Desiring, Departing and Dying

Affectively Speaking: *Epithymia* in Philippians 1:23

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Abstract

In a text that has caused no shortage of speculation and consternation, Paul links "desire" (*epithymia*) with "death" in writing of his "desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). While "desire" has mostly negative valences in Paul's letters, often linked to sexual craving, here it is linked to his broad fascination with death that is apparent in his frequent references not only to Christ's crucifixion but also more generally both to physical death and metaphorical death. Paul's contemplation of which is preferable, life or death, raises questions about how issues of social and existential meaning are affectively negotiated under the aspect of death, under what conditions one desires death, and what is the nature of desire itself. Thinking in this vein suggests an ecology of instincts vital to the affective valences of desiring death. This paper will explore these issues to show how Paul's own desire may be expressing both a passionate pull to his idea of Christ and a longing to escape that very passion.

Keywords

Paul; Desire; Death; Affect Theory; Philippians

"The anticipation of our own death tells us more about anticipation than it does about death."

(Phillips 2000, 110)

Introduction

I, (Richard), wrote a disaster of a paper a few years ago, which I presented at a conference and opened with the words, "Well, this was a failed experiment …" It was an attempt to understand an enigmatic, autobiographical clip in one of the letters written by Paul. Paul basically says, "I desire to die because then I can be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23), which some take to mean he is depressed and suicidal. Others, of course, say "saint" Paul can't be contemplating suicide. Overall, however, no one can really figure it out satisfactorily; at least there's no widespread agreement on an interpretation. I considered the paper a failure because I just couldn't do what I thought I could do in it. Paul talks about dying and I thought that the funerary inscriptions I'd been working on would help us understand the language he uses. To a degree they do, and I was able to make some good points (I think!) about memorialization along the way. But there was no strong "ah-ha" kind of moment in it, and the text remains difficult to contextualize.

In retrospect, and in conversation with some colleagues, including Sharday, I began to wonder whether part of the problem was the tools I was using: the

historical critical method and a decidedly textual approach. Eventually, this led Sharday and me to ask, what if we approach this particular text with a critical vocabulary of affect? And as we discussed this further, it occurred to us that, in this passage, Paul uses the Greek word *epithymia* ("desire"), which got us thinking that could be the way in. What happens if we look at the word "desire" (which at first blush seems connected to sexual "lust") through affect (that is, through forces that compel bodies beyond conscious reasoning and perhaps even beyond conscious experiences of particular emotions), and then look again at how it is deployed in this passage? It may be a new way into an old knotty problem (as in, a text that has been confounding people for almost 2000 years). At the very least, it has the potential to demonstrate how affect theory can be used in this sort of work.

It is increasingly common to see papers outside the core of affect theory (by those who are not so much theory-builders but see themselves as theory-users) employing sentences like, "The following paper approaches the study of <case X or issue X> using the lens of affect theory," but we suspect it reifies something that, by definition, cannot be pinned down, systematized, and deployed in a turn-key fashion. Of course, we hope the latter is not at all what we're doing here, and that's why we want to be careful about talking about affect theory as if it's more autonomous, established, and thing-like than it really is, and thereby playing a part in making it more plausible for newcomers to perceive it that way. We don't mean to invoke a "we liked this band before you ever heard of them and you'll never understand them the way we do" sort of attitude, but rather to point out that, say, the editors of the first *Affect Theory Reader* (Gregg and Seigworth 2010) and the seminal *Affective Turn* (Clough 2007) collections did not understand themselves to be consolidating a theory of affect, but rather finding a way to describe some works that were all attending to things that linguistic paradigm theory had marginalized—doing so under no common banner—and putting them in conversation.

In part, we are attempting what Maia Kotrosits describes as part of one of her own (2011) projects, "driving for a more deeply relational understanding of Paul's letters and a more complicated way to understand their emotionally turbulent tone" (2016, 14). "What," she asks, "if we *truly* read Paul as caught in the mess of his relationships?" (2016, 14). For instance, we might ask, does Paul's "desire" speak to his alienation from a variety of communities? It's not at all off the beaten path to interpret the passage in which Paul expresses his desire (Phil. 1:18b-26) in light of the social, political, economic, and legal dynamics of Paul's obligations to the Philippians, his relationship to the power (commanding the Roman guard) that has imprisoned him, or to the people proclaiming Christ outside his cell in order to draw more trouble down on his head. But one of the lines of analysis we follow later will explore, instead, an aesthetics of confinement and a politics of unfreedom, insofar as imprisonment nearly effaces the distinction between the public and private realms of life, cutting a person off from participation in the *polis* and cutting them off from themselves as well—from their autonomy, from their self-descriptive capacity—leaving them not *alone*, but tormented by the "world-receding" pain of loneliness (Dumm 2008, 32).

So, this essay is focused on finding out "how do things feel?" in addition to "what do they mean?" As Kotrosits notes, the affect theorist, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "wants to *expand* the way we think about what and how things might

mean in order to avoid 'reifying or mystifying' linguistic kinds of meaning" (Kotrosits 2016, 33, referencing Brinkema 2014, 6). And in the work of scholars like Donovan Schaefer, attending to how things feel is also about how knowledge conveyed by language feels to embodied readers and writers:

> When we think about a reader, we think about a sovereign, studious mind, a still body traveling outward to an abstract exterior, then returning for quiet, structured reflection. Instead, I want us to think of the reader as a body enthralled, a body possessed, an addict. (2018, 69)

Of course, a writer is always a reader of their own work, and so we might imagine Paul writing, confined, yet testing out how different formulations of escape feel—to imagine leaving his trapped flesh through the exit of death; to imagine in more abstract, more metaphorical terms, his "departure"; to imagine not resigning, but *choosing* to remain in the flesh. Surely, in addition to philological and other traditional exegetical resources, we need a way to dwell in this passage with language not as "the currency of power, but a *formation* within a broader, organic network of power coursing through bodies" (Schaefer 2018, 69).

It is important for us to make this point about meaning, knowledge, and language because "the 'affective turn' that has taken place in many fields since the mid-1990s is, in part, a corrective to the 'linguistic turn' that was preeminently associated with poststructuralist theories of language and textuality," and, "although it is not a corrective that is altogether oppositional," it can tend to sound that way—or at least tend to sound like a misfit with projects of textual interpretation (Koosed and Moore 2014, 382). But according to Koosed and Moore (ibid.), the affective turn rather "explores and enacts other strategies for resisting dualism, especially the mind/body split."

Part of this impetus is channelled through the streams that feed affect theory from psychoanalytic theory. This is the source of "perspectives rooted in psychological (Silvan Tomkins) and phenomenological traditions that focus not only on variation and transformation, but on sustained attachments—the firm shapes of experience that emerge out of embodied histories" (Schaefer 2015, 40).[1] As Sedgwick (2003) does in reading and reviving Tomkins—almost as if his work were an art object, not a corpus of scholarly writings subject to necessary revisions dictated by scientific study—we keep certain elements of psychoanalysis alive in this project, rather than assuming they have been superseded by affect theory in its use of them.

For finding sustained engagements with the concept of desire itself, this has certainly been necessary. As Theodore Jennings observes:

> Psychoanalysis may be viewed (following suggestions by Paul Ricoeur [1970] in *Freud and Philosophy*) as a hermeneutics, specifically as a hermeneutics of desire. It traces or tracks the imprint of desire first in the dream and then in a variety of behavioral symptoms (jokes, slips of the tongue, as well as bodily symptoms). This hermeneutics is, however, never simple since desire is constitutionally conflicted, divided, deflected, and

[1] This is as opposed to "theoretical approaches that emphasize difference as a field of infinite gradation. In these Deleuzian/Spinozistic models, affects are the molecular forces that coalesce to form soft structures—sand castles—always subject to erosion and mutation" (Schaefer 2015, 40).

> disguised. Thus desire is never only or primarily what it seems. It is constitutionally enigmatic. It is this that necessitates something like a science of desire, an analytics of desire. (2016, 195)

Although we do not propose here to undertake a full analysis of "desire"[2] we do want to explore a particular instance of "desire," or at least an expression of "desire," to test what its context might reveal about conflicts, deflections, and disguise. If "desire is never only or primarily what it seems" (Jennings 2016, 195), what is it when Paul expresses a desire to "be with Christ," which seemingly on its surface doesn't even make sense? Why has this phrase become a quotable quote, a catch-phrase of sorts among Christians—Western evangelical Christians, to be more precise[3]—even when they are *not* facing the traumatic situations of incarceration, with attendant psychological and physical pain, and a possible death sentence? And it becomes all the more important if it is the case, as Gordon Fee claims, that "the key to everything, both to this letter and to Paul's life as a whole, is to be found in this paragraph, even though it is a bit of an 'aside'" (1995, 150).

Textual Irritations and the Desire to Know More

That Paul had a "general fascination with death" (Droge 1988, 264, cf. 285) seems clear from his frequent references not only to Christ's death, but also more generally both to physical death and metaphorical death. Perhaps nowhere is it more personal for Paul, however, than in Phil. 1:20-4,[4] where he contemplates which is preferable, life or death:

> It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body (*sôma*), whether by life or by death (*thanatos*). For to me, living is Christ and dying (*to apothanein*) is gain. If I am to live in the flesh (*sarx*), that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire (*epithymia*) is to depart (*to analusai*) and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh (*sarx*) is more necessary for you.

O'Brien makes no understatement when he opens his commentary on Phil. 1:22 with the observation that, "at this point Paul's language becomes somewhat obscure, and the grammar of the passage reflects the conflict of feeling in his mind" (1991, 124; cf. Hawthorne 2004, 57). But it is not just v. 22; this entire passage is awkward both grammatically and logically—there is no question that Phil. 1:18b-26 presents a number of thorny exegetical questions.

In this section of the letter Paul sets out his own alternatives of life and death in a series of somewhat contrasting statements:

- to live is Christ;

[2] Nor are we looking at the ancient concept of *pathos* as part of rhetorical argumentation in Paul, at least not directly. This is a different study in its own right and worthy of attention but is not our focus here (cf. Olbricht 2001; Martin 2010, 107-13).

[3] A quick Google search uncovers a plethora of memes with some version of Phil. 1:23 emblazoned on it for inspiration or consolation.

[4] Here we focus on the core of a short section that begins at verse 18b with *alla kai* (see Nestle-Aland; O'Brien 1991, 108; Reumann 2008, 209). Although clearly related to what precedes through "rejoicing," Paul shifts from motives for proclamation to his own "salvation."

- to die is profit;
- to live in the flesh is fruit of labour;
- to depart and be with Christ is far better;
- to remain in the flesh is more urgent for their sake.

In the midst of the argument, Paul refuses to declare his preferred choice (v. 22), not because he wants to keep secret his decision but because the decision still seems not to have been made.[5] Nevertheless, just a few clauses later he can declare that he is persuaded of the urgency to remain alive, on the basis of the Philippians themselves (vv. 24-5).[6] This seems somewhat anticlimactic, however, compared to his earlier claim concerning the profitability of death. In the midst of it, Paul makes clear that his desire lies in departing in order to be "with Christ" (v. 23), which he emphasizes through the "heaping up of comparatives" (Vincent 1897, 29, on *pollô mallon kreisson*, which he characterizes as "strong emotion," 30).

There have been many attempts to understand this passage, although most exegetes concentrate their attention on one of three issues: where Paul imagines the non-corporeal aspect of a human (the "soul" or "spirit") will reside (spatially and/or temporally) prior to the return of Christ,[7] whether Paul desires to escape his earthly troubles,[8] and whether Paul is contemplating suicide[9] or not.[10] The merits of all three positions have been highlighted in the commentary literature, with no general agreement on which is to be preferred.

One piece of the puzzle that has received little attention, however, is Paul's use of *epithymia* in this text. It is a curious choice insofar as elsewhere, Paul's use of

[5] Either made by him or by a higher power, such as the imperial authorities or even God (as some commentators suggest) who has yet to reveal it to him.

[6] The nature of this urgency to remain for their sake is not entirely clear. It might, however, be linked to a concern to conclude his contractual obligations with the Philippians, however that relationship is construed; see Ascough (2018).

[7] E.g. Dailey (1990); O'Brien (1991, 132-7); Droge and Tabor (1992, 121, 123); Fee (1995, 145-50); Osiek (2000, 43-4); Peres (2003, 192, 259); Hawthorne (2004, 59-62); Reumann (2008, 239-40, 252-3); Sumney (2009, 24-5); Waters (2012, 299-301); Lamoreaux (2013, 109); Betz (2015, 19-46); cf. de Vogel (1977). Cf. 2 Cor. 5:8: "we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

[8] Paul's own hardships were many, as he recounts not only in Philippians (1:7, 13, 14, 17, 30; 2:27; 3:10; 4:11-12, 14) but also in other letters (1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 6:4-5; 11:24-9; Gal. 6:17). Palmer (1975) focuses on the idea that death is a release from the burdens of life, citing examples from various literary genres such as poetry, drama, and philosophy (also Beare 1959, 62-3; Hawthorne 2004, 56). He argues that while Paul "does not state explicitly *why* death is a gain," presuming the usual reason given by other Greco-Roman writers would suggest that Paul finds life to be a burden (Palmer 1975, 217, his emphasis; cf. Droge and Tabor 1992, 121-3; Vollenweider 1994; Jaquette 1996).

[9] Droge (1988) argues that Paul considers suicide, which he sees as desirable in a manner reminiscent of Socrates as presented both in Plato's *Phaedo* and interpreted by the Stoic Epictetus, and thus Paul's desire to die is an instance of the "noble death" tradition. See also Droge and Tabor (1992, 113-26); Clemons (1990, 70-1); Smit (2013). On whether Paul is contemplating suicide or has simply lost the will to live, the rather perfunctory (and accurate) conclusion of Ogereau captures it best: "We shall never know" (2014, 268 n. 117). Elsewhere Paul does intimate that voluntary death is an option, albeit not by his own hand: "if I hand over my body so that I may boast" (1 Cor. 13:3; alternatives texts have "be burned").

[10] E.g. Croy (2003) maintains that Paul uses the rhetorical move of "feigned perplexity" and has no intention of "choosing" death but presents the dilemma in order to highlight to the Philippians his work on their behalf (2003, 529). See also Betz (2015, 19-46); Gupta (2008, 255-6).

this word has a generally negative sense of "desiring something forbidden" (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker 1979, s.v.), often linked to sexual impropriety. In 1 Corinthians, for example, Paul points to the ancient Israelites whose rejection of God is exemplary "so that we might not desire (*epithymêtês*) evil as they did (*epithyme*)" (1 Cor. 10:6).[11] Here it is spiritual evil, or at least turning from their "baptism into Moses" and their spiritual food and drink (vv. 2-4). In 1 Thessalonians *epithymia* is used of the "Gentiles who do not know God" whose "lustful passion" (*pathei epithymias*) serves as a foil for the injunction that the Thessalonians keep their penises in their pants (1 Thess. 4:4-5; see Ascough 2003, 187-90). The connection between desire and sexuality appears also in Galatians, where "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (*epithymia*)" (5:24) and are enjoined through the Spirit not to "gratify the desires (*epithymia*) of the flesh. For what the flesh desires (*epithymeô*) is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit [desires] is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want (*thelô*)" (5:16-17).[12] *Epithymia* is invoked four times in Romans, in three instances reflecting sexual impropriety (1:24; 6:12; 13:14) and in the fourth used in citing the Torah's prohibition of "covetousness": "I would not have known what it is to covet (*epithymia*) if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet (*epithymeô*).' But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness (*epithymia*). Apart from the law sin lies dead" (7:7-8).[13]

The uses of *epithymia* in the Deutro-Pauline and Pastoral epistles continue in this vein, with references in Ephesians to the "desires (*epithymia*) of flesh" (2:3) and the old self corrupted and deluded "by its lusts" (*epithymia*, 4:22). In Colossians, *epithymia* is grouped with "fornication," "impurity," and "greed," and thus modified by "evil" (*epithymian kakên*, 3:5). The wish to be rich is identified in 1 Timothy as entrapment to "many senseless and harmful desires" (*epithymia*, 6:9), while the writer of 2 Timothy links *epithymia* to "youthful passions" (2:22), the suasion of "silly women" (3:6), and teaching to please the masses (4:3). In Titus, *epithymia* is used twice, once as "worldly passions" in contrast to godly living (2:12), and later alongside "pleasures" that enslave (3:3).

Only two instances in the Pauline literature can be cited for a positive use of *epithymia*, once of Paul's longing to see the Thessalonians in person (2:17), and the other in 1 Timothy of the desire of the "noble task" of aspiring to the office of "bishop" (3:1). These two instances, however, become, in the commentary literature, the justification for understanding the appearance of *epithymia* in Phil. 1:23 in a positive sense. For example, despite noting the many instances in which *epithymia* is used "in a bad sense to denote a desire for something forbidden," O'Brien (1991, 129) cites two positive instances in which it has positive connotations—in this case 1 Thess. 2:17 and Luke 22:15—in order to conclude that here it must have a positive connotation, "signifying a particular strong desire on the part of the apostle," a "longing" that is earnest and continuous (see also Fee

[11] Although not translated in the New Revised Standard Version (quoted here), the word ἐπιθυμέω appears in the Greek text.
[12] *Thelô*, like *boulomai*, is used "of consent rather than desire" (Liddell, Scott, and Jones 1940, s.v.).
[13] Sharday's reaction to this text, from someone viewing it with new eyes: "Then maybe just do away with the law? Seems easy enough! (i.e. WTF does this mean?)." Richard's response: "Yeah, we're not going down that road!"

1995, 148 n. 41). Nevertheless, O'Brien is rather vague what this might be, and in fact nuances such as "strong," "earnest," and "continuous" are not in themselves positive connotations but could well be used for the so-called "bad" desires. Fee weighs in on the side of O'Brien: "To make it [*epithymia*] pejorative here (as Bonnard and Collange do) is to allow predominant usage … dictate over context, which is methodologically suspect" (1995, 148 n. 41). But no less suspect is ignoring the predominance of the pejorative sense for a more palatable sense (theologically), which has marks of special pleading. At the very least, an attempt must be made to see what might happen if the word is taken in its so-called "pejorative" sense. That is, does the context here in Philippians—not just grammatically but in terms of Paul's setting—allow for the pejorative sense? Or, perhaps better put, what happens to the interpretation when we allow that *epithymia* might in some way be used "pejoratively?" What affect is revealed?

Bonnard and Collange themselves are not much help in this regard. Despite recognizing that *epithymia* is used here in the "bad sense," they leave it vague as to what that might mean for understanding the text (Collange 1979, 64; Bonnard 1950, 30). Silva notes that Paul's language in this passage reflects "traditional concepts in the ancient world" (2005, 73 n. 7, referencing Vollenweider 1994), which seem to be negative and bear sexual overtones (as we shall see). But the implications for this position are left under-explored, which is all the more surprising since Paul switches from *sōma* to *sarx* partway through the text, since *sarx* is often linked to *epithymia* with sexual valences. To his credit, Silva draws attention to the awkward syntax of v. 22, noting that the style itself reflects Paul's emotional state:

> The apostle here is not making an objective, detached theological statement, nor does he treat us to a sustained contrast between life and death for its mere stylistic impact. Rather, Paul is laying bare his soul and frankly admitting a certain embarrassment: he acknowledges feeling a tension—a trying, and perhaps almost unbearable, tension—between personal desire (τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων, *tên epithymian echon*, v. 23) and Christian duty (ἀναγκαιότερον, *anankaioteron*, v. 24). 'I am in straits [συνέχομαι, *synechomai*],' says Paul (v. 23). The verb *synechomai*, when used of personal feelings, indicates at the very least the idea of constraint (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14), and at worst that of torment … Although we cannot simply import the meaning of these references into Philippians, we surely miss the real import of this passage if we fail to see in it an echo of Paul's psychological ideal. (2005, 73)

Here, Silva almost invites some sort of psychological profiling of Paul, which not only are we unwilling to undertake, but view as rather challenging (if not impossible) and ultimately unhelpful. Instead, we try to lay our hands on the resources of affect theory and ask, what does it mean to desire death when Paul writes of his "desire to depart and be with Christ" (1:23)?[14]

[14] We take here the interchangeability of *analyô* and *thanatos*, although that in itself is a curious shift in Paul's language. Liddel, Scott, and Jones 1940 includes "die" as one possible meaning, citing Phil. 1:23 along with *Inscriptions Graeae* XIV 1794 and Diogenes Oenoandensis 2 (II CE). We could only find two other uses of *analy-* associated with *epithymia* through to the second century CE, only one of which is relevant here (the other being Philo, *Who is the Heir?* 226). The *Sententiae* 19 of Secundus of Athens (II CE) when he asks, "what is death?" (Τί ἐστι θάνατος;) and includes among the answers, "eternal slumber, release from the body, desire waning, departure of spirit, fear of the rich, desire of the poor, release of cares, escape from and loss of life, father of slumber, true appointed time."

In theoretical approaches in line with the Freudian concept of the "death drive," death and desire are linked in no less complex ways; the self-destructive instinct is twinned with an erotic, creative instinct (the "pleasure principle" in Freudian terms) that steers the organism on a path as full of self-contradiction and negation as of the pursuit of its interests and its preservation. It was our recognition of this—that is, the flash of remembering this concept in light of the question of Paul's death desire—that suggested the alternative line of analysis. The drives of psychoanalysis led us into certain theorizations of affect that build on the psychoanalytic work of Silvan Tomkins, such as the writings of Eve Sedgwick. From there, we were drawn into the literature developing on affect in religious studies, notably in the work of Donovan Schaefer. Since Paul's word choice is "desire," and "desire" and "drives" are intimately connected, as we shall elaborate, in certain theorizations of affect, these are the ones we let infuse our re-encounter with Phil. 1:20-4. Again, to be clear, we are not about to elaborate an analysis of this passage using the notion of the "death drive," either to undertake a theological reading of Paul or a psychoanalytic reading (cf. the project of Axton 2015);[15] rather we take as a heuristic this concept that began sounding resonances between Phil. 1:20-4 and theoretical orientations toward the sort of desiring body that troubles it.[16]

There are two places we could begin. One is starting with "drives" and asking what they are in relation to "pleasure," with which "drive" is sometimes used interchangeably in psychoanalytic literature.[17] This line of analysis would also lead to questioning what drives are in relation to "affects" (as in specific emotions), since drives and affects are sometimes compared and co-theorized. The consideration of affects, plural, then also raises the question of what drives are in relation to "affect" in the singular as in a force that circulates around and through bodies; a not-yet differentiated "intensity" registered by bodies on a visceral level.[18] Another starting

(*Aiônios hypnos, analysis sômatos, talaipôrountôn epithymia, pneumatos apostasis, plousiôn phobos, penêtôn epithymia, [ana]lysis melôn, phygê kai apoktêsis biou hypnou patêr, alêthinê prothesmia …)*.

[15] Nor are we suggesting that in antiquity there was a "death drive" as it is construed in modern psychoanalytic terms, although ἐπιθυμία and θάνατος are sometimes linked, particularly around times of despair or grief that might be analyzed that way. For example, Plutarch narrates the mass suicide of virgins at Miletos, which he attributes to a "desire for death" (*epithymia thanatou*; *Mulierum virtutes* 11). And the writer of Revelation imagines that during the time of the fifth trumpet tribulations "people will seek death (*zêtêsothsin thanaton*) but will not find it; they will long to die (*epithymêsothsin apothanein*), but death will flee from them" (9:6). Cassius Dio relates that Julia Domna, mourning the murder of her son Caracalla (despite her dislike of him), was able to put aside her "desire for death" (τοῦ θανάτου ἐπιθυμίαν) in order to plot her own ascendency to the throne (*Roman History* 79.23). Examples such as these, however, do not illuminate the dynamics of Paul's situation very much; e.g., Paul is not part of a mass phenomenon, nor is he necessarily *incapable* of death, nor is he in mourning for the death of a loved one, or even the death of Jesus for that matter, since he presents the latter in a rather triumphalist manner in the Phil. 2:5-11.

[16] Cf. Seigworth and Gregg (2010, 4) describe an affective approach as "highly particular encounters with bodies, affects, worlds" to which Koosed and Moore add "texts" (2014, 387).

[17] For example, Doris McIlwain writes, "While drives *and* affects figure strongly in Tomkins' theory, the affective revolution in psychology, which has been gaining momentum since the 1980s, has excluded drives … In psychoanalysis, the body's multiple, highly individual pleasures have been progressively excluded in the move(s) from a classical Freudian paradigm to object relations theory, self psychology and intersubjectivism" (2007, 530-1).

[18] These two lines of questioning also triangulate a third question on the relationship of desire to pleasure, and seem to take pleasure into a different register than either affect/desire/drive or affects/emotions. We leave that for another day!

place is with "desire" and asking if desire is "an affect," "affect," "a drive," or something else. We will take the latter approach, but we will begin by exploring the meaning of "desire" as it was understood in Paul's context.

A quick search of *epithym-* in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) returned 19,084 hits covering 4,244 pages of text. Clearly, this is a well-used word in antiquity and we will search in vain for any singular "parallel" that will shed light on Paul's use of it with respect to "departing" to be with Christ. At its root, *epithymia* has a sense of "welling up" or overtaking, which seems to be the predominant sense that has carried through its usage (Büchsel 1966, 167-72). According to Büchsel, the pre-Socratic use invokes impulses towards physical needs such as food and sex, although not necessarily in a negative way. But from the time of Plato, and particularly through the Stoics, the substantive and the verb take on a distinctly negative sense, particularly in terms of its lack of grounding in rational thought.[19] We see this, for example, in Aristotle, who delineated "desire" as one of the seven motivations for all human action (*Rhetoric* 1.10.8, Lobe Classical Library [=LCL]). In and of itself, "desire" is not negative as it is a "longing for the pleasant," a desire for things "which are due to our being convinced … that they are pleasant" (*Rhetoric* 1.11.5, LCL). More problematic are the desires that are "irrational":

> … that are not the result of any assumption. Such are all those which are called natural; for instance, those which come into existence through the body - such as the desire of food, thirst, hunger, the desire of such and such food in particular; the desires connected with taste, sexual pleasures, in a word, with touch, smell, hearing, and sight. (ibid.)

It is these irrational desires that are troubling, and thus Aristotle characterizes *epithymia* as one of only two negative motivations among the seven he lists:

> Now a wish (*boulêsis*) is a [rational] longing for good, for no one wishes for anything unless he thinks it is good; irrational longings are anger and desire (*epithymia*). Thus, all the actions of men must necessarily be referred to seven causes: chance (*tuchê*), nature, compulsion, habit, reason, anger, and desire (*epithymia*). (*Rhetoric* 1.10.8, LCL)

The other five motivations are either under the positive control of a person (habit, reason) or come from outside forces (chance, nature, compulsion).[20] There is, it

[19] For Plato, it is the soul that can "make present the thing to be desired and thereby arouse the *epithumia*" (Foucault 1985, 43, citing Plato, *Philebus* 44f). Foucault captures well the prevailing sense of *epithymia*: "In the experience of *aphrodisia* … act, desire, and pleasure formed an ensemble whose elements were distinguishable certainly, but closely bound to one another … Nature intended … the performance of the act be associated with a pleasure, and it was this pleasure that gave rise to *epithumia*, to desire, in a movement that was naturally directed toward what 'gives pleasure,' according to a principle that Aristotle cites: desire is always 'desire for the agreeable thing'" (Foucault 1985, 43, citing Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* 660b). Hyland (1968) argues that in Plato there is a distinction between *erôs*, *philia*, and *epithymia* in which the latter term lacks any sense of rationality. While Cummins (1981) takes issue with many of Hyland's readings, he does not dispute the central thesis that *epithymia* is not, for Plato, grounded in rationality. Büchsel summarizes, "In Greek philosophy ἐπιθυμία is the waywardness of man [sic] in conflict with his rationality" (1966, 169).

[20] Aristotle lists compulsion specifically and separately from desire. This makes sense because if there was any desire associated with compulsions, it would be incidental, not essential to the concept of compulsion itself. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that there's a compulsive tinge to desire, which can have an element of "I can't help it" / "I do it" or "I want to do it" even if I shouldn't

seems, a negative intensity that accompanies irrational "desire" because it cannot be properly understood, in contrast to the rationality of emotions. Such desires do not require suppression but rather "control" (*sôphrosynê*; Foucault 1985, 69, citing Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 3.11.1119a).

Epicurus "offers a classification of desires into three types: some are natural, others are empty; and natural desires are of two sorts, those that are necessary and those that are merely natural" (Konstan 2018, cf. Cooper 1999). Natural desires are of a pleasurable sort, such as food and drink or health, while empty desires look for that which can never be satisfied, such as immortality (often accompanied by fear of death), or wealth and fame, which can never be secure.

The rather negative, non-rational use of *epithymia* appears in the Septuagint, where its predominant use is towards impulsiveness and passion for that which has been prohibited, and thus it must be controlled.[21] This need for control likewise appears in discussions of "emotion" in the writings of the Roman period. For example, Cicero, referencing Zeno, warns against loss of control around emotion (*pathos*), which he sees rooted in "a rebellion in the mind as a whole against right reason" (*Tusculan Disputations* 4.22, trans. Graver 2002; cf. Konstan 2017, 46). For Cicero, the emotions, including desire (which in Cicero is "libido," and thus sexual arousal akin to how *epithymia* came to be used in the Greek tradition), are voluntary and can be controlled with discipline. Not to do so is "shameful" if allowed to go to the extreme:

> For although every emotion is burdensome and hardly different from insanity, still it is the case that when people experience fear, gladness, or desire [libido], we call them merely "moved" or "disturbed;" but those who have surrendered themselves to distress we call "wretched," "afflicted," "suffering," or "ruined." (*Tusculan Disputations* 4.8, trans. Graver 2002)

Cicero rightly classifies "desire" as a "good," that is future-oriented, but quickly retreats to insist that the potential for it to become "aroused too vigorously" and lead to "unbridled longing" (connected primarily to anger and hatred; *Tusculan Disputations* 4.12, 21) means that it must be controlled, with discipline. Yet once it is tamed, it seems to us, it is no longer "desire." Cicero has moved away from the epistemological quality of "desire" insofar as desire cannot be controlled, cannot be satisfied, because its object cannot be precisely defined (cf. Phillips 2012, 143).

It is important, then, to distinguish "desire"—which involves want in terms of both lack and some kind of libidinal casting out, if not exactly cathexis—from plain old "want" (*thelô*; *boulomai*). In fact, if we think of this readiness to invest libidinal energy even as cathexis-like, it usefully suggests the constitutive paradox of desire: if cathexis means originally "to hold, to possess," then nesting close in

(Sloan, c. 2000), or even if another part of me *doesn't* want to do it. The latter might map onto Paul's discussion in Romans 7, particularly where Paul claims that it was through Torah that "sin" of desire (ἐπιθυμία) to have what is possessed by another is made known (7:6-7), as we noted above. And yet of the compulsion to do what is forbidden, Paul uses *thelô*.

[21] This is not to suggest that ἐπιθυμία is not used in contexts in which it is either neutral on the moral implications of that which is sought (e.g., "hunger"), or in which there is something morally good desired, such as "freedom" (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker 1979, s.v., and in fact, it is in this latter category that Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker 1979 cites Phil 1:23). Nevertheless, the negative sense does prevail throughout.

"desire" with the idea of "want," as in "to lack" or "be short of something essential," it evokes trying to close your fingers around something intangible. There is no "desire without privation, without the want of the thing desired and without a certain amount of suffering mixed in" (Foucault 1985, 43). There is no desire that coexists with "getting it" (cf. Phillips 2012, 58).

Not unlike Paul, for many writers in the first and second century CE, the irrational, uncontrolled sense of "desire," however, has a predominant link with sexuality. For example, for Galen, writing in the second century CE, desire—"a marvelous, inexpressible (*arrhêton*) desire"—originates in the soul with a longing to use the sexual organs, that are designed not only for procreation but also for pleasure (Foucault 1985, 106). As Foucault summarizes, "Galen repeats the traditional image, by which one spoke metaphorically of the uncontrolled vehemence of desire" (Foucault 1985, 106, also referencing Plato, *On the Laws* 6.782e-783a).

As we delved into this brief history of the use of "desire," our intuition was that desire is not an emotion/affect, and our testing seems to bear that out. This history includes several suggestions that desire is not best thought of as *an* affect, on the model of theorists who treat "affects" and "emotions" as synonymous. In the Greek and Roman literary tradition, both before and after Paul, the concept of "desire" has a decidedly non-rational basis, unlike the emotions which require thinking and judgment in order to be understood (Konstan 2017, 39). Desire has a constitutively ambiguous epistemological status. But even as theories of emotion like Cicero's begin to treat emotions as less rational than they had been treated before, desire still distinguishes itself as being essentially "future oriented" in a way that "the emotions" are not, or not necessarily. Indeed, linked as does Galen with the act of sex and the outcome of pleasure, desire evokes not just the being moved of e*motion* or moving along of *path*os, but the tinge of compulsion that puts the "drive" in the later term, "sex drive." It is not as though emotion never designates something hard to name and hard to trace, but perhaps desires are necessarily significantly *more* this way than emotions are, just as they are more a cause than an outcome, more a process than a state.[22] In other words, as far as signalling a difference from emotion/affect, it is not that emotions/affects cannot be opaque, resistant to interpretation, protean. But in some sense, desire is *necessarily* vague in a way that does not seem logically entailed by an emotion like "disgust," which might indeed be all too well defined. As Phillips says, "knowing what you don't want doesn't mean you know what you do want" (2012, 115).

Neither does the way "desire" appears in contemporary lay psychology or affect theory discourses suggest that it belongs on or functions like elements of any normative lists of the "basic" emotions or their mixed, nuanced, derivative forms. "Desire" is not among the (at most) nine affects Tomkins recognizes in his four-volume *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (1962–1992), nor is it normally used as these are (as in "I'm happy" or "she's disgusted," to characterize a state or a mood which

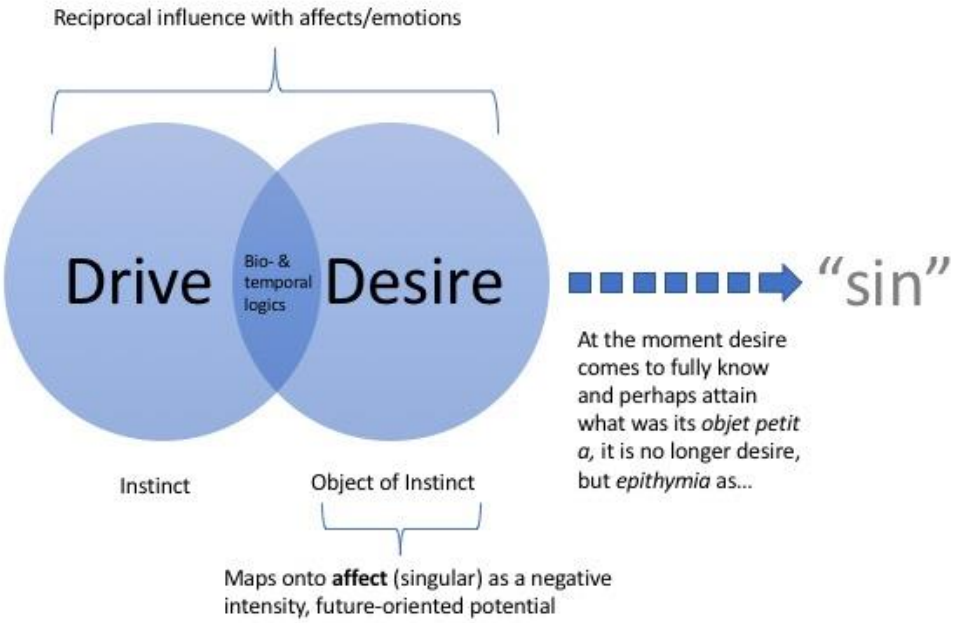
[22] According to Sanders, "Many psychologists have noted that it often makes more sense to speak of an emotional episode or scenario, than an emotion *per se*" (2012, 157). This would likewise be the case for "desire." Such episodes are both psychological and physiological and include the context in which it takes place and the subsequent reactions to it. It is not the case that desire is processual and emotions are not, but we think that desire is, in essence, a process that is future-oriented in a way that emotions are not, at least not necessarily; that is, desire is different from emotions this way in extent rather than kind.

would organize behaviour in a specific context) or as specifications of the concept "drive" (as in "death drive" or those drives associated with the "pleasure principle," like "sex drive," or the drive to sleep, eat, etc.). It could be said that desire is a way of relating to emotions/affects, not an emotion/affect itself.[23] The transitive tendency of "desire" suggests as much, in that it is possible to say "I am sad" or "I am happy," but not "I am desire."[24] Desire resists being fit into the one-word capsule of an emotion. We are thinking here of how cognitive-behavioural therapists, who aim to alter how a client feels by altering the feedback between perception, behaviour, and emotion, help their clients distinguish between thoughts and emotions with the heuristic that if you can't describe it in just one word, it's probably not an emotion. Again, it is not that emotions don't open onto questions about where they came from and at what they're directed, but even if the answer to "what do you feel?" is "desire," the invocation of desire seems almost chained to the three dots of an ellipsis trailing off (…), prompting the attempt to chase down the desire even as it marks an aporia about how to do it. Despite the fact that it is a losing battle to specify desire's object completely, the conventions of the grammar of desire nonetheless bait you to say, "I desire" *something*, or yet more awkwardly, "I am desirous" of something. Desire, even in the substantive, seems to never fully lose the in-the-midst temporality of its verb form.

But that still left us unclear about to what degree, or whether, desire is aligned or coextensive with the concept of "drive," "affect," or something else. It was certainly not our intention to reconcile or define the relationship of "affects" to "affect," but since the problem of desire in Paul's words to the Philippians is affect*ive*, yet not a reckoning with a *particular* emotion/affect, we found ourselves having to think about the relation of affects to affect at the same time as thinking about the relation of desire to affect. The relation of affect to affects partially maps onto the distinction between affect, in the Deleuzian sub-phenomenological tradition, and affects, as synonymous (or similar?) to emotions in the tradition that comes through Tomkins via Sedgwick and then scholars like Sara Ahmed (and, now, in religious studies, Donovan Schaefer). The latter lineage, however, does use "affect" as a non-count noun to mean something that "animates every aspect of embodied life" *with reference to* how things feel (Schaefer 2018, 70), in ways that often break down along conventional lines between emotional and physical feeling. It also attends to how things feel, as it were, synaesthetically. That is, it recognizes the fact that there is no mental phenomenon of emotion without the bodily phenomenon of sensation or the physical dimension of cognition, nor all manner of other-than-consciously-aware activity that it takes to be a body. And this lineage is inspired by Tomkins, who is indebted to Freud, who saw "basic affects," along with "drives," as "intentional engines" or "'subpersonal knowers … apprehending features of the world that we bump into as well as features of our psychic reality" (McIlwain 2007, 530). But if drives are "'knowers' in that they are somatically anchored sources of policy with regard to aspects of reality relevant to their satisfaction" (ibid.), then even if they can be frustrated, the fact that they can be satisfied offsets the perimeter

[23] Cf. Deonna and Teroni (2012, 34): "desires should be detached from the emotions but nevertheless understood as being essential ingredients in an explanation of why emotions occur … emotions should be analyzed as representations of desire satisfaction or frustration."
[24] Just as, of course, it would be odd to say "I sad" or "I happy," as you would say "I desire," because "sad" and "happy" are adjectives and "desire" is both a verb and a noun.

of their domain from that of desire in the Venn diagram of things. And in fact, we have made a Venn diagram of these things:



As Sedgwick notes:

> The object of affects such as anger, enjoyment, excitement, or shame is not proper to the affects in the same way that air is the object proper to respiration.… Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects. Thus, one can be excited by anger, disgusted by shame, or surprised by joy. (2003, 19)

If it is possible to feel emotions/affects about other emotions/affects, then perhaps "desire" does function a lot like "affect" in that insofar as it is possible to *desire an emotion or an affect,* the desire is the "'surge' running through us" (Schaefer 2018, 70, quoting Kathleen Stewart on the keyword "surge"), a "strange pulse" ("strange" as in not entirely endogenous, a little alien), a "force compelling" (71) us to affect, just as we are affected. It is in this sense that it strikes us as a drive. When we concentrated on the word "desire" taking on the object "death," we could not get the concept of "death *drive*" out of our minds—even though "drives have been deleted" from the "affective revolution in psychology that has been gaining momentum since the 1980s" (McIlwain 2007, 530). Not necessarily so, however, for affect theory.

In retrieving the work of Silvan Tomkins, Sedgwick explores his analytical practice of the layering of analog and digital models to achieve finitely many specific, and "qualitatively different possibilities, than [the] on/off" of binary models, such as in the way that a drive like sexuality is linked "to attention, to motivation, or indeed to action … only through co-assembly with an affect system" (McIlwain 2007, 504). So, affects and drives co-assemble. One can be bored or excited with sex, disgusted or delighted with food, depending on the circumstance.

We see desire as drive-like in that way. There is a temporal and also a bio-logic common to desire and to drive in ways that distinguish them from emotions/affects. [25] Each is a way of relating to emotion/affects, not emotion/affects itself. With drives, there is a patternistic propulsion forward in time (eating on a diurnal pattern, cycles of sexual receptiveness, sleeping on a nocturnal pattern, etc.); with desire, there is the tinge of compulsion, with links to bodily appetites, but also a speculation about what things *would be like if the desire were satisfied*, a question kept perpetually unsettled, prevented from achieving closure without turning desire into something unrecognizable as desire, something of which desire could only ever be envious. So neither is "desire" coextensive with "drive." But if we see it as drive-like in these certain ways and if we also see it aligned with affect inasmuch as it is a field of intensity that has some autonomy apart from particular affects/emotions, then we think it stands to conceive of desire as a co-assembly of drive and *affect*. We have come to understand desire, then ("understand" being an overstatement), as a field of critical intensity marked by instinctual temporal and bio-logics—critical as in ever tipping, at least potentially, toward the negative, risky, consuming valences of *epithymia*, and intense insofar as its very definition seems to preclude lukewarmth.

How then might this help us understand Paul's deployment of *epithymia* to the Philippians? If desire is what we say it is, what does it mean for Paul to feel it and to express it with respect to his own death? We contend that it suggests a viewing of his wanting to hurry up his own death with a kind of appetitive urgency that conserves the bodily sense of *epithymia*, given its connotations of bodily-craving, but does not restrict us to reconciling Paul's use exactly with any sense of lust or covetousness. Crucially, moreover, it transforms this (i.e. Paul's) use of death into something *inextricable* from desire.

Paul is longing to be with someone who, although once "in human form," now exists only in his beyond-human form. The immensity of the gulf Paul is staring across is something like what André Alexis has the god Hermes describe in his novel *Fifteen Dogs*, in reflecting on the human condition:

> A divide existed between them, one that the god could not breach, despite his power, knowledge and subtlety: death. On one side, the immortals. On the other, these beings. He could no more understand what it was to live with death than they could what it was to exist without it … Death was in every fibre of these creatures. It was hidden in their languages and at the root of their civilizations. You could hear it in their sounds they made and see it in the way they moved. It darkened their pleasures and lightened their despair. (2015, 170)

[25] To reiterate a hedge already made above, it is not that emotions/affects don't have movement; they do. Sara Ahmed says she picked "emotion" rather than affect/s as "her word" because it has the concept of movement (motion) in its etymology (in Ahmed and Schmitz 2014). Nor do we mean to ignore that emotions have a biological basis. Of course they do; they are evolved and they have neural and other physiological correlates that we can point to. And their evolutionary biology is, of course, related to the way they propel us to do things. The genetic material that codes for structures that enable the bodily capacity to generate and experience what we call emotions is selected for or persists epigenetically to the extent that they produce adaptive behaviours (albeit, not without a socially constructed dimension, cf. Theodoropoulou 2012, 434, 436; Konstan 2015). Again, the difference is not in kind but in extent.

Contrary to the commentators who saw Paul as suicidal, this relational struggle to be with someone for whom the very rules of being are incommensurable suggests that even acts of self-destruction may be aimed at self-transcendence and communion with another. This is what Volker Woltersdorff (2012) calls "self-shattering" as a way of naming a kind of pleasure taken in the "nonsuicidal dissolution of the subject" (Bersani et al. 2010, 174). "Self-shattering" goes beyond the individualist frame of the death drive, but it preserves this frame, and also the sense of tension between the eros of *epithymia* (its lustful connotations) and its dimension of *thanatos* (its negativity), by recognizing that a splitting of the self "was constitutive of our identity as sexual beings … [and] is present in the terrifying but also exhilarating instability of human subjectivity" (ibid.). What the concept of "self-shattering" emphasizes, as Woltersdorff underscores, is that *it is in relationship where the fractures appear* and in which assemblages of shattered selves survive their being undone (2012, 148). For Paul in Philippians, the cracks are appearing along the lines of his incarceration, his fraught relationships with various groups of Christ adherents (e.g. Phil. 1:15-18; 3:2, 18), and in his relationship with Christ, where his expectations about their reunion in this life are growing tenuous.

We might think of the tenor here as one of loneliness, if, as Thomas Dumm argues, loneliness is the consequence "when the reach of ourselves to others becomes so fragmented and confused that we find ourselves arrested, or halted, or otherwise blocked from contact with them and from ourselves" (2008 28). "In a political sense," he says, "loneliness may be thought of as a sign, perhaps the most important sign, of the ghostly presence of an almost effaced distinction between the public and private realms of life" (Dumm 2010, 29)—a condition nowhere more socially poignant than in imprisonment. Unlike the scenarios treated by Woltersdorff (2012) and by Bersani et al. (2010) in relation to masochistic self-shattering (namely ones of sexuality), there is no chance in the moment of Paul's writing Philippians of "overcoming self-destruction and integrating into society" with a "dialectic of recognition" between Paul and anyone who would care to do the intimate work of reassembly with him. [26] What Paul seeks in life is not possible in life. So, in fact for this reason, the death drive retains its utility for us here. It may help to understand how Paul's desiring death might be a way of overcoming the effacement of self- and world identity caused by the dissolution of his relational ties. Desiring death in this sense is neither about rejecting life nor seeking life after death, so much as it is "a death story that uniquely illuminates the life story; indeed, that makes it intelligible" (Phillips 2000, 13-14). The details of this story give particularity to the sense in which death is the "organizing principle" of his life—indeed, everyone's life on the model of the Freudian death drive (ibid.).

[26] Mediated communication is not a panacea for loneliness. As Rapske notes, "The association of prison with general debility and sickness is strong in the literature," often resulting illness and death, the latter sometimes through suicide (1994, 220). This seems to be the case whether or not prisoners can avail themselves of epistolary contact with the outside world. That Paul writes a letter to the Philippians does not overcome this distance for him, since, as he notes in Philippians itself, he continues to "long" for them (*epipotheô*, 1:8; *epipothêtos*, 4:10). As Mosurinjohn (2016) has argued, while written correspondence can manifest the desire to transcend psycho-physical isolation through low-level co-presence, it can nonetheless paradoxically (re)produce forms of disaffect, too, including boredom, anxiety, and anaesthetics. Thus, the loneliness is still likely to have been palpable to Paul.

Phillips clarifies: "People are not, Freud seems to be saying, the saboteurs of their own lives, acting against their own best interests; they are simply dying in their own fashion (to describe someone as self-destructive is to assume a knowledge of what is good for them, an omniscient knowledge of the 'real' logic of their lives)" (2000, 81, cf. 77). In imagining his own death as something desirable, Paul is thus not "checking-out" but rather choosing how, or at least why, he will die. It is an act of will, an assertion against the desires of oppressors—both the formal legal cohort and the informal opponents of his views (Phil. 1:12)—that allows Paul to claim for himself autonomy in what may lie before him. His death is not meaningless, at least not to him, as he imputes it with meaning both teleologically (he will be "with" Christ) and instrumentally (he dies "like" Christ Jesus; cf. Phil. 2:6-11). Yet, while he remains alive, for Paul "Christ" is the "objet petit a" (in Lacanian terms)—the "desire" that is unobtainable, out of reach, at least in this life; satisfaction cannot be found except in death (but then this is the moment when desire stops).

The transformation of the threat of death into a willingness to die deprives the empire of any force of the threat of death, says Jennings (2016, 200). Certainly, in the Roman imperial world much of life was overshadowed by what Benny Liew has deemed a "death anxiety" (2016, 139), with the attendant fears of lack of proper burial (among other things). It is within this context, and the broader context of Roman imperial violence, that we can position Paul, who desires his death while situated in a context that is itself indicative of that very imperial violence—he is incarcerated at the hands of the "praetorian guard" (Phil. 1:13). And there were not only "spectacles of death," as Liew points out, but also "death as spectacle" (2016, 142, citing Edwards 2007, 20-1, 46-77, 131). We see this latter in particular in the memorializations of tombs that lined the main roads leading to and from cities. One could not escape encountering death in some form. In fact, Paul brings it to the full attention of the Philippians in chapter 2, citing a slightly modified version of a hymn with which it seems they were familiar, adding to it the particularly gruesome invocation of "death on a cross" (2:8) as the mechanism by which the human Jesus was killed. Spectacle of death indeed!

Thus, Paul makes "a move from victimage to agency" that makes death a "destiny," and gives it purpose as "life-giving" (Jennings 2016, 200). Certainly, this is what it becomes for Paul. He imagines his death is no mere ending, but a beginning, or at least a transformation. Removed from incarceration and threat and restriction, he will "live," being with the risen Christ. It is much preferable, he says, than even staying among those to whom he is writing, even though they have brought him much "joy" (Phil. 1:4; 4:1).

Paul's post-mortem expectations are of the Jewish apocalyptic type (at the time), which is to say, life in the hereafter. But Christ is the key change agent. It will be a physical resurrection but in the form of a metamorphosed body. Don't ask Paul how; he calls it a "mystery" (1 Cor. 15:51). But Christ will return in glory to pick up the bodies—both the dead ones made alive again and those still living. At least that's how Paul's earlier letters conceive it. But by the time he gets to writing Philippians, Paul seems to have run out of steam. He no longer seems to imagine he will live to see Christ's return; he seems to be imagining his own death instead. Incarcerated, he speaks of his "joy" for the Philippians, yet his tone in our passage seems

dampened.[27] And if it is the case, as Dumm argues, that "because loneliness is an experience of disappearance, it is embedded in existential paradoxes concerning the meaning of life as a death-bound experience" (2008, 35) and "loneliness is a lens through which we may read the world around us as a failure" (36), then maybe as Christ fails to return and as Paul languishes in prison, he grows lonely and this loneliness is an existential condition that transforms his orientation toward death.

The condition of loneliness is "leavened with the realization that we are *always* living at the end of the world"—perhaps this is the meaning of the final words in the quotation above from *Fifteen Dogs*, that death "lightened [mortals'] despair" (Alexis 2015, 170). Dumm says:

> Our possibilities are defined as much by such endings as by beginnings. So even as there is a quality of living death connected to the terminal experience of loneliness, at the same time we are also presented with the gift, ongoing, of evidence for our continued existence, a potential for living available to us at every moment. (2008, 48)

Paul finds this in Christ. Expressions of post-mortem reunification with the subject of one's love are rare in antiquity. Funerary epigraphy, at least, tends towards the less hopeful, with emphasis of memorialization of deeds and character or mourning over loss. Paul's desire is more urgent even than longing for reunification, however, as he would hurry along the coming of his own death. His desire to be with Christ is more immediate, seemingly impatient for the necessary cessation of his this-worldly life.

Whereas elsewhere *epithymia* implies something bodily and sinful, considering the uncertainties in the commentary on what it actually indicates, here it is not so redolent of sin. If it is not sin here, it is not because Paul uses it of himself (as if somehow "saint" Paul is free of the vicissitudes of lust). Rather, it is not sin because its object is ultimately unknowable; it is because of Paul's wanting something in the future whose contours are unknown. Paul seems no longer to have a clear vision of what death or reunion with Christ would look like. And thus, in claiming that his "desire is to depart and be with Christ," *epithymia* for Paul (and indeed potentially elsewhere) does not have to be tracked to one or another of its wishful or lustful, positive or negative valences. As the psychoanalytic tradition has demonstrated, and much as Sedgwick said of affects attaching to all manner of things including other affects, it is possible for erotic energies to attach to nonsexual objects. We might recognize in Paul, then, a passionate pull both to his idea of Christ and to the fact that longing for death might be a way of getting out of this passionate longing.

Conclusion

It does seem that in some respects Paul's desire was satisfied insofar as he wanted to die (he did) and be with Christ. Ontologically, we doubt the latter, but culturally Paul entered into the realm of Christ, remaining alive to Christ adherents through

[27] Paul makes numerous references to joy and rejoicing in Philippians, so much so that it gets characterized as his most "joyful" letter, yet this seems to us to be tempered by his reference, almost in passing, that had Epaphroditus died it would have been yet another "sorrow" that would be heaped upon others he has experienced (*hina mê lypên epi lypên schô*, 2:27). It seems that all is not so joyful after all.

his letters and through his presumed presence as "saint" Paul. As Jennings says, there is a death that "won't stay put": "The dead who will not stay dead and so enter into the register of the undead (as Žižek suggested) or become the haunting presence/absence of the living dead" (2016, 199; cf. on Žižek, Sigurdson 2013, esp. 374-5). To push the metaphor, in this case it was through being "haunted"—as in "troubled," "worried," "disturbed," etc.—by this text that we confronted the affective dimensions of Paul's words. We want to conclude on the value of having done so.

Angelos Chaniotis and Pierre Ducrey opine that given the proliferation of studies on emotion in antiquity, "The question, therefore, clearly cannot be whether ancient historians and classicists should approach emotions but with what questions they should do so" (2013, 10). However, in the ensuing list of possible questions and approaches, nowhere do they entertain the possibilities of affect theory.[28] We hope here to have conveyed how *attending to how things feel* changes our engagement with texts; this way of engaging changes what these texts (and other phenomena) yield. For example, we had not previously noted the intimacy of the passage, what the Philippians might have thought in getting this "TMI" sort of personal missive as part of the letter; the etymology of particular words (e.g. the difference between wish and want and desire); and also, the specific conceptual issue that it pointed to, which was about the nature of desire and its relationship to these other affective concepts with family resemblances.

Like the art of the Greco-Roman period, texts are not devoid of emotional expression, and thus what Mylonopoulos observes for art is true of texts: "emotions are always present in Greek art, and only the degree of their visibility varies" (2017, 83). And so, in examining Paul's words, we are probing what the emotions are that are present in text—in this case a biblical text, although that does not make it particular or special—and that it is only the degree of visibility that needs to be ascertained. This is, of course, easier said than done. As Theodoropoulou notes, "Emotion cannot be investigated 'naked', because language always mediates between it and the researcher—and every language makes its own proper intersection in the spectrum of the emotional experience" (2012, 434). But it is not even just a matter of cloaking emotion in language. Emotion is bound up in layers of hues and textures and tones, "tied to what we often describe as the 'feeling' of life" (Grossberg 1992, 80). Again, we make a contrast with a claim of Chaniotis: that "we do not study Greek texts and works of art in order to understand emotions. We study emotions in order to be able to understand fully the texts and works of art that Greek culture produced" (2017, 16). Rather, studying the affective dimensions of Philippians has informed our understanding of the text and our understanding of our own affects, not only with respect to the text (but that too) but also more broadly, as in causing us to realize the lack of variety of perspectives on desire. The value of this yield is in diversifying the ecosystem of interpretation by supplementing historical and linguistic approaches, and also encouraging us to encounter texts more like actors in networks or ecologies of material, conceptual, animate, and inanimate kinds of beings and processes. That is to say, the value doesn't just lie

[28] This is not to suggest that their project is somehow deficient, but simply that affect theories bring a new dimension to the ongoing conversation, and our paper in particular aligns with the work being done by classicists such as Chaniotis, Ducrey, and David Konstan.

within the passage itself by animating sensation, emotion, and embodiment in Philippians; for us, at least, the process of conducting our revised experiment has been also an act of priming the exegetical imagination to attend to all kinds of things that it might not otherwise.

Indeed, it was in thinking about affect and emotion that it struck us that the usual approach of social scientific studies of the New Testament deploys "honour-shame" as an asymmetrical binary. Whereas "shame" is an emotion insofar as it is internalizing of the evaluation of outsiders, "honour" is not construed as an emotion, despite it relying on the judgment of others. Perhaps the better binary—if we are going to insist on such—is "pride-shame." Both sides, then, are framed in emotive terms and both carry social connotations that are at the same time, positive and negative.

"Whenever we are running away from something," writes Adam Phillips,[29] "we are always running towards something else. It may, for example, be a good question to ask of any text, or indeed of any theory (like psychoanalysis): what does it get you out of? Not just what does it get you out of having to believe, or abide by, but what mood, what state of mind does it release you from? Not, what can you get out of this book? But, what can it get you out of?" (2012, 130). We are tempted, of course, to throw this question back on Paul. What does his desire to *depart*—to run away from—get him out of? What relational complexities with the Philippians does this rhetorical move shift for him? What obligations does he avoid not only with his "thankless thanks" of chapter 4, but by this death? Such questions are interesting. But they are not the only, nor even the central, questions that this paper has generated. Instead, we find ourselves asking, whether a turn to affect theory is a running away from other methods—what does affect theory get us out of? At the very least, a shift from the linguistic turn allows us to abandon (the "cruel"?) hope that we will in fact "solve" the enigmatic "true" or "correct" reading of this confounding text! It is a move away from the plethora of commentaries and articles that delve into the theological and historical meaning of this text, and there are many such books and articles, so much so that "much study is a weariness of the flesh," to quote a wise man (Eccl. 12:11). Affect theory instead allows us to ask other questions, not only of the text, nor even necessarily of the text, but of ourselves, of the culture that reifies such a text that sees in death a preference over life.

Theodore Jennings notes that Engels, Nietzsche, and Freud all understood Christianity emerging "in a context of a sort of sickness unto death of the Roman imperium, in which nothing new seemed possible or thinkable" (2016, 197). He says, "the notion of an all-consuming destruction that seems to be in the background of certain Pauline formulations in letters to Thessalonica and Rome would have been all too familiar to readers in the Roman Empire," and yet does not cite the more personal destruction that Paul evokes in Phil. 1:23. Still, the question Jennings poses from this seems a propos: "Do we live in an analogous time, in which history seems to have come to an end and there is nothing left but to distract ourselves with shopping, or weary with what is, to desire the utter destruction of the world?" (2016, 197). "Only a flicker / Over the strained time-ridden faces / Distracted from distraction by distraction," in the words of T. S. Eliot ([1943] 1971, 17) (who was writing even before that "flicker" might have been the screen of those addition

[29] Here Phillips is building on Michael Balint's response to critiques of Freudianism.

machines we call smartphones). Certainly, there is no shortage of apocalyptic imaginings in various media, but what of the personal? Are we distracting ourselves with social media, texting ourselves to death in the face of the boredom that arises from information overload (see Mosurinjohn 2016)? It might bear considering this as a crisis—a pivot point—of the kind that faced Paul, one that requires us to reformulate our existential orientation in relation to a reckoning with our distractions, habits, addictions, and other desires. It also opens on to a need for a more thoroughgoing affective history of desire.

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