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Missiological Dimensions of Philosophy:
St Paul, the Greek Philosophers and contact-point making
(Acts 17:16-34)

Abstract: This study demonstrates how and with what aim philosophy is received into the missionary activities of the apostles Paul and Luke as regards the *Areopagitica* in Acts 17. By an ingenious utilization of Greco-Roman learning and paideia, generally, and philosophy, particularly, Luke Paul offers a context oriented cross-cultural model of preaching the kerygmatic word as of evangelization. A model for the inculturation of the power and meanings of the Gospel message is offered. In this a significant function is allocated to disciplined mindful reasoning, viz. philosophy. The author demonstrates the special ways in which contact-points are made, and common ground established, between the apostle Paul and Athenian philosophers. This allows him to observe that philosophy is endorsed by the primordial Church: both (a) as a dialectical (critical analytical) and rhetorical (persuasive oratorical) science-skill of addressing significant intellectual others and (b) as a faith-friendly mode of the Christian's practice of philosophy. The author infers a number of conclusions regarding the substantial role that philosophy acquires within the early Church. Moreover, the Christian endorsement of philosophy as a missionary tool has its grounding in the apostolic Church and, consequentially, it has its grounding in the New Testament. In this way philosophy, utilized and re-functionalized by the apostles Paul and Luke themselves, in its special way, participates in the "authoritative establishment of tradition by means of apostolic origin". The missionary model laid-out in Acts 17:16-34 has lasting value and needs to be continuously re-actualized: the same follows suit for a faith-conducive practice of philosophy.

Key words: mission, philosophy, contact-point making, inculturation, evangelization, Acts 17, *Areopagitica*, apostle Paul and Athenian philosophers, re-actualization

I. Method, objectives and goals

1. Luke sets the dramatic scene in Acts 17:16-34. This is especially so regarding a segment which scholars name as St. Paul's *Areopagitica* (Acts 17:11-31). On one hand, the apostle Paul is seen carrying the good news, that is, the living word about Jesus. On the other hand, he faces the philosophers of no other city but Athens, the cradle of classical learning, steeped in the arts of philosophy: particularly those of dialectic and rhetoric. How is this possible? How does the Apostle dare think it is possible to address such an audience, successfully? Is it not true that he stands no chance? For, all he has to offer are seemingly simple words about an unbelievable event: that of the resurrection from the dead of a man named Jesus, a Jew from a faraway land!

“We wish to know therefore what these things mean” (Acts 17:20b).

These words represent the reaction of the Athenian intellectual elite as they sought to understand St. Paul’s proclamation of the good news regarding the word of God (Acts 17:18). But, is it not true that we as confessing Christians also wish to know what these things mean? Reflection on the paradigmatic passage in Acts 17:16-34 may bring us closer to what St. Paul’s acts and messages meant almost 2000 years ago. Moreover, reflection on what was there proclaimed may expose what these acts and messages might mean today: to those in faith and those who have no faith, and to those who are struggling to secure a founded immersion of thought and life in faith. Therefore, I propose we examine the following main questions: • *What* was proclaimed? • *Where* was it proclaimed and to *whom*? • *How* and *why* was it proclaimed? And, perhaps most importantly, • What can we *learn* in practical terms? Answering these questions, I trust, will help us better understand that evangelization presupposes inculturation and that both constitute crucial dimensions of the mission of the Church. What would be the role of philosophy in all of this, if there is a role to disclose? In fact, the main goal of this study essay is to explore the role and status of philosophy in the ancient Church inasmuch as Lukan¹ Paul can reveal this to us through the classical narrative of the *Areopagitica*. It is in connection to the latter that I wish to underline that this study essay is a part of a wider project dedicated to the role and status of philosophy in the Pauline corpus, Luke’s Acts of the Apostles notwithstanding. As well, I wish to emphasize that in the following expositions I will apply a particular methodological restriction. Namely, I will focus strictly and exclusively on Lukan Paul’s strategy of preparation (*proparaskeue*) of the Athenian philosophers for the revealed word about Jesus as Lord and Judge of mankind. I delve not into exploring the domain of revealed truth addressing or inviting pure faith (Acts 17:30-31). Rather, I venture to explore what is argued and done by Paul from within the domain of natural truth inasmuch as he, purposefully, meets the philosophers on their own terms, as of pure reason (Acts 17:14-29). In other words, in order to observe and fully understand the significance and structure of Paul’s apologetic theology argumentation (*viz.* defending the revealed truth that Jesus is Lord Acts 17:30-31), we need to understand that, in Acts 17:16-34, it presupposes and is opened up by Paul’s natural theology argumentation (*viz.* defending the reasoned and reasonable truths about what is naturally proper to men regarding God). The application of this methodological stricture will, thus, open our path rather than close it. For, it is a necessary step that we mustn’t disregard. Alongside, and in virtue of such an approach, the multilayered and multifaceted richness of Lukan Paul’s missionary strategy at the Areopagus will come out in fuller view.

1 I hold that Luke conveys a real historical event regarding Paul’s address at the Areopagus, most likely working from Paul’s oral testimony or from notes left by Paul. However, he cleverly lays-out a narrative and a description out of this event, using special rhetorical and dramaturgical devices, with evangelical and missiological goals in mind. Hence, by “Lukan Paul” I understand the joint effects of Paul’s action and Luke’s subsequent written witness to this event. The unraveling of the said relation (with delicate and demanding exegetical-hermeneutical status questions, *viz.* authorship, respective contributions of the two apostles, etc) would necessitate a separate study in its own worth. On the whole, Luke plays a non-trivial part in laying out the narrative.

II. What is proclaimed: content

2. Laconically speaking, in Acts 17 St. Paul (C.5-C.67) proclaims what he proclaims ubiquitously: the man Jesus as in fact the Son of God² (Acts 9:10) in whom mankind is to be saved³: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:2.3). Looking attentively into the events that precede and follow his sojourn in Athens, we see that in Thessalonica: “... Paul went in, as was his custom, and [...] he argued (dielexato) with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘*This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ* (Acts 17:2-3). And then, later in Corinth: “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching (to logo), testifying to the Jews that the *Christ was Jesus**” (Acts 18:5). Let us see what he says in Athens. For, that is where the apostle abides after his stay in Thessalonica, before his departure to Corinth. At the Athenian Areopagus the apostle exclaims:

“... [God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a *man** (en andri) whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance (pistin) to all men by raising him from the dead (anastesas auton ek nekrón)” (Acts 17:31).

3. At first sight, it would seem that the Apostle states the same in Athens as elsewhere, e.g. Thessalonica, Corinth etc. However, there is one major difference. Looking at it closely will help us understand a fundamental aspect of the way in which the Gospel is proclaimed. What Paul does not mention at the Areopagus is the fact that this “man” is the Christ, i.e. the Son of God anointed (echrisen) by the Father in whom mankind is being saved by the Spirit (Is. 61:1; Lk. 4:18; Acts 4:16, 10:38). Still, Paul comes nearly close. Namely, at the Areopagus he says that this man is the “appointed” (hörisen) one. The reason for this lies in the fact that Paul, having entered the Athenian central gathering place (Agora), is addressing neither Jews, nor the adjoining Judaized Greeks. He spoke to this group earlier, in the Athenian synagogue (Acts 17:17a). Paul is now addressing the other two groups of Athenians, both of them pagan: (a) the common citizens and (b) the learned elite, especially members of the Areopagus assembly (Acts 17:19, 21)⁴.

2 On the Son of God thematic in wider perspectives, see: Martin Hengel, *Der Sohn Gottes, Die Entstehung Der Christologie und Die Jüdisch-Hellenistische Religionsgeschichte*, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen 1975 = idem, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, tr. J. Bowden, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1976.

3 “For several days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And in the synagogues immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying, ‘He is the *Son of Gott*’” (Acts 9:19-10).

4 In earlier times the Areopagus council, the city’s main governing body, used to meet on Mars’ Hill (Areion pagon), south of the Agora. At the time when Paul enters the city the council (now invested with charge over religious affairs and crime) are most likely meeting at the Royal Stoa (Stoa Basileios) within the Agora perimeter. Therefore, it is not automatically certain that the hearing took place on Mars’ Hill. Paul’s speech might have been delivered within the bounds of the Agora, in front of the gathered members of the Areopagus council. This option cannot be excluded. More on the history of this institution in: Mogens H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology*, tr. J. A. Crook, Blackwell Press, Oxford 1991. More on the debate about the exact location where the Areopagus speech was delivered:

Timothy D. Barnes, “An Apostle on Trial” *Journal of Theological Studies* 20:2 (1969) 407-410; Colin J. Hemer, “Paul and Athens: A Topographical Note” *New Testament Studies* 10:3 (1974) 348; Frederick F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand

The majority of the gentile Athenians (Acts 17:17b-18a) would not have understood anything connected to Old Testament promise, including prophecy about the anointed Saviour (Messiah, Christos). Accordingly, the narrative of Paul's *Areopagitica* (vv. 22-31) does not give explicit OT references. It keeps them in reserve, allusively: viz. Is 66:1; 1Kings 8:27; 2Chr. 6:18; Ps. 50:9; Deut. 32:8; Is. 55:6; Is. 40:18. These OT loci are implied in *Areopagitica* II. 24 (2x), 25, 26, 27 and 29. Nevertheless, they are discernible. (They are present implicitly, for a special typological reason: namely, when the truth about Jesus is finally revealed by Paul [in v. 31] the hitherto implicit OT context will connect Jesus, explicitly, with OT prophesies concerning the Messiah). What is more, Christ is not mentioned at all. At the same time, the shocking words about Jesus and resurrection are mentioned (Acts 17:18).

However, in order to accommodate those willing to listen, Paul (that is, Lukan Paul) lays-out a complex of preparatory arguments, in the *Areopagitica* (especially vv. 24-29). His aim is two-fold, at least: on one hand (1), this preparation aims to absorb their shock (viz. v. 31) positively, and, on the other hand (2), it amplifies the Apostle's hope of having prospective continued conversations: more conversions with those originally assembled (v. 32b). This is the main reason why the Apostle to the gentiles (ta ethne) is seen applying a special strategy of evangelization (Acts 17:22-31) as the philosophers usher him into their midst at the Areopagus (en mesö): the political, judiciary and cultural hub of Athens.

This strategy is relevant today as it was then. For this reason we need to examine its essential aspects. In order to do so successfully, we also need to understand precisely where and exactly to whom was the word of God (kerygma) proclaimed on that day. Martin Hengel's dictum remains obligatory: "A New Testament scholar who understands only the New Testament, *cannot* at all correctly understand this"⁵ As was suggested in this regard by Gregory E. Sterling, ideally, an aspiring NT reader should understand the context as well: the Hellenistic, Roman, and Jewish life-worlds⁶.

III. Where is it proclaimed and to whom: context

4. Paul's admirer and loyal pupil St. Luke (fl. 1st C) leaves a brief yet telling remark in Acts 17:16. As the Apostle walks the streets and fora of Athens in the winter of 51-52 AD, waiting for Silas and Timothy, "... he saw that the city was full of *idols** (kateidōlon)". Ancient sources confirm this. For example, Gaius Petronius (27-66) remarks sardonically on Athenian customs. He relates that "... the gods walk abroad so commonly in our streets that it is easier to meet a god than a man"⁷. Athens was in fact infested with a poignant if not bizarre amalgam of Hellenistic⁸

Rapids MI ('1954) 1988 (revised), 2.76, 343, 343 n. 97; Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible Vol. 31, Doubleday, New York 1998, 605.

5 Martin Hengel, "Aufgaben der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft", *New Testament Studies* 40:3 (1994) 32.1.

6 Gregory E. Sterling, "Hellenistic Philosophy and the New Testament", in: Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, Brill, Leiden – New York – Köln 1997, 313.

7 Gaius Petronius (Gaius Petronius Arbiter), *Satyricon*, tr. Michael Heseltine, LCL 15, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA – William Heinemann, London 1913, xvii. (This edition of the classics is further referred to under abbreviation: LCL = Loeb Classical Library [with the given series book number added]; HUP: Harvard University Press [with date of publication given]).

8 The terms "Hellenic" and "Hellenistic" need to be distinguished. The former denotes the Greek world before the

religious-philosophical beliefs and displays of idol worship and magic. Most likely entering through the Piraeus gate, Paul arrives at the famous Agora square. Architecturally regarded, it is an “open space in the dense city”⁹ The space itself is organized as a grid of sacral and social structures making this space meaningfully public. The Apostle is overwhelmed. What he knows from previous knowledge¹⁰, which figures like Strabo (64-13) and Ovid (43-18) have depicted vividly¹¹, emerges in its immediacy: it stands all around him and engulfs him sweepingly.

Looking from the Agora epicenter, i.e. from the vicinity of the Odeion (major recital hall gifted to Athens by the general of Augustus, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, in ca. 15 BCE), the astounded Apostle sees the following edifices of greater significance as he makes his rounds: to the west, the Héphaisteion (temple dedicated to the god of fire and smiths and to the goddess of arts and crafts: to Hephaistos and Athena, jointly); the Bouleutērion (meeting place of the Boule or governing city senate [numbering 500 men]); the Metrōon (shrine of the Mother of the Gods and the archive building of the city); the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios (temple commemorating the expulsion of Persians from Greek lands, viz. the battle of Plataia [479]); and across the Metrōon, as closest to Paul, he perceives the Eponymous heroes’ memorial (bronze statues representing the ten heroes of the tribes): gazing to the north-west, and moving some more, he observes the Stoa Basileios (head office of the king archon: as second in order of command of the Athenian government, he was the official responsible for religious matters and the laws¹²): looking to the north, he beholds the

Temple of Ares ([Mars] the god of battle and warfare) ; behind it is revealed the Altar to the Twelve Gods (mirroring the Olympic canon, built by the son of Hippias the tyrant, Peisistratos, in 552/551); and in the far rear he can make out the Stoa Poikile ([ca. 460] the colonnaded

fall of Greek provinces under Roman rule. The latter denotes the Graeco-Roman world which begun to shape after the Battle of Corinth (146 BCE) and lasted until the inauguration of the city of Byzantium by Constantine (i.e. Constantinople 330 CE) as the seat of the eastern part of the divided Roman Empire. In comparison with the historical-chronological dimension, the cultural-ideological dimension is more important in regard to our thematic. It signifies the synthesis of Greek and Roman culture whereby the Greeks re-conquered their conquerors, precisely through their culture, of which philosophy was the highest expression. Stanley Porter places Hellenism within the following time frame: 4 C. BCE till 4 C. CE (see: idem, “The Greek Language of the New Testament”, in Stanley E. Porter [ed.], op. cit., 99).

9 Denise Costanzo, “City”, in: idem, *What Architecture Means: Connecting Ideas and Design*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, New York and London 2016, 64.

10 References to pagan sources by Paul are better understood as effects of earlier Jewish polemics against pagan Hellenism, rather than as direct influences of classical Greek sources. His knowledge of pagan Greek culture is not necessarily direct but mediated (viz. M. Hengel’s thesis that there is no direct dependence of early Christianity on non-Jewish thought). See more in: Vadim Wittkowsky, “‘Pagane’ Zitate im Neuen Testament”, *Novum Testamentum* 51:2 (1009) 107-126. For Hengel’s argumentation see: Martin Wzngà, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, tr. J. Bowde, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1980.

11 Strabo, *Geographica* (Γεωγραφικά), V AD, τ3 AD = Strabo, *Geographica*, vol. I (b. 1-2) LCL 49 (1917); vol. II (b.3-5) LCL 50 (1923), HUP, Cambridge MA; Publius Ovidii Nasonis, *Metamorphoseon libriXV*, 8 AD = Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, LG Classics, New York 2006.

12 It was here, note, that Socrates was brought to trial. As conveyed by his beloved pupil, Plato, Socrates confesses to the geometer Theodoras that: “... now I must go to the Porch of the King (tou basileōs stoa), to answer to the suit which Meletus has brought against me”; see: Plato, *Iheaitetus* (Θεαίτητος), *zio d*, tr. H. N. Fowler, vol. VII, LCL 123, HUP, Cambridge MA 1921.

thoroughfare where philosophers convened to conduct their discussions, especially since Zeno of Kition, the pre-eminent Stoic, adopted this bustling place for the promulgation of his philosophical teaching in dialogue¹³): the view to the east allows him to see the Stoa of Attalos (a building housing 42 shopping spaces for rent, built by an alumnus of the Academic sceptic philosopher Carneades of Kyrene, i.e. by king Attalos II of Pergamon [159-138]): looking and moving to the south-east down the Panathenaic way, as further out and above, the Apostle perceives the temples of the Acropolis and multifarious gods of the Parthenon, including the temple of Athena Nike perched upon the bastion rock to the right of the Acropolis entrance gates, i.e. the Propylaea: gazing to the south, he captures the view of Mars' Hill (Areion pagon) dedicated to one of the Twelve Olympians, Ares (Mars), the son of Zeus and Hera: and, enclosed within the Agora square, the view of the Middle Stoa (the longest structure, dividing the Agora into two unequal halves): finally, to the south-west he finds the Tholos (headquarters of the executive committee [prytaneis] of the senate [boule]¹⁴, ca. 470), behind which lay the Piraeus gates¹⁵ The bounds of the Agora had varied over time. But it always consisted of the poikile stoa (Painted Porch) with the Acropolis towering over the city centre to the south-east. More still, the city surroundings as well as households are peppered with statues symbolizing phallic cults, hermaphrodite figures, idols of gods and semi-gods, even divinized men. Some of these are named as hermae after Hermes, the god believed to bring luck.

5. It might have been the staggering presence of the hermae which especially exasperated Paul. As Richard Wycherley describes them, there is one kind of idol figure "... in particular which made it literally true that the whole city was seen to be full of idols. Far more numerous and more widely distributed than all the rest were those most characteristic Athenian dedications, the Herms, square pillars surmounted by the head of Hermes [...]. They were ubiquitous at Athens, and many have been found in the agora excavations..."¹⁶. As archaeological evidence attests, these idols stood "... at the north-west corner of the agora, between the Poikile (Painted) Stoa and the Basileios (Royal) Stoa; in fact the figures so dominated the scene that the place was called simply 'the Herms'. This was the main approach to the agora, by which Paul would probably enter as he came up from Peiraeus"¹⁷. Is it not very ironic that the citizens of Lystra tried to worship Paul as Hermes, to his dismay and outrage! For, they mistook Barnabas and himself for gods in the likeness of men (Acts

¹³ As preserved in Diogenes Laertius, "(Zeno) used then to discourse, pacing up and down in the painted colonnade, which is also called the [...] Portico of Pisianax, but which received its name from the painting of Polygnotus [...]. Hither, then, people came henceforth to hear Zeno, and this is why they were known as men of the Stoa, or Stoics..." Similarly states Athenaeus the Epigrammatist, speaking of all the Stoics together: "Ο ye who've learnt the doctrines of the Porch"; see: Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum (Βίων καί γνωμών των εν φιλοσοφία εἰδοχησάντων)*, VII 1:5,1:30, tr. R. D. Hicks, vol. II, LCL 185, HUP, Cambridge MA 1925, 115-117, 141-143.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution (Αθηναίων Πολιτεία)*, 43:3, tr. H. Rackham, vol. XX, LCL 285, HUP, Cambridge MA 1935.

¹⁵ For more on the history, structures and meaning of the Athenian Agora see: John McK. Camp II, *The Athenian Agora: A Guide to the Excavation and Museum*, ASCSA, Athens 4th 1990. Also excellent are the historiography and pictorial illustrations found in: Craig A. Mauzy (with contributions by John McK. Camp II), *Agora Excavations 1931-2006: A Pictorial History*, ASCSA, Athens 2006.

¹⁶ Richard E. Wycherley, "St. Paul at Athens", *Journal of Theological Studies* 19:1 (1968) 6 20.

¹⁷ Ibid.

14:8-18). The memory of this, too, must have made Paul's spirit additionally sensitive to manifestations of idol worship.

The citizens of Athens were immersed in idol worship no less. And Paul's spirit, as Luke tells us, was stirred to a paroxysm (*paröxyneto*), as he beheld the "common hearth of Greece (*koinèn estian*)", as Athena's city was known in olden times, according to Claudius Aelianus (175-2.35)¹⁸. This is no wonder. Especially if we keep in mind the zealous streak which never faded out from Paul's commitment to the Law: be it the one given through Abraham as commandments of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:3-4), be it the one given in and through Jesus (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 3:31). Paul knew his prophets by heart. One can only imagine how deeply this "veritable forest of idols"¹⁹ impacted upon the spirit of the Apostle who, surely, endorsed the outcries of prophet Jeremiah: "Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with their foreign idols?" (Jer. 8:19): and, "Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Art thou not he, O Lord our God?" (Jer. 14:22). It is no surprise, then, that after departing from Athens Paul declares to the Corinthians: "What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons (*daimoniön*) and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons" (iCor. 10:20).

6. Aside from orthodox Jews (*Ioudaiois*) and Judaizing Greeks (*sebomenois*), and next to common Athenian folk, whom he met every day at the marketplace²⁰ (*en te agora*), there was a third distinct group. It is members of this group who will lead Paul to the Areopagus: "Some also of the Epicurean (*Epikoureiön*) and Stoic (*Stoikón*) philosophers met him. And some said, 'What would this babblers (*spermologos*) say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities'—because he preached²¹ (*euangelizeto*) Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know (*gnónai*) what this new teaching (*kainè didaché*) is which you present?'" (Acts 17:18-19).

Apostle Paul will soon let them know the essentials of this, as they said, "new" teaching containing "strange things" (*xenizonta* 19b-20a). But who were these "philosophers" (*philosophön*)? What is their distinctive mark in regard to other groups Paul happens to meet or challenge in Athens? The specific difference lies in the fact that these Athenian intellectuals were heirs to the philosophical critique precisely of ancient Greek mythology, even of official religion. In fact, Greek philosophical theologies, notably those of Plato and Aristotle, as well as those of subsequent classical philosophy (including the likes of Poseidonius of Apamea and Dio Chrysostom), are both the result and generator of this process of "demythologization" of ancient theogonies and cosmogonies, as well as common vulgar belief²². In this sense, importantly,

18 Claudius Aelianus, *Varia bistorta* (*Ποικίλη ιστορία*), IV:6 = Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, tr. N. G. Wilson, LCL 486, HUP, Cambridge MA 1997.

19 Richard E. Wycherley, *op. cit.*, 619fr.

20 It is likely that some of those were not amicable characters at all, resembling those volatile and unpredictable "market loungers" (*tōn agoraiōn*) Luke refers to regarding Jasons, Pauls and Silas' troubles in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-8).

21 Literally: Paul "gospelized": that is, he spoke and gave witness to the "good news" (*euangelion*) regarding salvation in Jesus.

22 The satirist Lucian of Samosata (ca. 120-190) gives an indicative account of the Epicureans. He portrays them as relentless critics of religious impostors and superstition, epitomized, say, in the spurious figure of Alexander the False Prophet (*Alexander Pseudomantis*): "When at last many sensible men (*ton noun echōnton*) [...] combined

Classical Greek philosophy is the cradle of theology proper²³, freed from vulgarized mythology and even more so from superstition.

We may denote this critical and higher philosophical theologizing as the outcome of the era of Greek rational “enlightenment”. Let me illustrate by quoting the convert into Stoicism, Dio Chrysostom (c. 40 – post no). Nearly half a millennium after the death of Socrates (which in itself is indicative of the ubiquitous logical-critical ethos of the representative intellectual Greek), he states clearly that knowledge of what is true and divine comes from human nature, as of its innate god-given intelligence: to wit, “... without the aid of human teacher and free from the deceit of any expounding priest (mistagōgos²⁴)”²⁵.

This does not mean that these philosophers had no concept of God, nor were the majority of them impious. The greater part of the philosophers of Athens, especially those of the Stoic school, expounded a theistic worldview, albeit philosophically. Such a worldview was projected by means of conceptual discourse, quite systematically with the aim to offer elaborate answers to questions relating to theology, cosmology, gnoseology, psychology, ethics and politics. Their philosophizing was imbued with a genuinely religious spirit. Even the Epicureans speculated about things divine, despite their all-pervasive caustic wit. One should not make haste to equate their impious disregard towards inherited common belief with radical atheism²⁶.

against him (Alexander), especially all the followers of Epicurus, and when in the cities they began gradually to detect all the trickery and buncombe of the show, he issued a promulgation designed to scare them, saying that Pontus was full of atheists and Christians (sic B.L.) who had the hardihood to utter the vilest abuse of him; [...] About Epicurus, moreover, he delivered himself of an oracle after this sort; when someone asked him how Epicurus was doing in Hades, he replied; ‘With leaden fetters on his feet in filthy mire he sitteth’; see: Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, tr. A. M. Harmon, vol. IV, LCL 162, HUP, Cambridge MA 1925, 208-209 (= Luciani Samosatensis, *Alexander [Pseudomantis]*, 25, and also 43-44). Cf. Hans D. Betz, *Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament. Religionsgeschichtliche und paränetische Parallelen. Ein Beitrag zum Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamentum*, (TUGAL 76), Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1961, 5-13.

23 In the sense of Aristode’s conception of theologiké which defines theology as the primary science (proté philosophia), the object of which in principle are things separable from matter (chorista) and immovable (akineta). Philosophy thus regarded inaugurates a disciplined reflection on God as the highest being — freed through critical abstraction from anthropomorphic projections and from mythological decoration or superstitious ornamentation. The logical-conceptual “intellectualization” of the attributes of God (in fact, their noetic “ontologization”) leads to, and is supported by, a conception of God as pure and necessary being: a divine mind (nous) which, being perfectly self-sufficient and actualized, moves and orders natural beings (ta onta) as their final cause. Cf. Aristotelis, *Metaphysica (Μετά τα φυσικά)*, V: 1026a 27-31; XII:i072a 22-26, 1072b 5-11 = Aristode, *Metaphysics*, tr. H. Tredennick, vol. XVII (b. 1-9): LCL 271 (1933) – vol. XVIII (b. 10-14): LCL 287 (1935), HUP, Cambridge MA.

24 This phrase allows us to cognize the allusion of Dio Chrysostom to an officary of the Hellenic-Hellenistic rites connected with the so called Eleusinian mysteries. This mystagōgos was the person who would annually aid, accompany and initiate the aspiring candidates (mystae) into the cult’s secrets connected with the goddesses Demeter and Persephone (within the old agrarian death-rebirth cult, possibly with roots in the cultic practices characteristic of the Mycenaean period [ca. 1600-1100]).

25 Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio (Λόγος “Ὀλυμπιακός”)*, XH27 = idem, *Discourses 12-30*, tr. J. W. Cohoon, LCL 339, HUP, Cambridge MA 1939.

26 It is also true that they tended to sublimate the sentiment of religious piety in favour of venerating their founding teacher Epicurus. Thus, they inadvertently and inconsistently kept sliding towards idolatry (e.g. Colotes’ gesture of prostrating himself before Epicurus: “And even Colotes (an outstanding Epicurean B.L.) himself, hearing one day Epicurus discoursing of natural things, fell suddenly at his feet and embraced his knees, as Epicurus himself...”): see

Fortuitously, apostle Paul was proficient enough in Graeco-Roman philosophy. As we shall soon observe, we find him standing ready to challenge Hellenistic philosophical precepts, especially those proffered by the Epicureans and Stoics. At the same time, note, we shall see him embracing philosophy as an eminent medium for communicating critically about the origin, structure, meaning and purpose of existence and life. Let us acquaint ourselves, briefly, with the basic ideas and beliefs held by these philosophers. This is necessary in order to prepare a better understanding of the multifarious effects of St. Paul's engagement at the Areopagus.

6.1 The Epicureans (deriving from Epicurus of Samos 341-270) were polytheists. Conditionally²⁷ speaking, their views of the gods approximate to what the modern term deism signifies in general. They professed that gods do exist yet abide aloof of human affairs in unreachable other worlds (metakosmia). Accordingly, the gods are indifferent to human affairs in principle. Coupled with this, understandably, they nurtured a sceptical attitude regarding traditional religious mores and practices, generally. Because, as by rule, these traditions of cult, belief and practice were imbued with a projection of overly human passions and inclinations onto gods and what is divine. As regards the cosmos, they followed the ontology of pre-Socratic atomists, Leucippus (fl. 5 C) and Democritus (ca. 460 – ca. 370).

This led them to suppose that the cosmic universe is composed, rather mechanically, of atoms and nothingness. Since this condition encapsulates the human being as well, ontologically, they drew their ethical consequences accordingly. One of these led to the conclusion that human beings should not fear death, no matter how saddening such a state of affairs happens to be, no matter how terrifying it seems to be. For, death is nothing else but a mere decomposition of particles assembled in – and as – the human being. These atomic particles, subsequently, return into the pan-cosmic swirl. Following the precepts of pre-Socratic atomistic physics the Epicureans also proffered that the human intellect (nous) is composed of the lightest, sphere-like and most fiery atoms.

The Epicurean ethic (entwined with, and derived from their ontology) is given succinctly in the so called four-fold cure (tetracharmakos). The four main precepts are laid out by the one-time Athenian philosopher, a student of Zeno of Sidon, the Epicurean Philodemus of Gadara (ca. 100 – ca. 30), who will eventually move to Italy, establishing himself in Naples. Later, after the 1752 discovery of the Villa of the Papyri, in Herculaneum (Italy), the said precepts were retrieved from one of the papyri scrolls²⁸: “§1 Don't fear god / §2 Don't worry about death / §3 What is good is easy to get / §4 What is terrible is easy to endure”. As regards precept §1, which is of particular interest to us, Epicurus himself explains: “Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not. It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist

more in: Plutarch, *Contra Colotes* (Πρός Κωλότην), *ij* = idem, *Moralia* (Ἠθικά), 1117bc = idem, *Moralia*, “... Reply to Colotes in Defence of the Other Philosophers...”, tr. B. Einarson, Ph. H. De Lacy, vol. XIV, LCL 428, HUP, Cambridge MA 1967.

²⁷ For, deism is monotheistic and modern.

²⁸ They were deciphered from the Herculaneum Papyrus 1005, 4:9-14.

no longer”²⁹. Death is a radical caesura of perception, sensation, cogitation: nothing less, nothing else.

In contrast to later Roman-Greek, Hellenistic, philosophical moods: for instance, those found in the works of eclectic poet and philosopher Horace (65-8) (where the awareness of death casts its melancholy shadow over the “fixed-term” enjoyment of life: where death is still regarded as something irreducible, no matter how “thin” in comparison to the fullness of life), the classical Epicureans endeavour to liquidate death as a concern in life, totally. This allows them to preach considered enjoyment of life (eudaimonia), breaking forth wholly unimpeded by destructive fears ushered by unrestrained, as much as non-enlightened, anticipations of death. As we just saw, they profess that death is nothing at all. According to Epicurean advice, every human needs to literally forget about death. Paradoxically, the reason for this rests in their absolute affirmation of human mortality — by means of arguments which refer to the unavoidable (and irreparable!) corruption of sub-divine atomic assemblages, including human beings.

The task of the philosophically enlightened human being is to seek pleasure (hedone) with measure (metron), coupled with a practice of avoiding of fears, pain and excess. The pinnacle of life is a state of undivided impassive calm (aponia³⁰). This is in itself is preferably pleasurable for it marks the attainment of tranquillity of both body and mind (ataraxia). Humans should keep their calm before the lesser, greater and greatest of life’s challenges, equally. Such a state both presupposes and affirms the practice of control of one’s self, as well as freedom from need, unwarranted hope or dread (of course, as much as such freedom is humanly, that is, philosophically attainable). Such a way of being and the accordant state of mind, finally, are associated with divine-like self-sufficiency (autarkeia).

Nevertheless, in a final count over things, looking from a cosmic level, events relating to human matters unfold according to irrevocably fated rules, regardless of human interests, wishes and hopes. Relying on philosophical wisdom (sophia), the mortal is left with the task to drain as much joy as possible from his place within the pre-set limits of life dictated by laws of the cosmic order (kosmos, taxis).

In later times, Epicurean, Stoic and Pyrrhonic-Sceptic traditions of classical Hellenic philosophical wisdom (with one of the common denominators found in their affirmation of respective quests for ataraxia and moderate pathé³¹) enter into a relation of mutual synthesis, or symbiosis, especially within the all-pervasive eclectic mannerism of high cultured Graeco-Roman Hellenism. Even when (within this eclectic admixture) the gods are acknowledged as agencies which may decide human destinies (seemingly suspending the Epicurean barrier between gods and men, viz. metakosmia), the gods will have it their way, and their way only³². That is to say, in

29 Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus*, tr. R. D. Hicks (the locus is to be found in: Diogenes Laertius, *Vitaephilosophorum*, X:i25), vol. II, LCL 185, HUP, 1925, 651.

30 Viewed strictly philologically, aponia designates a state of being “pain-less”, exempt from pain.

31 Where pathé signifies “passion” In this connection Sextus Empiricus (160-210 CE) transports the words of Pyrrho of Elis (360-270 BCE) as follows: “We always say that as regards belief the Sceptic’s goal is ataraxia, and that as regards things that are unavoidable it is having moderate pathé”, cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrronism* (*Ποββώνειοι υποτιπώσεις = Pyrrhonianum hypotyposeon*), I:12, tr. R. G. Bury, LCL 273, HUP, Cambridge MA 1933.

32 No matter how convincing a human sacrificial petition might seem, an offering in words or material gift, the

the final instance, again, this translates into indifference of the gods towards humankind, as the original Epicureans did in fact postulate.

As one who had been open to both Epicurean and Stoic strands of teaching, albeit selectively and to an extent³³, Horace exhorts tellingly: “Ask not – we cannot know – what end the gods have set for you, for me; nor attempt the Babylonian reckonings Leuconoe. How much better to endure whatever comes, whether Jupiter grants us additional winters or whether this is our last, which now wears out the Tuscan Sea upon the barrier of the cliffs! Be wise, strain the wine; and since life is brief, prune back far-reaching hopes! Even while we speak, envious time has passed: pluck the day (*carpe diem*), putting as little trust as possible in tomorrow!”³⁴.

The certainty of death, the shortness of life, the sad prospect of wallowing amongst shadows in a forlorn exteriority of eternal death divorced from the fullness of life, leave their burdensome mark on the poet's soul. Immersed in melancholy and the bizarre joy of mortal living, with the aid of Epicurean and Stoic intuitions, the poetic philosopher

Horace ponders the inevitable outcome: life without life, divorced from hope of a better outcome. As Philip Merlan portrays well, depicting the pessimistic frame of expectations in the Graeco-Roman world, expounding his dialogue with Horace's opus: “Everyone is doomed to see the slowly flowing, slowly winding rivers of the netherworld, everyone is doomed to external exile, everyone must join the flock of shadows”³⁵.

6.2 Now we need to consider the other party of wisdom-seekers facing St. Paul. This community of thinkers (deriving from Zeno of Citium 344-162), the Stoics, were pantheists. They professed that all beings, ultimately, are but organic parts of one universal intelligent substance. This living substance was referred to as Nature (or Cosmos) *or* God, and was regarded as “all in all”. In this sense, conditionally, they can be regarded as “monotheists” as well. It is no less true that they were prone to admit of “ordinary” gods over and above which they posited the superiority of the one Zeus: and, more still, over all gods to place the superiority of the one universal Nature or Cosmos — which alone is self-sufficient (*autarke*). (Plutarch deemed such illogicality repugnant: for, gods must be self-sufficient by definition, if they are truly gods³⁶).

human being remains — mortal, tied to this unenviable and tragic lot. What is more, even gods themselves are subdued to necessity as the all-determining principle of cosmic law. Necessity is beyond even their control and power. Things and processes must be what they are, and cannot be otherwise. Simonides of Ceos (ca. 556 – ca. 468) makes the point memorably: “Not even the gods fight against necessity (*ananké*)” See: Plato, *Protagoras* (*Πρωταγόρας*), 343d = Plato, *Laches, Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus*, tr. W. R. M. Lamb, vol. II, LCL 165, HUP, Cambridge MA 1924. (Cf. Simonides, *Fr.* 37.1.30 = LCL 476, HUP, 1991, 436).

33 Horace undoubtedly did draw on some Epicurean and some Stoic views regarding wisdom and life (as the analysis of some of his *Odes* [e.g. *Ode*. 1] and some of his *Epistles* [e.g. *Ep.* XVI] has shown). Equally, one needs to acknowledge that Horace was an eclectic. This means that he was relatively detached from both Epicurean and Stoic philosophical teaching in the purist dogmatic sense. He certainly was not an ardent disciple of Epicurus in the way Lucretius was. Horace was an intelligent and compassionate borrower. Yet, equally, he was spontaneous and remained independent from the schools of Epicurus and Zeno. This precautionary observation is laid out well by W. S. Maguinness, “The Eclecticism of Horace”, *Hermathena* 27:52 (1938) 27-28 ff, 41-42 ff.

34 Quintus Horatius Flaccus, *Ode* 1:11.

35 Philip Merlan, “Epicureanism and Horace”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10:3 (1949) 445.

36 Plutarch ascribes this teaching to Chrysippus: “But Chrysippus [...] says, that the World (Kosmos) *only** is self-

Be that as it may, the rational ordering of the universe is explained as emanating from this substance, as of Nature or Cosmos, i.e. God, taken to be an active first principle as well. This is explained well by Cicero (106-43), who invokes the pupil of Cleanthes³⁷, Chrysippus of Soli (or of Tarsus³⁸) (ca. 280-206): “The universe itself is God and the universal outpouring of its soul (ipsaque mundum deum dicit esse et eius animi fusionem universam) ; it is this same world’s guiding principle, operating in mind and reason, together with the common nature of things and the totality that embraces all existence; then the foreordained might and necessity (sic) of the future; then fire and the principle of aether...”³⁹.

Accordingly, they divided this uncreated and indestructible Substance into a passive (material) and active (spiritual) part. The active part of this cosmic substance (deemed to consist of intelligent aether) was seen as endowed with an all-pervasive spiritual soul (pneuma) structured formally by seed-like generative principles (logoi spermatikoi), of which the human intellect (nous, mind⁴⁰) is a prominent exemplar. These seed-like agencies (logoi) are in fact “parts” of God, that is, of the divine Intellect (Logos) which itself is constitutive and expressive of Nature (physis). Hence, the pneuma is a mediatory vehicle of the Logos, whereby the natural world is supplied with intelligibility, living movement, ordering and direction. The passive part of this cosmic substance was seen as the material side of things.

Human beings are organic emanations of this pantheistic natural Whole or God, imagined to be a self-contained sphere. For this reason they should not fear death either. As death takes hold of individual beings, their souls return into the primordial cosmic fire (pyr), or ethereal spirit. When embodied souls reach the end of life’s cycle, they are dissolved – “reconciled” – into this fire by a process of conflagrative combustion (ekpyrōsis⁴¹), possibly coming back through rebirth, or in another form or shape.

The task of a philosophically ennobled human, then, is to harmonize his intellect with the divine Intellect, that is, with universal Nature or God. In doing so the enlightened philosopher, in

sufficient (autarke monon einai ton kosmon physī), because this alone has in itself all things it needs. What then follows from this, that the World (Kosmos) alone is self-sufficient? That neither the Sun, Moon, nor any other of the gods is self-sufficient, and not being self-sufficient, they cannot be happy or blessed” See: idem, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions (Περί Στωϊκῶν ἐναντιοματίων = De stoicorum repugnantiiis)*, 40 = idem, *Moralia (Ἠθικά)*, XIII:7z, m§re = Plutarch’s *Morals*, vol. IV, tr. W W. Goodwin, Little, Brown and Co., Boston 1878, 467-468 (cf. = LCL 470: p. 568). Also cf.: Ioannes ab Arnim (ed. coll. 1903), *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, Vol. II: *Chrysippi Fragmenta Logica et Physica (viz. De Mundo)* = abbr. SVE Cap. II:io, B. G. Teubneri MCMLXIV, Stuttgartiae = B. G. Teubner, Stuttgart 1964, 186 (§605); Plutarch, *Moralia (Stoic Essays)*, tr. H. Cherniss, vol. XIII part z, LCL 470, HUP, Cambridge MA 1976, 568.

37 As we shall see, it is to Cleanthes, the successor of Zeno, that Paul makes an allusion in Acts 17:18.

38 Interestingly, this is the birthplace of the apostle Paul: “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city...” (Acts 21:39).

39 M. Tullius Cicero, *de Natura Deorum*, L39 (cf. O. Plasberg [ed.], *ibid.*, B. G. Teubner, Leipzig 1917, 16-17) = Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods, Academics*, tr. H. Rackham, vol. XIX, LCL 268, HUP, Cambridge MA 1933.

40 Depending on context I use two senses of the term mind: (a) mind as the capacity for logical reasoning: hence reason, ratio, dianoia (viz. the reasoning brain) and (b) mind as the capacity for an integrative “deep” vision of reality inspired by and illuminated by divine light: hence spiritual mind, intellectus, nous.

41 Plutarchus ascribes this teaching to Chrysippus in: idem, *De stoicorum repugnantiiis*, 41 = idem, *Moralia (Ἠθικά)*, XIII:72, 1053a = Plutarch’s *Morals*, vol. IV, Boston 1878, 468. Also: Ioannes ab Arnim, SVF, 186 (§605).

fact, affirms his own “divinity” in the very act of returning to “himself”, i.e. to his “true” being. In away, this “self-divinization” entails the affirmation of analogical – if not substantial – sameness of the divine and the human. As minimum, understanding and reason, as of the logos, are shared by both: divinity and humanity. As Dio Chrysostom of Prusa states later, in Bithynia (97 AD), in his Olympic oration, speculating on the primordial order of things: “... these earlier men (palaiotatous) were not living dispersed far away from the divine being [...] and had remained close to him in every way, they could not for any length of time continue to be unintelligent beings, especially since they had received from him intelligence⁴² and the capacity for reason (synesin kai logon eilephotes peri autou), illumined as they were on every side by the divine and magnificent glories of heaven and the stars of sun and moon”⁴³.

In any case, universal Nature (or “God”) acts according to its own laws alone, unconditionally. It is at work ceaselessly determining everything through a pan-cosmic net of causes and effects: with fated regularity or, to use a stronger expression, with supreme necessity. The aforesaid harmonization of the philosopher’s mind is pre-eminently accomplished through reflection on the true nature of things. An example of this is the eradication of destructive emotions which are regarded, note, as consequences of poor judgment. Consequently, the removal of pathological emotions is accomplished through a comprehensive understanding of the nature of one’s being, and, through the virtuous use of discerning will (prohairesis) in accordance to the proper nature of things. And conversely, the Stoics taught that uncontrolled emotions grievously impair the faculty of one’s understanding, that is, the intellect.

The best conduct, then, is to conform one’s mind, soul and body to what is necessary according to the grand design and laws of Nature or God. These laws rule over human individuals and collectives as well as over the multitudes of all kinds of beings in nature, in each realm accordingly. On the human level, mindful conforming to these laws entails a restrictive (negative) side and an affirmative (positive) side. On the restrictive side: the acceptance of pain, loss and frustration as parts of the inevitable, the relinquishing of hopes and fears, especially the abandonment of rampant hedonistic gratification. On the affirmative side: the acceptance of one’s duties in accordance to conscience (i.e. the law of one’s inner nature⁴⁴) and in accordance to obligations of citizenship in the cosmopolis (populated by gods and men, ideally, without

42 Possibly as a better option, this term could also be rendered as: “understanding” Nevertheless, I here follow the translation given by J. W. Cohoon viz. Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses 12-30*, vol. II, LCL 339, HUP, Cambridge MA 1939 (see: op. cit., *Or. [= Λόγος] XII:28*. p. 31).

43 Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio XLL27-28*. The referred to rhetorician from Prusa, Dio, came under significant Stoic influence: likely, that of the earlier mentioned Poseidonius of Apamea in Syria (ca. 135-51). See: Max Pohlenz (ed.), *Stoa und Stoiker, BdI: Die Gründer, Panaitios, Poseidonios*, Zürich 1950 (²1964), 341ff., 382 (cit. acc. Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, [Fortress Press 1976] 2007, 24 n. 51).

44 The syntagm “law of (one’s inner) nature” viz. “nomos physeos” is here used in the conditional and freer sense which primarily denotes conscience (synéidesis). “The Older Stoics do not use the phrase natural law’ Greek-speaking Stoics find it hard to combine the two terms physis and nomos. Cicero, however, uses lex naturae [...] and Philo uses nomos physeos”; see: G. Kittel, G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, tr. G. W. Bromiley, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, (1985) reprinted 2003, 1185.

distinction of race or nationality⁴⁵).

Such cooperation⁴⁶ with the grand design and laws of Nature or God (and thus cooperation⁴⁷ with fate [heimarmenē], necessity [anankē], providence [pronoia] and fortune [tyche⁴⁸]), informed by philosophical insight, releases the soul into a blissful state of being passionless (apatheia). Such a state is similar to Epicurean aponia. It heralds the attainment of self-sufficiency (autarkeia) within unstirred tranquillity (ataraxia). In a word, mindful accord of the human will with Nature is conducive to bliss-inducing virtue (arete), be it physical, moral or intellectual. Since concordance with nature (harmonia) includes the discerning will substantially, and demands its activity without exception, Stoic philosophy gives priority to the practical side of philosophical life.

The ideal of self-sufficient contentment (autarkeia), vouchsafed by a life of self-restrained temperance (sōphrosyne) in following the logos of physis, was held as the quintessential practical effect of theorizing, by both the Epicureans and Stoics. Although one should add that, in comparison with the Epicurean impassive calm, the Stoic was generally more politically engaged. Self-subduing was tied with dutifulness⁴⁹ intoned politically (viz. the polis and cosmopolis). This is accordant with the fact that theory was regarded as a function of, or intimately connected to practical philosophy. That is to say, theorizing was conceived to be in service of living (and) wisdom. As Antipater of Sidon (fl. ca. 100 BC) exclaims: “Here lies great Zeno, dear to Citium,

45 Anton-Hermann Chroust, “The Ideal Polity of the Early Stoics: Zeno’s Republic”, *The Political Review* 27:2 (1965) 173.

46 In connection with this see the sentence given by Seneca (4-65): “Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt” = “The fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling” (see Latin version in: Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, 107:11 [ed. Kurt O. F. Hense] = Seneca, *Epistles*, tr. R. M. Gummere, vol. III: ep. 93-124, LCL 77, HUP, Cambridge MA, 1925). Seneca fashioned the mentioned sentence after Chrysippus or Zeno who give the exemplar Graecum for it (see: Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, 21 in: H. Diels [ed.], *Doxographi Graeci* [G. Reimeri, Berolini MDCCCLXXIX = Berlin 1879], Hippolyti *Philosophumena*, 21:11 [p. 571]). For more on this see: Miroslav Marcovich, “On the Origin of Seneca’s ‘Ducunt Volentem Fata, Nolentem Trahunt’”, *Classical Philology* 54:2 (1959) 119-121.

47 “For the Greeks physis is a final court. Since it can be known only rationally, it is open to discussion, along with its norms, but since it forms a causal nexus, it rules out human freedom except as free concurrence with nature (as with Stoics)...”; see: G. Kittel, G. Friedrich (eds.), op. cit., 1285.

48 This should be taken in the sense of a subjective category: one tied to human ignorance of the higher ordering of causes (i.e. the full causal nexus), especially in relation to possible events and the future in general. The Stoics made chance compatible with their basically deterministic presuppositions. They disconnected this category from objective contingency in a non-deterministic world (which they rejected). At the same time, they widened the conception of determinism (viz. causation as a one-dimensional chain of actual events) to accommodate a “many-dimensional network of possible occurrences, all of them equal possibilities fitting within the frame of ‘fate’...” Actually, the Stoics took over Aristotle’s definition of chance (“...chance is inscrutable to human calculation, and is a *cause** only accidentally [aition kata symbebekos]”: idem, *Metaphysica* [Μετὰ τὰ φυσικά], XI:io65a 33 et passim); and, they made the Aristotelian notion suit their philosophy through a reworking of its meaning and usage. As stated by Boethius: “The Stoics who believe that everything happens out of necessity and by providence, judge the causal event not according to the nature of chance itself but according to our ignorance”; see: Boethius, *In Librnm Aristotelis De Interpretatione*, III, 194:2.2-24 = ibid., in: Migne, PL 64, 492 AB. (Cf. Samuel Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey [^959] = Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1987, 73, 76-77).

49 W. S. Maguinness, op. cit., 30.

who scaled high Olympus [...] this was the path he found out to the stars — the way of temperance (lit. saōphrosynas) alone”⁵⁰. Or, as conveyed by Plutarch (ca. 46 – post-119): “Say then that a wise man has need of nothing, that he wants nothing, he is fortunate, he is free from want, he is self-sufficient, blessed, perfect (autarkes, makarios, teleios)”⁵¹. This triune ideal was received from pre-Platonic Greek philosophy with its roots embedded in Homeric ethos.

Now, as philological-grammatical analysis and history of concepts analysis may display, contextually speaking, it is very helpful to acknowledge that Luke’s Paul refers to this ideal. He is perfectly aware of its meaning and Hellenic origin. Here are some non-Lukan and Lukan New Testament contexts. As regards autarkeia: “Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content (en hois eimi autarkes einai)” (Phil. 4:11). In a context referring directly to things divine, the term is rendered in an entirely Christianized sense: “There is great gain in godliness with contentment (eusebia meta autarkeias)” (1Tim. 6:6). As regards sōphrosynē, for example: “Paul said, ‘[] but I am speaking the sober truth (alētheias kai sōphrosynēs rhēmata)” (Acts 16:25; cf. 1Tim. 2:9; 2:15).

6.3 As his encounter with the philosophers draws near, let us turn to Paul and look at his state of mind and soul, again. On the whole, having entered Athens, the Apostle finds himself surrounded by myriads of signs and acts relating to religious cults uninformed by the good news of salvation in Jesus. We can imagine how amazing and unprecedented this event in fact was. On one hand, we find the unknown god of the Greeks wrought in stone (Acts 17:23). On the other hand, we acknowledge the imageless god of the Israelites towering in transcendence (Ex. 20:4). In between stands the Church’s Apostle preparing to declare the good news about God revealed in the person of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, raised from the dead. And, the zealous apostle, Paul, finds himself surrounded by post-Platonic and post-Aristotelian representatives of philosophy, notably the Epicureans and Stoics⁵².

Admittedly, they profess reserve (epohe) towards mythological and cultic superstition, yet, only to pay the price of fatalism and resignation, priding themselves in what boils down to a basically sceptical, restrained, attitude towards matters of life and death inasmuch as these concern one’s personal immortality. This is a life-world torn between superstition and rationalism, polytheism and pantheism. Viewed from a Christian perspective, the common streak of what is at hand is a fundamental unknowing of salvific truth in Jesus, encased within a frame of mind overpowered by a rationality still impervious to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Later, during his captivity in Rome (ca. 62), Paul will reminisce on pagan matters while writing to Colossians:

“And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind (dianoia), doing evil deeds, he [God in Christ] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, provided that you continue in the faith (pistei), stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel (euangeliou) which you heard (ekousate), which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul,

⁵⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitaephilosophorum*, VII:i:29 = ibid, vol. II, LCL 185, HUP 1925,141.

⁵¹ Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions against the Stoics* (*Περὶ τῶν κοινῶν ἐννοιῶν πρὸς τοὺς Στωϊκοὺς* = *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos*), 20 = idem, *Moralia*, XIII:74 = Plutarch’s *Morals*, vol. IV, Boston 1878, 391.

⁵² We cannot exclude the possibility that representatives of other philosophical schools of the times were present as well in the wider Agora: possibly the Platonic Academicians and Aristotelian Peripatetics, and others more.

became a minister” (Col. 1:21-23).

IV. How is it proclaimed: Strategy level 1 — natural theology

7. What follows next is most important. The Athenians steer St. Paul into the Areopagus, where the genius of the Apostle breaks forth in splendour, in word and in power by the Spirit (1Thess. 1:5). (The same should be said of St. Luke who very cleverly interprets the Areopagus event. He achieves this by redactional choices of scenes, images, words and accents; and by narrative structuring and plotting, so as to accentuate [not to “invent”] the crucial aspects of Paul’s missionary engagement in Athens, especially at the Areopagus. Therefore, looking at Paul in this context is always tied to observing *Lukan* Paul as well, accordingly and to an extent). On the whole, whilst facing the philosophers, including other members of the Athenian elite (lawyers, judges, officiators), accustomed to dialogue and dialectic, the apostle Paul is actually confronting the whole of the glory that was⁵³ Greece (J. K. Stobart⁵⁴). This is of paramount importance in light of the fact that Acts themselves represent the event of transition of the faith in Christ from Jerusalem to Rome via Athens, both cities being symbols of the power of pagan reasoning. “From now on I will go to the Gentiles”, retorts Paul to the Christian Jews in the Graeco-Roman city of Corinth (Acts 18:6b), during the continuation of his Second missionary journey (50-52⁵⁵).

7.1 A crucial dimension of this historic happening, that is, of evangelizing the great world of the Graeco-Roman Gentiles, is remarkably illustrated by the exemplary passage given as the *Areopagitica* in Acts 17:12-31. It is an event in which tool and model, tactic and strategy, are forged in order to successfully face the pagan world in general, especially the learned echelons of it. If need be, at the cost of one’s blood on the Cross (Col. 1:20).

St. Paul's Areopagitica

“[22] So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. [23] For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To an unknown god’. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. [24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man [Acts 7:48; Matt. 5:34-35; Is 66:1; 1Kings 8:27; 2Chr. 6:18], [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything [Ps. 50:9]. [26] And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation [Deut. 32:8], [27] that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us [Is 55:6], [28] for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’;

⁵³ As Paul arrives at the seaport gates of Athens, i.e. at the port of Piraeus, the city is already 400 years away from the “golden age” apex reached in the times of Plato, Aristotle, Pericles and other luminaries (phōsteres) of Athena’s city.

⁵⁴ John C. Stobart, *The Glory That Was Greece. A Survey of Hellenic Culture and Civilisation*, Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., London ¹1911.

⁵⁵ St. Paul’s Second missionary journey to gentile Greece transpires between 50-52. It is reported in Acts 15:36–18:22. The main points to be connected are given in the following line: from Antioch, through Cyria and Cilicia, Lystra, Phrygia, then to Galatia, Troas, Philippi and Thessalonica (major city in Macedonia), Berea, Athens and — Corinth (where he lingers 1 ½ years), Ephesus, Caesarea, finally returning to Antioch in Syria.

as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring'. [29] Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man [Is.40:18]. [30] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent [Acts 14:16; Lk. 24:47], [31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead" [Acts 10:42; Rom 2:16].

A closer examination of Paul's (Lukan Paul's) specific strategy of preaching to a non-Christian audience is now in order. What the apostle Paul does, entails far-reaching – universal – consequences. To be exact, (1) firstly, Paul searches for, and does find a common ground. As we shall see, he does so ingeniously. I name this his Strategy level 1 — *natural* theology. And, (2) secondly, only after securing a common ground between himself and the Athenian listeners: between his message (euangelion) and the mindset of pagan Greek intellectuals, does he advance the radical force of the word of salvation (kerygma). Namely, God has appointed a righteous Judge of all mankind "... and of this he has given assurance (pistin) to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). For that reason, repentance (Acts 17:30) is required from each human being without exception. I name this his Strategy level 2 — *revealed* theology⁵⁶. In what follows we shall see what the common ground is, how it is forged and why it is important. Even more significantly, we shall explore the reasons why positing common ground is necessary⁵⁷ (albeit not sufficient) in regard to delivering the gospel kerygma in fullness.

8. Now, part of the common ground is established by forging sets of *contact-points* between the two parties. If we read the wider passage in Acts 17 (especially w. 16-29), ^{as} closely as needed, then several of these come to the fore.

8.1 In the aforementioned section of Acts 17, firstly, we may discover the literary device of implicit simile between Socrates and St. Paul. Both are confessors of truth. Both are brought to trial and public questioning. According to one of the historical sources, Xenophon (430-354)⁵⁸, Plato's teacher "Socrates is guilty of crime in refusing to recognize the gods acknowledged by the state, and importing strange divinities of his own; he is further guilty of corrupting the young"⁵⁹.

56 The more convincing Paul is on the level of natural theology 17:14-29 (utilizing the philosophical tools of dialectic and rhetoric, of erudition and wit, and argumentative positioning), the more will his shift to the level of revealed theology 17:30-51 appear as shocking. The surprise is all the more intense since it is the *same* Paul who, just a while ago, discoursed with the pagan philosophers on equal terms, seemingly by reasoning "alone" who now seems to offer a message hard to grasp rationally. Some of them must have felt it strange – and, perhaps enticing! as well – that this stranger, disciplined in reasoning and sensitive to his surrounding listeners, suddenly makes such an astounding claim, viz. 17:31. (As I said in the introduction to this study, in-depth exploration of Strategy level 2 and its relation with Strategy level 1 is not the immediate subject of reflection and exploration in this study: however, the relation between the two, in its most elementary form, must be noted, for it is far more than merely presupposed by the whole of the *Areopagitica*).

57 As a minimum, it is highly helpful: especially in a surrounding such as a city centre, the city being Athens.

58 The other main historical source, of course, is Plato: *Apologia Socratis* (*Ἀπολογία Σωκράτους*), 24b, 2je-26a; cf. also: Plato, *Crito* (*Κριτόν*), 53b-c = Plato, *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo*, tr. Ch. Emlyn-Jones, W. Preddy, vol. I, LCL 36, HUP, Cambridge MA 2017. For an insightful and erudite analysis of the political, legal and ethical frameworks of relations leading to Socrates' indictment, trial and verdict see: John R. Wallach, *The Platonic Political Art: A Study of Critical Reason and Democracy*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001, 95-101.

59 Cf. Xenophon, *Memorabilia or Recollections of Socrates* (*Ἀπομνημονεύματα*), I:1:1. See: *The Works of*

The way the writer of Acts depicts the *Areopagitica* scene (including the narrative itself) makes the most of this Socratic background. Likely, the aim is to strike connotative empathy with the prospective readers and-or listeners of Acts 17:16-34. This is especially meaningful when the recipient audience, predominantly, is bound to derive from a Hellenistic cultural background.

The resonances of the Socratic history with St. Paul's drama are not inconspicuous: "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities' (xenōn daimoniōn) because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him (epilabomenoi) and brought him to the Areopagus" (vv. 18b-19a). Luke depicts the Athenians imparting to Paul that he is a bringer of a "new teaching" (kaine [...] didachē) and that these are "strange things indeed (xenizonta gar tina)" (vv. 19b-20). All these exclamations and the ensuing situation, culminating in the "taking hold of" Paul, resemble the trial situation drama or indictment brought against Socrates. "Absurd things, my friend, at first hearing", confides Socrates to Euthyphro, "For he says I am a maker of gods; and because I make new gods and do not believe in the old ones, he indicted me for the sake of these old ones..."⁶⁰. As regards our Apostle, the philosophers, at least for a while, are ready to listen. Paul's life is not threatened, nor is he dispatched into a court hearing, formally.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the first important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §1. Socratic figuring A: witness of truth (trial motive).

8.2 As we move through the passage under scrutiny (w.16-2.9), secondly, we discover at least two modalities of being philosophical in the classical sense. Luke brings them out looking at Paul. As previously, Luke is making sure that empathetic relations are forged regarding St. Paul as the truth-bearer and, potentially, as a tragic figure. Let me broaden this: Paul's faithful companion and pupil, St. Luke, is here working especially on behalf of implied readers and-or future listeners of the readings of Acts: those in his contemporary time, as well as those who are yet to appear in time.

On one hand, as was the case in Acts 17:2 (viz. dielexato⁶¹), apostle Paul is again seen engaged in argument, debate, discussion. It is to be expected that Athenian "marketplace" discussions (viz. dielegeto [...] kai en tē agora 17:17a) gravitate around topics such as welfare, custom, piety, god and truth, but also around "news" generally. It is more than likely that these discussions, possibly heated, proceed through bursts of spontaneous questions and answers. Now,

Xenophon, tr. H. G. Dakyns, volumes I-IV, Macmillan and Co., London 1897; Xenophon, *Memorabilia. Oeconomicus. Symposium. Apology*, tr. E. C. Marchant, O. J. Todd, vol. IV, LCL 168, HUP, Cambridge MA 2013.

⁶⁰ See: Plato, *Euthyphro* (Εὐθύφρων), 3b.

⁶¹ Note the semantic proximity of the terms "dielexato" and "dielegeto" with the term "dialektike" (dialectic). The first two terms signify: to reason, to discuss, to debate. The third term, i.e. dialectic, signifies: to transform hypotheses into truths by reasoned argument, usually through the positing of questions and answers: individually or collectively, mentally or verbally, in and through dialogue (cf. Plato, *Republic* [Πολιτεία], 511bc, 531d-532.b, etc); it also signifies to criticize and then replace mere opinion (doxa) with knowledge (epistēmē): that is, to replace mere opinion with true opinion combined with a reasoned explanation (meta logou alēthe doxan) (cf. idem, *Theaetetus*, 201d-210a, etc). The semantic proximity of the first two terms with the third (imbued with a rich Graeco-Roman prehistory) is underpinned by logical and methodological senses which the mentioned terms do share respectively. Generally, in the Graeco-Roman and Graeco-Judaic worlds all three mentioned terms are wedded to, and mediated by dialogue (dialogos); or, as is the case with Paul, with dialogue-through-debate (dielegeto Acts 17:17). Such a dialogue both presupposes and generates the event of the gathering together of persons, things into a world of meaningful relationships.

these aspects provide at least the necessary condition for qualifying Paul's situation, conditionally, as commensurate to one in which dialogical dialectic is presupposed. That is to say, as minimum, he is questioned and he does provide answers.

On the other hand, as we see from 17:17b, Paul demonstrates an “‘open-air’ style of preaching”⁶². The apostle argues outdoors and is ever on the move, dynamically. He therewith adopts, or expresses, a character similar to that posited as the Cynic philosopher's ideal⁶³. According to the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55-135 CE), who is himself alike to Paul in many ways, this is the character of a Cynic, of a man who lives under the open sky, of a free man”⁶⁴. Let us hear more of what Epictetus has to say: the true Cynic cannot be satisfied with this; but he must know that he is sent a messenger from Zeus to men about good and bad things, to show them that they have wandered⁶⁵ and are seeking the substance of good and evil where it is not, but where it is, they never think; [...]. It is his duty then to be able with a loud voice, if the occasion should arise, and appearing on the tragic stage to say like Socrates [sic B.L.]: ‘Men, whither are you hurrying⁶⁶, what are you doing, wretches? Like blind⁶⁷ people you are wandering up and down: you [...] have left the true road: you seek for prosperity and happiness where they are not, and if another shows you where they are, you do not believe him’”⁶⁸.

62 Luke T. Johnson, “Paul in Athens”, in: idem, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 5, Michael Glazier Book, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MI 1991, 31Z-313 n. 17.

63 Some have described Paul's approach in Athens, i.e. that of discussing whilst on the move, as analogous to that of the Aristotelian “peripatetic” philosophers. However, a cautionary remark is here in place. Namely, the name “peripatetic” derives from the colonnaded pathways (peripatoi) of Aristotle's Lyceum where the members of his school came to meet, rather than from a rigorously applied method of walking-during-discussion. It seems that the claim that Aristotle expounded his teachings whilst walking is rather legendary. In any case, Paul is a more spontaneous. He is ever on the wing, using every opportunity to start a discussion about matters of truth revealed in Jesus.

64 Epictetus, *Discourses* (*Ἀρριανοῦ τῶν Ἐπικλήτου Διατριβῶν*), III:22, 16-30; also cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes* (*Λόγοι*), XXXII: 9 (credit: L. T. Johnson, *ibid*). Dio Chrysostom, the 1st century AD orator, gives a plastic description of the Cynic's way of conduct: “... these Cynics, posting themselves at street-corners, in alley-ways, and at temple-gates, pass round the hat (i.e. deceive the naïve = ageirousi, B.L.)...” Admittedly, the portrayal comes across as somewhat derisive. By the end of the 2nd century AD the Cynics were a common occurrence across city centers of the Roman Empire (Dio describes a scene from 2nd century Alexandria). But, not all of them were as sound as the founding fathers of the philosophical movement (e.g. Diogenes, Antisthenes) nor of a level of excellence attained by contemporary Cynics, say, by the likes of Demetrius and Demonax (credit: P. R. Bosman). Not a few failed to attain a well grounded philosophical theory, and their ethics of personal conduct were sometimes questionable (This is targeted by Dio and Lucian). In a word, the outer gestures of philosophy tended to prevail over the inner depths of it: charlatanism over eminent Cynic ethos. Cf. Philip R. Bosman, “Traces of Cynic Monotheism in the Early Roman Empire”, *Acta Classica* 51 (2008) 1-20: 3-4. (Cf. also: Luke Timothy Johnson, “Proselytism and Witness in Earliest Christianity”, in: idem, *Contested Issues in Christian Origins and the New Testament: Collected Essays*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2013, 622 n. 94).

65 Compare this to the mentioned address of Paul to Colossians: “And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds...” (Col. 1:21).

66 Compare this to Paul's beseeching of Athenian citizens: “So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that...” (Acts 17:22a).

67 Let us remember to compare this with Paul's or Luke's *Areopagitica* term (retrieved from the Homeric corpus): namely, with the verb “psēlaphēseian” = like the blinded Cyclops “groping”, “seeking”, “feeling-out” for truth or god (cf. Acts 17:2.7).

68 Epictetus, *Discourses*, III:22 et passim.

As we might perceive, Socrates, as depicted by Epictetus, bears a striking resemblance to Paul. Both are messengers of truth, disregarded by common people, who do not believe them because they are spiritually blind (viz. psčlaphčseian, 17:27). It is not merely coincidental that the Stoic Epictetus refers to Socrates whilst reflecting affirmatively about authentic Cynic philosophy. The school's founder, Antisthenes of Athens (ca. 445-365), the pre-eminent Cynic, and Socrates of Athens (470-399) are contemporaries. The bond is not merely geographical, however. The Cynic and Socratic schools of philosophy share a number of fundamental precepts, both historically and doctrinally. And, they uphold a similar ethos of life generally. This is particularly so in regard to their nurture of mobile, open, convivial dialogue about truth, good, justice and meaning of existence. In this, too, the Socratic and Cynic, Stoic and Epicurean, philosophies share another important bond, as of their ethos in general. It is especially relevant in respect to what transpires, analogically, in the *Areopagitica*.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the second important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §2. Socratic figuring B: messenger of truth (mobile debate motive).

8.3 Furthermore, thirdly, we can see that St. Paul endorses the priority of the practical domain of human existence. The practical goal of theory is strongly underlined. Moreover, as a careful reading of the *Areopagitica* will disclose, the Apostle promotes thinking *for* salvation life⁶⁹. Technically speaking, the block of verses given in Acts 17:22.-29 presents a special kind of *thinking* which is in the service of – a preparation for – the block of verses in Acts 17:30-31, which in turn serve the exclamation about *salvation* of mankind in Jesus, the man raised from the dead.

It is thus appropriate to stress that the parallels between Paul's approach to truth and life, as demonstrated at the Areopagus, and the proclivities of philosophy in the Graeco-Roman period extend not only into the planes of theory⁷⁰ (theoria), formally, but also into the planes of practice (praxis⁷¹), substantially. The Hellenistic philosophers do try to seek out truth by grounding their thought, ideally, in adequate methods, clear disciplined reasoning and meaningful propositions. This does comprise their way of life: bios theōretikos. But that is not all. For, theory is a function of their search for the appropriate *practice* of life: bios praktikos. They seek truth, theoretically, so that they may orient their lives in accord with it, practically. This quest is welded into wisdom-seeking: philosophia. In the final instance, it is welded into wisdom-living. Theory is conspicuously harnessed in the service of their quest for the good life (kale zōe) of the soul (psyche) in wisdom (sophia).

This is organically connected with their essentially classical (Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian) commitment to philosophical soul-guidance: psychagogia and philosophical soul-healing: psychē iatria. Both of these, furthermore, depend significantly on another practical aspect of philosophy: namely, on the art of rhetoric (rhetorikč techné). Next to the dialectical framework

⁶⁹ More on the Christian distinction between biological life and life in the spirit, viz. salvation, see: F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Salvation as Life", *The Churchman* (April 1937) 76.

⁷⁰ In the sense of being philosophical through logical-methodical and critical examination of the validity of theories, ideas, statements, concepts, belief attitudes etc.

⁷¹ In the sense of living philosophy through truth messaging, truth witnessing, truth dialogizing, wisdom practicing etc.

of the *Areopagiticum*, let me underline in advance, the workings of the rhetorical framework must be accounted for as well. Aristotle defines rhetoric as the possibility (dynamis) of seeing at each moment what can speak for a matter^{72,73}. He further elaborates rhetoric as the art of addressing others with credible integrity of character (ethos)⁷⁴, appropriately (pathos) and convincingly (logos)^{75, 76} (We shall see that Lukan Paul's performance in the *Areopagica* event satisfies the listed conditions of proper rhetorical performance).

Aristotle's teacher, Plato, allows us to reflect another aspect of the art of convincing speech. This aspect is highly important in the context of philosophically guiding and healing a soul. As Plato's Socrates explains to Phaedrus: "The method of the art of healing (iatrikes) is much the same as that of rhetoric (retorikes)"⁷⁷. Phaedrus is led to understand rhetoric is the art of speech which has at its disposal an adequate knowledge of the kind of soul one is addressing, coupled with the goal of improving the interlocutor's well-being by exposing him to truth in adequately administered words. (This is precisely what St. Paul is seen doing at the Areopagus). Applying a speech to a listener (soul) in this way will have a positive effect, similarly to administering the right medicine to a needy patient (body)⁷⁸ Accordingly, it has been well said that Plato understands rhetorical ethos as the "space where language and truth meet", in words (remata), "and are made incarnate in a concrete individual"⁷⁹ — the dialectical rhetor. This presupposes the ethical as well as ontological inseparability of the speaker and the speech act. We are not only accountable for what we say, we *are* what we say.

⁷² Translation according to R. D. Metcalf's and M. B. Tanzer's rendering of Heidegger's (preferred) translation of Aristotle's Greek wording from *Rhet.* I:2.1 viz. "ἔστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρηῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν" Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie: Marburger Vorlesung Sommersemester 1924*, M. Michalski (ed.), Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 2002.

⁷³ Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica (Ῥητορικὴ)*, I:2, 1355b 25. (In Freese's 1926 translation: "Rhetoric is the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever") = Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, tr. J. H. Freese, vol. XXII, LCL 193, HUP, Cambridge MA 1926.

⁷⁴ Cf. Craig R. Smith, "Ethos Dwells Pervasively: A hermeneutic reading of Aristotle on credibility", in: Michael J. Hyde (ed.), *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia 2004, 1-19.

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica (Ῥητορικὴ)*, I:2, 1356a 3-7.

⁷⁶ In Plato we find that an invaluable aspect of the art of rhetoric is given by speech offered in a timely (kairos) manner. When Phaedrus admits to Socrates that a healer (medic) needs to know "to whom", "when" (opote) and "how much" of a cure (medicine) to administer, this is placed by Plato as an analogy to rhetorical speech. Tactful awareness of the nature of a particular rhetorical occasion is thus embraced into the set of non-trivial aspects of rhetoric, by Socrates i.e. Plato. Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus (Φαιδρός)*, 268b = John Burnet (ed.), *Platonis opera*, t. II, Oxford Classical Texts, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1922.

⁷⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus (Φαιδρός)*, 270b. For a critical discussion of the relation between rhetoric and healing in Plato's *Phaedrus* see: Elizabeth Asmis, "Psychagogia in Plato's *Phaedrus*", *Illinois Classical Studies* 11:1-2 (1986) 153-172; Daniel Werner, "Rhetoric and Philosophy in Plato's *Phaedrus*", *Greece and Rome (Second Series)* 57:1 (2010) 21-46.

⁷⁸ As explains Socrates: "In both cases you must analyze a nature, in one that of the body and in the other that of the soul, if you are to proceed in a scientific manner [...] to impart health and strength to the body by prescribing medicine and diet, or by proper discourses (logous) and training to give to the soul the desired belief (nomimos peithō) and virtue (aretēn)": cf. Plato, *Phaedrus (Φαιδρός)*, 270b.

⁷⁹ James S. Baumlin, "Ethos", in: Thomas O. Sloane (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, 264 et passim.

In contrast to Aristotle, who thinks it suffices that an audience believe⁸⁰ the rhetor is in possession of qualifying virtuous characteristics, Plato (via Socrates) advocates a substantial precondition: the rhetor must be truly virtuous and must speak the truth. Speaking words to others is no trivial thing. Words may express truth and heal, or they may not. Worse, they may mislead others into cognitive or emotional, mental or soul infirmity. That is why both dialectic (truth) and rhetoric (speech) should be equally important for both sides: for the apostles Paul and Luke and for the Epicurean and Stoic wisdom-seekers⁸¹. As well, that is why ethos (rule of character) implies ethike (rules for character), and conversely. Ideally, both sides assembled at the Areopagus (should) endorse these values: the Hellenistic philosophers and Paul.

The goals of soul-guidance and soul-healing, through argued and convincingly expressed speech acts, emerge in what both the philosophers and the apostle Paul attempt to do, whenever they meet others. The important difference between them is this: when Paul meets individuals and communities, including Epicurean and Stoic thinkers, he strives to create healthy ones in Jesus. This is the main thrust of his ethos. The expressing of words of truth has for its purpose to lead the human being (body, soul and spirit) to full salvation life (sótéria) in Jesus as Christ: "...we wait for adoption as sons [...]. For in this hope we were saved (esōthemen)"⁸² (Rom. 8:23-24). The important thing, then, is to keep in mind that in late antiquity the theoretical life was in service of the *practical* life. And, conjointly, to heed that the practical dimension of philosophy was markedly open to religious reality (Acts 17:22). Philosophy, to wit, was a practical and existentially relevant matter. In this sense Paul and Luke are attuned, and finely so, to the basic ethos⁸³ of Athena's philosophers (not excluding other intellectual audiences: especially, implied readers from the wider context of the Graeco-Roman imperial era).

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the third important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §3. Thinking for salvation life: primacy of practice (bios praktikos motive).

8.4 Having been brought to the Areopagus, fourthly, Paul appeals to the universal proclivity of mankind to seek God and commune with divinity. This deeply set inkling is paradigmatically manifest in the genius of Greek spirit. The Apostle compliments the Athenians (andres Athenaioi)

80 Øyvind Ihlen, "Good Environmental Citizens: The Green Rhetoric of Social Responsibility", in: R. L. Heath, E. L. Toth, D. Waymer (eds.), *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations II*, Routledge, New York 2009, 363. (The instrumental streak in Aristotle's rendering of rhetoric, I'd like to add, means not that we should regard him as harbouring a "quasi-Machiavellian" motivation).

811 take the Epicureans and Stoics gathered around Paul in bona fide terms. I see no need to caricaturize them in a depreciative sense as mere cynical users of philosophical skills, without substantial interest in the good, truth, or wisdom.

82 The accent is in this movement of bringing-to salvation (esōthemen).

83 If Craig R. Smith has it right in claiming that Aristotelian ethos in the rhetorical sense "... dwells in the character of the audience..." and "... in the speaker's style", and not exclusively in the rhetor, then, this entails a non-subjectivist understanding of rhetorical ethos. In that case ethos is not an exclusive property of the rhetor himself: it rests in the rhetor's style as much as in the audience itself (listeners). If we transfer this to Lukan Paul's situation, then, this means that the Apostle takes into account, albeit conditionally, the credibility and-or integrity of the listening philosophers, as well as their (implicit) referential philosophical mindsets, texts and authorities. In other words, Paul (Luke's Paul) accounts for the dialectical and rhetorical situation he finds himself in. Cf. Craig R. Smith, op. cit., 3 et passim.

as being very religious. His amicable greeting, in which he qualifies those gathered as “exceptionally pious” (deisidaimonesterous; Acts 17:22), needn’t be taken as mere courtesy, nor understood as outright ironical (admittedly, fine ironical undertones abide, but elsewhere e.g. v. 30a).

Next, without further ado, he refers to an altar dedicated to an “unknown god”⁸⁴ (Agnōstō Theō; Acts 17:23). It is precisely this god that needs to be known, truly and properly. Paul offers to do that. He is now connected to what all the Greeks themselves seek. Yet, he is convinced that hitherto they have done so unsuccessfully. Admittedly, for the time being, the zealous Apostle keeps in reserve the Decalogue commandment which proscribes idolizing God in stone or matter (Ex. 20:4⁸⁵). As well, although he does indeed presuppose it, Paul refrains from detailed elaborations of the Law written in the tablets of human hearts, by the Spirit of the living God ([Pneumati Theou zōntos] 2Cor. 3:3⁸⁶). Even more so, he abstains from revealing that Jesus, the Christ, is the supreme realization of divine Law in person (Matt. 5:17⁸⁷; Rom. 3:31).

At this junction we may observe still more. Namely, the apostle emits his appeal fully aware that according to divine intention every human being, not only Athenian Greeks, is an image of God (eikon tou theou). He knows well that being an *image* of the living God (Gen. 1:16-17) endows every human being with god-awareness and self-awareness, where the latter is a deeply connected with the former⁸⁸. He is also aware of other constitutive capacities and characteristics inherent in the human being seen as an image of God⁸⁹. McGregor Wright understands clearly that

84 As regards the inscription to the “unknown god”, scholars have put forward several hypotheses on how it came about and what it meant in the given Athenian religious-cultural context. Some (H. Conzelmann) have argued that Paul’s usage was merely Luke’s literary apologetic device. The actual inscription that was at hand was rephrased to suit the apostles’ purposes, thus transporting the plural into the singular “to an unknown *god*” (viz. Pausanians’ “altars of *gods** called unknown” = “bōmoi de theōn te onomazomenōn agnōstōn” [Pausanias, *Attica* 1.1.4 (*Ἐλλάδος περιήγησις: Ἀττικὰ*) = LCL 93]. Others (P. W. van der Horst), referring to historical, archaeological and evidence from literature as well (Homerus, *Iliad*, XI:808 = LCL 170; Iuvenalis, *Saturae*, III:i45 = LCL 91), have argued that in those times it was more than likely that Paul would have found altars dedicated to *one* individual god, and some of these might well have been dedicated to an *unknown* god (lit. arae deorum = Gk. bōmoi de theōn: which is in no grammatical nor logical incongruence with what Pausanias actually states). Others (F. F. Bruce) hold that the title “unknown” might have been solicited due to the effects of destruction of altars in wars. Hence the name would have been lost, and the inscription “to *a** god” would be restored as the best solution. This may well be what Paul saw. Consequently, in order to create an entry point to his audience, apologetically, he (or Luke) added the adjective “unknown”: thus, altar “to an *unknown* god” Finally, some scholars have proposed that Paul’s adage in fact reflects the inscription given by Judaizing Greek God-fearers who thus denoted the unknowable God of the *Jews* (e.g. Van der Horst referring to Livy’s now lost book, loc. 102d [Titus Livius, *Historiarum Romanorum*], where it is written in regard to Judea: “the god there worshipped is unknown”). See: Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids MI – Paternoster Press, Carlisle UK, 1998,521-513.

⁸⁵ “You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth”

⁸⁶ “You are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (plaxin kardiais sarkinais)”

⁸⁷ “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them...”

⁸⁸ In purely philosophical terms, I would venture to argue that one could infer God from self-awareness alone.

⁸⁹ The following is a helpful list of characteristics constitutive of the image of God in the human being: (1) god-

the common ground between St. Paul and his Areopagus audience is forged on the basis of the defensible supposition that the image of God is stamped into the very nature (physis) of mankind, and that each individual is an instantiation of it: “Paul assumes then, that all of us have the *imago Dei*, the Image of God, in common, and with it the elements of self-consciousness, rationality, and an ethically sensitive conscience that God built into it from the beginning”.

In a word, Paul appeals to the innate inkling for *god-seeking* and *god-thinking* (Acts 17:22-13) given to each human being as gift of God’s grace. This is of crucial importance. Especially so if and when “... (Paul) cannot assume that we have world views in common, or the meaning they provide, for our presuppositions differ from those of the unbeliever, and so facts and logic sustain different relations to each other in the outworking of the two world views”⁹⁰.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the fourth important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §4. In the image of God: or, innate God-seeking and God-thinking.

8.5 Fifthly, amongst other constitutive characteristics pertaining to the image of God (*eikon*) in the human being, one has to recognize reasoning consciousness (*dianoia*) and moral conscience (*syneidesis*). As we shall see, this is why the apostle Paul recurs to *natural* revelation⁹¹ In other words, he calls upon that which is revealed to *reason* and *conscience* through nature *alone*, that is, without the aid of supernatural light or grace (cf. Acts 17:24-25, 27b-28a⁹²). This implies not only the notion of outer nature (*viz.* cosmos) but also the notion of inner nature (*viz.* conscience): “Yet he is not far from each one of us, for ‘In him we live (*en autō gar zōmen*) and move and have our being’” (Acts 17:27b-28a). Incidentally, the Apostle will recur to the “grammar” of (inner) nature during his first sojourn in Corinth, immediately after leaving Athens: “Does not nature *itself* teach you...” (*oude he physis aute didaskei hymas*; 1Cor. 11:14). This can be restated in contracted terms: “nature teaches!” In the Epistle to Romans we find yet another sign of Paul’s reliance on the revelation through (inner) nature alone: “When Gentiles who have not the law do by *nature** what the law requires (*physei ta tou nomou poiōsin*), they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts (*grapton en tais kardias*), while their conscience⁹³ (*syneideseōs*) also bears witness...”

awareness: prayer, worship, adoration of the divine mystery (2) self-awareness: rationality, conscience, sense of right and wrong (3) self-transcendence (*ekstasis*): the ability to reach out beyond ourselves to God and others in love (4) self-sacrifice as voluntary self-giving and self-emptying (*kenosis*) for the sake of the other (5) freedom and responsiveness, self-restraint and growth (6) self-expression as creativity and inspired imagination (7) responsibility for creation. See: ICAOTD, *In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology*, Anglican Consultative Council, London 2015, 24-25.

90 Cf. R. K. McGregor Wright, “Paul’s Purpose in Athens and the Problem of ‘Common Ground’”, A Research Paper of the Aquila and Priscilla Study Center (© 1996: Johnson City, TN), (‘1988) *1993,10-12.

91 Natural revelation is not to be identified with natural theology although it is correct to assume that the two are closely connected, since the first is the necessary condition for the second.

92 “[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything...” In order to grasp the meanings of these verses one has no need of supernatural help, or of revelation proper: the naturally reasoning capacity may suffice.

93 James Strongs *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* §4893: *syneidēsis* p. 69 (p. 2.16) offers the following

(Rom. 1:14-15).

If one understands that human reason and conscience are part of human nature, and that non-human nature is open to human agency (inasmuch as human beings are part of non-human nature as well, in which they make their marks), then we do find that nature “itself” (via the agency of humankind’s nature) teaches evaluative inferences regarding moral rules, or, logical inferences regarding its origins, or, enables postulations regarding what is divine — on the merit of reasoning alone. Furthermore, it is here that natural reasoning and natural theologizing meet, complementarily. During his third visit to Corinth, wherefrom he writes to Romans in 57-58 CE, St. Paul states clearly: “Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly *perceived in the things that have been made** (apo ktiseōs kosmou noumena)...” (Rom 1:20).

What is more, such formulae and statements ring undertones suggestive of Stoic senses and meanings. Reasoning about nature from the nature of reason and conscience – as naturally given – was not an approach unknown to (at least some) of the Greek listeners that surrounded the Apostle at the Areopagus. The intellectuals amongst them, presumably, would have known the basics of natural theology, and of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical theology promulgated in the later Academy, Peripatetic circles or among the teachers and pupils of the Middle Stoa. Elements of suchlike thinking in Paul’s sermon, including certain aspects of its content, arguably, would have appealed enticingly to a Greek philosophical audience.

In the passage of Acts under scrutiny, especially 17:22⁹⁴, Paul wishes primarily (but not exclusively) to engage the intellectually minded or philosophically inclined listener (and reader, viz. Lukan Paul). Consequently, at least for a while (until Acts 17:31-32), he ties the question of the true yet unknown god with the capacity of reason *itself*— allowing for its ability to make inferences about god or divinity from outer and inner nature *alone*. One of the main lines of possible albeit tentative rapprochement between Paul and the philosophical members of the audience⁹⁴ thus comes to the fore (especially in Acts 17:24-25, 27b-28a, before the abrupt ending in Acts 17:31-32). That is to say, what is revealed through nature “itself” may translate into “natural theology” through disciplined reasoning alone⁹⁵

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out yet another, fifth, important contact-

explanation relating to the innate capacity of conscience: “co-perception, i.e. moral consciousness: — conscience” According to *Discovery Bible project: Helps Ministries Inc.* (G. L. Archer, G. Hill eds.) © 1987, 2011, syneidēsis in its NT usage is explained as follows: “Properly, joint-knowing, i.e. conscience which joins moral and spiritual consciousness as part of being created in the divine image. Accordingly, all people have this God-given capacity to know right from wrong because each is a free moral agent (cf. Jn. 1:4, 7, 9; Gen 1:26-27). ‘Conscience’ is an innate discernment, self-judging consciousness” Let me here add that the term “conscience” (syneideseōs) is yet another of Paul’s appropriations from eminently Hellenistic registers of ethical, philosophical and religious language, including the multifaceted connotations they carry.

⁹⁴ Needless to remind, it is not only philosophers who are gathered to listen to Paul at the Areopagus.

⁹⁵ Natural theology in the here presupposed traditional sense is to be understood as the attempt to prove the existence of God, divine intention, immortality of the soul etc, through observation of ordinary human and ordinary non-human nature — with the aid of human reason. This brings natural theology into close proximity to (and into partial overlap with) philosophical theology. In turn, the latter can be defined as disciplined analysis and development of theological ideas, theorems and values — with the aid of critical methods of philosophical thinking.

point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §5. In the image of reason: or, God in the mirror of nature.

8.6 Before moving on, I would like to reassert the results of the hermeneutical-exegetical work executed thus far. In this respect two basic structural aspects of the *first* part or level of St. Paul's missionary strategy towards the gentiles (i.e. those who know not of Jesus and are not of Jewish identity) need to be specially underlined and determined.

Firstly, the missionary strategy consists of establishing multifarious *contact-points* (Anknüpfungspunkte⁹⁶). These points of contact differ amongst themselves: in form, content, function and type. No less importantly, these contact-points (regardless of their mutual difference) map out the terrain of the *common ground*. This ground, once it is secured, allows the parties gathered to establish the necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for the realization of this extraordinary encounter. It is upon such a ground that the good news about salvation in Jesus (viz. the *second* part or level of St. Paul's missionary strategy) will be posited and subsequently promulgated in the given circumstances.

Secondly, the building of this common ground is analogical to the activity of *inculturation*. This activity itself translates into creating cultural, intellectual and existentially relevant idioms for transferring the kerygma about Jesus as successfully as possible. If so, then, the established contact-points are concrete instances – or conditions of – of inculturation which, sequentially, facilitate the main goal of mission: the *evangelization* of the recipient hearers or readers.

All things considered, the apostle Paul and the apostle Luke (through his redactorial furnishing of the Areopagus speech by Paul) create an impressive purpose-serving common ground structure in Acts 17:22²⁹. This structure consists of a many-layered as much as multi-faceted web of contact-points. I have identified five thus far:

- §1. Socratic figuring A: witness of truth (trial motive);
- §2. Socratic figuring B: messenger of truth (mobile debate motive);
- §3. Thinking for salvation life: primacy of practice (bios praktikos motive);
- §4. In the image of God: or, innate God-seeking and God-thinking; and
- §5. In the image of reason: or, God in the mirror of nature.

For the time being we may leave aside (and keep in reserve) the first two contact-points. They surely are significant. However, they are so more in the cultural-social sense. This allows us to focus on the last three. For, they imply existential, ontological, and cognitive implications of the highest order. By doing so we perceive clearly the deeper three-fold layer of the common ground: firstly, the appeal to death-awareness, implied in the search for preservation (as of the need to save one's being from dissolution and death, if possible); secondly, the appeal to god-awareness and spirituality (as of the image of God: eikon tou theou); thirdly, the appeal to self-awareness through conscience and rationality (as of the moral sense: syneidésis, and, as of natural reason: dianoia). By latching onto these points of contact, constitutive of the common ground, St. Paul is doing all he possibly can to attract, sustain and, ideally, transform the mindset of the assembled Athenians,

⁹⁶ In the sense in which Norden uses the term with regard to St. Paul's contact-making reflections and utterances about the "unknown god" See: Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede*, B. G. Teubner, Leipzig – Berlin 1913, 31 et passim.

especially the philosophers.

9. In what follows next I display the *effects* of Paul's address upon the recipient listener groups at the Areopagus. Conjointly, I delve deeper into exploring the ways in which the said narrative, especially Acts 17:24-29, introduces a natural theology, and does so in virtue of the introduction of previously listed contact-points (especially viz. §§4-5). The function of this natural theology is to prepare the philosophers for the revealed theology proper that arrives in Acts 17:30-31. The more developed and convincing the natural theology part is, the more difficult it should be for the philosophers and all others present, to reject the oncoming revealed theology party. If Paul is a reasonable expositor in the opening (Acts 17:22-23) and first section (Acts 17:24-29) of his discourse: if he has acquired some support and tentative trust in what he claims, then he is expected to retain the same at the closing (Acts 17:30-31) section of his discourse.

If what comes out in the closing section of the discourse, however, happens to be in stark contrast (in terms of style, expectation and content) to what transpired in the previous sections, then there should be a good and justifiable reason for this. However, a moment of utter surprise does appear at the end of his speech. It is of such magnitude that it marks a *break* with the relative acceptability of what transpired previously (but, this is not due to any feebleness of reasoning or weakness of spirit of the Apostle). This, too, needs to be explained. I'd wish to stress that it is precisely the solidity of the reasoned natural theology of Paul in w. 22b-29 which makes the revealed theology of w. 30-31 such a shocking thing in respect to its effects on the philosophers. The relation between these two sections will be taken into account in what follows⁹⁷ (viz. the relation of natural-philosophical and revealed-apologetic theology in the *Areopagitica*).

For the time being, an additional articulation of the *Areopagitica* is both required and helpful. It can be divided into two main parts, albeit only technically: I. vv. 24-29 and II. vv. 30-31. The first part may be named as the natural theology argument (NTA) and the second part may be named as the apologetic theological argument (ApoTA). Of course, the whole passage is apologetic since all of it serves to defend (apologos) the truth in Jesus as Christ and as the Logos of God⁹⁸. Both parts have a wider and a narrower or stricter form. The stricter forms are the following: NTA(s) w. 24-29 and ApoTA(s) v. 31.

I. NTA(s)

“[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man [Acts 7:48; Is 66:1; 1Kings 8:27], [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath

⁹⁷ Strategy level 1 (NTA) and Strategy level 2 (ApoTA) presuppose each other, where the latter both reaffirms *and* overcomes the former. In this sense, the first level (natural theology), resting on reason “alone”, does not in principle exclude the second (revealed theology), which rests on reason and mind illuminated by faith. It is my view that the two comprise an organic whole. Consequently, the combining of the two does not entail an unwarranted “Hellenization” of Christianity, nor does it lead to jeopardizing the biblical kerygma. As was said earlier, it is my methodological intention to here explore the Strategy level 1. A separate study will thematize the Second strategy level 2 in its own right.

⁹⁸ I separate the natural (philosophical) theology part of Acts 17 from the apologetic (revealed) theology part of Acts 17 — only in conditional terms, analytically. For, as I will demonstrate, the whole passage represents an apologetic argumentation steeped in the event of God revealed in Jesus: an event which is the central motivating force behind all senses and meanings of the discourse in and of Acts 17:16-34.

and everything [Ps. 50:9]. [26] And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation [Deut. 32:8], [27] that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us [Is 55:6], [28] for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring’. [29] Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man [Is. 40:18].

II. ApoTA(s)

[31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead” [Acts 10:42; Rom 2:16].

Let me now address the prospective effects of the stricter form of the natural theology argument upon the listeners in the concrete Areopagus situation. What is Paul saying? What are the essential aspects of his message? In simplest terms, according to the main current of the traditional interpretation of the *Areopagitica*, Paul’s message contains a succinct threefold teaching on:

1. creation (creatio)
2. conservation (conservatio)
3. salvation (salvatio)

The Aposde claims that God has created the world and everything in it, including the heavens and earth; that God sustains the world and keeps it in the hollow of his providing and equally providential hand; and that it is the will of God for mankind to be saved from death in a man of absolute righteousness, Jesus, whom he has raised from death as a sign of hope for all mankind, who are God’s kin. The first two parts (creatio and conservatio) of this threepart teaching fall exactly within the first part of the *Areopagiticum* (I. vv. 24-29): that is, they are covered by the natural theological part or level of the argument (NTA[s]). Standing on the common ground, forged by Paul (and Luke) within w. 24-29, let see what happens.

9.1 Firstly, a convincing critique of vulgar pagan religion is executed. The preconceptions and practices of gentile Greek religiosity are in fact destroyed. Even then, though, Paul refrains from “naming and blaming”, which is indicative. The apostle states clearly what God is *not* and cannot be. Consequently, he adds what we should not do when approaching or seeking God: in piety or in intellectual reflection. He in fact offers a kind of negative theology (theologia negativa) realized in a philosophical key. It is not by accident that in the passage w. 14-29 we find three grammatical-lexical particles denoting negatives of the kind “x is *not*” (the adverbially used negation ouk: twice⁹⁹, v. 24, 29) and “*nor* is x such and such” (the conjunctively used negation oude: once, v. 25). Looking from the side of the philosophers, the verses are releasing their implicit and explicit contents. Arguably, these contents are endorsed by the hearers as relatively commensurate to their philosophical tenets. At least, as a collateral positive effect, the said utterances dispose of vulgar pagan conceptions about divinity. For example, they reject the vulgar conceptions criticised by Euripides, to whom, note, St. Paul alludes precisely in the *Areopagitica*¹⁰⁰ The church father

⁹⁹ In fact, the negation “ouk” is used thrice. The third utilization of it (in v. 27b) is reserved for the Epicureans in particular, as I will demonstrate.

¹⁰⁰ Edurad Norden credits Wilamowitz-Moellendorff with identifying this “significant” parallel (wichtige Parallel)

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-216) makes note of the connection between Paul's utterance in Acts 17:25 and Euripides. The Alexandrian father cites Euripides and "Plato"¹⁰¹ against vulgar religiosity. (As we shall soon see, in the same passage Clement does the same by citing Paul and Zeno). He aligns completely against offensive misconceptions and practices regarding divinity: "Most excellently, therefore, Euripides accords with these, when he writes: 'What house constructed by the workmen's hands, with folds of walls, can clothe the shape divine?' And of sacrifices he thus speaks: 'For God needs nought, if He is truly God [...]'. 'For it was not from need that God made the world; that He might reap honours from men and the other gods and demons, winning a kind of revenue from creation, and from us, fumes, and from the gods and demons, their proper ministries', says Plato"¹⁰² More is to happen yet. Paul's argument (viz. NTA) carries propositions which, as next, challenge both groups of philosophers: each in a particular way.

9.2 Secondly, regardless of the established common ground, and despite the philosophers' likely agreement with Paul against vulgar religiosity, he in fact criticizes the Epicureans, albeit implicitly. His masterful insider-type of knowing of things Greek and philosophical must have made his critique all the more effective. For example, by speaking of God in the singular (17:26-28) he indirectly challenges the Epicurean conception of a plurality of gods. A grammatical-syntactical analysis of Paul's truth-claim (namely, that God is unique and numerically one) may demonstrate this point.

Let us scan the aforesaid said verses: v. 25 "he *himself* gives to all" (autos dido us pasi [the personal possessive pronoun "autos" is placed in the nominative case in 3rd person masculine *singular*]); v. 26 "he made" (epoiēsen [this verb is in 3rd person *singular*]); v. 27a "to seek *God*" (zētein ton Theon [the article "ton" is in the accusative case of the masculine gender *singular*]); v. 27a to "feel after *him*" (psēlaphēseian¹⁰³ auton [the personal possessive pronoun "auton" is in the accusative case of the 3rd person masculine *singular*]); v. 27a "might find *him* (heuroein [this

between Lukan Paul and Euripides (see: Eduard Norden, op. cit., 13). Norden himself goes on to remind, in terms of *biblica patristica*, that it was Clement of Alexandria who commented exegetically on that very same parallel (for Wilamowitz misses out on noting that). See: Wilamowitz's commentary on *Herakles mainomenos* v. 1346: Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Euripides: Herakles*, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin ²1895, 272.

101 Actually, Clement references an apocryphal text which he, erroneously, ascribes to Plato. He makes his point, nevertheless.

102 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* (Στροματείς), V:n II. 75-76, in: Migne, PG 9,112 D-113 A. The text is given according to the translation in: A. Cleveland Coxe (ed.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Volume 2: *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermes, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, Christian Literature Publishing Co., New York 1885, 462. Clement of Alexandria refers to Paul's *Areopagiticum* (viz. v. 23 agnosto theo) in: op. cit., 124A. St. Clement is not the only church father who reflected on Paul's *Areopagitica*. We need to remember others as well, particularly: Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, Arator, venerable Bede, and John Chrysostomos.

103 Note again that this term = pselapheseian is used by Homer in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* IX:4i6) to describe the blind and groping Cyclops in the cave (credit: Richard L. Anderson). See: Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, Harper & Brothers, NY 1883, 1755 (cf. Strongs *Old and New Testament Greek Lexicon*, §5584: pselaphaō). It is a high likelihood that Paul (or Luke) are employing this term intentionally so as to intone a high lingual style. As elsewhere in the *Areopagitica*, this usage might be suggesting to the audience that the Apostle is no amateur in matters classical or Greek. Still more, the tactile moment of the Cyclopean metaphor suggests an affirmation of an explorative-natural approach to what is created viz. the cosmos and-or God.

verb is in 3rd person plural yet syntactically it indicates “their finding of *him*”]; v. 27b “*he* is not far from each one of us” (ou makran apo henos hekastou hemön hyparchonta [the verb “hyparchonta” is a present participle active placed in the accusative case of the masculine *singular*]); v. 28a “In *him* we live” (en autō gar zōmen [the personal possessive pronoun “auto” is placed in the dative case of the masculine *singular*]), v. 28b “we are indeed *his* offspring” (Tou gar kai genos esmen [the article “Tou”, indicating that mankind are his kin, is placed in the genitive case of 3rd person *singular*]).

These instances of syntax structuring are totally non-conducive to polytheistic theology. It is hard to imagine that the Epicureans (present or implied) failed to catch the sense of that. Further still, earlier I referred to the Epicurean teaching on gods abiding in the intemundia: aloof and far from trite human affairs. The next line from the NTA part of the *Areopagitica* is in direct opposition to that: “Yet he is not far from each one of us” (v. 27b). Similarly, by referring to divine nourishment of humanity Paul challenges the viewpoint that gods are indifferent¹⁰⁴ to human affairs: “... he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything” (v. 25).

Let us assume that alongside all of that, Paul’s (and Luke’s) proficiency in Hellenistic learning could have, in principle, made him aware of some or many formal logical difficulties in Epicurean philosophical theology. For instance, possibly, he could have known of the logical contradiction implied in conflating the compound nature of gods – which was affirmed¹⁰⁵ – with incorruptibility or immortality. For, this is contradictory to general atomistic theory, etc. Having said that, I should underline that Paul, even after all the implicit criticism displayed, retains a positive contact-attitude, still. Because, his statement in v. 25 affirms one of the central doctrines of the Epicurean school: namely, that god(s) needs nothing from humans and depends not on their service¹⁰⁶ (“... as though he needed anything”). To be exact, divine nature is absolutely self-sufficient (viz. autarekeia).

9.1. Thirdly, precisely by laying-out an open and even inclusive conversational frame (set in terms and images which, on a level, are conducive to “natural” or “philosophical” theological reasoning), Paul, without totally renouncing the Epicureans, comes closer to the “more pious” Stoics. His discourse somewhat “befriends” the Stoic mindset in the same stroke in which he departs from the Epicureans. This is secured by the following which is part and parcel of Paul’s discourse at the Areopagus. Firstly, in v. 25 Paul asserts that God is the source of all life, breath and everything. This is perfectly in accord with one of the central Stoic doctrines, that of the

104 Cf. Quintus Horatius Flaccus, *Ode 1:11*.

105 According to Epicurean belief, in contrast to mortals the souls of the gods (and they do have one as well) do not part company of the body, ever. Hence the gods are immortal, since they do not decompose: neither in terms of soul nor in terms of body; nor in terms of breakage of the bonding of the two, respectively. However, inconsistently, their souls and ethereal bodies are nevertheless composed of “finest” atoms as well. This has led some observers to conclude that Epicurean philosophical theology was in fact a cover for atheism; and more, that the gods were in fact nothing else but exemplars of how divine beings would look like and behave, ideally. In a word, some think their gods are ethical constructs: nothing more. Some scholars (e.g. Frederick Copleston) remind that Epicureans didn’t endorse the belief in gods exclusively in terms of pious affirmation of the pan-Hellenic ideal of undisturbed bliss (makarioteta, eudaimonia). Namely, as Epicureans seem to have believed, the universality of the belief in gods can be explained only by asserting the presupposition of their objective existence.

106 Cf. Frederick F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, 342 n. 87.

omnipresent life-giving agency of God¹⁰⁷: “he is not far from each one of us” (v. 27b). Secondly, in w. 22-31 the Apostle relays what he deems is the true knowledge of God. It is knowledge of such a god who, among other things, has made mankind from one (blood [v. 26]). Thereby this God has made humankind his *kin* (w. 28b-29a). This entails that God can be known through our intellect, inasmuch as the intellect is analogous to God who has “fathered” humankind¹⁰⁸ as his “offspring” by gift. As far as the Stoics may have understood, this is reasonably acceptable. According to their doctrine, the intellect (*nous*, *logos*) is part of the pan-cosmic divine intellect (*logos spermatikos*): where the latter, as was said earlier, is understood to be the spiritual essence of god *or* nature (*physis*), universally. Moreover, as Epictetus the Stoic suggests in his *Discourses*, philosophy maintains our intellect as “the governing part conformable to nature”^{109, 110}.
 Alongside, note, Paul’s word on God also affirms an all-pervasive purpose (*telos*) inherent in nature. It directs all beings to a final goal or destiny — that of uniting with the divine: “that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him” (v. 27a). This teleological dimension, i.e. reference to a directive principle of being, is concordant to Stoic belief in divine guidance of nature universally, albeit by providential “fate”.

What is more, Paul then reconnects to both groups of philosophers, again, by saying that “... we ought not to think that the Deity (to Theion) is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man” (v. 29). Epicurean and Stoic philosophers could not agree more

107 Let me add that v. 25 is especially interesting because, like a doublet, it unites one of the central Epicurean (v. 25a) and one of the central Stoic (v. 25b) doctrines.

108 The Stoics would have regarded this analogy in “consubstantial” terms. That is to say, they would have regarded the human intellect as a co-natural part of the divine intellect itself. Needless to say, from a Christian standpoint, this goes against the substantial difference between created (nature) of humanity and uncreated (nature) of divinity.

109 Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1:15.

110 There is a Platonic and Aristotelian streak to be observed in such a claim. This is tangential to Plato’s teaching on the intellect as the principle ruling both things divine and things human (*viz.* *ho pantōn hegemon nous*); it is also correspondent to Plato’s teaching on the rational capacity or “part” (*to logikon*) in man which rules over the main psychic capacities or “parts” of the soul (especially emotion-will [*thimi*] and appetite-desire [*epithimi*]): including self-rule (*autokratia*): this, in turn, regulates and produces the cardinal virtues (*wisdom, courage, temperance*: the unity of which is justice). The analogy of intellectual rule conformable to ones proper nature is expanded to incorporate the socio-political and cosmic scale. In respect to the latter Plato advises as follows: “And the way of tendance of every part by every man is one: namely, to supply each with its own congenial food and motion; and for the divine part (*theion syngeneis*) within us the congenial motions are the intellections and revolutions of the Universe. These each one of us should follow [...] making the part that thinks like unto the object of its thought (*to katanouomeno to katanououn exhomoiōsai*), in accordance with its original nature, and having achieved this likeness attain finally to that goal of life which is set before men by the gods...”; see: Plato, *Timaeus*, 90c-d, tr. R. G. Bury, vol. IX, LCL 234, HUP, Cambridge MA 1929. Quite platonistically, and regardless of his regular insistence on the psycho-physical unity of the human being, Aristotle states the following (which is commensurate to Stoic standpoints on this topic): “... that which is best and most pleasant for each creature is that which is proper to the nature of each; accordingly the life of the intellect is the best and the pleasantest life for man, inasmuch as the intellect (*nous*) more than anything else is man”: Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* (*Ἠθικῶν Νικομαχείων*), X:7:9 (1178a8) = Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. H. Rackham, vol. XIX, LCL 73, HUP, Cambridge MA 1926. Previously, the Stagirite speaks of “something divine within him (man)” which elevates man beyond human nature: “If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life” (*idem*, *op. cit.*, X:7:8 [1177b27-29]).

on that. Paul has still got their attention. More importantly, he still holds a share in their conditional approval, albeit more from the Stoic side. In this manner Paul maintains a common point of reference. He does succeed: despite the critical hints of the address, regardless of the tension implicit in this situation of actual comparison between parties, and in spite of the oncoming standoff (17:32). “Nor, more important still, does he do anything to attack Greek philosophy as a whole or its modes of thinking”, summarizes James Barr, and adds: “Nor does he try [...] to suggest the ultimate failure of Greek philosophy as a whole¹¹¹. [...] Paul’s speech is distinctly friendly to Greek thought and displays no polemic in principle against it. He moves unembarrassedly within its language, terms, and categories — just as other Jewish thinkers of Greek speech did”¹¹². The Stoics, presumably, agree on most that is hitherto uttered by Paul. But even they concur on the basis of the qualified and *conditional* congeniality of Paul’s utterances thus far with Graeco-Roman philosophical reason, nature and custom. This process of successive elevation, in and by the sermon given by St. Paul, is aptly described by Joseph A. Fitzmyer: “His starting point is Athenian piety, and he tries to raise them from such personal experience to sound theology”¹¹³. But, we must remember, this is a process of making *and* breaking common ground.

10. At this intersection, arguably, we could be tempted to conclude that Paul (and Luke viz. Lukan Paul) has done all he possibly could in order to attract the attention, good will and understanding of the gathered hearers. This would be a reasonable conclusion. But there is still more. Another type of contact-point is released by Paul. This type of contact-point needs to be taken into account as well. It sheds additional light on the underpinnings of the common ground that is being established in Athens. Expressly, without explicitly naming them, Paul’s utterances bear many allusions to classic Greek dramatists, poets and philosophers. These hints, too, serve to illustrate and back-up the truth-claims put forward by the apostle. They are embedded in a very condensed fashion. This invites an explication of their implicit contents.

10.1. Firstly, in v. 25 St. Paul alludes to the great Athenian tragic dramatist Euripides (ca. 484-406): “nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything (*prosdeomenos tinos*)”. Philological and theological scholarship successfully identified the connection of this verse with Euripides’ play *Herakles mainomenos*. “If god is truly god, he is flawless, lacking nothing” = “*deitai gar o theos, eiper esti orthos, oudenos*” (1.1346)¹¹⁴. As was said earlier, Eduard Norden took this opportunity to indicate towards St. Clement of Alexandria. Clement’s account is extremely important because, among other things, he exposes the affluence of the Hellenic background that Paul in fact releases to his listeners in Acts 17:2.5 et passim. The relevant passage is found in his *Stromateis*.. “Most instructively, therefore, says Paul in the Acts of the Apostles:

111 I propose we compare this with St. Clement’s remark: “For Paul too, in the Epistles, plainly does not disparage philosophy (*ou philosophian diaballon phainetai*)”; see: idem, *Stromateis*, VI:8 in: Migne, PG 9, 284 BC. Still, both Paul and Clement indicate to the teaching of Christ as higher than Greek philosophy, for it is the full truth.

112 James Barr, “Paul on the Areopagus”, in: idem, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1994, 33.

113 Josef A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 607.

114 This is the translation provided by R. E. Meagher (cf. idem, *The Essential Euripides: Dancing in Dark Times*, Bolchazy – Carducci Publishers Inc., Wauconda Ill. 2002, 77).

‘The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man; nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything’ (Acts 17:24-25 BL). And Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect¹¹⁵, says in this book of the *Republic*¹¹⁶, ‘that we ought to make neither temples nor images; for that no work is worthy of the gods’¹¹⁷. As we have seen, St. Clement connects St. Paul’s allusion to Euripides’ *Herakles* (MPG 9,112D) with “Plato” (MPG 9,113A). Now he does the same in regard to Zeno (MPG 9,113B). Following Wilamowitz again, Norden (viz. 17:25a) adds yet another philosopher into this line of thinkers: namely, the Sophist thinker Antiphon (480-411). The sentence cited arrives from Antiphon’s *Peri aletheias* where it is stated that god or divinity¹¹⁸: “(lit.) ... is bound-less and need-less (apeiros kai adeitos)”¹¹⁹. On the whole, such religious philosophical thinkers insist that the transcendence of god or deity cannot be reduced to material terms; nor can the riches or worldly glamour do it pious justice.

As well, we should here perceive the connection between the classic Greek notion of self-sufficient and self-contained nature of divinity or god, on one hand, and the Stoic ideal of autarkeia or self-sufficient calm which, ideally, is the product of attaining likeness to god (homoiosis theo¹²⁰) as much as this is possible to human beings. That is why the Stoics speak of themselves in categories which are used to describe their god: aprosdei, autarkes. Such insights are derived through pre-Platonic, Platonic¹²¹ and Aristotelian traditions. These traditions are subsequently

115 Let us note the term “sect” (haireseos) as used by St. Clement. It denotes the Stoics as a religious philosophical group standing substantially outside the Church. Since they expound a philosophy which is not “ours”, that is, not of “Christ” (cf. *Stromateis* [Στροματείς], IL2). Interestingly, the same grammatical form, lexeme, and its accordant meaning is found three times in the Bible. All three occurrences fall into the Book of Acts (Acts 15:5; 24:5; 28:22).

116 Clement is referring to Zeno’s lost work *Republic*. Only a meager number of references and extracts survive. It deals with constituting the ideal polity. This early work is influenced by the traditional Greek political particularism. Only later will Zeno develop his political views so as to embrace proper cosmopolitanism. This work is mentioned by many Graeco-Roman authors (Diogenes Laertius; Athenaeus; Philodemus; Plutarch); but also by the church father John Chrysostom (Joannis Chrysostomi, *In Matthaenum Homilia I*, 4 [Ομιλία Α εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον Ἐδαγγέλιον], in: Migne, PG 57, 48). Cf. Anton-Hermann Chroust, op. cit., 173 n. 1.

117 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, V: 11 II. 75-76, in: Migne, PG 9,113 B.

118 Herman Diels interpolates: “ho theos” (see: H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin ‘1903 = abbr. FDV); Norden interpolates: “die Gottheit” (see: idem, op. cit., 13-14).

119 Herman Diels, FDV, 553: Antiphon der Sophist = Antiphontos *Aletheias* AB, *Fr. Bio.*

120 On assimilating oneself to god (homoiosis theo) and likening oneself to one’s object of contemplation (exhomoioōsai), see: Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176a-b; idem, *Timaeus*, 90d. This in turn is analogous to Plato’s commendation of god-following (akolouthein) and god-alikening (tō men homoiō to homoion ontī metriō philon) where God is set as the measure of all things in the highest degree (pantōn hrimatōn metron an eiē malista): see: idem, *Nomoi* [Νόμοι], Τις (in: idem, *Laws I*, tr. R. G. Bury, vol. X LCL 187 [1926], HUP, Cambridge MA, 294); and it is similar to his appreciation of imitating god (mimoumenos; mimesthai): idem, *Phaedrus* (Φαιδρός), 252d, etc.

121 For example, Plato describes the perfection of the Kosmos as a reflection of God’s perfection: it is thus “self-sufficient and in need of nothing else” = “autarkes on ameionon esesthai mallon hē prosdees allōn”: cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 33d, 34b. Similarly states the Platonist Plutarch about divinity while discussing poverty: “God alone is absolutely free from wants” = “aprosdeis aplos ho theos”: Plutarch, *Aristides and Cato Major* (*Marcus Cato*), 4:2 in: idem, *Lives* (Βίοι Παράλληλοι = *Vitae parallelae*), vol. II, tr. B. Perrin LCL 47, HUP, Cambridge MA 1914, 355. As well, Plutarch refers to the Stoic Chrysippus: that is, to his treatise on gods (*Περὶ θεῶν* = *Peri theon* cf. SVF II), where Zeno’s successor, Chrysippus, argues that the deity Kosmos: “... alone is said to be self-sufficient, because it alone has in itself all things it stands in need of (autarkes d’ einai legetai monos ho kosmos dia to monos en auto pant’ echein on

received and developed by Philo of Alexandria¹²², St. Paul and the church fathers in general, e.g. Gregory of Nyssa¹²³.

Nothing less than all of that that, and more, lurks in verse 17:25 alone. It is very plausible that the philosophers, especially those of the Stoic group, extrapolated the implied meanings of this utterance as it reverberated at the Areopagus. The same was done by other listeners-readers of Acts 17, in contemporary times, and later in ecclesial history. At that point in the Areopagus drama the gathered philosophers must have regarded Paul more favourably than at the moment when they accosted him, earlier (viz. *epilabomenoi* 17:19). A line of speech, contextually and missiologically oriented in its basic intentionality, can hardly be more condensed and simultaneously semantically rich, as well as listener enticing, than is the case with Acts 17:25.

10.2. Secondly, a few verses later, in Acts 17:28, apostle Paul alludes to another group of illustrious Greek ancients: Epimenides of Crete¹²⁴ (7-6 C. BCE) — “in him we live” (note, he will cite this anti-Cretan context again, in his Epistle to Titus i:i2¹²⁵); Aratus of Soli¹²⁶ in Cilicia¹²⁷ (ca.

deitai)”: Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* (*Περί Στωϊκῶν ἐναντιωμάτων* = *De stoicorum repugnantis*), §39 in: idem, *Moralia* (*Ἠθικά*), XIII:72, io52d = Plutarch’s *Morals*, vol. IV, Boston 1878,467. Immediately after section §39 of his refutation of *Stoic Self-Contradictions*, note, Plutarch himself refers to the exact same line 1345-1346 from Euripides’ *Herakles* (*Hercules Furens*, 1345) so as to again underline the right notion concerning God: “... the conception of the gods contains in it felicity, blessedness, and self-perfection. Wherefore also Euripides is commended for saying: ‘For God, if truly God, does nothing want’”: cf. Plutarch, op. cit., §40, 467. Lastly, it is helpful here to recall again that Paul (incidentally, a contemporary of Plutarch [ca. 46–post-119]) uses the same lexical form, i.e. *autarkes*, in Philippians 4:11: “I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content (*autarkes*)”

122 The contemporary of St. Paul, Philo of Alexandria (ca. 25 BC-50 AD), writes as follows: “... a man should imitate (*mimēsthai*) God as much as may be and leave nothing undone that may promote such assimilation (*exhomoiosis*) as possible” (idem, *De Virtutibus*, 168 = LCL 341 [1939]; *De Specialibus Legibus*, IV73 = LCL 341 [1939]; *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesisim*, IV178 = LCL 401 [1935]) (the translation from Philo is given in: David Bradshaw, “The Vision of God in Philo of Alexandria”, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 [1998] 483-500).

123 For insight into the creative reception of this by the Cappadocian church fathers see: Hubert Merki, *Ὁμοίωσις θεῷ* (*Homoiosis theō*): von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa, Paulus Verlag, Freiburg/Schweiz 1952.

124 As stated in Epimenides’ *Cretika* (*Κρητικά*): “They fashioned a tomb for you, holy and high one, Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies. But you are not dead: you live and abide forever. For in you we live and move and have our being” For the history of reception of Epimenides’ line quoted by Paul, with a particular discussion of James R. Harris’s discovery of it (given in a series of articles in the *Expositor* 1906,1907,1912), see: J. Lawlor, “St. Paul’s Quotations from Epimenides”, *The Irish Church Quarterly* 9:35 (1916) 180-193.

125 As Clement writes: “... others, Epimenides the Cretan, whom Paul knew as a Greek prophet, whom he mentions in the Epistle to Titus, where he speaks thus: One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. And this witness is true’. You see how even to the prophets of the Greeks he attributes something of the truth...” See: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 1:14.

126 As stated by Aratus in his *Phaenomena* (*Φαινόμενα*): “Let us begin with Zeus, whom we mortals never leave unspoken. For every street, every market-place is full of Zeus. Even the sea and the harbour are foil of this deity. Everywhere everyone is indebted to Zeus. For we are indeed his offspring”. Let me here note what Riemer Faber states in his article “The Apostle and the Poet: Paul and Aratus”, *Clarion* 42:13 (1993) 291-305. Faber helpfully informs us that “Recently M. J. Edwards, ‘Quoting Aratus: Acts 17,28’, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83 (1992) 266-269, plausibly argued that Paul’s direct source was Aristobulus, a second century BC Jew who cites the opening lines of the *Phaenomena*”

127 Paul of Tarsus and Aratus of Soli share the same homeland: Cilicia.

315-245) and the Stoic Cleanthes of Assos¹²⁸ (331-231) — “we are his offspring” (with a strong – albeit post festum – parallel to Dio Chrysostom¹²⁹ [ca. 40-ixō AD] as well). Let us recall that the religiously and historically rich connotative parallels with ancient Greek poets, dramatists and thinkers (offered in v. 25 and v. 28) are mirrored in 1Corinthians as well. Namely, in 1Corinthians 15:33 Paul, again, makes an allusion to great Greek versifiers. This time Paul’s associative hook leads to the Athenian dramatist Menander’s¹³⁰ (ca. 342-292) play *Thais*. “Bad company ruins good morals (phtheirusin ethe chresta homiliai kakai)”.

10.3. This junction offers an opportunity to elaborate even further. It allows us to cognize more of the context of Paul’s Hellenistic learning, and inter-textually so. Such an expansion, I trust, is helpful for developing our hitherto collated presuppositions for understanding the reception and utilization of philosophy by our two apostles, especially Paul.

Firstly, let us leave aside the Book of Acts, for a moment. A brief excursion will allow us to note Paul’s masterful usage of the OT quotes¹³¹ on the basis of the Septuagint, i.e. the *Greek* translation of the Old Testament. This can be explained by the fact that Hellenistic culture

128 Paul’s erudition is impressive at this point. He knows well that Stoic philosophers-poets also expressed similar views. Notable among them is Cleanthes with his hymn to Zeus. (The longer version is preserved by Stobaeus [fl. 5 AD] in his *Eclogae* [*Ἐκλογαὶ φυσικοὶ καὶ ἠθικαὶ*], I:1:12 = cf. idem, *Eclogarum physicarum et ethicarum*, voi I:i, A. Meineke [ed.], B. G. Teubneri, i860). The phrase quoted by Paul comes from Aratus (likely via Aristobulus). The layer from Cleanthes comes through. It is likely that it reverberated in the ears of learned Stoics listening to Paul, or in the minds of those who had read the Acts of the Apostles later. Possibly, at that moment in time, they were less prone to call him a seed-pecker, i.e. a half-wit babblers (spermatologos; Acts 17:18). Here is the rendering of the opening strophes, given by Frederick C. Grant: “Most glorious of immortals, Zeus / The many named, almighty evermore, / Nature’s great Sovereign, ruling all by law / Hail to thee ! On thee ‘tis meet and right / That mortals everywhere should call. / From thee was our begettingours alone / Of all that live and move upon the earth / The lot to bear God’s likeness* / Thee will I ever chant, thy power praise!” See: Frederick C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1953,152-154.

129 It is difficult to here push aside Dio Chrysostom’s utterance in respect to the same matter. In his oration delivered before a large public at Olympia in 97 AD he offers a crystal clear paraphrase of the Stoic understanding of divine-human kinship: “Now concerning the nature of the gods in general, and especially that of the ruler of the universe, first and foremost an idea regarding him [...] common to the whole human race [] a conception that is inevitable and innate in every creature endowed with reason (to logiko), arising in the course of nature (gignomeni kata physin) *without** the aid of human teacher [...], has made its way, and it rendered manifest Gods kinship (syngeneian) with man and furnished many evidences of the truth...” See: idem, *Oratio* XII:27. Of course, the Christian and the gentile Hellenistic conceptions of divine-human kinship are dramatically different, respectively. More discussion on the matter in: K. Reinhardt, *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, XXII:i, Metzler, Stuttgart 1953, 812-813 (also cf. Martin Hengel, *The Son of God...*, 24 n.51).

130 As I Ve said, in the *Stromata* Clement of Alexandria confirms Epimenides as the author of Paul’s citation in Titus 1:12. He goes on to compare it with Paul’s citation of Menander in 1Corinthinas 15:33. Thus we read: “... (Paul) is not ashamed, when discoursing for the edification of some and the shaming of others, to make use of Greek poems. Accordingly to the Corinthians (for this is not the only instance), while discoursing on the resurrection of the dead, he makes use of a tragic Iambic line, when he said, ‘What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus ? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’ Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals’” See: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, I:14.

131 In Acts 17:16-30 alone one can identify seven OT references or parallels: Is 66:1;1Kings 8:27; Deut. 32:8; Is. 55:6; Ps. 50:9; Is. 40:18. (As well, I shall have much more to say on this OT dimension of the *Areopagitica* in the forthcoming study dedicated to Strategy level 2 — viz. revealed theology: that is, dedicated to the apologetic theological argument as a whole (ApoTA) and in regard to Acts 17:16-34 as a whole [NTA+ApoTA]).

permeated Palestine regions as well, notably Jerusalem.¹³² This culture was not reserved exclusively to Attica, Magna Graecia or Antioch etc. The influence of Hellenism even on conservative Judaism was unexpectedly all-pervasive. “During the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman eras”, states Etan Levine, “Jews encountering alternatives to their Bible-based traditions, rejected outright paganism yet manifested willingness to select and adapt foreign influences, even to shape uniquely Jewish institutions. [...] the Rabbinic Academy [...] itself bearing the features of the Greek philosophical Academy!”¹³³.¹³⁴ I hasten to add that one mustn’t overemphasize this. Regardless of their Hellenistic formatting (i.e. educational stages and import of some elements of learning), the Jewish schools remained different in terms of the essential content. “The aim of Jewish education was a religious one: the knowledge and practice of the Torah”¹³⁵. In any case, the point is this: Paul, the pupil not only of Tarsus but of Hillel’s Jerusalem as well, was exposed to all of this during a pre-eminently Hellenistic era. Even he could scarcely have resisted the influence of that which was elemental to the spiritual-cultural codes of the period. Gregory E. Sterling gives an important account: “His citizenship in a Greek city would have required not only a primary education, but passing the ephebia¹³⁶, and possibly advanced education¹³⁷ Since Tarsus was famous for philosophy (Strabo 14:5:13), especially for her Stoic philosophers (Dio Chrysostom 33:48¹³⁸ and

132 Daube proves this point beyond question: David Daube, “Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric”, *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1949) 239-264.

133 Étan Levine, *Marital Relations in Ancient Judaism* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 10), Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2009, 41. (On p. 41 n. 7 Levine shares the crucial literature concerning the relation between Hellenism and Judaism: next to Daube’s seminal study, he refers to other standard-setting works, i.e. those by Saul Lieberman, Victor Tcherikover, Jacob Neusner and Martin Hengel).

134 After the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD), the last of Hillel’s disciples, Johanan ben Zakkai, established an Academy at the Judean seaport of Jabneh (Gk. Iamnia), with the aid of the remnants of the school of Hillel and some Shammaites.

135 Everett Ferguson, “Society and Culture: Education”, in: idem, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids MI (*1987) ³roo3, uz.

136 Sterling refers to an ancient Athenian institution: that of a finishing school reserved for Greek aristocrat boys. These adolescent men would spend one year in the ephebeia, after celebrating their 18th birthday. It was designed to provide physical and cultural nurture: philosophy was taught as well as rhetoric. The ephebs could access the gymnasium library. In olden times it was designed to give military training. In the Hellenistic period, however, the military accent faded out. The ephebeia was primarily oriented to instil cultured awareness of one’s public and political duties, as a Greek, but, it was also a “strong Hellenizing force” vouchsafing a Hellenic identity (cf. H. I. Marrou: *A History of Education in Antiquity*, tr. G. Lamb, Wisconsin University Press, Madison 1956, 109-110). Coming closer to what is here discussed, it is important to note (courtesy to Everett Ferguson, “Society and Culture: Education” in: idem, op. cit., in n. 70) that Tcherikover and Fuks have documented the aspiration of Alexandrian Jews to enlist their children into the Hellenistic ephebeia (see: Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, Cambridge 1957, 1:38-39, 59, 61, 64, 75-76). This was the case with Jerusalem’s high priest Jason as well (H. I. Marrou, op. cit., no).

137 This suggests that Paul, having Graeco-Roman citizenship, could have gone further still, choosing between the three main options of higher education available at the time: philosophy, medicine, or law (cf. E. Ferguson, op. cit., in).

138 It is noteworthy that Dio Chrysostom appraises Tarsus in his *Oratio* XXXIII:48. As we have seen, it is he who speaks out on behalf of human “kinship” with God, emphatically, as does Paul (Acts 17:18). However, the two of them presuppose radically different conceptions of human kinship to God (one Stoic the other Judeo-Christian). Still, this is of lesser importance in this context where we reflect on the Hellenistic cultural background of both.

Lucian, *Octogenarius* 21), and Paul's letters betray acquaintance with philosophy, it is possible that he received some *advanced*' training in philosophy. [...]. It also suggests that Paul, like Philo of Alexandria, had the requisite training to create his own applications. While Philo's knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy is more profound than Paul's, the apostle has the more creative mind"¹³⁹.

Secondly, this time from a more general perspective, we should take the opportunity to mark Paul's dexterity in utilizing Hellenistic philosophical verbiage, categories, ideas and images. According to John D. Zizioulas, apostle Paul borrows with ease the concepts and phrases from Hellenistic literary and philosophical tradition: "(Paul's) familiarity in Hellenistic education and most of all his command of the Greek language give witness that he surely spent a large part of his youth in touch with Hellenistic education (elliniki paideia). [...]. In general, very few Jewish Hellenists, even those of whom we know that they acquired Hellenistic education (e.g. Philo or Josephus), can compare with Paul in gift and power with regard to Greek language"¹⁴⁰.

The following selection of only several of a multitude of examples may suffice. In Philippians the Apostle uses the term "arete" (virtue [Phil. 4:8¹⁴¹]). He does so with full awareness of the eminently Hellenic pre-history of the semantics and ethics attached to the term: not least, knowing well of its status in Stoic literature (which in turn leads back to Platonic-Aristotelian, and ultimately to Homeric aretology¹⁴²). In the same Epistle he refers to "autarkeia" (self-sufficient contentment [Phil. 4:11]): of which I spoke earlier viz. the Stoics and Epicureans, and viz. the nature (physis) of deity according to Euripides et alii. In 1Corinthians he cites an analogous term: "aperispastos" (without distraction [1Cor. 7:35]). He is aware of the term "to kalon" (beautiful) as synonymic for good (especially for good as virtue or as wisdom), and conversely (e.g. Rom. 7:18, 21; 2Cor. 13:7; Gal. 4:18, 6:9; 1Thess. 5:21). This indicates that he understands the notion of "kalokagathia" (kalos k'agatos), deeply rooted in Hellenic high culture and literature, especially that of Platonic¹⁴³ provenance. The same holds for his usage of

139 Gregory E. Sterling, op. cit., 341.

140 John Zizioulas, *Hellenism and Christianity. The Meeting of Two Worlds* = Ιωάννης Ζηζιούλας, "Ελληνισμός και χριστιανισμός: Ἡ συνάντηση τῶν δύο κόσμων", in: *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, τόμος Ζ', Εκδοτική Αθηνών, Αθήνα 1976, 534. Zizioulas also asserts that the *content** (periehomeno) of St. Paul's Areopagus speech, "according to contemporary interpretations", is to be regarded as the effect of St. Luke's "industrious re-working" of it (see: idem, op. cit., 533). He does not delve into discussing what exactly is implied by Luke's "significant" (poly) "reworking" of Paul's address in Athens.

141 This term has deuterocanonical OT parallels: notably, Wis. 4:1; 5:13; it is abundant in 4 Maccabees. The latter in particular is a deuterocanonical text which has served to prove the Hellenistic permeation of Jewish OT literature see: David A. de Silva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and commentary on the Greek text in Codex Sinaiticus*, Septuagint Commentary Series, Brill, Leiden 2006.

142 See: e.g. *Od.* II:205 ff, VII:50 ff; *Il.* I:235 ff, II:55 ff 245, 265, XI 790 ff. etc. These are instances where we find vivid Homeric references to "aretē" as excellence of chastity-faithfulness, courage, honour, strategy-making, speech-delivery, sense of shame, friendship.

143 Plato refers profusely to the idea of the beautiful and especially to beauty as an aspect of divine and human good (e.g. *Hippias major* [Ἰππίας μίζων], z87d). For an approximation of beauty and the good via the beneficiality of beauty (which causes something good), see: *Hipp. maj.*, 289e ff = LCL 167, vol. IV, HUP, 1916; *Symposion* (Συμπόσιον), 204b, zioa-znd = LCL 166, vol. III, HUP, 1915, etc. Incidentally, in the *Symposion* Plato makes explicit references to Homer and Hesiod (209d) in regard to beauty as the object of love (eros) which moves the poets to produce their works.

previously mentioned terms denoting conscience: “syneidesis” (Rom. 2:15) and nature: “physis” (1Cor. 11:14) as teachers of what is good. Still more, St. Paul can be seen using Greek philosophical schemata to offer his pupils, as much as himself, ontological, ethical and cosmological orientation points. For example: being vis-à-vis nonbeing (to eon/alétheia vs. me eontos/doxa¹⁴⁴): or, the sensory material realm vis-à-vis the spiritual intellectual realm (ta aesthēta vs. ta noēta¹⁴⁵): or, the famous three-part ordering of the human being: body, intelligent soul, spirit [soma, psyche {nous}, pneuma¹⁴⁶] (e.g. 1Thess. 5:13; Rom. 12:1-2; 1Cor. 2:14, 6:19, 15:44-46; Heb. 4:12 etc)¹⁴⁷. Lastly, the apostle to the gentiles, Paul, utilizes the methods of allegory and typology taken over from names (e.g. Gal. 4:24 [hatina estin allégoroumena]; 1Cor. 10:6 [tauta de typoi hemōn]; 10:11 [touta de typikōs]). These interpretative methods, allegory and typology, systematically observe how one thing is expressed yet another is actually intended. The interpreter (e.g. Paul in Gal. 4:24 or 1Cor. 10:11) supplies the deeper meaning to the literal meaning. He does so by viewing a certain phrase¹⁴⁸ as figure or type for something else (alio agoreuein). Both levels of meaning, literal and figurative, support each other respectively. These methods have a pre-eminently

144 Ultimately, this distinction is of Parmenidian origin. See: Parmenides, *Peri Physeos* (Περὶ φύσεως), in: H. Diels, FDV, Parmenides: *Ers.* B8:i9/Bi:Z9 and B8:iz/Bi:30.

145 The classical origin of the distinction between what is perceived by the senses (aesthēta), viz. the material, and that which is perceived by reason (tēs dianoias logismo), viz. the immaterial (noēta), is generally associated with Plato (although it appears as early as Parmenides’ treatise on nature [or, what is true being]). See: e.g. Plato, *Phaedo* (Φαίδων), 78d-79a. It will be imported by Aristotle (e.g. *De anima* [Περὶ Ψυχῆς], II:4i8a [regarding the discussion of sensory organs and sensory perception]) and transported by a long tradition, reaching Alexander G. Baumgarten who stabilized its modern meaning, especially reaffirming the oppositionary relation between the sensory and intellectual realms (see: idem, *Aesthetica*, I-II, Kleyb, Frankfurt am Oder 1750/1758).

146 The similarity between Paul’s three-part ordering of the human being and that of Plato is formal, not substantial. That is to say, in counter-distinction to Pauline anthropology, Plato is a dualist and his tripartite division of human faculties pertains to the soul: alongside, his conception of spirit has nothing in common with Paul’s biblical understanding of it. Nevertheless, it remains true that Greek thinkers provided the NT writers with terminological, schematic and conceptual tools for describing and analyzing the human being, as well as allowing them to insert new meaning into phrases which were culturally known (hence not extravagant) to the Graeco-Roman world. For Plato’s determinations of the human being, dichotomist and trichotomist, see: e.g. idem, *Phaedo*, 64c, 65d, 66a; idem, *Timaeus*, 30a-c.

147 St. Paul does come under the influence of Hellenic-Hellenistic schemata indicative of the three-part ordering of the human being. However, unless he is accentuating the contrast between spirit (Heb. ruach) and soul (Heb. nephesh), Paul keeps the biblical vision of the human being as a living integrated body-soul = psyche zosan (Gen. 2:7; 1Cor. 15:45): a being open to divine touch and inspiration in virtue of being an image of God: hence, possessive of a divinely gifted capacity for spiritualized life of the whole human being (“hagiasai hymas holoteleis kai holoklēron hymōn” 1Thess. 5:2.3). He is not a Hellenic dualist nor is he a Gnostic spiritualist. This remains the case even if in one instance (albeit only technically) a quasi-Gnostic concept (viz. life-giving spirit versus earthly vital soul) influences his way of talking about the soul-spirit divide, e.g. 1Cor. 2:14 where Paul attempts to criticize the naturalist-carnal human type (mere psychikos) in favour to the human type open to God in the spirit (pneumatikos): subsequently, he distinguishes between earthly body-soul (soma psychikon) and spiritual body-soul or man (soma pneumatikon) (1Cor 15:44-46).

148 In Galatians 4:24 these are the names of Abrahams wives Hagar and Sarah which are taken as figures or types signifying the two covenants (OT and NT) as well as those born within the realities of the two covenants respectively (viz. slavery and bondage [earthly Sion] and freedom and release [heavenly Sion]). Sometimes a distinction is made between type and allegory, where the former rests on a narrative held to be true and the later on one considered fictitious.

Hellenic origin. The application of these methods in Greek classical culture can be traced, for instance, from Pythagorean teaching methods to exegetical attempts to furnish the Homeric corpus, by allegorization¹⁴⁹, with an ethically and socio-politically impeccable meaning, acceptable within the world of values of ancient Greece.

11. We may now back-track to the *Areopagitica*. There we find yet another two instances of the art of contact-point making. These as well are closely connected to the special ways Lukan Paul is seen to be using ideas, phrases and terms, i.e. religious, theological and philosophical terminology. They, too, are inserted by the author of the *Areopagitica* in terms of non-arbitrary and purposeful usage of particular semantic meanings. What sets them aside as extraordinarily exemplary, however, is the astounding precision and effectiveness in respect to the recipient audience that they aim to entice.

11.1 Firstly, let us inspect the term “divinity” (v. 29). As we have seen, after dropping tactical hints about Euripides, Epimenides, Aratus and Cleanthes (v. 25 and v. 28), Paul is seen re-aligning himself to both groups of philosophers, in a specially delicate way, by adding in the next line that “... we ought not to think that the Deity (to Theion) is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man” (v. 29). The phrase to Theion occurs only once in the NT. Hence it is a hapax legomenon¹⁵⁰. It is a lexeme that belongs strictly to the deposit of Greek philosophical theology, and Paul (or Lukan Paul) knows it. What is more, at this point Paul is using the term not in connection to any particular god (theos) or to the multitude of gods (theoi). Rather, taking the article “to” in accusative neuter mode, coupled with the adjective noun “Theion” in accusative neuter mode as well, Paul indicates to God in the most general and thus inclusive sense: to that of divinity (to Theion). Thereby he in fact refers to the nature of divinity as such, in the purely abstract sense. This decision is of huge importance at this stage because it allows the apostle to dive beneath all ephemeral or substantial differences in the philosophical theologies presupposed by his Stoic and Epicurean listeners. Through the use of adequate terminology he is evoking, conceptually, what can be claimed of god universally: by everyone everywhere. Common ground is still being forged, and kept, at every step. Incidentally, it is not by chance that this term is analogous to the one that appears in Pauls natural theological opening of the Epistle to Romans. The same semantic connotation appears there as well: “... his invisible nature, namely, his eternal

149 Keeping in train with Homeric exegetical tradition, even the Cappadocian church father Basil the Great (330-379) teaches his class that the “nakedness” of Odysseus is in fact a sign (type, figure) denoting something else. Although capable of being cunning (but only when unavoidable), Odysseus is not duplicitous and has nothing to hide, for he is clad in virtue: “... all the poetry of Homer is a praise of virtue, and with him all that is not merely accessory tends to this end. There is a notable instance of this where Homer first made the princess reverence the leader of the Cephallenians, though he appeared naked, shipwrecked, and alone, and then made Odysseus as completely lack embarrassment, though seen naked and alone, since virtue served him as a garment” (see: *Od.* VI:135-210). (Interestingly, Plutarch, too, leaves a comment on this locus from Homer). Cf. Basil the Great, *Address to Young Men, on How They Might Derive Benefit from Greek Literature* (*Πρὸς τοὺς νέους, ὅπως ἂν ἐξ ἐλληνικῶν ὠφελοῦντο λόγων*) in: Migne, PG 31, 572-C.

150 This hapax legomenon does not appear in the Septuagint. See: Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 6, völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage, hrsg. von K. Aland u. B. Aland, Berlin – New York 1988, 719.

power and deity (to theiotēs), has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made...” (Rom. 1:20).

11.2 Secondly, we inspect the term “proof” (v. 31). A striking example of Paul’s (or Lukan Paul’s) deliberate usage of special terms in special ways is given in the utilization of the lexeme “pistis”: “of this he has given *assurance** (pistin paraschön) to all men by raising him from the dead” (v. 31)¹⁵¹. Let us observe that the biblical noun “pistis” generally signifies “faithfulness” to something or someone, or faithfulness from someone (e.g. Matt. 23:23; Gal. 5:22-23; Rom. 3:1-3; Tit. 2:9-10; 2Tim. 4:7). However, depending on context, the lexeme “pistin” can be distilled into two basic meanings: (a) promise (as in 1Tim. 5:11-12¹⁵²) and (b) assurance (as in Heb. 11:1). The latter sense is the one which Paul uses in the Areopagus address, intentionally. It may mean proof, sound logical and factual assurance. All these senses, together, allow the positing of reason-mediated “conviction” (elenchos). Pauls classical explanatory definition of faith in his Epistle to the Hebrews rests on such a meaning: “Now faith is the *assurance** (pistin) of things hoped for, the *conviction** (elenchos) of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1)¹⁵³. Faith is never intended to mean blind faith. Rather, it denotes trustworthy assurance (pistin) founded on concrete albeit special experiences which may be validated in principle, and integrated into logically meaningful as much as convincing (elenchos) statements. The point is this: the usage of the term “pistin” by Paul is entirely purposeful. Why? Well, alongside the lexical-philological meaning (that of offering proof= pistin paraschön pasin), which the philosophers must have understood immediately, there is the historical-literary tradition from which it emerges. Many preceding generations of Greek intellectuals have used the lexeme pistis(n) precisely in the latter sense: that of “a token offered as a guarantee of something promised, proof, pledge”¹⁵⁴ in order “to convince”. This comes out, for instance, when the Pyrrhonian Skeptic, Sextus Empiricus (ca. 160-210), states that Democritus (ca. 460-370) intended to “assign power of evidence (kratos tes pisteos) to the senses”¹⁵⁵. Such usage and meaning: again, that of offering *proof* = pistin paraschön pasin, is attested in the works of Graeco-Roman philosophers. Next to Democritus, we find it in Parmenides¹⁵⁶, and in Plato,

151 My analyses and understanding of the philosophical-theological and apologetic function of Paul’s (or Luke’s) usage of the concretum “pistin” (so as to draw the philosophers closer into hearing, listening and to facilitate understanding) have been enhanced by the study offered by: M. Vešović, Z. Ranković = M. Вешовић, З. Ранковић, „О једном значењу лексеме πίστις код Светог апостола Павла“ (“On One Meaning of the Lexeme πίστις in Saint Paul”) *Cmus = Stil* 10 (2.011) z06-2.11. As well I consult W. F. Arndt / F. W. Gingrich / F. W. Danker’s, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago – London ³2000 (based on: Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 6th ed.) = abbr. BDAG for references to the Graeco-Roman tradition of re-receiving the lexeme “pistis”

152 Where the context for pistis (faith) is the “braking of promise”: “...they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge” (pistin êthetêsan)” (1Tim. 5:1z).

153 Now compare this to the words of Cebes to Socrates, as they are voiced in Plato’s *Phaedo*, a dialogue dedicated to the destiny of the soul after death: “... there would be good reason for the blessed hope, Socrates, that what you say is true. But perhaps no little argument and proof (deitai kai pisteos) is required to show that when a man is dead the soul still exists and has any power and intelligence”; see: Plato, *Phaedo*, 70b.

154 See: BDAG 2000, 818.

155 Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VII13C̄ (Diels, FDV, *Fr.* B9: in this fragment Sextus relates affirmatively to the mentioned fragment given by Democritus, see in: Diels, FDV *Fr.* B125) =

156 Parmenides, *Fr.* B8:iz (also cf. Bt:30 viz. pistis alethes) (Diels, FDV, *Fr.* B8:iz: as early as in Parmenides we

Aristotle, Diogenes Laertius (born in the Roman province Cilicia [fl. 3 C. AD], the capital of which was Tarsus), including others¹⁵⁷. Let me underline that in the pre-Socratic period “pistis” is not an inferior form of knowledge as in Plato, *Rep.* VI 511^{e158}, but evidence, both in the subjective sense of confidence that one's belief is true and in the objective sense of reliable signs which justify such confidence¹⁵⁹. The sense of pistis(n) as evidence-procuring is preserved in classical historians as well, viz. Polybius (ca. 200-118)¹⁶⁰. Aside from the mentioned philosophers the same usage of the term is applied in the works of Hellenized Jews, notably Josephus Flavius (ca. 37-100) who draws on the aforesaid rich convention: the tradition in which Lukan Paul stands as well, and legitimately so¹⁶¹.

11.3 On the basis of preceding explorations of Paul's aptitude in Graeco-Roman high culture we can add another, sixth, contribution to the set of types of contact-points (viz. the purpose-serving common ground structure in Acts 17:22b-29 and in ths. *Areopagitica* generally, vv. 22-31). It issues forth from his above displayed erudite as much as masterful utilization of Hellenistic ideas, phrases and technical terms (religious, theological and philosophical). I will subsume this type of contact-points under the category of *paideia*. Paideia in general denotes the canon of classical Graeco-Roman education and upbringing: in letters, understanding, ethics, piety and proper social-political conduct. The type of contact-point subsumed under the category of “paideia” is closely related to the first two types listed earlier (viz. §1. Socratic figuring A and §2. Socratic figuring B): nonetheless, it is not identical with them. It is part and parcel with the five previously extracted types of contact-point.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the sixth important contact-point present in th *e. Areopagitica* narrative: §6. Paideia 1: context-oriented variations of Hellenistic ideas, phrases and terms.

11.4 The *Areopagitica* (vv. 24-29) contains another two types of contact-point: Firstly, it can be shown that these lines (no matter how “loose” they might seem) are not entirely arbitrary in the logical sense. To my mind, they comprise a series of intentionally compressed - “natural” – syllogisms where the missing premises can be supplied by the listener or reader: spontaneously or formally: for instance, in the latter case by validation through a process of proper logical reduction. (Some of the lines are not logically valid in the strict sense, but can be made so, upon explication of implicit form and after validation: vv. 24, 25, 26; some are logically valid in principle, but the suppressed premises need to be supplied and validated: vv. 27b, 28, 29).

find “pistis” utilized in the sense of “force of trust” or “strength of evidence”: pistios ischus).

157 Democritus, *Fr.* 125 (Diels, FDV, *Fr.* B125: in this fragment we are told that reason [phrēn] receives its proof [tas pisteis] from the senses); Plato, *Phaedo*, 70b (viz. deitai kai pisteos); Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1173a (viz. pistin ou panu pistotera); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitaephilosophorum*, X:85 (viz. pistin bebaion).

158 Still, in his dialogue *Phaedo* Plato allows Cebes to utilize the traditional sense of pistis as evidence, proof, assurance. Admittedly, Plato wrote his *Phaedo* during his early middle period, before the *Republic*.

159 Lawrence J. Trudeau (ed.), “Democritus”, *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, vol. 136, Gale Cengage, Detroit 2.01z, Z70.

160 Polybius, *Histories (Itrmpicu)*, II:5z:4 = idem, *The Histories*, vol. I (b. i-z), LCL 128, HUP, 2010.

161 Josephus Flavius, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, II:218 (viz. hypo tou Theoupistin); XV:26o (viz. pistin pareichen) = idem, *Jewish Antiquities, Volume I* (b. 1-3), Josephus vol. V., LCL 242, HUP, 1930.

Therefore, although the *Areopagitica* narrative is not laid out in terms of fully explicated formal sets of syllogistic propositions for necessary inference, the points of conclusive insight do come out of the actual conversation itself: as if gushing-forth from the listening interlocutor himself (who discovers that he has known this “all along”). What is more, the narrative is comprised mostly of truncated, condensed syllogisms where the audience (according to the given rhetorical situation) explicates the missing premise which is otherwise implicit. The rhetor assumes while inventing, the audience whilst understanding the argument¹⁶².

In a word, there is an enthymemic aspect to be observed. “The Enthymeme, according to Aristode, is the Syllogism of probable reasoning about practical affairs and matters of opinion, in contrast with the Syllogism of theoretical demonstration upon necessary grounds (viz. categorical syllogism BL). But, as now commonly treated, it is an argument with one of its elements omitted...”.¹⁶³ The enthymeme is an abbreviated syllogism. This is apologetically noteworthy for it entices the listener to respond himself and participate creatively. The enthymeme has another characteristic which makes it special and of considerable importance for the understanding of Lukan Paul s *Areopagitica*. On one hand, the enthymeme is part and parcel of standard formal logic. On the other hand, it is part and parcel of standard rhetoric. It is a rhetorical syllogism. As the great master of classical antiquity states: “... all orators produce belief by employing as proofs either examples (paradeigmata) or enthymemes (enthymemata) and nothing else...”.¹⁶⁴ This makes the enthymeme the ideal tool for anyone who wishes to argue convincingly in public, to wit, in any impromptu speech situation. Such was Paul’s situation. That is why it is no coincidence that we find the enthymeme in the NT generally, and in tht *Areopagitica* particularly, especially viz. Acts. 17:2.7b, 28, 29.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the seventh important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §7. Paideia 2: dialectic and compressed syllogisms (enthymemic aspect).

11.5 Secondly, as regards Paul’s Areopagus sermon (regardless of the issue of extent and quality of Luke’s redactorial-compositional interventions), the demonstrable (and consciously intentional) presence of rhetorical macro-formatting of the sermon is hard to ignore or refute. Viewed from the level of its “macrostructure”, Paul’s self-contained and complete Areopagus speech is clearly ordered so as to mirror the classical four-part model of rhetorical speech-making or speech delivery. That is to say, in due historical time, the Aristotelian rhetorical model (composed of 1. prothesis = narratio → propositio and 2. pistis = argumentatio → probatio) is expanded. Subsequently, it is developed and comprised of the following parts which in fact represent the classical Greco-Roman standard:

1. prooemium = exordium: introductory appeal

162 William Benoit, “On Aristode’s Example”, *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 20:4 (1987) 261-267.

163 Carveth Read, *Logic: Deductive and Inductive*, Grant Richards, London 1898, 115.

164 Aristotle, *Rhetoric (Τέχνη ῥητορική)*, I, 2:8-9 = Aristode, *Art of Rhetoric*, vol. XXII, LCL 193, HUP, Cambridge MA 1926. Aristotle’s understanding of rhetorical syllogisms, or enthymemes, enlists two types (over time another two types have evolved). I propose that in Paul’s sermon we can find at least one type of enthymeme: the syllogism with a missing premise that is supplied by the audience as an unstated assumption (i.e. as a sort of mental responsive approval). This goes hand in hand with the brevity of Acts 17:24-29.

2. *diegesis* = *narratio*: statement of the case
3. *pistis* = *argumentatio*: argument with proof
4. *epilogos* = *peroratio*: conclusion

Quintilian (35-post-96) will opt for a forensic speech five-part model (he adds the *refutatio* after *probatio*, i.e. after argument with proof). In comparison, viewed through the lenses of rhetoric-literary structuring, Lukan Paul's practice of *persuasion* (*pathos* = *persuasio*) conforms to the genre of deliberative speech (as is shown by Satterthwaite¹⁶⁵ and others). According to the procedures of secondary rhetoric, it follows the four-part rhetorical-oratorical model of prose composition. I'd like to stress that it aims to facilitate the thrust of the overall logic of *argumentation*.

1. *exordium* (introductory address [17:11 Paul captures the Athenian's interest through naming them as very pious or God-fearing]);
 2. *narratio* -> in some cases subdivided as *propositio* (this summarizes in thesis form the central thought of the *narratio*, i.e. the proposed theme of discussion [17:23b Paul proposes to discuss the nature and character of a god unknown to the Athenians whom he claims to know: in fact, they already worship the god whom Paul is proclaiming, however, they have no true and proper knowledge of this god]);
 3. *argumentatio* → in some cases subdivided as *probatio* (the positive proof of the proposed discussion theme through argued reasoning in steps: *divisio* [17:24-2.9 Paul will attempt to prove that God revealed in Jesus is this hitherto unknown god]); and
 4. *peroratio* (the concluding attempt to persuade the audience to decide on taking the right course of action and behaviour [17:30-31 Paul beseeches those gathered to repent and believe in Jesus]).
- The significance of the intertwining of dialectic and rhetoric in St. Paul's missionary engagement in general is well stated in the following reflection: "Far from being an artificial or merely literary exercise", underlines Helmut Koester, "Paul's use of persuasive rhetoric like the diatribe must reflect his practices as a missionary preacher and teacher"¹⁶⁶. He goes on to add: "Since Paul's letters were not private communications but instead were meant for public reading aloud in the assembled congregations [...], he naturally drew as needed on established techniques of persuasion in deliberative settings. Paul's use of the Cynic-Stoic diatribe style [...], especially in Romans, is an adaptation of rhetorical techniques used in the philosophical schools to draw out and rebut the potential objections of one's opponents or student (cf. Epictetus)"¹⁶⁷. Since at the time Paul's epistles, and Luke's Acts for that matter, are primarily aimed for public reading to converts or the faithful (and, therefore, only secondarily for private reading amongst individual confidants), the utilization of rhetoric is doubly necessitated. It is no accident that Philip E. Satterthwaite (drawing on Robert Morgenthaler's explorations on the connections of Luke's Acts and Quintilian's

165 Philip E. Satterthwaite, "Acts Against the Background of Classical Rhetoric" in: Bruce W. Winter, Andrew D. Clark (eds.), *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: vol.1 The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993, 337-379.

166 Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: vol. 2 History and Literature of Early Christianity*, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin ²2000, 73-74. (Interestingly, Koester also refers to Paul's speech in 1 Corinthians 15 as a paradigmatic instance of utilization of rhetorical convention. And, more interestingly still, he notes that this address, too, is about persuading a Hellenic audience in regard to a un-Hellenic notion viz. the resurrection from the dead [cf. 1Cor. 15:3-7, 8-11; cf. Acts 17:32]).

167 Helmut Koester, op. cit.

*Institutio Oratoria*¹⁶⁸) finds that “the literary techniques of Acts have been heavily influenced by classical rhetorical conventions”¹⁶⁹. Of course, these insights are not meant to exclusively cover what Luke may have known or what he may have done. They may be (and in fact should be) legitimately connected with the educational background of Paul as well, especially in proportion to the historical reliability of Acts in respect to Paul’s engagement in Athens. As Hans-Josef Klauck (relying on David A. deSilva) states, succinctly: “That Greco-Roman rhetoric was used in Diaspora Judaism is beyond doubt in light of the indisputable examples of 4 Maccabees¹⁷⁰ and Philo of Alexandria”¹⁷¹.

The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the eight important contact-points present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §8. Paideia 3: rhetoric and diatribe expositions (agoratic aspect).

- §1. Socratic figuring A: witness of truth (trial motive);
- §2. Socratic figuring B: messenger of truth (mobile debate motive);
- §3. Thinking for salvation life: primacy of practice (bios praktikos motive);
- §4. In the image of God: or, God-seeking and God-thinking;
- §5. In the image of reason: or, reflecting God in the mirror of nature;
- §6. Paideia 1: context-oriented variations of Hellenistic ideas, phrases and terms;
- §7. Paideia 2: dialectic and compressed syllogisms (enthymemic aspect);
- §8. Paideia 3: rhetoric and oratory expositions (agoratic aspect).

All of what was said so far, however, means not that Paul has nothing to say against Greek philosophy (for he does), nor should this mean that he is ubiquitously amicable towards pagan thought (for he is not). As was demonstrated, Paul’s utterances at the Areopagus, and the ways in which Luke lays them out, in fact, do carry aspects which can be seen as critical of Epicurean and Stoic philosophical precepts. Therefore, the point is actually this: At that preparatory stage of the “dialogue” about Jesus it would have been counterproductive to make a full scale assault against Greek philosophy as a whole, to disparage it, or, to take sides explicitly, say, in favour of the Stoics against the Epicureans. As minimum, Paul doesn’t try to divide or confuse the philosophers, “nor does he attack them”¹⁷². Concomitantly, the philosophical elite of Athens find themselves enticed to agree conditionally (Stoics) and disagree (Epicureans) conditionally with what the Apostle is expounding up till now (vv. 22-29). They keep pledging their implicit yet responsive Ayes and Noes, accordingly. Things are still moving along, albeit down lines of natural reasoning: finely attuned to the longing for God presupposed as inherent in mankind.

168 Robert Morgenthaler, *Lukas und Quintilian. Rhetorik als Erzählkunst*, Gotthelf, Zurich 1993.

169 Philip E. Satterthwaite, op. cit.

170 In support, Klauck refers to David A. deSilva’s study: idem, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and commentary on the Greek text in Codex Sinaiticus*, Septuagint Commentary Series, Brill, Leiden 2.006.

171 Klauck hastens to add that “... Paul and the authors of the Catholic Epistles lag somewhat behind this educational level. Yet this does not make recourse to classical rhetoric useless” See: Hans-Josef Klauck (Daniel P. Bailey ed.), “Epistolary and Rhetorical Theory”, in: idem, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis*, Baylor University Press, Waco Texas 2006, 226.

172 James Barr, op. cit., 3z.

* * *

All in all, here as elsewhere, according to St. Paul, prayer is not senseless, for it is permeated by understanding (*proseuxomai de kai tö noi*, 1Cor. 14:15), nor is faith blind, for it has an agile mind in Christ (*pistei nooumen*, Heb 11:3). Concurrently, both prayerful faith and understanding mind are wedded by grace through giving witness to God, in action (*viz. Acts*, *praxeön tön apostolön*). It is in acts of giving witness to God in Christ (especially amongst those without faith) that grace draws faith (prayer) and mind (understanding) into a dynamic of mutual indwelling. The drama narrated in the *Areopagitica* springs from, or leads to, the giving of witness to Christ: in spirit and in mind.

V. What can we learn: Philosophy in the service of mission — results and effects

12. We are now in a position to draw grounded conclusions with regard to what the role of philosophy is in the missionary venture of the apostles Paul and Luke, as reported in Acts 17:16-34. By extension, inasmuch as our reading of Acts 17 allows it, we may discern how and to what end is philosophy utilized, re-appropriated and re-conceptualized by the Church in apostolic times, with consequences reaching into post-apostolic times as well. What Paul says about philosophy elsewhere (as inter-textual analysis may clearly demonstrate) does not subvert¹⁷³, in principle, what has been gained in Athens through the Areopagus event. As regards the importance of philosophy as such, I present these results in the form of the following general theses:

(1) Philosophy is endorsed by St. Paul and St. Luke as a preparation (*ευαγγελική προπαρασκευή* = *preparatio evangelica*) for the reception of kerygma about Jesus as the Saviour of mankind in God. (2) Philosophy allows and facilitates the inculturation of kerygma, through contact-point making. It is thus utilized as a function of evangelization. (3) In the Greek-Roman world philosophy is the most adequate context for opening the dialogue about truth in Jesus. This local context (and it is local even within the imperial Greco-Roman setting, since there are other cultures and civilizations, too, in space and in time) doesn't detract from the fact that, structurally, philosophy represents a fundamental context for the projection of the evangelical message: and, thus, for theology as well. This is so because human nature, with its innate capacity of reason, naturally given, is universal to all human beings. Reasoned argumentation is not merely a good

173 Inter-textual NT evidence for Pauls reference to wisdom (*sophia*) and philosophy (*philosophia*) attained and propagated by men without the power of grace and-or divine wisdom as of Christ (1Cor. 1:2.4) leads to the following loci: *1 Corinthians 1*, 2, 3: wisdom of Christ and the wisdom of men — the wisdom of divine folly (1Cor. 1:18-30; 2:1-5; 3:18-23); *Romans*: power of Christ and the power of men — the strength of divine weakness (Rom 1:16;); 1:18-23); and *Colossians 1*, 2. light of Christ and the lights of men — the illumination of divine darkness (1:13-22; 2:1-9). Reflection on the ways Acts 17:16-34 relates to these NT loci (which clarify, deepen and additionally explain Pauls engagement in Athens) deserves a separate study. Let it suffice, then, to note briefly that in Col. 2:8 (“See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy [*dia tes philosophias*] and empty deceit (*kenes apates*), according to human tradition [*kata ten paradosin tön anthropon*]...”) St. Paul doesn't disqualify philosophy as such, nor does he target Greek philosophy per se. The context is given by the faithful living in Colossae near the Phrygian city of Laodicea in Asia Minor. At the time, in the vicinity of Collosae an admixture of Gnostic theosophy and idiosyncratic Judaic beliefs close to Essenism circulates. The Apostle warns against *these*, Judaic and-or Oriental, speculative brands of syncretic Gnostic doctrine: *not* against philosophy as the science (*episteme*) and art (*technè*) of thinking about being, truth, meaning, value, the good, and God, etc.

choice for advance in Athens, but remains so in every setting where human beings respond to reasoned meaning. (Of course, reasoning alone is not sufficient for attaining full faith: nevertheless, it remains necessary for a faith fully understood and thus held in an integral manner: "... I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the *mind** also (kai to noi)" 1Cor. 14:15). (4) For the said reasons, philosophy is utilized as a means for the universalization of kerygma and mission through discursive and conceptual points of general reference which address human reason and conscience (viz. cultural and conceptual contact-point making and common ground making). (5) Philosophy is promoted as a standing skill (techne) of critical reasoning, falsehood prevention and persuasive oration. Alongside, philosophy is not degraded as a mere ad extra instrument used for a particular goal. (6) Inasmuch as the Strategy level I of Acts 17 (viz. natural theology and philosophical theology: NTA) prepares and leads to, and is confirmed retroactively by Strategy level 2 (viz. revealed theology Apo-TA) — philosophy is re-conceived in the frame of Christian philosophy. In Acts 17:21-31 we observe this in its germinal phase, in nuce, but it is there already. This holds if we define Christian philosophy as the defence of the revealed truths of faith as plausible philosophical premises (open to argumentation, discourse, and method): which, in turn, find their place within a creatively open worldview which best orients the human being towards what is true, good and salvific. (7) Consequently, philosophy is not a matter of erudition only, as if it were a mere cultural ornament. For, it is one of the necessary modes by which the Church re-appropriates, critically, and opens-up, critically, what surrounds her in the non-ecclesial life-world. (8) For this reason, let me expand, philosophy is not (nor should it be) external to the curriculum of theological disciplines. To the contrary, in the formal and pragmatic sense, faith-friendly philosophy is organically internal to the Church. Generally speaking, philosophy offers the formal-methodological way in which faith and theology are grounded logically and clarified conceptually for the ecclesial life-word of the faithful (viz. Christian philosophical theology). (9) As paradigmatically demonstrated by Acts 17, the Christian embracement of philosophy as a missionary tool has its grounding in the apostolic Church and, consequentially, it has its grounding in the New Testament. In this way faith-friendly philosophy, utilized and re-functionalized by the apostles Paul and Luke themselves, participates in the "authoritative establishment of tradition by means of apostolic origin"¹⁷⁴. Christian philosophizing is a special tradition within apostolic Tradition, viz. parathéké or paradosis. (10) Philosophy is not only imported into the primordial Church. For, it is produced by the primordial Church as well. Acts 17 give assurance that philosophy (taken as the disciplined praxis of mindful reasoning) is able to mediate the kerygma in a proficient and efficient way. At the Areopagus we may observe the birth of "our" philosophy (kat' hernas philosophia). The exemplar of the *Areopagitica* is a lasting model of the way the Church may promote its kerygmatic message and, at the same time, remain wedded to disciplined critical reasoning. This is not a transient historical happening, diachronically, but a lasting dimension of the Church's capacity for mission, synchronically. That is to say, in every epoch

¹⁷⁴ Walter Schöpsdau, "Depositum fidei", in: Hans Dieter Betz (ed.), *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4, Mohr Siebeck, 1998-1007. Schöpsdau's phrase focuses the concept of depositum fidei in general. Here I use it to illustrate my claim that the apostolic usage of philosophy falls into the depositum fidei as well, and with deserved right.

philosophers open to faith (building philosophemes opened by faith) have the duty to re-actualize the *Areopagitica* exemplar in their own living contexts. The beginnings of the tradition of that are inaugurated by the early church father Clement of Alexandria (150-C.215):

"... we shall not err in alleging that all things necessary and profitable for life came to us from God, and that philosophy more especially was given to the Greeks, as a covenant (sic B.L.) peculiar to them — being, as it is, a stepping-stone to the philosophy which is according to Christ (he kata Christon philosophia)..."¹⁷⁵

13. Speaking in concrete terms, the lesson of the paradigmatic event described in Acts 17:22-31 has two basic dimensions. Firstly, by an ingenious utilization of philosophy, set in a faith-friendly mode, it offers a context oriented cross-cultural *model* of preaching the word (evangelization). In other words, it offers a model for *inculturation* of the power and meaning of the Gospel message: "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom. 10:17): provided preaching is attuned contextually. Secondly, it leaves instructive guidelines for creative *re-actualization* (re-application) in our own given situations, as we come to face a growingly apostatic world: a world which prides itself in freedoms, knowledge, scientific and technological advance, and power, yet in many ways remains Christless: "And how are they to hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). The mentioned model contains an exemplary *strategy* of preaching. We can articulate four elements of this strategy: (1) find common ground with non-believing others through careful observation and empathy informed by learning, (2) deconstruct what is false, (3) construct what is true, and finally (4) instruct by giving word and witness to God in Jesus Christ — crucified and resurrected, the first-born from the dead, whom one may reach in and through the *Church*, his living Body of which he is the living head (Col. 1:18-20). In a word: realign, deconstruct, construct, instruct. We can then conclude that Acts 17:22-31, being an exemplary model, teaches us that evangelization, if and when it is cross-cultural, needs to be contextually sensitive and recipient-oriented. If so, the Gospel will be inculturated as successfully as possible and missionary activity will thrive. Churches may thus be planted and ones already existent may proliferate. Interpreting the Gospel doesn't end with the understanding of what it meant in its original setting. Proper interpretation entails its contemporary re-application, in and by the same spirit.

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