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Paul and Stoicism: Romans 12 as a Test Case

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The recent resurgence of interest in ancient Greco-Roman ethics has prompted many studies of NT ethical thought in the light of Aristotelian and Stoic approaches to ethics. The purpose of this article is to compare Rom 12 with Stoicism. Rather than looking for similarities between Stoic ethics and Pauline moral teaching, however (as Troels Engberg-Pedersen does in *Paul and the Stoics*), it is argued that a comparison between Paul and the Stoics is better achieved by a comparative process more interested in differences rather than similarities. Such a comparison undertaken in relation to Rom 12 reveals Paul's interaction with Stoic ethics, but in the interests of presenting a radically different moral vision.

1. Greek philosophical ethics, the NT and Paul

In recent decades the revival of interest in approaches to philosophical ethics based on the good life and virtues, as opposed to the previously dominant traditions of deontological and utilitarian ethics, has led to a resurgence of interest in Greek ethics of the classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods. An important early stimulus came with an essay published by Elizabeth Anscombe in 1958, while the warm reception given to Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, published in 1981, indicated widespread support for this development.[1] The enriched understanding of happiness and virtue in ancient Greek philosophy that has ensued is clearly seen in the important 1993 monograph by Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*.[2] In the last few decades there has also been a concerted effort to relate various aspects of the NT, including Paul's letters, to the vigorous currents of Hellenistic and Greco-Roman philosophy. Especially significant in this regard have been works by Abraham Malherbe and Wayne Meeks.[3] A case for interpreting Rom 12.1–15.13 in

1 See G. E. M. Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', *Philosophy* 33 (1958) 1–19 (reprinted in her *Collected Philosophical Papers, Volume III* [Oxford: Blackwells, 1981]), and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1981).

2 Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University, 1993).

3 See Abraham J. Malherbe, ed., *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), *Paul*

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relation to Greek thought on the virtues and the good life has recently been made by the present writer.[4] Other evidence of interest in the use of Greek ideas on character and moral formation to shed light on biblical texts is evident in a collection of essays edited by William Brown.[5] The purpose of the present article is to continue this broad trend in current interpretation, but in relation to the specific issue of how Rom 12 may be understood in relation to the ethical thought of the Stoics.[6]

Stoic ethics was a highly distinctive development of Greek ethical thinking stemming from Plato and Aristotle.[7] Stoicism was founded by Zeno of Citium (335–263 BCE) and derived its name from the fact that Zeno taught in the *Stoa Poikile*, the 'Painted Porch', in Athens. Cleanthes (331–232 BCE) succeeded Zeno as head of the Stoa and was in turn followed by Chrysippus (*c.* 280–207 BCE).[8] Strong interest in Stoicism continued into Paul's period and beyond, in the East and also in Rome. There are three main sources for Stoic ethics. The first is what Cicero has to say about the subject in Book 3 of his *De finibus* ('On Ends'). The second is Book 7 of the *Lives of Eminent Philosopher*s by Diogenes Laertius (*c.* 200–250 CE). The third is a work reasonably ascribed to Arius Didymus,[9] a prominent Alexandrian philosopher, who was a close associate of Augustus (entering Alexandria with him in 30 BCE, for example) and who composed an *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*. This work survives in a collection by Stobaeus dated to the early fifth century CE and has recently been translated and edited by A. J. Pomeroy.[10] The work by Arius

and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) and *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) and *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven, CN: Yale University, 1993).

4 Philip F. Esler, 'Social Identity, the Virtues and the Good Life: A New Approach to Romans 12:1–15:13', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 33 (2003) 51–63.

5 William P. Brown, ed., *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

6 I gratefully acknowledge the fellowship awarded to me by the Leverhulme Trust in 2001–2 which provided me with the leave during which the research for this article was undertaken.

7 I will use the word 'ethics' in relation to Stoicism in this essay as a matter of convenience, even though it has particular modern connotations, especially its focus on decision-making in difficult cases and separation from the search for human happiness, that were not characteristic of ancient Greek thought on human behaviour – see Esler, 'Social Identity', 52–3.

8 Book 7 of the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius (see R. D. Hicks, *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2 [Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University, 1931]) covers Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus.

9 See Anthony A. Long, 'Arius Didymus and the Exposition of Stoic Ethics', *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Work of Arius Didymus*, vol. 1 (ed. William W. Fortenbaugh; Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities; New Brunswick/London: Transaction Books, 1983) 41–65, at 41, for these primary sources for Stoic ethics.

10 Arthur J. Pomeroy, ed., *Arius Didymus: Epitome of Stoic Ethics* (Texts and Translations 44, Greco-Roman 14; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999). All quotations and English translations hereafter are from this text.

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Didymus is 'the longest and most detailed surviving account of Stoic ethics'[11] and is written in Greek, so that in it, most helpfully, we have direct access to the original terminology rather than being reliant on Cicero's Latin rendering of Stoic expressions.

2. Paul and Stoicism: a case of similarity?

But what does it mean to consider Rom 12 in relation to Stoic ethics? Although this must clearly involve a process of comparison, what sort of comparative process is needed? In the social sciences there are two broad types of comparison between two phenomena. The first, the so-called 'close comparison' of phenomena existing together in time and place, is generally aimed at bringing out differences between them and not similarities, given that their cultural contiguity already makes some likeness inevitable.[12] The second, the so-called 'distant comparison', is conducted between phenomena that are remote in time or place or both. Here the interest lies in similarities, since differences are only to be expected. The phenomena to be compared include any cultural data susceptible of social analysis. Since Paul and Stoicism co-existed in the first-century Mediterranean world, a close comparison, aimed at bringing out differences, seems to be the more appropriate type.

In his substantial and important monograph *Paul and the Stoics* Troels Engberg-Pedersen has sought to situate Paul's thought in relationship with the ancient ethical tradition of Stoicism.[13] This stimulating book has rightly attracted a great deal of scholarly attention.[14] Since Engberg-Pedersen largely aims at bringing out similarities between Paul and Stoicism, contrary to what I have just suggested is the more appropriate procedure for phenomena close in space and time, his work offers an interesting foil for my very different proposal. Accordingly, I will first offer a critique of his argument for similarity, before proceeding to the case I wish to make – one that focuses on the differences between Paul and the Stoics.

In contrast to many, Engberg-Pedersen reasonably believes that Paul's ideas are coherent. He represents this coherence in the form of a visual model, the heart of which he designates by the relationship 'I -> X -> S', meaning (very broadly) that the individual ('I') comes to see him- or herself as belonging to God and

11 Long, 'Arius Didymus', 41.

12 See M. Duverger, *Introduction to the Social Sciences* (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1964) 261–7.

13 Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000).

14 See, for example, John M. G. Barclay, review in *Biblical Intepretation* 9 (2001) 233–6, and J. Louis Martyn, 'De-apocalypticizing Paul: An Essay Focused on *Paul and the Stoics* by Troels Engberg-Pedersen', *JSNT* 24 (2002) 61–102.

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Christ ('X') and thereby as a member of a new social entity ('S').[15] He regards Stoicism as also being explicable in terms of this model, although for the Stoics 'X' represents reason ('which is also God [though certainly a different kind of God]').[16]

Engberg-Pedersen's attempt to find such a similarity between Stoic and Pauline thought entails forfeiting the benefits that might come from the other type of comparison – one that focuses on differences. It is striking that when Engberg-Pedersen offers a discussion of Rom 12, where the richness of Paul's moral teaching provides ample scope for comparison and, vitally, for contrast with Stoic ethics, as we will see later in this article, he hardly ever mentions Stoicism and, when he does, it is only to bring out similarities, not differences.[17]

Certain aspects of Engberg-Pedersen's thesis can be accepted, such as his claim that the 'I -> X -> S' model is, in essence, about 'a specific vision of the good life for human beings'.[18] This is true for Paul and also for the Stoics (subject to discussion below as to what the 'X' means for Stoics), given the pervasive influence of Aristotelian traditions.[19] Yet, perhaps inevitably for a scholar who undertook impressive research into Aristotle and then Stoicism before turning his attention to Paul, Engberg-Pedersen pushes the comparison too far.[20] Indeed, he would have been altogether more convincing if, given this background, he had argued for Pauline differences from Stoicism! Signs of this homologizing tendency appear early, as when he asserts that Paul was 'doing philosophy about the self (the "I") and its relation to God, Christ, the world and the others to *exactly* [my emphasis] the same extent as a similar philosophy (of self and others) was being done in antiquity by the philosophers who make up the ancient ethical tradition'.[21]

But there is a further problem with his approach. Since ideas active in particular settings (such as the respective teachings of Paul and the Stoics on ethical matters) can have real social impacts, they are quite properly the subject of social-scientific analysis,[22] including the comparative method. Engberg-Pedersen, however, takes pains to point out that he is arguing that it is the basic structure of Stoic ethics that is relevant to a comparison with Paul, not the indi-

15 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 34–60.

16 Ibid., 35.

17 For his coverage of Rom 12, see ibid., 261–71; for his references to Stoicism in this part of the letter, see 263, 264 and 268.

18 Ibid., 40.

19 See Esler, 'Social Identity'.

20 For his work on Aristotle, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1981), and for the Stoics, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy* (Studies in Hellenistic Civilization 2; Aarhus: Aarhus University, 1990).

21 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 13.

22 See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor, 1969) 41.

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vidual Stoic motifs that derive their meaning from that structure.[23] Yet this emphasis takes us away from the actual form of these ideas in the social life of the first century and prompts an inevitable question. What do we know if we know this? If Engberg-Pedersen is only interested in comparing deep structures of Pauline and Stoic thought, not their actual moral provision, what is the purpose of the comparison? Western intellectuals with a philosophic bent may find it interesting to compare 'deep' ideas divorced from their particular social settings, but what is the point of it in relation to documents so immersed in the realities of everyday life as the Pauline letters? Are we not in danger here of returning to the 'idealistic fallacy', to cite Bengt Holmberg's useful description of the interpretation of historical phenomena in terms of underlying ideas and disregard for the continuous dialectic between ideas and social structures?[24] Or is the comparison that Engberg-Pedersen proposes essentially (merely?) an aesthetic one?

In addition to the problems surrounding Engberg-Pedersen's interest in similarity between Paul and the Stoics rather than difference and his pursuit of such similarity at a deep structural level, even his case for this type of similarity is not convincing. The daring gambit which underpins his thesis is to treat Stoicism as having a corporate dimension strong enough to be compared to that which Paul derives from being in Christ. Having discussed a number of features which the Stoics derived from Aristotle, such as happiness (εὐδαιμονία) as the goal (τέλος) of human action, the virtues, including the role of the virtue of practical wisdom (φρόνησις), and the problem of human weakness of will,[25] Engberg-Pedersen embarks upon a consideration of that feature of Stoicism where he has made a particular contribution – *oikeiôsis* (οἰκείωσις).[26] The word is difficult to translate, but essentially suggests the notion of making one person or thing *oikeios* (οἰκεῖος) to another, where *oikeios* comes from *oikos* (οἶκος), meaning 'house' or 'family'. The translation 'familiarization' is helpful since it brings out both the notion of family and also of being close to and coming to belong. Its opposite is *allotriôsis* (ἀλλοτρίωσις), the process of becoming alien, *allotrios* (ἀλλότριος), to someone or something.[27] Engberg-Pedersen also adopts the translation 'familiarization', and he interprets it to mean the process by which an individual changes in his or her understanding of the good, as essentially constituted by possession of material goods (which are really alien, *allotria*, to one's self), to focusing on 'things that genuinely pertain to oneself' (*oikeia*). Yet given that, in the view of

23 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 46.

24 Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978) 205–7.

25 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 48–53. For my discussion of Aristotelian virtue ethics, see Esler, 'Social Identity', 55–8.

26 See Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis*.

27 See Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 1993) 162.

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Chrysippus, the primary impulse of an animal is self-preservation and that from the start nature familiarizes (*oikeiousês*) the animal with itself,[28] the concept does not at first glance seem to be a particularly promising one for the development of teaching relating to concern for others and community formation.[29]

Focusing mainly on what Cicero has to say about this process in Book 3 of his *De finibus* ('On Ends'), Engberg-Pedersen initially describes how an individual moves from the 'I' level to the 'X' level, which is the level of reason, where the person is able to understand the world correctly, in theory and in practice.[30] But what happens next? Does the Stoic remain in this condition, which is clearly a strongly self-centered one? Not according to Engberg-Pedersen. He argues that Stoics propounded a second aspect of familiarization which brought individuals to the 'S' level, of communal or group experience.[31] This step is absolutely fundamental to his whole understanding of *oikeiôsis* and to his argument for a Stoic similarity to Paul at a deep level of thought. The main passage he cites in support from Cicero's *De finibus* uses the love parents have for their children as the basis for the notion of 'the universal community of the human race . . . a natural, shared attachment of man to man, so that just because he is a man, a man must be considered not alien by another man'.[32] In addition, he quotes Cicero's view that since Stoics believe the universe is governed by divine will, a sort of city and state shared by human beings and gods to which they belong, they set common advantage before their own.[33]

There is no doubt that Cicero attributes to Stoics a belief in solidarity and affection between all human beings. This topic occupies Chapters 62–71 of Book 3 of *De finibus*. For Engberg-Pedersen's thesis to be valid (for 'I' to reach the 'S' level via 'X'), however, it is necessary that *human reason* produces this result. This is precisely the claim he makes here, which is essentially repeated (with stylistic variation) from his earlier writings on the Stoics.[34] He argues that a person who in childhood experienced other-regarding attitudes from his parents will go on later in life to apply such attitudes not only to relatives (those 'belonging to him' – *oikeioi* – in a physical sense) but also to all rational beings who 'belong to' him by virtue of their rationality. This conclusion, to repeat, is absolutely fundamental to

28 Diogenes Laertius 7.85.

29 See the discussion in Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 184–94.

30 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 53–66.

31 Ibid., 66–70.

32 Cicero, *De finibus* 3.62–3; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 67–8.

33 Cicero, *De finibus* 3.64; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 69.

34 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 69; and see his essay 'Discovering the Good: *Oikeiôsis* and *Kathekonta* in Stoic Ethics', *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics* (ed. M. Schofield, and Gisela Striker; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1986) 145–83, and *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis*, 124–5.

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his entire thesis. His difficulty is that no extant Stoic source offers this view, as he himself admits: 'Nowhere in our sources is the precise role made clear that rationality has in bringing about this result, but there can be little doubt that it is the one just given.'[35]

The relationship between *oikeiôsis* and attitudes to others is one of the most difficult topics in Stoicism, as can be seen in S. G. Pembroke's detailed discussion.[36] Nevertheless, upon inspection it is evident that Cicero takes the view that it is not individual human reason but nature that is responsible for the ties between human beings. We need to recognize initially, however, that 'nature' (φύσις/*natura*) has a rather particular meaning in Stoicism, something akin to the structure of the universe which is capable of being discerned by human reason.[37] The foundation for this view is the Stoic belief in the *Logos*, a divine principle of rationality permeating and governing the entire cosmos, which finds expression as early as the *Hymn to Zeus* of Cleanthes.[38] Whereas we regard an event occurring 'naturally' as either driven by emotion or as happening in a non-predetermined fashion, a Stoic would treat something which happened 'in accord with nature' (κατὰ φύσιν/*secundum naturam*) as occurring by virtue of the law of nature. Thus, when Cicero cites the Stoic view that *nature* creates in parents a love for their children, and from this origin explains the common society of the human race, he means that such a love arises from the fundamental ordering of the universe. In this sense, it can be said that such love is 'instinctual'.[39] The same applies when he states that, just as *nature* teaches us to shrink from pain, so it teaches us to love our children, and from this comes the mutual attraction between human beings. 'We are fitted *by nature* [emphasis added] to form unions, societies and states.'[40] In all cases, human solidarity arises from the impact of the fundamental ordering of the universe upon human beings – it is thus instinctual – and this excludes Engberg-Pedersen's suggestion that it is the consequence of reasoning carried out by individual human beings. This is an area in which, in fact, we observe the deterministic character of Stoic philosophy.[41] Thus, this is not a case of a source being silent on the point, as Engberg-Pedersen suggests; rather, Cicero's explanation leaves no room for his.

On the other hand, Pembroke concludes that Chrysippus (an early Stoic) could

35 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 69.

36 S. G. Pembroke, 'Oikeiôsis', *Problems in Stoicism* (ed. Anthony A. Long; London/Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone, 1996 [1971]) 114–49, at 121–32.

37 See Meeks, *The Moral World*, 47.

38 Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, line 12; on which, see H. C. Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965) 151.

39 Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 271.

40 Cicero, *De finibus* 3.62–3.

41 Meeks, *The Moral World*, 48–9.

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have argued that devotion to other human beings arose through the interaction of nature and reason, in that reason could 'articulate', and therefore reinforce, the devotion that exists naturally.[42] But this is very different from Engberg-Pedersen, who is propounding human reason as the sole explanation.

Finally, the extreme fragility of Engberg-Pedersen's hypothesis is brought out in a revealing footnote in his 1990 text on Stoicism where, having discounted the views of Pembroke, he actually suggests that the coherence of his proposal here with earlier parts of his theory on *oikeiôsis* 'is really a sufficiently strong argument in its favour'. He then asks, even more audaciously and in a manner which demonstrates that he has left historical criticism behind in this area, 'Why, if this interpretation lies so ready at hand, *not* adopt it and so give the Stoics what they were quite clearly looking for, viz. an argument proper to derive justice from their understanding of *oikeiôsis*?'[43] So this obliging modern critic pushes the ancient Stoics over a line they never managed to cross for themselves!

In addition to these objections to the whole basis for his central claim that the model 'I -> X -> S' applies to the Stoics as well as to Paul, there is another major obstacle to Engberg-Pedersen's argument. It is this. Even if in Stoic thought concern for others was derived from the operation of human reason (which it is not), such an attitude is capable of being so attenuated as to have little bearing on the attitudes and actions of the essentially self-centered Stoic. Consider the following passage from Arius Didymus, the important author on Stoic ethics (who is unfortunately neglected by Engberg-Pedersen in *Paul and the Stoics)*:

> All goods are common to the worthwhile (σπουδαῖοι), all evils to the worthless (φαῦλοι). Because of this, whoever benefits someone also is himself benefitted, and the person who harms another also harms himself. All the worthwhile benefit one another. They are not totally friends of one another, nor well-disposed to each other , [nor] highly prized nor accepted by each other because they are not aware of each other and do not live together in the same place. However, they are in attitude well-disposed and friendly to each other, and prized and accepted by one another. The stupid are the opposite of this.[44]

Note initially the self-directed nature of this picture. The worthwhile person (sc. the Stoic) benefits himself as he benefits another. Making matters worse for Engberg-Pedersen's case is the extremely attenuated nature of the ideal of human 'community' depicted here. Worthwhile people are well disposed to each other (but not to other, 'worthless' and 'stupid' people) in principle, but not fully so, since they 'are not aware of each other and do not live together in the same place'. It is difficult to see how this dimension of Stoic existence deserves the label 'social'

42 Pembroke, 'Oikeiôsis', 130.

43 Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis*, 250.

44 Arius Didymus, 11i.16–29; ed. Pomeroy, 76–7.

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which Engberg-Pedersen needs to apply to it for his thesis to stand. Moreover, there seems little connection between this and Paul's passionate concern for the face-to-face interactions between Judean and non-Judean in Roman house-congregations (and elsewhere in his zone of mission).

A final point is that whatever the status of Stoic beliefs in duties owed to other human beings, these beliefs were not the generating force for such of their ethics as applied to person-to-person relations. As we will now see in relation to Rom 12, Stoic ethics were driven by the need to explain to the wise and worthwhile man how to achieve the good. They were largely self-centered, and benefits to others were by-products of this primary concern. That is to say, notions of universal human community remained as a noble idea with no real function in their ethical practices, so that there is little substance in Engberg-Pedersen's claim that they had a communal aspect to their thought comparable with Paul's. While Engberg-Pedersen could reply to this by reiterating that he is only interested in comparing deep structures, he would face the riposte that this emphasizes the troubling remoteness of his argument from the issues that really mattered to Paul and his audience.

3. Rom 12 compared with Stoic ethics: a case for difference

Having now revealed the difficulties inherent in a recent attempt to reveal a deep, underlying similarity between Stoic ethics and Pauline moral thought, the time has come to undertake a very different form of comparison. Given that the two phenomena under investigation come from roughly the same time and place (and are therefore likely to share some similarities by virtue of their common setting), I will employ the technique of 'close comparison', which looks to differences more than similarities. Although I will focus on Rom 12 (for the reason that Romans has been the subject of my own Pauline research recently),[45] it would be possible to compare Stoic ethics with other passages in his correspondence in a similar way.

Rom 12.1–8

Paul begins this section of the letter as follows. He urges his addressees

> to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your rational worship (λογικὴ λατρεία), and do not be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind (νοῦς), that you may prove what is the will of God . . . . (12.1–2)

45 See esp. Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, MA: Fortress, 2003). For a general view on re-situating Rom 12–15 away from designations such as 'ethics' and 'paraenesis' in the direction of social identity theory and virtue ethics, see Esler, 'Social Identity'.

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The mention of 'rational worship' and a renewed mind are the first of a number of references in Rom 12–15 to cognitive dimensions of human behaviour. There are several more, indeed, in the next verse, which has four expressions containing the verb φρονεῖν ('to think') or its cognates, when he urges his audience

> not to think arrogantly (μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν) contrary to how you should think (παρ᾽ ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν), but think (φρονεῖν) with self-restrained thinking (σωφρονεῖν), just as God has assigned a measure of a faith to each. (12.3)

Julia Annas has recently pointed out that ancient Greco-Roman theories of ethics are conspicuous for their appeal to human rationality and that this 'is particularly clear in the Stoics, who argue that the moral point of view is grasped by the agent whose reason has developed in the appropriate way'.[46] From the verses just cited, it is clear that Paul shares with the Stoics this type of concern for the cognitive dimension of human existence, in his case that the Christ-followers should exhibit the right sort of rationality. While the source of the rationality Paul has in mind is different from that of the Stoics, its importance to him is quite notable and will be maintained as the argument develops. This is the first of many places in Rom 12 where Paul seems to be touching upon issues of interest to Stoics, albeit from a quite different perspective. It is worthy of comment that although Engberg-Pedersen notes a connection between Paul's thought and Stoicism in Rom 12.1–2, he fails to mention any differences and greatly overstates the similarity by asserting that Paul 'is equally certainly moving within a specifically Stoic form of thought'.[47]

The striking connection of the direction 'not to think arrogantly' in v. 3 to a correct form of rationality prompts comparison with Aristotelian and Stoic moral traditions. In Aristotelian thought φρόνησις, or practical wisdom, the ability to reason correctly about practical matters, figured prominently in relation to the practice of virtue necessary to achieve happiness. It was also central to Stoic ethics. In the epitome by Arius Didymus, φρόνησις is listed first among the virtues (ἀρεταί) and means 'a knowledge of what things must be done and what must not be done and of what are neither, or a knowledge of what are good things and what are bad and what are neither for a creature whose nature it is to live in cities'.[48] It is indeed the first of the four primary virtues. Paul does not use the nominal form φρόνησις, although it appears in the pseudo-Pauline letter to the Ephesians 1.8.[49]

46 Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 445.

47 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 264.

48 Arius Didymus 5.b. Translation (modified); ed. Pomeroy, 13. The text represents Stobaeus, *Eclogues*, Book 2, Chapter 7.5–12. The expression 'a creature whose nature it is to live in cities' derives from Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a: 'A human being is by nature a creature who lives in cities (πολιτικὸν ζῷον)'.

49 The only other instance of the word in the NT is in Luke 1.17.

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More pertinently, the twice repeated verb φρονεῖν in Rom 12.3 strikes a very similar chord. And this is not the only similarity with Aristotelianism and Stoicism.

The second of the four primary virtues according to Arius Didymus is σωφροσύνη,[50] meaning self-restraint through sound judgement: 'a knowledge of what things are worth choosing and what are worth avoiding and what are neither'.[51] This word, again, is not used by Paul,[52] but the related verb, σωφρονεῖν, features in Rom 12.3, although only elsewhere in the Pauline correspondence at 2 Cor 5.13. In Rom 12.3, as John H. Elliott has astutely noted,[53] σωφρονεῖν has the particular flavor of exercising sound judgement as an antithesis to hybris, the breach of social limits, so detrimental to the unity of the group, constituted by insult (or even injury) to others. In this regard it provides a complete alternative to μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν, meaning 'to act arrogantly', as noted above.

This prompts reflection on how different Paul is from the Stoics. As we have noted above, the social dimension to Stoic ethics was extremely weak, either because (as in Arius Didymus) worthwhile people are well disposed to each other (but not to others) in principle but not fully so, since they 'are not aware of each other and do not live together in the same place',[54] or (as in Cicero) because fellow human feeling is a natural sentiment, not the result of reason. With Paul things are entirely different, since he is interested in holding communities together. For this reason he enlists φρόνησις and σωφροσύνη (in their verbal forms) to support the injunction not to act arrogantly. Arrogance is a quality that can break up communities and this posed a risk for the Christ-movement, but not for the Stoics, who lived isolated from one another. Accordingly, Paul inserts near the start of his explanation of how to live as a Christ-follower a focus upon rational and self-restrained judgement analogous to that being advocated in his time by the Stoics, yet now for a completely different end. It is hard to resist the conclusion that he is here offering a rival vision of human behavior which picks up the Stoics' best insights, but integrates them into a new and distinctive product. This is precisely the type of contrast that is missed if one follows Engberg-Pedersen's approach in not investigating *differences* between Paul and Stoicism.

In Rom 12.3–8 Paul offers a particular and closely circumscribed social arena for the implementation of the norm in vv. 1–3, namely, in relation to specific ministries within the congregations. This emphasis further serves sharply to differentiate his thought from the Stoic tradition, since he is passionately concerned with

50 The third and fourth primary virtues were bravery and justice.

51 Arius Didymus 5b–b2; ed. Pomeroy, 10–15. For an apt comment on this ancient concept, see John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 748.

52 It appears in the NT only at Acts 26.25 and 1 Tim. 2.9, 15.

53 Elliott, *1 Peter,* 748.

54 Arius Didymus 11; ed. Pomeroy, 77.

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face-to-face interactions between the members of the Christ-believing congregations as they perform the various ministries that together contribute to the unity of the movement.

Ἀγάπη *in Rom 12.9–21: general issues*

Rom 12.9–21 consists of a collection of some 30 statements that all illustrate the initial assertion of Rom 12.9a: 'Love (ἀγάπη) is without pretence'. Paul regarded the presence of ἀγάπη as closely linked to the Holy Spirit. At Rom 5.5 he attributes the outpouring of God's love into human hearts to the agency of the Spirit 'which has been given to us'. Nevertheless, in spite of the divine origin of ἀγάπη as understood by Paul, a case can be made for treating it as a virtue in the Aristotelian and Stoic senses in relation to its mode of operation. The notion of virtue was certainly not alien to Paul, since he uses the standard Greek word for 'virtue' (ἀρετή) once in his letters, and in a very positive sense – as something to be thought about (Phil 4.8).

At its core a virtue is a 'disposition', meaning a certain settled and stable capacity, tendency or propensity possessed by someone, or a liability to which he or she is subject. Dispositions are expressed by incidents in a person's life capable of being narrated retrospectively or prospectively. Yet a virtue is a special type of disposition, one that makes a person morally good and contributes to his or her happiness or flourishing.[55] The Stoics believed there were four primary virtues: practical wisdom, self-restraint, justice and courage, and they are dispositions of this type. But so too is ἀγάπη. It is a settled capacity or tendency, expressed in particular events, which is conducive to human happiness. Patristic writers had no difficulty in treating ἀγάπη as a virtue, to which, indeed, they added faith and hope. For Paul ἀγάπη was the primary virtue and this differentiated him sharply from the Stoics.

The Stoics theorized about the connection between a virtue and its manifestations in a person's life. They distinguished between virtues (ἀρεταί), conditions/inclinations (ἕξεις), which were variable (like a fondness for music or horse-riding), and actions (ἐνεργήματα), by which virtues were expressed. They called an act (ἐνέργημα) done in accordance with a virtue, such as acting justly, a 'right act' (κατόρθωμα).[56] It is reasonable to regard the 30 statements in Rom 12.9–21 as manifestations of the morally excellent disposition of ἀγάπη which God has lodged in a person's heart. More specifically, we may treat them as 'acts' (ἐνεργήματα) and, indeed, as 'right acts' (κατορθώματα) analogous to those of the

55 For a detailed discussion of the appropriateness of the language of the virtues (which are staging a remarkable resurgence in contemporary ethics) to Paul's moral thought, see Esler, 'Social Identity'.

56 See Arius Didymus 8; ed. Pomeroy, 51–3.

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Stoics. Paul could well be speaking to his audience in a way that the promulgation of Aristotelian and Stoic ethics, even at popular and non-specialist levels, had made familiar. Yet we should not forget that the virtue that Paul describes is quite different in origin from Stoic virtues, since it derives from the Holy Spirit, and, as we will soon see, is very different in the moral demands it makes on those who manifest it.

It was a central feature of Aristotle's ethics that, just as with any skill, people became virtuous by practising virtue.[57] To an extent, this idea also flowed into Stoic thought. The Stoics certainly believed in moral progress. Stoics were to exercise virtue always.[58] They were 'genuinely in earnest and vigilant for their own improvement'.[59] They put their principles into practice on a daily basis.[60] Moreover, among those things that they classed as indifferent, some were to be preferred and some rejected and among those regarded as preferred came προκοπή ('moral improvement').[61] This must mean that they thought one made moral progress by practising the virtues. On the other hand, and somewhat in conflict with this, was their view 'that between virtue and vice there is nothing intermediate, whereas according to the Peripatetics there is, namely, the state of moral improvement (προκοπή)'. A person was either just or unjust, not more just or more unjust.[62] These positions can be reconciled on the basis that a person who possessed the virtues and exercised them becomes morally better, even though it could not be said that he or she acquires more of the virtues by so doing. Cicero, well aware of this paradoxical dimension of Stoic thought, offers a more particular explanation, namely, that 'although the Stoics deny that either virtues or vices can be increased in degree (*crescere*), they nevertheless believe that each of them can be in a sense expanded and widened in scope'.[63] Arius Didymus reports a difference of view among Stoics, with some asserting that virtuous people occurred by nature, while others held that virtue could be acquired by training, in accord with the maxim 'Practice over time turns into second nature'.[64]

Many, however, consider that Paul did not accept the notion of moral development. This idea goes back to Luther, who thought the idea of moral progress difficult to reconcile to justification by faith, with its twin realities of *simul justus*

57 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1103a–b.

58 Diogenes Laertius 7.128.

59 Diogenes Laertius 7.118.

60 See Epictetus, *Discourse* 1.4.18–21, who describes the daily regime of the Stoic (cited by Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 67). Epictetus (*c.* 55–135 CE) was a student of the Roman Stoic Musonius Rufus.

61 Diogenes Laertius 7.106–7; Arius Didymus 7b; ed. Pomeroy, 44–5.

62 Diogenes Laertius 7.127.

63 Cicero, *De finibus* 3.48; ET by H. Rackham, *Cicero: De Finibus* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University, 1931) 267.

64 Arius Didymus 11m; ed. Pomeroy, 86–7.

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et peccator.[65] According to Abraham Malherbe, for example, early 'Christians' (presumably including Paul) 'very seldom spoke of virtue' and 'did not share the Greek notion of character development', even if he is still able to speak of 'moral growth' in relation to some parts of the Pauline correspondence (such as 1 Cor 3.1–3; 1 Thess 3.10).[66] More uncompromising is John Barton, who asserts that just as the OT does not talk about moral progress but *conversion* (his emphasis), so too the

> same may be said of most New Testament teaching on morality. Paul is not telling his readers how to advance in the moral life, but describing the effects of conversion. What converts must not do is to revert to their earlier manner of life, but this is not the same as saying that they must make steady progress.[67]

In fact, Paul did allow scope for moral development, but clearly without ever contradicting the basic insight that it is God who makes righteous (Rom 8.33). While it is true that Rom 12.9–21 does not itself suggest that Christ-followers who activate in their life some or all of the exemplifications of ἀγάπη listed will advance in virtue, will make moral progress, other parts of Romans and of his other extant letters strongly indicate that Paul held such a view. The principal consideration here is that Paul amply recognized that individuals grew in the life of faith, as J. P. Sampley has suggested.[68] Paul believed that God gave individual Christ-followers different measures of faith (Rom 12.3, 6). In Rom 14–15 he makes clear that some had weak faith and some strong faith. In addition, however, Paul thought that faith was capable of growth. Thus, he tells the Philippians that he will stay with them for their 'advancement (προκοπή) and joy in faith', or, perhaps better, their 'joyful advancement in faith' (Phil 1.25). This is highly significant. As just noted, the word προκοπή was a standard Stoic word for moral progress, whence it found its way into Philo.[69] Paul tells the Philippians of his own attempt to advance to perfection in a metaphor which draws on foot-racing (Phil 3.12–16). He also uses imagery from athletics in exhorting the Corinthians to run so that they may win the prize (1 Cor 9.24), and even goes so far as to assert that 'Every athlete exercises self-control (ἐγκρατεύεται) in all things' (1 Cor 9.25), a statement remarkable not only for the reference to exercise but also for its mention of the very Stoic notion

65 But see Gilbert C. Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice of Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984) 101–26, who argues that Luther was not as opposed to the idea of moral progress as many think.

66 Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 15, 59–60.

67 John Barton, 'Virtue in the Bible', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 12 (1999) 12–22, at 15.

68 J. P. Sampley, *Walking Between the Times: Paul's Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 47–8.

69 See Gustav Stählin, 'προκοπή, προκόπτω', *TDNT* 6 (1968) 703–20, at 706–7, 709–11; the word appears in this sense in Arius Didymus 7b; ed. Pomeroy, 44–5.

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of self-control (ἐγκράτεια).[70] Elsewhere Paul expresses disappointment that the Corinthians have not advanced as he had wished (1 Cor 3.1–3). Another sign of this dimension to Paul's thought is his use of the adjective δόκιμος, meaning 'tried and tested' (Rom 14.18; 16.10; 1 Cor 11.19; 2 Cor 10.18; 13.7) and δοκιμή, 'the condition of being tried and tested', 'proven worth' (Rom 5.4; 2 Cor 2.9; 8.2; 9.13; 13.3; Phil 2.22). Sampley accurately notes that such terms suggest 'a certain *gravitas* that a person establishes over a period of time and through heavy responsibilities or in a rugged trial'.[71] In other words, Christ-followers moving in the right direction advance in faith over time.

In the light of this body of material which indicates Paul's belief in progress in the faith, it would be highly surprising if he had thought anything other than that the practice of the manifestations of ἀγάπη in Rom 12.9–21 would necessarily assist in this process. He is telling his audience how to advance in the moral life, in spite of Barton's view to the contrary. On the other hand, there is no doubt that such progress is predicated upon conversion.

Detailed consideration of Rom 12.9–21

Yet while there is thus a similarity between Paul and the Stoics in relation to moral development by practice of virtues, they had very different visions as to the acts that would manifest these virtues. In relation to these manifestations, the picture is again one where although Paul's presentation of the detail contains some similarities with Stoic ethics, the existence of differences in his account produces a total package which is, in the end, radically divergent from Stoicism.

In Rom 12.12 Paul mentions the fact of being 'steadfast in affliction' (τῇ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες) as characteristic of ἀγάπη. The Stoics regarded 'steadfastness', or 'endurance' (ὑπομονή), sometimes in the plural ('acts of steadfastness/endurance'), as a product of the primary virtue of courage.[72] To be steadfast was characteristic of the worthwhile man.[73] Steadfastness, which for the Stoics solely concerns how a person copes with experience and does not involve reaching out to others, is clearly an attribute well suited to their ethics, with its focus on the individual self. Although for Paul, too, steadfastness relates to the experience of the self, he insists that there is a close connection between the affliction that will come from following Christ and steadfastness: 'For affliction produces steadfastness' (Rom 5.3).

70 See Arius Didymus 5b2, where ἐγκράτεια is defined as 'a knowledge that does not overstep the bounds of what has come to light in accord with correct reasoning'; ed. Pomeroy, 14–17. Paul commends ἐγκράτεια along with faith and gentleness at Gal. 5.23.

71 Sampley, *Walking Between the Times*, 65.

72 Arius Didymus 5b2–3, 5b5; ed. Pomeroy, 14–17, 18–19 ('Bravery deals with acts of steadfastness [ὑπομοναί]').

73 Arius Didymus 11b; ed. Pomeroy, 64–5.

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The notions of 'Thinking in harmony toward one another' (τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες) and 'Not having arrogant thoughts' (ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες) in Rom 12.16 seem, *prima facie* at least, to approximate to the Stoic viewpoint because of their stress on commendable mental processes. The following quotation from Arius Didymus brings out the importance of concord (ὁμόνοια) among Stoics:

> They say that all good things are common to the worthwhile – hence, in addition, the man who benefits any of his neighbors also benefits himself. Concord is a knowledge of common goods. Hence also all the worthwhile are in concord with one another, because they are in harmony in the affairs of life. But the worthless (φαῦλος) being in disharmony with one another, are enemies of one another . . . .[74]

This seems particularly close to Paul's notion of 'Thinking in harmony toward one another'. Yet the resemblance fades on closer examination. For the Stoics must have regarded such concord as a theoretical concept, not one applied in daily experience, since 'they are not aware of each other and do not live together in the same place', and so could not be regarded as friends of one another in a full sense.[75] For Paul, on the other hand, harmonious thinking was to be practised in the day-to-day, face-to-face interactions between Christ-followers. It was an actual, not a theoretical, reality. In addition, immediately after the exhortation in v. 16 not to have arrogant thoughts, Paul urges his readers to associate with the lowly (ταπεινοί). This guidance runs directly counter to a major dimension of Stoicism, namely, the way in which the morally 'worthwhile' disparaged the rest of humanity as 'worthless' (φαῦλοι), an attitude evident in the quotation from Arius Didymus immediately above.[76]

In addition, the appeal in v. 16 not to be 'intelligent' (φρόνιμος) in a particular way – in your own estimation – also relates to the thought of the Stoics, since φρόνιμος was one of their standard designations for the morally worthwhile person, along with 'good', 'wise' and 'worthwhile'. In spite of the role of φρόνιμος in Stoic thought, Paul obviously has nothing against his addressees being regarded as such *as long as that regard is held by others and not themselves*. He seems to be offering a form of being φρόνιμος within the Christ-movement which is in competition with Stoicism. Even though he may have been influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the very similar statement in Prov 3.7, the heavy cluster of φρον-stem words in Rom 12.16 suggests Pauline engagement with the main ethical tradition

74 Arius Didymus 11b; ed. Pomeroy, 64–5.

75 Arius Didymus 11i; ed. Pomeroy, 76–7.

76 This point would be strengthened if it could be shown that φαῦλος and ταπεινός could be equated. Unfortunately, the word ταπεινός does not appear in Arius Didymus, and in Paul's letters φαῦλοι means '(an) evil (thing)' (Rom 9.11; 2 Cor 5.10). Nevertheless, the φαῦλος in Arius Didymus and the ταπεινοί in Paul both refer to those who occupy the bottom levels of a prevailing system of social or moral evaluation.

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of his day that emphasized reason – Stoicism. But Paul's point is probably even sharper, given the likelihood that Stoics were known for considering that they were intelligent in their own estimation, since living surrounded by the worthless and possibly never meeting one of their own kind, the only person in a position to credit a Stoic with being intelligent was him- or herself.

In Rom 12.11–12, for example, three of the manifestations of ἀγάπη mentioned by Paul are 'being on fire with the Spirit', 'serving the Lord' and 'persisting in prayer'. While the Stoics believed in honoring the gods, especially by sacrifice and keeping themselves pure,[77] persistent prayer and being on fire with the Spirit, reflecting actual charismatic experience, differentiated Paul and his addressees quite sharply from Stoicism and other strands of Greek philosophical ethics.

In Rom 12.10, near the top of the list of the manifestations of ἀγάπη appears 'brotherly love' (φιλαδελφία). While brotherly love was recognized by Greco-Roman authors (such as Plutarch, in his treatise *On Brotherly Love*) as the model of harmonious relations between members of a respectable family, throughout his career Paul was an active proponent of *fictive* brotherly love, to be shown by Christ-followers to one another (see 1 Thess. 4.9 and Gal. 5.13–6.10). Concrete expressions of this love, 'contributing to the needs of the holy ones' and 'practising hospitality', are recommended in v. 13. The strength of the ties binding the communities of Christ-followers together required for their expression a powerful metaphor from kinship patterns in the ambient culture, and brotherly love provided it. Stoic ideas on the feeling of one human being for another were very feeble in comparison.

The exhortations in v. 15 to rejoice and weep with others, that is, to engage in the visible expression of emotions with fellow Christ-followers (perhaps inspired by traditions such as Sir 7.34), can be contrasted with Stoic attitudes to the emotions. Early Stoic thought delineated four primary classes of emotion (πάθος) which they viewed very negatively: grief, fear, desire and pleasure, each covering a range of more specific phenomena. Within the class 'grief', which they considered to be 'an irrational mental contraction', fell, *inter alia*, 'pity' (ἔλεος), meaning grief felt at undeserved suffering, and 'anguish' (ὀδύνη), meaning painful grief.[78] The extent of Stoic dislike for these four primary emotions can be gauged from what Cicero tells us. He actually translates πάθος as 'a disturbance of the mind' (*perturbatio animi*), adding that the very word seems to denote something vicious and not produced by nature. All the emotions 'are mere fancies and frivolous opinions. Therefore the Wise Man will always be free of them.'[79] This

77 Diogenes Laertius 7.119.

78 See Diogenes Laertius 7.110–15.

79 Cicero, *De finibus* 3.35; ET from Rackham, Cicero, 255. The Latin for this quotation runs: omniaque ea sunt opiniones ac iudicia levitatis; itaque his sapiens semper vacabit'.

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means that to feel grief, either pity or anguish, would be irrational and hence not in keeping with the Stoic way of life. Accordingly, to share in the grief felt by another, as Paul suggests, would have seemed to the Stoics to be even more senseless.

Yet the Stoic position on joy (χαρά) was rather different. According to Diogenes Laertius at least (there is nothing comparable in Arius Didymus or Cicero's *De finibus* Book 3), the Stoics allowed that there were three 'good emotional states' (εὐπαθείαι): joy, caution and wishing. They regarded joy as 'rational (εὔλογος) elation'.[80] Yet although it was a good, it was not necessary for happiness.[81] Accordingly, a Stoic would not have objected to rejoicing on his own behalf, and probably not with another, but such an emotion was peripheral to the central moral task of gaining happiness through the practice of virtue in accordance with the law of nature. Paul, conversely, is positively disposed to rejoicing with others and goes further in actively urging such activity on the part of Christ-followers.

In v. 14 Paul urges his readers to 'Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse', and later, in vv. 17–21, he offers a set of injunctions on not repaying evil for evil, but instead conquering evil by good. This is radically different from anything in Stoicism. Arius Didymus, for example, states that Stoics taught that 'the man with good sense does not show pardon (συγγνώμη) to anyone . . . he does not show pardon to those who are doing wrong . . . the good man is not tolerant (ἐπιεικής), since the tolerant can be begged off the punishment in accord with what is due'.[82] Yet human qualities which the Stoics rejected, Paul treasured. Συγγνώμη occurs only once in the NT, at 1 Cor 7.6, with the meaning of 'concession' ('I say this by way of concession, not of command'). The other expression is more interesting. At 2 Cor 10.1 ἐπιείκεια refers to the tolerance or meekness of Christ and is coupled with 'gentleness'. Elsewhere (Phil 4.5) Paul urges the Philippians 'to let everyone know your tolerance (τὸ ἐπιεικής)'. Whereas the Stoics say 'Demand your legal rights, do not tolerate wrong-doing', in these passages from outside Romans Paul makes the contrary assertion: 'Do not stand on your rights, but rather show tolerance and meekness, just like Christ.'

Paul recommends 'giving precedence to one another in honour' (12.10), a counter-cultural sentiment in the ancient Mediterranean world that may have been expressed by Jesus.[83] On the other hand, Cicero reports that although the early Stoics Chrysippus and Diogenes used to aver that a favorable reputation (*bona fama*) was not worth stretching out a finger for, their successors declared

80 Diogenes Laertius 7.116.

81 See Arius Didymus 6d; ed Pomeroy, 38–41.

82 Arius Didymus 11d; ed. Pomeroy, 66–7 (translation modified).

83 See Michael B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1–15.13* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991) 94.

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that such a reputation was preferred and desirable for its own sake.[84] Arius Didymus also regarded reputation (δόξα) as worth acquiring.[85]

3. CONCLUSION

Throughout the course of Rom 12 Paul works closely with ideas and language that have parallels in Stoicism and yet thoroughly subverts them as he paints his own very distinctive picture. Why this engagement with Stoic ethics? Julia Annas has provided a very plausible answer:

> However, adopting your opponents' terminology need not be a sign that you have adopted their conclusions. Indeed, an effective way to meet an opponent is precisely to neutralize the point that formed an objection by taking it over yourself, showing that you can make the alleged objection part of your position. Rather than repeating your own position in the original terms, you go on to show that you can absorb the apparently troublesome part of your opponents' position without being forced to their conclusions. Thus you come out one step ahead of the opposition rather than one step behind. And in an intellectual atmosphere where debate tends to start from your opponents' premises, this is an intelligent way to proceed, critical rather than merely defensive.[86]

Although we have opposed Engberg-Pedersen's advocacy of a similarity between Paul and the Stoics at a deep, underlying level of thought, a striking feature of Paul's presentation that may derive from his interaction with Stoicism is the extent to which he stresses the rational basis underlying the attitudes and behavior he recommends. In a way that seems rather unusual to us,[87] Paul assumes that moral knowledge and virtuous activity are inseparable. On the other hand, Paul's paramount concern with the nature of face-to-face contacts between Christ-followers, who must treat one another with ἀγάπη and put the interests of others ahead of their own, is so radically different from anything in Stoic thought that it brings into sharp focus his distinctive vision of moral life in Christ.

84 Cicero, *De finibus* 3.57.
85 Arius Didymus 7e; ed. Pomeroy, 48–9.
86 Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 281.
87 Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice of Virtue*, 27.

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