tied to

⁷¹ SEG 27.261, Side B lines 46–58. See Nigel Crowther “*Euexia, Eutaxia, Philoponia: Three Contests of the Greek Gymnasium*,” *ZPE* 85 (1991): 301–4.

⁷² See König, *Athletics*, 127.

⁷³ König, *Athletics*, 65. See Giovanni Salmeri (“Dio, Rome, and the Civic Life of Asia Minor,” in *Dio Chrysostom: Politics, Letters, and Philosophy* [ed. Simon Swain; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 81) for a discussion of *eutaxia* in Dio’s orations.

⁷⁴ Plutarch, *Mor.* 119E–120A.

⁷⁵ Spivey and Squire, *Panorama*, 28. Cf. *IG II²* 1006 where the *kosmetes*, leader of the *ephebetes* training at Athens, is honored and the *ephēbeia* are described as *kalokagathia*. Cf. also Plato, *Lysis* 203–211A. Socrates took for granted this connection, even though he was an exception being pug-nosed and stout. He sought to define goodness as an abstract virtue. Note also, the association of ugliness with badness is seen in the *Iliad* when Thersites’ argument is dismissed and he is damned because of his physical appearance (2.211–69).

the beautiful, prize-winning, parts of his body. Nigel Spivey mentions similar competitions at Elis in the Peloponnesus and at Tanagra in Boeotia.⁷⁶

Aristotle makes an explicit connection between training the body and accepted ideals about beauty (*καλός*) in his description of what constitutes the happy and virtuous life, which has the features of “health, beauty, strength, stature, fitness for athletic contests (*ὑγίαιαν, κάλλος, ἰσχύν, μέγεθος, δύναμιν ἀγωνιστικὴν*).”⁷⁷ He also places in a close relationship beauty (*καλός*), goodness (*ἀγαθός*), and virtue (*ἀρετή*). As he states:

The noble (*καλός*), then is that which being desirable in itself, is at the same time worthy of praise (*ἐπαίνετος*), or which, being good (*ἀγαθός*), is pleasant because it is good (*ἀγαθός*). If this is the noble (*καλός*), then virtue (*ἀρετή*) must of necessity be noble (*καλός*), for being good (*ἀγαθός*) it is worthy of praise (*ἐπαίνετος*). (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1366A; Freese, LCL)

The Polycleiton statues of athletes capture this understanding of the ideal athlete, i.e. the one who has a beautiful and virtuous body. Polycleitos was a sculptor from Argos (ca. 450 BCE) who developed the “canon” of what was thought to be the beautiful body, which was an idealized view of human proportions.⁷⁸ Galen in describing the views of Chrysippus indicates this:

Chrysippus ... believes that beauty (*κάλλος*) does not lie in the proportion of the elements, but of the members (*ἐν τῇ τῶν μορίων συμμετρία*): of finger, obviously, to finger, of all the fingers to palm and wrist, of these to forearm, of forearm to upper arm, and of all to all, as is written in Polycleitus’ Canon. Polycleitus first gave us full information in that book about all the proportions of the body, then he confirmed his account in action by fashioning a statue in accordance with the demands of the theory; and he gave to the statue, as he did to the treatise, the name Canon. (Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 5.448–449; trans. De Lacy)

⁷⁶ Nigel Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996), 36.

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1360B4 (Freese, LCL).

⁷⁸ This is suggested in Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 3.1.2–7, and was made graphic and popularized by Leonardo da Vinci’s drawing of the “Vitruvian man.”

While there are no statues of Polycleitos that have survived and the ones that we have are Roman copies of Greek originals, it is fairly safe to assume that these sorts of statues would have populated Greek cities in the first-century CE. As Spivey indicates, approvingly discussing Erwin Panofsky's view of the Canon, "the assumptions on which this organic Greek canon rested were not seriously challenged until the third century AD."⁷⁹ It is in this time period that the influence of Neoplatonism became widespread and people began to question some of these Classical notions. Statues such as the Doryphoros and the Diadoumenos, two common Roman copies of the Polycleiton style, would have populated Greek cities celebrating victorious athletes and reinforcing the beautiful and good discourse with which they were associated.⁸⁰ These statues exhibit a balanced and perfect symmetry, symbolically representing the perfect physical and inner harmony. The harmony of the natural anatomy is heightened with humanly impossible geometric lines. Spivey notes two of these impossibilities: the continuation of the iliac crest and the descent of the spinal cord.⁸¹ No human could achieve these kinds of curves regardless of how much they trained. It presents an illusion of reality that is aesthetically pleasing according to the notions of beauty outlined in the canon. It was not just athletes that were sculpted in such a fashion. As König notes, Roman emperors were portrayed with many of the same features, albeit shaped by what was thought of as militaristic and semi-divine qualities.⁸² The most notable are the images of Augustus. The Prima Porta statue portrays him with bare feet and in the same kind of balanced Polycleiton pose. A statue most likely of Augustus, housed at the Thessaloniki Museum, portrays him as a semi nude with the same kind of musculature and geometric features as the Diadoumenos.⁸³ Deities were also depicted according to this same canon. For instance, Poseidon is presented in the athletic pose and with the same kind of geometric perfection

⁷⁹ Spivey, *Greek Sculpture*, 42.

⁸⁰ See Tzachou-Alexandri (ed.), *Mind and Body*, fig. 220; cf. the sculpture of the young athlete known as the "kritios boy" fig. 218. For the Doryphoros see König, *Athletics*, fig. 5; cf. the Diskophoros, fig. 12.

⁸¹ Spivey, *Greek Sculpture*, 40.

⁸² König, *Athletics*, 113–15.

⁸³ See <http://www.amth.gr/index.php/lithika-mikrotexnia> (accessed 7 March 2013).

in a statue found at Isthmia.⁸⁴ These statues presented the perfect ideal of beauty and goodness and stood as the ultimate exemplars of perfection.

There are several statues from the ancient world that seem to contradict this portrayal of perfection. These statues are typically of boxers, for example the Terme boxer which is a bronze statue of a seated boxer with mangled ears and an exhausted expression on his face.⁸⁵ Noteworthy also is the head of the boxer Satyros at Olympia as well as the two boxers from the theatre at Aphrodisias.⁸⁶ They all display the same kinds of wounds: mangled ears, disfigured noses, scars, and the look of intense exhaustion. In this display, the marks typically associated with imperfection can be viewed as representative of their endurance through difficulties which demonstrates their superior character. So while they may look scarred and imperfect compared to the Doryphoros and Diadoumenos, as König notes they actually bear badges of athletic ability (*ἀρετή*) won in contests where they endured extreme difficulties, a widely valued virtue.⁸⁷

The inscriptional record testifies to the combination of the perfect body and virtuous soul as well. Many inscriptions celebrating agonistic victory simply state what the honorand won in. They are catalogues of boasts that mark the invincibility of the athlete. Other inscriptions celebrate the victory of the athlete and herald him as being perfect in body and in soul. This kind of celebration has connections with the *gymnasion* contests that celebrated the kind of behavior that leads to victory. There are several inscriptions that make this body and soul connection; one from Ephesus honoring the athlete Aurelios Achilles is particularly noteworthy. He is one

who has undertaken the training of the body, and who is also most noble in training, and most dignified (*σεμνότατος*) in his way of life and his conduct, so that in him all virtue (*ἀρετή*) of body and soul is blended ... [The city has honored him] often, both in previous contests (*ἀγῶνες*), which he adorned, having competed impressively and with all courage, and especially in the contest of the Olympia. (*SEG* 31.903; trans. Roueché, no. 72, lines 16–26)

⁸⁴ Tzachou-Alexandri (ed.), *Mind and Body*, fig. 123; cf. fig. 125 where Poseidon is striding forward.

⁸⁵ See König, *Athletics* fig. 8 for a picture of the Terme boxer.

⁸⁶ See König, *Athletics*, fig. 7 for Satyros; figs. 9 and 10 for the boxers at Aphrodisias.

⁸⁷ König, *Athletics*, 115.

Other inscriptions make this same kind of connection. For example, Markos Alfidios is “the strongest possible example, both of temperance (σωφροσύνη) and of athletic prowess.”⁸⁸ The same is present in ps.-Dionysius, who when discussing how to praise athletes indicates that temperance, self-control, and training are reasons for admiration.⁸⁹

Victory songs, *epinikion*, also make a connection between the athletic prowess of the victor and his moral abilities. This is set within the broadening of praise for the athlete, which starts with his athletic accomplishments and broadens to his fine ancestry, parallels with heroes, and other things considered praiseworthy.⁹⁰ The most extensive collection of these comes from Pindar. His work significantly heightens the praise and honor associated with athletic success and relates it to divine assistance (as discussed above), the excellence of the athlete,⁹¹ and to his moral character. This can be seen in his ode praising Diagoras who is celebrated for his ἀρετή and for avoiding *hubris*.⁹² Pindar states,

O father Zeus, give honor to this hymn for a victor at Olympia, and to his now famous *arete* in boxing. Grant him grace and reverence among his townsfolk and among foreigners. He travels the straight path which despises *hubris*, and he has learned well the righteous precepts of good forefathers. (Pindar, *Ol.* 7.80–93; trans. Miller, 248)

From the above discussion it has been demonstrated that the ideal athlete was construed as one who was a perfect example of both external and internal excellence (ἀρετή). In the *gymnasion* men were trained to be good and beautiful, and therefore fashioned to be perfect citizens. The visual and epigraphic testimony in the Greco-Roman world celebrated these qualities and reinforced this way of understanding the athletic body. While this indeed was an elite ideology, it was one that was promoted throughout the cities in the eastern part of the Empire. The abundant display of statues,

⁸⁸ König, *Athletics*, 131. Cf. *IvO* 55 where Tiberius Claudius Rufus is celebrated for his victories in the *pankration*, which are directly attributed to his ἀνδρεία and σωφροσύνη.

⁸⁹ Ps.-Dionysius, *Ars rhetorica* 7.7.5: τὰς ἐνδοξοτάτας ... ἀπὸ σωφροσύνης, ἀπὸ ἐγκρατείας, ἀπὸ τῆς ἀσκήσεως τοιοῦτοι ἐγένοντο.

⁹⁰ Spivey and Squire, *Panorama*, 40.

⁹¹ E.g. Pindar, *Isthm.* 1.18–25; *Ol.* 10.20–22; cf. Homer, *Od.* 8.147–48. See Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics*, 17–20; Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 23–25.

⁹² See Miller, *Athletics*, 235–240.

inscriptions, and regularly held festivals make it a very influential and widely spread discourse that many in society would have encountered.

4.3. Construction of the Good Life: Moral Philosophy and Athletics

The usage of athletics in moral philosophy is an expected phenomenon given the ancient connection between the *gymnasion* and philosophy. For instance, Plato's *Charmides* is set in the *palaestra* of Taureas, and his *Theaetetus* is set in a *gymnasion*.⁹³ Socrates is often presented as in or on his way to a *gymnasion*.⁹⁴ Of course, as is well known, both Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum were associated with *gymnasia*.⁹⁵ Because of this it is not surprising that athletic language is often used in ancient philosophical discussions. For example, Socrates states, "let us, like athletes, approach and grapple with this new argument."⁹⁶ The language of competition is used,⁹⁷ as well as that of combat sports where people wrestle in an argument,⁹⁸ box,⁹⁹ and umpires officiate,¹⁰⁰ victory is awarded, and an audience is gathered around the events.¹⁰¹ In light of this ancient connection along with the popularity of athletics in the Greco-Roman world and the ways in which athletic ideals were talked about in terms of ἀρετή, and the complex of terms and concepts associated with it, it is natural that Hellenistic moral philosophers would use athletic imagery in their discussions of what it meant to live a good and virtuous life. In what follows I will examine how Lucretius, Seneca, Epictetus, and Dio Chrysostom use the language of athletics for their moral philosophical purposes.

⁹³ Plato, *Charm.* 153A; *Theaet.* 144C.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., Plato, *Euthyphr.* 2A; *Lysis* 203–204A.

⁹⁵ The connection between Plato and athletics has been made even more strongly by Stephen Miller's (*The Berkeley Plato: From Neglected Relic to Ancient Treasure* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009], esp. 37–55) investigation of a Plato herm that has ribbons tied around his head, which are found predominantly in connection with athletic victory.

⁹⁶ Plato, *Phileb.* 41B (Fowler, LCL).

⁹⁷ Plato, *Crat.* 421D.

⁹⁸ Plato, *Euthyd.* 277D, 278B, 288A; *Theaet.* 162B, 167E–168A, 169B, C.

⁹⁹ Plato, *Prot.* 339E.

¹⁰⁰ Plato, *Prot.* 336C, 338B.

¹⁰¹ Plato, *Prot.* 336E, 339E. See Heather L. Reid, *Athletics and Philosophy in the Ancient World: Contests of Virtue* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011), 44.

4.3.1. Lucretius

Lucretius is an Epicurean who is writing in Rome in the first-century BCE. I will examine two passages in *De Rerum Natura* where he uses athletic language drawn first from combat sports and second from running a race. In the first text he is describing how one should apply his/her mind to true reasoning when confronted with something new.¹⁰² He argues that the novelty of something new should not lead one to forgo critically examining it (*acri iudico perpende*).¹⁰³ After using one's reason and pure judgment to ponder this new truth, and if one finds that it appears to be true, then he/she is to concede victory. The text reads *dede manus*, which literally means give up the hand and refers to raising a finger to signal defeat in the combat sports. Lucretius continues and says that if one finds this novelty to be false, then he/she is to *accingere contra*, i.e. prepare to oppose it.¹⁰⁴ While this imagery could be militaristic or generic, given the athletic reference immediately preceding it, it seems very likely that Lucretius is continuing in this same vein. The picture is of one fighting against the false novelty like a boxer—or a contestant from any other combat event—would fight against an opponent. This imagery portrays the Epicurean as a boxer who when in a contest applying sound reasoning in examining a novelty is overpowered by the truth of it, concedes victory; however, when he/she is engaged in this contest and discovers that this novelty is false, fights against it. This presents an important aspect of Epicurean moral philosophy; that is, the need to use sound reasoning so that one can have correct beliefs/opinions about what is natural and necessary and therefore live a life free from distress and attain what is most pleasurable (see 3.2.1 above).

The second text uses the imagery of a runner in a race to depict the way in which one should follow the path that Epicurus has set forth in his life and teachings. As I argued earlier, Lucretius presents Epicurus as the exemplar *par excellence* whose teachings and life should be imitated (see 3.2.1 above). After describing the perceptiveness of Epicurus to identify the central problem with humanity, Lucretius states what Epicurus has done to remedy it:

¹⁰² Lucretius 2.1023.

¹⁰³ Lucretius 2.1041–42.

¹⁰⁴ Lucretius 2.1043.

And so he purged people's hearts with his truthful words, and established the limit of desire and fear, and laid out the nature of the highest good (*bonum summum*) to which we all strive (*tendimus omnes*), and indicated the way (*viam monstravit*) by whose narrow path we may press on towards it on a straight course (*tramite parvo qua possemus ad id recto contendere cursu*).” (Lucretius 6.28; trans. Long and Sedley, 21X)

Epicurus is presented as one who has remedied the problems of humanity by setting forth the nature of the *summum bonum* and in doing so marking out a way of life by which one can attain this goal. The two Latin verbs *tendo* and *contendo*, which are translated “strive” and “press on” respectively convey the idea of “stretch out” and “stretching out vigorously” and are comparable to the Greek verb *τείνω*.¹⁰⁵ That for which one stretches out strenuously is the *summum bonum*, and the path one is on in doing this is presented as the *trames* and the *cursus*. The first noun *trames* is usually used for a footpath, and the second noun *cursus* is most frequently used in connection with a running course.¹⁰⁶ This imagery portrays one earnestly striving after the *summum bonum* like a runner runs towards the *terma*. This image of the runner vividly encapsulates the entirety of the Epicurean moral philosophical project: it presents the nature of the *summum bonum*, which maps out a course for how one is to live, and indicates the manner in which one is to pursue the ultimate goal of life, i.e. strenuously running after it.

4.3.2. Seneca

Seneca is a Roman Stoic writing in the first-century CE. He often speaks derisively of athletics and athletes, and even warns Lucilius to avoid the arena;¹⁰⁷ however, at the same time he positively employs athletic imagery (especially from the combat sports) to depict the kind of discipline and struggle needed in the pursuit of virtue. This is evident in *Ep.* 15 where Seneca mocks athletics saying that it exhausts one's energies, it makes one sluggish from overeating, and it places one in the service of slaves since one has to

¹⁰⁵ *LD*, 1852 for *tendo* and 446 for *contendo*. Cf. *OLD*, 1918 and 427.

¹⁰⁶ *LD*, 1887 for *trames* and 503 for *cursus*. Cf. *OLD*, 1960 and 477.

¹⁰⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 7.1–3.

take orders from the trainers. In this letter he affirms that physical training, which he delimits to easy and quick exercises like running and jumping, is of some value; although he emphasizes that it is exercising the rational soul (*animus*) that is of ultimate value, i.e. the kind of training that enables one to live virtuously. As he explains to Lucilius, “But whatever you do, come back soon from body to the mind (*a corpore ad animum*). The mind must be exercised both day and night (*Illum noctibus ac diebus exerce*).”¹⁰⁸ In *Ep.* 80 the same kind of discussion is found. After being interrupted by a shout from a boxing match in the stadium, he bemoans how many exercise their bodies, but how few exercise their natural capacities (*ingenia quam pauci*), i.e. their rational soul.¹⁰⁹ This leads into his discussion of the training of athletes, which he uses to think analogously about the kind of training needed to be able to withstand hardships in life and to live virtuously:

The question which I ponder most of all is this: if the body can be trained to such a degree of endurance (*patientia*) that it will stand the blows and kicks of several opponents at once, and to such a degree that a man can last out the day and resist the scorching sun in the midst of the burning dust, drenched all the while with his own blood,—if this can be done, how much more easily might the mind be toughened (*quanto facilius animus conroboreari possit*) so that it could receive the blows of Fortune and not be conquered, so that it might struggle to its feet again after it has been laid low, after it has been trampled under foot (*ut proiectus, ut conculcatus exsurgat*)?

For although the body needs many things in order to be strong, yet the mind grows from within (*animus ex se crescit*), giving itself nourishment and exercise (*se ipse alit, se exercet*). Yonder athletes must have copious food, copious drink, copious quantities of oil, and long training besides; but you can acquire virtue (*virtus*) without equipment and without expense. All that goes to make you a good man (*bonum*) lies within yourself (*tecum est*). And what do you need in order to become good? To wish it (*Velle*). (Seneca, *Ep.* 80.2–4; Gummere, LCL)

This kind of positive appropriation of athletics, as embodying the kind of training and endurance needed in facing difficulties in order to live virtuously, is also seen elsewhere in Seneca’s writings. For example, in *Ep.* 78 Seneca is giving advice to Lucilius on how he can cope with his ill health, which broadens to a discussion of dealing with

¹⁰⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 15.5 (Gummere, LCL).

¹⁰⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 80.2.

any pain in life. He again uses athletics to portray how one is to endure this in order to live virtuously:

What blows do athletes receive on their faces and all over their bodies! Nevertheless, through their desire for fame they endure every torture, and they undergo these things not only because they are fighting but in order to be able to fight. Their very training means torture (*Exercitatio ipsa tormentum est*). So let us win the way to victory in all our struggles (*evincamus omnia*),—for the reward (*praemium*) is not a garland (*corona*) or a palm (*palma*) or a trumpeter who calls for silence at the proclamation of our names, but rather virtue (*virtus*), steadfastness of soul (*firmitas animi*), in a peace (*pax*) that is won for all time, if fortune has been utterly vanquished in any combat (*in aliquo certamine debellata fortuna est*). (Seneca, *Ep.* 78.16; Gummere, LCL)¹¹⁰

Seneca's usage of athletic imagery also gets at a central aspect of his moral philosophy. As mentioned above (3.2.2), for the Stoics virtue alone is good, and it is often discussed in terms of a fully reasoned moral way of life. Living virtuously is the *summum bonum*, which is to be singularly pursued, and all other matters or states of affairs are either bad or indifferent. Seneca uses athletics to emphasize how training one's rational soul (*animus*) is the most important concern in life, and he uses imagery from the combat sports to depict how one is to endure difficulties, which are in the category of indifferent and therefore not something that should cause one distress. Difficulties should be properly endured with one's singular focus on that which is alone good.

4.3.3. Epictetus

Epictetus was a former slave who was trained as a Stoic in Rome under Musonius Rufus but taught at Nicopolis in western Greece in the later part of the first-century and early part of the second-century CE. He frequently uses athletic imagery, and similar to Seneca, favors the combat sports. He, however, differs from Seneca in his usage of athletics in that he never explicitly criticizes them. In the work of Epictetus athletic imagery is used primarily to depict three areas of his moral philosophical project: 1) the devotion to philosophy that is needed of the would-be philosopher, 2) the struggle against difficulties

¹¹⁰ Cf. Seneca, *De Prov.* 1.2.3–4; *De Ira* 4.14.2.

and external impressions, and 3) the framing of life as a contest. These will be addressed in turn.

1) Epictetus warns the would-be philosopher, i.e. one who desires to make progress in living the virtuous life, that a serious commitment is needed in this pursuit and he uses athletic imagery to make his point. He argues that one must consider what comes prior to and after what one is thinking about doing. He uses the example of wanting to win in the Olympic Games and then discusses how one must consider the training involved as well as the competition itself before taking on this challenge. In his customary dialogical fashion Epictetus states:

“I wish to win an Olympic victory.” But consider the matters which come before that and those which follow after; and only when you have done that, then, if it profits you, put your hand to the task. You have to submit to discipline, follow a strict diet, give up sweet-cakes, train under compulsion, at a fixed hour, in heat or in cold; you must not drink cold water, nor wine just whenever you feel like it; you must have turned yourself over to your trainer, precisely as you would to a physician. Then when the contest (ἀγών) comes on, you have to “dig in” beside your opponent, sometimes dislocate your wrist, sprain your ankle, swallow quantities of sand, take a scourging; yes, and then sometimes get beaten along with all that. After you have counted up these points (ταῦτα λογισάμενος), go on into the games (ἔρχου ἐπὶ τὸ ἀθλεῖν), if you still wish to. (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.15.2–5; Oldfather, LCL)

This provides an analogy for thinking about the moral philosophical life which has its own difficulties and must not be entered into half-heartedly. He chides those who begin one thing and then another (e.g. being an athlete, then a gladiator, then a philosopher, then a rhetorician) as acting like children. Instead, Epictetus insists, one must decide to be “one person, either good or bad.”¹¹¹

2) One of the most prominent ways Epictetus uses athletic imagery is when he is addressing how negative circumstances and external impressions are to be handled, which further develops the idea of discipline present in the above passage. Rather than viewing difficulties as hindrances to progress, they are to be understood as opportunities for training, contests where one competes to make the best of the situation.

¹¹¹ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.15.13 (Oldfather, LCL): ἔνα σε δεῖ ἀνθρώπων εἶναι ἢ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν.

It is difficulties (περιστάσεις) that show what men are. Consequently, when a difficulty befalls, remember that God, like a physical trainer, has matched you with a rugged young man. What for? Some one says, so that you may become an Olympic victor; but that cannot be done without sweat. To my way of thinking no one has got a finer difficulty than the one which you have got, if only you are willing to make use of it as an athlete makes use of a young man to wrestle with (ἂν θέλῃς ὡς ἀθλητῆς νεανίσκῳ χρῆσθαι). (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.24.1–2; Oldfather, LCL)¹¹²

Here God is depicted as the tough athletic coach who pairs one with a difficult partner. The hardships one faces in life are presented as God-given opportunities to hone and display one's moral strength and abilities. These difficulties, which can come from other people, ill health, disasters, and so forth, are all viewed as means of training one in order to develop in the path of moral progress and hence to attain εὐδαιμονία. In a similar manner, when he is discussing how one is to struggle against external impressions, Epictetus argues that one must not be swept away by them, but instead one should pause and put them to the test (δοκιμάζω).¹¹³ He says to the one who forms the habit of exercising (γυμνάζω) in this way “you will see what mighty shoulders you develop, what sinews, what vigour.”¹¹⁴ He continues, “The man who exercises himself against such external impressions is the true athlete in training ... Great is the struggle (ὁ ἀγών), divine the task (θεῖον τὸ ἔργον); the prize is a kingdom, freedom, serenity, peace (ὑπὲρ βασιλείας, ὑπὲρ ἐλευθερίας, ὑπὲρ εὐροίας, ὑπὲρ ἀταραξίας).”¹¹⁵ In this same discourse he also presents Socrates as an Olympic victor who won at a contest greater than that in which athletes compete, and argues that if one keeps in mind his example one will be able to have victory over external impressions (νικήσεις τὴν φαντασίαν).¹¹⁶

3) Epictetus also uses the image of the athlete to depict the progressive nature of the path to εὐδαιμονία and to show how all of life can be considered as a contest. In addressing those who have failed in the Stoic contest of life, he states:

¹¹² Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.29.33–35; 3.20.9–10; 3.22.51–54; 4.4.11–17.

¹¹³ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.18.24.

¹¹⁴ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.18.26 (Oldfather, LCL).

¹¹⁵ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.18.27–28 (Oldfather, LCL).

¹¹⁶ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.18.22–23.

Consider which of the things that you proposed at the start you have achieved, and which you have not; likewise, how it gives you pleasure to recall some of them, and pain to recall others, and, if possible, recover also those things which have slipped out of grasp. For men who are engaged in the greatest of contests (τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν μέγιστον ἀγωνιζόμενοις) ought not to flinch, but to take also the blows; for the contest (ὁ ἀγών) before us is not in wrestling or the pancratium, in which, whether a man succeeds or fails, he may be worth a great deal, or only a little,—yes, by Zeus, he may even be extremely happy or extremely miserable,—but it is a contest for good fortune and happiness itself (ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς εὐτυχίας καὶ εὐδαιμονίας). What follows? Why here, even if we give in for the time being, no one prevents us from struggling (ἀγωνίζεσθαι) again, and we do not have to wait another four-year period for another Olympic festival to come around, but the moment a man has picked himself up, and recovered himself, and exhibits the same eagerness, he is allowed to contest (ἀγωνίζεσθαι); and if you give in again, you can enter again; and if once you win a victory, you are as though you had never given in at all. (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.25.1–4; Oldfather, LCL)¹¹⁷

Epictetus depicts life as a whole as a contest, not where one competes with others, but a contest to live a virtuous life. He uses the athletic imagery to portray this, capturing both the need for continued progress as one faces losses and the notion that one is competing for a prize, i.e. εὐδαιμονία. Indeed, there will be false starts and failures in the contest, but the one who continues in the competition and makes progress can achieve the desired end. This text alludes to a central feature of Epictetus' moral philosophy; that is, every situation provides one with a competition, whether or not to make correct judgments about impressions so that one can make progress in the art of life to achieve εὐδαιμονία. Elsewhere, Epictetus even calls the person who does this, coming through life making correct judgments and achieving εὐδαιμονία, the invincible athlete (ὁ ἀνίκητος ἀθλητής).¹¹⁸

This discussion of athletic imagery in Epictetus highlights the centrality of it for his moral philosophical project. He uses it to depict what is required of the would-be philosopher, what is needed when facing difficulties and external impressions, as well as

¹¹⁷ Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.23.1–3.

¹¹⁸ After discussing numerous temptations to pleasure and hardships, culminating in death, he states, “The man who passes all these tests is what I mean by the invincible athlete” (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.18.23; Oldfather, LCL). Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.5.15–17 where a team sport, a ball-game, is used to depict the moral life and path to happiness. Socrates is presented as one who knew how to play the game well (18–20). See Anthony A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 202–3.

portraying what it means to compete for *εὐδαιμονία*. As Anthony Long states, regarding the athletic imagery in *Diatr.* 3.25.1–5, “far from being merely decorative, [it] throws important light on Epictetus’ conception of happiness.”¹¹⁹ It is key for how Epictetus thinks about and instructs his students on the way of life in Stoicism.

4.3.4. Dio Chrysostom

Dio Chrysostom was a contemporary of Epictetus, and while his philosophical views changed throughout his life making it difficult to say which philosophical school he adhered to, it is safe to say that he was at least influenced by Stoic ideas. He too employs athletic imagery in several of his speeches, and he maintains a tension between mocking athletics and praising them. This tension is most readily seen in the contrast between the 8th and 9th Orations where Dio has Diogenes the Cynic mock athletics and the 28th and 29th Orations where Dio praises the boxer Melancomas as the most beautiful and virtuous of all men. While some have attributed the differences between these Orations to Dio’s period of activity in the political sphere and his period of exile where he developed his more Cynic ideas, others have argued that this distinction does not hold and that the tension between participation in politics and his more rigorous philosophical view of life can be seen throughout his work.¹²⁰ In what follows I will examine how he uses athletic imagery in the 8th and 9th Orations since it is here that he, while concomitantly mocking athletics, is appropriating it to depict the nature of the moral philosophical life.

The 8th Oration opens with Diogenes the Cynic being exiled and coming to Athens. He is there trained by Antisthenes and when Antisthenes dies, Diogenes moves to Corinth. As with the 9th Oration, the rest of the narrative takes place at the Isthmian

¹¹⁹ Long, *Epictetus*, 196.

¹²⁰ The 8th and 9th Orations are often taken as representing the Cynic position, whether as presenting an accurate picture of what Diogenes would have said and done, or as representing that which was typical of Cynicism in Dio’s day. Many have questioned this and have argued Dio is using Diogenes (just as he does with Odysseus and Socrates) as a mouthpiece for certain convictions that he wants to emphasize. See Margarethe Billerbeck, “The Ideal Cynic from Epictetus to Julian,” in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy* (eds. R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé; Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 212; König, *Athletics*, 139–41. See also John L. Moles, “The career and conversion of Dio Chrsystom,” *JHS* 98 (1978): 79–100.

Games where Diogenes, as a physician, goes to address the ailments of humanity. The crowds gathering to watch the athletic competitions provide an occasion for Diogenes to present a different understanding of contest and competition. A person sets up the scene by asking Diogenes if he has come to watch the contests (ἀγῶνες). Diogenes responds by stating that he has come “to take part (ἀγωνιούμενος).”¹²¹ He states that he competes against competitors that are “[t]he toughest there are and the hardest to beat,” which he identifies as “hardships (πόννοι).”¹²² In fighting against these antagonists, Diogenes argues that what is won is not “a sprig of parsley ..., nor for a bit of wild olive, or of pine, but to win happiness (εὐδαιμονία) and virtue (ἀρετή) throughout all the days of his life.”¹²³ The person who endures hunger, cold, thirst, torture, loss of reputation, and so forth and treats these difficulties as mere trifles is described as ὁ ἀνὴρ ὁ τέλειος. This is the person who sportingly plays with these matters like children playing with their dice and colored balls. Later in the Oration Diogenes uses imagery from boxing and the *pankration* to depict how he takes on another opponent, that of pleasure (ἡδονή).¹²⁴ The contest against hardships and pleasure are presented as the true contests of life, and the true athlete, like Diogenes, is the one who engages with these competitors and steadfastly endures them.

Dio Chrysostom uses the imagery from combat sports, echoing the usage of athletics by Seneca and Epictetus, and portrays Diogenes the Cynic as one who has engaged in the true contest of life. He is depicted as fighting against the antagonists of hardship and pleasure in his struggle to win εὐδαιμονία and ἀρετή. This is the contest which encompasses the totality of life, and the prize is viewed as the one and only thing of true value.

This section has explored the ways in which moral philosophers in the Greco-Roman world used athletic imagery. Most of them used imagery from the combat sports to portray what was involved in living virtuously. This is primarily taken up in discussions

¹²¹ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.11 (Cohoon, LCL).

¹²² Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.12 (Cohoon, LCL).

¹²³ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.15 (Cohoon, LCL); cf. *Or.* 9.10–12 (Cohoon, LCL) where Diogenes places the crown of pine on his head and states that he deserves it because he has defeated many opponents, viz. “poverty, exile, and disrepute ... and anger, pain, desire, fear, and ... pleasure.”

¹²⁴ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.18–19, 23–24.

where they are arguing for the need to struggle against something or to endure difficulties: e.g. false beliefs, hardships, external impressions, and pleasure. In conjunction with this, imagery from the combat sports is used to depict the way in which circumstances can provide opportunities for one to develop in living a virtuous life, training one in the discipline and the kind of singular focus that is needed. Another area where athletic imagery is used is in portraying life as a whole in terms of a contest. Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom use the imagery from combat sports in order to depict this, while Lucretius uses the image of the runner running a race to do so.

4.4. Race Imagery and the Entirety of Life

While the moral philosophers tend to favor imagery from the combat sports, race imagery was often used to metaphorically depict the entirety of life. This is present in Seneca (*Ep.* 12.9) when he quotes from Dido's epitaph in the *Aeneid* stating: "I have lived; the course that Fortune set for me is finished (*Vixi et quem dederat cursum fortuna, peregi*)."¹²⁵ Seneca is using this proverbial statement to present how one should think about death. That is, one should not be distressed about losing one's life; rather, the happy person is one who lives each day without anxiety, embracing the course that Fortune has given. Race imagery is similarly present in a Roman inscription where the *pietas* of a matron is being praised by her husband who wished that he had died first. He makes the statement to sum up her death as, "you finished the race of life before I did."¹²⁶ Martial records an epigram of a charioteer that also uses the race as a metaphor for life, "You have fallen and died. Too soon have you harnessed the dark horses of death. Why did the finish line of the race, which you time and again hastened to cross ... now become the finish of your life?"¹²⁷ Jo-Ann Shelton also notes how the chariot race was sometimes used as a metaphor for the race of life, which can be seen on Roman tombstones which would portray the image of a driver and chariot racing toward the finish line.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 12.9 (Gummere, LCL).

¹²⁶ *CIL* 6.1527, 31670 (*ILS* 8393), quoted from Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 295.

¹²⁷ Martial, *Epigrams* 10.53, quoted from Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 359.

¹²⁸ Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 359 n.291.

A sarcophagus fragment from Aphrodisias also visually captures the metaphorical portrayal of life as a race. The fragment depicts Agon (the winged *genius* that is associated with victorious athletes) with the Seasons. What is left on the fragment is winter (a young hunter holding two ducks). Charlotte Roueché argues that there was likely the other three Seasons as well, but these have been broken off and lost.¹²⁹ Roueché interprets the Seasons as symbolizing the cycles of life, while the Agon represents the rewards that await the person who has “lived his life like a sporting contest.”¹³⁰ The sarcophagus presents the person buried in the tomb as one who has lived through the continuous cycles of life and has finished a victor reaping the rewards.

These usages of race imagery metaphorically to depict the entirety of life highlight the importance of this imagery in conceptualizing life. The prominence of athletics and the kinds of associations people had with it made it conducive to using this language to portray life as a whole, from the struggles of mortality to the finish line of death.

4.5. Conclusion

Athletics was a popular and prominent part of the Greco-Roman world. Many people would have encountered athletics at festivals where games were held; they also would have seen statues, pottery, and mosaics of athletes throughout various cities, and would have heard people use athletic imagery metaphorically to depict various aspects of life. Athletics was associated with different cultural values and practices that shaped the ways in which people would have seen and heard this imagery. This is seen in civic discourse where athletics was intimately bound up with notions of being a good citizen. Athletic training in the *gymnasion* was considered crucial for forming a person to participate in a *polis*. In connection with this, the kind of training involved in forming a citizen in such a fashion was thought of in terms of developing one’s external and internal excellence/virtue. In moral philosophical discourse athletics was used to depict central aspects of what it meant to live a virtuous life. This was seen primarily in discussions of

¹²⁹ Charlotte Roueché, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias in the Roman and Late Roman Periods: A Study Based on Inscriptions from the Current Excavations at Aphrodisias in Caria* (JRS 6; London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1993), 245–48.

¹³⁰ Roueché, *Performers and Partisans*, 248.

the kind of steadfastness needed when facing difficulties (imagery from combat sports) and when life as a whole was being presented as a contest (imagery from both combat sports and the races).

This athletic context provides important material for exploring how Paul is using athletic language in Philippians. Paul uses athletic language in close connection with the language of citizenship (Phil 1:27). He uses athletics to portray what is needed in the face of difficulties (Phil 1:27–30), and he also uses race imagery to portray the kind of life that he lives (Phil 3:13–14). These athletic references come at key places in Paul's argument, highlighting their importance for how Paul is conceptualizing Christian existence. Having discussed the ways in which athletics was connected with virtue, being a good citizen, and how moral philosophers utilized athletic imagery to depict various aspects of their moral projects, we will be able to explore more fully the kinds of associations connected to Paul's usage of this imagery as well as examine how this imagery is functioning in relation to Paul's argumentative agenda in the letter.

Having examined moral philosophy and athletics I will now turn to explore the nature of vivid speech. This will section will be particularly relevant for understanding how the image of the runner in Phil 3:13–14 is functioning in Paul's argument.

Chapter 5

VIVID DESCRIPTION: THE VERBAL AND THE VISUAL

Introduction

This chapter explores the connection between the verbal and the visual in the ancient world by examining vivid speech in rhetorical theory and practice. There have been several recent contributions to understanding the role of the visual in NT studies. These have typically viewed the visual as a way of providing a backdrop to what we find in the NT. For instance, some have used the visual imagery of imperial propaganda to more fully understand the imperial context of the first-century CE and how certain terms and expressions could be understood in light of this setting.¹ Others have utilized visual sources as a means of exploring the context for various NT motifs.² Few, however, have sought to explore how the verbal and the visual were interconnected in the Greco-Roman world and how this shapes the ways in which certain words were heard. Jane Heath has gone some way toward addressing this neglected area of research through exploring Paul's visual piety, i.e. by examining how Paul is attempting to shape the Christian mode of viewing, which in turn shapes believers' relationship to God and others.³ Her research intersects with mine at various points, since we are both interested in visuality in the ancient world.⁴ However, my concern in this chapter has more in common with Peter

¹ E.g. Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010); Davina Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); Harry O. Maier, "Barbarians, Scythians and Imperial Iconography in the Epistle to the Colossians," in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Visual Images* (eds. Anette Weissenrieder, et al.; WUNT 193; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 385–406.

² E.g. David Balch, "Paul's Portrait of Christ Crucified (Gal. 3:1) in Light of Painting and Sculptures of Suffering and Death in Pompeian and Roman Houses," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (eds. David Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 84–108; Philip Esler, "Paul and the *Agon*: Understanding a Pauline Motif in Its Cultural and Visual Context," in *Picturing the New Testament*, 356–384.

³ See Jane M.F. Heath, "Metamorphosis of the Beholder: Pauline Visual Piety in a Hellenistic and Jewish Setting (Romans, 2 Corinthians 2:14-5:21 and 1 Corinthians 10-13)" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2009).

⁴ See also Jane M.F. Heath, "Absent Presences of Paul and Christ: *Enargeia* in 1 Thessalonians 1–3," *JSNT* 31 (2009): 3–38. Here she discusses how in antiquity it was thought that vividness (*ἐνάργεια*) in a speech was able to make present that which was absent and she demonstrates the usefulness of this discourse for understanding the "absent-presences" in 1 Thess 1–3.

Lampe's discussion of visualization.⁵ In his exploration of psychological insights in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, he presents the visualization of the subject matter in a speech as an aspect of rhetoric that was understood to be particularly persuasive. His treatment of this topic briefly touches on some of the key notions connected to vivid speech. In what follows I will significantly expand this discussion and address what was considered vivid speech, and how it was thought to function in rhetorical theory and practice. This will demonstrate how the interconnection between the verbal and the visual was utilized in order to persuade an audience. After this discussion I will analyze Phil 3:13–14 to see if the image of the runner could function as an instance of vivid speech and therefore play an important role in the argumentative strategy of Philippians.

5.1. Vivid Speech: ἔκφρασις, Ancient Human Psychology, and Persuasion

In the Greco-Roman world there was wide discussion of a certain kind of speech that brought the subject matter before the mind's eye of the listener. The rhetorical technique used to achieve this is described with numerous names, most often used interchangeably: ἔκφρασις, ἐνάργεια, ὑποτύπωσις, διατύπωσις, *evidentia*, *illustratio*, *demonstratio*, *imaginatio*, *sub oculos subiectio*.⁶ The various terms used indicate imprecision in defining this kind of rhetoric, but whatever the lack of precise definition and complications of integrating it into rhetorical theory may have been, all were agreed that it turned the listener into a spectator and that in doing this it had a powerfully persuasive effect. The earliest writer to use language of bringing before the eyes is Aristotle. He argues that there is a certain kind of metaphor that brings the subject πρὸ ὀμμάτων.⁷ The way one achieves this is through using words that signify actuality (ἐνέργεια). One example he gives is from Euripides, "Thereupon the Greeks shooting forward with their

⁵ Peter Lampe, "Quintilian's Psychological Insights in his *Institutio Oratoria*," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (eds. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; New/London: T&T Clark, 2010), 180–99, esp. 185–87.

⁶ See Ann Vasaly, *Representations: Images of the World in Ciceronian Oratory* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 90. Cf. the parenthetical comments of Donald Russell in his translation of Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.32 (LCL).

⁷ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1411A25–B21.

feet.”⁸ “Shooting” (ἄξαντες) is the word he signals as achieving ἐνέργεια as well as μεταφορά.

Later writers describe works earlier than Aristotle as achieving vividness (ἐνάργεια) and using words to create a visual experience.⁹ For example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus states that Lysias’ speeches had an abundance of ἐνάργεια, and he claims that no one is so foolish that “he will not feel that he can see the actions which are being described going on and that he is meeting face-to-face the characters in the orator’s story. And he will require no further evidence of the likely actions, feelings, thoughts, or words of the different persons.”¹⁰ Several writers describe the work of historians as employing the same kind of vivid speech. Plutarch presents Thucydides’ work as striving for ἐνάργεια and οἷον θεατὴν ποιῆσαι τὸν ἀκροατὴν.¹¹ He states something similar about Xenophon’s description of a battle scene, indicating that it brings the scene before the reader’s eyes.¹² Lucian also describes Xenophon’s writings in the same way.¹³ Ps.-Longinus, picking up the idea of turning listeners into spectators, describes Herodotus’ work as that which takes the audience on a journey τὴν ἀκοὴν ὄψιν ποιῶν.¹⁴ In Latin literature the Auctor ad Herennium discusses the rhetorical practice he calls *demonstratio*, and states that it is achieved “when an event is so described in words that the business seems to be enacted and the subject pass vividly before our eyes (*res ante oculos esse videatur*).”¹⁵ This brief survey demonstrates that among different authors in different fields of communication (viz. orators: Lysias, Auctor ad Herennium; and historians: Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon) there was a broad notion of vivid speech, a way of communicating that could bring the subject matter before the minds’ eye of the audience.

⁸ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1411B29 (Freese, LCL): τὸν τεύθεν οὖν Ἑλληνας ἄξαντες ποσίν, quoting Euripides, *Iphig. Aul.* 80. Euripides has δορί (spears) for ποσίν in this passage which describes the Greeks coming to the narrow straits of Aulis to prepare for battle.

⁹ Ruth Webb (*Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* [Surrey: Ashgate, 2009], 89), following Kathy Eden, argues that vivid description had its beginnings in the forensic contexts of classical Greece. My discussion of vivid speech has been greatly informed by Webb’s work.

¹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lys.* 7 (Usher, LCL).

¹¹ Plutarch, *Mor.* 347A7.

¹² Plutarch, *Art.* 8.1.

¹³ Lucian, *Imag.* 10.

¹⁴ Ps.-Longinus, *Subl.* 26.2.

¹⁵ *Rhet. Her.* 4.50.68 (Caplan, LCL).

5.1.1. ἔκφρασις in the *Progymnasmata*

Vivid speech that was thought to evoke a visual experience gets formalized and officially defined in the *Progymnasmata*, the earliest of which dates from the first-century CE and is attributed to Aelius Theon. It is given the name ἔκφρασις and is isolated as a specific rhetorical exercise, defined as “a descriptive speech which vividly brings the subject shown before the eyes.”¹⁶ Ruth Webb analyzes this definition, pointing out that more than any other rhetorical exercise it focuses on the effect it has on the audience, and it draws attention to the interaction between the speaker and the listener.¹⁷ These aspects of this speech can be elucidated from exploring how the definition uses metaphor to explain the nature of this speech. Typically the definition of rhetorical exercises simply states what the speech is. For example, a narrative is defined as speech “descriptive of things that have happened or as though they have happened.”¹⁸ The definition for an ἔκφρασις, however, emphasizes what this speech does, presenting the speaker as a tour guide and a theatrical dramatist, while the audience is presented as those who see what is taking place before their eyes.

The speaker as a tour guide is conveyed through the first descriptor of this kind of speech, περιηγηματικός, which could be literally rendered “leading around.” Webb uses the analogy of what Pausanias does in his Περιήγησις as comparable to what is indicated here, where the speaker acts as a guide leading the audience around the subject not just “showing” the listener the subject matter, but also highlighting what to look at, and therefore making something of its nature clear.¹⁹ The notion of clarity is also present with the participle δηλούμενον, which can mean to make clear or to explain.²⁰ The second half of the definition, vividly bringing the subject before the eyes, presents the speaker as

¹⁶ Theon, *Prog.* 118.6 (trans. Webb): “Ἐκφρασις ἐστὶ λόγος περιηγηματικὸς ἐναργῶς ὑπ’ ὄψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον.

¹⁷ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 51–55.

¹⁸ Theon, *Prog.* 78.15–16 (trans. Kennedy).

¹⁹ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 54. Cf. the Byzantine commentary by John of Sardis on the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius (*Commentarium in Aphthonii Progymnasmata*, 216.8), where he explains περιηγηματικός by comparing it to one taking someone to Athens and showing this person around the city, pointing out everything in a particular order and providing a fitting commentary. Cf. also Simon Goldhill’s discussion of ekphrastic epigrams (“What is Ekphrasis For?” *CP* 102 [2007]: 1–19, esp. 18) where he argues that they are directive and thus designed to constitute the viewing subject as one who looks in a specific way.

²⁰ LSJ, 385; cf. BDAG, 222.

a theatrical dramatist producing a scene on a stage. This is taken up in later definitions as making the listeners spectators,²¹ and it draws attention to the close connection between this speech and the visual arts.²²

The process through which the audience would see what was presented to them is laconically introduced with the word *ἐνάργεια* in the discussion about the virtues of this speech, which as Theon states are “above all clarity and vividness (*ἐνάργεια*) which makes one almost see what is being spoken about.”²³ Ps.-Hermogenes emphasizes the same when he states that the clarity and vividness (*ἐνάργεια*) “should almost bring about sight through the sense of hearing.”²⁴ Nicolaus makes a similar statement with respect to *ἐνάργεια* stating, “it tries to make the listeners into spectators.”²⁵ These texts indicate that *ἐνάργεια* plays a key role in bringing the subject matter before the eyes of the audience. The nature of vividness (*ἐνάργεια*), however, is not described in the rhetorical handbooks. Its visual impact is assumed, but there is no indication of how it linguistically worked, and why this was supposed to be persuasive. To answer these questions and explore more fully the assumptions that underpin *ἔκφρασις*, it will be necessary to turn to Quintilian who fills in these lacunae. Before addressing this, it will be useful to briefly examine in what kinds of speech an *ἔκφρασις* would be used and their typical length.

An *ἔκφρασις* could be included in a broad range of types of speech; Hermogenes notes how other theorists have treated it in fable, narrative, common-place, and encomion.²⁶ This highlights the flexibility of *ἔκφρασις*, in that it could be used in various places for certain persuasive purposes. While *ἔκφρασις* could be used in many types of speech, it was most often connected with narrative. This is seen in Theon’s preface where he states that the historical writers use *ἔκφρασις* very frequently.²⁷ It is also evident in the subject

²¹ E.g. Nicolaus, *Prog.* 70.5–6.

²² Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 347A (Babbitt, LCL). After discussing how poetry and painting are two different modes of representation with the same goal, states that “the most effective historian is he who, by a vivid representation of emotions and characters, makes his narration like a painting.” He then goes on to discuss how Thucydides strove for *ἐνάργεια* in his writings. Cf. also Ps.-Longinus, *Subl.* 15.1, who notes the connection between visualization (*φαντασία*) and making images (*εἰδωλοποιία*).

²³ Theon, *Prog.* 119.28 (trans. Webb).

²⁴ Ps.-Hermogenes, *Prog.* 10.23 (trans. Webb).

²⁵ Nicolaos, *Prog.* 68.11 (trans. Webb).

²⁶ Ps.-Hermogenes, *Prog.* 10.30.

²⁷ Theon, *Prog.* 60.19–22.

categories that are given in the definitions of *ἔκφρασις* (persons, events, places, and times) which correspond to the elements of narration (omitting manner and cause).²⁸ Furthermore, it is actually included in another rhetorical handbook from the first-century CE as a means of persuasion in a narration. This author, typically called the Anonymous Seguerianus, in discussing how to make a narration persuasive states, “*Enargeia* also works for persuasion. *Enargeia* is speech bringing what is being explained before the eyes.”²⁹ This definition is almost exactly the same as the definition given for *ἔκφρασις* by Theon. This close connection between narrative and *ἔκφρασις* indicates that any aspect of a narrative could be expanded through the technique of *ἔκφρασις*.³⁰ Quintilian indicates as much when he argues that vividness is to be used in a narrative when one wants the narration to be “not only grand but attractive” and “when a truth requires not only to be told but in a sense to be presented to the sight” not “to obscure something” but “to strive ... to make them seem as vivid as possible.”³¹

The connection between *ἔκφρασις* and narrative calls attention to the ways in which all of the rhetorical exercises were interconnected. There were distinctive features of each, but they often bled into one another. This is due to the practicalities of giving a speech and the educational purposes of the *Progymnasmata*. In giving a speech an orator could include aspects of a narrative in a fable, or expand a narrative with an *ἔκφρασις*, and so on, in order to speak in an acceptable and persuasive manner. The goal was to speak effectively and the techniques were to be employed flexibly to do this. As to the purposes of these exercises, they were not thought of as set pieces that were to be deployed in the rote form in which they were learned, but rather were thought to be “part of a formative process which has provided students with flexible skills and with a stock of commonly accepted things to say and ways to say them.”³² The exercises

²⁸ See, e.g., Theon, *Prog.* 118.8–9 and 78.17–20

²⁹ Anonymous Seguerianus, 96 (trans. Dilts and Kennedy, italics in original): *συνεργεῖ δὲ πρὸς πειθῶ καὶ ἡ ἐνάργεια. ἔστι δὲ ἐνάργεια λόγος ὑπὲρ ὧν ἄγων τό δηλούμενον.*

³⁰ See Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 65–67.

³¹ Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.63–65 (Russell, LCL).

³² Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 47. Cf. Malcolm Heath (“Practical advocacy in Roman Egypt,” in *Oratory in Action* [eds. Michael J. Edwards and Christopher Reid; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004], 64) who states that “Rhetorical training was not intended to produce orators who would adhere rigidly to a set framework; rather, it used a set framework to impart a repertoire of skills and techniques meant to be

instilled skills and habits within the students that would enable them to speak in effective ways, or what was thought to be effective in their society.

The subject categories for ἔκφρασις indicate that this rhetorical device could be used for numerous subjects. Hermogenes' list of subjects illustrates this, "There are ekphraseis of persons, events, states of affairs, places, times and many other things."³³ Webb even states that those familiar with "the doctrine of the *peristaseis* would therefore immediately recognize 'persons, places, times and events' as rhetorician-speak for 'practically everything.'"³⁴ While many modern theorists view ἔκφρασις as a verbal representation of an *objet d'art*,³⁵ the ancient context had a much broader usage.³⁶ It is not until Nicolaus (fifth-century CE) that ἔκφρασις is specifically connected with sculptures, paintings, and similar objects.³⁷ Webb argues that the "modern definition grew out of the ancient one by a double process of restriction and expansion":³⁸ ἔκφρασις was first restricted to sculptures, paintings, buildings, and other objects of art, and then this narrow understanding was expanded to include any writings that address this subject matter.

Not only could an ἔκφρασις be about any subject matter, but it could also come in varying lengths. The most well known were several lines long and typically of an object, e.g. the shield of Aeneas in the *Aeneid* or the description of paintings in Philostratus' *Imagines*. The entry in the *Progymnasmata* demonstrates, however, that they could also be short and only one sentence long. Theon's example of an ἔκφρασις of a person is illustrative, "He had a pointed head, and was lame in one leg."³⁹ An ἔκφρασις could therefore be short, associated with nearly any entity, found in any kind of speech but was

applied flexibly according to the needs of each concrete situation." He goes on in this essay to demonstrate the ways in which advocates actually made use of rhetorical theory in practice by examining court records from Roman Egypt.

³³ Hermogenes, *Prog.* 22 (trans. Webb).

³⁴ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 63.

³⁵ James Heffernan, "Ekphrasis and Representation," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 297–316 (esp. 299).

³⁶ See Ruth Webb, "Ekphrasis ancient and modern: the invention of a genre," *Word and Image* 15 (1999): 7–18.

³⁷ He (*Prog.* 69.4–5; trans. Webb) adds the subjects of "statues ..., paintings or things of this sort."

³⁸ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 28.

³⁹ Theon, *Prog.* 118.6 (trans. Webb). For further material to support this see the discussion below about the linguistic features of a vivid description with examples from Quintilian and Cicero, all of which are around one sentence long.

most commonly in narrative, and could be used to heighten the persuasive force of the argument.

5.1.2. Quintilian and Ancient Human Psychology

As indicated above the reason for the visual and persuasive effect of vivid speech is not spelled out in the *Progymnasmata*; it is simply presumed. Quintilian's discussion of *ἐνάργεια* introduces ancient notions about human psychology that aid in explaining why rhetoricians believed that words could evoke visual experiences and why this was considered powerfully persuasive. In Book 6 of the *Institutio Oratoria* Quintilian draws attention to the centrality of *φαντασία* in formulating *ἐνάργεια*. In this text he is giving guidance on how an orator can go about stirring the emotions of the audience.⁴⁰ He explains that the way one can arouse such emotions in the audience is through first feeling those emotions within oneself; one must be emotionally moved before one can move others in the same manner. This is achieved through recalling the visual impressions (*φαντασίαι*; *visiones*) of a particular scene. He states,

The person who will show the greatest power in the expression of emotions will be the person who has properly formed what the Greeks call *phantasiai* (let us call them "visions"), by which the images of absent things are presented to the mind

⁴⁰ Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.26–28. Cf. Cicero, *De or.* 2.45.189 (Sutton and Rackham, LCL): "Moreover it is impossible for the listener to feel indignation, hatred or ill-will, to be terrified of anything, or reduced to tears of compassion, unless all those emotions, which the advocate would inspire in the arbitrator, are visibly stamped or rather branded on the advocate himself ... I give you my word that I never tried, by means of a speech, to arouse either indignation or compassion, either ill-will or hatred, in the minds of the tribunal, without being really stirred myself, as I worked upon their minds, by the very feelings to which I was seeking to prompt them."

There are similar discussions of what is needed to produce a good poem. Theorists argue it is through experiencing and feeling the material in question that one is enabled to write well. See Aristotle, *Poetics* 17 (Halliwell, LCL): "One should construct plots, and work them out in diction, with the material as much as possible in the mind's eye (*πρὸ ὀμμάτων*). In this way, by seeing things most vividly (*ἐναργέστατα*), as if present at the actual events, one will discover what is apposite and not miss contradictions. ... So far as possible, one should also work out the plot in gestures, since a natural affinity makes those in the grip of emotions the most convincing, and the truest distress or anger is conveyed by one who actually feels these things." Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 99–107 (Fairclough, LCL): "Not enough is it for poems to have beauty: they must have charm, and lead the hearer's soul where they will. As men's faces smile on those who smile, so they respond to those who weep. If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself: the, O Telephus or Peleus, will your misfortunes hurt me: if the words you utter are ill suited, I shall laugh or fall asleep. Sad tones befit the face of sorrow; blustering accents that of anger; jests become the merry, solemn words the grave."

(*imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo*) in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us (*ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere videamur*). (Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.29; Russell, LCL)

He goes on to compare this process to daydreaming where one does not just seem to be imagining something, but actually involved in doing the activities of the dream.⁴¹ By conjuring up such mental imagery in this way the orator can relive the experiences of an event. This allows the orator to identify with those experiencing such happenings, which enables the orator to feel what they felt. This will give rise to vivid description (*ἐνάργεια*) which will enable the audience to experience something similar, seeing what is being described, and thus feeling the same emotions as the orator. Quintilian makes this clear in discussing what he would do in a murder case.

Suppose I am complaining that someone has been murdered. Am I not to have before my eyes all the circumstances which one can believe to have happened during the event? Will not the assassin burst out on a sudden, and the victim tremble, cry for help, and either plead for mercy or try to escape? Shall I not see one man striking the blow and the other man falling? Will not the blood, the pallor, the groans, the last gasp of the dying be imprinted on my mind? The result will be *enargeia*, what Cicero calls *illustratio* and *evidentia*, a quality which makes us seem not so much to be talking about something as exhibiting it (*quae non tam dicere videtur quam ostendere*). Emotions will ensue just as if we were present at the event itself. (Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.31–32; Russell, LCL)

For Quintilian, the key to producing *ἐνάργεια* is the ability to reproduce *φαντασίαι*. With this language Quintilian highlights certain cultural assumptions about human psychology that underlie how it was presumed words could produce visual images. It is therefore necessary to develop some of these ideas to fill out further how *φαντασίαι* were thought to work. Central to understanding *φαντασίαι* is the pervasive belief in the Greco-Roman world that visual impressions were imprinted on one's mind/soul from what was taken in through the senses. This is most clearly stated in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, where he states, "so deeply does sight engrave on the mind images (*εἰκόνας*) of actions

⁴¹ Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.30.

(πραγμάτα) that are seen.”⁴² This is particularly acute in seeing one’s beloved. Plutarch indicates this in his dialogue on love, “the images of the beloved ... burned into the mind by sight, as if using encaustic technique, leave behind in the memory shapes that move and live and speak and remain forever and ever.”⁴³ This same belief is also seen in ancient novels. For instance, when Clitophon sees Leucippe in Achilles Tatius’ novel, he is struck by her beauty and states, “As soon as I had seen her, I was lost. For Beauty’s wound is sharper than any weapon’s, and it runs through the eyes down to the soul.”⁴⁴ Libanius, in a similar manner, relates the emergence of an ἔκφρασις to the imprint left on his soul by what he saw. He speaks of seeing a beautiful girl and then his soul becoming a painter producing an ἔκφρασις which was the verbal expression of the encounter.⁴⁵ The idea that what one saw was imprinted in one’s mind and could be expressed through words could also be a source of trouble for public speakers. This is indicated by the warnings given by teachers of rhetoric not to describe shameful material or to take care when describing something such as the bride to be during a wedding speech for fear that the audience would think the worst about the speaker.⁴⁶ This is due to the belief that in order to describe something vividly it would have been necessary to take it in visually.

Aristotle developed ideas about the mind functioning as a storehouse of images in his theories of memory, cognition, and knowledge. For instance, he paralleled memory to a painted portrait, and an impression left on wax by a seal.⁴⁷ He equated thinking with putting before the eyes,⁴⁸ and stated, “the soul never thinks without an image.”⁴⁹ These ideas are brought together in his theory of knowledge which maintained that the five senses brought in perceptions from daily life. These perceptions are first treated by the

⁴² Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, 17 (trans. MacDowell).

⁴³ Plutarch, *Mor.* 759C (Helmbold, LCL).

⁴⁴ Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 1.4 (trans. Winkler); cf. Chariton, *Chaer.* 6.5–7; Apollonios of Rhodes, *Argon.* 3.453–6; cf. also Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1370B19–22.

⁴⁵ Libanius, *Prog.* 12.30.

⁴⁶ See Nicolaus, *Prog.* 45.16; Menander Rhetor, *Peri Epithalamiou*, 2.6.404.11–14.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Mem. rem.* 450B30, 450B1–10.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *De an.* 427B18–22.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *De an.* 431A16–17 (trans. Hamlyn): διὸ οὐδέποτε νοεῖ ἄνευ φαντάσματος ἢ ψυχῆ.

faculty of imagination (φαντασία), forming them into images (φαντάσματα) which become the basis of thought.⁵⁰ As he states,

And for this reason unless one perceived (αἰσθανόμενος) things one would not learn or understand anything, and when one contemplates one must simultaneously contemplate an image (φάντασμα); for images are like sense-perceptions (τὰ γὰρ φαντάσματα ὡσπερ αἰσθήματά ἐστι), except that they are without matter. But imagination (φαντασία) is different from assertion and denial; for truth and falsity involve a combination of thoughts (νοημάτων). But what distinguishes the first thoughts (πρῶτα νοήματα) from images (φαντάσματα)? Surely neither these nor any other thoughts will be images (φαντάσματα), but they will not exist without images (φαντασμάτων). (Aristotle, *De an.* 432A7–14; trans. Hamlyn)

The Stoics, following in the wake of Aristotle, argued that visual impressions (φαντασμοί) were at the root of language. In his discussion of early Stoicism Diogenes Laertius records, “For impression (φαντασία) arises first, and then thought, which has the power of talking, expresses in language what it experiences by the agency of the impression (φαντασία).”⁵¹ Ps.-Longinus indicates the prominence of the Stoic view of φαντασία and highlights how it is being taken up in rhetorical and poetic practices.

For the term *phantasia* is applied in general (κοινῶς) to an idea which enters the mind from any source and engenders speech, but the word has now come to be used predominantly of passages where, inspired by strong emotion, you seem to see what you describe and bring it vividly before the eyes of your audience (βλέπειν δοκῆς καὶ ὑπ’ ὄψιν τιθῆς τοῖς ἀκούουσιν). That *phantasia* means one thing in oratory and another in poetry you will yourself detect, and also that the object of the poetical form of it is to enthrall (ἔκπληξις), and that of the prose form (ἐν λόγοις) to present things vividly (ἐνάργεια), though both indeed aim at the emotional and the excited. (*Subl.* 15:1–2; Russell, LCL)

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *De an.* 431B20–432A14. See Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1966), 32.

⁵¹ Diogenes Laertius 7.49 (trans. Long and Sedley, 33D). The Stoic theory of φαντασία is much more complex than indicated here. To go into a full discussion of it would take us too far away from our topic at hand. For a fuller discussion see the texts and commentary in Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Vol. 1 Translations of the Principle Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 236–41.

He presents the commonly held idea about φαντασία in terms of what is found among Stoics; it is the source of speech. However, he highlights how a popular usage has emerged in both rhetoric and poetry, which connects it with stirring audiences' emotions, albeit with different goals in view. The key point of this passage for our consideration here is that some form of visual impression was thought to be at the root of speech, whether this was taken generally, or specifically connected with rhetoric or poetry. This perspective of the mind had an enduring prevalence as well; it shows up even as late as the fifth-century CE. Augustine, for example, when he mentioned that when he wants to speak about Carthage, first recalls the image and then he speaks.⁵²

Discussions of artificial memory also aid in filling out this understanding of the mind. The famous story of Simonides recorded by Cicero illustrates this. He is the one who discovered the idea that:

[P]ersons desiring to train this faculty [memory] must select localities and form mental images of the facts they wish to remember and store those images in the localities, with the result that the arrangement of the localities will preserve the order of the facts, and the images of the facts will designate the facts themselves, and we shall employ the localities and images respectively as a wax writing tablet and the letters written on it. (*De or.* 2.86.354; Sutton and Rackham, LCL)

This understanding of memory was discussed widely in both Greek and Roman sources.⁵³ It feeds into how rhetoricians instructed their students to remember speeches by connecting the words or ideas of a speech with various visual images, all of which were placed in a particular physical frame, such as a house. The images, which were to share some likeness to the subject matter being spoken about, were to be placed in the different rooms of the house. The orator could then mentally walk through the house recovering the various images connected to certain aspects of the speech, thus enabling the orator to recall it in its entirety.⁵⁴

⁵² Augustine, *Trin.* 8.9.68–70.

⁵³ See Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1–49; Jocelyn Penny Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1997), 81–111.

⁵⁴ *Rhet. Ad Herr.* 3.16.28–24.30; cf. Cicero, *De or.* 2.86.354–87.360.

It was widely believed that people operated with a visual library, “a gallery of the mind.”⁵⁵ These images were taken in from what one saw, and could serve as the basis for speech, knowledge, and memory. As Webb states in indicating the role of φαντασῖαι in ἔκφρασις, “The souls of both speaker and listener are stocked with internal images of absent things, and these provide the raw material with which each party can ‘paint’ the images that ekphrasis puts into words.”⁵⁶

5.1.3. ἐνάργεια and Persuasion

Orators would make use of the visual library imprinted in people’s minds for their own persuasive purposes. Quintilian argues that an orator does this by first visualizing a scene (reproducing φαντασῖαι) which would trigger certain emotions,⁵⁷ and enable the orator to produce vivid words (ἐνάργεια). This vivid speech had the ability to trigger a similar mental image within the mind’s eye of the audience, and could powerfully persuade them. Quintilian indicates that persuasion occurs primarily through stirring an audience’s emotions; as he states, this speech is able to penetrate the emotions (*adfectus...penetrat*).⁵⁸ It is through feeling a certain way about the subject in question that the audience is led to be convinced of the orator’s argument. For example, if feelings of indignation are aroused for the heinous deeds of a murderer, then the person on trial for murder will receive a verdict of guilty and a harsher sentence. Quintilian assumes that if the orator can make the audience feel a certain way about the events under question, then they will respond in the manner that he desires.

A letter from Aelius Aristides to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus illustrate how one’s emotions can be manipulated to achieve a particular result in the manner Quintilian expects. In this letter Aristides writes to the emperors requesting aid

⁵⁵ Webb (*Ekphrasis*, 113) uses this expression in her discussion of what lies behind vivid speech. She states it is “the gallery of mental images impressed by sensation in the speaker’s mind.” Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 759C (Helmbold, LCL): “For our sight seems to paint its other pictures on wet plaster,” referring to everyday images which tend to fade with time.

⁵⁶ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 113.

⁵⁷ Quintilian mentions instances where he so identified with the visual impression that he was in tears and showed all the signs of grief. “I have certainly often been moved, to the point of being overtaken not only with tears but by pallor and by a grief which is very like the real thing” (*Inst.* 6.2.36; Russell, LCL).

⁵⁸ Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.67.

for the city of Smyrna which had been destroyed by an earthquake. After asking the emperor to remember the city when he visited it, Aristides provides an account of the desolation.

The harbor, which you saw, has closed its eyes, the beauty of the market place is gone, the adornments of the streets have disappeared, the gymnasiums together with the men and boys who used them are destroyed, some of the temples have fallen, some sunk beneath the ground. That which was the most beautiful city to behold and bore the title of “fair” among all mankind has been made the most unpleasant of spectacles, a hill of ruins and corpses. The west winds blow through a waste land. (Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 19.3; trans. Behr)

These few lines encapsulate the destruction of the city and have a powerful effect on Marcus Aurelius. Philostratus records that while reading the letter, Marcus Aurelius frequently groaned out loud, and when he read that the winds blew through a wasteland, he shed a tear on the page.⁵⁹ Because the letter aroused such an emotional response within Marcus Aurelius, it led him to take action and have the city rebuilt. As Philostratus states, “in accordance with the impulse inspired by Aristides, he consented to rebuild the city.”⁶⁰

Ps-Longinus also indicates the power of vivid description to achieve the desired end of the orator. He states,

What then is the effect of rhetorical visualization (*φαντασία*)? There is much it can do to bring urgency and passion into our words; but it is when it is closely involved with factual arguments that as well as persuading the listener, it enslaves him (*δουλοῦται*). (Ps.-Longinus, *Subl.* 15.9; Russell, LCL)

He even goes on to state that the brilliance of a vivid description can at times overpower one’s reasoning faculty and lead one to readily embrace what is being portrayed.

⁵⁹ Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 582. See Ruth Webb, “Imagination and the arousal of the emotions in Greco-Roman rhetoric,” in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature* (ed. Susanna M. Braund and Christopher Gill; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 112–27.

⁶⁰ Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 582 (Wright, LCL).

There, besides developing his factual argument the orator has visualized (πεφάντασται) the event and consequently his conception far exceeds the limits of mere persuasion. In all such cases the stronger element seems naturally to catch our ears, so that our attention is drawn from the reasoning to the enthralling effect of the imagination (φαντασίαν), and the reality is concealed in a halo of brilliance. And this effect on us is natural enough; set two forces side by side and the stronger always absorbs the virtues of the other. (Ps.-Longinus, *Subl.* 15.10-11; Russell, LCL)

This kind of language is not passive; it is active, having the ability to grab people and make them “slaves” of the orator’s rhetoric. This is why Quintilian states:

A speech does not adequately fulfill its purpose or attain the total domination (*plene dominatur oratio*) it should have if it goes no further than the ears, and the judge feels that he is merely being told the story of the matters he has to decide, without their being brought out and displayed to his mind’s eye. (*Inst.* 8.3.62; Russell, LCL)

Vivid speech was viewed as powerfully persuasive, and was considered one of the most powerful techniques for convincing an audience. It was thought to penetrate the emotions and even dominate and enslave the listener. Theon even indicates that vivid speech was able to remain implanted in the mind much more permanently than plain speech. He calls attention to this in his discourse about the education of the young where he explains to the teachers that

[T]he style (ἐρμηνεία) must be clear and vivid (ἐναργής); for the need is not only to express a thought but also to make what is said dwell in the mind of the hearers, so that what is said by Homer happens: “I shall speak a word easily and place it in mind.” (Theon, *Prog.* 72.1-3; trans. Kennedy)⁶¹

The persuasive effectiveness of vivid speech was also bound up with how these images were associated with common cultural values and assumptions. The production of ἐνάργεια plays on what was commonly held and what the audience would expect. It had to have the appearance of truth in order for it to be effective. Quintilian’s final

⁶¹ Cf. Goldhill (“What is Ekphrasis for?” 4-5) who emphasizes the power of vivid speech to violently manipulate the audience.

discussion of the path to achieving ἐνάργεια emphasizes how what was commonly accepted was to be the focus of this kind of speech: “We have only to watch Nature and follow her. All eloquence is about the activities of life, every man applies whatever he hears to his own experience, and the mind finds it easiest to accept what it can recognize (*facillime enim recipiunt animi quod agnoscunt*).”⁶² Anonymous Seguerianus states something similar with respect to how a narrative becomes persuasive. It does this “if (the speaker) tries to make everything he says resemble the truth (ἐξομοιοῦν πειρῶτο τοῖς ἀληθέσι).”⁶³ Orators could best capitalize on the visual library imprinted in the listeners’ minds by appealing to commonly held cultural norms associated with different imagery.

The ability of words to create the experience of seeing what one is describing can in fact break down if there was a disconnect between speaker and listener with respect to the values associated with the imagery being described. An example of a failed ἔκφρασις from Libanius illustrates this.⁶⁴ In his *Autobiography*, he describes how a pagan, Bemarchius, gives an ἔκφρασις of a new church. The audience, rather than being swept away by his rhetoric, is left puzzled about what he said. Webb explains the failure of his vivid speech as due to the significant shift in visual images and values associated with them that occurred during this time period.⁶⁵ Christian architectural forms with distinctive cultural import were replacing the pagan forms with their older cultural significance. Bemarchius’ vivid description appeals to the latter while the audience was familiar with and expecting the former. Because the audience and speaker did not share the same visual vocabulary with its related cultural values, the vivid speech failed to convince and actually led to bewilderment.

Quintilian’s response to Cicero’s vivid portrait of Verres, however, illustrates positively how this worked in practice with those who shared a common visual vocabulary associated with common cultural values, which was normally the case in the Greco-Roman world in the first-century CE. Quintilian provides the description: “There

⁶² Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.71 (Russell, LCL). Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.30; 4.2.63–65.

⁶³ Anonymous Seguerianus, 89 (trans. Dilts and Kennedy).

⁶⁴ Libanius, *Or.* 1.41.

⁶⁵ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 126.

stood the Roman praetor, in his slippers, with a purple cloak and a tunic down to his heels, leaning on one of his women on the beach ...”⁶⁶ Then he states:

Could anyone be so unimaginative as not to feel that he is seeing the persons and the place and the dress, and to add some unspoken details for himself into the bargain? I certainly imagine that I can see the face, the eyes, the disgusting endearments of the pair, and the silent loathing and abashed fear of the bystanders. (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.64–65; Russell, LCL)

Quintilian’s response indicates that Cicero makes use of certain stereotypes and shared cultural values in his description of Verres. For instance, Quintilian indicates that he sees the praetor in an unseemly manner. This may not come readily to a modern person’s mind unless he or she knew that leaning on the arm of a woman was considered an unmanly stance in the Roman world and that Verres’ robe (a purple cloak and a tunic down to his heels) was actually luxurious non-Roman dress, which would have been offensive to many Romans. His slippers also would have caught the eyes of the onlookers, since this is not the typical shoe a praetor wears in public.⁶⁷ These are cultural associations that were shared by many at the time. Quintilian, based on these cultural associations, fills in the vivid description and “sees” Verres in a particular way.⁶⁸ Quintilian even assumes that anyone would have the same response, as indicated with his statement: “Could anyone be so unimaginative as not to feel that he is seeing”⁶⁹ Through using visual vocabulary that was associated with commonly held stereotypes, an orator could expect the audience to feel a certain way about the subject matter under question. As they visualized a scene they would automatically “see” it with the values commonly associated with the imagery.

⁶⁶ Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.64 (Russell, LCL); cf. Cicero, *Verr.* 5.33.86.

⁶⁷ See Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 110.

⁶⁸ Cf. Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 124–25, where she provides a modern account demonstrating the connection between cultural stereotypes and images.

⁶⁹ Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.64.

5.1.4. Linguistic Features of Vivid Speech

It is necessary here to briefly explore how vivid description was linguistically achieved so that we can more fully identify when an author is utilizing this technique. Quintilian discusses three types of *ἐνάργεια* and highlights some of the linguistic features of this kind of speech. The first is when an entire scene is painted with words. He gives an example from the *Aeneid*, “At once, both took their stand, up on their toes,”⁷⁰ which presents two boxers ready for a fight. The second is through the addition of details. For instance, a vivid description of a destroyed city takes the simple statement, “it was stormed,” and opens it up by describing what this entailed, e.g. flames coming out of houses, roofs falling, and so forth.⁷¹ The third is through noting the circumstantial details of an event. Quintilian provides another example from the *Aeneid*, “Chill shuddering shakes my limbs, my blood is curdled cold with fear.”⁷²

Beth Innocenti’s article on Cicero’s use of vivid description aids in filling out this discussion.⁷³ After briefly discussing how sometimes auditory details will be included, as well as other appeals to the senses,⁷⁴ she addresses three specific aspects of how Cicero uses language to achieve a vivid description. The first involves movement in actions as a central feature of this speech, which if they were forceful could more easily promote visualization.⁷⁵ She gives the example “to be flung down, stripped naked and tied up in the open market-place.”⁷⁶ Innocenti notes, which we have already encountered in Quintilian, that what is most important is to describe what appears more naturally to happen. Describing the movement of actions may not be enough, and so it might be necessary “to particularize actions with objects” so that the action described is directly

⁷⁰ Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.63 (Russell, LCL); cf. Virgil, *Aen.* 5.426.

⁷¹ Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.68; cf. 8.3.66 “the picture we wish to present is made of a number of details (*ex pluribus*)” (Russell, LCL). See also Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Lys.* 7; Demetrius, *Eloc.* 209–17, where he discusses how *ἐνάργεια* results from reference to details, repetitions, attendant circumstances (e.g. the sound of footsteps), and the collocation of similar sounding words.

⁷² Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.70 (Russell, LCL); cf. Virgil, *Aen.* 3.29–30.

⁷³ Beth Innocenti, “Towards a Theory of Vivid Description as Practiced in Cicero’s *Verrine* Orations,” *Rhetorica* 12 (1994): 355–81.

⁷⁴ Innocenti, “Vivid Description,” 370. She gives the example from Cicero, *Verr.* 2.1.66: “general buzz of talk and merriment”; cf. Demetrius, *Eloc.* 217.

⁷⁵ Innocenti, “Vivid Description,” 371. Cf. Aristotle’s discussion of a metaphor that brings the subject before the eyes mentioned above.

⁷⁶ Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.161.

connected to something.⁷⁷ She cites as an example “the locks were being wrenched off and the doors burst open.”⁷⁸ The third linguistic feature used to achieve vivid speech is through the use of contrast, such as indicating an action occurred suddenly contrasting it with the static, or through the use of common antitheses like light/darkness, night/day, etc.⁷⁹ These linguistic features could all be used to open up a scene and create a vivid description that the audience could visualize. It is important to emphasize that the focus is not on how many words are used, but rather on using words and framing a scene in a way that was thought to more readily evoke the visual images imprinted within one’s mind/soul.

5.2. The Image of the Runner as a Vivid Description (Phil 3:13–14)

Having established the nature and persuasive effect of vivid speech in rhetorical theory and practice and the linguistic features that are most commonly associated with creating a vivid description, I will now turn briefly to Phil 3:13–14 and examine whether the description of the runner could function as a piece of such rhetoric.⁸⁰ A fuller treatment of this passage in its context in Philippians will be provided in ch. 8 (specifically 8.2) below.

This passage is part of a broader biographical section where Paul describes his life both prior to Christ and after what could be called his conversion. Paul then metaphorically depicts himself as a runner. The movement from narration to an expansion of that which is narrated fits the common pattern of using an *ἔκφρασις* to vividly display what has just been described.⁸¹ There are further connections with vivid speech in that the passage has many of the linguistic features that were discussed above. First, an entire scene is painted with words. Not only is the runner running the race, but the finish line and prize is mentioned as well. Second, a simple statement, which is

⁷⁷ Innocenti, “Vivid Description,” 371.

⁷⁸ Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.52.

⁷⁹ Innocenti, “Vivid Description,” 371–3.

⁸⁰ Lampe (“Psychological Insights,” 191) provides three exemplary instances of visualization in the Pauline corpus: 2 Cor 12:7; 2 Cor 11:32–33; 1 Cor 4:11–13. Paul’s statement in Gal 3:1 might point to his preaching of Christ to the Galatians in a vivid way.

⁸¹ John Reumann (*Philippians* [AB 33B; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008], 555) notes as well that in this passage “the ‘autobiographical’ and the ‘stadium-metaphor’ levels collide.”

repeated twice, is opened up and expanded with more details. Paul states in Phil 3:12 that he presses on (διώκω). This word is used again in Phil 3:14, but it is expanded with the details from running a race. Third, circumstantial details from what running a race entails are included in the description. This is most clearly seen in the participial clauses τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος. Here the details of what the runner is doing are given heightening the vividness of the scene. In conjunction with this, as many commentators have noted, the word ἐπεκτείνομαι is a very vivid word.⁸² It fits Aristotle's qualification for what is needed to bring a metaphor before the eyes by having the quality of actuality (ἐνέργεια), and it is a word that conveys forceful motion, exerting oneself to the uttermost.⁸³ The passage also uses contrast to set up the runner imagery. Three times Paul states what he has not done (3:12, οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι; 3:13, ἐγὼ ἑμαυτὸν οὐ λογιζομαι κατειληφέναι). This has the effect of building up anticipation for the description of what he does do, setting up the vivid description and heightening the rhetorical force of his argument. The connection with Paul's biographical narration and the linguistic features of this passage strongly warrant treating the image of the runner as an instance of vivid speech that brings the subject vividly before the eyes of the audience.

The kinds of associations people would have with this imagery, obliging them to “see” it in a particular way, have been outlined in ch. 4 above. These will be brought together in the exegesis of this passage below to explore how Paul is using this imagery to persuade his audience.

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the interconnection between the verbal and the visual in ancient rhetorical theory and practice. In the Greco-Roman world there was a long

⁸² Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: Hendrickson, 1998), 222; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 347 n.41; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco: Word, 1983), 153; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 429; Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* (NovTSupp 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 140; Marvin R. Vincent, *The Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 110.

⁸³ BDAG, 361.

history of using vivid speech that was thought to turn the listeners into spectators and have a powerfully persuasive effect. This kind of speech was formalized and defined in the *Progymnasmata* and given the label *ἔκφρασις*, which could be used in different types of speeches, for different subjects, and could come in varying lengths. The chief characteristic of vivid speech was *ἐνάργεια* which played on ancient assumptions about human psychology. From Quintilian and other sources I demonstrated how it was widely believed that people's minds were full of images. Orators would make use of this visual library for their own persuasive purposes, using language to call forth visual images that were connected to a web of cultural associations and values. By employing this kind of rhetoric the speaker could lead the listener to feel a certain way about the topic at hand and therefore respond accordingly. Because of this power to manipulate an audience vivid speech was considered one of the most powerful rhetorical techniques that a speaker could use. I concluded my discussion of vivid speech by exploring some of the linguistic features that were commonly used to create a vivid effect, and then I analyzed Phil 3:13–14 showing how these linguistic features are present in Paul's description of the runner.

Having established that Phil 3:13–14 could function as a vivid description, it brings to the fore the possibility that the image of the runner is playing a significant role in Paul's argument in Philippians. The specific nature of this role will be addressed in the exegetical section below (8.2), where it will be demonstrated that this imagery not only brings together important themes in Paul's letter, but also encapsulates his overarching argumentative aim.

PART III

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS:

MORAL PHILOSOPHY, ATHLETIC IMAGERY, AND VIVID SPEECH IN PHILIPPIANS

This part of the thesis analyzes Philippians in light of the material discussed in Part II: the structure of thought in moral philosophy, ancient athletics, and vivid speech, which are interrelated in Paul's argument in Philippians. In the exegesis that follows I will examine how Paul's pattern of thought is structured similarly to the thought pattern in ancient moral philosophy. This will aid in understanding how Paul is using moral philosophical terms and concepts in making his argument in this letter. Related to Paul's argumentative agenda is his use of athletic imagery. Athletic language occurs at crucial places in Paul's argument, and it will be demonstrated that this language not only connects together important themes (e.g. the addressees' heavenly citizenship and confidence in suffering), but also that it sums up Paul's overarching argumentative aim. This will be particularly seen in Phil 3:13–14, which functions in many ways like the image of the runner in Lucretius (see 4.3.1). This coincides with the third area discussed in Part II: vivid speech. It was demonstrated in chapter 5 that this kind of speech plays a significant role in rhetoric and was used at crucial places in an argument powerfully to persuade an audience. The image of the runner in Phil 3:13–14 shares the qualities of a vivid description (see 5.2) and therefore could plausibly function in this manner. Given the rhetorical nature of this imagery and the way in which it sums up Paul's overarching argumentative aim, there is strong support for viewing it as the heart of Paul's argument in Philippians. It is the picture that Paul is placing before the Philippians' eyes which encapsulates what he is seeking to persuade them to think and do.

Chapter 6

DISCERNING AND MODELING THE VIRTUOUS LIFE (PHIL 1:1–26)

Introduction

After the greeting (1:1–2), Philippians 1:1–26 is typically divided into two sections: the thanksgiving section (1:3–11) and Paul’s report about his circumstances (1:12–26). In the exegesis that follows I will demonstrate the ways in which these sections of the letter are structured according to the pattern of thought in moral philosophy. This will be demonstrated in the thanksgiving section by examining how Paul is signaling two important themes of the letter, making progress toward a particular end/goal and a pattern of discernment that addresses how one is to make progress, both of which are encompassed within Paul’s concern for life as a whole. It will be demonstrated in the second section by examining how the report about Paul’s circumstances is presented in a way that models the kind of virtuous thinking and living that he will exhort the Philippians to adopt.

This chapter is divided into two parts: 1) Phil 1:1–11, which examines Paul’s concern for life as a whole and his prayer for the Philippians to discern that which really matters; 2) Phil 1:12–26, which examines how Paul uses positive and negative examples of virtue. It will be argued that this entire section (Phil 1:1–26) sets up Paul’s argument in that it presents a particular perspective on their lives (making progress toward a particular end) which is particularly embodied in Paul’s example. This presents a way of thinking about life that is structured according to the broad pattern of thought in moral philosophy.

6.1. Concern with Life as a Whole: Discerning The Superior Things (Phil 1:1–11)

Paul begins Philippians with his customary thanks to God. He gives the reason for this thanks in 1:5 (*ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*). This has been widely understood in terms of the Philippians’ financial gift, which is mentioned more specifically in 4:15

where the verbal form of the noun *κοινωνία* is used.¹ Recently, James Ware has argued that Paul is offering thanks for the Philippians' role in proclaiming the gospel.² While the former has much more support than the latter, the important point to note is that whatever Paul means by their *κοινωνία εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* he intimately connects this with the broader idea of God's *ἔργον ἀγαθόν* in 1:6. Because this is something that has its completion at the day of Christ, it is more than likely referring to the salvific work that God began in the community.³ Their financial giving, and any other activity bound up with *κοινωνία εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*, is evidence of God's saving activity, which is moving them toward a particular goal.⁴ Paul, therefore, at the outset of the letter introduces a perspective on their life that views it as having a beginning and as moving toward a *τέλος* (*ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ*). Rather than placing the emphasis on *κοινωνία*, *εὐαγγέλιον*, or the prevalence of "all" terms, the emphasis is more appropriately placed on the expression of confidence. That this is the correct emphatic note to recognize is confirmed by Paul's prayer report which describes how they are to move toward this *τέλος* and concludes with a similar expression about the day of Christ paralleling 1:6.

The perspective on life introduced in 1:6 gets picked up and filled out in Paul's prayer report in specifically moral philosophical terms. Paul Holloway has most thoroughly analyzed the prayer report in connection with moral philosophy. In his discussion of Phil 1:9–11 he identifies two problems of interpretation: 1) the relationship between love and knowledge in 1:9 and 2) the relationship of 1:9 to the purpose clause that follows in 1:10.⁵ He argues that the former is to be understood in terms of knowledge increasing, not love.⁶ As he states, "his [Paul's] prayer acknowledges their love and calls for an

¹ E.g. Gerald W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift Exchange and Christian Giving* (SNTSMS 92; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 102; Morna D. Hooker, "The Letter to the Philippians," in *NIB* vol. 11 (ed. Leander E. Keck et al.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 483.

² James P. Ware, *The Mission of the Church in Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (NovTSup 120; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 167–68.

³ Cf. Phil 2:12–13: *σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε· θεὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν.*

⁴ See Hooker, "Philippians," 483; Judith M. Gundry-Volf, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying in and Falling Away* (WUNT 2/37; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Siebeck, 1990), 33–47.

⁵ Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (SNTSMS 112; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 92–93.

⁶ Cf. how *περισεύω* is used in Rom 15:13; 1 Cor 15:58; 2 Cor 3:9; 8:7.

increase in knowledge.”⁷ The emphasis on knowledge is clearly present in this prayer report (as the prepositional phrase ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει indicates); however, it seems grammatically unwarranted to argue that the subject of love cannot be the entity that is increasing. The fact that there is a parallel construction in Phil 1:26 where the subject of περισσεύω is that which abounds, highlights that the grammar is a bit more flexible than Holloway allows. Furthermore, a parallel usage of περισσεύω might be found in Acts 16:5.⁸ The verb in this verse is followed by the dative instead of the preposition ἐν, but the idea conveyed is similar, i.e. the churches are growing, and the dative noun specifies the kind of growth—it is in numbers. Similarly, in Phil 1:9 love is to increase and the prepositional phrase specifies the kind of increase Paul has in view. The idea of love increasing is a notion seen elsewhere in Paul’s letters. For example, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to let their love abound more (1 Thess 4:10; cf. 1 Thess 3:12), and it plays a central role in his ethical exhortation elsewhere (e.g. Rom 13:10; 1 Cor 13:8; Gal 5:6, 13, 22). The idea that knowledge is to increase does not play an important role in Paul’s letters and can even be used in a destructive manner (cf. 1 Cor 8:1). Therefore, it seems most likely, as the majority of commentators have argued, that Paul is asking that love would grow and the way in which it should grow is in knowledge.⁹

Holloway argues that the second problem is best resolved by situating Phil 1:10 in the context of the Stoic distinction between the things that matter and those things which do not matter, which he identifies as a distinction that plays an important role in the Stoic theory of consolation.¹⁰ For reasons given above (see 1.2.3), however, the Stoic theory of consolation is not the most fitting for understanding the nature of moral philosophical language in Philippians. It is best read more broadly against the common pattern of

⁷ Holloway, *Consolation*, 94.

⁸ See BDAG, 805.

⁹ See, e.g., Marvin R. Vincent, *Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 11; Francis W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1959), 55; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 26; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 73; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 98; Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 66; Hooker, “Philippians,” 485; John Reumann, *Philippians* (AB 33B; New Haven/London: Yale University Press), 124; Todd D. Still, *Philippians & Philemon* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 33.

¹⁰ Holloway, *Consolation*, 95.

thought found in ancient moral philosophy. This can be seen in the way the terms used in Phil 1:10–11 parallel those which are used in Epictetus where he is addressing what it means to live a virtuous life.

Epictetus, who is known for following Stoic orthodoxy but using terms and concepts that are more geared toward making a practical application of Stoic ideas,¹¹ uses the same language as Paul to express what living virtuously entails. A brief discussion of his moral philosophy will set the stage for understanding the nature of this language in his thought. Epictetus presents the goal of life in terms of εὐδαιμονία, which consists in living virtuously. He argues that it is through making progress (προκοπή) in virtue that one approaches “happiness and calm and serenity (εὐδαιμονία ... καὶ ἀπάθεια καὶ εὐροια).”¹² Making progress in living virtuously involves dealing appropriately with that which is “up to us” (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) and not being concerned with that which is not up to us. This is Epictetus’ way of expressing how virtue is the only good, and that which one alone has control over, while everything else is not in one’s control and therefore not important for attaining the goal of life.¹³ In the first discourse Epictetus describes what is “up to us” as “the power to make correct use of external impressions (φαντασίαι).”¹⁴ As Anthony Long suggests, external impressions should be broadly understood as covering “anything at all that ‘appears’ to us—any thought or object of awareness, ranging from the simplest impressions ... to ... complex thoughts.”¹⁵ It is through dealing appropriately with “impressions” that one can make progress and attain the goal of life.

It is in *Diatr.* 1.20 where Epictetus uses the same language that we find in Phil 1:9. In discussing how reason contemplates itself, he describes the greatest task of philosophy as “to test impressions and discriminate between them (δοκιμάζειν τὰς φαντασίας καὶ διακρίνειν), and apply none that has not been tested (ἀδοκίμαστος).”¹⁶ The language of testing and discriminating in this text highlights a process of examining something to

¹¹ See Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 373; cf. Anthony A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 43–45, 51

¹² Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.4.3–4 (Oldfather, LCL).

¹³ See John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), 113–14.

¹⁴ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.1.7 (Oldfather, LCL); cf. *Diatr.* 1.1.12.

¹⁵ Long, *Epictetus*, 214.

¹⁶ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.20.7 (Oldfather, LCL).

see what it is—whether good, bad, or indifferent—and it also indicates that after having examined something and decided that it is good one applies it. Epictetus in this discourse, however, does not explain how it is that one “tests” impressions. In another discourse he does explain what is involved in this procedure of testing so as to approve what is good, i.e. that which is virtuous. This is found in *Diatr.* 2.11 where he examines what is the beginning of philosophy. He argues it is found in the recognition that many opinions are falsely held and in the need to investigate what is the standard of correct judgment to decide which are false and which are true. As he states, matters are to be “judged and weighed, if we have the standards ready with which to test them; and the task of philosophy is this—to examine and to establish the standards (ἐπισκέπτεσθαι καὶ βεβαιοῦν τοὺς κανόνας); but to go ahead and use them after they have become known is the task of the good and excellent man (τὸ δ’ ἤδη χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἐγνωσμένοις τοῦτο τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ἔργον ἐστίν).”¹⁷ He states something similar in the *Encheiridion*, that after examining an external impression, one is to “test it by these rules which you have (δοκίμαζε τοῖς κανόσι τούτοις οἷς ἔχεις).”¹⁸ The standards (κανόνων) of which he speaks are that derived from Stoic teachings and which can be seen as embodied in virtuous exemplars.¹⁹

While Epictetus uses the language of testing impressions by a certain standard in order to ascertain what is good and thus virtuous, he also describes those things pertaining to living virtuously as that which really matters (τὸ διαφέρον).²⁰ In *Diatr.* 2.5 he contrasts the matters that are indifferent with those that are not, i.e. the things that do not matter with those that do matter. Externals (e.g. a storm on a voyage, imprisonment, exile, wealth, health) he points out are indifferent matters; however, how one makes use of externals is not an indifferent matter. As he states, externals

¹⁷ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.11.23–25 (Oldfather, LCL).

¹⁸ Epictetus, *Ench.* 1.5 (Oldfather, LCL).

¹⁹ Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.11.15. See his use of exemplars (Zeno, Cleanthes, Socrates, and Diogenes): *Diatr.* 2.13.14; 3.23.32; 3.24.38; 3.26.23. In connection with this Long (*Epictetus*, 133) argues, “Testing impressions is the way Epictetus recommends his students to manifest rationality and commitment to Stoicism. He is asking them to subject every situation and thought to their reflexive rationality and understanding of what is good or bad or merely neutral.”

²⁰ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.5.8.

must be used carefully, because their use is not a matter of indifference (ὅτι ἡ χρῆσις οὐκ ἀδιάφορον), and at the same time with steadfastness and peace of mind, because the material is indifferent (ὅτι ἡ ὕλη οὐ διαφέρουσα). For in what really concerns us (τὸ διαφέρον), there no man can either hinder or compel me. The attainment of those things in which I can be hindered or compelled is not under my control and is neither good nor bad, but the use which I make of them is either good or bad, and that is under my control. (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.5.7–8; Oldfather, LCL)

That which pertains to living virtuously, i.e. what is under one's control, is described as that which really matters. Epictetus' moral philosophy is centrally concerned with living the virtuous life, which entails appropriately handling that which is “up to us,” and this for him is what really matters.

This pattern of discernment in living the virtuous life can also be seen in other moral philosophies. While they use different language to express this, a similar concept is present. As I argued above (see the summary in 3.3) the pattern of thought in ancient moral philosophy posits that there is one goal at which one's life should aim, and that this goal maps out a life-course for how to live. The virtues, having both intellectual and affective aspects, enable one to live according to the mapped-out life-course and thus attain the goal. With this perspective on life, that which really matters is that which pertains to living the kind of life determined by the ultimate goal. For the Stoics, as we have just demonstrated for Epictetus, it would entail discerning what is virtuous (the *summum bonum* of life for them) and aligning one's life to this way of living. For the Epicureans it would entail discerning what is most pleasurable (the *summum bonum* for them), i.e. a life of tranquility, and aligning one's life to this path. The “standards” one would use to discern the things that really matter are the teachings of the respective schools, which all discuss in terms of knowledge or reasoning. It is precisely this pattern of discernment that we see in Phil 1:9–10, which helps explain the connection between the purpose clause of 1:10 and the statement in 1:9.

In Phil 1:10 Paul states that the purpose of the Philippians' love growing in knowledge is to test (examine in order to approve of) the things that matter (εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα). As with the “standards” that Epictetus uses, and the teachings of other moral philosophies, the knowledgeable love that Paul prays for can be

viewed as that which is used in the testing process. That is, their knowledgeable love is the standard that is to be used in adjudicating what really matters. There is support for this reading in Rom 2:18 where Paul uses almost exactly the same expression. Here Paul presents the Jew as using the standard of what has been taught by the law in the process of discerning the superior things (δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου). What Paul precisely means by knowledgeable love is not spelled out in Phil 1:9. It is simply presented as the standard which they are to use in discerning the superior things. As the letter unfolds the nature of knowledgeable love that Paul has in view will come into sharper focus, particularly from the use of positive and negative examples as well as his teachings.

Paul does not fully elaborate on the nature of the superior things (τὰ διαφέροντα) either. A few have argued that this refers to the things that differ, meaning that Paul is asking the Philippians to be able to make distinctions between different things, e.g. truth and error.²¹ Others have argued that the expression refers to the superior things; that is, the things that differ are those which are the best or superior.²² Holloway, as noted above, has argued that the expression is best understood in light of the distinction between what does matter and what does not in the Stoic theory of consolation.²³ While Holloway rightly emphasizes the moral philosophical nature of this language, he wrongly connects it with a consolatory *topos* and presumes that the Philippians are concerned with the things that do not matter (e.g. distress, grief) which Paul is writing to correct. As we have seen this language fits most naturally in the context of moral philosophy where that which truly matters is that which is found in connection with the ultimate goal of life. This understanding of the expression picks up the usage of “the differing things” as “the best” or “superior things” and connects it specifically with the moral philosophical pattern of thinking about the whole of life which is oriented toward a particular goal. For example, Epictetus uses τὸ διαφέρον to indicate that which pertains to living a virtuous life (i.e. that which is “up to us”) which is for him what really matters and is in what the ultimate goal of life consists.

²¹ E.g. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 2.1; Vincent, *Philippians*, 13.

²² E.g. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 28; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 77–78; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 68.

²³ Holloway, *Consolation*, 94–95.

In a similar way τὰ διαφέροντα for Paul is about the superior things with respect to his thinking about life as a whole and its ultimate goal. Paul has introduced this perspective in Phil 1:6 where he presents the τέλος in terms of the day of Christ, and he will return to this perspective on life in 1:10b. What he has in view, or in what this goal consists, is not fully elaborated in this context. He will more fully spell out what this entails in Phil 3:21, giving a fuller picture of how he views the ultimate goal of life. He also addresses this in other ways throughout the letter (cf. Phil 1:21; 3:7–11, 14). In Phil 1:9–10 Paul is putting forth a pattern of discernment in line with the moral philosophical pattern of thinking where knowledge (“standards”) is used to discern what the superior things are, viz. a way of living that is determined by the ultimate goal of life.

Paul’s prayer report is further filled out in terms of ethical conduct and Paul’s thinking about the whole of life with which he began the thanksgiving section (Phil 1:10b–11). This part of the prayer report should not be viewed as remotely connected to what has just preceded it;²⁴ rather, the ethical import of the purpose clause closely connects with discerning the things that really matter. By using their knowledgeable love to assess what is supremely important in life, they will be in a position to live blamelessly bearing the fruit of righteousness. This is exactly how this pattern of discernment is used in Epictetus and other moral philosophies. By attending to the most important matters of life (e.g. virtue for the Stoics and pleasure for the Epicureans) one will be able to live the best kind of life and ultimately attain the goal that one is pursuing. Similarly with Paul’s conclusion of the prayer report, the pattern of discernment that he asks for is to issue forth in a well-lived life. Paul concludes his prayer report echoing Phil 1:6 and underscoring how he is concerned with the Philippians’ lives as a whole. He views their lives as moving toward a particular end, the day of Christ, and has introduced a way of thinking about their lives that is to help them make progress until that day arrives.

In the thanksgiving section Paul has introduced a perspective on life that views it in terms of the whole, which has a beginning and is moving toward an end. While God is portrayed as an active agent who is at work enabling the Philippian believers to make progress toward the day of Christ, in the prayer report Paul places some of the

²⁴ Pace Holloway, *Consolation*, 92.

responsibility on the Philippians. Paul prays to God to grow their love in knowledge, but the Philippians are the ones who are to use this in discerning the superior things. This spells out the kind of progress they are to make using the same kind of language that Epictetus uses in discussing what is involved in living virtuously. As in all of Paul's thanksgiving sections, the specifics of what is involved in these introductory themes (e.g. having a knowledgeable love or the nature of the things that matter) are not elaborated. These will be developed in more detail in the body of the letter. What is presented here is the framework for conceptualizing life, which has certain moral qualities (i.e. knowledgeable love, purity and blamelessness) and is depicted as in progress toward a goal.

6.2. Positive and Negative Examples of Virtue (Phil 1:12–26)

In Phil 1:12–26 Paul begins the letter body with a lengthy discussion of his circumstances (*τὰ κατ' ἐμέ*). The main issue debated with respect to this autobiographical material revolves around why Paul begins by addressing his circumstances. Is it because the Philippians are discouraged about what has befallen Paul and so Paul begins by addressing his circumstances in order to assuage their crestfallen spirits or to relieve their anxiety?²⁵ Or, is it because Paul wants to present himself as an example of the kind of thinking and living that he hopes to persuade the Philippians to adopt?²⁶ The former privileges Paul's situation as the issue that needs to be addressed, while the latter privileges the Philippians' situation as the issue that Paul is ultimately concerned to address. While this material can indeed serve multiple functions²⁷—such as reassuring the readers and providing information about the advance of the gospel—the ways in which this material connects with what follows (cf. Phil 1:30) and how Paul places such a strong emphasis on imitating him in Philippians (cf. Phil 3:17; 4:9) provide stronger

²⁵ E.g. David E. Garland, "The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors," *NovT* 37 (1985): 152; L. Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians* (JSNTSup 78; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 148; Holloway, *Consolation*, 102–115.

²⁶ E.g. Duane F. Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *NovT* 30 (1988): 64; Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 103–128.

²⁷ Cf. Oakes, *Philippians*, 111.

reasons for viewing the material as ultimately presented in a way so as to address the Philippians' situation.²⁸ Paul is selectively writing about certain aspects of "his circumstances" in a way that relates to the Philippians' circumstances. In doing this he begins to present the kind of virtues that are needed to enable the Philippians to attain the ultimate goal of life and starts to fill out what he means by a knowledgeable love (i.e. the standards that inform this).

In moral philosophies exemplars often played a crucial role in modeling a virtuous life. For instance, Aristotle compares the process of becoming virtuous to learning a craft (e.g. building a house or playing a harp).²⁹ As the apprentice learns a craft by observing a master craftsperson and then trying out what one has learned, so too does a beginner in the life of virtue learn from other virtuous people and imitate what they do. The Stoics also emphasized that exemplary figures were to be imitated. As we saw in Seneca's *Ep.* 120, the central way in which a beginner was to learn to become virtuous was through learning from the examples of others and analogously applying this to one's own life. One could learn from the lives of people who exemplified certain virtuous qualities, such as Fabricius and Horatius, and one could learn from counter-examples to virtue, i.e. those things that are to be avoided (viz. vice). In Phil 1:12–26 Paul presents himself, as well as another group, as positive examples to be imitated, and he presents a counter-example of the kind of thinking and behavior that is to be avoided.³⁰

Paul begins presenting himself as a positive example in Phil 1:12 by talking about the advance of the gospel in the face of difficulties. Paul has mentioned that he is in chains in Phil 1:7 and the Philippians would have already known about this and the kind of hardships Paul was facing (hence their initial sending of Epaphroditus with a gift). Paul presents his adverse circumstances, contrary to what one would expect, as not being a hindrance to the gospel's advance.³¹ The result clause in Phil 1:13 indicates two ways in which his circumstances have actually turned out otherwise than expected: 1) Paul's

²⁸ See Oakes, *Philippians*, 103–111.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.4–8.

³⁰ Cf. Stanley K. Stowers, "Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven: Reading Theology in Philippians," in *Pauline Theology, Vol. 1* (ed. Julette M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 115.

³¹ That Paul is presenting the advance of the gospel as something otherwise than normally expected is signaled by *μᾶλλον* in Phil 1:12.

chains have spread the gospel among the entire Praetorian Guard as well as among others, and 2) others have gained confidence to proclaim the gospel. The way Paul presents his circumstances connects with the Philippians' experience in two important ways, which highlights how this material would have functioned paradigmatically for them. First, the Philippians like Paul are facing opposition (Phil 1:28). Second, the context of Philippi as a Roman colony parallels Paul's situation where the gospel is advancing (cf. Phil 4:22). These connections between the Philippians' experience and Paul's highlight that the main issue he is concerned to address is responding to difficult circumstances, viz. suffering of some sort caused by their commitment to the gospel. While the Philippians' suffering (and Paul's) may have been triggered by their proclamation of the gospel, the emphasis is on them following Paul's example and handling their suffering in a similar way. This is further supported from the nature of Paul's exhortation to the Philippians, which centers on their moral conduct and dealing appropriately with suffering rather than engaging in missionary activity through the verbal proclamation of the gospel (cf. Phil 1:27–30).³² Paul begins the letter body with a report about his circumstances which emphasizes the advance of the gospel, but he does it in a way that presents a perspective on suffering which the Philippians could analogously apply to their circumstances.

Paul also presents a group of believers who exhibit qualities from which the Philippians could learn. In discussing how the gospel has advanced, he explains how a group of believers has confidence *περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν*. This presents a strong element of boldness in the face of potential hostilities. Since Paul is in prison, those who could be seen in any way connected with Paul (through preaching the same message that he does) would face the possibility of similar hostilities. This fearlessness relates to the same kind of attitude that Paul instructs the Philippians to have in Phil 1:28. Paul divides this group of emboldened proclaimers into two. While debates have focused on trying to understand the ways in which those who preach out of

³² Pace Ware, *Mission*, 171–86, who argues that the paraenetic function of Phil 1:12–14 pertains to encouraging the Philippians to engage in this kind of missionary activity.

envy and strife are trying to do harm to Paul,³³ what is most crucial for our purposes are the motives that Paul calls attention to. Some act *διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν*, while others act *ἐξ ἀγάπης*. These motives present on the one hand negative qualities to be avoided, and on the other hand a positive quality to be embraced. These qualities show up again in Phil 2:2–4 when Paul is exhorting the Philippians to think and live in a particular way.

Paul continues his self-presentation in Phil 1:19–26 where he reflects on his trial and its potential outcome. He has again selected elements from his circumstances and presented them in a way that functions paradigmatically for the Philippians. This is done in two ways: 1) in the presentation of his situation in terms of deliverance which is underscored by his confident expectation that Christ will be exalted in his body, and 2) the way in which he reflects on his “choice” about whether to live or die.

As Peter Oakes has noted, the term *σωτηρία* used in 1:19 connects with Paul’s instructions to the Philippians in 1:28, 2:12, and shares affinities with the pattern of the Christ story, which presents Christ’s ultimate deliverance in 2:9–11.³⁴ In all of these texts suffering is presented as leading to deliverance. Similarly in 1:19 Paul presents his situation, one of suffering in prison, as ultimately leading to deliverance. Whatever is meant by *σωτηρία* in this context, it at least uses language and presents a pattern of thinking that is also used to frame the Philippians’ experience. The paradigmatic function of the material is therefore the one most centrally in view.³⁵

The expectation of Paul’s deliverance is rooted in his confidence that Christ will be magnified in his body. This explicitly relates *σωτηρία* with the bodily exaltation of Christ. Some have argued that the way in which Christ will be exalted is through Paul’s bold proclamation of Christ at his trial, and that this in turn is meant to encourage the Philippians to boldly proclaim Christ as well.³⁶ Even if the expression *ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ* is

³³ E.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 121–23; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 77–78.

³⁴ Oakes, *Philippians*, 108.

³⁵ Cf. Craig S. Wansink, *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul’s Imprisonments* (JSNTSup 130; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 117, who states, “In setting the stage for the admonitions and rhetoric of 1.27–2.11, Paul presents the pattern of his own behavior in 1.18b–26 as a model for the Philippians.”

³⁶ E.g. Ware, *Mission*, 204–206.

understood in terms of verbal proclamation,³⁷ the emphasis is placed on the bodily magnification of Christ. This is further supported with the following statement in 1:21, which as Morna Hooker has argued, acts as “a neat rhetorical summary.”³⁸ This verse has resonances with Gal 2:20 and highlights Paul’s mystical union with Christ. It is Paul’s union with Christ that underscores the way in which Christ will be bodily magnified.³⁹ For Paul, living means embodying the pattern of Christ’s story, i.e. aligning his life to the life of Christ.⁴⁰ This is how Christ will be exalted in Paul’s body and why he has confidence of his deliverance (i.e. he is following the same path as Christ which entailed suffering but resulted in vindication). Paul also states that dying is gain, which highlights how Christ will be magnified in Paul’s death. What this entails is not addressed in this passage,⁴¹ but it most likely connects with the kind of ultimate gain (κέρδος) Paul has in view in Phil 3:7–11 where he uses the same language. This of course gets more fully expressed in Phil 3:21. Both of these passages present the ultimate gain for Paul in terms of complete conformity to Christ through resurrection and transformation to Christ’s glorious body. In living and dying Paul sees his life intimately wedded to Christ’s, and in this sense he underscores how Christ will be bodily magnified. Paul’s reflection on his circumstances in 1:19–21 provides a model for the Philippians not in the sense of encouraging them to verbally proclaim the gospel, but ultimately in the sense of viewing their lives as intimately connected to Christ’s.

Paul continues in Phil 1:22 by picking up the first half of his aphoristic statement in 1:21, and explaining it in terms of a fruitful work. This sets up the *sunkrīsis* which follows where Paul deliberates about what he will “choose,” either remaining alive for the

³⁷ The expression can be used to convey the general idea of boldness or openness rather than the specific notion of bold speech. See Col 2:15 and John 7:4.

³⁸ Hooker, “Philippians,” 490.

³⁹ Cf. Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 160 n.80, who points out that Paul often uses the term *σῶμα* in his lists of apostolic sufferings (1 Cor 4:11–13; 2 Cor 4:7–12; Gal 6:17).

⁴⁰ This is variously expressed in his letters. For example, in Galatians this is presented in terms of being crucified with Christ (2:19), Christ living in me (2:20), and Paul even says he bears the stigmata of Jesus on his body (6:17). In Romans he speaks of being baptized into Christ’s death (6:4) and putting on Christ (13:14). In 2 Corinthians he speaks of carrying in his body the death of Christ (4:10). While these are used for different purposes, sometimes to legitimate his ministry which entails suffering and other times to support his ethical instructions, they highlight how Paul conceives of his union with Christ.

⁴¹ He does state in Phil 1:23 that the gain he has in view is “to be with Christ.”

sake of the Philippians or departing (i.e. dying) to be with Christ. The nature of Paul's reflection on his imprisonment highlights how this section of the letter is functioning paradigmatically for the Philippians. The key difficulty with interpreting this text is that Paul, one who is a prisoner of Rome and having no say as to what happens to him, indicates that he can choose what will happen to him, viz. to depart/die and be with Christ or to be released/remain alive and come to Philippi. Given the reality of his situation, his reflection on his life and what he plans to do appear dubious.⁴² This has led N. Clayton Croy to argue that Paul is employing a rhetorical device, "feigning perplexity" (*dubitatio*, *διαπόρρησις*), to heighten his concern for the Philippians.⁴³ Whether Paul is employing a rhetorical device or not, the passage is presented in a way that is meant to teach the Philippians how to handle their situation. The comparisons Paul provides give the Philippians access to his deliberations about his circumstances and thus allow them to see how Paul is thinking through the issue and forgoing his desires in the matter. This in turn provides an example for how the Philippians are to relate to one another in their own difficult circumstances, i.e. they too are to privilege the interests of others ahead of their own (cf. Phil 2:3-4).⁴⁴

Before leaving Phil 1:12-26 it is necessary to address two important themes in this section, which play an important role in the rest of the letter and are important in moral philosophy as well: progress and joy. The idea of making progress in living virtuously is widely discussed in moral philosophy. This was seen in Aristotle, the Epicureans, and especially in the Stoics (see ch. 3 above and the summaries at the end of each section). Epictetus even wrote a discourse specifically devoted to progress (*Περὶ προκοπῆς*) in which he discusses how one is to make progress in virtue. He discusses this in terms of one securing the objects of desire (i.e. the good or virtuous) and avoiding the objects of aversion (i.e. the bad), and he emphasizes that progress is made not just in learning what

⁴² He even indicates in Phil 2:23 that the choice in the matter is not up to him.

⁴³ N. Clayton Croy, "'To Die is Gain' (Philippians 1:19-26): Does Paul Contemplate Suicide?" *JBL* 122 (2003): 517-31.

⁴⁴ See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 87. Cf. Samuel Vollenweider, "Die Waagschalen von Leben und Tod: Zum antiken Hintergrund von Phil 1,21-26," *ZNW* 83 (1994): 93-115.

is virtuous, but is found especially in putting it into practice.⁴⁵ The idea of progress has already been introduced in Philippians in the thanksgiving section where Paul is concerned with the whole of life and presents the Philippians as moving toward the day of Christ. This is picked up in Phil 1:12–26 where Paul frames the section with the noun *προκοπή* creating an *inclusio*. In 1:12 it refers to the progress of the gospel among others in the midst of difficult circumstances, while in 1:25 it refers to the Philippians’ progress “in the faith.” This connection between the gospel’s advance and the Philippians’ progress may serve either to encourage the Philippians to make progress just as the gospel is advancing in the midst of difficulties, or it may be Paul’s way of conceptualizing the Philippians’ progress, i.e. it is bound up with the advance of the gospel. Either way this section ends emphasizing the need for the Philippians to make progress, which connects with the emphasis in the thanksgiving section and sets up the exhortation that follows in 1:27 and following.

There has been debate about how to interpret the expression “in the faith” (τῆς πίστεως) in Phil 1:25. Some have argued that faith is to be taken as an active process, i.e. the Philippians’ act of believing,⁴⁶ while others argue that it refers to the content of what they believe, i.e. the faith, as in the Christian faith or the gospel,⁴⁷ and Markus Bockmuehl has argued that it refers to both.⁴⁸ The surrounding context and the letter as a whole seem to favor the second option. Paul presents himself and others as examples and instructs the Philippians about what it means to think and live as believers (cf. Phil 4:8–9). The expression “in the faith” is therefore best understood in terms of them being further established in how to live life committed to the gospel, as John Chrysostom indicates in explaining how the Philippians are to make progress when he states that they are to be strengthened more (στηριχθῆναι μᾶλλον), and then gives the example of young birds needing their mothers until their feathers are set to illustrate what this means.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.4.1–12. In *Diatr.* 1.4.20 he compares this to a runner putting into practice the principles of running, or a singer doing the same with musicianship (ὡς ὁ δρομεὺς δρομικῶς καὶ ὁ φῶνασκος φωνασικῶς).

⁴⁶ E.g. Reumann, *Philippians*, 256.

⁴⁷ E.g. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 52; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 140; Fee, *Philippians*, 153; Hooker, “Philippians,” 491.

⁴⁸ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 94.

⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 4.2.

This kind of progress is similar to that in moral philosophy. It is development in living a certain kind of life.

The second theme that is present in Phil 1:12–26 is joy. As discussed in ch. 3 joy plays a central role in ancient moral philosophy. For Aristotle one is to make the right choice and do it cheerfully (*χαίρω*).⁵⁰ The Epicureans link correct beliefs with pleasurable emotional states like joy (*χαρά*).⁵¹ The Stoics present joy (*χαρά*) as one of the *εὐπάθειαι*, which are emotions endorsed by reason.⁵² For them it is the appropriate emotional response to the presence of virtue, in one’s self or in others.⁵³ For all moral philosophies joy was considered one of the central emotions of the virtuous person.

Paul emphasizes joy as the central emotion that he has and that the Philippians are to have.⁵⁴ The mention of joy is present in the thanksgiving section (Phil 1:4) and will show up repeatedly in the rest of the letter (e.g. Phil 3:1; 4:4). Joy is mentioned three times in Phil 1:12–26 framing Paul’s perspective on his circumstances (1:18) and is one of the reasons why he wants to come to the Philippians, i.e. for their joy in the faith (1:25). Joy in Philippians can be seen as functioning in a similar way as in moral philosophy; that is, joy is the appropriate emotional response to virtue. In 1:18a Paul’s joy is connected to the preaching of Christ, which recalls the statement in 1:14 about those who speak the word fearlessly. While he has highlighted the good motives of some and the bad motives of others in order to call attention to what the Philippians should embrace and avoid, the people are still proclaiming Christ boldly even though this has risks. Paul’s rejoicing is connected to the virtuous behavior of those who have confidence in the face of potential hostilities. In 1:18b Paul’s joy is connected to his confidence about his future deliverance, which is rooted in how he views his life in union with Christ’s. This again connects Paul’s joy to the virtuous behavior of bodily magnifying Christ. Paul’s joy in 1:4 can also be seen in connection with virtuous behavior. Paul states that his joyful prayer is due to the Philippians’ partnership in the gospel. Whether this is viewed in terms of their

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.3.1.

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Mor.* 1089D.

⁵² Diogenes Laertius 7.116.

⁵³ In *Ep.* 59 Seneca presents joy (*gaudium*) as the chief emotion of the sage. Diogenes Laertius 7.94 discusses joy as one of the offshoots (*ἐπιγεννήματα*) of virtue. See Gill, *The Structured Self*, 225.

⁵⁴ As Still (*Philippians*, 30) states, “the overall tenor of the letter is that of joy.”

financial giving, proclamation, or lived out witness of the gospel, it still pertains to the kind of behavior that Paul would consider virtuous. The joy that Paul desires for the Philippians can also be seen as connected to virtuous behavior. In 1:25 joy is specified as joy “in the faith.” As noted above this expression most likely entails the content of their faith, i.e. the gospel, which for Paul provides the material (viz. Christ’s life, death, and resurrection) that would reflect the virtuous life. For Paul joy is clearly the appropriate emotional response to living a virtuous life. These virtues are those that Paul and others in 1:12–26 have modeled, and will be further developed in the rest of the letter.

The letter body opens with Paul’s discussion of his circumstances which presents Paul and another group of believers as positive examples of virtuous behavior to emulate. The virtues for Paul are a steadfastness which faces difficulties with fearlessness, relating to one another out of love instead of envy and strife, bodily magnifying Christ, and having a concern for others ahead of one’s own desires even in the face of suffering. These can be narrowed down to two virtues, confidence in suffering and an other-regarding love, which could both be summed up in the expression τὸ ζῆν Χριστός. For Paul these are the virtues that are needed to live a good life and thus to attain the ultimate goal of life. Paul’s example begins to provide the material that fills out the nature of the knowledgeable love the Philippians are to have so that they can discern what really matters and live a pure and blameless life. By learning from these examples of virtue they will be able to make progress and to have joy in the faith.

6.3. Conclusion

This chapter has examined both the thanksgiving section and Paul’s narration of his circumstances (Phil 1:3–26) in light of the pattern of thought in moral philosophy. It was argued that in the thanksgiving section Paul introduces a way of thinking about life that parallels that found in moral philosophy. Paul is concerned with life as a whole and presents the Philippians as on a path toward a particular goal. In his prayer report he presents knowledgeable love as that which is to be used as a standard to discern the superior things in life, which are those determined by the ultimate goal. By being concerned with these superior matters one can live a good life and ultimately attain the

supreme goal/good, which in this context Paul presents as being pure and blameless on the day of Christ.

In the opening of the letter body Paul informs the Philippians about his circumstances in a way that highlights virtuous qualities that are needed to live in a way to attain the ultimate goal of life. Paul also discusses his situation in a way that highlights two major themes in the letter: joy and progress. Paul's use of *exempla*, his emphasis on needing to make progress, and the way in which he connects joy with what is virtuous correlate with structural aspects of moral philosophical thought.

Having set forth a pattern of discernment that is oriented toward an ultimate end and modeled the kind of virtuous behavior that is needed to attain that ultimate end, Paul is now in a position to begin his exhortation to the Philippians spelling out further how they are to make progress in this path. It is to an analysis of this exhortation that we now turn.

Chapter 7

LIVING VIRTUOUSLY: CITIZEN-ATHLETES WITH THE ΦΡΟΝΗΣΙΣ OF CHRIST (PHIL 1:27–2:30)

Introduction

Having introduced the perspective that the Philippians' lives are moving toward a τέλος and presented himself and others as examples of virtue to be imitated, Paul turns to exhort the Philippians on how they are to make progress in living a virtuous life. In the exegesis that follows I will demonstrate how Paul spells out further the nature of this virtuous life. In this section of the letter Paul uses political and athletic metaphors in conjunction with moral philosophical terms and concepts. I will argue that Paul's argument, as in Phil 1:1–26, is structured similarly to the pattern of thought in moral philosophy, and will demonstrate how the thesis statement frames his entire argument, conceptualizing the nature of Christian existence in terms of an athletic contest of virtue.

This chapter is divided into four parts: 1) Phil 1:27–30, which frames his entire argument in terms of a contest of virtue; 2) Phil 2:1–11, which highlights the moral reasoning the Philippians are to share; 3) Phil 2:12–18, which signals the kind of exemplary community the Philippians are to be; 4) Phil 2:19–30, which presents two examples of virtue reinforcing the nature of the virtuous life Paul is exhorting the Philippians to embrace. In the analysis that follows the focus will be on demonstrating the ways in which Paul's argument is structured similarly to that found in moral philosophy, which is oriented toward a particular goal and views the virtues as necessary to attain this goal.

7.1. The Contest of Virtue: Citizenship and Athletics (Phil 1:27–30)

In Phil 1:27–30 Paul turns to address the Philippians in what has often been understood as the thesis statement of Paul's argument.¹ The import of these verses can be seen not only in the fact that it is the first place in the epistle where Paul directly addresses the

¹ E.g. Duane F. Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *NovT* 30 (1988): 65–67.

Philippians (indicated by the shift from the first person singular to the second person plural), but he also uses the first imperative in the letter: πολιτεύεσθε. The particle μόνον indicates the significance of these verses as well. Paul has concluded the previous section indicating that he wants to come to them for their progress and joy in the faith, and now he states that in the meantime here is the one thing with which they should concern themselves. The fact that towards the end of the argument (Phil 3:20) Paul returns to a political metaphor, echoing Phil 1:27, also points to how what is stated here frames what follows. All of this highlights the significance of these verses in setting up Paul's argument that will unfold in the rest of the letter and can be rightly understood as the thesis statement.

The imperative πολιτεύεσθε is a *hapax legomenon* in Paul's letters.² He typically uses the verbs περιπατέω and ζάω in his exhortations for believers to live in a particular way,³ which have led many to emphasize the importance of taking the political connotation of this verb seriously. There is debate, however, as to which background this metaphor is best understood in light of; that is, is the Greek connotation of living as a citizen of a *polis* or the Jewish connotation of living as the new Israel in view?⁴ The latter has much less support given the nature of the audience.⁵ Therefore, the Greek background is most likely the correct context within which to explore the force of this imperative. This is usually understood either in terms of an exhortation for them to engage in public civic affairs or for them to have their lives regulated by their heavenly citizenship.⁶ The first emphasizes the way in which this verb is used in connection with performance of civic duties, while the second emphasizes Paul's usage of πολίτευμα in Phil 3:20 where he

² Outside of this corpus it is only used once in the NT (Acts 23:1).

³ For περιπατέω see Rom 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 14:15; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 4:2; 5:7; 10:2; 12:18; Gal 5:16; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1; 4:12, and for ζάω see, e.g., Rom 8:12; Gal 5:25; 1 Thess 3:8.

⁴ See respectively Raymond R. Brewer, "The Meaning of Politeuesthe in Philippians 1:27," *JBL* 73 (1954): 76–83, and Ernest C. Miller, "Πολιτεύσθε In Philippians 1.27: Some Philological and Thematic Observations," *JSNT* 15 (1982): 86–96.

⁵ See Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–76.

⁶ See respectively Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 98, and Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology* (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 100–101.

presents the Philippians as members of an alternative heavenly *polis*. While this verb can have the force of performing civic duties,⁷ given the nature of the exhortation that follows and the way in which Paul uses this language later in the letter there is more support for seeing the second usage as most likely in view. There is, however, a close connection between the two because both could be thought of in terms of living virtuously, which can be seen from discussions about the good citizen and the moral philosophers' depiction of the ideal *polis*.

As discussed in chapter 4 (esp. 4.2 above), there was an intimate connection between being a good citizen and living virtuously. As Plato indicated, it is training in virtue that leads one to become a perfect citizen.⁸ This is evident in Aristotle's work as well, who argues that politicians should be centrally concerned with virtue so that they can organize the *polis* in a way that allows all to flourish, i.e. to live virtuous lives and attain εὐδαιμονία.⁹ This is demonstrated further in that Aristotle uses *Nicomachean Ethics* to set up his *Politics*, and he even states that “the end of political expertise (πολιτικῆς τέλος) is best (ἄριστον),” which is centrally concerned with “making the citizens be of a certain quality, i.e. good (ἀγαθοὺς τοὺς πολίτας ποιῆσαι), and doers of fine things.”¹⁰ For both Plato and Aristotle, as Peter Garnsey states, summing up political philosophy in the Classical period, “moral and political philosophy were virtually inseparable: good man was good citizen.”¹¹

The connection between being a good citizen and displaying virtue was widely held outside of Plato and Aristotle as well. Plutarch in his *Lives* often presents the defining characteristic of the good citizen as virtue. For instance, the senator to be appointed by Lycurgus is not the fastest or the strongest, but “the best and wisest of the good and wise (ἐν ἀγαθοῖς καὶ σώφροσιν ἄριστον καὶ σωφρονέστατον) who was to be elected, and have for the rest of his life, as a victor's prize for excellence (νικητήριον ἔχειν τῆς ἀρετῆς), what I

⁷ E.g. Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.35.2.

⁸ Plato, *Leges* 1.643E–644A.

⁹ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.13.2.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.9.8 (trans. Broadie and Rowe).

¹¹ Peter Garnsey, “Introduction: the Hellenistic and Roman periods,” in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (eds. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 403 (italics in original).

may call the supreme power in the state (κράτος ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ).¹² Similarly, he reports that when Lycurgus was asked about the best form of government stated, “That in which the greatest number of citizens are willing, without civil strife, to vie with one another in virtue (ἐν ᾗ ἂν περὶ ἀρετῆς πλείστοι πολιτευόμενοι πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἄνευ στάσεως ἀγωνίζεσθαι θέλωσι).”¹³ There are also numerous inscriptions that describe the performance of civic duties in terms of virtue. One from Thrace dating from the first to second century CE illustrates this, using some of the same terms found in Phil 1:27.

ὁ δῆμος τὸν ἄριστον καὶ πρῶτον τῶν πολιτῶν Τίτον Φλάουιον Πάρμιν, εὐεργέτην πόλεως καὶ σωσίπολιν, λαμπρότατα καὶ φιλοτειμότατα καὶ τῆς τῶν προγόνων ἀρετῆς ἀξίως πολιτευσάμενον.

The common people [honor] the best and first of the citizens, Titus Flaovius Parmis, benefactor and savior of the city, most magnanimous and most generous and from the virtue of his ancestors he worthily conducted himself as a citizen. (*SEG* 38.727; my trans.)

In furthering this connection between virtue and civic duties, a common expression often found on inscriptions honoring people for benefactions to a city is ἀρετᾶς ἕνεκεν, signaling that the honorand performed such services “because of virtue.”¹⁴

The Hellenistic moral philosophers following Plato and Aristotle, make similar connections between virtue and the conduct of citizens. This is seen especially in Stoicism. The Stoics speak of the virtuous person as a citizen of the cosmos (κοσμοπολίτης).¹⁵ Zeno’s *Republic* is reportedly about this very issue, which Plutarch states

is aimed at this one main point, that our household arrangements should not be based on cities or parishes, each one marked out by its own legal system, but we

¹² Plutarch, *Lyc.* 26.1 (Perrin, LCL).

¹³ Plutarch, *Mor.* 232C (Babbitt, LCL). Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 154E.

¹⁴ See, e.g., *IG* IV² 1.642; V 1.480; V 2.263; *FD* III 1.47.

¹⁵ It is likely that the term originated with Diogenes the Cynic, see Diogenes Laertius 6.63.

should regard all men as our fellow citizens and local residents (δημότας καὶ πολίτας), and there should be one way of life and order (εἷς δὲ βίος ἢ καὶ κόσμος), like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common law (νόμῳ κοινῷ). Zeno wrote this, picturing as it were a dream or image of a philosopher's well-regulated society (εὐνομίας φιλοσόφου καὶ πολιτείας). (Plutarch, *Mor.* 329A–B; trans. Long and Sedley, 67A)

Chrysippus takes up the depiction of a universal community given by Zeno and he more specifically connects it to only those who are virtuous.¹⁶ That is, only the virtuous are united together as citizens of the world.¹⁷ Seneca develops this idea in terms of a “dual citizenship”:

Let us take hold of the fact that there are two communities (*duas res publicas*) – the one, which is great and truly common, embracing gods and humans (*di atque homines*), in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our state (*civitatis nostrae*) by the sun; the other, the one to which we have been assigned by the accident of our birth. (Seneca, *Ot.* 4.1; trans. Long and Sedley, 67K)¹⁸

Seneca recognizes that there are two communities to which one belongs, that which is affiliated with the cosmos and that which is affiliated with the State. The community affiliated with the cosmos is, for the Stoic, the only true city; the earthly ones are all arbitrary formations.¹⁹ This cosmic city of “gods and humans” is comprised only of virtuous people who share a common law. As Clement of Alexandria indicates in describing the Stoic understanding of the city:

The Stoics say that heaven (οὐρανός)²⁰ is properly a city, but places here on earth are not cities; for they are called so, but are not. For a city is morally good

¹⁶ It is debated as to whether or not Zeno is speaking of a utopian community made up of all people or if he is envisioning a community made up of only the wise and virtuous. There is support for the latter in Diogenes Laertius 7.33. See John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), 129–30; cf. Malcolm Schofield, “Epicurean and Stoic political thought” in *Greek and Roman Political Thought*, 443–46.

¹⁷ See Schofield, “Epicurean and Stoic political thought,” 452–53. Cf. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Stoicism in Philippians,” in *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 266–67.

¹⁸ Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.5.26; Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 6.44.

¹⁹ Diogenes of Babylon is reportedly to have denied Rome was a real city (see Cicero, *Acad.* 2.137).

²⁰ See Diogenes Laertius 7.138 (Hicks, LCL) where he describes heaven as “the extreme circumference or ring in which the deity has his seat.”

(σπουδαῖον γὰρ ἡ πόλις)²¹ and a people is a certain refined system (ὁ δῆμος ἀσπεῖόν τι σύστημα),²² a multitude of people governed by law. (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.26; trans. Wilson, modified at places)

The Stoics use political language to speak of a citizenry that is united in their common way of life, the virtuous life. These people are the true citizens of the cosmos. While the Stoics do not speak in the same way about the good man being the good citizen as found in Aristotle and Plato, they still make the connections between virtue and citizenship.

Both the notion of performing civic duties and of having a “dual citizenship” are strongly connected to living virtuously. The most common association for the imperative “conduct yourselves as citizens worthily” would have been with the display/performance of virtue. Given that this is qualified by “of the gospel of Christ” and that Paul will speak of their πολιτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς in Phil 3:20, it is highly likely that the emphasis is on them living virtuously as members of an alternative *polis* (as found in the moral philosophers). Viewing the imperative in connection with virtue coheres with John Chrysostom’s interpretation of this verse which makes a direct connection between Phil 1:27 and virtue. Commenting on this verse, he states, “Do you see, how all that he has said, tends to turn them to this one thing, advancement in virtue (Ὁρᾷς ὅτι διὰ τοῦτο εἶπε πάντα, ἵνα εἰς τοῦτο αὐτοὺς προτρέψῃ ἐπιδοῦναι πρὸς ἀρετὴν).”²³ It is ultimately advancement in virtue that Paul is exhorting them to embrace by using this political metaphor. Of course, the political nature of the imagery sets up what follows in that citizenship and virtue are naturally associated with athletics and contests.

The opening imperative is elaborated further with another imperative (στήκετε) and two participial clauses (συναθλοῦντες... μὴ πτυρόμενοι...). There are several who understand the imagery in this elaboration in connection with a military context. For instance, Timothy Geoffrion argues that Paul is exhorting the Philippians to stand firm like soldiers gathered together in battle, standing their ground and not being frightened

²¹ See Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 10.6.5 for the use of this adjective in connection with moral goodness.

²² See Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 154, for a discussion of how the Stoics viewed both ethics and the psychic elements holistically in terms of structure and harmony.

²³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 4.2 (trans. Marriott).

by the enemies attacking them.²⁴ As John Reumann has noted, the military connection cannot be made with the verb *στήκετε*, which was a fairly new term that did not have an established history.²⁵ Instead, the connection can only flow out of the political metaphor that opens this section and the nature of the participles that address how they are to “stand firm.” The crucial interpretive question to answer is in deciding whether the imagery conveyed by the political metaphor and the participles that follow is militaristic or athletic. While living virtuously, which as argued above is the primary force of the political metaphor, was associated with militaristic imagery, as Geoffrion has noted,²⁶ the connection between the ideal citizen and athletics in the first-century CE, the emphasis on athletics in the rest of Philippians, and the linguistic features of this section strongly suggest that we should view the imagery primarily in connection with athletics.

As was discussed in 4.2 above, it was training in the *gymnasion* that fashioned one into an ideal citizen. A central part of this training was athletics, which was part of shaping one to be *καλοκάγαθία*. It is important to remember that the connection between *gymnasion* training and the military had significantly weakened by the first-century CE, if it existed at all (see 4.2). The stronger associations with this training were in athletics and rhetoric, which were both viewed as crucial in the formation of the good citizen. There would, therefore, have been a close association between the good conduct of citizens (*πολιτεύομαι*) and athletics (*ἀθλέω*). Athletic training would have been seen as the means by which one could become a good citizen, and athletic contests would have been viewed as the gatherings where the virtue of the good citizen was displayed. It is most likely, therefore, that the athletic connection is the one most centrally in view rather than

²⁴ Timothy C. Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose and the Political and Military Character of Philippians: A Call to Stand Firm* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1993), 36, 54, 61, 62. Cf. Edgar M. Krentz, “Military Language and Metaphors in Philippians,” in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd* (JSNTSup 86; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 113, 120, 122–23; Oakes, *Philippians*, 80, 100, 175, following Geoffrion.

²⁵ John Reumann, *Philippians* (AB 33B; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 287. It shows up first in the LXX (1 Kings 8:11), then the NT, is found widely in early Christian literature, and is used once in Galen (*About Sophistry or Deception in Speaking*, 14.592). It should be noted as well that Paul typically uses this verb to exhort believers to remain committed to the gospel (cf. 1 Thess 3:8). Exploring how ἵστημι is used in Herodotus and Xenophon (as Geoffrion does) is irrelevant for understanding how *στήκετε* is functioning in Philippians.

²⁶ See Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose*, 38–42, where he discusses the *topos of militia spiritualis*.

the militaristic one.²⁷ In further support for understanding the thesis statement as conveying athletic rather than militaristic imagery is the fact that athletics will play a prominent role in the argument that follows.²⁸ Paul will describe himself in terms of athletics in Phil 2:16, and the most extended metaphor he uses in this letter is that of the athlete, Phil 3:13–14. As argued above (5.2), Phil 3:13–14 has all of the characteristics of vivid speech, and because of this plays a central role in the argument of the letter. This was briefly introduced in ch. 5, and will be more fully addressed below (8.2). While Paul does refer to Epaphroditus as his fellow-soldier (Phil 2:25), the weight of emphasis is most clearly placed on athletics throughout the argument of the letter. Because of this emphasis, it is most probable that in the thesis statement of the letter Paul would introduce this imagery.

My argument thus far for reading Phil 1:27–30 in connection with athletics has not been made on linguistic grounds because the terms used are found in both athletic and military contexts (*ἀθλέω*, *ἀγών*, *πολιτ-*). However, there are two linguistic aspects of Phil 1:27–30 that add further support for viewing the scene in terms of athletic imagery. First, the verb that is most typically used for soldiers joining together in battle is *συναγωνίζομαι*.²⁹ The only two places where *συναθλέω* is used outside of the NT and early Christian literature do not refer to soldiers joining together for battle. In Diodorus Siculus (first-century BCE) the idea conveyed by the passive participle is “being practiced together,” and the present active verb in the grammarian Aristophanes (third to second century BCE) indicates “competing/practicing together,” which more explicitly carries

²⁷ This is especially so given the nature of the audience. See Oakes, *Philippians*, 50–54, who makes a strong case that the city was not as full of veterans as what was once thought. He estimates that there would have only been around 3% (53) in the city and 1% (60) in the Christian community. Cf. L. Michael White, “Visualizing the ‘Real’ World of Acts 16: Toward Construction of a Social Index,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (eds. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 242.

²⁸ Cf. Morna D. Hooker, “The Letter to the Philippians,” in *NIB* vol. 11 (ed. Leander E. Keck et al.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 496, who states, “The verb ‘striving side by side’ seems to be an athletic metaphor and points forward to the imagery of 3:14 (cf. 4:3).”

²⁹ LSJ, 1692; cf. Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose*, 61. Paul uses this verb in Rom 15:30 where militaristic imagery is probably in view. Here he calls the Roman Christians to join together with him in prayer, which could be seen as a “spiritual” battle.

athletic overtones.³⁰ Second, the verb that Paul has previously used to convey military imagery is *στρατεύω* (e.g. 1 Cor 9:7; 2 Cor 10:3–6; cf. Rom 7:23) not *ἀθλέω* or any variation of it. The linguistic features of these verses along with the contextual issues addressed above provide strong reasons for considering athletics as the most prominent imagery in play.

Therefore, after opening with a political metaphor to frame his exhortation to the Philippians in terms of citizens living virtuously, Paul elaborates on this in terms of athletics. The scene that unfolds with this athletic imagery is taken from the combat sports.³¹ As noted above and discussed in 4.2 this has significant connections with the development and display of virtue in contests. This imagery is also widely used in moral philosophers (as discussed in 4.3 above) to portray what is needed to live virtuously in facing difficulties or struggling against externals, and it is even used to present life as a whole as a contest to live virtuously in order to attain the ultimate goal of life.³² Paul is not using the imagery to persuade the Philippians to fight against their opponents; instead, as with moral philosophers the struggle is to live a certain kind of life. This is indicated with the dative clause (which as many have argued is a dative of advantage rather than a dative of means) that follows the participle *συναθλοῦντες*.

Commentators have understood the expression *τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* as either referring to the content of the faith (the genitive functioning appositionally/epexegetically) or to the act of believing (the genitive functioning as

³⁰ While LSJ, 1692, equates *συναθλέω* with *συναγωνίζομαι*, it should be noted that there is no evidence associating the former with a militaristic scene. The clause in Diodorus Siculus 3.4.2 is translated by Oldfather (LCL) as “impressed upon the memory by practice” (*μνήμη σνηθλημένης*).” The passage in Aristophanes (*Historiae Animalium Epitome* 2.511) is about a deer and her children and uses a cluster of athletic terms to depict how the female deer trains her children and will compete together beside them (*καὶ γυμνάζει αὐτὰ πρὸς δρόμον, καὶ ἰδρώτων ἡδέως αὐτοῖς κοινωνεῖ, καὶ πονουμένοις παρ’ ἕκαστα συναθλεῖ*: and she [the female deer] trains them [her children] for a race, and she, gladly sweating, takes part with them, and when they are worn out she will compete/practice together beside each of them. [my trans.]).

³¹ Cf. Russell B. Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos* in Philippians: The *Agōn* Topos in Paul and Hellenistic Moralists,” in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference* (eds. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson; New York/London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 239.

³² Cf. Sisson, “Authorial *Ethos* in Philippians,” 240–41.

source/origin).³³ While Paul has previously used the noun *πίστις* in Phil 1:25 to refer to the content of the faith (see 6.2), which would seemingly lend support to the first interpretation of the expression, in Phil 1:27 the noun is combined with a genitive phrase which raises the possibility that *πίστις* could function in a different manner than in 1:25. The noun *πίστις* can convey the idea of trust or fidelity,³⁴ and with *πίστις* being a verbal noun the genitive could function as its object. The expression would therefore be rendered as trust/fidelity in (or to) the gospel. The emphasis in this interpretation is not so much on believing propositions, but about remaining loyal and faithful to the gospel.³⁵ Given that Paul begins the thesis statement exhorting the Philippians to conduct themselves as citizens worthily *of the gospel*, the force of the expression *τῷ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* is likely to have an ethical emphasis as well; i.e. their fidelity to the gospel is also concerned with them living in a particular way. The force of the entire clause, therefore, is for them to join together as one person in struggling, as athletes engaged in a difficult contest, to live a certain kind of life determined by the gospel. This parallels the ways in which combat sports are used in the moral philosophers. This imagery is always associated with what is needed in living virtuously, whether this is in terms of training, endurance of difficulties, or contending with externals. All of these aspects are rooted in what is needed to live a virtuous life.³⁶ Furthermore, this understanding of the clause fits well with Paul's exhortation in the rest of the letter, which is centrally concerned with the moral formation of the Philippians.

The second participial clause that follows indicates what they are not to do, i.e. be frightened of their opponents. This continues the athletic metaphor in that just as athletes (e.g. boxers or *pankratiasts*) should not be frightened and shrink back from the

³³ For the former see, e.g., Hooker, "Philippians," 496; for the latter see, e.g., Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 152.

³⁴ See, e.g., LSJ, 1408; Barth, *EDNT* 3.92–93; Bultmann, *TDNT* 6.182, on the Stoic usage. See also Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.4.1.

³⁵ Cf. Rom 10:16, where the *εὐαγγέλιον* is discussed as something that is obeyed; Rom 16:25, where it is connected with that which the Roman Christians are to be strengthened according to; 1 Cor 9:23, where it is something that Paul participates/shares in; 1 Cor 15:1, where it is something the Corinthian Christians received and stand in; cf. Phil 1:5, where the Philippian Christians are said to share/participate in the gospel, which is connected with the good work that God began and will bring to completion (see 6.1 above).

³⁶ See the quotes from Seneca, Epictetus, and Dio Chrysostom in 4.3.

opposition they are facing, neither should the Philippians be frightened by those opposed to them. Instead, they should face them with confidence and continue their struggle to live virtuously. The idea of not being frightened recalls the attitude and behavior of Paul and those whom he mentioned in Phil 1:12–18, who faced their own difficult circumstances with confidence. Paul is now specifically urging the Philippians to embrace the same kind of virtuous living.

That Paul is concerned to encourage them to live a certain kind of life with this athletic imagery is further supported by the way in which he presents his circumstances in terms of a contest (*ἀγών*). The same contest that they saw and now hear happening in Paul's case is that of facing hostile circumstances. From 1 Thess 2:2 we learn that Paul experienced harsh treatment in Philippi and from Phil 1:12–26 we have learned that Paul is imprisoned and potentially facing death. The Philippians have the same contest in that they are facing similar difficulties where they too are suffering at the hands of others. By framing his situation in terms of a contest Paul not only picks up the athletic imagery in 1:27, but he also connects his exemplary behavior that he demonstrated in the midst of difficult circumstances with his *ἀγών*. Paul has just presented himself as facing difficulties with confidence and has demonstrated how he has considered the needs of others ahead of his own desires even though he is in dire straits (1:12–26). The contest he shares with the Philippians is not just simply facing difficulties, but facing them in a specific way; that is, it is a contest to live virtuously in difficult circumstances. More specifically, it is a contest to live with confidence while facing suffering and to live in a way that displays a concern for others over a concern for oneself.

A further element in this thesis statement that indicates Paul is concerned with them living a certain kind of life is the way in which he links their “struggling together ... and not being frightened ...” with evidence of their salvation. Paul has already discussed his situation in these same terms (Phil 1:19, see 6.2 above) and it is likely that what is stated in 1:29 is comparable to the way in which Paul has presented this perspective on his life there. As was argued above (6.2), *σωτηρία*, which Paul uses to indicate final deliverance, is viewed in terms of the result of living in a certain way in the midst of suffering. For example, in Phil 1:19 even though Paul is suffering, he is confident that it will result in

his deliverance because Christ will be bodily magnified in his life or death. This parallels the plot structure of the Christ hymn—suffering leading to deliverance—and it relates to what Paul says about *σωτηρία* in Phil 2:12 (as will be discussed below). The connection between living virtuously in the midst of suffering and salvation explains the connection Paul is making in 1:28 between what he has exhorted the Philippians to do and how this gives evidence of their salvation; that is, by living virtuously in their circumstances the Philippians will show that they are living in a way that results in their ultimate deliverance. By living in this way the Philippians will also be demonstrating that the ones opposing them are on a different course, one that ends in destruction.

By framing the exhortation in this way, living virtuously resulting in salvation, Paul utilizes the perspective on their lives that he presented in the thanksgiving section (esp. Phil 1:3–6, see 6.1 above). In this section Paul depicted the Philippians as moving toward a particular goal and offered a pattern of discernment that would facilitate arriving at this goal blamelessly. In Phil 1:27–30 the emphasis on living virtuously resulting in salvation, and the depiction of this in terms of a contest which has a struggle but results in a reward, invokes the same perspective on their lives as that found in the thanksgiving section. Their lives are moving toward a particular goal and living virtuously demonstrates that they are on the correct path toward attaining this goal (in 1:29 presented in terms of salvation).

The thesis statement that opens Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians is centrally concerned with living a certain kind of life, viz. a virtuous life. This is evident in the use of terms, political and athletic, to portray how the Philippians are to live. In addition, their confidence in facing difficulties is presented in terms of their salvation, which is also related to a way of life that issues forth in deliverance (cf. Phil 1:19; 2:12). The exhortation is for the Philippians to join together and live a virtuous life in the face of difficulties just as Paul is living virtuously in his circumstances knowing that in doing so they will be on the right path toward attaining the ultimate goal of life. This is the “contest” in which Paul portrays himself and the Philippians. How they are to participate in this contest is addressed in the verses that follow, which focus particularly on the reasoning that is to shape their conduct.

7.2. The Intellectual Aspects of Virtue: The φρόνησις of Christ (Phil 2:1–11)

Having begun his exhortation to the Philippians with a call for them to unite together and live virtuously in the midst of hostile circumstances, Paul then moves to spell out the nature of the virtuous life in terms of a moral reasoning that is shaped by the ultimate example: Christ. Paul begins this section by first grounding his exhortation in certain benefits the Philippians have received. This then sets up the apodosis and the clauses that follow, where the implications of the conditional sentence are spelled out. This is addressed in terms of joy, love, and moral reasoning. All of these areas relate to how the structure of thought in moral philosophy is being utilized in this letter.

As was discussed in 6.2 (and also in ch. 3), joy is the central emotion mentioned in moral philosophies. It is often associated with the appropriate emotional response to virtue. In Phil 2:2 Paul connects the fulfillment of his joy to the advancement of the Philippians in developing the same kind of moral reasoning. That is, Paul's joy is contingent upon the progress the Philippians make in living virtuously. This relates to how joy is used in Phil 1:4 where Paul's prayer is offered with joy for their partnership in the gospel. There is a certain way of living that issues forth in a response of joy from Paul, and the absence of such a way of living is what makes Paul's joy deficient. While this is slightly different from how the sage's joy functions in moral philosophy—since they consistently have joy that is based on their own living of a virtuous life rather than others living virtuously—the emotional response to virtue is the same. Living virtuously is connected to joy, and not living virtuously brings a deficiency in joy.

The way in which they are to fulfill Paul's joy is described in terms of sharing a moral reasoning. This is emphasized with the repetition of the verb φρονέω. As we saw in ch. 3 φρόνησις was considered the central intellectual virtue in moral philosophy. It united and underpinned all of the virtues. For Aristotle it was the highest virtue for practical reasoning in the rational part of the soul, and was important for reasoning about what was ultimately good or bad for humans. Epicurus argued that it was the greatest good and source of all of the other virtues. The Stoics argued that it was the knowledge of things good, evil, and indifferent, and that it was the art/skill of life. For all, φρόνησις was

crucial for reasoning correctly about the whole of one's life. Paul's discussion of moral reasoning in Philippians, while not specifically using this noun, can be seen as functioning in a similar way to how *φρόνησις* functions in moral philosophy. It is the central intellectual virtue that unites all of the other virtues (e.g. confidence in the face of difficulties, concern for others), and is foundational for reasoning correctly about one's life as a whole (from beginning to end, i.e. the day of Christ). This can be seen in how Paul elaborates on this way of reasoning with a rule for living and then ultimately spells out this kind of reasoning with the Christ hymn.

Before turning to these areas there is one more aspect of Phil 2:2 that needs to be addressed which relates to the structure of thought in this letter. This is the connection between moral reasoning and love. I argued that in Phil 1:9 Paul was setting forth a pattern of discernment where the Philippians' knowledgeable love was to be used to discern that which really matters (see 6.1). Knowledgeable love functions like the way the standards are used in Epictetus; that is, it is something derived from the teachings of the movement and is embodied in virtuous exemplars and is to be used to decide what is really good and virtuous, i.e. that which really matters. Paul began to fill out the nature of this knowledgeable love in his self-presentation in Phil 1:12–26. In Phil 2:2 he once again calls attention to this connection between love and knowledge and addresses it in terms of a rule (2:3–4) and the Christ hymn (2:5–11). While Paul's example can be seen to embody certain aspects of this knowledgeable love, it is ultimately the example of Christ that informs what this entails.

The way in which Paul elaborates on the kind of moral reasoning that he has in view follows the same pattern that moral philosophers use in instructing their students about what it means to live virtuously. This is most clearly seen in Seneca's *Ep.* 120 where he describes how one develops a knowledge of what is morally good and virtuous (see 3.2.2). While one can learn from positive and negative examples who display aspects of the virtuous life, it was the sage who perfectly embodied virtue that one was ultimately to learn from. The sage was to function as a "whetstone" for the person making progress in virtue. All thoughts and actions were to be sharpened by analogously relating them to the sage's virtuous way of living. This same pattern for learning what is morally good is

present also in the Epicureans who use Epicurus' life in this way (see 3.2.1). A further teaching device to instruct beginners in the way of virtue was the use of rules and principles. Seneca also provides a discussion of this in *Ep.* 94 and 95. He makes the case that principles are more important than rules, but that rules are nonetheless needed. He uses the metaphor of the root (principles) and the branches (rules) to portray how they relate and work together.³⁷ A beginner in the life of virtue will start by following rules (much like a novice learning a craft), and then later reflect on the basis for why following these rules is important. Eventually this person would arrive at a place where he/she had an integrated overall understanding of what to do and why to do it.

It is with a rule—since the statement is about what to do rather than why one should do it—that Paul begins to unpack what is involved in the kind of moral reasoning that they should share in common (Phil 2:3–4). Both verses are structured according to a “not that-but this” pattern, with the second verse (2:4) elaborating on the first. A few have argued that the verbless clauses in 2:3 should be read with a form of the verb φρονέω implied,³⁸ while others have argued that “do” or “act” should be supplied.³⁹ Thinking has clearly been the main topic in 2:2 and thus would naturally flow in to 2:3, which makes the first option the most likely. Paul instructs them that their thinking should not be characterized in two ways. The first is according to ἐριθεία, which has already been introduced in Phil 1:17 where it was connected with the envy and strife (φθόνος καὶ ἔρις) of the rival preachers at Rome. ἐριθεία has been widely understood in terms of selfish ambition;⁴⁰ however, a few have treated it in terms of factionalism.⁴¹ Paul uses this word in vice lists (e.g. Gal 5:20) and it is fairly common in early Christian literature; however, it is only used twice outside of this corpus, in Aristotle's *Politics*.⁴² Whether connected with an individual (self-seeking) or a group (factionalism) the idea most likely associated

³⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.64.

³⁸ See, e.g., Marvin R. Vincent, *Epistles to Philippians and to Philemon* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 55, supplying φρονοῦντες from 2:2. Cf. Hooker, “Philippians,” 499.

³⁹ See, e.g., O'Brien, *Philippians*, 179.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., O'Brien, *Philippians*, 181; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 186 n.66; Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 109; Reumann, *Philippians*, 182, 306.

⁴¹ Vincent, *Philippians*, 21.

⁴² See BDAG, 392.

with this word is a kind of ambition that sought advantage over others. The second way of thinking that they should resist is that associated with *κενοδοξία*, which can be broadly understood in terms of false opinions.⁴³ This term, however, is often more narrowly used to indicate an over-inflated opinion of oneself (i.e. conceit).⁴⁴ This is how the noun is commonly understood in Phil 2:3. Both of these nouns highlight a certain way of thinking, either in terms of getting an advantage over others or superiority over others, that is destructive to the unity of the community. This prohibition of a faulty and destructive way of thinking parallels a central concern in the Stoics and Epicureans. Both emphasize how false beliefs/opinions are harmful and hinder one from living a virtuous life (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2), which in turn leads to their strong emphasis on correct thinking/reasoning. Paul in a similar way is giving a prohibition against false and destructive ways of thinking, which is embedded within his emphasis on a correct way of thinking.

The positive side of the rule highlights how the Philippians are to relate to one another. This too emphasizes a way of thinking. The noun *ταπεινοφροσύνη* indicates the manner in which the Philippians are to consider one another. As widely noted, humility was not something prized in the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁵ All of the extra-biblical references to words with the root *ταπεινο-* are associated with a lowly or debased state.⁴⁶ For Paul the usage of this noun connects with what he will say about Christ (2:8) and about those whose *πολίτευμα* exists in heaven (3:20). The usage of *ταπεινοφροσύνη* rather than *ταπείνωσις* is likely meant to continue the emphasis on thinking that was introduced with the *φρον-* verbs in 2:2. It is with a humble mindset/attitude (or thinking shaped by humility) that they are to consider one another.⁴⁷ The participial clause fills this out, emphasizing that others are to be considered better than (or surpassing) oneself. The verb *ἡγέομαι* is important for how it too will be used again in the letter (e.g. 2:6; 3:8), and

⁴³ See, e.g., Epicurus, *Key doctrines* 30.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Diodorus Siculus 17.107. Cf. BDAG, 538, for both usages.

⁴⁵ E.g. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 180; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 110; Reumann, *Philippians*, 309.

⁴⁶ See LSJ, 1757. See especially Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.24.56, who uses *ταπεινοφροσύνη* to indicate an "abject spirit" (Oldfather, LCL).

⁴⁷ Cf. Hooker, "Philippians," 499, who argues that "it refers to the attitude of being humble."

for the way in which it continues the emphasis on thinking.⁴⁸ The other-concern introduced with this rule also picks up that which was exemplified in Paul in 1:19–26.

The positive aspect of the rule is further elaborated to emphasize a way of thinking that prioritizes others over oneself (2:4). It is debated whether this verse conveys the idea of both looking out for one's own interests and that of others, or if it presents not looking out for one's own interests but instead that of others. The latter has much stronger linguistic and contextual support.⁴⁹ The concern for others presented here does have some similarities with that which is found in moral philosophy. In Aristotle and in the Epicureans other-concern is present in their discussions of friendship.⁵⁰ In the Stoics their discussion of social *οἰκείωσις* highlights the ever-widening circles of concern reaching out to embrace all in the universe.⁵¹

Having introduced a rule, Paul turns to provide the ultimate example that is to inform their moral reasoning. Phil 2:5–11 is possibly one of the most discussed texts in the NT. For my purposes, I am most centrally concerned to explore how this text functions in its context. The way in which this text functions has been typically discussed either in terms of soteriology or ethics. That is, the hymn is viewed as connected to the material around it either by providing the salvific drama in which believers participate or by providing a model that believers are to imitate.⁵² The ethical reading has garnered far more support than the soteriological reading; however, a few have argued that there are

⁴⁸ BDAG, 434, defines this verb as “to engage in an intellectual process, *think, consider, regard.*”

⁴⁹ See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 113–14, and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Radical Altruism in Philippians 2:4,” in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (eds. John T. Fitzgerald et al.; NovTSup 110; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 199–202. Both present strong evidence to indicate that the linguistic construction is “not ... but rather ...”

⁵⁰ See respectively Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 8–9; Cicero, *Fin.* 1.65–70. See Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 249–62, for Aristotle's view of friendship with respect to other-concern; and see Annas, *Morality*, 236–43, for the Epicurean view of friendship with respect to the same.

⁵¹ For further discussion of this perspective in Stoicism see Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵² For the former see Ernst Käsemann, “A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5–11,” *JTC* 5 (1968): 45–88; Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997). For the latter see Larry W. Hurtado “Jesus as Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5–11,” in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare* (eds. Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1984), 113–126; Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 88–102.

important aspects of the soteriological reading that should not be minimized.⁵³ While I agree that the hymn does convey something more than merely an ethical example to be imitated, the way in which it is being used in this context highlights that it is most centrally concerned with ethical issues; that is, how the Philippians should morally reason. This can be addressed by first examining how 2:5 relates to what has preceded it and introduces what follows it, and by following the two movements in the plot of the Christ hymn: the downward movement and the upward movement.

The hymn is introduced in 2:5 with a sentence that is much debated. The two exegetical issues most commonly discussed are: 1) does the *τοῦτο* refer to what precedes it or what follows it, and 2) what verb should be supplied to make sense of the verbless relative clause? While *τοῦτο* can refer to either that which precedes or that which follows,⁵⁴ there is stronger support for understanding the demonstrative pronoun to refer to that which precedes it. As Peter O'Brien argues the "catchword" of Phil 2:1–4 is the verb *φρονέω*, which is repeated again in 2:5. The repetition of this verb picks up that which has preceded and "[a]s a result the *τοῦτο* ... points backward" to Paul's instructions about their moral reasoning.⁵⁵ Having already stated that they are to share the same kind of reasoning, which is spelled out with a rule (with a humble mindset considering the interests of others rather than their own), Paul states that "this" (what has just been given in the rule) is the way that they should reason.

Ernst Käsemann, contending for the soteriological reading of this passage, has argued that the phrase *φρονεῖν δεῖ* should be supplied in the verbless relative clause (*ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*), and has argued that *ἐν Χριστῷ* should be understood as a technical formula that indicates the sphere of believers' existence; i.e. they live in the realm of

⁵³ See Oakes, *Philippians*, 188, 201–207, who emphasizes change of authority; David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 206–214, who emphasizes the nature of the story as narrating the central Christian myth that is to shape the community's worldview and ethos; Sergio Rosell Nebreda, *Christ Identity: A Social-Scientific Reading of Philippians 2.5-11* (FRLANT 240; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 329–340, who also emphasizes that the story is a theological narrative that is to reorder their symbolic universe.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., BDAG, 741.

⁵⁵ O'Brien, *Philippians*, 204. Cf. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 121–22.

Christ.⁵⁶ According to Käsemann, Paul is exhorting the Philippians to have the mindset that it is necessary to have for those whose existence is determined by this realm. The Christ hymn that follows narrates the mythical drama in which the hostile powers were defeated and Christ's lordship inaugurated, bringing about the realm where there is freedom from these hostile powers. As noted above, most have not been persuaded by this understanding of Phil 2:5–11. The context in which this passage occurs, with its exhortation for the Philippians to think and live in a particular way, strongly warrants viewing the hymn in connection with ethics rather than soteriology. As Peter Oakes has argued as well, Käsemann's reading "assumes an implausible level of conceptual sophistication among the hearers."⁵⁷ These responses to Käsemann's interpretation have led most to argue that some form of the "to be" verb is what should be supplied, either the past or present tense. Given that the entirety of the hymn that follows is narrated in the past tense, it seems most likely that the "to be" verb that should be supplied is the imperfect. Phil 2:5, therefore, serves to call attention to the rule that has just preceded this verse and indicates that this way of reasoning is that which was present in Christ.

While the Christ hymn is connected specifically with that which has immediately preceded it, the way that the hymn connects with other elements of moral exhortation in the letter indicates that it also serves a broader purpose. It will be demonstrated below that in many ways the Christ hymn conveys the most virtuous way of thinking and living which is analogously to shape how those on the path toward becoming virtuous are to think and live.⁵⁸ Transferring what Brad Inwood says about the discussion of the sage in Seneca, it could be said that the Christ hymn functions as "a whetstone for [the Philippians'] analysis of moral experience."⁵⁹ Examining how the two movements of the hymn relate to the ethical exhortation in Philippians will confirm this. After briefly addressing these two movements I will spell out these connections more fully.

⁵⁶ Käsemann, "Philippians 2:5-11," 83–86.

⁵⁷ Oakes, *Philippians*, 190.

⁵⁸ See Seneca, *Ep.* 120.12–22, and 3.2.2 above.

⁵⁹ Brad Inwood, *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 295–96.

The downward movement of the hymn is presented in Phil 2:6–8. The hymn begins with Christ in the highest position imaginable. He is pre-existent and equal with God.⁶⁰ Equality is evident from the statement τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ and pre-existence is necessary given that Christ becomes human (ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος). Therefore, while there is debate about what exactly ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ entails, it is highly likely it is being used to indicate Christ’s pre-existent status in some manner.⁶¹ The main verb of 2:6, within an idiomatic expression, indicates that Christ did not take advantage of this high position, as Robert Hoover has convincingly demonstrated.⁶² This sets up the rest of the hymn in that what follows describes what he did do. This is emphasized in that Christ is presented as the active subject of the verbs that follow. The second main verb in 2:7 emphasizes the self-lowering of Christ. Given that the verb κενόω is being used in a context where status and position are being discussed and that it is used without a genitive qualifier, the most likely sense of the verb is that of “nullify.”⁶³ The participial clause that follows spells this out further in terms of “taking the form of a slave,” which would have been considered one of the lowest positions imaginable. The main verb (ταπεινῶ) in 2:8 continues the self-lowering emphasis. This verb, as in 2:7, is used with the reflexive pronoun, which in both cases highlights the voluntary nature of Christ’s self-lowering. The verb ταπεινῶ, as noted above with respect to the noun ταπεινοφροσύνη, would have conveyed a debased state. The ignominy is developed further with the following participial clause and genitive qualifier; i.e. his crucifixion (θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ). As widely noted, this was one of the most shameful and humiliating ways to die,⁶⁴ and represents the nadir of Christ’s

⁶⁰ Pace James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM, 1980), 113–21, who argues that the hymn is best contrasted with the story of Adam and therefore does not present Christ as pre-existent.

⁶¹ See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 126–29.

⁶² Robert W. Hoover, “The *Harpagmos* Enigma: A Philological Solution,” *HTR* 64 (1971): 95–119. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 62–90.

⁶³ See David P. Moessner, “Turning Status ‘Upside Down’ in Philippi: Christ Jesus’ ‘Emptying Himself as Forfeiting Any Acknowledgement of His ‘Equality with God’ (Phil 2:6-11),” *HBT* 31 (2009): 135–39. Cf. Oakes, *Philippians*, 194; Joseph H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (SNTSMS 132; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 135–36.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1977).

self-lowering in the hymn. The first half of the hymn, therefore, presents the extent to which Christ lowered himself for the sake of others.⁶⁵

The upward movement of the hymn begins in 2:9. God, who is now the subject of the verbs that follow, is the one who acts, responding to the self-lowering and self-giving of Christ. The *διὸ καί* that introduces this part of the hymn indicates that it is because of what Christ has done that God exalts him.⁶⁶ The emphasis in 2:9–11 is on the superlative status that is given to Christ. This is indicated first with the verb *ὑπερυψόω*. As many have noted this is a rare word in the NT; however, it occurs frequently in Dan 3:52–90 (LXX) in the hymn being sung by the three in the furnace. Its usage there points to understanding the compound verb in an absolute sense; that is, God most highly exalts Christ.⁶⁷ The name that God gives to Jesus points to this super-exalted status as well. This name is most likely *κύριος*, since Jesus is already his given name, and the confession in 2:11 seems to indicate that “Lord” is a new title as well.⁶⁸ The obeisance that is offered Christ in 2:10–11, quoting Isa 45:23, further emphasizes the extent to which he is exalted. The second half of the hymn, therefore, presents the extent to which God exalts Christ.

The hymn relates to the ethical exhortation in Philippians in how it presents Christ as embodying virtues that are emphasized throughout the letter and by the way in which it presents a perspective on life as a whole. As argued above, the Christ hymn presents Christ lowering himself for the sake of others. This embodies the rule that is presented in 2:3–4 and analogously relates to how Paul presents himself in 1:19–26 (cf. 2:19–24). The hymn also displays the virtue of confidence in the face of difficulties. Christ is obedient to the point of death; he remains faithful and endures suffering. This relates to Paul’s exhortation for the Philippians to face suffering with confidence in 1:27–30 and

⁶⁵ Phil 2:6–8 provides a nice elaboration on the pithy statement in 2 Cor 8:9: *ὅτι δι’ ἡμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὢν*.

⁶⁶ Cf. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 233–34.

⁶⁷ This is instead of treating it as a comparative indicating that God exalts Jesus to a higher place. See O’Brien, *Philippians*, 236; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 141.

⁶⁸ This might be, as Richard Bauckham argues (“The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:9–11,” in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2* [eds. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998], 131–133), the Greek substitution for the Tetragrammaton, especially since the previous quote is from Isaiah 45, which in the Isaianic context presents all creation worshipping the one God.

analogously informs Paul's presentation of himself and others in 1:12–18 (cf. 2:25–30). The Christ hymn also presents a perspective on life as a whole that follows a particular sequence: suffering-death-exaltation. I have already highlighted how Paul begins this letter framing their lives in terms of a beginning and an end (1:3–11), and have twice discussed a similar sequence in my analysis of how Paul is using the word *σωτηρία* (1:19, 28), both of which relate to this perspective on life as a whole. As *φρόνησις* in the moral philosophers is ultimately concerned with what is good or bad with respect to life as a whole, so too we can say something similar about how Paul is using the Christ hymn to inform the Philippians' moral reasoning with respect to life as a whole as he envisages it.⁶⁹ And just as the life of the fully virtuous sage was to inform how one made progress in becoming virtuous in moral philosophy, so too is Paul using the fully virtuous life of Christ to inform the way in which the Philippians are to make progress.

7.3. Exhortation to Moral Integrity: Radiating Light in the World (Phil 2:12–18)

Having introduced the larger epistolary section (1:27–2:30) by presenting their lives in terms of a contest for virtue and presenting the kind of reasoning that is to shape their thinking in this contest, Paul now turns to address some specifics of how they are to relate to one another within the community of faith and to those outside of it, filling out the nature of the virtuous life Paul is calling them to embrace. This is introduced with a general statement that picks up the theme of their moral progress and concludes with Paul's presentation of his life in terms of a race and a libation.

The main idea that governs the exhortation in this paragraph is that they are to “bring about/work out” (*κατεργάζομαι*) their own salvation. This expression has typically been understood either in sociological or theological terms. The former views *σωτηρία* in terms of the health of the community and emphasizes that the exhortation is a call for

⁶⁹ Several have made these same connections in relating all of the Christ hymn to the moral reasoning in the letter. E.g. Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus* (JSNTSup 36; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 77–101; Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philippians,” in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays* (eds. Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2002), 106–114; Horrell, *Solidarity*, 206–214.

the Philippians to corporately restore the community to wholeness by removing anything that makes it unhealthy.⁷⁰ The latter views *σωτηρία* eschatologically and understands the exhortation as a call for the Philippians to produce the fruit of their eternal salvation that they have already received, which entails living in a certain way with respect to others inside and outside of the community of faith.⁷¹ Another way of interpreting this expression involves relating it more closely to the exhortation that has preceded it, viz. 1:27–2:11. For example, Stephen Fowl has argued that the goal of Paul’s exhortation in this entire section has been the salvation/deliverance of the Philippians and that by adopting the practices that Paul has called for in this section the Philippians will be on the path to attaining it.⁷² The exhortation to “bring about your own salvation” is therefore a call for them to live in the way that Paul has just presented.⁷³ This understanding of the expression is much more plausible. It picks up the way that Paul has used the noun *σωτηρία* in 1:28, and it follows the pattern of the Christ hymn, where living in a certain way results in deliverance/vindication, which is a pattern that (as we have seen) shapes much of Paul’s exhortation in this letter.

The reference to the Philippians’ obedience and the exhortation for them to bring about their salvation highlights an important theme in this epistle: the moral progress of the Philippians. Paul’s self presentation in 1:12–26 ended on this note, and 1:27 began to introduce how they are to make progress whether Paul is present with them or absent from them, a statement which is reiterated in 2:12 as well. As we have seen this relates to the way that Paul has framed their lives in terms of a beginning which is moving toward a particular end, which parallels the structure of thinking about the virtuous life in moral philosophy. By adopting the virtues Paul has presented in 1:27–2:11—i.e. having confidence in the face of hostility, demonstrating a concern for others, and sharing the same kind of reasoning reflected in the Christ hymn—the Philippians will be living the kind of virtuous life that is needed to attain the ultimate goal of life and experience salvation/deliverance.

⁷⁰ See, e.g., J. H. Michael, “Work Out Your Own Salvation,” *Expositor*, 9th series, 12 (1924): 439–50.

⁷¹ See, e.g., O’Brien, *Philippians*, 278–280.

⁷² Fowl, *The Story of Christ*, 96.

⁷³ Cf. Oakes, *Philippians*, 108–109.

In Phil 2:13 Paul grounds the moral progress of the Philippians in the activity of God, just as he does in the thanksgiving section (see 1:6). This verse connects the agency of the Philippians to the agency of God, which is indicated by the *γάρ* that logically links the two verses. In this verse God's agency is seen as the energizing force behind the Philippians' desire and action. While God's empowerment of humans is a prominent aspect of Jewish and early Christian thought, a similar idea is also present in some of the moral philosophers, particularly the later Stoics. This is most acutely seen in Seneca's *Ep.* 41. In praising Lucilius' pursuit of sound understanding Seneca indicates that this is not something for which one needs to pray, because as Seneca states,

God is near you, he is with you, he is within you (*prope est a te deus, tecum est, intus est*). This is what I mean, Lucilius: a holy spirit indwells within us (*sacer intra nos spiritus sedet*), one who marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian. As we treat this spirit, so are we treated by it. Indeed, no man can be good without the help of God. Can one rise superior to fortune unless God helps him to rise? ... When a soul rises superior to other souls, when it is under control, when it passes through every experience as if it were of small account, when it smiles at our fears and at our prayers, it is stirred by a force from heaven (*caelestis potentia agitat*). A thing like this cannot stand upright unless it be propped by the divine (*Non potest res tanta sine adminiculo numinis stare*). (Seneca, *Ep.* 41.1–2, 5; Gummere, LCL)⁷⁴

While there are indeed theological differences in how the Stoics conceive of God and how Paul does, as James Ware has helpfully noted,⁷⁵ the structural similarity of their thought with respect to the role of divine agency in living a virtuous life should not be overlooked. It is precisely in making progress in living a good life that Seneca emphasizes the role of divine help, which parallels Paul's understanding in Philippians. God is the empowering agent enabling the Philippians to live the kind of virtuous life that Paul has been arguing for (cf. Phil 4:13).

The nature of this virtuous life is filled out further in Phil 2:14–16. The instructions in 2:14 parallel the exhortation pertaining to a selfless concern for others in 2:3–4, which

⁷⁴ Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.8.

⁷⁵ James Ware, "Moral Progress and Divine Power in Seneca and Paul," in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; London/New York: Routledge, 2008), 267–83.

is also exemplified in Christ's humility and self-lowering in the Christ hymn. Several commentators have called attention to how the prohibition against "grumbling and complaining" evokes the description of Israel in the wilderness.⁷⁶ While this may indeed inform how Paul is thinking about the Philippian situation, as Markus Bockmuehl correctly notes it is not possible to say more specifically about the nature of the problem that Paul is addressing; that is, whether he is concerned to address complaints against God, leaders in the community, or others.⁷⁷ The *γογγυσμοί* and *διαλογισμοί* are best understood as behavior that is contrary to the virtue of humble minded other-regard. Grumbling behind the scenes and arguing with each other places a strain on communal relations and is destructive in their struggle together to live virtuously.

The purpose clause that follows the prohibition in 2:14 spells out the result of living virtuously in relationship to those outside the community of faith. By living virtuously the Philippians will be on the path toward becoming pure and blameless children of God.⁷⁸ Paul uses three terms that highlight the desired moral integrity for the community: *ἄμεμπτος*, *ἀκέραιος*, *ἄμωμος*. These terms are roughly synonymous with one another and strongly emphasize the flawless character of the community. By living in the virtuous ways that Paul has been describing, the community will stand out in the midst of people who are living in disreputable ways, and are even presented as a *γενεὰ σκολιὰ καὶ διεστραμμένη*. The way in which they will stand out is elaborated further in terms of shining as lights and as holding the position/principle of life.

The last description of the community (*λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες*) given in Phil 2:16 has been understood primarily in two different ways, either holding fast to the word of life or holding forth the word of life. The former emphasizes the commitment of the Philippians to the gospel, while the latter emphasizes the proclamation of the gospel. The detailed analysis of James Ware has thoroughly demonstrated that the verb *ἐπέχω*

⁷⁶ See, e.g., O'Brien, *Philippians*, 290; Fee, *Philippians*, 243.

⁷⁷ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 155; cf. Reumann, *Philippians*, 411. Complaints against leaders might have stronger support with the specific mention of leaders (*ἐπισκόποι καὶ διακόντοι*) in the letter greeting (1:1) and that two people are singled out in 4:2. However, it is perhaps best understood in general as the instructions in 2:3–4 are as well.

⁷⁸ While Paul uses similar language to speak of becoming morally blameless at the day of Christ (e.g. Phil 1:10), it is important to note that here it is being used with respect to their current character in Philippi.

cannot mean “hold fast.”⁷⁹ This meaning is not attested in any ancient source. Ware instead argues that the meaning of the verb is most naturally “holding forth” and thus the idea in the phrase is a clear call for the Philippians to spread the gospel through proclaiming the word. Ware has indeed demonstrated that the verb *can* mean “holding forth”; however, there are other connotations of the verb, which are contingent upon how it is being used in a sentence, and there are also questions about what is precisely meant by *λόγος ζωῆς*. Ware takes this expression as unequivocally meaning the gospel, but the construction can be used to convey a different idea. John Chrysostom’s interpretation highlights an important alternative. He interprets Paul as describing the Philippians as having the principle, or seed, of life, which stands in contrast to those outside the Christian community who do not have life (cf. Phil 1:28; 3:19).⁸⁰ Peter Oakes has argued something similar. He has helpfully pointed out how the expression *λόγον + genitive + ἐπέχω* is used as a technical phrase that conveys the idea of having/holding the position of something, so the phrase in Phil 2:16 could be understood as the Philippians having the position of life in the world.⁸¹ This understanding of the expression as either “having the principle of life” or “having the position of life in the world” highlights the unique qualities of the Philippians, which best fits with the immediate context where Paul has been urging them to be obedient living virtuous lives. Actively proclaiming the gospel verbally, as Ware has argued, does not seem to fit what is under consideration in these verses.

This idea that people living virtuously stand out in the midst of people living in disreputable ways is also present in Seneca. He describes the virtuous person in similar terms to Paul, stating,

⁷⁹ James Ware, *The Mission of the Church in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (NovTSup 120; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 267–68; cf. Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Hold Fast Versus ‘Hold Out’ in Philippians 2:16,” *WTJ* 63 (2002): 50–52; Peter Oakes, “Quelle devrait être l’influence des échos intertextuels sur la traduction? Le cas de l’épître aux Philippiens (2,15-16),” in *Intertextualités: La Bible en échos* (eds. Daniel Marguerat and Adrian Curtis; Paris: Labor et Fides, 2000), 267–73.

⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 8.4: Τί ἐστι, Λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες; Τουτέστι, μέλλοντες ζήσασθαι, τῶν σωζομένων ὄντες. “Ορα πῶς εὐθέως τίθησι τὰ ἔπαθλα· Οἱ φωστῆρες, φησὶ, λόγον φωτὸς ἐπέχουσιν· ὑμεῖς λόγον ζωῆς. Τί ἐστι, Λόγον ζωῆς; Σπέρμα ζωῆς ἔχοντες, τουτέστιν, ἐνέχυρα ζωῆς ἔχοντες, αὐτὴν κατέχοντες τὴν ζωὴν, τουτέστι, σπέρμα ζωῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἔχοντες· τοῦτο λέγει, Λόγον ζωῆς.

⁸¹ He takes the prepositional phrase ἐν κόσμῳ with the expression *λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες*. See more fully Oakes, “Quelle devrait,” 266–85.

[H]e has given a clear conception of himself to many men; he has shone forth like a light in the darkness (*in tenebris lumen effulsit*) and has turned towards himself the thoughts of all men, because he was gentle and calm and equally compliant with the orders of man and of God. He possessed perfection of the soul. (Seneca, *Ep.* 120.13–14; Gummere, LCL)

Both Paul and Seneca view living virtuously as radiating light to those living in “darkness.” For Paul the moral character of the community of faith is to stand in contrast to how others are living. This exemplary behavior is what Paul is calling attention to in Phil 2:15–16 and is describing it in terms of light and life.

Paul concludes this section by discussing his ministry among the Philippians from the perspective of the day of Christ. If the Philippians live in the virtuous way that Paul has been urging them to embrace, then this will give Paul a reason to boast at the day of Christ. Paul portrays his ministry in terms of a race and manual labor. Having run the race and finished his work, he does not want to see that the Philippians have turned aside from living virtuously and his work may have been in vain. Paul in 2:17 also presents his “running/working” in terms of a libation offering that is being poured out. The prepositional phrase that follows is most likely indicating that Paul’s sacrificial service is a small offering in addition to the Philippians’ sacrificial living.⁸² The imagery evokes the ultimate giving of oneself, which parallels the kind of selflessness that Paul has urged the Philippians to embrace (cf. Phil 2:3–8). It is this selfless way of living that leads Paul to rejoice. Paul again connects joy to living in a particular way (see 6.2, 7.2), and he urges the Philippians to join him in sharing this perspective.

7.4. Examples of Virtue: Timothy and Epaphroditus (Phil 2:19–30)

Having given more specifics as to what their contest in virtue entails, Paul moves to discuss the travel plans of Timothy and Epaphroditus. This section of the letter is more than simply a recommendation letter for Timothy and details of why Epaphroditus is returning (although it does convey this information); rather, the way in which this

⁸² O’Brien, *Philippians*, 307.

information is presented continues to emphasize key aspects of the kind of virtuous life that Paul has been discussing. Timothy and Epaphroditus in this section of the letter are both functioning as examples of the virtuous behavior that is present in Paul's exhortation thus far. As we have seen moral exemplars played an important role in ancient moral philosophy (see 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 6.2, 7.2). It is by observing the behavior of virtuous people that one learns what it means to live a virtuous life. With Timothy and Epaphroditus arriving in Philippi they will be present reminders of what it means to live virtuously.

Paul's description of Timothy highlights his selfless concern for the Philippians. This is indicated first by Paul's statement that he is *ισόψυχος*. The word *ισόψυχος* relates to Paul's exhortation to the Philippians to be *μιᾷ ψυχῇ* (1:27) and *σύμψυχοι* (2:2), and means roughly "like-minded." This connection highlights that as the Philippians are to be united in their contest to live virtuously, so Timothy is united with Paul in the same contest. The way in which this is reflected in Timothy's life is through his genuine concern for the Philippians, echoing the kind of reasoning presented in Phil 2:3–8 (cf. Phil 1:19–26). Timothy's concern for the Philippians is heightened by how Paul contrasts Timothy with those around him. In a rather surprising manner Paul indicates that all (in Rome) seek their own things, not the things of Christ. This can be understood as Pauline hyperbole to emphasize Timothy's concern for the Philippians.⁸³ On the other hand, it may indeed be a true reflection of the situation. As Peter O'Brien and Stephen Llewelyn point out, *οἱ πάντες* in Phil 1:21 does not necessarily have to refer to every believer in Rome, especially since Paul indicates the positive qualities of some in Phil 1:16 and sends greetings from several in Phil 4:22. It could instead indicate all of those who were available to travel to Philippi.⁸⁴ Either way, Timothy's concern for others is being emphasized highlighting a key virtue that Paul has been urging the Philippians to embrace. Timothy's selflessness is also indicated by the verb (*δουλόω*) Paul uses to describe how he has served with him in the gospel. Paul has already presented himself

⁸³ See Oakes, *Philippians*, 110.

⁸⁴ O'Brien, *Philippians*, 321; Stephen Robert Llewelyn, "Sending Letters in the Ancient World: Paul and the Philippians," *TynBul* 46 (1995): 353–354. As Morna Hooker ("Philippians," 519) indicates as well, Rome is around 800 miles from Philippi, so it is not surprising that there are not many willing to make such a long journey.

and Timothy as *δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ* (Phil 1:1), and it is likely that Christ's self-lowering, which is presented in terms of him taking the *μορφή δούλου* (Phil 2:7), is informing both Phil 1:1 and 2:22. This language of slavery portrays the service of Timothy in terms that parallel the kind of reasoning present in the Christ hymn. Timothy's known character is that of sacrificial service in the gospel, which is the kind of selfless other-regard that Timothy will embody among the Philippians reminding them of how they too should live in such a virtuous way.

Paul's presentation of Epaphroditus focuses on his willingness to risk his life for the work of Christ. Paul first mentions this in further explaining his illness, that it was *παραπλήσιον θανάτῳ* (2:27), and second in explaining why they should welcome him, because he drew near *μέχρι θανάτου* (2:30). Paul also states in Phil 2:29 that people like Epaphroditus, i.e. those facing death because of their commitment to the work of Christ, should be honored. These comments emphasize Epaphroditus' confidence in the face of suffering, which echoes the kind of reasoning that Christ displayed (2:8) and connects with Paul's exhortation for the Philippians to display this same virtue in their circumstances (1:27–30). Epaphroditus is also portrayed in a way that highlights his concern for others. This is displayed in his willingness to deliver the gift sent by the Philippians (cf. Phil 4:18) and minister to Paul's needs while he is in prison, which is indicated in Phil 2:30. Todd Still has also pointed out that Epaphroditus' concern for others is displayed in his distress, not over his own malady, but “[r]ather, he was disturbed by the fact that the Philippian congregation had learned of his illness.”⁸⁵ In his concern for his fellow Philippians Epaphroditus is displaying the same kind of selflessness that is present in Timothy (Phil 2:20), Paul (Phil 1:21–24), and ultimately in Christ (Phil 2:6–8). Epaphroditus is portrayed in a way that emphasizes the virtues that Paul has been urging the Philippians to embrace: confidence in the face of difficulties, concern for others, and a reasoning shaped by the Christ hymn.

⁸⁵ Todd D. Still, *Philippians & Philemon* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 84.

7.5. Conclusion

Paul opens his exhortation to the Philippians with a call for them to live virtuously. He uses both political and athletic language to frame his argument, and ultimately conceptualizes the nature of Christian existence in terms of a contest of virtue. The nature of this contest of virtue is specifically spelled out for the Philippians in terms of displaying the virtues of confidence in the face of difficult circumstances and of humble concern for others. The kind of moral reasoning that is to shape the way in which they live is ultimately informed by the Christ hymn. This way of reasoning is concerned with what is good with respect to life as a whole. While Christ is presented as the ultimate “whetstone” against which the Philippians are to analyze their moral experience, both Timothy and Epaphroditus are discussed as positive examples of virtue as well. If the Philippians continue in the path of virtuous living marked out by Christ (as well as Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Paul), then they will be making progress toward attaining the ultimate goal of life, which Paul variously describes in terms of salvation, blamelessness, and purity. Living in this way also has an effect on those around them, radiating light to those in darkness.

As we have seen Paul’s argument in Philippians is structured similarly to that in moral philosophy and uses the language of athletics to conceptualize this perspective on life. In the second half of Philippians Paul continues to develop this perspective, filling out fuller how the Philippians are to think and live.

Chapter 8

PURSUING CHRIST AS THE ΤΕΛΟΣ OF LIFE: THE VIRTUOUS AND FULLY SUFFICIENT LIFE (PHIL 3:1–4:23)

Introduction

The second half of Philippians in many ways repeats some of the same material presented in the first half of the letter. Paul returns to the same topics and uses similar terms and concepts to address these topics. He does this in a way that reinforces and fills out the perspective on life that he has been arguing for in Phil 1:1–2:30. This perspective takes Christ as the τέλος of life and views the virtues as necessary in order to attain this ultimate goal. In the exegesis that follows my aim is to demonstrate how the second half of the letter continues to utilize a pattern of thought that is structured similarly to the broad thought pattern in ancient moral philosophy, and to show how the vivid runner imagery, which parallels how athletic imagery is used in moral philosophy, encapsulates this way of thinking about life.

This chapter is divided into four parts: 1) Phil 3:1–11, where Paul most passionately presents his singular orientation toward gaining Christ as the τέλος of life; 2) Phil 3:12–14, where Paul vividly displays this orientation with the image of the runner; 3) Phil 3:15–4:7, where Paul exhorts the Philippians to embrace this perspective on life, imitating Paul and others, and gives them rule-like instructions to assist them in living virtuously; 4) Phil 4:8–23, where Paul concludes the letter, offering thanks for the gift of the Philippians in a way that reinforces the nature of the virtuous life and emphasizes that it is fully sufficient regardless of one's circumstances. The analysis of each letter section will demonstrate how the logic of Paul's argument correlates with the broad structure of thought in moral philosophy.

8.1. Christ as the τέλος of Life (Phil 3:1–11)

In Phil 3:1–14 Paul specifies most clearly his central aim in this letter, which is to persuade the Philippians to orient their lives toward gaining Christ, who is presented as the τέλος/*summum bonum* of life. After an exhortation to rejoice and a specific indication

that what follows repeats what he has previously written, Paul develops this teleological orientation which is set up by the counter-example of (Christian?) Jewish missionaries. Paul then vividly portrays this orientation depicting himself as a runner strenuously pressing on toward a goal. In this vivid description Paul brings a picture before the minds' eye of the audience which encapsulates his aim in this letter and imprints within their minds a positive model of virtue.

By beginning his exhortation in 3:1 with an instruction for the Philippians to rejoice, Paul echoes a key theme present in this epistle. Here for the first time Paul specifically connects his command to rejoice with the prepositional phrase ἐν κυρίῳ. There have been several interpretive options proffered for understanding what this phrase indicates.¹ Given the way Paul has connected joy to living in a certain way (e.g., 1:4; 2:2; 2:17–18), viz. virtuously, it is highly likely that Paul is doing something similar here. This has similarities with Paul Holloway's understanding of this expression, which is informed by how Seneca (*Ep.* 23) exhorts Lucilius to learn how to rejoice and the way in which this exhortation summarizes his moral philosophical project.² In Seneca's letter joy is connected to that which is truly good, which is for him the virtuous life.³ One should learn how to rejoice in those things that are connected to this way of thinking and living. While for Paul the phrase ἐν κυρίῳ can broadly indicate the sphere of believers' existence (cf. 1 Cor 7:39), in Philippians this phrase should be closely related to the Christ hymn and the pattern of living that is marked out by it. The Philippians should rejoice in the Lord in the sense that they should have joy in those things which are associated with the way of thinking and living presented in the Christ hymn. This is further supported from how Paul has just connected the reason for the Philippians' joy at the return of Epaphroditus to Epaphroditus' sacrificial service for the work of Christ (2:29–30), paralleling Christ's self-lowering for the sake of others. Paul will also connect being in

¹ See the discussion in John Reumann, *Philippians* (AB 33B; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 457.

² Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (SNTSMS 112; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 132.

³ Seneca, *Ep.* 23.7: *Quid sit istud [i.e. veri boni], interrogas, aut unde subeat? Dicam ex bona conscientia, ex honestis consiliis, ex rectis actionibus, ex contemptu fortuitorum, ex placido vitae et continuo tenore unam prementis viam.*

Christ to analogously sharing the pattern of Christ's life (3:9–11), which indicates how he is conceptualizing the nature of life in Christ/the Lord. Thus, as we have seen throughout Philippians, joy is not a detached feeling of cheerfulness, but rather it is an emotion that is connected to a way of living; i.e. the virtuous life as Paul is defining it.

After this exhortation to rejoice Paul signals that he is going to repeat that which he has previously written (τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν). This too has been a much-debated phrase.⁴ Because Paul uses the word γράφω there is no need to speculate about previous oral teachings.⁵ He is referring specifically to something that he has written.⁶ While Polycarp does mention “letters” that Paul wrote,⁷ it would be unusual for Paul not to mention a different letter if this is what he was referring to (cf. 1 Cor 5:9). It is most likely that Paul is indicating something in this letter (Phil 1:1–2:30) that he is now going to repeat. Markus Bockmuehl and others have argued that joy is the most plausible candidate, since Paul has repeated this exhortation several times in the letter.⁸ However, as Peter Wick has argued, one would expect a singular τὸ αὐτό if this was the case, which is exactly what Paul uses in 2:18 when he is repeating his call for the Philippians to rejoice.⁹ Wick has instead argued that the repeated material is all of that which has preceded this verse.

⁴ See the four options adumbrated by Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 178–80.

⁵ Pace Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 352.

⁶ Therefore, while agreeing with Stanley K. Stowers (“Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven: Reading Theology in Philippians,” in *Pauline Theology, Vol. 1* [ed. Jouette M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 115) that 3:1 functions like a reminder, I disagree that Paul is using a hortatory idiom to exhort the Philippians to keep doing what they have been doing. None of the examples that Stowers provides has the term γράφω in them, but instead use verbs indicating what was said, heard, or known before (Isocrates, *Nic.* 40; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 17.1–2; 1 Thess 1:5; 2:1, and so forth). Moreover, I have found no instances in ancient Greek literature where γράφω is used in connection with either τὰ αὐτὰ or ταῦτα to indicate anything other than something that was written (see, e.g., Plutarch, *Mor.* 1049B1; ps.-Aeschines, *Ep.* 10.9.7; Themistoclis, *Ep.* 4.106; Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 8.2.14; 8.6.44; ps.-Aelius Aristides, *Ars rhet.* 1.3.2; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.219; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 56.18.8). Also, the references in 1 Thess to “having no need to write to you” do not parallel the construction in Phil 3:1. In both 1 Thess 4:9 and 5:1 Paul is bringing up topics (note the περὶ δέ) and indicating that he has no need to write about them. Phil 3:1 instead indicates that Paul is going to repeat the same things that he has written.

⁷ Polycarp, *Phil.* 3.2. See the discussion above in 1.1 footnote 1.

⁸ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 180. See also Jeffrey Reed, “Philippians 3:1 and the Epistolary Hesitation Formulas: The Literary Integrity of Philippians, Again,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 79–80; cf. Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 124.

⁹ Peter Wick, *Der Philipperbrief: Der formale Aufbau des Briefs als Schlüssel zum Verständnis seines Inhalts* (BWANT 135; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 56–57; cf. Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 292–93.

He views the letter as two parts that mirror each other with 3:1 as the pivot point.¹⁰

Troels Engberg-Pedersen has taken up this perspective on the letter, but has rightly not pressed the parallels as far as Wick.¹¹

While agreeing with Wick and Engberg-Pedersen that there is broad similarity between the material in the first half of Philippians and that which comes after 3:1,¹² I also want to suggest that in repeating the same material Paul repeats and further specifies the nature of the virtuous life he is trying to persuade the Philippians to embrace. In the first half of the letter (1:1–2:30) Paul has depicted the Philippians as moving toward a *τέλος* and has offered a way of reasoning and living that would enable them to make progress toward attaining this goal. He has also used positive and negative examples as well as rules in order to explain more fully the nature of this virtuous life, and he has framed his entire argument as a contest of virtue using both political and athletic imagery. It is my contention (which will be further established in the exegesis that follows) that Paul is signalling in Phil 3:1 that he is not just going to repeat the same material (i.e. the same topics), but that he is repeating his argument. That is, he is going to again present a perspective on life that is teleologically oriented. He will present again how it is that the Philippians should think and live in order to make progress in attaining the ultimate goal of life, and he will again use positive and negative examples along with rules and political and athletic imagery to make his argument. Paul, therefore, in the second half of the letter (Phil 3:1–4:23) is repeating the perspective on life that he has been arguing for in the first half, only this time he does give some more explicit details that enable us to fill out the nature of this life more precisely.

After stating that he does not hesitate to repeat himself in this letter, Paul indicates why—because it is an *ἀσφαλῆς* for the Philippians.¹³ Many who have understood *τὰ αὐτά*

¹⁰ See above 1.3.1.

¹¹ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 84–85, and see 316 n.18.

¹² E.g. two sections on Paul's circumstances (1:12–26; 3:2–14), two sections where Paul exhorts the Philippians (1:27–2:18; 3:15–4:9), and two sections addressing exchanges between Paul and the Philippians (2:19–30; 4:10–23).

¹³ “Hesitate” is a better understanding of what *ἀκνηρόν* conveys here, rather than “troublesome” or “irksome.” Most usages of this term indicate “shrinking,” “timid,” or “reluctantly” (see LSJ, 1212). Cf. John M.G. Barclay's translation of Josephus (*Against Apion: Translation and Commentary* [Flavius Josephus,

to refer to that which follows (i.e. warning about Judaizers) argue that the security in view is connected to their political safety. That is, the threat Paul is trying to ward off is one where the Philippians would potentially be tempted to adopt Jewish practices in order to gain the privileges of being a recognized religion (the so-called *religio licita*). This would alleviate their suffering and give them security. With this scenario in mind ἀσφαλής is read as a counter to this temptation which sets up Paul’s argument that their “heavenly citizenship” is secured in Christ alone and therefore they do not need to adopt Jewish practices to achieve this.¹⁴ There are two major problems with this historical reconstruction. First, we do not know for certain to what extent adopting Jewish practices would have alleviated their suffering and provided them with political security. As has been argued by Leonard Rutgers Rome did not have an official policy toward the Jews (i.e. treating them as a so-called *religio licita*), instead they responded to situations as they arose, which could be favorable or not.¹⁵ Second, the temptation to adopt Jewish practices does not seem to be very acute. As Morna Hooker has argued, the warnings in Phil 3:2 are general and are used to set up the important issue Paul moves on to address: gaining Christ.¹⁶ Furthermore, this concern about Judaizers has not occurred previously in the letter nor will Paul mention it again. The kind of security that is in view, therefore, is most likely something other than political safety.

The kind of security in view could be understood as that which comes from having a certain perspective on life and living according to it. This is found in the moral philosophers. For example, Epicurus uses the term ἀσφαλής to indicate the kind of security that comes from knowing certain things and living in a particular way. He argues

Vol. 10; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007], 297), *C. Ap.* 2.219: “I would have hesitated to write this now (ὥκνουσθ’ ἂν ἐγὼ ταῦτα γράφειν).” See also Reed, “Philippians 3:1,” 65–76, who argues that this term is part of a hesitation formula.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Demetrius K. Williams, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ: The Terminology of the Cross and Conflict in Philippians* (JSNTSup 223; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 149–152; Mikeal Tellbe, “The Sociological Factors behind Philippians 3.1-11 and the Conflict at Philippi,” *JSNT* 55 (1994): 116–17; idem, *Paul between Synagogue and State: Christians, Jews, and Civic Authorities in 1 Thessalonians, Romans, and Philippians* (ConBNT 34; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001), 264.

¹⁵ Leonard Victor Rutgers, “Roman Policy towards the Jews: Expulsions from the City of Rome during the First Century C.E.,” *Classical Antiquity* 13 (1994): 56–74.

¹⁶ Morna D. Hooker, “Philippians: Phantom Opponents and the Real Source of Conflict,” in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity. Essays in Honor of Heikki Räisänen* (eds. Ismo Dunderberg et al.; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2002), 377–81, 391–92.

that true safety is found in having knowledge about the universe, living “a quiet private life withdrawn from the multitude,” and having friendships.¹⁷ Epictetus contends that all safety is found in how one keeps one’s moral purpose.¹⁸ He also argues that having a guarantee on one’s security involves having correct ideas firmly fixed within one.¹⁹ For these moral philosophers ἀσφαλής is discussed in terms of their moral philosophical programs; that is, it comes when one has fully embraced their perspective on life and is living accordingly. In a similar manner wisdom is often presented as that which is a true source of security, which guides one correctly as to how to live. For instance, Antisthenes describes “wisdom” as “a most sure stronghold which never crumbles away nor is betrayed.”²⁰ In Jewish wisdom literature wisdom is similarly presented as that which is a source of security. For example, Prov 3:18 (LXX) states that “she is a tree of life for all the ones who cling to her, and for the ones who lean upon her, as upon the Lord, [she is] a security.”²¹ Given the emphasis in Philippians on living virtuously, it is most likely that the kind of security in view in 3:1 is that which comes from sharing Paul’s perspective on what the virtuous life entails and living according to it. Paul, therefore, is indicating that he does not hesitate to repeat his argument about the nature of the virtuous life, because for the Philippians it will be a source of security in that it will assist them in sharing the correct perspective on life.

The perspective on life that Paul will address in what follows is set up with a negative example. As has been discussed previously (3.2.1, 3.2.2, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4) *exempla* play an important role in moral philosophy in teaching one about what living virtuously entails. This is typically associated with positive examples, but as we have seen (3.2.2) negative examples can also be used (e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 120; cf. Phil 1:15, 17). In 3:2 Paul uses

¹⁷ See respectively Epicurus, *Key Doctrines* 13, 14 (Hicks, LCL), and 28.

¹⁸ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.2.2 (Oldfather, LCL): “for if you wish to maintain freedom of moral purpose in its natural condition, all security is yours, every facility yours, you have no trouble (εἰ γὰρ προαίρεισιν θέλεις τηρῆσαι κατὰ φύσιν ἔχουσιν, πᾶσά σοι ἀσφάλεια, πᾶσά σοι εὐμάρεια, πρᾶγμα οὐκ ἔχεις).”

¹⁹ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.16.9 (Oldfather, LCL): “Therefore, until these fine ideas of yours are firmly fixed within you, and you have acquired some power which will guarantee you security (μέχρις ἂν οὖν παγῶσιν ἐν ὑμῖν αἱ κομψαὶ ὑπολήψεις καὶ δυναμὴν τινα περιποιήσῃσθε πρὸς ἀσφάλειαν), my advice to you is to be cautious about joining issue with the laymen.” Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.26.14–15; 4.1.91–99, 172; 4.4.6; *Ench.* 4.

²⁰ Diogenes Laertius 6.13 (Hicks, LCL): Τεῖχος ἀσφαλέστατον φρόνησιν· μήτε γὰρ καταρεῖν μήτε προδίδοσθαι.

²¹ My trans.: ξύλον ζωῆς ἐστὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἀντεχομένοις αὐτῆς, καὶ τοῖς ἐπεριδομένοις ἐπ’ αὐτὴν ὡς ἐπὶ κύριον ἀσφαλής. Cf. also Wis 7:23.

(Christian?) Jewish missionaries to set up a perspective on life that stands in contrast to the virtuous life Paul has been arguing for.

It is clear from the language used that Paul indeed feels strongly about this group. The threefold βλέπετε has often been treated as “beware of/be cautious of.”²² While the pointed and derisive expressions (κύων, κακὸς ἐργάτης, κατατομή) might seem to indicate a warning, the broader context of Paul’s argument indicates that βλέπετε is most likely to be rendered “consider.”²³ The main point in bringing up this group is not for the purpose of countering their demand for the Philippians to get circumcised.²⁴ Paul gives no extended arguments countering this position like he does in Galatians when there was an actual threat.²⁵ The focus is rather on setting up what has become the focus of Paul’s life which he is persuading the Philippians to adopt as the focus of their lives (cf. 3:17).²⁶ This can be seen in the way that he takes up the missionaries’ way of life (πεποίθησις ἐν σαρκί), and uses it as a bridge to discuss his own previous manner of life. The “fleshly” orientation of the missionaries, as with Paul’s “fleshly” orientation, is the negative foil to Paul’s new orientation after his encounter with Christ.

After enumerating his “fleshly” orientation (which may be best described as an earthly, limited way of thinking and living, cf. 3:19) in terms of inherited privileges and personal accomplishments (3:5–6), Paul presents his new orientation in a way that correlates to how the goal of life is presented in moral philosophy. As discussed above (see chapter 3, and for a summary see 3.3) it was widely held in moral philosophy that there was *one* goal at which one’s life should aim. This goal was to become the singular

²² E.g. Reed, “Philippians 3:1,” 85–86.

²³ See, e.g., George D. Kilpatrick, “ΒΛΕΠΕΤΕ, Philippians 3:2,” in *In Memoriam Paul Kahle* (eds. Matthew Black and Georg Fohrer; BZAW 103; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1968), 146–48. Cf. 1 Cor 1:26; 10:18.

²⁴ Pace, e.g., Williams, *Enemies of the Cross*, 159–62; Tellbe, *Paul between Synagogue and State*, 259–60; Brian J. Dodd, “The Story of Christ and the Imitation of Paul in Philippians 2–3,” in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2* (eds. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 154–57. For a position similar to mine see Holloway, *Consolation*, 133–35.

²⁵ Cf. Hooker, “Phantom Opponents,” 391.

²⁶ Of course what Paul says in 3:3 (ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἔσμεν ἢ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες) provides a perspective on the issue of circumcision that does counter any position that makes it a necessity for membership in the people of God. However, the force of the argument as it unfolds is not on providing arguments for this proposition. The movement in the argument is towards presenting a model of thinking and living that takes Christ as the goal of life. This is clear from the Christocentric focus in 3:7–14, and the way in which Paul exhorts the Philippians to reason like him about life (3:15) and even specifically calls them to imitate him in 3:17.

point of orientation under which all other goals and pursuits were subsumed. Organizing life in this way would therefore map out a life-course for how to live in that all choices and actions were made with the view toward attaining this singular goal. While Paul in Phil 3:7–11 does not use the language of the moral philosophers (e.g. τέλος, ἄριστος, ἀγαθός), the orientation toward one singular goal and the revaluation of everything in light of this goal, along with how this goal maps out a life-course for how to live, is indeed present. This is evident in Paul’s negative construal of everything in light of Christ in 3:7–8, which ends with the purpose clause ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ. The life-course that is mapped out by this singular goal is presented in how Paul discusses the way in which he desires to know Christ, expressed in 3:10–11.

Paul begins his revaluation of values in light of Christ in 3:7 using the accounting language of gains and losses.²⁷ The movement in this passage is progressively toward an orientation that values Christ as the singular greatest good in life which relativizes everything else. This is evident in the movement from speaking about his gains in his previous way of living (ἅτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη) as a loss (ζημίαν), to speaking about all things (πάντα) as a loss (ζημίαν), and finally in his description of all things as refuse (σκύβαλα). This last term heightens the contrast to an extreme position. Josephus uses the term σκύβαλον to refer to the dung found in sewers and in cattle fields,²⁸ and others use it to refer to unwanted scraps that are to be thrown out.²⁹ The point conveyed is that compared to gaining Christ, everything else is worthless. The progression in Paul’s thought is also indicated by the verbs he uses. He begins with the perfect ἤγημαι and then uses the present ἡγοῦμαι, signaling that he *has* considered what was once gain as a loss and he *is* now considering all things as a loss. The present ἡγοῦμαι is used again with σκύβαλα making this the crescendo of his negative appraisal of all else in light of Christ.

The goal of Paul’s new orientation is also progressively presented in the passage culminating in the purpose clause of 3:8–9. He begins with the statement that he has considered his previous gains as a loss διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν (3:7). This prepositional phrase

²⁷ See LSJ, 755, 942–43; Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 5.4.13–14; James Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914–1929), 273.

²⁸ Josephus, *BJ* 5.13.7.

²⁹ See *Greek Anthology* 1.462–63; Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 2.11.5. Cf. Reumann, *Philippians*, 492.

could be understood either in the causal sense of Christ's incursion into Paul's life bringing about his revaluation of values, or it could be understood as "for the sake of Christ" indicating the motivation of Paul's revaluation. Given that the movement in Paul's argument is toward gaining Christ, it is best to understand this prepositional phrase (and those that follow) as indicating the motivation of Paul's change in values.³⁰ Paul has revaluated everything in life for the sake of gaining Christ. For him Christ has become the τέλος/*summum bonum* of life which leads him to reorient all in light of attaining this goal. This is emphasized even further in that he describes this singular orientation in terms of τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου. The genitive τῆς γνώσεως is best understood as exegetical, indicating that the surpassing thing is the knowledge of Christ Jesus (an objective genitive) my Lord. The expression τὸ ὑπερέχον used to describe the knowledge of Christ parallels how knowledge of the goal is discussed in moral philosophical thought.

All of the moral philosophies examined in ch. 3 emphasize the importance of having knowledge of the ultimate goal of life. As discussed above (3.1) Aristotle emphasized that knowledge of the ultimate goal of life was absolutely necessary in living a good life.³¹ He uses the imagery of an archer aiming at a target to elucidate what he means. Just as the archer must have knowledge of the target in order to hit the mark, so too must people in life have knowledge of the ultimate goal in order to attain it. Cicero, in discussing the Hellenistic moral philosophies (see 3.2 above), also emphasizes the importance of knowing what the ultimate goal in life is. Once this is settled, one knows what is ultimately good and evil.³² For the Epicureans, of course, it is crucial to know that the ultimate goal in life consists in living according to pleasure. For the Stoics it is imperative that one knows that virtue alone is good and is in what the ultimate goal of life consists. For all ancient moral philosophies knowing the ultimate goal of life is the

³⁰ Cf. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 385. By reading this prepositional phrase as "for the sake of" rather than "because of" is not to say that Paul's conversion does not also inform the language that is used here; rather, it is to place the emphasis on the overall perspective of 3:7–8, which presents Paul orienting his life toward gaining Christ and revaluing all in light of this singular goal. Paul's conversion, of course, brought about this new orientation.

³¹ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.2.2.

³² Cicero, *Fin.* 5.6.15–16.

most important aspect of identifying the nature of the good life. Paul, similarly, in Phil 3:8 indicates that the one superlative thing is knowledge of Christ. While Paul gives a more personal experiential coloring to this superlative goal,³³ it still functions similarly to knowledge of the ultimate goal in ancient moral philosophy in that it is the one superior thing that must be identified and used to orient one's life.³⁴

The kind of organizational structure to life that comes from having Christ as the goal of one's life is filled out in 3:10–11. In moral philosophy the goal of life would map out a life-course for how one should live in that one would make choices and actions with respect to attaining this goal. In 3:10–11 there is a similar presentation of how orienting one's life toward gaining Christ maps out a way of living. Paul begins with the power of Christ's resurrection, which more than likely is to highlight the enabling power to live a new kind of life. This is coupled with sharing the sufferings of Christ, being conformed to Christ's death, and finally attaining the resurrection from the dead. As many have noted, the pattern of life that is found here follows the plot structure of the Christ hymn (a downward movement followed by an upward one).³⁵ With Christ as the goal of life the life-course that is mapped out is naturally the pattern of living presented in the story of Christ (Phil 2:6–11). All choices and actions in life are to be made in a way that analogously follows the pattern of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. This way of living is the path toward ultimately gaining Christ.

³³ This is evident in Paul's expression *κύριος μου*.

³⁴ There is an interesting ancient connection between knowledge and being like that which is known. This is present in a common assumption that Aristotle uses in his argument about how there are different kinds of rational faculties in the reasoning part of the soul. He indicates this in the following manner (*Eth. nic.* 6.1.5; trans. Broadie and Rowe): "Let us assume the parts possessing reason to be two, one by virtue of which we reflect upon the sorts of things whose principles cannot be otherwise, one by virtue of which we reflect upon things that can be otherwise; for with things that are generically distinct, the part of the soul that stands in a natural relationship to each genus will itself be generically distinct, given that they have cognition in accordance with a certain likeness and affinity to their objects." This kind of assumption could play a role in how Paul moves from knowing Christ to addressing the way in which this shapes his manner of living in terms that conform to what he has described about Christ (Phil 2:6–11). Knowing Christ, within this way of understanding knowledge, would necessarily entail becoming like Christ.

³⁵ Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philippians," in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays* (eds. Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2002), 109; Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus* (JSNTSup 36; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 99–100; David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 213.

Several have commented on the fact that Paul expresses hesitancy about his participation in the resurrection, which he presents elsewhere as a certainty for believers (e.g. 1 Cor 15:20–23).³⁶ While Paul has indeed expressed confidence of being with Christ upon his death in Philippians (1:23), he has indicated reserve in attaining this at previous places (e.g. 1 Cor 9:27). His hesitancy in 3:11 should be understood as a real perspective on his future and not underestimated as some have done.³⁷ Given the context, where Paul has been discussing reevaluating everything in order to gain Christ, and the emphasis on moral progress in this letter (cf. 1:25), Paul is more than likely here indicating how he views his life as in progress. He is moving toward the ultimate goal of life and is attempting to live according to the life-course mapped out by this goal, i.e. conforming his life to Christ's.³⁸ The hesitancy reflects the real possibility that he might not make progress as is needed to attain the ultimate goal of life.³⁹ Paul's hesitancy emphasizes that he has not arrived at his goal,⁴⁰ which entails that there is still a real possibility of getting off the course and therefore failing to attain the goal.⁴¹

³⁶ See, e.g., Randall E. Otto, "If Possible I May Attain the Resurrection from the Dead" (Philippians 3:11)," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 324–340.

³⁷ E.g. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 412–13. Paul's usage of this expression elsewhere also supports viewing this as a genuine uncertainty about future events. See Rom 1:10 and 11:14; cf. BDAG, 279.

³⁸ Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 11.3, who indicates that Paul expresses himself in this way because he desires to endure great things, imitating Christ, and conforming his life to Christ's. Chrysostom also describes Paul's life-course in this text as a race (στάδιον), which has struggles (ἄθλους), and contests (ἀγῶνας). Ἐὰν δυνηθῶ τοσαῦτα παθεῖν, ἐὰν δυνηθῶ μιμήσασθαι αὐτόν, ἂν δυνηθῶ σύμμορφος αὐτῷ γενέσθαι. Οἶον, πολλὰ ἔπαθεν ὁ Χριστός, ἐνεπτύσθη, ἐρραπίσθη, ἐμαστιγιώθη, ὕστερον ἀπέθανε. Τοῦτο στάδιον ἐστὶ· διὰ πάντων τούτων δεῖ πρὸς τὴν ἀνάστασιν αὐτοῦ φθάσαι, πάντας τοὺς ἄθλους ἐνεγκόντας. Ἡ τοῖνον τοῦτό φησιν, ἢ ὅτι Ἐὰν καταξιωθῶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τυχεῖν εὐδοκίμου, παρρησίαν ἐχούσης, εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν φθάσω τὴν αὐτοῦ. Ἄν γὰρ δυνηθῶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας πάντας ἐνεγκεῖν, καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν αὐτοῦ δυνήσομαι σχεῖν, καὶ μετὰ δόξης ἀναστῆναι.

³⁹ This seems much more plausible than Otto ("If Possible," 340) who argues it reflects his concern to attain a special resurrection for martyrs.

⁴⁰ Cf. Todd D. Still's comments about Paul's reserve in this text in *Philippians & Philemon* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 108.

⁴¹ Others have made similar arguments; however, the concern has typically been to present this perspective as a corrective to some opponents who are teaching a form of perfectionism (i.e. they have experienced religious eschatological perfection); e.g. Helmut Koester, "The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment (Philippians III)," *NTS* 8 (1961–62): 323–24. While I agree that Paul is indicating a real hesitancy about his future in this passage, I disagree that it is to counter some perfectionist tendency. The "perfect" language that is used in 3:12–15 is best understood in light of goals rather than the language of opponents (see the argument below). Furthermore, as noted above, the "Judaizing" threat, which is usually connected to the perfectionist heresy, does not seem to be very acute, and Paul's argument unfolds in a way that indicates countering the "Judaizers" arguments is not his main concern.

8.2. Pursuing Christ as the τέλος of Life: The Image of the Runner (Phil 3:12–14)

Having presented Christ as the singular goal of his life and described the life-course that is mapped out by this goal, Paul vividly depicts this orientation in terms of a runner striving toward the finish line in 3:12–14. As argued in 5.2 above this imagery is presented in a way that reflects the rhetorical technique of vivid speech and therefore plays an important role in Paul's argument. Its importance can be seen in how it summarizes Paul's orientation (as it is presented in 3:7–11) and from how his call for them to imitate him (*συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε*) immediately follows this imagery. As will be argued below this imagery indeed presents *in nuce* the way of thinking about life that Paul has been arguing for throughout the entire letter.

The imagery is set up with a series of negative statements followed by parallel positive assertions. It begins with a clarificatory expression in 3:12: οὐχ ὅτι. While Paul often uses this expression to clarify a point, it can be used to set up what he wants to say, rather than being a means of addressing a potential misunderstanding or challenging the opposition's argument as some have understood it.⁴² This negative qualifier is followed by two verbs, which are both preceded by ἤδη and neither have objects. There has been much discussion as to what the object of these verbs should be.⁴³ Given the flow of thought in 3:7–11 with its emphasis on gaining Christ and then the description of what this entails, it naturally follows that the topic under consideration in 3:12 is still that of gaining Christ; i.e. attaining the ultimate goal of life. The object that should be supplied, therefore, is Christ in the terms that Paul has just been describing him.⁴⁴ While it is fairly clear what the first verb (*ἔλαβον*) conveys, there has been some debate about what the second verb (*τετελείωμαι*) conveys. Most have argued that Paul is taking up the language of the opponents and is indicating, in contrast to what they claim, that he has not been

⁴² E.g. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 420. The repetition of "not ... but ..." clauses heightens the rhetorical force of the passage leading up to the ἐν δέ that introduces the athletic imagery. The clarification is more than likely connected to this rhetorical maneuver rather than anything else.

⁴³ See the six options listed in O'Brien, *Philippians*, 420–21.

⁴⁴ So O'Brien, *Philippians*, 421–22; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 220.

perfected.⁴⁵ However, the verb can convey the idea of not having arrived at a goal.⁴⁶ Paul has used goal-like language already in this letter (1:6), has presented a perspective on life that is moving toward a goal, and, as I have been arguing, the logic of his argument unfolds according to the structure of thought in moral philosophy, which had a teleological orientation. The verb fits well with what Paul has been arguing for in this letter and does not have to be viewed as a term from “perfectionist” opponents. The force of 3:12 in light of the argument in this epistle is best understood as indicating that Paul has not yet received Christ as the τέλος of his life. This interpretation fits best with the surrounding context in that it flows seamlessly out of his description of his new orientation in 3:7–11 and coheres well with the athletic imagery that follows, which depicts Paul running toward a goal.⁴⁷

The positive assertion, describing what Paul is doing, begins with the verb διώκω. This verb presents Paul as pursuing something. The present tense indicates continuous action, and it is highly likely that the image of the runner running toward the goal is already in view.⁴⁸ The clause that follows presents Paul’s expectation; that is, that he might apprehend something.⁴⁹ Having argued above that the most likely object of the two verbs in the first clause is the goal Paul is aiming his life at (viz. Christ, the τέλος of his life), this should also be understood as the object of the verb καταλάβω. Paul then indicates that this goal he is pursuing is that for which Christ apprehended him.⁵⁰ This allusion to his conversion experience highlights Christ’s initiative and activity in Paul’s life which began his movement on the path of making progress toward “gaining Christ.”

⁴⁵ E.g. Koester, “Purpose of the Polemic,” 322–23; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 423; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 221.

⁴⁶ BDAG, 996. The middle/passive form can convey an active idea such as in Luke 13:32: “on the third day I will reach my goal (τῆ τρίτῃ τελειοῦμαι).” Cf. Delling, *TDNT* 8:83–84; Hübner, *EDNT* 3:344.

⁴⁷ It is interesting that John Chrysostom (*Hom. Phil.* 11.3–12.2), who is known for his vituperation against the Jews, does not interpret this text in a way that sees them as being addressed with this term, or the terms that follow.

⁴⁸ Cf. John Chrysostom (*Hom. Phil.* 11.3) who views 3:12 in light of athletic imagery. He describes Paul’s statement in the following manner: “Ἐτι ἐναγώνιος μοι ὁ βίος, ἔτι τοῦ τέλους εἰμι πόρρω, ἔτι τῶν βραβείων ἀφ᾽έστηκα, ἔτι τρέχω, ἔτι διώκω.

⁴⁹ See BDF, 375, for how εἰ is used as an expression of expectation.

⁵⁰ The prepositional phrase ἐφ’ ᾧ is probably best understood as elliptical for τοῦτο ἐφ’ ᾧ, rather than causal as Joseph A. Fitzmyer has argued (“The Consecutive Meaning of ΕΦ’ Ω in Romans 5.12,” *NTS* 39 [1993]: 321–339, esp. 330). Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.11.20 and 3.7.7, who also uses the expression in this same manner.

The initial positive description of Paul's life highlights several features that are vividly portrayed in the imagery that follows; viz. running, striving to attain the goal of his life, and an initiative *extra se* compelling him to make progress.

After another negative statement (3:13a) paralleling the first clause in 3:12,⁵¹ Paul signals there is one thing that he does consider. The expression ἐν δέ emphasizes the singularity of Paul's reasoning about his life (cf. 1:27; 2:2; 4:2); i.e. he has one way of thinking about how to live. The athletic imagery that follows vividly displays this and calls forth a web of associations connected to a runner in a race. The runner imagery begins with two participial clauses balanced with the particles μέν ... δέ. The first clause, Paul's forgetting what is behind, has been understood in terms of him 1) forgetting his past privileges and achievements in Judaism,⁵² 2) forgetting his current accomplishments in his missionary activity,⁵³ or 3) forgetting both his past in Judaism and his accomplishments as a Christian.⁵⁴ This last option has the most merit. Paul's disregard for anything and everything (cf. 3:8) that may hinder him from attaining his goal is likely what is being presented. This all-encompassing disregard for anything but the goal coheres with how Lucian, a satirist writing in the second-century CE, portrays the runner:

Immediately the *hysplex* has fallen the good runner thinks only of what is in front of him and, stretching (ἀποτείνω) his mind toward the *terma* and putting his hope of victory in his feet, does not plot against the fellow next to him or even consider his competitors. (Lucian, *Cal.* 12; trans. Miller, 21)

In this text the good runner is presented as thinking *only* of what is in front of him and disregarding all else. In a similar way the expression τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος is likely indicating the neglect of and disregard for anything except for that which lies ahead, viz. the goal and that which is associated with attaining it.

⁵¹ The use of repetition and negation are linguistic features of vivid speech, see the discussion in 5.1.4 above. It is likely that these are being used here to build anticipation for the full visualization of Paul's life (see 5.2).

⁵² E.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 348; Morna D. Hooker, "The Letter to the Philippians," in *NIB* vol. 11 (ed. Leander E. Keck et al.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 533; Reumann, *Philippians*, 555.

⁵³ E.g. Holloway, *Consolation*, 142; cf. Marvin R. Vincent, *Epistles to Philippians and to Philemon* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 109; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 429.

⁵⁴ E.g. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 222.

The second clause fills out the athletic imagery in a positive direction, indicating what Paul does concern himself with. The participle *ἐπεκτεινόμενος*, a vivid verb as we have already seen (see 5.2 above), presents the intensity of Paul’s efforts. The preposition prefixed to *ἐκτείνω* (stretch out) gives the participle an emphatic nuance and thus the definition “to exert oneself to the uttermost” is most appropriate.⁵⁵ This kind of exertion, while indicated above in Lucian who uses a similar verb to Paul, is also presented on an epigram which portrays the runner’s entire body as stamped with the expectation of winning the prize.⁵⁶ That to which Paul exerts himself to the uttermost is designated with a dative plural: *τοῖς ... ἔμπροσθεν*. This at first seems out of place since Paul will state in 3:14 that he presses on toward the goal (singular). As we have seen above Paul’s singular orientation is indeed toward gaining Christ, the goal of his life. However, there are things before him that are part of attaining this goal, such as the virtues (i.e. confidence in suffering, concern for others, reasoning shaped by the Christ hymn) he has been attempting to persuade the Philippians to embrace. The plural article is likely highlighting this aspect of how Paul lives. He is strenuously stretching forward to those things that are necessary to attain the goal of gaining Christ fully.

The one goal in view in 3:14, on which Paul is singularly focused and for which he strenuously exerts himself, can be safely identified as Christ. This is evident in that gaining Christ has been the focus of Paul’s argument in 3:7–11, and as argued above the objectless verbs in 3:12 are best understood as referring to Christ. The flow of the argument, therefore, entails that this is what the *σκοπός* is for Paul.⁵⁷ This is further supported in that the verb *διώκω* is used in 3:12 to indicate this and is repeated again in 3:14. After presenting himself as a runner who is only concerned with that which lies ahead of him (living virtuously to attain the ultimate goal of life), Paul continues this

⁵⁵ BDAG, 361.

⁵⁶ *Greek Anthology*, 16.54 (trans. Miller, 254): “As you were in life, Ladas, flying before wind-foot Thymos barely touching the ground with the tips of your toes, just so did Myron cast you in bronze engraving all over your body expectation of the crown of Pisa. He is full of hope, with the breath on the tips of his lips blowing from within his hollow ribs bronze ready to jump out for the crown—the base cannot hold it back art swifter than the wind.”

⁵⁷ The preposition *κατά* is best rendered “toward” as in Luke 10:32; Acts 16:7; cf. BDAG, 511.

vivid description portraying himself as a runner continuously making progress toward the finish line (i.e. Christ as the ultimate goal of his life).

As in athletics, those who win are rewarded with a prize, so too does Paul continue the athletic imagery in this fashion.⁵⁸ The prize is qualified by a series of genitives τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ. Given the way in which Paul uses the noun κλήσις to refer to God's call to salvation,⁵⁹ the prize is best understood as that which is held out in God's salvific call (thus a subjective genitive).⁶⁰ The adverb ἄνω signals not the origin of the call, but the direction of it, i.e. it is one that moves upward.⁶¹ With this calling Paul indicates a key theme of the letter, God's activity in the life of believers, and fills out the path of the life-course on which he is running in a way that analogously parallels the final act in the Christ hymn (2:9–11).⁶²

As already discussed above, the usage of athletics was a prominent feature of moral philosophies in presenting what it meant to live a virtuous life. This was present in Seneca, Epictetus, and Dio Chrysostom (see 4.3.2–4) who all used imagery from the combat sports to depict what was needed to live well. While runner imagery was used widely to depict the entirety of life (see 4.4), the closest perspective to Paul's usage of the runner is that from Lucretius (see 4.3.1). He presents Epicurus as laying out the nature of the *summum bonum* and in doing so indicating a course by which one should run, striving for the ultimate goal of life. This imagery encapsulates the Epicurean moral philosophical project summing up how one should think and live and even uses some Latin terms that are parallel to the athletic terms Paul uses in 3:13–14.

With the image of the runner Paul also encapsulates what he has been persuading the Philippians to embrace; i.e. how they should think and live. Like the runner Paul depicts his life as aiming at one goal: Christ. This goal is the central and all encompassing focus of Paul's life. Not only is he aiming at this goal and structuring his life to attain it, but he

⁵⁸ Cf. the sarcophagus from Aphrodisias where the person in the tomb is being presented as having passed through the seasons, the cycles of life, and attained victory (see 4.4 above).

⁵⁹ Cf. Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 1:26; 7:20.

⁶⁰ See O'Brien, *Philippians*, 433.

⁶¹ Cf. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 432; BDAG, 92.

⁶² Cf. 4.1 above and the discussion of how it was believed that the gods aided athletes to attain victory (see esp. Pindar, *Pyth.* 8.61–66; 10.10–12).

is also strenuously exerting himself in the contest to attain this goal, highlighting how he lives virtuously. The reward for attaining this goal is presented in terms of a prize; it is the reward of salvation already discussed in this letter and which here is portrayed in terms of an upward movement, which will be filled out more fully in 3:21. The runner imagery presents *in nuce* the kind of life Paul has been arguing for the Philippians to embrace throughout this letter in that it presents a teleological perspective on life, a life-course that is a contest of virtue which requires human exertion but is enabled by divine activity, and a reward for fully attaining the goal of life. This is how Paul thinks about and lives his life and is the way of thinking and living that he hopes the Philippians will embrace as well.

The import of the runner imagery in Paul's argument is also indicated by its vivid nature. As discussed in ch. 5 (esp. 5.1.3) the rhetorical technique of vivid speech was considered a powerful means of persuasion. It was used to evoke a particular response within an audience by capitalizing on a common visual library and the norms associated with those images. In Phil 3:12–14 Paul is doing something similar. He is using the vivid description of a runner to depict his own life. This taps into the common portraits of runners imprinted in the mind of the audience, which were naturally associated with goal-orientation, exertion, and reward. In portraying his life as a runner Paul can capitalize on these norms and interweave them with his argument in this letter. The power of this imagery in Paul's argument can therefore be seen in how it presents a picture before the eyes of the audience which sums up Paul's epistolary aim in this letter, i.e. persuading the Philippians to continue pursuing Christ as the *τέλος* of life and all that this entails, viz. living virtuously.

The significance of the runner imagery is also evident from how it is connected in two other important ways with Paul's argumentative agenda in this letter. The first is the way in which it relates to the *imitatio Pauli* motif that dominates Philippians. As argued above (6.2), Paul's self-presentation in Phil 1:12–26 largely functions to provide an example for the Philippians. The material in 3:4–14 arguably serves the same purpose, which is even explicitly indicated in 3:17. The beginning of the letter closing (4:9) also emphasizes this motif. The central focus on imitating Paul makes the image of the

runner, which depicts Paul's life *in toto*, even more significant. The second way in which this imagery's importance is indicated in the letter is by its connection to 1:27–30 and 4:3. As argued above, the language in 1:27–30 is athletic and presents Paul and the Philippians in a contest of virtue. The same language is used in 4:3 when Paul specifically addresses two people. In the opening thesis statement and towards the end of Paul's argument athletic language is used to persuade the Philippians to think and live in a particular way. This calls attention to the importance of thinking about life as an athletic contest, which the image of the runner in 3:13–14 more fully elaborates. Given these connections, the vivid nature of the runner imagery, and the way in which it encapsulates Paul's argument, it is safe to conclude that this imagery stands at the heart of Paul's argument summarizing what he is persuading the Philippians to do.

8.3. Exhortation to Live Virtuously: Learning from Examples and Rules (Phil 3:15–4:7)

Having vividly depicted his life oriented toward gaining Christ as the *τέλος* of life, Paul in 3:15 moves to specifically address the Philippians. A shift is indicated with the inferential *οὖν* and the move from using primarily the first person singular (since 3:4) to using the first person plural (*φρονῶμεν*) and the second person plural (*φρονεῖτε*). Paul in this section of the letter exhorts the Philippians to think and live in the way he has just presented himself thinking and living (cf. the relationship between 1:12–26 and 1:27–2:18). He uses positive and negative *exempla* and political imagery again to encourage them to embrace this path. He concludes the main body of the letter with a specific exhortation to two members of the Philippian congregation, using athletic language, and gives rule-like instructions that reinforce the nature of the virtuous life.

In Phil 3:15 Paul applies his example of pursuing Christ to the Philippian situation by exhorting them, whoever are *τέλειοι*, to reason in the way Paul reasons about his life (*τοῦτο φρονῶμεν*). There has been much debate about what is meant by the term *τέλειοι*. Some have claimed that Paul is ironically taking up the language of opponents.⁶³ They

⁶³ E.g. Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 156; Reumann, *Philippians*, 559–560.

claim to be perfect, so the argument goes, but Paul, using their term of self-description, indicates that those who are “perfect” are the ones who view their lives as in progress, i.e. as not having become perfect. Another interpretation takes the term not as ironic and from the opponents, but rather understands it as a term from Paul and one that indicates those who are mature (cf. 1 Cor 2:6); i.e., morally and spiritually mature.⁶⁴ This last option is the most convincing given that Paul includes himself in this group and that he has used this expression positively in other places. The notion of “mature” can be developed further in view of the logic of Paul’s argument in this letter, and the immediate context where Paul has presented himself as pursuing a goal. Several have noted the possible play on *τελ-* terms in this passage, but have not pursued this word-play in light of the structure of thought in moral philosophy. With Paul having presented himself as not having arrived at the goal of gaining Christ (*τετελείωμαι*), but pressing on to attain it, it is likely that the term *τέλειοι* plays on the idea of goal-orientation so present in this portion of his argument, which, as argued above, parallels the teleological orientation in moral philosophical thought. The word-play highlights that the mature disposition Paul has in view is the one that is intent on pursuing Christ as the *τέλος* of life. Those who are mature (goal-oriented) should reason about life the way Paul has been in 3:7–14. This play on *τελ-* terms also sets up the contrast in 3:19–21 between those who have an earthly way of reasoning, whose end (*τέλος*) is destruction, and those whose citizenship is in heaven, whose end is complete conformity to Christ, i.e., fully gaining Christ as the *τέλος* of life. Keeping the “goal” connotation of this language in play fits well with the nature of Paul’s argument in this letter, which as I have been arguing is thoroughly teleological, i.e. oriented toward gaining Christ as the *τέλος* of life.

Paul next indicates that there might be some who reason differently about life than he does. These people are potentially those who have a problem with suffering (cf. 1:28–29)

⁶⁴ E.g. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 436–37; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 225–26; Hooker, “Philippians,” 533–34. Cf. Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120, who also rejects the perfectionist reading, and argues instead that the issue addressed is Christian inertia where some are not willing to exert themselves, especially if this entails suffering. Holloway, *Consolation*, 142, also rejects the perfectionist reading and argues that the group addressed are those who are looking back at past accomplishments instead of being focused on what is ahead. I agree with both that the force of Paul’s argument is to get them to move forward, but I think this is best understood in light of how the *τέλος* functions in moral philosophical thought.

and those who are having issues with each other (cf. 2:3–4; 4:2).⁶⁵ Paul’s tone in this text is irenic, highlighting that the differences in view are not major. Whatever the points of disagreement might be Paul does express confidence in God who will disclose to these people the correct way of reasoning about life. Here we see again Paul connecting divine activity to thinking and living in a particular way, viz. oriented toward gaining Christ as the τέλος of life. Paul throughout this epistle has expressed his confidence in God to enable the Philippians to make progress in the right kind of way (1:6; 2:13), which parallels how some moral philosophers thought about the activity of God in the life of those attempting to live virtuously (see 7.3 above).

After expressing this confidence in God, Paul then encourages the Philippians not to regress in the path that they are on. The conjunctive adverb πλὴν is best understood as emphasizing what is important, rather than indicating a contrast.⁶⁶ The prepositional phrase that follows picks up the imagery of movement toward a goal (εἰς ὃ).⁶⁷ The Philippians and Paul (ἐφθάσαμεν) are on the path of making progress toward the ultimate goal of gaining Christ, and they have arrived at a certain point in this path. The final clause tersely indicates how they are to continue in this path. While the verb στοιχέω was originally used to convey the idea of lining up in military formation,⁶⁸ in the NT and in other contemporaneous literature the verb is used figuratively to connote conformity to some standard.⁶⁹ The infinitive is most likely being used in a hortatory manner, conveying the idea of “let us conform.” That which they are to conform to is not exactly clear in this clause; it is simply identified as “the same thing.” If this compact statement is the earliest form of the text, which is probably likely, then early interpreters clarified

⁶⁵ Cf. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 226–27.

⁶⁶ See BDAG, 826; cf. 1 Cor 11:11; Phil 4:14.

⁶⁷ BDAG, 1053. They cite BGU 522.6 and Rom 9:31 in support of this connotation of the verb. In confirming this further, there are actually several references in ancient Greek literature where φθάνω + εἰς conveys the idea of coming to or arriving at a place. E.g. Philo, *Rewards* 26.3; *Abr.* 161.2; *Somn.* 1.36; Josephus, *B.J.* 3.142; Strabo, *Georg.* 1.3.8; 17.1.54. Cf. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 441 (italics in original), who renders the clause as “to the point we have reached,” and indicates (441 n.130) that the image conveyed with this prepositional phrase is “a point on a line that has been reached on the way to an ultimate goal.”

⁶⁸ See LSJ, 1647–48.

⁶⁹ See BDAG, 946; cf. Musonius Rufus 8.136; 18B.48.

this clause with the addition of the phrase *κανόνι, τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν*.⁷⁰ Modern commentators have affirmed the cogency of this explanation, agreeing that there is some standard, a way of reasoning, that they share in common that Paul is calling them to continue to conform to.⁷¹ This indeed fits well with the context which highlights that there are mature ones in the Philippian community who are reasoning in such a way, and it coheres well with the entire argument of the letter which has emphasized that the Philippians are making progress, but that they need to continue to think and live in a particular way (cf. 2:12). The force of this compact verse, therefore, is to encourage the Philippians to continue to conform to the pattern of thinking and living (i.e. the standard) that has brought them to the point where they are in making progress on the path toward attaining the ultimate goal of life.

Paul in 3:17 then exhorts the Philippians, making explicit what has been implicit throughout the letter, to join together in imitating him. As most commentators have argued, the phrase *συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε* is best understood as “be co-imitators of me,” instead of “be imitators with me of [Christ].”⁷² This is supported from the fact that Christ is not specifically mentioned in the surrounding context. The focus has been entirely on how Paul thinks about and lives his life; of course, how he lives is patterned after Christ. The exhortation is for them to imitate Paul in his focus on gaining Christ as the *τέλος* of life, which has been the focus of Phil 3.

The call to imitate this pattern of thinking and living is then developed further with positive and negative *exempla*.⁷³ Paul points out that they should pay attention to those who are living in the way that Paul lives (*οὕτω*). He even uses the term *τύπος* to indicate the way in which he is thinking about his own example and the exemplary behavior of others who live similarly. The language of imitating and people serving as *τύποι* are both found frequently in the moral philosophical tradition (as discussed above, see 3.2.1,

⁷⁰ See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 615.

⁷¹ E.g. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 228.

⁷² E.g. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 445; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 228; Hooker, “Philippians,” 534.

⁷³ Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 120, who discusses how one can learn what is virtuous from both positive and negative examples (see 3.2.2 above).

3.2.2, 6.2, 7.2, 7.4).⁷⁴ Epictetus even argues that it is necessary to set down a certain *τύπος* for oneself in social situations so that one will behave correctly.⁷⁵ For Paul the positive examples in view are most likely Epaphroditus and Timothy, but there may be others as well. The people who are living as Paul is, orienting their lives toward gaining Christ as the *τέλος* of life and are living virtuously, are the ones that the Philippians should pattern their lives after. Their way of living stands in contrast to another group of people whose ways of thinking and living the Philippians should avoid.

The negative *exempla* that Paul introduces in 3:18 are set in contrast to the positive *exempla* just mentioned. The identity of this group has long been debated. Several have argued that Paul is returning to his critique of the Jewish faction mentioned in 3:2 and is sarcastically describing their Jewish practices (viz. dietary restrictions and circumcision).⁷⁶ However, as Karl Olav Sandnes has convincingly argued, all of the descriptors used in 3:19 are best understood in terms of the common critique of how some (mis)understood Epicureanism, i.e. a self-serving licentious lifestyle.⁷⁷ They are likely people who have responded to the gospel in some fashion; hence, Paul speaks about himself weeping when speaking of them, but they have at some point turned to adopt ways of living that are contrary to the gospel. This is intimated in the characterization of them as enemies of the cross of Christ, which calls attention to behavior that is opposed to the pattern of living marked out by the Christ hymn.⁷⁸ That is, it is a way of living that is self-centered, self-indulgent, and avoids suffering.

⁷⁴ For how this language is used more broadly see Michaelis, *TDNT* 4.659–66, who emphasizes that in Greco-Roman literature it is particularly associated with imitating the divine, and in Hellenistic Jewish texts, it is used in discussions of imitating exemplary men. See Goppelt, *TDNT* 8.246–59, who discusses some of the texts that use the term *τύπος* for ethical examples; although, he does point out that *παράδειγμα* is more frequently used for this. Cf. Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 39–46, who discusses the use of examples and appeals to imitation in deliberative rhetoric.

⁷⁵ Epictetus, *Ench.* 33.

⁷⁶ E.g. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 166; Chris Mearns, “The Identity of Paul’s Opponents at Philippi,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 194–204.

⁷⁷ Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 145–59, note esp. 155–56 (italics in the original), where he states “the Achilles’ heel of this ‘Jewish’ interpretation is that a rhetoric, which Jewish sources have appropriated and turned against lenient observers of Jewish custom – is here supposed to be targeting people who *continue* to observe them faithfully.” Cf. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 231–32.

⁷⁸ Cf. Williams, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ*, 222–23.

In 3:18–19 Paul connects living in a certain way with reasoning and a movement toward an end (τέλος). Living in a particular way is emphasized by how the negative *exempla* are introduced (πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν). As noted above (7.1) Paul often uses the word περιπατέω in discussing ways of living. This is expanded further in the description of them as belly worshippers and those who live shamefully (ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἢ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ). This way of living is associated with earthly reasoning (οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες). The earthly nature of this reasoning is likely emphasizing the difference between it and the kind of reasoning associated with the Christ hymn (cf. 2:2–5). The hymn ended with the super-exaltation of Christ who is in 3:20 presented as coming from heaven. The kind of reasoning associated with Christ is that which is heavenly since this is where Christ is understood to be, and it is the kind of reasoning that moves one in an upward trajectory following the path of Christ (cf. 3:14). The earthly way of reasoning, in contrast to the heavenly, issues forth in a life that is contrary to the pattern of living marked out by Christ and ultimately ends in destruction (ὧν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια).

Paul returns to the positive *exempla*, who stand in contrast to those just mentioned, and fills out what their end (τέλος) will be using a political metaphor. As I have argued above (7.1) the ideas conveyed with this political metaphor are most closely associated with the discussion of virtue. The language used in 3:20 has striking similarities to how the Stoics speak of their “dual citizenship” (cf. Seneca, *Ot.* 4.1; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.26). The Stoics talked about those who are living virtuously as members of a particular earthly *polis* while at the same time are united together and are members of an alternative “real” heavenly *polis*. The heavenly State is governed by the laws of virtue and is comprised of people who are living accordingly. Paul in like manner is using a political metaphor in 3:20 to emphasize how those who belong to this heavenly State are governed differently from those who belong to that which is earthly,⁷⁹ and as the latter

⁷⁹ Cf. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 100. While I broadly agree with his assessment of the connotation of *πολίτευμα*, I am not convinced that Paul is taking up this terminology from opponents.

live a life that will end in destruction the former live a life that will end in transformation, becoming fully virtuous.

Those who are imitating Paul's way of thinking and living, or those who are living similarly, are joined together and demonstrate that they are members of this heavenly community because their lives are governed by a particular pattern of life. They reason in a particular way and are thus making progress in living virtuously. The nature of the virtuous life in question, as well as the reasoning that informs it, is emphasized by how the pre-transformed body of those living in such a way is described as a body of humility (τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως), which echoes the humility Christ exhibited (2:8) and the humility that Paul called the Philippians to display in their relationships with one another (2:3).⁸⁰ Living a life characterized in this way is the path toward attaining salvation, which is hinted at by the coming of the savior (σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν). This salvation is presented in terms of being completely conformed to Christ; i.e. ultimately gaining him fully as the τέλος of life (σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ). While this picture of life has been previously portrayed by presenting believers as making progress toward becoming pure and blameless at the day of Christ (1:6, 10), attaining salvation (1:28), and the prize of the upward call (3:14), here in 3:20–21 the picture is filled in as making progress toward fully gaining Christ and being transformed to become like him. This, of course, is not a one to one correlation, but rather it presents believers as analogously becoming like Christ. This final act in the drama of life parallels the denouement of Paul's singular pursuit described in 3:7–11, which was vividly displayed with athletic imagery, depicting the post race reward as the prize of the upward call of God (3:14). This way of thinking about life parallels the pattern of thought in moral philosophy where the ultimate goal of life is finally attained. For the Stoics, in attaining this goal one becomes fully virtuous; for the Epicureans, one becomes completely free from distress and lives the most pleasurable life. For all moral philosophers, upon attaining the ultimate goal of life one attains fully what this goal

⁸⁰ Cf. Peter Doble, "Vile Bodies' or Transformed Persons? Philippians 3.21 in Context," *JSNT* 86 (2002): 3–27, who argues that ταπεινώσις refers to the virtue of humility, particularly in the face of suffering, rather than to a disparagement of the body.

consists in. For Paul, this is fully gaining Christ and therefore becoming completely conformed to him.

Before turning to give some specific instructions Paul piles up affectionate terms in his appeal for the Philippians to remain committed to the way of thinking and living he has been presenting. Paul calls the Philippians his *στέφανος*, which echoes the perspective of his race/work presented in 2:16. This depicts the Philippians as Paul's reward upon finishing the race of his ministry (cf. 1 Thess 2:19). Just as Paul's discussion of his desire to boast at the day of Christ that his running/labors were not in vain encourages them to continue in the path to be pure and blameless (cf. 2:12, 15), so too here in 4:1 the affectionate terms subtly urge them to continue to make progress in the way that Paul has argued for. This is more explicitly indicated with the expression: *οὕτως στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ*. As several have noted, this expression echoes the imperative in 1:27,⁸¹ which as argued above was part of Paul's exhortation for the Philippians to unite together as co-athletes in a contest of virtue (see 7.1), i.e. to live a life worthy of the gospel. Having addressed more fully the nature of this contest, viz. how the Philippians are to think and live in order to make progress toward gaining Christ as the *τέλος* of life (1:27–4:1), Paul now enjoins them to stand firm in the Lord in this manner (*οὕτως*). Paul's usage of *στήκω* in 4:1 provides further support for understanding the force of the imperative in 1:27 as not related to a militaristic metaphor (see 7.1 above). The preceding argument has been about pursuing Christ as the *τέλος* of life which will culminate in ultimately gaining him (3:20–21). The focus has been about joining together and making progress (like a runner in a race), not about standing ground as soldiers in a phalanx.

Paul next addresses Euodia and Syntyche, calling on them to reason in the same way and reminding them that they were co-athletes with Paul in the gospel. There is debate about the extent to which this conflict is the central focus of Paul's letter.⁸² Along with

⁸¹ E.g. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 238; Hooker, "Philippians," 536; Reumann, *Philippians*, 631.

⁸² E.g. David E. Garland, "The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors," *NovT* 27 (1985): 172, has argued that the issue between these two women is Paul's central reason for writing; cf. Davorin Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (NovTestSup 79; Leiden: Brill, 1995); Nils A. Dahl, "Euodia and Syntyche and Paul's Letter to the Philippians," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (eds. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 3–15. However, others have argued

the reasons mentioned above for rejecting the idea that this issue is the central focus of the letter (see 1.4.2), is the fact that Paul's argument has focused on exhorting *all* of the Philippians to orient their lives toward gaining Christ as the τέλος of life. In this section of the epistle Paul utilizes two key elements in his argument to admonish these women, making a specific application of what has preceded to their situation. The call for them to reason in the same way alludes to the kind of reasoning that Paul urged the Philippians to embrace in 2:2–5, and is ultimately the kind of reasoning associated with the Christ hymn. This way of reasoning informs one how to live virtuously, which means having a concern for others and having confidence in the face of suffering. It is this kind of reasoning that Paul is calling Euodia and Syntyche to embrace.

The second key element in his exhortation to these women picks up the athletic motif, which, as we have seen, is a central aspect of this letter. Paul has called the Philippians to join together in a contest of virtue (1:27–30) and he has presented himself as a runner in a race pursuing Christ as the τέλος of life (3:13–14). Paul uses the aorist form of the verb συναθλέω (which contrasts with the present participle used in 1:27) in calling attention to how these women once struggled as co-athletes in the gospel. Given how Paul has previously used athletic imagery in this epistle, the force of the verb is to emphasize how they were once struggling together in a contest to live virtuously, i.e. to live a life worthy of the gospel, pursuing Christ as the τέλος of life. Since the context of 4:2 is one of exhortation it is very likely that Paul is reminding these women of the path that they were on, and the prize toward which they are headed (ὡς τὰ ὀνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς), in order to gently persuade them to embrace this way of thinking and living again.⁸³

Paul next turns to give rule-like instructions in concluding the letter body (cf. 2:14). These instructions are concise rules that relate to the nature of the virtuous life that Paul

that this is too one-sided: e.g. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 312–13 n.3; Hooker, “Philippians,” 539–40; Reumann, *Philippians*, 632–33.

⁸³ Cf. Dahl, “Euodia and Syntyche,” 7, who argues that Paul even mentions the book of life to indicate that if they do not return to the right way of living that their names will be blotted out of it. See Still, *Philippians*, 122, however, who argues that it is unlikely the reference to the book of life highlights that their names will be blotted out, but he still maintains that this reference to the book of life is to encourage them to adopt a particular perspective on life.

has been persuading the Philippians to embrace. The repeated command to rejoice echoes a central theme of this letter, and again calls the Philippians to have joy in those things that are associated with the Lord (see 8.1 above). It is the pattern of living marked out by the Christ hymn and all that this entails that the Philippians are to learn to rejoice in. This command functions as a summary statement for what follows in that rejoicing in the Lord consists of appreciation for and display of the virtues that follow. These virtues relate to the two areas that Paul has repeatedly returned to throughout the letter, viz. a humble concern for others and confidence in suffering. The former is reflected in the expression τὸ ἐπεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις. The noun ἐπεικῆς in this context is most likely conveying the idea of patient endurance of mistreatment from others.⁸⁴ Instead of responding out of hatred or vindictiveness, the person who displays ἐπεικῆς would endure this mistreatment reflecting the humility of Christ. The expression πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις indicates that this is a disposition that is to be held among all people. Whether people in the community or those outside are behaving in malicious or destructive ways, the response is to be one of patient endurance. This kind of disposition takes the focus off of one's self and one's own concerns and fosters instead humility in one's relationship with others, which is a virtue repeatedly emphasized in Philippians (2:3, 8; 3:21).

The virtue of confidence in suffering is expressed in Paul's admonition: μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε. One of the main issues facing the Philippian community was external hostilities (cf. 1:27–30). Their anxiety about this situation is most likely what is being

⁸⁴ The broad meaning of this noun is “fitting, meet, suitable” (LSJ, 632). Aristotle uses it in his discussion of justice. One displays ἐπεικῆς when instead of following the strict letter of the law, one follows its purpose or intent. The spirit of this disposition in relationships with others is captured in this statement about the nature of the equitable person (*Eth. nic.* 5.10.8; trans. Broadie and Rowe): “the sort who decides on and does things of this kind [i.e. follows the purpose of the law rather than the strict letter], and who is not a stickler for justice in the bad sense but rather tends to take a less strict view of things, even though he has the law to back him up.” This disposition toward others is displayed among superiors to inferiors, and is often understood as clemency or leniency (cf. Acts 24:4; 1 Pet 2:18). Cf. Preisker, *TDNT* 2.588–90. However, it can also be used of the forbearance of wrongs from one who is not in a superior position. Cf. Giesen, *EDNT* 2.26. This is present in Epictetus who speaks about this disposition in the context of enduring a bad neighbor (*Diatr.* 3.20.11). It is also present in Wis 2:19 in connection with the one who endures hostilities from others. The fact that Paul connects a form of this word with πραΰτης in his description of Jesus (2 Cor 10:1) also indicates that it can be understood as patient endurance of difficulties. See Ragnar Leivestad, “The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ’ II Cor. X.1,” *NTS* 13 (1965–66): 156–64. Given the nature of Paul’s argument in Philippians, this is the most likely nuance of the noun, rather than clemency (*pace* Preisker, *TDNT* 2.589). See also BDAG, 317; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 487–88.

addressed here (cf. 1:28 and 1:14). The present imperative could convey an admonition to “stop worrying” indicating that they have been doing this and should now cease.⁸⁵ Instead they should pray to God, who as we have already seen is the one who enables them to make progress in such difficulties (cf. 2:13). This orientation toward God holds out the promise of peace, which will guard their hearts and minds (4:7). The peace offered is to assuage their anxiety and allow them to endure their situation with confidence.

Sandwiched between the admonitions in 4:5 and 4:6 is the pithy statement: ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς. Several have noted the ambiguous meaning and placement of this phrase.⁸⁶ It could be taken temporally, following on from 3:20–21 and therefore denoting the Lord’s imminent return, or it could be understood spatially, echoing a common refrain in the Psalms that the Lord is near to those who call upon him (cf. Psa 34:18; 145:18). The phrase could also be seen as supporting either the admonition in 4:5 or that in 4:6. Given this ambiguity and the asyndetic nature of this passage, it is likely, as several have argued,⁸⁷ that the phrase is being used in a multivalent way. The Lord’s nearness (spatially) is that which will aid them in their contest to live a virtuous life displaying humility and having confidence in difficulties (i.e. peace), and his nearness (temporally) also provides encouragement to continue to live in such a manner, assuring them that the end is in sight when they will be transformed and finally fully gain Christ.

8.4. The Virtuous and Content Life (Phil 4:8–23)

Paul concludes the letter in a way that summarizes and reinforces his argument. Many have long noted the importance of the letter beginning (viz. the thanksgiving section) and the thesis statement (*propositio*) of the letter, which opens the argumentative exhortation;⁸⁸ however, a few have begun to stress the import of the (often neglected)

⁸⁵ Cf. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 491; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 246; Reumann, *Philippians*, 635; BDF, 336.

⁸⁶ E.g. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 488–90; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 245–46; Hooker, “Philippians,” 540–41.

⁸⁷ E.g. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 488–90; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 245–46; Hooker, “Philippians,” 540–41.

⁸⁸ For the thanksgiving see, e.g., Paul Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939); Peter T. O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977). For the thesis statement see, e.g., Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 66, 68–80; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia;

letter ending. This has been alluded to by those rhetorically analyzing the letter in discussions of the *peroratio*, which recapitulates the argument (*repetitio*) and makes an emotional appeal to the audience (*adfectus*).⁸⁹ Jeffrey Weima, analyzing Paul's letters from an epistolary perspective, has also called attention to the importance of Paul's epistolary letter closings. As he states,

[T]he letter closing has great interpretative value, providing important clues to understanding the key issues addressed in the body of the letter. The Pauline letter closings, therefore, function much like the thanksgiving section, but in reverse. For as the thanksgiving section foreshadows and points ahead to the major concerns to be addressed in the body of the letter, so the closing serves to highlight and encapsulate the main points previously taken up in the body. And this recapitulating function of Paul's letter closings, in turn, provides interpretative clues for a richer understanding of their respective letters.⁹⁰

In analyzing Paul's letter closings he points out that they are formulaic in nature, and all have the following epistolary conventions: 1) peace benediction, 2) hortatory section, 3) greetings, 4) autograph, and 5) grace benediction.⁹¹ He helpfully segments the letter closing in Philippians into these parts: hortatory section (4:8–9a);⁹² peace benediction (4:9b);⁹³ autograph/joy expression (4:10–20);⁹⁴ greetings (4:21–22); grace benediction (4:23).⁹⁵

Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 114; Duane F. Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *NovT* 30 (1988): 65–67.

⁸⁹ See, e.g., Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians," 76.

⁹⁰ Jeffrey A.D. Weima, "Sincerely, Paul: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams; PAST 6; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), 309. See also idem, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings* (JSNTSup 101; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

⁹¹ Weima, "Pauline Letter Closings," 310.

⁹² As Weima (*Neglected Endings*, 191) points out τὸ λοιπὸν, ἀδελφοί is a "stereotyped phrase" that is being used to introduce the hortatory section and start the letter closing (cf. 2 Cor 13:11).

⁹³ While the peace benediction (4:9b) is in its standard Pauline formula (cf. Rom 15:33; 2 Cor 13:11), it is linked to the preceding exhortation with a καί rather than a δέ, as Weima notes (*Neglected Endings*, 191), thereby connecting the wish for peace closely to thinking and living in the way just adumbrated.

⁹⁴ Paul expresses his joy for the letter recipients in Rom 16:19 and 1 Cor 16:17, so this is not unusual in Philippians. What is noteworthy about this section in Phil 4:10–20 is how enlarged it is.

⁹⁵ Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 191–194.

It is important to note that as Paul concludes Philippians the last thing he leaves them with, that which is left “ringing in their ears,”⁹⁶ is an exhortation for them to consider that which is virtuous and to follow the teaching and example of Paul. Several have drawn attention to the moral philosophical character of the terms that Paul uses in Phil 4:8.⁹⁷ These terms are used widely in different contexts, but the way Paul summarizes them with the parallel clauses of εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος indicates that the discourse of virtue among the moral philosophers is primarily in view. A crucial interpretive question to answer with respect to this verse is: how is Paul using these terms? Is he urging the Philippians to consider those things that the moral philosophers value, or is he taking up the language of moral philosophy and using it for his own purposes; i.e. using these terms to describe the kind of life that he has been arguing for? While Paul’s ethics share some overlap with the moral philosophers and what was broadly accepted as good,⁹⁸ given the nature of Paul’s argument in Philippians, it seems that Paul is here again taking up the language and pattern of thinking in moral philosophy and using it for his purposes. Just as Paul has presented a teleological perspective on life, which takes Christ as the ultimate goal, and has emphasized a particular way of reasoning, which is informed by the Christ hymn, so too here Paul is using the terms of moral philosophy, which are used to describe that which is associated with living the good and virtuous life, and he is connecting them to the virtuous life that he has presented throughout this letter.⁹⁹

That Paul is connecting that which is virtuous and praiseworthy to the kind of virtuous life he has argued for in this letter is further confirmed from Phil 4:9. The close connection between 4:8 and 4:9 is evident from how the two verses parallel each other and from the way in which the neuter plural relative pronoun (ὅ) that begins 4:9 picks up

⁹⁶ As Ben Witherington states with respect to the *peroratio* in 1 Peter in *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, vol. 2: *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 234.

⁹⁷ E.g. Abraham J. Malherbe, “Paul’s Self-Sufficiency (Philippians 4:11),” in *Friendship, Flattery, & Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; NovTSup 82; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 137, who states this verse “constitutes the most Greek verse in all of Paul’s letters.” Cf. Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (trans. David E. Green; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 200; Reumann, *Philippians*, 639.

⁹⁸ See Horrell, *Solidarity*, 246–72.

⁹⁹ Cf. Horrell, *Solidarity*, 214.

ταῦτα in 4:8.¹⁰⁰ In 4:9 Paul encourages them to put into practice both that which he has taught them and that which they have seen in and heard from him. The former involves them putting into practice his teachings about making progress in the virtuous life and the latter enjoins them (again) to imitate Paul's example (cf. 3:17). The last two verbs repeat the terms used in 1:30, which presented Paul's life in terms of a contest of virtue. The nature of this contest was filled out most fully, and vividly, with the image of the runner in 3:13–14. Paul is admonishing them to imitate his exemplary behavior, which entails pursuing Christ as the ultimate goal of life and embodying the virtues that are necessary for attaining this goal. These are the virtues that Paul emphasized in both of his self-presentations in this letter (1:12–26; 3:4–14), and entail: humility, concern for others, confidence in suffering, and having a reasoning informed by the Christ hymn. By urging the Philippians to consider that which is virtuous and to put into practice what they have learned from Paul and have seen embodied in him, Paul is clearly reiterating and summarizing his argument in Philippians, and is doing so using the terms and concepts of moral philosophy. This further confirms the pattern of thinking that informs the logic of Paul's argumentation in this letter.

Paul next offers thanks for the gift the Philippians sent with Epaphroditus. This is the reason for the extended expression of joy (4:10–20). In offering thanks, Paul does so in a way that reinforces the perspective on life that he has been arguing for in this letter. He first connects their sacrificial giving to a way of reasoning (4:10), which as we have seen is a prominent feature of the pattern of thought in this letter and is shaped by the Christ hymn. Paul expresses his joy in the Lord over their thinking about him in this way, which again connects joy to a correct way of reasoning. Paul, however, qualifies his joy over the Philippians' gift, and does so in a way that conveys the full sufficiency of the kind of life that is oriented toward gaining Christ.

He describes this perspective on life with a term that was widely used in moral philosophy (*ἀντάρκης*), which several have connected with Stoicism.¹⁰¹ Abraham Malherbe, however, has argued that Paul does not use this term according to how it was

¹⁰⁰ Cf. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 508; Hooker, "Philippians," 541; Foerster, *TDNT* 7.194.

¹⁰¹ E.g. Vincent, *Philippians*, 143. Cf. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 163; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 198–199.

used among the Stoics, which he discusses in terms of emotional detachment and introspection, and instead argues that the term was part of a larger complex of ideas which were associated with friendship.¹⁰² Malherbe is certainly correct in arguing that Paul’s use of the term has nothing to do with emotional detachment and introspection; however, the way that *αὐτάρκεια* broadly functioned in the structure of thought in moral philosophy was more about having everything that was needed to live the kind of life in question than it was about the areas that he has identified. As argued above (3.1), Aristotle uses this expression in giving his criteria for the nature of the supreme good,¹⁰³ and as Julia Annas points out, the term indicates that the supreme good “must contain everything that is required by the deliberated projects that that life contains.”¹⁰⁴ A similar understanding of *αὐτάρκεια* is present in the Hellenistic moral philosophers. Epicurus describes this term as indicating that one has everything that one needs to live the most pleasurable life (see 3.2.1 above).¹⁰⁵ The Stoics speak of the virtues as being *αὐτάρκεια* in that they are sufficient, i.e. nothing else is needed to live a good life (see 3.2.2 above).¹⁰⁶

The way in which Paul uses the term *αὐτάρκης* shares strong affinities with this broad understanding of *αὐτάρκεια*. Rather than indicating that he is emotionally detached, Paul is instead emphasizing that his life, one that is oriented toward gaining Christ as the ultimate goal, is fully sufficient irrespective of the circumstances in which he finds himself. He elaborates on the nature of this contentment with positive and negative contrasts highlighting that in any situation he lives a fully sufficient life (4:12). Paul then

¹⁰² Malherbe, “Paul’s Self-Sufficiency,” 125–26, 137–38. Cf. Gerald W. Peterman, *Paul’s Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift-Exchange and Christian Giving* (SNTSMS 92; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134–38, who argues that the Stoic version of *αὐτάρκεια*, which he describes in terms of individualistic emotional detachment and contentment in all circumstances, does not cohere well with Paul’s thought, which views Christians as interdependent, emotionally concerned about others, and as able to display sorrow. Without going into the details of some of the problems with his understanding of Stoicism, suffice it to say here that he is primarily concerned with how the Stoics describe the nature of the fully sufficient life and does not address how this idea functions within their broader pattern of thinking. This significantly limits his comparison of Paul and the Stoics. The same can also be said of Malherbe’s analysis.

¹⁰³ See Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1.7.8.

¹⁰⁴ Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 41.

¹⁰⁵ See Diogenes Laertius 10.130–31.

¹⁰⁶ John Stobaeus 2.101 (trans. Pomeroy): “They describe virtue by numerous terms. ... self-sufficient, as it suffices for the person who has it (τὴν δ’ ἀρετὴν πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι προσαγορεύουσιν. ... καὶ αὐτάρκης, ἐξαρκεῖν γὰρ τῷ ἔχοντι).” Cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.127 (Hicks, LCL): “[T]hey hold that it [virtue] is in itself sufficient to ensure well-being (αὐτάρκη τ’ εἶναι αὐτὴν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν).”

concludes this discussion about his contentment with a reference to the one who enables Paul to live such a life. As we have seen throughout the letter this divine enablement is connected to living a particular kind of life (see 7.3 above),¹⁰⁷ viz. the virtuous life. For Paul this is part of a fully sufficient life. It is one that is oriented toward gaining Christ as the ultimate goal and living virtuously to attain this goal while being energized by God who enables and sees one through to the final attainment of the goal (cf. 1:6; 2:12).

In Phil 4:14–20 Paul specifically addresses the gift that the Philippians have given to Paul. Some have argued that Paul’s description of his self-sufficiency would have called into question his friendship with the Philippians, so he turns now to correct this possible misunderstanding.¹⁰⁸ It seems better, however, to understand Paul’s “thanks” in connection with the perspective on life that he has argued for throughout the letter. As argued by Craig Wansink, sometimes a writer would leave their thanks for something until the end of the letter in order to frame how the gift should be understood (see 1.1 above).¹⁰⁹ Paul’s “thanks” in this section could be viewed along similar lines. He is commending them for their gift and doing so in a way that connects it with the perspective on life that he has argued for throughout the letter, viz. a life oriented toward gaining Christ as the *τέλος* of life and living in a way to attain this goal. This is evident in how Paul associates their gift with suffering, other concern, and divine enablement.

Paul first connects their gift to sharing together in his suffering (4:14). The language that Paul uses echoes the language of the thanksgiving section, where Paul discussed their partnership in the gospel (1:5, cf. 1:7). Paul has also connected their lives to sharing the same contest as Paul in 1:30, which was related to suffering as well (cf. 1:29). As we have seen throughout, Paul has presented the Philippians as on the path of making progress toward ultimately gaining Christ. The way in which they make progress is reasoning in the way that was reflected in the Christ hymn, which entails facing

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 41.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Malherbe, “Paul’s Self-Sufficiency,” 138; Alan C. Mitchell, “‘Greet the Friends by Name’: New Testament Evidence for the Greco-Roman *Topos* on Friendship,” in *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; SBLRBS 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 235; Holloway, *Consolation*, 159.

¹⁰⁹ Craig S. Wansink, *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul’s Imprisonments* (JSNTSup 130; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 129.

difficulties with confidence and displaying a humble concern for others. The financial gift of the Philippians, which was very likely given out of their poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8:2), is commended by Paul as a sacrifice that connects them to hardships. They have repeatedly shared in Paul's sufferings by their sacrificial financial giving (4:15–16). This would have placed financial strains on the Philippians and exacerbated their hardships. Their giving and willingness to share in suffering is a concrete demonstration of how they are making progress in the right kind of way;¹¹⁰ i.e. they are displaying the moral reasoning (cf. 4:10) associated with Christ and moving toward gaining him fully.

Paul secondly connects their gift to a reward and does so using language that associates their giving with spiritual/moral virtue (4:17). In line with how Paul has emphasized that the kind of life he lives is fully sufficient irrespective of the circumstances in which he finds himself (4:11–12), so he also emphasizes here that what is of most value is the fruit accruing to the Philippians' account, not the gift. Paul has already used this language in Phil 1:11 to indicate the virtuous behavior associated with being pure and blameless on the day of Christ. Something similar is likely in view in 4:17 as well; i.e. their gift is an expression of their sacrificial concern for another which embodies a virtuous quality that indicates they are making progress toward becoming pure and blameless. The fruit is even associated with a sacrifice that is well-pleasing to God (4:19), which has affinities with the *εὐδοκία* mentioned in 2:13 in conjunction with the Philippians' obedience and the bringing about of their own salvation.

Lastly, Paul emphasizes God's activity in providing for the Philippians. Divine enablement has been a recurring theme throughout the letter (e.g. 1:6; 2:13; 4:13). As argued above, God's enabling activity has been associated with the Philippians making progress in the right kind of way; i.e. pursuing Christ as the ultimate goal of life and living virtuously to attain this goal. God will complete this good work (1:6), energizing them to desire and to perform what is necessary to arrive at this goal blamelessly (2:13). God's activity in fulfilling their every need (4:19), while more broadly relating to needs in general, should also be viewed in terms of God's activity in the life of the Philippians to attain the ultimate goal of life. That is, an aspect of this promise is for God to fulfill what

¹¹⁰ Cf. Peterman, *Paul's Gift*, 145–46.

is necessary for them to attain the ultimate goal of life, empowering them to face difficult circumstances and difficult people, giving them peace through these situations, and enabling them to reason about their lives analogously to the Christ hymn. As Paul began the letter indicating his confidence in God to see the Philippians through to a particular end—the day of Christ, which in Phil 3:21 was associated with being fully transformed to be like Christ—he ends the letter on a similar note emphasizing God’s activity in their lives to meet their needs.

8.5. Conclusion

The second half of Philippians continues the pattern of thinking about life that was introduced in the first half of the letter. As we have seen, this pattern of thought parallels the broad structure of thought in moral philosophy. There is a singular goal that is to be the point of orientation for one’s life. This goal maps out a life-course in that all choices and actions are to be made with respect to attaining this goal. The virtues come into play in that they are necessary to live the right kind of life in order to attain the goal. This way of living is fully sufficient in that there is nothing external to it that is needed to live the life in question. For Paul it is Christ who is the ultimate goal, which indeed maps out a life-course for how to live. The virtues are those things that come from reasoning about life as Christ reasoned, which entails humility, other-concern, and confidence in suffering. This kind of life, enabled by God, is fully sufficient; i.e. one does not need material items to live virtuously and attain the goal. While this way of thinking and living is expressed in various ways throughout the letter, it is the athletic imagery that most fully summarizes this perspective. As argued above, the image of the runner vividly presents this way of thinking and living, presenting Paul as singularly focused on gaining Christ as the ultimate goal of his life. With this structure of thought in mind, it is clear that the aim of Paul’s letter to the Philippians is to call them to continue to make progress in this manner; i.e. to pursue Christ as the ultimate goal of their lives and to live virtuously in order to attain this goal.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that moral philosophy, athletics, and vivid speech play an important role in understanding Paul's argument in Philippians. These three areas contribute to and are interrelated in Paul's argument in that his argument is structured similarly to the broad structure of thought in ancient moral philosophy and he uses athletics to conceptualize the nature of Christian existence—paralleling the moral philosophers' use of the same—which is vividly presented in Phil 3:13–14. The rhetorical import of athletics is preeminently seen in the image of the runner, which functions as a vivid description, playing a powerfully persuasive role in Paul's argument and encapsulating his overarching argumentative aim, exhorting the Philippians to pursue Christ as the *τέλος* of life.

In the exegetical analysis of Philippians it was repeatedly demonstrated that Paul's argument is structured according to the thought pattern in ancient moral philosophy, which, broadly put, posits that there is one goal (*τέλος*) of life that all choices and actions are to be made with respect toward attaining, and that the virtues are necessary to attain this goal. Paul throughout the letter depicts the Philippians' lives as moving toward a particular goal (cf. 1:6, 10, 28; 2:12, 16; 3:20–21). Paul variously discusses the ultimate goal of life in terms of purity, blamelessness, and salvation. As argued in ch. 8, these are all different ways of referring to what Paul presents in Phil 3:21, being completely conformed to the likeness of Christ. Instead of virtue or pleasure being the ultimate goal in Paul's thought, it is Christ, which is further confirmed from how Paul presents gaining Christ as that which is of all-surpassing value, relativizing all else as *σκύβαλον* (cf. 3:7–11). For Paul, Christ is the singular goal that Christians are to orient their lives toward attaining, making all choices and performing all actions with this goal in view.

Paul also gives a central place to the virtues needed to attain the ultimate goal of life and utilizes some of the same resources that moral philosophers use in making a case for how one should live. The virtues for Paul are: confidence in the face of difficulties, humility, concern for others, and ultimately a reasoning (*φρόνησις*) informed by the Christ hymn. Paul repeatedly emphasizes these virtues in his use of *exempla* (cf. 1:12–26; 2:19–30; 3:7–14, 17–19)—both positive, reinforcing these virtues, and negative,

highlighting their opposites to be avoided—and rule-like instructions (cf. 2:3–4, 14; 4:4–6). The place of virtues in Paul’s argument has similarities with the Stoic discussion of virtues. Because the Stoics view the ultimate end in connection with virtue, i.e. *εὐδαιμονία* consists in virtue alone, there is a direct connection between living virtuously and the life-course mapped out by the ultimate goal of life. Paul also makes a direct connection between the virtues and the ultimate goal of gaining Christ. The virtues for Paul are not merely a means by which one attains the goal (as they are for the Epicureans), but are constitutive elements of making progress toward attaining the goal, i.e. living according to the life-course mapped out by Christ.

The centrality of athletics for how Paul is conceptualizing the nature of Christian existence is seen in the thesis statement of the letter (1:27–30), where Paul presents the Philippians as having the same contest as himself, i.e. the contest to live a virtuous life. The connections between the worthy conduct of citizens, athletics, and virtue provide strong support for viewing athletics in connection with virtue as most centrally in view in the thesis statement, rather than militaristic imagery. In further support of this is the way that Paul argues for the Philippians to make progress, imitating Paul and embodying the virtues mentioned above, which has its denouement in being completely transformed to be like Christ. This progressive path is then presented as the way in which the Philippians are to stand firm in the Lord (4:2), paralleling the opening exhortation in 1:27. The Philippians are presented as in a contest to live virtuously, which has a progressive quality, not as in a battle where they are to stand their ground against an enemy. The exhortation to Euodia and Syntyche (4:2–3) is also to be viewed in this manner, i.e. they are being subtly enjoined to contend again in the contest to live a virtuous life. The letter closing provides further support for viewing Paul’s argument as most centrally concerned with the Philippians living virtuously. In the letter closing (4:8–9) Paul reiterates and summarizes his argument in the letter, calling for the Philippians to consider what is virtuous and praiseworthy, which is that which they have heard from Paul and seen in him. Paul throughout the letter also emphasizes that the Philippians are enabled by God to live such a life (1:6; 2:13), and he discusses how this life is fully

sufficient (4:11), i.e. there is nothing external (i.e. in any circumstance one can live a virtuous life) needed to live the kind of life in question.

This perspective on life, where one is engaged in a contest to live virtuously and is making progress toward attaining the ultimate goal of life, is presented *in nuce* with the image of the runner in Phil 3:13–14. It was argued that this imagery functions as a vivid description, bringing before the mind's eye of the audience a picture that would evoke a particular response and play a powerful role in persuading the audience. The picture of the runner sums up Paul's overarching argumentative aim in the letter by presenting the way in which one is to pursue Christ as the τέλος of life. By strenuously running toward this goal, which entails living according to the life-course mapped out by this goal and embodying the virtues mentioned throughout the letter, one will be making progress toward gaining Christ, which is connected to the prize offered in the upward call of God, and can be understood specifically in connection with fully gaining Christ and being transformed to be like him. The rhetorical potency of this imagery makes it something that would linger in the mind of the audience; it is the picture that sums up how they should think and live and is, therefore, at the heart of Paul's argument in this letter.

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