


Divine and Human Spirit in Rom 8:16. Paul and Epictetus on Free Will

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ABSTRACT: The article focuses on the phenomenon of free will in Paul, taking as the starting point Rom. 8:16. At the beginning, a concise exegetical analysis of Rom 8:16 is presented, placed in the rhetorical context of Rom 8. Subsequently, a comparison is drawn between Paul's and Epictetus's views on divine and human agency. First, the Epictetus's idea of freedom is presented with a special emphasis on the notion of proairesis, understood as the true self of a person, responsible for free moral choices and actions. Next, the similarities and differences between the Epictetus's and Pauline vision of free will are discussed. What connects the apostle and the philosopher are convictions that free will can exist in a divinely determined world and that human volition requires continuous education and subordination to God's will. The elements that clearly distinguish Paul from Epictetus are the natural image of deity to be imitated in the human pursuit of freedom, and a genuinely relational, corporeal and emotive character of free will in the apostle. The psycho-somatic nature of human personality and will in Paul invites a dialogue between the apostle and modern science but it has to be carried out cautiously, bearing in mind the different methodologies, the idea of transcendent deity and Christological foundation upon which the Pauline idea of freedom and free will is built.

KEYWORDS: Rom 8:16, divine Spirit, human spirit, Epictetus, proairesis, freedom, free will, determinism

The question of the relationship between human will and divine action has been the focus of interest for representatives of various religions and fields of science for centuries. Since the Qur'an did not give a clear answer to it, one hundred years after Muhammad's death, Islamic scholars asked the caliphs for the permission to study the writings of ancient Greek philosophers, where the key to solving this mystery might be hidden.¹ The Bible also does not explain how to reconcile an individual's absolute dependence on God and the faculty to freely decide one's fate. One of the most important New Testament authors on the subject is, of course, Paul. In Pauline vision, Christian freedom is a divine gift, closely related to the Christ event and the work of the Spirit; it means the new life in Christ, being free from sin, and directed towards God's righteousness, sanctification

¹ R. Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Fundamentals of Philosophy Series; New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005) 148.

and eternal life (Rom 6:22).² Does the new life in Christ, marked so distinctly by the primacy of God's grace and action, leave any room for a truly free human will and agency? The starting point of this paper will be Rom 8:16, describing in a more explicit and detailed way than other Pauline elocutions the interaction between the human and divine Spirit, and placing it in a dense network of divine agency in Rom 8. The specific text we will focus on does not preclude the use of others, but it gives us a chance to avoid too general and shallow an analysis of Pauline pronouncements on the issue, additionally detached from their argumentative context. Pondering on Rom 8:16 and adding other relevant passages from the apostle's letters, I will try to draw a picture of the relationship between human free will and divine all-determining action in Paul. To help us better understand the interaction between free will and the divine determinant in the apostle, I will refer to the Stoic thought as represented by Epictetus, roughly contemporary with Paul. His idea of freedom constructed around the notion of *proairesis* presents both striking similarities and important differences with respect to the apostle, which will help us better capture the specificity of the Pauline notion of volition and its relatedness to the Graeco-Roman and Jewish atmosphere.³

1. Rom 8:16 in the Context of Chapter 8

Rom 8:16 belongs to the section of Rom 8:14–17, which plays a pivotal role in chapter 8. In this chapter, we are dealing with the climax of Paul's argumentation in Rom 5–8.⁴ Here,

- 2 See the context in which the stem ἐλευθ- appears in Paul: Rom 6:18, 20, 22; 8:2, 21; 1 Cor 7:22; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 2:4; 4:31; 5:1, 13. On the word group in the Graeco-Roman, Jewish and New Testament context, see H. Schlier, "ἐλευθερος κτλ.," *TDNT* II, 487–502; K. Niederwimmer, "ἐλευθερος κτλ.," *EDNT* I, 432–434.
- 3 On the methodological challenges awaiting those who compare the New Testament authors and the Stoics, see C.K. Rowe, *One True Life. The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2016) 175–262. The author practically denies a possibility of any fruitful comparison between the Christian and Stoic views, heavily criticising the "encyclopedic" mind frame in which such a comparison is oftentimes carried out. Christopher K. Rowe points to the blurring of the distinctions between the Stoic and Christian authors characteristic of the modern approach and argues for the radical untranslatability of the Stoic and Christian concepts, turned into artificial abstracts and detached from ordinary life in which they took on their proper meanings. The author accentuates exclusively differences between the Stoa and Christianity, presented by him as competing and rival projects of living. He eventually admits some points of contact between them on behalf of the common Graeco-Roman atmosphere they share (see "Appendix," *ibidem*, 260), but it remains largely irrelevant to his methodological views. Although they are hard to agree with, as shown by a vast majority of scholars, we should welcome his caution and care in accentuating important dissimilarities between Paul and the Stoics. On a possible search for a common intellectual and historic-cultural background among different ancient authors and its methodological premises, see also K. Crabbe, *Luke/Acts and the End of History* (BZNW 238; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2019) 33 and more on pp. 32–56.
- 4 On the rhetorical structure of Rom 5–8, see J.-N. Aletti, "The Rhetoric of Romans 5–8," *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture. Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (eds. S.E. Porter – T.H. Olbricht) (JSNTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997) 294–308; A. Gieniusz, *Romans 8, 18–30. Suffering Does Not Thwart the Future Glory* (USFSJH 9; Atlanta, GA: Scholars 1999) 40–49; C.H. Talbert, "Tracing Paul's Train of Thought in Romans 6–8," *RevExp* 100/1 (2003) 53–63. On the rhetorical analysis of Rom 5–8, see J.-N. Aletti,

Paul describes the believers' new life in Christ by introducing a figure who is responsible for it, namely, the Spirit. In the complementary thesis (*subpropositio*) of Rom 8:1–2, the apostle states that there is no condemnation for those “in Christ,” because the law of the Spirit has set them free from the law of sin and death.⁵ Verse 2 explicates Paul's statement in v. 1: the law of the Spirit means the new *aeon* which the Spirit introduces, the *aeon* of God's love and justification working through Christ, which effectively abolishes the previous condemnation. The Spirit liberates (ἐλευθερώω) Christians from the slavery of sin and death. The first argument (Rom 8:3–4) with which the apostle illustrates his thesis is focused on God and Christ: God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh (Rom 8:4). This way the just requirement of the Law can be fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit (Rom 8:3–4). In other words, the Christians' new life is possible thanks to the saving work of the Father and the Son and it becomes accessible to those who let themselves be guided by the Spirit.

The Spirit binds together the first (Rom 8:3–4) and the second argument (8:5–13), in which the apostle elaborates on the topic of new life. First, the Spirit liberates the believers from walking according to the flesh, that is, according to the old, sinful self, granting them life and peace with God (Rom 8:5–8). Second, life in the Spirit means belonging to Christ and resurrection similar to his resurrection (Rom 8:9–11). Third, it also means putting to death the deeds of the body, which results in being more and more immersed in the baptismal death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 8:12–13). The indicative, with which Paul describes the new status of the believers in Rom 8:1–13, is interwoven with the imperative. The gifts of the Spirit remain ineffective in those, who do not collaborate with the Spirit (Rom 8:4,13). The new life in Christ is a joint effort of the Christian and the Spirit.

Closing the first part of his argumentation in chapter 8, the apostle depicts the believers guided by the Spirit and enjoying their new status of children of God (Rom 8:14). Paul uses the rhetorical *gradatio*, picturing first the Spirit that enables the baptised to cry to God “Abba! Father!” (Rom 8:15). Then, it continually supports the testimony of their own human spirit that they are God's children (Rom 8:16) and finally introduces them to the glorious inheritance awaiting those who participate in the sufferings of Christ (Rom 8:17). The work of the Spirit cannot be limited simply to reminding the believers who they are, as it consists in bringing them ever more deeply into communion with the Father, thanks to which they become more and more similar to the Son and capable of moral life.⁶

New Approaches for Interpreting the Letters of Saint Paul. Collected Essays. Rhetoric, Soteriology, Christology and Ecclesiology (SubBi 43; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2012) 61–138.

5 On the rhetorical role of Rom 8,1–2, see J.-N. Aletti, “Romans 8. The Incarnation and Its Redemptive Impact,” J.-N. Aletti, *New Approaches for Interpreting the Letters of Saint Paul. Collected Essays. Rhetoric, Soteriology, Christology and Ecclesiology* (SubBi 43; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2012) 114–115; Gieniusz, *Romans 8,18–30*, 45; C. Grappe, “Qui me délivrera de ce corps de mort? L'esprit de vie! Romains 7,24 et 8,2 comme éléments de typologie adamique,” *Bib* 83/4 (2002) 491. See also J. van Rensburg, “The Children of God in Romans 8,” *Neot* 15 (1981) 155; Talbert “Tracing Paul's Train of Thought in Romans 6–8,” 59.

6 Cf. V. Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul. Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (WUNT 2/283; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010) 172; Aletti “Romans 8,” 116.

In this context Rom 8:16, which belongs to the pivotal section of Rom 8:14–17, that can be labeled as a rhetorical *transitio*, appears. On the one hand, it closes the Pauline argumentation in Rom 8:1–17 and, on the other, foreshadows the new argument in Rom 8:18–30.⁷ Verse 18 can be qualified as the next subsidiary thesis (*subpropositio*), which focuses on the topic of the believers' sufferings alluded to in v. 17.⁸ Paul argues that the present distress cannot thwart the future glory that awaits the believers. According to Andrzej Gieniusz, in Rom 8:18, the apostle responds to the dilemma related to the Deuteronomistic theory of retribution, according to which the trials are irrevocably resulting from one's sins.⁹ Paul seems to be arguing that the hardships not only do not obliterate the perspective of eternal inheritance, but they also provide an occasion for an even deeper assimilation to Christ and thus participating in his glory. As the Son took upon himself the lowly condition of mankind (Rom 8:3) and thus reached the glorious resurrection (Rom 8:11), so also the baptised, bearing the burdens of the present life, are destined for the future glorious existence.¹⁰ Rom 8:18 alludes to Rom 8:1, but also to the principle thesis of Rom 5:20–21. Sufferings, still present in this world, are not a sign of being subject to the curse of the Law (Rom 8:1) and do not abolish the reign of grace leading to eternal life (Rom 5:20–21).

How does then the Pauline argumentation develop with respect to the thesis that Paul put forward in Rom 8:18? The apostle consequently presents three arguments in which the key role is again played by the Spirit. First, in Rom 8:19–22, it helps to turn the unproductive sighs of the creation into the labour pains out of which the future freedom and glory of the children of God emerges.¹¹ At the end, the whole creation (κτίσις), signifying here the sub-human world, will participate in the renewed condition of the believers. Second, the Spirit, together with its first fruits deposited in the baptised, ignites and sustains in them the hope of the awaited full redemption of their bodies, that is, resurrection (Rom 8:23–25). Finally, it approaches the Christians in their weakness and lets them experience the power of its prayer and intercession on their behalf (8:26–27).¹² Verses 28–30 conclude the Pauline argumentation in Rom 8:18–30, reinforcing what Paul stated in v. 18.¹³ The present sufferings cannot thwart the future glory of the believers because all things work together for good of those who are called, foreknown and predestined by God

7 Cf. J.-B. Matand Bulembat, *Noyau et enjeux de l'eschatologie paulinienne. De l'apocalyptique juive et de l'eschatologie hellénistique dans quelques argumentations de l'apôtre Paul. Étude rhétorico-exégétique de 1 Co 15,35–58; 2 Co 5,1–10 et Rom 8,18–30* (WUNT 84; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 1997) 204–206.

8 Cf. J.-N. Aletti, "Romans 5–8. The Arrangement and Its Theological Relevance," J.-N. Aletti, *New Approaches for Interpreting the Letters of Saint Paul. Collected Essays. Rhetoric, Soteriology, Christology and Ecclesiology* (SubBi 43; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2012) 66; Gieniusz, *Romans 8,18–30*, 81–82; Grappe "Qui me délivrera de ce corps de mort?," 491; Talbert "Tracing Paul's Train of Thought in Romans 6–8," 60.

9 See Gieniusz, *Romans 8,18–30*, 110–111, 160–161.

10 Cf. Aletti "Romans 8," 116.

11 See the double appearance of the vocabulary connected with liberation and freedom in Rom 8:21: ἐλευθερώω and ἐλευθερία.

12 Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas, TX: Word 1988) 477; D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1996) 523; Gieniusz, *Romans 8,18–30*, 212–214.

13 Cf. Gieniusz, *Romans 8,18–30*, 251–253, 287.

to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8:28–29). The Christian path overseen by the Spirit inevitably ends in the glorious inheritance of heaven (8:30).

Getting back to the pivotal section of Rom 8:14–17 and v. 16, Paul portrays here the Spirit who testifies together with our own spirit that we are children of God. The identity of God's children is strictly connected with love which helps the baptised to fulfil the just requirement of God's Law (Rom 8:3–4). It also enhances freedom from the old way of living according to the flesh, which results in the dominion of sin and death (Rom 8:5–8, 12–13). Having the Spirit residing in them, the believers belong to the Father and Son (Rom 8:9–11), waiting for the final transformation of their bodies for the full conformity to Christ (Rom 8:23, 29). Given such an importance of the Spirit in every key aspect of Christian life, one may wonder what kind of collaboration it requires from the believers. How does their freedom and action relate to the work of the Spirit? Does the Spirit collaborating with God also predestines (προορίζω) Christians for salvation (cf. Rom 8:29)? To answer these questions, we need to take a closer look at Rom 8:16, where the human and divine Spirit are put side by side.

2. A Closer Look at Rom 8:16 and the Phenomenon of Human Freedom

In Rom 8:16, Paul describes the Spirit supporting our spirit with its testimony (συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν) that we are God's children. While the first mention of *pneuma* in Rom 8:16 undoubtedly refers to the divine Spirit, the second one gives rise to some interpretative problems. What does “our spirit” mean and what role does it play in Rom 8:16? Robert Jewett, despite the logical difficulties he acknowledges, states that in the analysed verse Paul speaks of God's infused Spirit given to man, supported by the testimony of ... the same divine Spirit.¹⁴ To avoid such a loop, it is better to follow those who interpret τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν as a reference to the human spirit. Adolf Schlatter and Marie-Joseph Lagrange argue that it stands for the human nature renewed by Christ's grace, which finds general support in the context of Rom 8.¹⁵ Joseph Fitzmyer, in turn, sees here an allusion to a personal space in which we offer our prayers as God's children.¹⁶ Similarly, Douglas Moo explains “our spirit” as part of the human personality that receives the witness of the Spirit and also “bears witness with it” (συμμαρτυρεῖ) that we are God's children.¹⁷

14 See R. Jewett – R.D. Kotansky, *Romans. A Commentary on the Book of Romans* (Hermeneia, MN; Minneapolis: Fortress 2007) 500.

15 See M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul. Épître aux Romains* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda 1931) 202; A. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit. Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief*, 3 ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer 1959) 266.

16 See J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday 1993) 501.

17 See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 503–504. On the human spirit here, see also Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 454; G.D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence. The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1994) 568; T.J. Burke, “Adoption and the Spirit in Romans 8,” *EvQ* 70 (1998) 322; C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and*

Assuming that “our spirit” here denotes the human self that communicates with God, what role does Paul assign to it in Rom 8:16? Is it just a passive recipient of the testimony of the divine Spirit that confirms our dignity as God’s children? The verb *συμμαρτυρέω*, which Paul uses here, can mean that God’s Spirit “testifies” to the human spirit that we are God’s children, but taking into full consideration the construct *συν-*, it makes better sense to translate it as joint witnessing.¹⁸ The Spirit of God would then confirm the witness of the human spirit, which expresses the believers’ new consciousness as God’s children.¹⁹ Schlatter and Lagrange are right, seeing here not only an allusion to the spiritual dimension of the human person, but to a dimension touched by the transforming grace of Christ. The objections raised against this interpretation by some commentators, claiming that the human spirit cannot testify to our dignity as God’s children, stem rather from the Lutheran *simul iustus et peccator* than from Paul’s logic of argumentation in Rom 8.²⁰ Paul regularly pictures here the believers collaborating with the divine Spirit (8:4–5, 9, 13, 14–15). Thus, the human spirit in Rom 8:16, imbued with the power of the divine Spirit, embraces its new identity and belonging to God’s family. With the help of the divine Spirit, it also translates it into the moral life of an individual (Rom 8:5–8, 12–13). In the midst of the absolute domination of God’s grace, as depicted in Rom 8, there is room for human free will and ethical action that results from it. Free will seems to be quite compatible with divine determinism. How exactly does this process take place? What part of our personality is responsible for interacting with God’s Spirit? Paul is silent about the details of this interaction, but we can look for them in his contemporary, the Stoic philosopher Epictetus.

Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Introduction and Commentary on Romans I–VIII (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 2004) 403.

18 See “*συμμαρτυρέω*,” *A Greek-English Lexicon* (ed. H.G. Liddell – R. Scott – H.S. Jones – R. McKenzie) (Oxford – New York: Clarendon – Oxford University Press 1996) 1677: “to bear witness with or in support of another.” Thus W. Sanday – A.C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; New York: Scribner 1897) 203; R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern 1936) 524; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 454; E.A. Obeng, “Abba, Father. The Prayer of the Sons of God,” *ExpTim* 99/12 (1988) 365; B. Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1996) 253; G.R. Osborne, *Romans* (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2004) 207; T.J. Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family. Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 22; Nottingham – Downers Grove, IL: Apollos – InterVarsity Press 2006) 149; Jewett – Kotansky, *Romans*, 500; R.N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2016) 705.

19 Cf. R.H. Mounce, *Romans* (NAC 27; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman 1995) 183.

20 See H. Strathmann, “*μάρτυς κτλ.*,” *TDNT* IV, 509; L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Leicester, England – Grand Rapids, MI: Apollos – Eerdmans 1988) 316–317 and his reference to Luther.

3. Paul and Epictetus on Free Will and the Self

The intuition of drawing a comparison between the thought of Paul and the ideas of ancient philosophers, especially the Stoics, is not a new one. It has been pursued from antiquity to the present times, the proof of which is the famous pseudonymous correspondence between Paul and Seneca.²¹ The connection between the Pauline and the Stoic anthropology and ethics has recently been picked up by Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Susan Eastman.²² Comparing the notion of free will in Paul and Epictetus in his *Cosmology and Self* (2010), Engberg-Pedersen is following in the footsteps of many scholars who, in the past and present century, were interested in this philosopher in relation to Paul.²³

- 21 See J.N. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca* (Leiden: Brill 1961); J.R. Dodson – D.E. Briones (eds.), *Paul and Seneca in Dialogue* (Ancient Philosophy and Religion 2; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2017).
- 22 See the numerous publications by Engberg-Pedersen on Paul and the Stoics: T. Engberg-Pedersen, “Stoicism in Philippians,” *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen) (Minneapolis, MA: Fortress 1995) 256–290; T. Engberg-Pedersen, “The Hellenistic Öffentlichkeit: Philosophy as a Social Force in the Greco-Roman World,” *Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict. Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity, and the Greco-Roman World* (eds. P. Borgen – V.K. Robbins – D.B. Gowler) (Emory Studies in Early Christianity 6; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1998) 15–37; T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2000); T. Engberg-Pedersen, “The Reception of Graeco-Roman Culture in the New Testament: The Case of Romans 7.7–25,” *The New Testament as Reception* (eds. M. Müller – H. Ironier) (JSNTSup 230; London – New York: Sheffield Academic Press 2002) 32–57; T. Engberg-Pedersen, “The Relationship with Others. Similarities and Differences between Paul and Stoicism,” *ZNW* 96/1–2 (2005) 35–60; T. Engberg-Pedersen, “Paul’s Stoicizing Politics in Romans 12–13. The Role of 13.1–10 in the Argument,” *JSNT* 29/2 (2006) 163–172; T. Engberg-Pedersen, “Complete and Incomplete Transformation in Paul. A Philosophical Reading of Paul on Body and Spirit,” *Metamorphoses. Resurrection, Body, and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* (eds. T.K. Seim – J. Økland) (Ekstasis 1; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2009) 123–146; T. Engberg-Pedersen, “The Material Spirit. Cosmology and Ethics in Paul,” *NTS* 55/2 (2009) 179–197; T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul. The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010); T. Engberg-Pedersen, “A Stoic Concept of the Person in Paul? From Galatians 5:17 to Romans 7:14–25,” *Christian Body, Christian Self. Concepts of Early Christian Personhood* (eds. C.K. Rothschild – T.W. Thompson) (WUNT 284; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011) 85–112; T. Engberg-Pedersen, “On Comparison. The Stoic Theory of Value in Paul’s Theology and Ethics in Philippians,” *Der Philipperbrief des Paulus in der hellenistisch-römischen Welt* (eds. J. Frey – B. Schliesser – V. Niederhofer) (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2015) 289–308; T. Engberg-Pedersen, “Paul in Philippians and Seneca in Epistle 93 on Life after Death and Its Present Implications,” *Paul and Seneca in Dialogue* (eds. J.R. Dodson – D.E. Briones) (Ancient Philosophy and Religion 2; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2017) 276–284. See also S.G. Eastman, *Paul and the Person. Reframing Paul’s Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2017).
- 23 Among the predecessors whom Engberg-Pedersen cites, see A. Bonhöffer, *Epiktet und das Neue Testament* (RVV 10; Gießen: Töpelmann 1911); A. Bonhöffer, “Epiktet und das Neue Testament,” *ZNW* 13 (1912) 281–292; S. Vollenweider, *Freiheit als neue Schöpfung. Eine Untersuchung zur Eleutheria bei Paulus und in seiner Umwelt* (FRLANT 147; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1989); A.A. Long, *Epictetus. A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford – New York: Clarendon 2002). On Paul and Epictetus in contemporary scholarship, see N. Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law. A Comparison* (LNTS 405; London: Clark 2009); R.M. Thorsteinsson, “Paul and Roman Stoicism. Romans 12 and Contemporary Stoic Ethics,” *JSNT* 29/2 (2006) 139–161; R.M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism. A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010); Rowe, *One True Life*; J.R. Dodson – A.W. Pitts (eds.), *Paul and the Greco-Roman Philosophical Tradition* (LNTS 527; London et al.: Bloomsbury 2017);

In fact, there are numerous themes in Epictetus and Paul that seem to be worth putting in a dialogue with one another. Both authors distance themselves from ancient rhetoric and probably did not have a professional rhetorical training. Although they know how to speak persuasively, their focus falls primarily on teaching and giving their disciples an example to emulate (cf. *Diatr.* 1.15.2; 2 Cor 11:5–6).²⁴ Epictetus, similarly to Paul (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Rom 8:9–11), depicts god dwelling in an individual and does so in a profoundly personalist terms, which distinguishes him from other Stoics.²⁵ The philosopher's teaching based on a dialogue in which "I" overlaps with "we," correcting and advising his students on making progress as Stoics, also seems to be close to the Pauline epistles, constituting a kind of a long-distance dialogue with his communities, directed at their progress in Christian life.²⁶ Epictetus, who in the eyes of other philosophers is not worthy of emulating (*Diatr.* 3.8.7), also resembles Paul criticised by his opponents for his weakness (cf. 2 Cor 10:1–11). Finally, he is all the more suitable as a partner in dialogue with the apostle, as the question of human freedom and god's work lies, according to Engberg-Pedersen, at the very core of his thought.²⁷ Also, according to Susan Eastman, Epictetus seems to come „closest to contemporary ideas of persons as autonomous, self-contained individuals" and has „a working model of what it means to be a human being."²⁸ Following this thought, we shall first have a look at Epictetus to compare it later with Paul, searching for the similarities and differences in the apostle in relation to the Stoic notion of free will.

3.1. Epictetus's Freedom and Notion of *proairesis*

The world of Epictetus, which Long calls "God-directed world," is a deterministically constructed space where everything depends on the Creator, but at the same time leaves us room which is "exclusively and wonderfully ours" for free will and autonomous human acts.²⁹

J.R. Dodson – D.E. Briones (eds.), *Paul and the Giants of Philosophy. Reading the Apostle in Greco-Roman Context* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2019).

- 24 Long, *Epictetus*, 13. On Paul's Graeco-Roman education, see W.C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem, the City of Paul's Youth* (London: Epworth Press 1962) 18–39; U. Vanni, "Due Città nella Formazione di Paolo: Tarso e Gerusalemme," *Atti del I Simposio di Tarso su S. Paolo Apostolo* (ed. L. Padovese) (Turchia. La Chiesa e la Sua Storia 5; Roma: Istituto Franciscano di Spiritualità. Pontificio Ateneo Antoniano 1993) 17–29; J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul a Critical Life* (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press 1997) 46–52; S.E. Porter, "Paul of Tarsus and His Letters," *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 B.C. – A.D. 400)* (ed. S.E. Porter) (Leiden: Brill 1997) 533–538; M. Rastoin, *Tarse et Jérusalem. La double culture de l'Apôtre Paul en Galates* 3, 6–4, 7 (AnBib 152; Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico 2003) 21–28; R.F. Hock, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education," *Paul in the Greco-Roman World. A Handbook* (ed. J.P. Sampley) (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press 2003) 198–227; A.W. Pitts, "Hellenistic Schools in Jerusalem and Paul's Rhetorical Education," *Paul's World* (ed. S.E. Porter) (Pauline Studies 4; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2008) 19–50.
- 25 Cf. *Diatr.* 1.1.3; 1.3.2; 1.9.6; 1.12.1–3; 1.16.16–21; 2.8.12–13; 2.16.42; 4.10–14–17. On Epictetus's idea of god, see Long, *Epictetus*, 17, 143, 156; Rowe, *One True Life*, 44–49.
- 26 Long, *Epictetus*, 61. On the philosophy depicted as a practical training and the art of living in Epictetus, see *Diatr.* 1.4.131–5; 1.17.17–18; 2.17.34–36; *Ench.* 29;
- 27 Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 108.
- 28 Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 31–34.
- 29 Long, *Epictetus*, 180.

The freedom that Epictetus talks about is not a political or social idea, but an internal and psychological phenomenon, related to happiness and human peace.³⁰ It consists in the fact that an individual is not forced to do anything, be it by external factors or by internal errors and limitations. Quoting Epictetus:

For what is it that every man is seeking? To live securely, to be happy, to do everything as he wishes to do, not to be hindered, not to be subject to compulsion (*Diatr.* 4.1.46).³¹

The freedom meant by the philosopher is a freedom from passion, pain, fear, and confusion; from the body, property, office, and reputation; from an unhappy life, from being hampered and hindered (*Diatr.* 4.3.7–12). This kind of freedom can be achieved only by focusing on what belongs to us and detaching ourselves from everything that is not ours. According to Epictetus, Zeus himself established the things that are ours, free from impediment and hindrance, and those that are not ours, subject to impediment and hindrance. We received this instruction from him the moment we were born: to cherish completely what is ours, and not to seek after things that do not belong to us (*Diatr.* 1.25.3–5). What is then within our control and what is not?

What has He given me for my own and subject to my authority, and what has He left for Himself? Everything within the sphere of the moral purpose He has given me, subjected them to my control, unhampered and unhindered. My body that is made of clay, how could He make that unhindered? Accordingly, He has made it subject to the revolution of the universe—my property, my furniture, my house, my children, my wife (*Diatr.* 4.1.100–101).

Epictetus argues that everything that can be situated outside a human being does not depend of us and slips out of our control. The external things comprise: property, equipment, house, children, wife and even the body. We cannot be free unless we detach our desires and aversions from everything that pertains to the outside world. On the other hand, among the things belonging to us, god, our father included the possession of good and evil (*Diatr.* 3.24.2–3). In consequence, the only sphere that a person is capable of controlling and that truly belongs to us is the faculty of making choices, *προαίρεσις*. It is the basic concept which Epictetus uses to describe human freedom.³² One can render it as “volition” or “choice.”³³ The concept, which also appears in Aristotle, in Epictetus acquires a rather

³⁰ Long, *Epictetus*, 27.

³¹ Translations of Epictetus after LCL, unless stated otherwise.

³² On the concept, see especially A.A. Long, “Representation and the Self in Stoicism,” A.A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (HCS 36; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2001) 264–285; Long, *Epictetus*, 207–230. See also a detailed study by R. Dobbin, “Prohairesis in Epictetus,” *Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1991) 111–135. Additionally A. Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Sather Classical Lectures 48; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1982) 60–61 (pp. 80–89 on the Pauline perspective on free will presented by the author in a dubiously voluntarist manner); Rowe, *One True Life*, 6–62, 275.

³³ Thus Long, *Epictetus*, 210–220. Other possible renderings of *proairesis* include: choice, decision, and pre-choice.

distinct and original meaning, emphasising our capacity for autonomy to a degree, which according to Anthony Long, is without clear parallel in the preceding Stoic tradition.³⁴

Proairesis in Epictetus shows a couple of distinguishable traits.³⁵ It is a portion of divinity, a share in the divine nature within a person (*Diatr.* 1.1.12). *Proairesis* enjoys freedom from any constraint and hindrance, since it can be compelled only by itself; it enables one to live freely and in accord both with one's own intelligence and with god (*Diatr.* 1.17.21–28). The divinity granted human beings the faculty of moral choice, to some extent withdrawing its power: "He has put the whole matter under our control without reserving even for Himself any power to prevent or hinder" (*Diatr.* 1.6.40–41). In short, *proairesis* is absolutely free and gives a person a true mastery over their own life (*Diatr.* 2.2.1–7). In Epictetus's own words, being a human means to have "no quality more sovereign than moral choice" and to keep "everything else subordinate to it, and this moral choice itself free from slavery and subjection" (*Diatr.* 2.10.1–2). It is here that human freedom and free will manifest their full potential, not being directly influenced even by the deity itself. Human body can be bound and fettered in chains, but not even Zeus can overcome *proairesis* (*Diatr.* 1.1.21–24).

Proairesis differs from the governing part of the soul (ἡγεμονική) by its freedom, self-awareness, and moral capabilities.³⁶ By making judgements through *proairesis*, an individual gains autonomy and responsibility. It is an "ego" that is even capable of speaking to itself. According to Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *proairesis* shows universal traits; it is not an individual self, but a "self-identically shared by all human beings who operate human cognition in the proper way."³⁷ Engberg-Pedersen calls it "a true human self," while A. A. Long speaks of "the ideally rational and normative self."³⁸ As such, *proairesis* stands in a stark contrast with the created world, including one's own body:

For when the tyrant says to a man, "I will chain your leg," the man who has set a high value on his leg replies, "Nay, have mercy upon me," while the man who has set a high value on his moral purpose replies, "If it seems more profitable to you to do so, chain it." "Do you not care?" "No, I do not care." "I will show you that I am master." "How can *you* be my master? Zeus has set me free. Or do you really think that he was likely to let his own son be made a slave? You are, however, master of my dead body, take it. (*Diatr.* 1.19.8–10).

On the other hand, *proairesis* is totally dependent on deity understood as rationality permeating the created world. The first duty of an individual is to please god:

I have one whom I must please, to whom I must submit, whom I must obey, that is, God, and after Him, myself. God has commended me to myself, and He has subjected to me alone my moral purpose (*proairesis*), giving me standards for the correct use of it (*Diatr.* 4.12.11–12).

34 See Long, *Epictetus*, 161. On *proairesis* in Aristotle, see Long, *Epictetus*, 211–212.

35 Cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 113. See also Long, *Epictetus*, 207–208.

36 Long, *Epictetus*, 211.

37 Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 113.

38 Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 118; Long, *Epictetus*, 166.

Being free and a friend of god entails obeying willingly the deity, following its instructions, laws and commandments to which one should be subordinated more than to the laws of Masurius and Cassius (*Diatr.* 4.3.7–12). Being free in Epictetus does not mean the freedom from the all-determining deity; it is rather equivalent to an unconditional subordination to god. The road that leads to freedom, and the only release from the world's enslavement, is to be able to wholeheartedly say: "Lead me, Zeus and you, Fate, wherever you have ordained for me" (4.1.131).³⁹ This kind of freedom ultimately consists in accepting everything what may come upon us as ordained by god, so that "we may keep our minds in harmony with what happens" (*Diatr.* 1.12.15–17).⁴⁰

Proairesis understood as individual's faculty of moral choice has a dynamic character: it can and should be properly formed.⁴¹ A training programme, according to Epictetus, consists in withdrawing from external things and focusing on our *proairesis*, cultivating and perfecting it to make it harmonious with nature: elevated, free, unimpeded, trustworthy, and honorable (*Diatr.* 1.4.18–21). For that purpose, an individual needs a philosophical education, because, over time, our innate and divinely given faculty of *proairesis* gets distorted.⁴² This happens because we are part of a society that gets us off track and assigns value to things that do not really matter, such as status, reputation, or property. The goal of philosophy is to teach an individual how to seek god's will and how to live according to nature, that is, to align our reasoning faculty with a divinely ordered cosmos and society.⁴³ Ultimately, the human way of freedom consists in keeping the inner reasoning faculties intact from external contamination:

How, then, is a citadel destroyed? Not by iron, nor by fire, but by judgements. [...] But here is where we must begin, and it is from this side that we must seize the acropolis and cast out the tyrants; we must yield up the paltry body, its members, the faculties, property, reputation, offices, honours, children, brothers, friends—count all these things as alien to us (*Diatr.* 4.1.87).

This kind of freedom from passions and error, does not so much belong to every person as it constitutes a programme for each and every one of us. It is actualised in those who cultivate their *proairesis* and make a proper use of their impressions. Free will is in fact a philosophical programme rather than an innate faculty of a human being.⁴⁴

A well-shaped, freedom-granting *proairesis* demands self-sufficiency with respect to one's own body and ordinary values in the world, but it does not exclude genuinely caring for other human beings (*Diatr.* 3.24.60–65). It is true that when discussing the notion of *proairesis* Epictetus puts much more stress on the natural self-interestedness of human motivations, but not to the point of excluding our relationships with others. Good volition

³⁹ Translation after Long, *Epictetus*, 221.

⁴⁰ Translation after Long, *Epictetus*, 153.

⁴¹ Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 113. See also Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 36–37.

⁴² On the philosophy as a training ground and exercise in living in Epictetus, see Rowe, *One True Life*, 52–59.

⁴³ Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 54–55.

⁴⁴ Long, *Epictetus*, 221.

promotes integrity, which in turn involves honoring one's ties to kin, social roles, and other acquired relations.⁴⁵ Epictetus states that a philosopher should want to remain unmoved and undisturbed, but he should also know what his duties are towards gods, parents, brothers, country, and strangers (*Diatr.* 2.17.31). As a dutiful man, son, brother, father, and citizen, a person cannot remain "unfeeling like a statue" (*Diatr.* 3.2.2–4).

The priority given to our "ego" results from the fact that only a properly developed *proairesis* enables us to perform our social roles well. In effect, only those who are wholly at peace with themselves have the right kind of disposition to effectively care about other people.⁴⁶ Epictetus refuses to call such an approach a mere self-love (φιλαυτία), but rather qualifies it as being in harmony with one's nature and Zeus's insight. God shaped the nature of every rational animal in such a way that it cannot attain its own goods unless it contributes something to the common interest. Hence it is not antisocial to do everything for one's own sake (*Diatr.* 1.19.11–15). For that reason, an individual should put together their own interests, piety, and what is honorable for their country, parents, and friends on one scale. If we pay proper attention to our *proairesis*, then and only then will we be friends, and sons, and fathers that we should be. Thus, to preserve our human relationships, we have to preserve our integrity first (*Diatr.* 2.22.18–21). *Proairesis* and one's own interest are a priority strictly bound to social relations (*Diatr.* 2.10.7–12; 3.3.5–10; *Ench.* 30). Epictetus also explains it with the classic Stoic imagery of an individual as a citizen of the world (*Diatr.* 2.10.3–4) and a member of the body, that is society (*Diatr.* 2.5.24–26; 3.7.19–21). The way we fulfil our social duties ultimately testifies to our value as persons and philosophers (*Diatr.* 3.21.1–6).⁴⁷

Internal freedom is also strictly bound to how an individual manages their emotions and desires. Even though the Stoics treat the majority of them rather harshly, they nevertheless advise cultivating "good feelings" (εὐπαθεία), classifying these under three broad categories: joy, caution, and well-wishing.⁴⁸ Morbid emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, or jealousy are nothing but an effect of our false judgements, while the good emotions are born out of the correct assessment of our existential situation (*Diatr.* 3.3.17–19). Tempering one's emotions is related to the exercise of detaching oneself from the externals. An individual should be constantly mindful of the fact that the things and persons they are attached to are fragile and they do not belong to them (*Diatr.* 3.24.84–88). Wishes and desires are to be aligned with the will of Zeus (*Diatr.* 2.17.23–26). When seeing somebody in distress, Epictetus recommends not to be carried away by our impressions that something wrong happened, because ill and bliss are only a matter of our judgement. Ultimately, the philosopher recommends showing sympathy to the one who weeps either in words or even by sharing in another's groans, provided that we do not groan within ourselves (*Ench.* 16).⁴⁹

45 Long, *Epictetus*, 30.

46 Long, *Epictetus*, 114.

47 For more on that, see Long, *Epictetus*, 256–257.

48 Long, *Epictetus*, 244.

49 For more on emotions in the Stoics, see Long, *Epictetus*, 257–258.

3.2. Similarities and Differences between Paul and Epictetus

In his reflection on Christian freedom, Paul does not use the term *proairesis*, employed as a key term by Epictetus. The apostle does not recommend either a radical focus on one's own self or detachment from relationships with others. This does not mean that there are no points in common between him and Epictetus. According to Engberg-Pedersen, these two thinkers essentially agree on two issues. The first is the inner orientation of a person towards God and the knowledge through which God acts and in which human and divine freedom meet.⁵⁰ According to Engberg-Pedersen, Paul, similarly to Epictetus, connects God's action with knowledge that generates understanding in humans. Divine knowledge, received by a person, gives rise, in turn, to individual action and responsibility, which should be perceived as free.⁵¹

The second point linking Paul to Epictetus is the necessity to turn away from the body and the world so that human "ego" might be realised in its freedom (cf. Gal 5:24; 6:14).⁵² To be sure, according to Engberg-Pedersen, there are also clear differences between Paul and Epictetus. For instance, the philosopher's divinity is predictable while Christian God is not – his ways are inscrutable and can only be known by revelation (cf. Rom 4:17–25; 11:33–36). Yet, after having known God, Paul and Epictetus describe the human path of moral life in quite a similar way, entailing being directed towards a deity and freedom from the body and this world.⁵³ Ultimately, according to Engberg-Pedersen, the freedom of believers is based on the understanding that in the present world the ultimate power belongs to Christ, whom they are to follow. Here, the apocalyptic Paul meets the philosopher, Epictetus.⁵⁴

Susan Eastman does not share Engberg-Pedersen's optimism in relation to the similarities between Paul and Epictetus with regard to human self and its autonomy. According to Eastman, the differences between Paul and Epictetus's dualistic and individualistic vision of a person seem to exceed by far the similarities. She lists the dissimilarities between them in her extensive discussion of the Epictetus's concept of "ego," which is thoroughly rational, self-referential, and deprived of the true second-person perspective.⁵⁵ Epictetus is characterised by rampant individualism and self-referentiality. His "self" is both the subject and the object of human loyalty, detached from the outside world, evaluating, and self-controlled. Epictetus perceives human beings exclusively through a first-person perspective. The philosopher's cognition, according to Eastman, begins and ends with self-perception, so that all human knowledge is viewed in relation to oneself and filtered through one's

⁵⁰ See Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 123–128. The author cites the following Pauline texts: 1 Thess 2:13; Gal 1:11–16; 4:8–11; Phil 2:12–13; 3:12–14; 1 Cor 4:6–7; 8:1–4; 13:12; 15:7–11. See also Rom 1:18–21; 8:28–30; 9:6–12; 9:16–24; 10:12–11:7 where, according to Engberg-Pedersen, the same dynamics are present vis-a-vis non-Christ-believers.

⁵¹ Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 129–130.

⁵² Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 121–123.

⁵³ Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 134–136.

⁵⁴ Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 138.

⁵⁵ Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 37–42.

inner evaluative faculties.⁵⁶ Epictetus, speaking of *proairesis* as our true self and postulating its detachment from the body, also manifests an alien to Paul, dualistic vision of a person.

How then can Epictetus help us understand the paradoxical connection between human free will and God's all-determining action in Paul? First, it seems that the ancients viewed this connection, puzzling for us, modern people, as quite natural.⁵⁷ Epictetus, to be sure, does not discuss the problem of how to reconcile human freedom with divine determinism. He is interested in a practical dimension of freedom applied to our moral choices and translated into our happy life. In his teaching, he argues both for the completely unimpeded human volition and divine determinism.⁵⁸ Also in Paul, we will find no trace of contemporary philosophical debates related to the issues of determinism and freedom of human will. The apostle clearly believes in the primacy of God's will (θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ), which establishes the order of creation (1 Cor 12:18; 15:38), is responsible for the salvation of mankind (Gal 1:4; Eph 1:5, 9, 11; Col 1:27), and freely elects and shows mercy or hardens the heart of whomever God chooses (Rom 9:18, 22). The will of God called Paul to be the apostle of Christ (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1) and directs his steps (Rom 1:10; 15:32; 1 Cor 4:19).

At the same time, both Paul and Epictetus have no difficulty saying that in the world that absolutely depends on God, we are given the power to make decisions. Human will (θέλω, θέλημα) in Paul is empowered and free to choose and put into effect what an individual thinks good,⁵⁹ but it can also choose evil.⁶⁰ The proof of that are the numerous exhortations to moral action in Paul, the argument raised already by Erasmus of Rotterdam in his famous debate with Martin Luther. Erasmus points to the Pauline appeals to lay aside the works of darkness in Rom 13:12 or to strip off the old man with his deeds in Col 3:9. By stating in Rom 7:18 that one cannot find strength to accomplish what is good, Paul also admits that good is in the power of a person.⁶¹ To these examples we might add the plea in Rom 6:12–13 regarding the sin that should not exercise power over the believers' bodies; instead they should present their limbs to God as instruments of righteousness (cf. Rom 6:19). Rom 8, referring oftentimes to the guidance of the Spirit, also constitutes a thinly veiled appeal to collaborate with its power in expanding the inner space of Christian freedom and holiness (8:4, 5–8, 12–13, 14–15). Such exhortations would make no

56 Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 44–48.

57 Long, *Epictetus*, 230: "Epictetus leaves no room for a freedom that is actually independent of divine causation." For more on this, see especially S. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon 2005).

58 Long, *Epictetus*, 162; 230 following Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*.

59 Cf. 1 Cor 4:21; 7:1, 32, 36, 37, 39; 10:20; 14:5, 19; 16:12; 2 Cor 8:10, 11, 12; Phlm 14.

60 Cf. Gal 1:7; 4:9, 17, 21; 6:12, 13; Eph 2:3; Col 2:18.

61 E.F. Winter (ed.), *Erasmus, Desiderius, and Martin Luther. Discourse on Free Will* (London et al.: Bloomsbury 2013) 50: "Let us lay aside the works of darkness' (Romans 13:12), 'Strip off the old man with his deeds' (Colossians 3:9), exclaims Paul. How can we be commanded to lay aside something if we are incapable? The same: 'To wish is within my power, but I do not find the strength to accomplish what is good' (Romans 7:18). Paul obviously admits here that it is in the power of man to want to do good."

sense if Paul believed that human salvation was utterly determined by God, to the exclusion of our freedom.⁶²

Secondly, even if Paul does not employ the Epictetus's *proairesis*, the notion seems to be somehow close to Rom 8:5–6, where the apostle speaks of the Spirit which inculcates in the believers its own thinking and acting, moral attitudes and choices (cf. the vocabulary of φρονέω and φρόνημα).⁶³ The active, thinking, and morally-directed divine Spirit awaits a response from the human “self” which is responsible not only for critical judgements but also for embracing divine values, and for standing, as Engberg-Pedersen puts it, on God's side. Such a response and “self” also come into view in Rom 8:12–13, where Paul states that the believers are not the debtors of the flesh, yet he does not qualify them as the debtors of the Spirit either. Their status of God's children excludes coercion implied in the metaphor of “debtors” and promotes freedom with which from now on they are to embrace the guidance of the Spirit.⁶⁴ Finally, the divine Spirit communicating with the human spirit in Rom 8:16 resembles the Stoic notion of *proairesis*, in which the divinity respects the person's autonomy, collaborating with them, instead of superimposing its will.

Third, for both Paul and Epictetus, free will requires education and cooperation with God's will, which makes us truly free.⁶⁵ According to the apostle, the discernment of and obedience to God's will are crucial for an individual's salvation and moral life.⁶⁶ This cooperation can be seen in Rom 8:16, but also in our walking and living according to the Spirit in Rom 8:4–5, in putting to death the deeds of the body with its help (Rom 8:13). In other similar texts, Paul explicitly connects his apostolic efforts and achievements with the grace of God (1 Cor 15:10; Rom 15:15–19), calls the Philippians to work on their salvation with fear and trembling, pointing to God who is at work in them, enabling their will (Phil 2:12–13), and speaks of God who makes the believers share abundantly in every good deed (2 Cor 9:8–10).⁶⁷ Having been set free from sin entails for the baptised becoming slaves to righteousness (Rom 6:18, 22), and not submitting again to the yoke of the Law (Gal 5:1) or the flesh (Gal 5:17). The divine-human character of Christian agency was also

62 See also similar exhortations in Rom 12:1–15:13; 1 Cor 5–6; 8:1–13; 10:1–11:1; 2 Cor 6:1–2, 14–18; Gal 5:16–26; Phil 1:27–2:16; 3:16–4:9; 1 Thess 4:1–5:24.

63 On the Spirit's mindset in Rom 8:5–6, see M. Kowalski, “The Cognitive Spirit and the Novelty of Paul's Thought in Rom 8,5–6,” *Bib* 100/1 (2020) 47–68. Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, 79–89 in his discussion of free will in Paul, he refers to the notions of conscience, knowledge and intention but not to the Stoic idea of *proairesis*.

64 On the function of anacoluthon in Rom 8:12–13 in stressing the identity of the believers, see A. Gieniusz, “Debtors to the Spirit’ in Romans 8.12? Reasons for the Silence,” *NTS* 59/1 (2013) 61–72.

65 The argument was also raised by Erasmus of Rotterdam in his *Discourse on Free Will*: “The same in another passage: ‘His grace in me has not been fruitless’ (1 Corinthians 15:10). The Apostle informs us that he has not left unused divine grace. How could he assert this, if he had done nothing?” See Winter, *Erasmus, Desiderius, and Martin Luther. Discourse on Free Will*, 50–51.

66 Cf. Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 8:5; Eph 5:17; 6:6; Col 1:9; 4:12; 1 Thess 4:3; 5:18.

67 See the discussion of the texts in which divine grace and human agency are intertwined in J.M.G. Barclay, “By the Grace of God I Am What I Am. Grace and Agency in Philo and Paul,” *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* (eds. J.M.G. Barclay – S.J. Gathercole) (London: Clark 2008) 151–156.

highlighted by Engberg-Pedersen, who saw its foundations in the gift the divine knowledge is for us.⁶⁸

At the same time, some fundamental differences between Paul's and Epictetus's vision of the person and their freedom should be emphasised. These discrepancies can be of equal or even greater value than the similarities in understanding the Pauline notion of free will. The first important dissimilarity between Paul and Epictetus regards the image of the deity.⁶⁹ Even though they both speak of God, the father and present him in a profoundly personalist manner, in Epictetus, the divinity does not assume transcendent traits. As pointed out by Long, it results in the lack of distinction between the deity and the Stoic sage. For Epictetus, as for other Stoics, our minds are literally "offshoots" of god, parts of the divinity assigned to each person. The omnipresent deity and nature are one, which explains the Stoic appeal to live according to nature (*Diatr.* 1.26.1).⁷⁰ In the ethics, moral choices and freedom promoted by the Stoa, everything is played out in our physical world; there is no supernatural realm in which we shall experience God's judgement after death.⁷¹ In effect, there is no divinity transcending human nature in Epictetus, there is no need for savior and a guide besides the one contained within us. Thus, individuals are capable of liberating themselves from fear and their internal malice by their own efforts (*Diatr.* 2.1.23–4).

This vision is obviously alien to Paul, according to whom an individual cannot live morally and aspire to good, relying only on their human strength (Rom 3:1–20; 7:7–25). Human will (θέλω, θέλημα) can be fatally frustrated by sin (Rom 7:15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21; Gal 5:17) or Satan (1 Thess 2:18). Neither the mind nor volition are capable of liberating themselves from the power of evil (Rom 7:15–25). The corruption, enslavement by sin and incapacity to do good, which Paul describes in such vivid images in Rom 3:1–20 and 7:7–25, constitute the fate of humanity outside Christ.⁷² In Christ and thanks to his Spirit, the believers are freed from the slavery of sin and death; their freedom comes as a gift from God which transcends human mind and volition (Rom 3:21–26; 7:24b; 8:1–4; 10:9). The divine Spirit described by the apostle in Rom 8 is also much more active than the Stoic *pneuma* or Zeus, the giver of laws whom an individual must simply obey. The Spirit of God guides us, helping us to fulfil the divine will in our lives (Rom 8:3–4), inculcates Christ's mindset in us (Rom 8:5–6), ensures our resurrection (Rom 8:9–11), helps us put to death

68 Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 123–128.

69 On the Epictetus's vision of god, see Rowe, *One True Life*, 42–49.

70 On the Stoic ideal of life in accord with nature, see Diogenes Laërtius, *Vit. phil.* 7.1 Zeno (87–89); Epictetus, *Ench.* 26; *Diss.* 4.1.89, 100; Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 9.1–2; Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.58. For more on the concept of nature and life in accord with it, see *SVF* 3.5–9, 12–15, 17, 142–146; 178–181, 186–188, 190–191, 194–195; B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford – New York: Clarendon – Oxford University Press 1985) 107–109; 160, 194–215; A.A. Long, "The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics," A.A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 36; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2001) 134–155.

71 Long, *Epictetus*, 145–146, 188.

72 Cf. J.-N. Aletti, "Romans 7:7–25 and Galatians 5:17. Questions and Proposals," J.-N. Aletti, *New Approaches for Interpreting the Letters of Saint Paul. Collected Essays. Rhetoric, Soteriology, Christology and Ecclesiology* (SubBi 43; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2012) 82, 91–109.

the deeds of the body (Rom 8:12–13), testifies to our dignity as God’s children, bringing us into communion with the Father and the Son (Rom 8:14–17), abides within us (Rom 8:9–11, 23) and intercedes on our behalf (Rom 8:26–27).

This Spirit also does much more than the divinity which, according to Ben Sira, leaves the believers in the power of their own free choices with the hope that they can succeed (Sir 15:14; Sir 17:6).⁷³ According to Jason Maston, in Rom 7:7–25, Paul engages in a polemic with Ben Sira’s moral optimism, arguing that the two-way tradition does not produce an adequate obedience and in consequence an individual, being left on their own, is destined to death. In Rom 8:1–13, the apostle moves on to show that the problem can be solved only by the empowering gift of God’s Spirit. According to Maston, the pattern adopted in Rom 8:1–13 bears a remarkable similarity to that of the *Hodayot*; both of them highlight the divine action, the crucial role of the divine Spirit, and weakness of the human will. However, Paul modifies the Jewish model in a significant way by placing God’s saving act in a specific moment in history, instead of a pre-temporal predestination, and by organising it around Christ. The Christological modification results in the new situation of mankind which now, freed from the power of sin, is capable of leading life obedient to God in Christ’s Spirit. The Spirit reestablishes human ability to do good, which is not an independent response to God’s gracious deliverance, but rather a continuation of divine work.⁷⁴

Essentially agreeing with Maston’s comparison between Ben Sira, Qumran and Paul, one should also highlight two points which were not stressed by the author enough. First, in Paul, the Spirit acts much more as a personal and transcendent agent than in the authors of the Second Temple period. Albeit being strictly connected with the work of Christ, it assumes the traits of an independent agent to the extent rare in the Jewish literature.⁷⁵ Second, the believers guided by the Spirit in Rom 8 differ significantly from the Essenes who, even possessing the Spirit of God, still consider themselves a vessel of clay and a thing kneaded with water, a foundation of shame and impurity, a furnace of iniquity, and a structure of sin, a spirit of error, devoid of understanding and terrified of God’s righteous judgements (1QH^a 9:23–25).⁷⁶ Looking at his life, the Qumran initiate concludes that he is just a man, and for this reason justice does not belong to him, just as the path of justice does not belong to Adam’s offspring. A human being is ultimately merely a body, a sinner from the maternal womb to the grave (1QH^a 12:30).⁷⁷

⁷³ On the divine and human agency in Ben Sira, see J. Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul. A Comparative Study* (WUNT 2/297; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010) 23–74.

⁷⁴ See Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul*, 124–174.

⁷⁵ See the Spirit as an acting entity in Ps 139:7; Mic 2:7; Isa 48:16; 63:10, 14, in which, however, it still appears as an extension of God’s work.

⁷⁶ See the translation in F. García Martínez – E.J.C. Tigchelaar (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (Translations)* (Leiden – New York: Brill 1997) 159; E.M. Schuller – C.A. Newsom, *The Hodayot (Thanksgiving Psalms). A Study Edition of 1QH^a* (EJL 36; Williston, ND: SBL Press 2012) 31.

⁷⁷ Jörg Frey (“The Notion of ‘Flesh’ in 4QInstruction and the Background of Pauline Usage,” *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran. Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Oslo, 1998. Published in Memory of Maurice Baillet* [eds. D. Falk – F. García Martínez – E.M. Schuller]

This negative anthropology is absent from Paul, who in Rom 8 underlines the capacity of the believers to align their will with the will of God. In Rom 6, Paul describes the baptised as dead to sin and free from it, an indicative that becomes an imperative to persevere and keep living their new life in Christ (Rom 6:12–13, 19). It continues in Rom 8:1–13, with the pivotal Rom 8:14–17, presenting the Spirit's guidance and presence in the believers. Christians witness the fulfilment of the prophetic visions of Jer 31:31–34 and Ezek 36:26–27; 37:1–14 in their lives, in which the gifts of new heart and Spirit make them the new creation capable of obeying God's will and participating in God's glory.⁷⁸ Their freedom reaches its peak in Christ, with the divine Spirit actively collaborating with their human volition. All the indicated similarities notwithstanding, the Pauline view of the junction between the divine agency and human freedom presents significant novelty with respect both to the Stoic and Jewish traditions.

Second, the freedom in Paul, unlike in Epictetus, is not focused on “ego” and an individual's mastery over their life. As we could see, central to Epictetus's moral programme is self-relation and a first-person perspective, which heavily influences his view of relations with others. One can agree with Eastman arguing that “the network of human relationships within which Epictetus and his students exist is the arena for practice in making right judgements about impressions. It is a training ground for *proairesis*, nothing more and nothing less.”⁷⁹ Engberg-Pedersen, who maintains that both Paul and Epictetus recommend detachment from the body and this world, but not from the interpersonal relations, is much less persuasive here. According to him, “the principle of non-dependence does not either in the least exclude an attitude of real care and love for other human beings, that is, of being genuinely ‘affectionate’ towards them.”⁸⁰ Here, he quotes from Epictetus describing Socrates loving his children and Diogenes showing genuine care for others (*Diatr.* 3.24.60–65). In another work of his, Engberg-Pedersen argued in favour of the similarity between Paul's and the Stoics' ethics and deep structure of the conversion process. Both in the apostle and in the Stoa, the process would proceed from the self-centered “I” toward “X,” which denotes yielding to a deity, and further toward “S,” signifying human existence centered on a community.⁸¹

[Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2000] 205–206) rightly points here to the image of a member of the community, their sinfulness and resistance to the Creator. Similarly, E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM 1977) 277–278; Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul*, 87.

78 Cf. S. Lyonnet, “Rom 8,2–4 à la lumière de Jérémie 31 et d’Ezechiel 35–39,” *Etudes sur l’Épître aux Romains* (AnBib 120; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1990) 231–241; T.R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT 6; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1998) 415; J.W. Yates, III, *The Spirit and Creation in Paul* (WUNT 2/251; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008) 143–156; Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul*, 160; C.S. Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit. Paul’s Approach to Transformed Thinking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2016) 127.

79 Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 58–59.

80 Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 114.

81 Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 33–36, 53–79.

The interpretations of Enberg-Pedersen were criticised by many scholars, recently by Susan Eastman who rightly argues that instead of talking about the passage from “self” to “shared” in Epictetus, one should speak of the circular movement „from self to shared to self.”⁸² Such a loop, according to Eastman, results from the Stoic cosmology. Putting ourselves ahead of everything else is essentially equivalent to putting god ahead of everything else, because god is in the self and constitutes our true self. According to Eastman, the Christian idea of placing God first, others second, and oneself last would make little sense to a Stoic.⁸³ Epictetus obviously knows the outside world and external relations, but they cede the first place to the all-important relationship which a human being has with their own “self.”⁸⁴ Social roles, relations and obligations are mediated by the primary allegiance to an individual’s own moral purpose and their commitment to what is good for them.⁸⁵ The latter also requires doing the good for others. Epictetus’s stance, although sympathising with Socrates and his social inclination, is also qualified by Long as utterly one-sided: “us in relation to them, not them in relation to us.”⁸⁶

A markedly different approach is characteristic of Paul, who in many places of his correspondence calls Christians not only to take into account the good of others, but also to put it ahead of their own. In 1 Cor 8:1–11:1, the apostle appeals to the “strong” in Corinth to abandon their rights to participate in pagan meals for the sake of the “weak” members whose conscience can thus be defiled (1 Cor 8:7).⁸⁷ The problem discussed by Paul regards the status of the “strong” which necessitates a socio-economic interaction with their equals taking place in the pagan temples.⁸⁸ Yet, it also sheds important light on the Pauline perception

82 Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 59.

83 Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 45, 53.

84 Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 50–53.

85 The roles performed by an individual are called by Long “secondary identities,” while the primary identity is the one that a person has with their “self.” See Long, *Epictetus*, 232–234.

86 Long, *Epictetus*, 237. On Socrates as a role model for Epictetus, see Long, *Epictetus*, 244.

87 On the argumentative dynamics of 1 Cor 8:1–11:1, see M.M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation. An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1993) 126–149; J.F.M. Smit, “1 Cor 8:1–6. A Rhetorical Partitio. A Contribution to the Coherence of 1 Cor 8:1–11:1,” *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer) (BETL 125; Leuven: Leuven University Press – Peeters 1996) 577–591; J.F.M. Smit, “The Rhetorical Disposition of First Cor 8:7–9:27,” *CBQ* 59 (1997) 476–491; J.F.M. Smit, “Do Not Be Idolaters. Paul’s Rhetoric in 1 Cor 10:1–22,” *Novi T* 39 (1997) 40–53; A. Eriksson, *Traditions as Rhetorical Proof. Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians* (ConBNT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell 1998) 97–99, 120–127, 135–173.

88 On the “strong” and “weak” in Corinth, see J. Murphy-O’Connor, “Freedom or the Ghetto (1 Cor., VIII, 1–13; X, 23–XI, 1),” *RB* 85 (1978) 543–574; R.A. Horsley, “Consciousness and Freedom among the Corinthians: 1 Corinthians 8–10,” *CBQ* 40 (1978) 574–589; G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity. Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1982) 121–143; D.B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation. The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1990) 119–120; J.K. Chow, *Patronage and Power. A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTSup 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1992) 141–157; D.G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence. Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (SNTW; Edinburgh: Clark 1996) 105–108; A.T. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth. Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy* (JSNTSup 176; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999) 69–74; K. Ehrensparger, “To Eat Or Not to Eat – This Is the Question? Table Disputes in Corinth,” *Decisive Meals. Table*

of personal freedom.⁸⁹ The “weak” mean for Paul not only the materially deprived members of the community, but also stumbling brothers and sisters who need care and special protection. Paul shares the knowledge of the “strong,” convinced that pagan idols do not exist (8:4–6), however, this conviction does not have to be shared by everybody (8:7). The freedom and rights of the “strong” are evaluated on the basis of whether or not they become a stumbling block to the “weak” (1 Cor 8:9–10). The knowledge possessed by some can bring destruction upon those for whom Christ died (1 Cor 8:11).

One can see how the apostle relativises here not only personal liberty but also knowledge, so dear to Epictetus, subordinating both of them to the principle of community-building love (1 Cor 8:1–3).⁹⁰ The sin against the weak in Corinth is sin against the Lord (1 Cor 8:12), so, concluding, Paul decides emphatically to never eat (pagan) meat so that he may not cause others to fall (1 Cor 8:13). In 1 Cor 8, hints of which are also present in Rom 14–15, a second-person perspective, so alien to the Stoic “self,” clearly resounds. Paul, who, being free, (ἐλεύθερος) declares in 1 Cor 9:19 to have made himself a slave to all, is, according to Abraham Malherbe, very distant from the Stoics and Cynics alike, who never would have described themselves this way.⁹¹ Christian freedom (ἐλευθερία) is not determined solely by one’s own conscience, but also by the conscience of others (1 Cor 10:29), the common good and God’s glory (1 Cor 10:30–32).⁹² Ultimately, in 1 Cor 10:24, the apostle appeals: “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour,” giving himself as an example: “just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:33) (cf. also Phil 2:20–21; Rom 15:1–2). The ideal for Paul is the kenotic Christ who did not treat equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and humbled himself to the point of death on the cross (Phil 2:6–8). The believers should have the same mindset as Christ, pursuing not their own interests, but the interests of others (Phil 2:4–5; cf. also Rom 15:3).

Third, Long, followed by Eastman, rightly states that Epictetus’s vision of an individual is dualistic.⁹³ Our essential self is not the body but the volition, which is a portion of

Politics in Biblical Literature (eds. N. MacDonald – L. Sutter Rehmann – K. Ehrensperger) (LNTS 449; London – New York: Clark 2012) 119–122.

⁸⁹ See particularly A.J. Malherbe, “Determinism and Free Will in Paul. The Argument of 1 Corinthians 8 and 9,” *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen) (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1995) 231–255. The author interprets 1 Corinthians 8 and 9 in light of the Stoic discussions on freedom and determinism.

⁹⁰ Malherbe “Determinism and Free Will in Paul,” 233. On 1 Cor 8,1b being the Corinthians’ maxim, see A.C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI – Carlisle: Eerdmans – Paternoster 2000) 620. On the danger connected with an indiscriminate use of power, see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 126.

⁹¹ Malherbe “Determinism and Free Will in Paul,” 251–253. Cf. also the freedom that Paul gives up for the sake of the Gospel in 1 Cor 9:1.

⁹² On this notoriously difficult passage, see Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 788–792; D.E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2003) 497–500.

⁹³ Long, *Epictetus*, 28, 157–158, 160, 208; Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 42. Long (*Epictetus*, 208) who qualifies Epictetus’s contrast between body and mind not as a metaphysical one, but, nonetheless, as a dualistic conception, with close affinities to Plato’s *Phaedo*.

divinity within us. “I am not a paltry body” (*Diatr.* 4.6.34), states the philosopher, and my “paltry body” is not my own (*Diatr.* 4.1.158). This “paltry body” does not belong to us, being nothing more than a cleverly compounded clay (*Diatr.* 1.1.10–12; cf. also 4.11.27).⁹⁴ Epictetus depicts the body as “mud” and “chains,” along with all other “externals” such as property and family relationships (cf. *Diatr.* 4.1.99–111). Taking pride in his inner freedom, the philosopher states to a tyrant: “Zeus has set me free. Or do you really think that he was likely to let his own son be made a slave? You are, however, master of my dead body, take it” (*Diatr.* 1.19.9). “Paltry body” together with its limbs and faculties must be given up and counted as alien to us, to keep intact the inner citadel of one’s moral judgement (*Diatr.* 4.1.87; cf. also 4.7.18).

Engberg-Pedersen claims that the body in Epictetus, although regarded by the Stoics as inferior to the mind (*Diatr.* 1.9.11, 16–17), nevertheless constitutes a divine gift and creation. According to him, there is a stark asymmetry between the body and the mind in Epictetus, „but there is no rigid dualism” between them.⁹⁵ Agreeing rather with Long and Eastman on the dualistic vision of the body in the Stoics, one can also quote Marcus Aurelius who calls it a mere bloody mixture of bones, veins and arteries.⁹⁶ In the same vein, Epictetus describes the true human self, *προαίρεσις* (“volition,” “choice”) as qualitatively different from our body, standing in a clear and direct contrast with it and in need of liberating itself from its influence. Although the philosopher honours his “paltry body” and tries to keep it sound, his true concern remains the inner freedom as exemplified by Diogenes, who would let go of his entire “paltry body” (*Diatr.* 4.1.151–153). Epictetus recommends keeping our body clean, according to its nature, but he describes it in an animalistic manner, comparing it to other creatures (*Diatr.* 3.1.42–43). The duty of the philosopher is not to guard the external matters, like the “paltry body,” which is not his and is dead by nature, but his governing principle (*τὸ ἴδιον ἡγεμονικόν*) (3.10.15–16). Socrates did not care to save his “paltry body,” but his moral conduct (*Diatr.* 4.1.163). By admiring the body, one becomes a slave to it (*Diatr.* 1.25.24). To those who want to depart from this world and the body imagined as prison, fetters, burden and tyrant, Epictetus advises to wait for god’s signal, without refuting their pessimistic views on corporeality (*Diatr.* 1.9.12–17; cf. also 1.29.28). “Paltry body” is nothing to the philosopher (*Diatr.* 3.12.21), while leaving it means departing from the slavery of this world (*Diatr.* 3.24.71–72). Now we live in “the body of death” (*ἐν τῷ σωματίῳ τούτῳ τῷ νεκρῷ*) (*Diatr.* 2.19.27), but “the paltry body must be separated from the bit of spirit, either now or later, just as it existed apart from it before” (*Diatr.* 2.1.17). It was never meant to be our essential part.

The body as such does not bear negative connotations in Paul. In those outside Christ it falls prey to sin (Rom 7:7–25), but in the believers it becomes a dwelling place of the Spirit and the space of new life in Christ. The flesh of Christ, in which God condemned

⁹⁴ On the “paltry body” (*τὸ σμάτιον*) in Epictetus, see e.g. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.9.3, 12, 15; 1.25.21–24; 1.29.6, 10, 16, 17; 2.25.28; 3.1.43; 3.10.15–16; 3.18.4; 4.1.151–153, 158, 163.

⁹⁵ Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 111.

⁹⁶ Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 2.2.

sin, becomes the model of how the Christian corporeality should be understood and lived (Rom 8:3). The bodies of the believers, by the power of the Spirit that inhabits them, are to experience resurrection and full similarity to the glorious body of the Son (Rom 8:9–11, 23, 29).⁹⁷ Paul is an heir to the Old Testament anthropology, according to which a person constitutes a psycho-somatic unity, an ensouled body and an embodied soul.⁹⁸ At the same time, he elevates human body to the dignity unheard of in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman authors: it becomes a dwelling place of God and his Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Rom 8:9–11). While according to the Old Testament and Philo the divine Spirit can inhabit only the great ones such as Moses, Joshua, Daniel or the Messiah, the Stoics excluded the body as a dwelling place of a divinity altogether.⁹⁹ God in *propria persona* could reside only in the human mind.¹⁰⁰ Human freedom and volition in Paul ceases to be a “noetic abstraction,” as Frederick Tappenden puts it, becoming a phenomenon strictly connected with our somatic nature.¹⁰¹

Fourth, Epictetus also practically eliminates from his definition of human self not only corporeality but also emotions, as having nothing to do with personhood or freedom in Stoic terms. For him, “rationality” counts as the center of the self.¹⁰² In this respect, he also differs from Paul, who in his correspondence often refers to the power of *pathos*. It serves him to strengthen the bonds between him and his communities and to make his message more appealing.¹⁰³ It is clear e.g. in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians, where Paul speaks of his longing and desire to visit his communities, which he calls his joy, love and a crown of boasting (1 Thess 2:17–20; 3:10–12; Phil 1:3–8; 2:12, 19–30; 3:1, 18; 4:1, 4–7, 10). Love, which for Paul is a driving force behind his relations with the communities, for Epictetus is a destructive power that inevitably causes havoc for those who cherish it and upon their beloved (*Diatr.* 2.22.34–37). The apostle grieving for sinners and fellow Christians walking away from the path of Christ (Phil 3:18; 2 Cor 2:1–7), concerned for his spiritual children to the point of abandoning his mission in Troas (2 Cor 2:12–13), is also very distant from the sage that, according to Epictetus, cannot be “broken in spirit” (*Disc.* 3.24.58) or “groan inwardly” (*Ench.* 16).

97 On the Spirit of resurrection and its function, see M. Kowalski, “The Spirit of Resurrection in Romans 8 and Its Jewish Correspondences,” *JSNT* 44/2 (2021) 254–283.

98 H.W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1974) 7–9.

99 See Num 11:17; 27:18; Isa 11:2; Dan 5:12; 6:4; Philo, *Gig.* 19–55.

100 A.A. Long, “Soul and Body in Stoicism,” A.A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 36; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2001) 249.

101 F.S. Tappenden, *Resurrection in Paul. Cognition, Metaphor, and Transformation* (ECL 19; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press 2016) 3. On the Pauline logic of the body, see also Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 85–105.

102 Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 59. For more on the Stoic doctrine of emotions and their relation to mind, see Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 139–145; Long, *Epictetus*, 244–254; R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (The Gifford Lectures; Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000).

103 Cf. 1 Cor 6:15; 2 Cor 1:8; 7:2–4; 6:14–15; 10:1–2; 11:1; 12:13, 16, 20–21; 13:2, 6–7; Phil 1:7–8; 2:26–30; 4:1; Gal 4:19–20; 6:11, 17; 1 Thess 1:2–4; 2:13–14, 17–20; 3:8–10; 2 Thess 1:2–4.

Pathos is also an effective tool in revealing the true identity of Pauline opponents (cf. 2 Cor 11:12–15, 20; Gal 1,6–10; 3,1–5; 5,7, 12), employed by Paul to teach and show the community the right example to emulate.¹⁰⁴ Aristotle himself dedicated a substantial part of his *Rhetoric* to emotions, regarding them an important element of persuasive speech (see Book II, Chapters 2–11). Here the apostle seems to follow not only the conventions of popular rhetoric, but, more importantly, the anthropology of the Old Testament, which does not censure emotions, speaking even of God's anger and jealousy.¹⁰⁵ Paul himself, imitating the jealous love of God, stands up to fight for the good of the Corinthians, threatened by the false example given by his opponents (cf. 2 Cor 11:2–4).¹⁰⁶ While the Stoics wanted to erase them from the image of a perfectly rational deity, Paul keeps them as a part of human nature, a valid motivation for our actions and an element influencing our decisions.¹⁰⁷

Finally, the apostle certainly shares with Epictetus the idea that a true sage should imitate divinity in all things:

Next we must learn what the gods are like; for whatever their character is discovered to be, the man who is going to please and obey them must endeavour as best he can to resemble them. If the deity is faithful, he also must be faithful; if free, he also must be free; if beneficent, he also must be beneficent; if high-minded, he also must be high-minded, and so forth; therefore, in everything he says and does, he must act as an imitator of God (*Diatr.* 2.14.12–13).¹⁰⁸

The idea of *mimesis* lies at the very core of Pauline teaching and apostolic example (cf. 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7–9; Phil 2:5–8; 3:17; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Rom 15:1–3). The crucial difference between Paul and Epictetus regards the image of God to be imitated. The Stoic deity, purely rational, unmoved and high-minded, commanding detachment from this world, has little to do with God in Christ who takes the form of a slave, being

104 On the use of *pathos* in Paul, see M.M. DiCicco, *Paul's Use of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in 2 Corinthians 10–13* (Mellen Biblical Press Series 31; Lewiston: Mellen 1995).

105 On the theological topics of God's wrath and jealousy, see H. Kleinknecht *et al.*, “ὀργή κτλ.,” *TDNT* V, 382–447; K.-D. Schunck, “chēmāh,” *TDOT* IV, 462–465; G. Herion – S.H. Travis, “Wrath of God,” *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (eds. D.N. Freedman *et al.*) (New York: Doubleday 1992) VI, 989–998; E. Reuter, “qn’,” *TDOT* XIII, 47–58.

106 Paul's jealous concern about his community is similar to God's jealousy for his people, which burns because of their sin and idolatry (cf. Exod 20:5; Ezek 23:25; Deut 6:15; Josh 24:19–20; Nah 1:2). The expression θεοῦ ζήλω can be interpreted as a dative of manner in which the first element qualifies the Pauline “jealousy” as “divine,” imitating God's love (genitive of quality). Cf. M.E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of the Corinthians*. II. *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII* (ICC; London – New York: Clark 2004) 659–660; M.J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2013) 734–735. Ralph Martin (2 *Corinthians* [WBC 40; Waco, TX: Word 1986] 327) sees here a genitive of origin, interpreting the Pauline jealousy as “inspired by God.”

107 For the ancient philosophers erasing god's emotions, see Plutarch, *Per.* 39; Plutarch, *Suav. viv.* 22; Cicero, *Off.* 3.102 Philo, *Sacr.* 95; *Deus* 59. Cf. also Kleinknecht *et al.*, “ὀργή κτλ.,” 385–387, 417–418.

108 Long, *Epictetus*, 170. According to the author, Epictetus speaking of “seeking to become like God” follows Plato, *Theaetetus* (176A–B), where the expression stands for contemplation of eternal values, disengagement from mundane life and “becoming just and pure, with understanding.”

born in human likeness, sharing our joys and tears and suffering the gruesome death of the cross out of love for us (Phil 2:6–8). Therefore, also the ideal of Christian freedom will be different from the Stoic one. While for the Stoics it consists in focusing on our inner self, keeping it intact, unpolluted by morbid desires and by relationships with the external world, for the followers of Christ it will consist in practicing his law of love, radically dedicating themselves to others, being close to the weak and stumbling, and bearing their burdens (cf. Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 8:13; 9:19–22; 2 Cor 11:28–29). What for Epictetus results in a complete loss of god's image within us, the loss of peace of mind and divine perfection, for Paul becomes a path to imitate Christ in his free and willing sacrifice, so that we might also share in his glory (Phil 3:10–11; Rom 8:17).

Conclusions

In conclusion, Rom 8:16 constitutes a valid starting point for the reflection on free will and the juncture between the human and divine agency in Paul. The fragment presents the divine Spirit which collaborates with the human spirit in testifying to our dignity as God's children. The work of the Spirit in the context of Rom 8 cannot be reduced to simply reminding the believers who they are. The Spirit guarantees the fulfilment of God's will in their lives (Rom 8:1–4), inculcates Christ's mindset in them (Rom 8:5–6), foreshadows their resurrection (Rom 8:9–11), helps put to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:12–13), mediates the gift of divine filiation, introduces the baptised into the full communion with the Father and the Son (Rom 8:14–17, 23, 29), and intercedes on their behalf (Rom 8:26–27). At the same time, as suggested in Rom 8:16, it performs its role by cooperating with the human spirit, capable of embracing God's will in a free manner.

Reference to Epictetus allows us to understand how the Stoic current, important and popular in Paul's time, perceived the phenomenon of free will and human freedom. Epictetus speaks of the freedom in an inner, psychological and attitudinal sense. He explains it with the notion of *proairesis*, which can be translated as "volition," and which constitutes our true self, a rational particle of divinity within us. Thanks to it, we are capable of making free moral choices which Zeus himself does not interfere with. *Proairesis*, to function properly, needs our constant attention and effort of keeping it at peace and unimpeded, not frustrated by desires and morbid emotions, detached from the external world: the body, possessions, career, and even relations with others. These external things, over which we do not exercise any actual control, can obfuscate our rational judgements and thus cripple our freedom. Epictetus does not recommend severing all our ties with the surrounding world; we still remain the citizens of it and members of the social body. Focusing on *proairesis* and cultivating our inner freedom allows us rather to properly fulfil the social roles entrusted to us.

Epictetus does not conceive of human freedom as detached from the deity. Our free will, to remain truly free, demands subjection and obedience to the divine will. Here

the philosopher presents himself as close to Paul. Both Epictetus and Paul have no problem with situating human freedom within the frame of the divinely determined world. The apostle does not make use of the term *proairesis*, but his vision of the rational and capable of ethical choices human spirit in Rom 8:1–17 shows some affinities to the Epictetus's notion of volition. Similarly to the philosopher, human will, according to Paul, should be shaped and guided by the divine Spirit.

Deeper understanding of the Pauline notion of free will comes to us if we pay attention to the important differences between the apostle and Epictetus. First of all, their image of the divinity is different. According to the Stoics, it is immanent, material, strictly connected with the mind and nature, and deprived of any supernatural horizon. An individual in Epictetus can achieve true freedom with their own efforts, with no need of calling upon any other deity than their reason. For Paul, a person without Christ, whether the Jew or the Greek, is hopelessly torn apart, with their intellect and will being paralysed by sin and incapable of escaping its slavery (Rom 1:16–17; 3:1–20; 7:7–25). Here, Paul is critical not only of the Stoic but also of the Jewish optimism regarding the capacity of free will to choose what is good on its own (cf. Sir 15:14; 17:6). Only in Christ and thanks to his Holy Spirit, human freedom can be restored to its full potential and a person can become a partner in a dialogue with God. This partnership, new heart and new spirit, distinguish Paul from the Qumranic vision, pointing also to the fulfilment of the prophecies of the New Covenant in Christians (Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 3:26–27).

The second difference between Paul and Epictetus regards the absolute focus on *proairesis* in the latter, with the external relationships treated as “secondary identities,” a mere training ground for the ego's perfection. The apostle, following the kenotic Christ, puts the others' good ahead of his own and treats the love of neighbour as a path to realise our freedom. Third, while Epictetus clearly separates *proairesis* from the body, Paul, as an heir to the Old Testament anthropology, reads an individual as a psycho-somatic unity and interprets the phenomenon of human will in the same way. In Christ, the human body becomes a dwelling place of the divine Spirit coming into a close reaction with the human spirit, which also gives a novel twist to the apostle's notion of free will. Additionally, our volition is not severed from emotions, which are an obstacle and undesired element in the highly intellectualised Stoic vision. Finally, getting back to the first difference, the imitation of the deity, highlighted as a principle goal of an individual both in Epictetus and Paul, also constitutes a major dissimilarity between them. Contrary to the philosophical vision of the unmoved, rational sage, Paul presents the believer following again the kenotic Christ and shaping their freedom in his image. Christ brings all the novelty to the Pauline idea of freedom which is nothing but a radical dedication to serve others.

To be sure, Paul, similarly to Epictetus, does not engage in the theoretical problem of how to reconcile human free will with divine determinism. They perceive such a symbiosis as natural and possible to argue for, as many contemporary philosophers would also do.¹⁰⁹

109 See Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, esp. 163–171.

Pauline idea of volition strictly bound to our corporeality and emotions also enters into an interesting conversation with what modern empirical sciences claim about free will.¹¹⁰ To continue the discourse between Paul, philosophy and modern science, not only another paper is needed, but also an awareness that all of the above employ different methodological approaches which cannot be blurred. Paul, unlike Epictetus and modern empiricists, is no naturalist. He firmly believes in the supernatural and transcendental God of the Jewish-Christian revelation. His vision of human free will is rooted in this belief and built around the ideal of Christ. These two factors determine the Pauline specificity and have to be taken into serious consideration by anybody who investigates the theme of free will in the apostle.

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110 Cf. Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 132–146 See also A.R. Mele, "Free Will and Science," *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2 ed. (ed. R. Kane) (Oxford Handbooks; New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012) DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195399691.003.0026; H. Walter, "Contributions of Neuroscience to the Free Will Debate," *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2 ed. (ed. R. Kane) (Oxford Handbooks; New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012) DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195399691.003.0027; J. Knobe – S. Nichols, "Free Will and the Bounds of the Self," *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2 ed. (ed. R. Kane) (Oxford Handbooks; New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012) DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195399691.003.0028.

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