

Anger, Emotion, and Desire in the Gospel of Matthew

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
In Integrative Graduate Studies at Brown University

Providence, Rhode Island

May 2010

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This dissertation by Erin Roberts is accepted in its present form
by the Program in Integrative Studies as satisfying the
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed to the completion of this dissertation. Stanley Stowers, David Konstan, and Ross Kraemer deserve my heartfelt thanks. They have been extremely encouraging and insightful mentors, and I have learned much from their devotion to their students and to their own research. I am similarly grateful for Gail Tetreault, the Department Manager of Religious Studies, whose kindness and patience have sustained many graduate students over the years. Faculty who have contributed indirectly to the dissertation by generously offering their guidance and expertise throughout my coursework and exams include Mary Louise Gill, Joseph Pucci, and Gisela Striker.

I also benefited from and will always value the enthusiastic group of graduate students and faculty who met weekly throughout 2009-2010, through the sponsorship of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: Niki Clements, Matthew Duperon, Jennifer Eyl, Paul Firenze, Timothy Freiermuth, Alissa MacMillan, Pneuma McNulty, Jeffrey Neilson, Paul Robertson, Stanley Stowers, Lori Veilleux, and Heidi Wendt. Special thanks also should go to Niki Clements, Jennifer Eyl, and Heidi Wendt, my dear friends and colleagues who saw me through the final stages of writing. Heidi's stylish and eloquent re-working of difficult sections of the manuscript, as well as her willingness to be awake at all hours, was an invaluable help.

My deepest thanks, however, go to my family. My brother, Jon, has been a caring and loyal friend through the entire process, and I am glad that we will be seeing more of each other now that this project is complete. My best friend and life partner, Oleg, deserves many thanks for standing by me during the difficulties and frustrations that graduate school and dissertation-writing can bring, and also for his sharp-eyed scrutiny of nearly every footnote in the entire manuscript. Finally, my parents, Mary Jane and Carroll, have been the most generous, kind, and supportive parents anyone could ask for. I gratefully dedicate this project to them.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Const.</i>	Seneca, <i>De constantia sapientis</i> (<i>On the firmness of the sage</i>)
DL	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Vitae philosophorum</i> (<i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>)
<i>Fin.</i>	Cicero, <i>De finibus</i> (<i>On Moral Ends</i>)
<i>Ir.</i>	Philodemus, <i>De ira</i> (<i>On Anger</i>)
<i>Ira</i>	Seneca, <i>De ira</i> (<i>On Anger</i>)
Lk	Luke
Matt	Matthew
Mk	Mark
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>Nic. Eth.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Ethica nicomachea</i> (<i>Nichomachean Ethics</i>)
LXX	Septuagint
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
<i>PS</i>	Cicero, <i>Paradoxa stoicorum</i> (<i>Stoic Paradoxes</i>)
<i>Rhet.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetorica</i> (<i>Rhetoric</i>)
Sera	Plutarch, <i>De sera numinis vindicta</i> (<i>On the Delay of Divine Justice</i>)
<i>Tusc.</i>	Cicero, <i>Tusculanae disputationes</i> (<i>Tusculan Disputations</i>)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On December 13, 1999, a debate among the Republican Presidential Candidates was held in Des Moines, Iowa.¹ In attendance were the then-Governor of Texas, George W. Bush, the evangelical politician Gary Bauer, Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah, the businessman and politico Steve Forbes, Former Ambassador and political activist Alan Keyes, and the senior Senator from Arizona, John McCain. Near the end of the debate, moderator John Bachman asked a question that had been submitted by a citizen of Iowa. The question was this: “What political philosopher or thinker ... do you most identify with and why?”

Steve Forbes started things off by answering that his choices were John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, Alan Keyes chose the drafters of the United States Constitution, Orrin Hatch went for Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan, and John McCain chose Theodore Roosevelt. The answer, though, that silenced the audience and surprised viewers, commentators, and scholars of religion alike, came from George W. Bush, who responded by saying, “Christ, because he changed my heart.”

In the days and weeks following the debate, commentators considered whether his answer breeched the separation clause of the First Amendment. Leaders of religious organizations puzzled over whether Bush really *meant* what he said or whether it was a well-timed attempt to strengthen the Christian base, while an article in the *Los Angeles*

¹ Full transcript may be found at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=76120>. Accessed by Erin Roberts, 10 November 2009.

Times identified points of contention between some of the teachings attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew and aspects of Bush's platform.²

What surprised *me*, however, as I watched this debate nearly ten years ago, was the un-argued and un-questioned historical claim that Jesus was in fact a philosopher. The 1990s were rife with theories about the historical Jesus, and the ones that I was familiar with at the time claimed that Jesus was a prophetic social revolutionary, a magician, a Galilean peasant, an apocalyptic prophet advocating a kind of "interim" ethics, or a spirit-possessed healer.³ Bush's claim that Jesus was a *philosopher* did not align with my idea of what a philosopher looked like, and his reason—that Jesus had changed his heart—did not make sense to me because I was not aware that philosophers were in the business of changing people's hearts.

But now, nearly ten years *later*, I have a much clearer picture of what a philosopher in the time of Jesus may have looked like, and I think that it coheres with the depiction of Jesus elaborated in the Gospel of Matthew. As I will explain in more detail, Greek and Roman philosophers in antiquity were teachers of morality who dealt in the same kind of ethical currency attributed to Jesus by the author of the Gospel of Matthew.

I want to be clear, though, that this resemblance does not lead me to conclude that the historical Jesus was a moral philosopher, or if by chance he *were* such philosopher, that we could claim this with any type of academic responsibility. Secure and non-contradictory historical evidence for the details of Jesus' life is scant, and even our earliest sources—the letters of Paul and probably the Gospel of Mark—do not indicate

² Madison T. Schockley, "A Closer Walk with Bush and Jesus; Politics; Teachings from the Bible Don't Match Up with the Politics of Texas Governor," *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 2000.

³ At the time, I did not know about the "Cynic-hypothesis."

that moral philosophy, understood as that activity among whose concerns is a decided interest in moral teachings or character formation, was his primary aim. As Stanley Stowers has described the situation, “Mark presents Jesus as a teacher of mysterious teachings about the coming kingdom of God, a mystery so obscure that none of Jesus’ disciples are able to understand it. Jesus in Mark is about as remote from a guide about how one ought to live day to day as one can imagine.”⁴ Concerning the apostle Paul’s knowledge of Jesus as a teacher of ethics, Stowers rightly observes that, “if Paul knew that Jesus was such a teacher, he does not use either the teachings or the idea that Jesus was a teacher, even though the teachings from the later Mathew and Luke would be very relevant and overlap with his own teachings.”⁵

What, then, could have motivated the author of the Gospel of Matthew to construct a narrative about Jesus that depicts him as a teacher of ethics? In what follows, I claim that the Gospel of Matthew depicts Jesus as a teacher of moral philosophy *not* because I believe that the historical Jesus was or could be identified as such, but rather, because the author was participating in a form of cultural production that valued the social capital that could be accrued through this kind of depiction. I argue that the ways in which Matthew depicts Jesus and the contents of his teachings about anger, emotion, and desire are consistent with a schema or *topos* of anger utilized by Greek and Roman virtue ethicists. In particular, I claim that the teaching about anger in Matthew 5 is analogous to Stoic ethics to such an extent that we may responsibly posit Stoicism as the historical influence that contributed to this distinctive teaching. This argument

⁴ Stanley K. Stowers, "Jesus the Teacher and Stoic Ethics in the Gospel of Matthew" in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, eds. Ismo Dunderberg, Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Tuomas RasimusHendrickson, forthcoming)

⁵ Ibid.

contributes to an understanding of the contents of Matthew's ethical teachings, especially those found in Matthew 5-7, which have consistently occupied scholars of the New Testament (NT hereafter) and Christian origins. Further, I argue that Matthew's connection of anger with the coming kingdom of heaven also follows the general contours of the anger schema in a way that indirectly addresses the apparent contradiction between the philosophical ideal of divine *apatheia* and Judean traditions about god's anger and wrath.⁶

One set of questions that guides this study relates to how the author of the Gospel of Matthew utilizes the concept and image of anger to serve the literary ends of his narrative.⁷ This set of questions is different from the one common among scholarship on emotion and the gospels, which aims at describing Jesus' emotional experiences.⁸ Projects aimed in this direction rely upon assumptions about the possibility of arriving at an accurate reconstruction of the life and personality of the historical Jesus and are frequently driven by the belief that his life is authoritative for modern morality. One important observation about the multiple quests for the historical Jesus is that little can be

⁶ My language of "Judean" rather than "Jewish" throughout the dissertation reflects the work of Steve Mason, who has emphasized that "Judaism" was not, in the 1st century CE, an identifiably "religious" category; Steven Mason, "Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007), 457-512.

⁷ Throughout the dissertation, I refer to both the Gospel of Matthew and the author of this gospel as simply "Matthew." I do this for convenience, and not because of any solid evidence that the author went by the name Matthew. Similarly, although the gender of Matthew remains unknown, I refer to Matthew with masculine pronouns. This is also merely a convenience and should not be taken to be a claim about the gender of this anonymous gospel author.

⁸ See, for example, Walter Ernest Bundy, *The Psychic Health of Jesus* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922); Donald Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2000); John W. Miller, *Jesus at Thirty: A Psychological and Historical Portrait* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Albert Schweitzer and Charles Rhind Joy, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus, Exposition and Criticism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948); Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human Or Divine?* (New York: Clark, 2005); Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "On the Emotional Life of our Lord" in *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1950), 93-145.

known for certain about this man's life, and thus the project of making arguments about his mental state is tenuous at best. This dissertation aims at a more viable historical project: it describes the ways that the author of the gospel of Matthew portrays practices and teachings related to emotion, compares this portrayal with other depictions from both within and outside early Christianity, redescribes the gospel material in terms of the examined comparanda, and shows how the comparison helps rectify the concept of emotion as an academic category of analysis.⁹

To these ends, the dissertation's two main exempla are the Gospel of Matthew and the writings of Classical and Hellenistic moral philosophers. The results of the comparison have convinced me that the Gospel of Matthew is best viewed *not* as a text of historical "facts" from which to construct an accurate account of the life of its main character, but rather, as a cultural artifact that is situated amid competing claims about the origins of the movement that we now call "Christianity." In other words, the comparison allows us to conceive of Matthew as someone who utilized the competing views of the moral philosophers in his depiction of Jesus and his teachings. As a late first-century CE mythic reconstruction of the origins of the Jesus movement, the gospel contains images from the author's field of knowledge that would have given traction either to the new movement conceived as a whole, to one particular localized form of it, or possibly to the producer's own accrual of intellectual or cultural capital and prestige.¹⁰ Finally, as a

⁹ This programmatic statement owes much to Jonathan Z. Smith's discussions of comparison; Jonathan Z. Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Still Dwells" in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, eds. Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Jonathan Z. Smith, "Bible and Religion" in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jonathan Z. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 197-215.

¹⁰ This claim has consequences for the popular scholarly tendency to depict the Gospel of Matthew as a document that directly reflects the activities, crises, and concerns of the "Matthean community." I explore this tendency in the following chapters.

result of the comparison and redescription, the dissertation offers a rectified account of how the concept of emotion could fruitfully function as a category of analysis in NT studies.¹¹

In Chapter Two, I clarify various aspects of ancient thought about human moral psychology and emotion. For now, though, a few general points about my use of the term “emotion” are in order. The Greek verb, *paschein*, means to experience something. It is to this verb and the related nouns—*pathos* in the singular and *pathē* in the plural—that the English words “emotion,” “affection,” and “passion” are referred.¹² Although I use all three of these terms at various points throughout the dissertation, I have chosen to use “emotion” the most frequently. The English term “affection” is more commonly used to refer to a feeling of closeness or fondness than it is to refer to a broader category that also includes joy, pity, anger, hatred, and the like. The common use of the term “passion” is similarly restrictive, often indicating an extreme or excess of an emotion, and thus does not capture the milder or calmer affects. My choice of the term “emotion” reflects its widespread usage in English to refer to a host of experiences such as desire, anger, grief, pain, or happiness, but is not to be accepted without qualification. As is explained in the following chapters, the ancient theories are highly technical and do not map precisely onto modern folk conceptions of emotion.

¹¹ I use the phrase “New Testament” with full awareness that it is an anachronistic and theologically-laden concept. Not all of the texts collected in the anthology now known as the “New Testament” were, upon composition, “Christian” texts. Nevertheless, the field of study that has these texts as its object is commonly known as “New Testament Studies” and thus I utilize the term in order to talk about the field of study in which this dissertation fits (even if the fit is, by traditional standards, somewhat untidy).

¹² John T. Fitzgerald, “The Passions and Moral Progress: An Introduction” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (London: Routledge, 2008), 1-25.

A second set of questions central to the current project involves asking to what extent Matthew's use of anger and other emotions (fear, pity, and grief, for example) maps onto different philosophical positions concerning the theory and value of emotion. The Hellenistic moral philosophers regarded emotions as being an important aspect of virtue and the good life, and Matthew's connection between emotion and righteousness resonates with the philosophical discourse on this topic. This is not to say that Matthew's gospel is a philosophical treatise or that Matthew explicitly outlines a theory of emotion. Matthew does, however, cast Jesus as a teacher who makes certain claims about desire, cognition, intentionality, interiority and right actions; because these are also subjects of great interest to the Hellenistic moral philosophers, they may be viewed as starting points for comparative analysis. Not only is comparison possible, but, as the dissertation demonstrates, there is value in sorting out the extent to which Matthew's teachings conform to one or more of the different ethical approaches known in antiquity. By describing the competing philosophical views of anger in antiquity and seeing whether and where Matthew fits in this field, we can attempt to locate Matthew among other cultural producers. The fruits of such comparison involve being able to make historical speculations about the social, intellectual, and perhaps geographical location of Matthew, as well as laying the groundwork for a well-reasoned discussion of the range of interpretive options available to ancient readers. Even though his ideas are not an exact replication of one or another of the philosophical positions, the work of comparison is worthwhile for the purpose of situating Matthew's gospel within the framework of Hellenistic ethical discourse.¹³

¹³ Or, as William Arnal has put it (albeit with reference to the Cynic/Jesus hypothesis), "Even if it were

The Troubled History of Emotion in the Gospels

Although the particular subject matter of the dissertation focuses upon anger in the Gospel of Matthew, it also scrutinizes the current state of research on emotion in the NT gospels and develops some theoretical starting points for a more scholarly study of the topic.¹⁴ A review of the modern research shows that most studies dealing with emotion and the gospels cluster together around four main trends: practical theology, doctrinal theology (especially Christology), psychobiography, and literary analysis. Although there is overlap between categories, it is still helpful to see the main trends.

The first type of research deals with what might be called “practical theology,” which is characterized by its confessional nature and its intended audience of pastoral counselors, church leaders and members, or anyone else wishing to find out what “the Bible” teaches about human emotion. This research takes for granted the authority of the gospels as guides for moral life and places heavy emphasis on Jesus as a paradigm of virtue. Thus, these studies focus on recovering what Jesus taught about emotion and applying these teachings to the lives of today’s believers.¹⁵

Perhaps the most industrious scholar working in this area is Matthew Elliott, who has created something of a cottage industry—replete with a website, a blog, workshops,

impossible for a first-century Jew to *be* a Cynic, this would not necessarily vitiate the point of comparison” William E. Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity* (London: Equinox Pub. Ltd, 2005), 25.

¹⁴ This study is limited to the canonical gospels for pragmatic reasons. Previous scholarship on emotion and the earliest “Christian” texts has, for the most part, been limited to the canonical gospels, and requires more thorough critique than would be possible if non-canonical gospels were also taken into account.

¹⁵ Robert K. Bower and Kenneth B. Mulholland, eds. *Biblical and Psychological Perspectives for Christian Counselors* (South Pasadena, CA: Publishers Services, 1974); Matthew Elliott, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006); Robert Lewis Seyler, “A Christian Understanding of Anger; New Testament Preaching as Counseling from the Sermon on the Mount, Mt. 5:21-6; 38-42.” (D. Min., School of Theology at Claremont, 1977).

and lectures—on the morality of emotion in Christian life. His two most recent publications argue that “the Bible”—taken as a whole, but also with emphasis on the gospels—has a unified theory of human emotion that runs something like this: God created humans with emotions and intended that humans should feel and express them, rather than suffer the consequences of repression.¹⁶ Elliott’s work, like that of others in this area of research, aims to identify or construct a “Biblical” or “Christian” way of understanding and dealing with emotions that is helpful for church or faith communities.

The second way that scholars have tended to think about emotion and the gospels has to do with “doctrinal theology,” especially Christology. Of interest, here, is how the gospels portray the relation between Jesus’ affective experience and his supposed human/divine composition. This is a complicated issue, and arguments have taken various shapes beginning even in antiquity. Working from the Stoic premise that emotions are deviations from reason and thus a form of moral error, Origen endeavored to show that Jesus did not commit this kind of error when he began to grieve in the Garden of Gethsemane. In his analysis of Matthew 26:38-39, Origen points out that Jesus had only *begun* to grieve, and had not in fact grieved in the more robust sense of the term.¹⁷

Distinguishing between the beginning and the full fruition of a negative emotion plays an important role in Stoic moral psychology, where all sentient beings—non-human

¹⁶ Elliott, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament*; Matthew Elliott, *Feel: The Power of Listening to Your Heart* (Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008) A more detailed account of Elliott’s arguments may be found in his Ph.D. dissertation Matthew A. Elliott, “Emotion and the New Testament: A Critique of the Interpretation of Emotion in New Testament Studies and an Interpretation of the use of Emotion in the New Testament” (Ph. D., University of Aberdeen, 2002).

¹⁷ Origen, PG 13, cols. 1741-42. Margaret Graver, *Stoicism & Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 106, 239 n. 35.

and human animals alike, from the dullest of characters to the sages themselves—receive impressions and subsequently experience bites or contractions that, while they may be likened to emotion, do not involve assent to improper beliefs.¹⁸ These bites, or “feelings without assent” include physiological reactions like getting goosebumps when one is sprinkled with cold water, but also reactions with propositional content, such as having one’s hair stand on end upon receiving what one takes to be bad news, blushing at language that one considers foul, or—after to coming to identify with or otherwise care for a character in a play—being moved by his or her misfortunes.

Thus Origen’s point is well-taken: by merely *beginning* to grieve, Jesus did not commit himself to the false belief that his impending death was in fact an evil. Instead, by beginning to grieve, he merely received the impression that such a death could be an evil, but he did not succumb to the temptation of the false belief that in his case it must be. In doing this, Origen saw himself to be upholding Jesus’ divinity in the face of Arian Christology. Didymus Caecus, also from Alexandria, used the very same piece of evidence to argue for Jesus’ humanity. Against Apollinaris of Laodicea, who claimed that Jesus’ human mind had been replaced by the divine *logos*, Caecus claimed that Jesus’ humanity consisted in his ability to have this kind of preliminary feeling.¹⁹

Similar attempts to parse Jesus’ consciousness with specific attention to his emotions may be found in more modern discussions of Christology. In 1912, for example, Benjamin Warfield assigned Jesus’ various emotional experiences to what he

¹⁸ This is the Stoic theory of the *propatheiai*. As Margaret Graver has recently shown, this theory may—in some form—be traced back to the early Stoics and is likely not a later addition to their psychological theory. Margaret Graver, “Philo of Alexandria and the Origins of the Stoic ‘Propatheiai’,” *Phronesis: A Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 44.4 (1999), 300-325; Graver, *Stoicism & Emotion*.

¹⁹ Ibid., 106-107.

claimed to be two distinct centers of consciousness.²⁰ In what must have been an attempt to save the historical Jesus from the appearance of impropriety, Warfield claimed that the close and deep love that he felt for Mary and Martha must have issued from his *divine* consciousness, and not from the seat of purely *human* desires. By contrast, Warfield praised the “purely human affection” of Jesus toward Lazarus, because, he said, this showed Jesus’ ability—or, at least the ability of one part of his duplex personality—to share in the human experience of social bonding and companionship.

The strangeness of the idea that a person might have two centers of consciousness was not lost on the medical professionals of Warfield’s day, which brings us to third way in which modern scholars have merged the study of emotion and the gospels. The genre of psychobiography began in the early 20th century when some psychiatrists argued— independently of each other—that the historical Jesus suffered from various sorts of neurosis. One argued that he had inherited a mental condition that made him a “psychic degenerate,” another that he was a “paranoid psychotic” with megalomaniacal tendencies, and another that his hallucinations were part of the condition known as “religious paranoia.”²¹

At about the same time that Warfield published his study on the emotional life of Jesus, Albert Schweitzer was finishing up his degree in medicine with a thesis that challenged the psychobiographical claims about the psychosis and paranoia of Jesus.²²

²⁰ Warfield, *On the Emotional Life of our Lord*, 93-145. Originally published in F. L. Patton, ed., *Biblical and Theological Studies* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912).

²¹ Donald Capps, *Jesus the Village Psychiatrist* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

²² Schweitzer, Albert and Charles Rhind Joy. *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus, Exposition and Criticism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948).

He attacked the claims, first, with reference to the authors' misuse and lack of knowledge of the methods of biblical studies, and second, with reference to their alleged misunderstanding of paranoia and their misdiagnosis of the historical Jesus. Schweitzer did concede that Jesus showed some symptoms worthy of study, such as hallucinations at his baptism and his inflated sense of self, but that these hardly amounted to paranoia.

Although the genre of psychobiography blossomed during the 20th century, it was not until the year 2000, when Donald Capps published *Jesus: A Psychological Biography*, that anyone had actually argued for the legitimacy or the place of psychobiography in academic scholarship.²³ By arguing that historical Jesus research had under-utilized psychological theory, Capps claimed that a psychological analysis could lend greater insight into Jesus' personal and social identity, both as a "utopian melancholic personality"²⁴ and as a healer of psychophysical illnesses.²⁵

Finally, the fourth way that the topic of emotion has been implicated with gospels scholarship involves literary analysis. These studies are often comparative in nature and focus less on the historical figure of Jesus than they do on the redactional activity of the gospel writers.²⁶ One example of this involves arguments about Markan priority, and explains Matthew and Luke's removal of the Markan Jesus' emotions as the result of

²³ Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography*.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Capps, *Jesus the Village Psychiatrist*.

²⁶ David Alan Black, "Jesus on Anger: The Text of Matthew 5:22a Revisited," *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988), 1-8; Jeffrey B. Gibson, "Another Look at Why Jesus 'Sighs Deeply': Anastenazō in Mark 8:12a," *Journal of Theological Studies* 47.1 (1996), 131-140; Jeffrey B. Gibson, "Mark 8:12a : Why does Jesus 'Sigh Deeply'?" *Bible Translator* 38.1 (1987):122-125; Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Absence of Jesus' Emotions: The Lucan Redaction of Lk 22:39-46," *Biblica* 61.2 (1980), 153-171; Cullen I. K. Story, "The Mental Attitude of Jesus at Bethany: John 11:33,38," *New Testament Studies* 37.1 (1991), 51-66; Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human Or Divine?*; Voorwinde, "Jesus' Tears--Human Or Divine," *Reformed Theological Review* 56 (1997), 68-81.

“christological embarrassment.” Based upon the assumption the Jesus was fully divine and upon the assumption that God does not experience emotions, some scholars have claimed that Matthew and Luke excised emotive passages their gospels because they were embarrassed by the rough and unrefined christology of their sources. Thus, although the aim in this scholarship is literary analysis, it nevertheless gains strength from theological developments that took place after the gospels were written. Nearly all of the work done on the topic of emotion and the gospels has a theological aim and thus has goals and methods that ought to be differentiated from my project of locating proto-Christian discourse about emotion within its contemporary intellectual context.

The study of emotion and the gospels is marked by a failure to account for cross-cultural and trans-historical varieties of emotion theory, and this problem seems to stem from the relative isolation of NT studies within the human sciences. Although other areas of the academic study of religion actively engage in cross- and multi- disciplinary theorization and research, scholars of the NT are often set apart (either by their own impetus or by departmental structures) from the humanistic enterprise of the modern university. This isolation sometimes leads to NT scholars’ being unaware of or resistant to work being done in other fields, and thus one of my goals is to contribute to cross- and multi- disciplinary research, and to do so for the sake of naturalizing the study of the texts that later became part of the anthology known as the NT.

The failure to account for a variety of emotion theory plays out in the assumption that emotions are basic and self-evident aspects of human experience, and that little to no explanation or analysis of the definition of emotion is necessary. Also of note is the assumption that there is a core set of feelings or emotions experienced by humans and

that the moral element is in how we “express” or “deal with” them. This is highly problematic, especially given: 1) the lack of consensus among psychological and psychoanalytic literature about the ontology of emotion,²⁷ 2) anthropological and linguistic studies that have shown significant variations in emotion from culture to culture,²⁸ and 3) demonstrations that ancient conceptions were different from our own.²⁹ Some studies do aim to engage ancient discussions of emotion to aid interpretation of the NT texts, but the view is often so skewed toward a normative use of the biblical texts that the philosophical accounts are not properly described or fairly evaluated.

Work has been done on the topic of emotion in fields such as history, anthropology, classics, philosophy, and cognitive science. The history of emotion is a legitimate subject of inquiry among historians, and there has been a relatively recent outbreak of interest in emotion among medievalists and classicists.³⁰ Although there is

²⁷ See, for example, the variety of views found in Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones and Lisa Feldman Barrett, eds., *Handbook of Emotions*, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2008).

²⁸ Catherine Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their Challenge to Western Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Anna Wierzbicka, *Emotions Across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁹ David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

³⁰ The bibliography is extensive, but some of the more recent works include: Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill, eds., *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Susanna Morton Braund and Glenn W. Most, *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); John T. Fitzgerald, *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (London: Routledge, 2008); William W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics, and Ethics*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2002); William V. Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); David Konstan, "El Derecho De Enfadarse: Un Patron Narrativo En La Comedia Clasica"; David Konstan, *Pity Transformed* (London: Duckworth, 2001); David Konstan and N. K. Rutter, *Envy, Spite and Jealousy: The Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003); David Konstan, "Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: The Strategies of Status" in *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen*, eds. Susanna Morton Braund and Glenn W. Most (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 99-120; Burkhard Reis and Stella Haffmans, *The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); David

interest in emotion among some NT scholars, the category has not yet been theorized in a way that lends itself to being productive as a subfield. Subfields of anthropology, history, and classics have emphasized cultural and temporal differences in emotion, and this emphasis could shed some much-needed light on the trend of NT scholars who assume an essential sameness of emotion, both cross-culturally and trans-historically. The dissertation's emphasis on difference is not a claim that emotions are nothing more than social constructions, but rather serves as a corrective measure to balance the over-emphasis on sameness.

While operating on a modern, localized, folk understanding of emotion, many of the studies in the practical and doctrinal theology areas re-inscribe modern understandings of emotion onto the gospel texts, which *then* are seen to contain evidence that emotions are highly personal, private experiences that have to do with “feelings” as opposed to thoughts.³¹ This hyper-internalized and overly-individualized view of emotion—when applied to the gospels—acts as a set of blinders, prohibiting other alternatives, and this in two ways.

Konstan, "Epicurean 'Passions' and the Good Life" in *The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics*, eds. Burkhard Reis and Stella Haffmans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 194-205; David Konstan, "The Concept of 'Emotion' from Plato to Cicero," *Methexis* 19 (2006), 139-151; Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*; David Konstan, *A Life Worthy of the Gods: The Materialist Psychology of Epicurus*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2008); David Konstan, *Some Aspects of Epicurean Psychology* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Writing without Fear about Early Medieval Emotions," *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001), 229-234; Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 107.3 (June 2002), 821-845; Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

³¹ This is clearly evidenced even by the titles of Matthew Elliott's recent books: Elliott, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament*; Elliott, *Feel: The Power of Listening to Your Heart*. Also, see Elliott's website, www.faithfulfeelings.com, whose homepage opens with the question, "How do you feel?"

Interpreting passages about anger or fear, for example, with the conception that emotions are internal private feelings, can lead one to miss the more social and practice-based aspects of emotion articulated by the ancient writers themselves. The role that Aristotle, for example, attributes to emotion in maintaining social relations and hierarchies, has very little to do with warm fuzzies or private dramas. Similarly, the technical cognitive content of emotion as explained by the Stoics or the Epicureans is a far cry from the conception that emotions are mere “feelings.” And so the first kind of alternative that can be missed is the social significance that emotion may have played in gospel texts.

But there is also a second kind of missed alternative, and this is not one of *interpretation*, but of *identification*, and by this I mean to suggest that what one culture counts as an emotion or counts as an event with affective significance might not be recognized as such by another. Researchers in cultural anthropology and linguistics have demonstrated this point, as has classicist David Konstan, who has shown that even among the ancient philosophers there was disagreement not merely over how one ought to *manage* one’s emotions, but over the more fundamental issue of what *an emotion was in the first place*.³² The concept of emotion, even when constructed within the relatively narrow scope of ancient Greek philosophy, is fraught with disagreement, and to approach an ancient text without a clear understanding of these differences does a disservice to the text. Chapter Two will outline some of the prominent positions taken in Hellenistic philosophy on the topic of emotion. For now, though, I mention some of the problems in NT scholarship that result from the non-acknowledgment of the differences.

³² Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*.

Foremost is the problem of knowing which texts and which sections of the texts employ emotion language. In the case of ancient literature, this problem is complicated by a number of steps. First, modern translations do not always enable us to see the emotive associations of certain Greek words. One example is Matthew 5.25, which I translate as, “Show goodwill toward your opponent right away, while you are on the way to court with him.”³³

As will be explained in more detail in Chapter Three, the Greek word translated here as “show goodwill” is from the verb *eunoēō*, a verbal form of the noun *eunoia*, which is a term used by the Stoics to designate one species of the genus good emotion *boulēsis*, which, in turn, is the rational counterpart to the irrational emotion called desire (*epithumia*). Thus the translation “show goodwill” is meant to capture the practices related to the good emotion of *eunoia*, which is defined by Stoic sources as “wishing-well for others.” Modern English translations of Matthew 5.25 commonly render the verb as “make friends,”³⁴ “come to terms with,”³⁵ “agree,”³⁶ or “settle matters/settle the dispute.”³⁷ Although these translations are perfectly viable, they nevertheless suppress the emotive element of the term. Hans Dieter Betz’s translation, “become well-disposed,” comes close, as does my “show goodwill,” but neither precisely capture the Stoic sense of the term *eunoia*.³⁸

³³ I settled upon this translation after consulting with David Konstan and Stanley Stowers about how to render *isthī eunoōn*. Email correspondence, 3 December 2009.

³⁴ Revised Standard Version; New American Standard Bible; Darby Translation

³⁵ New Revised Standard Version; English Standard Version

³⁶ King James Version; New King James Version; Young’s Literal Translation; American Standard Version

³⁷ New International Version; Good News Bible

³⁸ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 198.

Secondly, even reading a text in its original language, in this case Greek, is not helpful if the translator is not aware of terms that are important in discussions of emotion or moral psychology outside the texts of the NT. Thus, even those commentators who know Greek very well may not necessarily be aware that *eunoieō/eunoia* was a specific technical term in Stoic moral psychology. This is not to say that Matthew's use of the term is necessarily the same as the Stoic use of the term, but rather, that similarity between the Matthean and Stoic use must not be prematurely foreclosed as an interpretive option.

The third difficulty is not unrelated to the second, and stems from the fact that ancient lists of emotions do not match our modern ones. Even when our sources use terms similar to what we understand today as emotions (anger, fear, and so forth), one needs to attend to the differences and be open to the possibility that what may count as an emotion *nowadays* may not have counted as such in ancient Greek and Latin texts:

... the set of emotions that Aristotle treats in his *Rhetoric* also exhibits important discrepancies with modern lists, sometimes cutting across the categories by which we discriminate the emotions. To anticipate, Aristotle seems to divide what we call anger into two distinct emotions; in turn, whereas we typically discriminate guilt and shame, classical Greek appears to collapse the two into a single concept (and yet it has two terms that seem to correspond to our idea of 'shame'). What is more, some emotions that are central to ancient Greek inventories are absent in modern catalogues: an example is *zēlos*, which, as we shall see, connotes a positive spirit of rivalry as contrasted with the negative passion of envy. Pity may be another case: it is universally included in lists of the *pathē*, but figures so rarely in modern accounts that one may wonder whether if it is conceived as an emotion at all in contemporary English. In turn, sentiments such as loneliness or sadness are often classified as emotions today but are missing in ancient Greek lists. More remarkable still is the absence of grief from Aristotle's survey of the *pathē*, although it provides the narrative armature for Martha Nussbaum's neo-Stoic analysis.³⁹

³⁹ Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*, 15-16.

Thus when one turns to an ancient text such as the Gospel of Matthew with the intention of studying his literary use of emotion, one needs to be aware that, despite our best efforts, there is room for error in our identification of what does and does not constitute emotion.

Finally, in addition to language, there is the issue of expectations about the association of certain actions with particular emotions. One example relates to the so-called “temple tantrum”⁴⁰ of Matthew 21.12-13:

And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those bartering and doing business in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the seats of those selling the doves, and said to them, “It has been written, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer, and *you* make it a hideout of robbers.’”⁴¹

Some view this text as an expression of anger and find difficulty reconciling it with the anti-anger teaching of Matthew 5.22: “And I say to you that every person who is angry (*pas ho orgizomenos*) with his brother will be liable to judgment.” Whereas Matthew depicts Jesus as advocating an *anti*-anger teaching in 5.22, the incident in 21.12-13 shows him lashing out in a display of the very passion that he condemned! Dale Allison, who says that “Jesus is undeniably angry when, in chapter 21, he turns over tables in the temple as well as when, in chapter 23, he publicly castigates the scribes and Pharisees,”⁴² is particularly concerned with this dilemma: “Consider again the disavowal of anger [Matthew 5.22] and its relationship to the rest of the Gospel. While Matthew successfully avoids remarking upon Jesus’ anger, *it remains impossible to envisage Jesus turning over*

⁴⁰ The phrase “temple tantrum” may be found in the Introduction to the Second Edition of Paula Fredricksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), xxi. The earliest use of the phrase appears to be in Ben Witherington, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 107.

⁴¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the Gospel of Matthew are my own.

⁴² Dale C. Allison, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 238.

the tables in the temple or condemning the scribes and Pharisees apart from anger”
(emphasis added).⁴³

Allison’s inability to imagine that these actions could have taken place without anger obviously does not arise from the text itself, which makes no mention of Jesus’ state of mind. As will become clear throughout the dissertation, Matthew is aware of Greek terms related to a variety of emotions; he could have depicted Jesus as having some sort of emotion here, but he did not. Neither Mark, Luke, nor John for that matter,⁴⁴ align this action with anger. John, in fact, connects it to *zēlos*, which is commonly translated simply as “zeal,” but in Greek can also have other—more emotive—connotations related to a kind of productive or positive rivalry. Thus without any textual basis for concluding that Jesus’ actions must have been motivated by anger, we must further consider the source for Allison’s insistence upon it.

One possibility is, as mentioned above, that Allison is relying upon a theory of action that identifies certain behaviors as emotive *expressions*: although Matthew did not say that Jesus was angry, we know that he was because of the way he acted. The undoing of this argument, however, is the fact that theories and moral advice about anger in the time contemporaneous with Matthew do not assume a necessary relationship between anger and the actions attributed to Jesus in the temple. Stoic discussions of anger that distinguish between an act of revenge (the satisfaction of anger), on the one hand, and a rebuke or censure (a rational sort of correction), on the other, offer a perfectly viable model by which Jesus’ non-emotive protest may be interpreted.

⁴³ Ibid., 246.

⁴⁴ Luke 19.45-46, Mark 11.15-19, John 2.13-17.

In Stoicism, rebuking someone for moral or didactic purposes does not require anger. In fact, if this sort of rebuke (*parrēsia*) has any connection with emotion, it would not be anger; instead, it might indicate pity, a desire to heal, or a lack of fear. Furthermore, in his treatise on anger, Seneca gives countless examples and arguments *against* the claim that anger must be involved in the kinds of “harsh teaching” depicted by all four gospel writers in the so-called “temple tantrum.” The following passage provides several examples that Seneca used to illustrate the claim that anger need not be connected with certain actions:

There is no anger there [in rebuke], but the pitying desire to heal. Mad dogs we knock on the head; the fierce and savage ox we slay; sickly sheep we put to the knife to keep them from infecting the flock; unnatural progeny we destroy; we drown even children who at birth are weakly and abnormal. Yet it is not anger but reason that separates the harmful from the sound. For the one who administers punishment, nothing is so unfitting as anger, since punishment is all the better able to work reform if it is bestowed with judgment. This is the reason Socrates says to his slave: "I would beat you if I were not angry." The slave's reproof he postponed to a more rational moment; at the time it was himself he reproved. Will there be any one, pray, who has passion under control, when even Socrates did not dare to trust himself to anger? Consequently, there is no need that correction be given in anger in order to restrain the erring and the wicked.⁴⁵

This and many other passages in Seneca's *De ira* (*On Anger*) should give pause to anyone who thinks that rebuke requires anger in the ancient understanding of the emotion.

One of the more baffling aspects of Allison's interpretation is his claim that it would have been *impossible* for Jesus to have turned the tables without anger. Although this dissertation is not interested in questions about the historical Jesus, Allison's claim is still important, and could be reformulated in terms consistent with my aims as an inability

⁴⁵ Seneca, *Ira* 1.15.2-16.1.

to imagine that the gospel writers could have *depicted* such an action without mentioning anger. If the Stoic can depict the sage as dispassionately avenging the assault of his wife or the murder of his father,⁴⁶ why is it so difficult to think that Matthew, Mark, and Luke could have depicted Jesus as dispassionately pushing over some chairs and tables? It seems that there must be something at stake in retaining the idea of Jesus' anger, and perhaps it involves upholding a particular view of the nature of god and of Jesus' supposed divine nature. This has been a persistent interest in the history of Christian thought because of philosophical views that humans, and not gods (or at least not *high* gods) have emotions. In other words, rather than dealing with the plain sense of the text, which does not impart anger to Jesus, Allison takes the opportunity to highlight Jesus' connections with the prophets and his ability to engage in a kind of justified divine anger:

... although 5:21-26 demands self-control and kindness in word and deed, the instances in which Jesus becomes angry can be understood as qualifying that imperative, as proving that, in extreme situations, it can be trumped. Surely Matthew, as a student of the Jewish Bible, believed that prophets must occasionally speak the harsh truth *and display the divine indignation*; and he may also have believed that this sometimes dire necessity may temporarily displace some less urgent obligation, in this case the embargo on anger (emphasis added).⁴⁷

The claim here is that Jesus' anger is excusable, and in fact promoted, because the kind of anger he possesses is prophetic and *divine*. Allison also quotes with approval a passage from Hans Windisch, who says that Jesus' rebukes "issue from the agitated soul of a violently indignant prophet whose words are to be measured with another measure than those of an ordinary man. The anger against hypocrisy, corruption, and neglect of the most important duties that is here expressed is something other than the anger that is the

⁴⁶ Seneca, *Ira* 1.12.1-2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 247-248.

result of a lack of self-control, love, and understanding.”⁴⁸ In his treatment of Matthew 21.12-13, then, Allison, Windisch, and others, introduce the image of Jesus’ anger into the text, declare it to be problematic, and then solve the problem with reference to Jesus’ special status as a prophet or a divinity. This seems like too much work, especially when the plain sense of the text does not even necessitate anger.

The scene in Matthew 21.12-13 states that Jesus’ intention is to retain the temple’s status as a house of prayer. Read in light of the teachings about prayer in 6.5-15 or about anger and sacrifice in 5.21-24, would it not make sense to think that the point of this section is to say that a house of prayer would have to do more with the *absence* of anger, insults, and revenge? It is fitting, in this regard, that Matthew does mention emotion in the surrounding context of the passage in chapter 21, but not in relation to Jesus:

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. And the chief priests and the scribes, seeing the amazing things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant [from *aganakteō*] and said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?’” And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there (Matthew 21.14-16).

Even when the disgruntled chief priests and scribes approach Jesus, Matthew portrays his response as non-emotive: Jesus responds to them with a quotation from Psalm 8.2 and leaves the city for the night.

With all this in mind, it remains a mystery why Allison prefers to explain away Jesus’ hypocrisy (advocating an anti-anger teaching yet becoming enraged in the temple)

⁴⁸ Ibid., 248.

rather than simply following the text and acknowledging that Matthew does not depict him as angry in the temple scene. The claim that the Jesus of 21.12-13 was acting as an angry prophet or divinity could perhaps be read as evidence of the persistent desire (conscious or otherwise) to “find” evidence in the texts of the NT both for the doctrine of divine wrath and for the doctrine of Jesus’ divinity.

The point of this example was to illustrate some of the potential difficulties in a study of emotion in an ancient text like the Gospel of Matthew. Identifying moments in the narrative that indicate emotion may be more complicated than we think, mainly because our own expectations about the connection between intentions and actions get in the way. As will be detailed in Chapter Two, there is a great deal of evidence that the association of righteous anger with the image of the good person was not a foregone conclusion. Seneca, for example, says that “the good man will perform his duties undisturbed and unafraid; and he will in such a way do all that is worthy of a good man as to do nothing that is unworthy of a man. My father is being murdered - I will defend him; he is slain - I will avenge him, not because I grieve, but because it is my moral obligation.”⁴⁹ Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ turning the tables in the temple without anger, then, is not without precedent.

In addition to the problems directly involving the study of emotion in NT gospels, the dissertation also deals with other, non-emotion-related issues that nevertheless still impinge upon a nicely theorized study of emotion. As William Arnal has vigorously argued, some areas of NT studies—and especially studies of the “historical Jesus”—have failed to offer an account of Jesus’ Judaism that is free from political, theological, or

⁴⁹ Seneca, *Ira* 1.12.1-2

social agenda.⁵⁰ He shows that some scholars depict the Judaism of Jesus' time as a monolithic, static, well-defined conglomeration of particular practices (Torah-reading, Temple-going), interests (salvation, the Messiah), and appearances (clothing, circumcision) that more closely resembles the isolation from heterogeneity found in the Jewish ghettos of 20th century Europe than the historical evidence of an ethnically integrated first century Palestine. In nearly all of the prominent commentaries on Matthew is a similarly troublesome reconstruction of the author, readers, or community standing behind the gospel.

In step with the oft-repeated claim that Matthew is "the most Jewish of the gospels," is the unspoken corollary claim that Matthew and his assumed community must also be the "least Greek." The unstated yet resounding claim about Matthew and his community being non-Greek exerts itself in the sources that commentators have used to reconstruct the literary and historical context for Matthew's text and community: the "Old Testament," the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Mishnah, Talmud, Targumim, and other rabbinic texts. But unless Matthew lived in an isolated sectarian community, cut off from all literary, cultural, and intellectual influences of Hellenism, these texts simply cannot be the *only* ones that informed Matthew's thoughts, writing practices, or way of constructing his narrative. Further, many of these texts *were not even written until after Matthew had written his gospel*. And so one of the recurrent themes of the dissertation is to emphasize the importance of the cultural work that is being done through our choices about which sources are relevant for proper contextualization of the Gospel of Matthew. Even without explicit statements about

⁵⁰ Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity*.

Matthew's "Judaism," an examination of the sources used by a commentator reveals the tacit assumptions that govern the resulting picture and interpretation.

In the case of Matt 5.21-26, for example, instead of asking *why* Matthew would have portrayed Jesus as taking an anti-anger position,⁵¹ or what possible arguments could be made against anger (there are many in the Greek and Roman philosophical literature), some commentators take the opportunity to highlight Jesus' uniqueness against a manufactured backdrop of rigid "Jewish legalism." The great irony here is twofold: comparing Jesus' teaching in 5.21-26 with philosophical literature about anger would actually make the teaching *less* unique; second, if any uniqueness about this teaching ought to be highlighted, it could be framed as one unique to the Stoic absolutist position against anger, and *not unique merely to Jesus*.⁵² Because of the privilege given to "Jewish" sources (as if Jews—and especially Jesus—could not have been interested in broader intellectual currents⁵³), the rich discussions of ethics and emotion in the philosophical texts are missed, and a purely "Jewish" mentality is imaginatively constructed. It is almost as if scholars who follow this way of thinking would fully expect—if they were able to look into the minds of the readers and the author of Matthew—to see a tidy little library with the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, and (the as yet to be written) rabbinic literature on the shelves. Nobody in this library would have ever heard of Plato, Aristotle, or Philo of Alexandria, never mind any

⁵¹ *I.e.*, "what sort of social capital is Matthew attributing to Jesus in his narrative?"

⁵² The classic argument against uniqueness is Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁵³ Attested by the hostile reactions to the "Cynic hypothesis," Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity*.

of the great dramas or comedies.⁵⁴ This view both assumes and nourishes the polarization of two imagined historical categories: an insular or “ghettoized” Judaism separated off from any Hellenistic context (whose anachronism is heightened by the use of Rabbinic literature to define the category), on the one hand, and “Christianity” on the other.⁵⁵

The second issue that has impeded a rigorous study of emotion in the NT relates directly to the four approaches described earlier in the chapter. In order for theologians to make normative claims based upon or anchored within the teachings of the “historical Jesus,” the teachings of this historical figure must be constructed in a coherent, non-conflicting manner. In other words, the life of Jesus as portrayed in the four canonical gospels must be synthesized and harmonized into one authoritative account. This makes it easier to answer questions like “What did Jesus teach about X?”, but it often comes at the expense of glossing over the differences between the gospels. Thus, despite the anti-anger teaching of Matthew 5.22, nearly every prescriptive account of the role of emotion in the life of the modern Christian *values human anger as a god-given gift*. The construction of a unified teaching issuing from the mouth of a morally authoritative Jesus of course spawns further problems, not least of which being biased evaluation of sources

⁵⁴ Voorwinde, for example, limits the context of his study of emotion in the Gospel of John to “the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Synoptic Gospels, and the remainder of the New Testament.” Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human Or Divine?* Voorwinde's work, however, is more careful and reflective than most of the other research on the topic.

⁵⁵ This is not so much the case within Pauline studies, where scholars have felt more comfortable with engaging discussions about the emotions or the passions found in ancient Greek and Roman philosophical texts. Many Pauline scholars have conscientiously moved away from these sorts of polarizing characterizations, but the same may not be said of Gospels scholars. For an analysis of the ways and reasons that gospels scholars have resisted moving away from such heavy emphasis on Jesus' Jewishness, see Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity*. I have not found any studies that deal with the topic of emotion in non-canonical gospels.

outside the NT canon.⁵⁶ Once the mythic figure of Jesus is established and deemed normative by interpreters, comparative work becomes nearly impossible because the comparison is value-based rather than historically or anthropologically based.

Emotion and the Academic Study of Religion

What, then, are the guidelines for this dissertation that mark it out as different from current and past research on the topic of emotion and the NT gospels? First, this project is not about Jesus. This fact alone distinguishes this project not only from theological ones, but also from other sorts of projects pursued under the purview of Religious Studies (such as historical Jesus studies).⁵⁷ Instead, the project is about the text of the Gospel of Matthew and the range of possible interpretations available for ancient readers. As described in the previous section, the text need not be contextualized in a way that precludes the use of Greek and Latin literature as meaningful comparative exempla. To maintain a solid argument *against* using Greek and Latin philosophical texts as part of the interpretive framework, one would need to establish that the *author and readers of Matthew* lived in an essentialized Jewish world that was sealed off from any Greek context, despite the fact that most Jews of the time spoke Greek and lived in Greek cities. On a theoretical and even ethical level, to assume Matthew's Jewish mind⁵⁸ could not

⁵⁶ An extreme case of this is Sarah Chambers, "A Biblical Theology of Godly Human Anger" (Ph.D., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1996), which repeatedly discounts Seneca's and Aristotle's views on anger as thoroughly inadequate because they do not agree with "Scripture." This kind of interpretation reinscribes modern notions of the "religious" and the "secular" into a world that was not commonly conceived this way, often at the expense of fair and balanced descriptions of the "secular" (i.e., philosophical) sources.

⁵⁷ Voorwinde also makes this point in *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human Or Divine?*

⁵⁸ Or, as one commentator has written, "the Semitic *part* of his mind" (emphasis added), Robert Horton Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

have grasped ideas from Greek or Roman philosophy is wrong; and it is equally wrong to assume without discussion that he would have rejected them without qualification.

For practical and theoretical reasons, then, this dissertation expands the literary context of interpretation to include some of the non-Jewish philosophical works that discuss emotion and anger. Extant philosophical treatises dealing exclusively with anger include Philodemus's *De ira*, Seneca's *De ira*, and Plutarch's *De cohibenda ira* and *De sera numinis vindicta*.⁵⁹ There are also discussions of anger found within treatises on other topics by Aristotle, Cicero, Galen, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, Philo of Alexandria, Diogenes Laertius and others, as well as non-didactic sources such as Vergil's *Aeneid*.⁶⁰ These texts point toward the importance of the topic of anger in antiquity and also focus the concerns about anger around questions such as: *What causes anger? What is its role in social life and interpersonal relations? What arguments can be made for and against anger and its satisfaction? How does anger fit into larger questions about ethics, desire, and self-control?* Considering questions about anger that were of concern in antiquity will yield a clearer picture of the literary and cultural work accomplished by Matthew's attribution of an anti-anger teaching to Jesus.

The second way that this dissertation is different from previous studies is that while most of the research so far has aimed at what might be called applied ethics, this study aims at the comparison of ancient ethical theories. The subfield of "New Testament ethics" is largely a theological endeavor, but this dissertation aims to characterize the

⁵⁹ I have followed the SBL style guide by using Latin titles even when the work is in Greek; I also follow the abbreviated title suggestions offered there as well: Philodemus's *De ira* will be abbreviated with *Ir.* and Seneca's with *Ira*. Patrick H. Alexander and Society of Biblical Literature, *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999).

⁶⁰ There is a small body of literature about anger in the *Aeneid* and its relation to Philodemus' *Peri orgēs*.

teachings of Jesus depicted in the Gospel of Matthew not as uniquely holding moral authority for today, but rather as just one part of the ancient Greek and Roman focus on virtue ethics.⁶¹

Finally, the dissertation brings an informed knowledge of different theories of emotion—both modern and ancient—to the table. It depends upon the findings of anthropologists who have pointed toward the difficulties in assuming emotion (and not just its expression) is a cultural universal and have sought, instead, to analyze it in terms of localized social practice,⁶² as upon research emphasizing that ancient Greeks and Romans conceived not only of emotion but also of the mind and self in ways different from today.⁶³

Outline of Chapters

Thus far, I have outlined three main goals. The first is to situate my analysis of emotion in the NT in a way that takes into consideration some of the work done on the history of emotions in other fields such as classics, philosophy, anthropology and history. The

⁶¹ For a short introduction to virtue ethics, see Julia Annas, "Virtue Ethics" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, ed. David Copp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 515-537.

⁶² Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their Challenge to Western Theory*; Lutz and Abu-Lughod, *Language and the Politics of Emotion*; Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog, *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Lawrence Rosen, *Other Intentions: Cultural Contexts and the Attribution of Inner States* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1995).

⁶³ Christopher Gill, "Ancient Psychotherapy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46 (1985), 307-326; Christopher Gill, *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (Oxford England; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1990); Christopher Gill, "Is there a Concept of Person in Greek Philosophy?" in *Psychology: Companions to Ancient Thought, Vol. 2*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 166-193; Christopher Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Konstan, "The Concept of 'Emotion' from Plato to Cicero," 139-151; Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*; Richard Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

second is to contextualize Matthew's connection between ethics and emotion—particularly that of anger—within the ethical discourse of Greek and Roman moral philosophy. The third goal is a methodological one that aims to show that although Judean traditions and texts are important for understanding Matthew's gospel, these traditions did not exist in isolation from Greek and Roman philosophical and intellectual contexts.

In Chapter Two, I outline three main philosophical positions on emotion and anger: the Aristotelian/Peripatetic, the Epicurean, and the Stoic position. Although each of these schools has a different opinion about the moral value of emotion and anger in the good life, I argue that all three schools of thought characterize the definition and social location of anger in similar ways. Specifically, I claim that they draw upon a schema or *topos* of anger that remains constant even in the face of divergent ethical teachings about the role of anger.

Chapter Three examines Matthew 5, which contains the only explicit anti-anger teaching in the synoptic gospels. I argue that Matthew's depiction of Jesus' teachings about ethics and moral psychology not only follow the schema of anger known to the philosophers, but that it aligns closely with the Stoic position. I identify other ways that Matthew 5 bears resemblance to Stoic ethics, and suggest that a Stoic influence is the best explanation for Matthew's unique depiction of Jesus.

In Chapter Four, I turn to the three other moments in the Gospel of Matthew that discuss anger. All three of these occurrences refer to anger and the kingdom of heaven. I show that Matthew's motif about anger in the kingdom of heaven also follows the anger schema. I suggest that Matthew's association of anger with the kingdom of heaven

functions as an eschatological incentive for human righteousness, and show that this use of divine anger and punishment resonates with certain philosophical teachings about divine providence and care.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I suggest that Matthew uses Greek and Roman philosophical teachings about human anger to create a portrait of Jesus as a teacher of ethics. By drawing upon already-established and recognizable teachings, Matthew creates an image of an authoritative teacher of ethics that would have been appealing to readers who were interested in pursuing a life of virtue.

CHAPTER TWO

ANGER AND ETHICS IN GREEK AND ROMAN PHILOSOPHY

This chapter provides an overview of the emotion of anger in Greek and Roman philosophical sources and provides an analytical model that will prove useful for comparing different claims about the moral value of anger. As was discussed in Chapter One, NT scholars have tended to overlook Greek and Roman literature as a meaningful intellectual context for the gospels. My focus on Greek and Roman materials is neither intended to be a simplistic alternative to scholarship that relies largely on Judean sources, nor is it a rejection of the Judean context of the earliest writings about Jesus.

Nevertheless, despite the abundance of Greek and Roman literature that deals with the emotions—including several treatises devoted exclusively to anger—many of the scholars currently working on the Gospel of Matthew explain the anti-anger teaching in 5:21-26 with reference to a literary context consisting nearly entirely of Judean sources.¹

To reiterate what was said in Chapter One, my use of philosophical sources is aimed at illuminating the range of possible interpretations with reference to the *author* of the gospel of Matthew, and not Jesus himself. As is explored further in the following chapters, the assumed Judaism of the author of the Gospel of Matthew in no way precludes his knowing about common themes of Greek literature or philosophy. To the contrary: as a writer and compiler of Greek texts, Matthew must have gone through at

¹ I discuss representative interpretations in Chapter Three.

least a basic level of Greek education that would have involved exposure to the conventions of Greek literature.

The purpose of this chapter, is to show that there is a rich and relevant history within which the narrative depictions of emotion in Matthew may be contextualized. The first section traces the history of the academic study of emotion among Greek philosophers and outlines the disagreements about the intrinsic value of emotion and its role in the good life. Of particular importance in this discussion are Aristotelian, Peripatetic, Epicurean, and Stoic accounts of emotion and anger; these divergent approaches to the ethical value of emotion serve, in later chapters, as the map upon which I locate the distinctive ethical teachings contained within the Gospel of Matthew.

The second section of the chapter argues that despite the differing views of the value of anger, there is nevertheless an identifiable schema by which anger is depicted in the writings of Greek and Roman philosophers. The schema has three main elements: 1) a definition or understanding of anger as being a desire for revenge, 2) a portrayal of anger as a component of social practice, and 3) a three-part narrative structure that describes three phases of anger and its related practices. Although the different philosophical schools do have divergent positions concerning the value of anger, they nevertheless all agree upon the three components of the anger schema. Chapters Three and Four argue that the Gospel of Matthew depicts anger in a way consistent with the three components of the anger schema.

A History of the Study of Emotion and Anger

Although an account of the history of emotion in ancient Greek philosophy may begin with Plato's writings, Aristotle is generally credited with offering the first systematic account of emotion and its relationship with human cognition.² Plato does discuss a range of affects that qualify as "emotions" in the sense that was discussed in Chapter One, but he does not limit the term *pathos* to the sorts of affects under consideration in this study. Even when Plato does write about the experiences that seem to correlate with our modern understanding of emotion, he does not articulate a unified doctrine. While the *Phaedo* and the *Theatetus* (176A ff.) seem to support the extirpation of passions from the human soul, the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* argue that the emotions are a natural part of the human soul and thus cannot be eradicated, but must instead be controlled.³ Pointing to the diversity of views expressed in the Platonic corpus is one way to show that it is difficult, if not impossible, to attribute a unified view of the emotions to Plato.

In a recent article, David Konstan evaluates ancient philosophical use of the term *pathos* along a scale of inclusivity that allows us to see how narrowly or broadly certain thinkers conceived of the term's semantic range.⁴ Plato, for instance, uses the term to refer to: anything perceived or experienced (*Gorgias* 481c5-8); anything that happens to a

² Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics, and Ethics*; William W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle and Theophrastus on the Emotions" in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (London: Routledge, 2008); Konstan, "The Concept of 'Emotion' from Plato to Cicero," 139-151; Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*; Gisela Striker, "Emotions in Context: Aristotle's Treatment of the Passions in the *Rhetoric* and His Moral Psychology" in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 286-302. But also see William Harris, who claims that Plato has a theory similar to our more modern concept of emotion, Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity*, 84-85.

³ John M. Dillon, "Metriopatheia and Apatheia: Some Reflections on a Controversy in Later Greek Ethics" in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy. Vol. 2*, eds. John Peter Anton and Anthony Preus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 508-517.

⁴ Konstan, "The Concept of 'Emotion' from Plato to Cicero," 139-151.

person (*Sophist* 248d4-5; *Gorgias* 476c2-3) or to an inanimate object (*Phaedo* 72b5, 78b5); psychological affect (*Phaedo* 59a4-6); the process leading to pleasures and pains (*Philebus* 32b6-7); hunger and thirst (*Phaedo* 94b7-10); and some of the contents of the mortal soul (pleasure, pain, confidence, fear, temper, hope; *Timaeus* 69c8-d4).⁵ Plato's wide-ranging use of the term *pathos* leads Konstan to doubt that,

... for Plato, the term *pathos* has as its specific referent what we think of as the emotions; on the occasions when it seems to coincide with the modern notion, it would appear to do so simply because the term is so capacious that these phenomena too, in the appropriate context, come under its umbrella.⁶

The claim that Plato has a broad interpretation of the term *pathos* should not be taken to mean that he could not grasp the concept of emotions in the more narrow sense.⁷ The point is, rather, that Plato does not offer the sort of consistent account of emotion that could count as a coherent theory.⁸

Konstan's conclusion that Plato does not offer a full account of our modern concept of emotion is in agreement with the work of William Fortenbaugh, who traces the origins of the academic discussion of emotion to Plato's Academy and points out that it is in Plato's *Philebus* that we first begin to see a sustained attempt to deal with questions of emotion and its relation to cognition.⁹ In the dialogue, Socrates identifies three kinds of mixtures of pain and pleasure (*Philebus* 46b10-c4): those found in the body alone, such as the simultaneous pain of being cold and pleasure of being warmed, (46d8-

⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸ For a recent discussion of the differing accounts of emotion in Plato's *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Philebus* and *Timaeus*, see Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 7-24.

⁹ Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics, and Ethics*; Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle and Theophrastus on the Emotions."

47c3); those found in the body and the soul, such as when the body is pained by being emptied and yet the soul is pleased by the expectation of replenishment (47c3-d3); and those found in the soul alone, such as the combination of pain and pleasure in anger, fear, longing, or lamentation (47d4-50e2). By identifying the pains and pleasures of the soul alone with affects such as “anger [*orgēn*], fear, longing, lamentations, love, jealousy, malice, and other things like that,” (47e1-2)¹⁰ the dialogue moves in the direction of a theory that is closer to our modern understanding of emotion as something distinct from bodily drives such as hunger or thirst. It also introduces the idea that opinion and cognition are related to emotional response, but does not clarify the precise nature of this relation.¹¹

There is not one “Platonic” view of the emotions. Not only does Plato propound different doctrines in different dialogues, but he also does not restrict his use of the term *pathos* to the narrower sense that is under discussion in this study. Plato’s category of *pathē* is broad enough to include pain, pleasure, desires, and appetites, as well as phenomena such as fear and joy, which, as we will see, come to be separated off into a category of their own by later philosophers. Due to these constraints, I begin my history of emotion and anger with Aristotle. This is not to say that Plato’s writings will not be relevant in the pages to come or to deny the important role Plato’s Academy played in the beginnings of the academic study of emotion. Rather, it is to say that Aristotle offers the

¹⁰Translation, with modification, from Dorthea Frede in John M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005).

¹¹ Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics, and Ethics*, 9-11.

first extended and systematic treatment of emotion, and thus I begin my history with him.¹²

Aristotle and his Followers

Aristotle takes up the question of the relation between cognition and emotional response, and offers an innovative solution in the *Topics*. In his discussion of anger, Aristotle notes that anger involves both pain and the thought that one is outraged. Aristotle is not content with Plato's claim that "anger is pain 'with' the thought of outrage," for the term "with" is not very precise.¹³ Two qualities may in fact exist together and yet not have any direct relationship to each other: "suppose courage to have been defined as daring with right reasoning: here it is possible that a person exhibits daring in robbery, and right reasoning in regard to the means of health—but he is not courageous just because he has this together with that at the same time."¹⁴ Instead, Aristotle introduces a *causal* connection between the pain of anger and the thought of outrage.

Aristotle follows through on this idea in his *Rhetoric*, where he identifies the thought of outrage as the efficient cause of anger. As Fortenbaugh describes, "Anger is not a pain which happens to occur together with (*meta*) the thought of outrage. On the contrary, anger is necessarily caused by the thought of outrage, so that such a thought is

¹² But even Aristotle is not always consistent. For some of the complications regarding this issue, see Dorothea Frede, "Mixed Feelings in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*" in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 258-285; Striker, "Emotions in Context: Aristotle's Treatment of the Passions in the Rhetoric and His Moral Psychology," 286-302.

¹³ Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics, and Ethics*, 11; Striker, "Emotions in Context: Aristotle's Treatment of the Passions in the Rhetoric and His Moral Psychology," 288, 300 n. 6.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Topics* 150b28-151a13. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Aristotle are from Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, trans. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

mentioned in the essential definition of anger.”¹⁵ This “essential definition” may be found in *Rhet.* 2.2:

Anger may be defined as a desire [*orexis*] accompanied by pain [*meta lupēs*], for a conspicuous revenge [*timōrias*] for a conspicuous slight [*oligōria*] at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself or one’s friends. If this is a proper definition of anger, it must always be felt towards some particular individual, e.g. Cleon, and not man in general. It must be felt because the other has done or intended to do something to him or one of his friends. It must always be attended by a certain pleasure [*tina hēdonēn*]¹⁶—that which arises from the expectation of revenge. For it is pleasant to think that you will attain what you aim at, and nobody aims at what he thinks he cannot attain. Hence it has been well said about wrath [*thumou*],

Sweeter it is by far than the honeycomb dripping with sweetness,
And spreads through the hearts of men [*Iliad* XVIII 109].

It is also attended by a certain pleasure because the thoughts dwell upon the act of vengeance, and the images then called up cause pleasure, like the images called up in dreams.¹⁶

As may be seen in this excerpt, the stimulus for anger is the perception of a slight (a belittling action or word). The causal cognitive component in this exchange is the thought that one has been belittled by someone who is—based on his location in the social hierarchy—not worthy to give such an insult.¹⁷

¹⁵ Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics, and Ethics*, 12. In *Rhet.* 2, Aristotle analyses the other emotions in terms of cognitive causes as well; the thought of imminent danger, for example, is the efficient cause of fear. For Aristotle’s syllogistic explanation of angry behavior, see *Posterior Analytics* 94a36-b8 and *Ibid.*, 12-15.

¹⁶ *Rhet.* 2.2 (1378a30-b10).

¹⁷ A slight, for Aristotle, is a very precise concept: “A slight is a complex social event, and requires a considerable measure of judgment in order to be recognized or perceived as such” Konstan, “Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: The Strategies of Status,” 103. I say “his location in the social hierarchy” because I suspect Aristotle likely has free men rather than free women or slaves in mind. His definition of anger is dependent not only upon one’s status, but also upon one’s ability to exact revenge. Although women were by no means a homogenous group, and there were of course women with wealth and power, the options for women’s anger were more constrained than those of men, Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*, 56. The issue of gender and anger in antiquity is also complicated by the persistent negative stereotype of women’s tendency toward unjustified anger in antiquity. See *Ibid.*, 56-65; Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity*, 264-282.

Further, it should be noticed that Aristotle does not include pain and pleasure as part of the emotion itself, but rather as components attendant upon the emotion. Pleasure (*hēdonē*) and pain (*lupē*) are not *pathē* for Aristotle. Instead, they are *aisthēseis*, non-rational or sensory perceptions. These are different from the *pathē*, which require cognition, and which thus are located in the rational part of the soul.

At this point, one may ask why it is that the seminal discussion of the ancient study of the emotions is contained within Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and not, say, a text on psychology or ethics. As is well known, the task of an orator is to persuade an audience to change its opinion or to lead a jury to a certain judgment; because the *pathē* are commonly understood to be those things by which people change their judgments,¹⁸ a good orator should have a basic understanding of what the emotions are and how they work so that he may more effectively control the response of those listening. What we have in the *Rhetoric*, then, is a dialectical account of the emotions aimed at enabling the orator to understand how emotions work so that he may incite them in his audience. This, however, should not be taken to mean that it is a false account or that it does not express a carefully considered view of what the emotions really are; rather, the account of the emotions in the *Rhetoric* is "an appropriately thoughtful study of the emotions themselves, and not merely what people say about them."¹⁹

¹⁸ *Rhet.* 1378a19-22.

¹⁹ John M. Cooper, "An Aristotelian Theory of the Emotions" in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 242. In agreement with this point are also David Konstan, "Rhetoric and Emotion" in *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric*, ed. Ian Worthington (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 415, 417, 419; Martha Craven Nussbaum, "Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion" in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 305-306; Striker, "Emotions in Context: Aristotle's Treatment of the Passions in the Rhetoric and His Moral Psychology," 286-288.

Concerning the intrinsic value of the emotions and their role in the good life, Aristotle claims that they are neither good nor bad in and of themselves. Rather, they should be judged depending upon the context in which they arise, and thus are only *situationally* good or bad. For Aristotle, an appropriate emotive response would take into consideration whether it arose at the right time, in the right manner, and with reference to the right object.²⁰

It is within this line of thinking that Aristotle lays out his description of emotional practices in *Rhet.* 2.²¹ Anger, for example, is necessary within a society that values honor—a society that Aristotle takes for granted.²² If someone slights another person it is anger (*orgē*) that inspires revenge. Anger serves a social purpose; it inspires a person who has been slighted (belittled) to take actions that help restore any honor that has been lost.²³

²⁰ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.*, 1125b32-34; c.f. *Eth. nic.* 1126b5-9: “But this much at least is clear, the intermediate disposition, in accordance with which we are angry with the people we should, in the circumstances we should, in the way we should, and so on, is to be praised while the excessive and the deficient states are to be censured—lightly, if the deviation is small, more if it is more, but severely if it is on a large scale. It is clear, then, that it is the intermediate disposition we should hold on to.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Eth. nic.* are from Christopher Rowe and Sarah Broadie, eds., *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Aristotle’s doctrine of circumstantial appropriateness is not the same as a doctrine of moderation. Sometimes harsh anger is appropriate, whereas other times a highly restrained version suits the situation; Aristotle does not advocate a moderate amount of anger for every circumstance.

²¹ My discussion of Aristotle’s ethical view of anger is based upon his treatment of anger in *Rhet.* 2.2 and *Eth. nic.* IV.5. I have also been influenced by the interpretation of anger offered in Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*, 41-76; Konstan, “Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: The Strategies of Status,” 99-120. Aristotle’s physiological account of anger (a boiling of blood around the heart, *De anima* 1.1.403a29-b3) is not directly related to this project, but this is not to say that physiological and ethical accounts of anger do not entail each other. C.f., Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, “De Anima: Its Agenda and its Recent Interpreters” in *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima*, eds. Martha Craven Nussbaum and Amélie Rorty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 8. A nice collection of essays on Aristotle and emotion is contained in Amélie Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle’s Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 206-323.

²² Konstan, “Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: The Strategies of Status,” esp. 112-120.

²³ Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*, 41-76, esp. 73-76.

In this interpretation, one's affect is not simply an expression of an internal state; instead, the properly negotiated performance of affect may be viewed as a component of social practice that helps one to maintain various kinds of social or symbolic capital. The identification of anger as a component of social practice bears itself out in Aristotle's idea that a true slight can only be given by an inferior to a person of higher status or by an equal to an equal. If a superior treats an inferior with contempt, this does not embody a slight because the person truly is of lesser worth. The person of merit, however, who has been belittled by an inferior or an equal, initially feels pain, which is quickly followed by a more pleasurable desire for revenge.

For Aristotle, a person of honor and status *should avenge a slight*. Not to do so is to risk being seen as foolish, slavish, or unmanly, but to do so "in the circumstances one should and at the people one should, and again in the way one should, and when, and for the length of time one should" is to be praised.²⁴ Anger, then, is a proper, natural and necessary response to a failure in the social practices of a society that values honor, praise, status and hierarchy.

Aristotle's own writings are not the only sources for arguments or assumptions about the desirability of certain emotions. Theophrastus carried on Aristotle's teachings, and we also find later Greek and Latin discussions of emotion that preserve Aristotelian arguments.²⁵ Sections of Seneca's *Ira*, for example, are organized around refuting the arguments of an interlocutor who maintains the necessity of anger for certain actions.

²⁴ The negative tone of "slavish" and "unmanly" is another indicator that perhaps Aristotle has only free men in mind in his discussion. Both slaves and women had a far more narrow range of circumstances in which anger would be appropriate than did free men. Both the absence and excess of anger were viewed as inappropriate, and men exhibiting either of these two states could be described as womanish.

²⁵ For a discussion of Theophrastus's introduction of degrees of emotion with relation to "the more and the less," see Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle and Theophrastus on the Emotions," 39-41.

Cicero preserves Peripatetic arguments for the usefulness of the passions (*Tusc.* 4.39-46) and Philodemus is dismayed at Peripatetics who claim, like Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, that “the spirit of avenging oneself on enemies” is “a thing becoming and just and profitable both in private and public and beside that pleasurable” (*Ir.*, 31-32).²⁶ These and other texts attest to the survival and character of Aristotelian traditions.²⁷

One should be careful, though, not to assume that the views of Aristotle and those of his later followers are identical. Although Aristotle says little about therapy for the emotions, the later texts cast Aristotle as placing an emphasis on moderate emotions (*metriopatheiai*) rather than upon emotions as ethically appropriate with reference to situational criteria. This may be viewed as a Stoicized version of Aristotle, for it argues against Stoic extirpation of bad emotions by advocating the moderation of them.²⁸

Despite these differences, it is still appropriate to refer to an Aristotelian/Peripatetic tradition in which emotions are valued under the right circumstances.

²⁶ All translations from Philodemus’s *Ir.* are from David Armstrong’s unpublished translation, which he kindly shared with me.

²⁷ Knowledge of an Aristotelian argument does not, of course, imply a direct knowledge of the texts of his “school-works,” nor does it suggest that his writings were wildly popular or largely available to other philosophers in his own time and in the centuries following his death, as emphasized by F. H. Sandbach, *Aristotle and the Stoics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1985). We do know, though that Aristotle’s account of anger cohered, at least roughly, with the depictions of anger in Greek drama and comedy (and possibly folk morality and psychology). David J. Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists: Study I, Indivisible Magnitudes; Study II, Aristotle and Epicurus on Voluntary Action* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) makes a convincing case for knowledge of Aristotle’s works, at least among the Epicureans, concerning physics. The importance of the Furley essays is that they show that Aristotle’s writings may not have endured the harsh fate ascribed to them in accounts about Neleus of Scepsis, who, upon receiving Theophrastus’s entire library, supposedly took it away to Scepsis, where it languished until the first century BCE (Strabo, xiii.; DL, v. 52, 53, 55, 56; Athenaeus, i.; Plutarch, *Sulla*).

²⁸ Braund and Gill, *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, 6-7. I say “extirpation of bad emotions” because I do not want to imply that the Stoics advocated pure apathy. Instead, they distinguished between “good” emotions (*eupatheiai* or *constantiae*) and “bad” ones (*pathē* or *perturbationes*), and argued that the wise person would only be capable of the good ones: joy (*chara* or *gaudium*), wishing (*boulēsis* or *voluntas*), and caution (*eulabeian* or *cautio*); Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.12-14. For a recent evaluation of Stoic theory on the emotions that demonstrates that the “pure apathy” argument is inaccurate, see Graver, *Stoicism & Emotion*. For a discussion of the confusion of later Platonists over the Stoic doctrine of the *eupatheiai*, see Dillon, *Metriopatheia and Apatheia: Some Reflections on a Controversy in Later Greek Ethics*, 508-517.

Thus far, we have seen that Plato uses the term *pathē* to include pleasure, pain, appetites, desires, and emotions. Aristotle restricts the term to refer to emotions, which require cognition, and thus are located in the rational part of the soul; pleasure and pain, for him, are *aithēseis* (sense perceptions) that reside in the non-rational section of the soul. We now turn to Epicurus, who uses the term *pathos* in an entirely different manner.

Epicurus and the Epicureans

According to Epicurus, the *pathē* are limited to pleasure (*hēdonē*) and pain (*algēdōn*).²⁹

Pleasure and pain are registered by the non-rational part of the soul, as in Aristotle, but they serve a different purpose than the *aithēseis*. For Epicurus, *aithēseis* exist to confirm the physical appearance of things. Whether a tower that appears round at a distance is really square upon closer examination,³⁰ for example, is the sort of question that may be answered with reference to sensory perceptions, which are incorrigible:

“Every sensation (*aisthēsis*), he says, is devoid of reason (*alogos*) and incapable of memory ... nor is there anything which can refute sensations or convict them of error ... for they are equally valid.”³¹

²⁹ Konstan, “Epicurean 'Passions' and the Good Life,” 194-205; Konstan, “The Concept of 'Emotion' from Plato to Cicero,” 139-151; David Konstan, *A Life Worthy of the Gods: The Materialist Psychology of Epicurus*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2008). This is not an uncontroversial claim, and Konstan does note that Epicurus’s exclusive identification of the *pathē* with pleasure and pain does not extend to other Epicurean writers. Philodemus, for example, describes anger as being a *pathos* in the more conventional (i.e., Aristotelian) sense of the term.

³⁰ DL 10.34.

³¹ DL 10.31-32. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Diogenes Laertius are from Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks, Vol. 1-2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). For Epicurus’s argument that all *aithēseis* are true, see Gisela Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 77-91.

For Epicurus, *pathē*, like *aisthēseis*, are non-rational. Even non-human animals have them. They, like *aisthēseis*, are criteria of truth, and thus serve an important purpose in the lives of all animals. Unlike *aisthēseis*, however, *pathē* are criteria for choice and avoidance: “They affirm that there are two states of feeling [*pathē*], pleasure and pain [*hēdonē kai algēdonā*], which arise in every animate being, and that the one is favourable and the other hostile to that being, and by their means choice and avoidance [*tas haireseis kai phugas*] are determined.”³² Creatures know without being taught that they should avoid pain and pursue pleasure: flesh being torn is painful, and thus animals under attack try their best to flee an attacker; the warmth and nourishment provided by a mother is pleasant to a nursling, and thus the young animal seeks this out. The *pathē*, then, are not “emotions” in the more refined Aristotelian sense, but rather are those physical sensations that all animals associate with things to be pursued (cats sleep in the warm sunlit spots on the floor because it feels nice) and with things to be avoided (babies do not tend to cuddle with cacti because it hurts). For Epicurus, pleasure and pain are criteria by which life is enabled. Nature has provided *hēdonē* and *algēdon* to all creatures so that they can naturally act in ways that will sustain—not terminate—life.

What, then, of the “emotions”? Epicurus locates these in the rational part of the soul, but does not assign them to any one named category. In a way similar to the status of the affects of pleasure and pain in the non-rational soul, joy (*chara*) and fears (*phoboi*) are positive and negative affects of the rational soul.³³ As with Aristotle, these require beliefs. Fear and pain are both forms of distress, but while pain is non-rational (and can

³² DL 10.34.

³³ The evidence for this may be found in DL 10.66 and Lucretius, *DRN* 2.944-962. Both of these passages connect the phenomena of fears and joy (*phoboi*, *chara*; *pavor ac metus*, *laetitia*) with the rational part of the soul (*to logikon*; *mens animusque*); Konstan, “Epicurean ‘Passions’ and the Good Life,” 197-198.

be felt all over the body), fear is rational (and felt in the chest, where the mind was thought to reside). Unlike pain, however, fear is not incorrigible: fear can be mistaken, whereas pain cannot. The determining factor in the truth of fear is whether there exists a valid cause. The most prominent Epicurean illustration of a mistaken fear is the fear of punishment after death. This fear is mistaken, invalid, and empty because the fact of the matter is that at death the body dissolves into atoms, and there is no such thing as life after death—never mind post-mortem punishment.

In the case of anger, we are dealing with an affect of the rational part of the soul, and thus anger may be either well-founded or mistaken. The evidence we have on the topic of Epicurean views of anger points toward diversity and perhaps some tension among Epicureans on this topic. Nevertheless, the discernable commonality is that there was a difference between appropriate and mistaken anger: “...there was a recognizably Epicurean account of anger; its hallmark was a contrast, not between ‘moderate’ and ‘excessive’, but between ‘natural’ and ‘empty’ anger ...”³⁴ The Epicurean account agrees with the Aristotelian view that anger *can* be appropriate, but for different reasons.³⁵ Philodemus distinguishes between “natural anger” (*phusikē orgē*) and “empty

³⁴ John Procopé, "Epicureans on Anger" in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, eds. Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 173.

³⁵ Discussions of Philodemus's view of anger include: Julia Annas, "Epicurean Emotions," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 30.2 (1989), 145-164; M. Erler, "How to be Philosophical about the End of the *Aeneid*," *Illinois Classical Studies* 19 (1994), 191-201; Jeffrey Fish, "Anger, Philodemus' Good King, and the Helen Episode of *Aeneid* 2.567-589: A New Proof of Authenticity from Herculaneum" in *Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans*, eds. David Armstrong and others, 1st ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), 111-138; D. P. Fowler, "Epicurean Anger" in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, eds. Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 16-35; Christopher Gill, "Reactive and Objective Attitudes: Anger in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Hellenistic Philosophy" in *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen*, eds. Susanna Morton Braund and Glenn W. Most (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 208-228; Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity*; Konstan, "Epicurean 'Passions' and the Good Life," 194-205; Konstan, *A Life Worthy of the Gods: The Materialist Psychology of Epicurus*; Procopé, "Epicureans on Anger," 171-196; Voula Tsouna, *The Ethics of Philodemus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

anger” (*kenē orgē*), on the basis of Epicurus’s distinction between “natural” and “empty” desires.³⁶ *Phusikē orgē* is a natural part of being human, and the wise are even more prone to it than others. Natural anger³⁷ is brief and entirely acceptable when caused by particular actions or behaviors.

This type of anger is not the same as Aristotle’s, even though both are acceptable. First of all, while Aristotle associates *orgē* with a certain kind of pleasure, Philodemus denies such a connection. In the Aristotelian/Peripatetic view, anger has components of both pain and pleasure. The pain comes as a result of the offense that is given and the pleasure comes to the offended party when he exacts revenge for the insult (and even upon *imagining* the revenge). The Epicurean, however, finds the pleasure gained through revenge to be small and, ultimately, not worth it. Greater vexation will follow soon upon that small pleasure and ruin it.³⁸ According to Philodemus’s account, however, the pleasure derived from revenge is “always a bad emotion, for it always carries one away to actions that are damaging to oneself, and never to good. And if only the pain of anger is legitimate, the anger itself will be short-lived, since one naturally seeks the avoidance of pain.”³⁹ One reason for not retaliating, then, would be to avoid the potential pains that would come from the retaliation. If security or something else necessary is to be achieved, then the Epicurean, despite the pains involved, will choose to retaliate appropriately; but he will feel no pleasure in this at all. If nothing necessary is at stake,

³⁶ Procopé, *Epicureans on Anger*, 173.

³⁷ Epicurus had different ways of understanding the term “natural” that are important for a more detailed understanding of how he thought anger could have been natural. *Ibid.*, 179-180.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

³⁹ Fish, *Anger, Philodemus' Good King, and the Helen Episode of Aeneid 2.567-589: A New Proof of Authenticity from Herculaneum*, 115.

the Epicurean will choose not to experience the momentary pleasure of getting back at someone because he knows that the pains resulting from this retaliation (both his own pains and those inflicted upon others) will amount to an overall loss. Natural—and not empty—anger *does* have a place in the good life of the Epicurean but neither the anger nor the revenge contains any lasting pleasure; thus, it cannot be in itself a good.⁴⁰

Secondly, while the anger that Aristotle describes aims to restore honor, dignity, or status,⁴¹ the kind Philodemus describes would aim at things like safety or security of the community. Empty anger is never acceptable, for it is based upon mistaken and misguided judgments.

The Stoics

One important aspect of the Stoic theory of emotion is the distinction between the *eupatheiai* (the “good” or “natural” emotions) and the *pathē* (the “bad” or “unnatural” ones). When the human is functioning in an optimal manner, the Stoics claim, he or she will experience affects associated with proper value judgments. The ideal human, then, will have joy (*chara*), will have a healthy desire (*boulēsis*) for virtue and well-being, but will not carry on in either of these states without a certain measure of caution (*eulabeia*). All three of these natural emotions are dependent upon one’s ability to properly evaluate one’s surroundings in terms of their influence upon human virtue. Thus, the Stoic view of emotion is similar to the Aristotelian and Epicurean accounts in its claim that emotions are dependent upon value judgments.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 114-115. Fish points out that Vergil, in his account of Aeneas’ slaying Lausus, replaces the pleasure of anger with pity; Ibid., 119-120.

⁴¹ Again, see Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*, 41-76, esp. 73-76.

Whereas Aristotle identifies damaging emotions as those which are experienced in inappropriate circumstances or which lead to inappropriate responses, Stoics determine the value of certain emotions with reference to a conception of what is “natural” for the human animal: “They [the Stoics] say that passion [*pathos*] is impulse which is excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason, or a movement of the soul which is irrational and contrary to nature.”⁴² Because the unnatural emotions (desire, fear, pleasure, and grief) are considered to be contrary to nature (*para phusin*), they are considered to be outside the realm of what is appropriate in the good life. I first consider how and why the Stoics judge these particular emotions to be contrary to the nature of the human soul, which they claimed to be inherently rational.⁴³

One important difference between Platonic and Aristotelian accounts, on the one hand, and Stoic ones, on the other, involves the partitioning of the soul into parts. For Plato and Aristotle, the soul’s tri- or bi- partite nature allows for a certain kind of mental conflict; reason can be in conflict with the irrational part(s) of the soul, and thus mixed or conflicting thoughts and desires can exist simultaneously. For the Stoics, however, the soul is unitary⁴⁴ and thus mental conflict is characterized by a vacillation or fluttering between different thoughts: “Some people [meaning the Stoics] say that passion is no different from reason, and that there is no dissension or conflict between the two, but a

⁴² Stobaeus 2.88.8-10. Translation from A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, eds., *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 410.

⁴³ A more detailed account may be found in Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, 270-280.

⁴⁴ Except for Posidonius, if Galen is to be taken at face value. On the issue of the reliability of Galen’s account of Posidonius, see the recent discussion in Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 266-290. Although the Stoics part ways with Plato, they do in fact claim to be followers of Socrates. See, on this point, Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, 270, 316-324.

turning of the single reason in both directions, which we do not notice owing to the sharpness and speed of the change.”⁴⁵ The mind functions either rationally or irrationally, but is not divided into parts representing these two descriptors. Although quick fluctuation between rational and irrational thinking may give the *impression* of simultaneous conflicting feelings, this is not the case.

The Stoics, then, did not aim to “get rid of” an inborn or natural part of human existence known as emotional response, nor did they seek to control or repress it. The idea that emotion arises from a constitutive part of the human has no place in Stoic theory; they were not interested in eliminating or extracting anything from the human soul—for, as they saw it, there is nothing inherently wrong with the soul in the first place.⁴⁶ Rather, they were interested in inculcating a way of functioning that was suited to human reason, variously known as “following” or “living in agreement with” nature (*kata phusin*).⁴⁷ The human mind is built for rational thinking, and thus when it is functioning in its intended state, it does not give rise to troubling and irrational emotions such as fear, desire, pleasure, or distress.

The way the soul is imagined is important for our discussion insofar as it necessitates a particular way of thinking about the emotions. Instead of viewing emotions as arising from a natural part of the soul, the Stoics believe emotions arise from the reasoning faculty itself; the good emotions arise when it is functioning rightly and the bad

⁴⁵ Plutarch, *On moral virtue* 446f1-447a1. Translation from Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 412.

⁴⁶ Although Cicero does, wrongly, characterize it this way. See Julia Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Dillon, *Metriopatheia and Apatheia: Some Reflections on a Controversy in Later Greek Ethics*, 508-517.

⁴⁷ Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, 221-280.

emotions arise when it is functioning improperly or irrationally.⁴⁸ Thus, the properly-functioning mind will be entirely free from giving rise to negative emotions, whereas the mind characterized by mistaken value-judgments will inevitably do so. Each person, then, is entirely responsible for emotional response and can be corrected through moral education, which instills one with the knowledge that virtue is the only true good. Equipped with this knowledge, a person can evaluate situations properly and thus mitigate the possibility of having an irrational impulse.

An impulse (*hormē*) is a motive or impetus for a particular action as the result of assent to a particular proposition. All impulses are rational insofar as they are acts of cognition; even excessive impulses (emotions) are rational in this sense. When a Stoic speaks of an irrational or excessive impulse, then, he does not mean to say that the impulse comes from a non-rational part of the soul (for the Stoic, no such part exists). Galen reports that Chrysippus illustrated the difference between a rational impulse and an irrational one with the image of someone running so fast that he cannot stop himself:

When someone walks in accordance with his impulse, the movement of his legs is not excessive but commensurate with the impulse, so that he can stop or change whenever he wants to. But when people run in accordance with their impulse, this sort of thing no longer happens. The movement of their legs exceeds their impulse, so that they are carried away and unable to change obediently, as soon as they have started to do so. Something similar, I think, takes place with impulses, owing to their going beyond the rational proportion.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The term “rational” may be a bit misleading because it has two different meanings. First is a purely descriptive meaning that is linked to human cognition (i.e., anything that happens in the human mind may be termed “rational” simply by virtue of being an act of cognition; actions that are not considered to be conducted by the mind would thus be referred to as “a-rational” or “non-rational”). Second is a more evaluative meaning, which states that an action has been done thoughtfully or properly (i.e., it was rational for him to think that the sun would come up tomorrow; actions or conclusion that are the opposite of this would be termed “irrational”). It is in the second sense, then, that I use the term “irrational.”

⁴⁹ Galen, *On Hippocrates' and Plato's doctrines* 4.2.15-17, translation by Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 414.

Just as the difference between walking and running does not consist in there being a different pair of legs for each mode of locomotion, the difference between rational and irrational thinking does not require two or more separate soul-parts. Moving properly or improperly is not necessarily the result of different parts working against each other. Rather, it is the result of the same mechanism working in different ways.

The Stoics draw a necessary connection between cognition, belief, and emotion. All impulses require assent to some proposition, and all assents, in turn, require some sort of belief or judgment. One could consider this belief to have two stages: 1) assent to a premise about the goodness or badness of a situation (“that person just hit me for no good reason ... and this is bad”), and 2) assent to a premise about action relating to that situation (“I ought to become angry with that person and exact revenge”). This is similar to the logic of Aristotle’s account of anger. The difference, however, is that while Aristotle would claim that rational assent to a premise about harm, injury, or evil is possible, Stoic doctrine would deny this possibility on the grounds that true harm, injury, and evil exist only in flawed value judgments.

Anger is wrong, from a Stoic point of view, precisely because anger—the desire for revenge—begins with assenting to the premise that one has been harmed in a meaningful way.⁵⁰ There are many reasons given by the Stoics for the impropriety of anger, but the most prominent reason involves the proper identification of harm or injury. Because the only real harm (*iniuria*) that can come to a human is the kind that could keep him from his virtue, a sage will always have his virtue intact, no matter what anyone else does to him: “We do not deny that it is an unpleasant thing to be beaten and hit, to lose

⁵⁰ Seneca, *Ira* 2.1.3-5.

some bodily member, but we deny that all such things are injuries. We do not divest them of the sensation of pain, but of the name of injury, which is not allowable so long as virtue is unharmed.”⁵¹ By refusing to accept the existence of a *cause* for anger, a Stoic effectively precludes all possibility of anger’s arising in the first place: if anger is the desire to avenge a perceived injury, and if no injury is perceived, then anger will not come into existence.

It should be noted, though, that the refusal to assent to the impression about true harm does not eliminate the possibility of assenting to impressions about injustice, unfair treatment, or abuse.⁵² The refusal to acknowledge true harm does not prevent revenge or punishment; all it does is detach revenge and punishment from the emotion of anger.⁵³ A Stoic will avenge the murder of his father or the assault of his mother not out of anger, but because of filial affection and loyalty:

“What then?” you ask; “will the good man not be angry if his father is murdered, his mother assaulted before his eyes?” No, he will not be angry, but he will avenge them, will protect them. Why, moreover, are you afraid that filial affection, even without anger, may not prove a sufficiently strong incentive for him? . . . The good man will perform his duties undisturbed and unafraid; and he will in such a way do all that is worthy of a good man as to do nothing that is

⁵¹ Seneca, *De constantiae sapientis* 16.1-2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Const.* are from Seneca, *Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁵² For a discussion of the relationship between assent, impression, and impulse with regard to Stoic views of anger, see Katja Maria Vogt, “Anger, Present Injustice and Future Revenge in Seneca’s *De Ira*” in *Seeing Seneca Whole: Perspectives on Philosophy, Poetry, and Politics*, eds. Katharina Volk and Gareth D. Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 57-74.

⁵³ See Seneca, *Ira* 1.15.1: “And so the man who does wrong ought to be set right both by admonition and by force, by measures both gentle and harsh, and we should try to make him a better man for his own sake, as well as for the sake of others, stinting not our reproof, but our anger. For what physician will show anger toward a patient?” This also explains why Seneca says that Socrates would only beat his slave after a cooling off period: “Yet it is not anger, but reason that separates the harmful from the sound. For the one who administers punishment nothing is so unbefitting as anger, since punishment is all the better able to work reform if it is bestowed with judgement. This is the reason Socrates says to his slave, ‘I would beat you if I were not angry.’ The slave’s reproof he postponed to a more rational moment; at the time it was himself he reproved” (*Ira* 1.15.2-16.1).

unworthy of a man. My father is being murdered - I will defend him; he is slain - I will avenge him, not because I grieve, but because it is my duty.⁵⁴

Responding to an injustice must not—and in fact for a Stoic, cannot—be done out of anger.

Thus, unlike the Aristotelian and Epicurean contention that anger can have an appropriate place in the good life, the Stoics argue that there is *never* a right time, a right amount, a right object, or a right extent for anger.⁵⁵ Questions about the circumstances of anger are not relevant because *anger is always* unnatural.⁵⁶ As such, it has no place in the good life,⁵⁷ for the very existence of an emotion (*pathos*) represents some level of deviation from reason. The Stoic claim that the *pathē* (as opposed to the *eupatheiai*)⁵⁸ are wrong because they are irrationally misguided judgments holds true in the case of anger, which trades upon a mistaken belief about the true nature of harm.

An Anger Schema

Now that some of the divergent ways of theorizing the nature of emotion and evaluating the ethical value of anger have been examined, I offer an analytical model that highlights

⁵⁴ Seneca, *Ira* 1.12.1-2. C.f., *Ira*, 1.12.5.

⁵⁵ In using Seneca as a representative of the Stoic view of anger, I do not intend to imply that there was no variation among Stoics on the topic of anger. For a summary discussion of Stoics views on anger, see Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity*, 104-123. Other recent discussions of Stoic anger include Gill, "Reactive and Objective Attitudes: Anger in Virgil's Aeneid and Hellenistic Philosophy," esp. 210-213; Procopé, "Epicureans on Anger," 176-7; Vogt, "Anger, Present Injustice and Future Revenge in Seneca's De Ira," 57-74.

⁵⁶ For arguments for anger's being contrary to nature, see Seneca, *Ira* 1.5.2-6.5.

⁵⁷ For arguments against anger's utility, see Seneca, *Ira* 1.7.1-13.5.

⁵⁸ As Margaret Graver has shown, the Stoics did value certain emotions and see them as important within the good life Graver, *Stoicism & Emotion*.

the similarities among the various philosophical discourses.⁵⁹ The analysis focuses upon three shared components that point to the existence of a schema of anger that was expressed in Greek and Latin texts. Although the schema may be found in texts from a variety of genres (comedy, drama, philosophy), I concentrate on the philosophical texts because their teachings about moral psychology form the most appropriate context in which to understand the anti-anger teaching in Matthew 5:21-26. More to the point, I will argue in the next chapter that Matthew's teaching against anger not only contains the general components of the schema to be outlined here, but also characterizes the value of anger in a manner compatible with a Stoic view.

In what follows, I identify the common ways that various ancient authors characterize the emotion of anger. Despite a particular author's evaluation of the appropriateness of anger in the good life, three components remain consistent:

1) agreement on the definition of anger as the desire for revenge; 2) portrayal of anger as a component of social practice; 3) description of anger as consisting in three related yet distinct phases, often found in vignettes, anecdotes or narratives.

The first component of my proposed schema involves anger's relationship with desire (*epithumia* or *orexis* in Greek, *libido* in Latin). Perhaps the most specific definitions of desire were offered by the Stoics. In *Tusc.*, for example, Cicero explains that the Stoic theory of emotion posits four disorders (*perturbationes*) and three

⁵⁹ It is known that ancient authors employed various topical schemata (or *topoi*) in writing on different topics, including moral philosophy. See, for example, Johan C. Thom, "The Mind is its Own Place: Defining the Topos" in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, eds. Abraham J. Malherbe and others (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 555-573.

consistencies (*constantiae*).⁶⁰ The four disorders or passions (*perturbationes*) are distress (*aegritudo*), fear (*metus*), gladness (*laetitia*), and desire (*libido*), with desire (*libido*) being belief in the existence of a particular prospective good.

Each of these four genus emotions can bear itself out in a variety of ways, depending upon the cause of the emotion as well as its seemingly appropriate outcome. Thus, with reference to the genus emotion of desire, which is the belief that a good is in one's future, Cicero is able to distinguish a variety of species. He differentiates anger (*ira*, the desire to avenge an unjust harm) from rancor (*inimicitia*, anger biding its time for revenge), heatedness (*excandescencia*, anger at its inception) from hatred (*odium*, inveterate anger), and need (*indigentia*, a desire that cannot be satisfied) from yearning (*desiderium*, the desire to see someone who is not yet present).⁶¹ All of these are desires insofar as each expects some kind of future good, be it fulfilling a need, seeing your beloved, or bringing a longstanding desire for revenge to completion. Of importance here is that anger is characterized as a clearly defined species of desire. It is not a generalized feeling of frustration or irritation. Anger, instead, arises from a very specific circumstance: when someone believes himself to have been harmed unjustly; it arises not as a general "feeling" of discontent, but rather as an impulse toward a particular action: revenge.

All of the philosophical schools agreed not only that anger was a type of desire, but that it was the kind of desire aimed at avenging an undeserved harm. The definition is

⁶⁰ *Tusc.* 4.14. I assume Cicero is translating *pathē* with *perturbationes* and *eupatheiai* with *constantiae*. I like Graver's translation of *constantiae* as "consistencies" because these are the affects that are consistent with rationality; Marcus Tullius Cicero and Margaret Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 44. The delineation of emotions by genus and species may also be found in DL 7.111.

⁶¹ *Tusc.* 4.21; I have followed Graver's translation of the technical terms; Ibid., 46.

consistently repeated in the Stoic sources: “anger is ‘desire to punish a person who is thought to have harmed one unjustly’” (Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.21)⁶²; “anger [is] a desire to punish one who is thought to have done you an undeserved injury” (DL 7.113); anger is “desire to exact punishment” (Seneca, *Ira* 1.3.2). Lactantius reports that a variety of sources—including Aristotle—all agree on the definition of anger:

Anger is a desire to avenge an injury or, as Posidonius says, a desire to punish the person by whom you consider yourself unjustly damaged. Some people have defined it thus: anger is an agitation of the mind to harm someone who has harmed you or wanted to harm you. Aristotle’s definition differs little from my own; for he says that anger is the desire to pay back pain. (Lactantius, *De ira dei* 17.13)

This reference to Aristotle is consistent with what we saw previously in *Rhet.* 2.2: “Anger may be defined as a desire [*orexis*] accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself or one’s friends.” Despite the fact that Aristotle and the Stoics would disagree over the precise nature of the desire—for whereas Aristotle calls it an *orexis*, the Stoics call it an *alogos orexis*, an irrational desire—it remains a desire nonetheless.⁶³

Philodemus, too, views anger as a desire to enact revenge or punishment upon someone who has caused harm. The section of Philodemus’s treatise on anger that probably contained his definition has been lost,⁶⁴ but we can see from a few examples that he does consider anger to be a desire for avenging an intentional harm or injury. In one section, where he is explaining his claim that even the sage—by virtue of his being

⁶² And again at *Tusc.* 4.44: “anger is as I defined it lately the desire for vengeance” (*est enim ira, ut modo definivi, ulciscendi libido*). Although Cicero is not a Stoic, he explicitly reports Stoic doctrine in *Tusc.* 4. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Tusc.* are from Ibid.

⁶³ DL 7.113.

⁶⁴ Procopé, *Epicureans on Anger*, 176.

human—will be liable to anger, he poses a counter-argument from a hypothetical interlocutor who assumes that anger is a desire for revenge: “And here someone will say, ‘but if he is willing to be angered by injury, and is injured by certain people to the greatest possible extent, how can he fail to experience a great anger, and to have a violent desire for revenge?’”⁶⁵ Later, Philodemus again makes clear that anger is a desire for revenge, when he speaks of fools, who are “desiring vengeance as if it were an enjoyable thing, which is indeed entailed by great anger ...”⁶⁶ And again, concerning the sage who is faced with a potentially anger-arousing situation, Philodemus associates anger with the belief that one has been harmed intentionally:

So that if to be angered follows commonly on such notions; and the wise man, being injured by someone intentionally, understands correctly that he is harmed, but just to the extent that he has actually been harmed, then of course he will be angered, but briefly ...”⁶⁷

It is clear that intentional harm is what inspires the desire to retaliate in some way, either through revenge or opposition. Paired with Philodemus’s classification of anger into Epicurus’s two categories of desire (natural and empty), it is safe to say that he understands anger to be a kind of desire.

The second component of my proposed schema of anger is this: the sources all represent anger as a component of social practice. By this I mean that the texts do not generally depict anger as being a solitary affair; people are rarely described as becoming angry at themselves.⁶⁸ The texts spend a good amount of time identifying the

⁶⁵ Philodemus, *Ir.*, 41.

⁶⁶ *Ir.*, 42.

⁶⁷ *Ir.*, 47.

⁶⁸ There is mention of someone being angry with himself in Seneca, *Ira* 3.6.5, but this is not the focus of that passage. There is also the therapeutic technique of hiding one’s anger within oneself, but in these

interpersonal behaviors that are grounds for anger and describing the ways that one might respond. Anger requires interaction between at least two people; of course there may be cases where someone becomes angry at the *perception* of being harmed by someone else, but even this perception requires at least some minimal contact. In these cases, it is not the bare act of social interaction that has been perceived, but rather its *harmful nature*.⁶⁹ The very notion of revenge implies some kind of previous social exchange. This is not to say that people are never angry while alone, or that one could not understand the effects of anger in personal or private terms,⁷⁰ but that the *impetus* for anger and the *realm of its satisfaction* may best be described in terms of social interactions. Thus when I say that anger is depicted as a component of social practice, I simply mean that the sources describe anger as arising as the result of one's evaluation of a social event rather than as an intrinsic and enduring aspect of a person's psyche.⁷¹

Finally, the third component of the anger schema has to do with the formulaic ways in which authors depict anger through anecdotes and stories. The tales are often inextricable from the moral teaching at which the author aims and thus are commentaries

situations it is clear that the stimulus was an interaction with another person, and the reason for hiding anger is socially motivated (to prevent getting someone *else's* dander up, for instance.) See Seneca, *Ira* 3.14.1-15.2, for examples of hiding anger.

⁶⁹ In other words, I am not including extreme cases where someone may imagine interaction where it did not take place. I think we would call this paranoia or some other sort of delusional thinking. I think what is meant when the texts say "perception" of an injury is "construal" or "interpretation" of a particular interaction as being injurious. Seneca's *Const.* contains an extended argument for why one ought not view social interactions as having the capacity to cause true harm.

⁷⁰ Such as when the Stoics argue that anger damages the souls of the individuals who assent to it or when they recommend therapeutic techniques that require personal reflection or solitude.

⁷¹ The most compatible modern analog would be appraisal theory, which has recently been discussed with reference to the highly social aspects of appraisal in Gerald L. Clore and Andrew Ortony, "Appraisal Theories: How Cognition Shapes Affect into Emotion" in *Handbook of Emotions*, eds. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones and Lisa Feldman Barrett, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 628-642; Antony S. R. Manstead and Agneta H. Fischer, "Social Appraisal: The Social World as Object of and Influence on Appraisal Processes" in *Appraisal Processes in Emotion: Theory, Methods, Research*, eds. Klaus R. Scherer, Angela Schorr and Tom Johnstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 221-232.

on the moral value of a person's response to anger-inducing stimuli. What is important for my purposes, however, is not the moral value of the stories but rather the situations themselves; I examine the sorts of social stimuli that provoke anger and the kinds of responses that follow. In order to organize this examination, I suggest that the formulaic accounts of anger be analyzed via a three-part narrative structure, consisting of:

1) provocation, 2) desire, and 3) response. Sometimes the three components appear in the order listed but it is not unusual to find them sprinkled throughout the stories in varying order. This structure may seem obvious, especially given the accounts of emotion that were summarized in the first half of the chapter. The model is important, though, because it provides a way of comparing the Greek and Roman materials with the gospel materials that accounts for the continuity of common literary conventions about anger, but also enables us to pinpoint the specific elements that differ. In other words, it offers a detailed framework for comparison that allows for a more nuanced analysis than is currently available. Table One, below, displays the individual components of the proposed anger schema.

Table One: Proposed Descriptive Anger Schema with Prescriptive Variations

	Variation #1 (Aristotle & Peripatetics)	Variation #2 (Philodemus)	Variation #3 (Stoics)
Provocation	with pain at perceived slight	with pain at perceived harm	no perception of harm and thus no pain
Desire	With anticipatory pleasure	without anticipatory pleasure; with the goal of safety, security, or justice	rational assessment and thus no desire

Response	revenge, with pleasure	revenge, punishment, or teaching, with pain on the part of the one responding	punishment, teaching, or reconciliation
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The left-hand column lists the three components typically found in descriptions of anger (provocation, desire and response), while three prescriptive variations are listed in the top row. The first prescriptive variation involves provocation in the form of a slight, desire for revenge with anticipatory pleasure, and, finally, the pleasurable satisfaction of revenge. Aristotle's discussion of anger from *Rhet.* 2.2 and the Peripatetic discourse recounted by Cicero in *Tusc.* (both discussed in the previous section) fit this first variation. The second variation includes a provocation in the form of injustice or harm, the (ideally) natural desire for revenge, and response with pain or vexation. Philodemus's emphasis on the brevity of natural anger and the pain that it brings highlights the main difference between the first and second variations. Finally, the third variation aims to disrupt the development of anger through attention to the evaluation of the potentially-provocative stimulus. This happens through a rational assessment of the situation and is followed by a non-affective response that aims at punishment, teaching, or reconciliation.

Many of the stories of anger and revenge are violent and often involve murder or torture as the fulfillment of the desire for revenge, yet the impetus or provocation may not itself have been physically violent. We need not assume that this necessarily points to a conclusion about the volatility or uncivilized nature of ancient society.⁷² Instead, it is

⁷² As is the case in some ontogenic accounts of the history of emotion, such as Norbert Elias and others, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, Rev. ed. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000). This approach is critiqued in Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," 821-845; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*

likely the attempt of the author to “set before the eyes” the dangers and evils of anger so that the reader may see firsthand the irrationality of anger.⁷³ Nevertheless, the anecdotes follow the formulaic schema discussed above. I illustrate the first variation of narrative accounts with reference to two passages from Seneca’s *Ira*.

The first illustrates how a relatively minor stimulus may be perceived as a slight or a threat and thus lead to a desire for—and fulfillment of—revenge:

... inflamed by a very few incendiary words, [a mass of people] outdoes the incendiary himself; they fly forthwith to fire and sword, and proclaim war against their neighbors or wage it against their countrymen; whole houses are consumed, root and branch, and the man who but lately was held in high esteem and applauded for his eloquence receives now the anger of his following; legions hurl their javelins upon their own commanders ... the moment their excitable minds are roused by the semblance of injury, they are forthwith in action, and where their resentment draws them, like an avalanche they fall upon their legions ... (Seneca, *Ira* 3.2.3-6)

First, we find that the provocation amounted to “a very few incendiary words” which moved the people to the “semblance of injury.” Because of this, they become angry (they are “inflamed” and drawn along by “resentment”) and satisfy the anger by taking up fire and sword, burning houses, and attacking whomever they can. Re-structured to follow the three-part formula proposed above, it looks like this:

Provocation	a. Mental pain received: incendiary words b. Injury perceived: “minds are roused by the semblance of injury”
Desire	a. Desire for revenge b. They are inflamed, angry, and resentful
Response	a. The vengeful response goes beyond the provocation: the mass of people “outdoes the incendiary himself” b. “they fly forthwith to fire and sword, and proclaim war against their neighbors or wage it against their countrymen; whole houses are consumed, root and branch”

⁷³ For discussion of the therapeutic technique of “setting before the eyes,” see Voula Tsouna, “Anger and the Desire for Revenge” in *The Ethics of Philodemus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 195-238.

- c. “legions hurl their javelins upon their own commanders”
- d. “they are forthwith in action ... they fall upon their legions”

Seneca makes clear that the desire for revenge recounted in this anecdote is the result of an interaction that was judged injurious or harmful by those who became angry. Here, as elsewhere, the emotion of anger is more than a term descriptive of a mental state; it is, instead, an impulse toward a specific kind of behavior or action. The perceived provocation led to an impulse toward revenge. The people acted upon the impulse and satisfied the desire through physical violence.

In another section from *Ira*, Seneca shows the power of one’s own evaluation of whether one has been harmed by someone (or in this case *something*):

Cyrus, however, raged against a river. For when, with the purpose of taking Babylon, he was hastening to war - in which the favorable opportunity is of the utmost importance - he attempted to ford the river Gyndes, then in full flood ... [and] when one of the white horses which regularly drew the royal chariot was swept away, the king became mightily stirred. And so he swore that he would reduce that river, which was carrying away the retinue of the king, to such proportions that even women could cross it and trample it under foot. To this task, then, he transferred all his preparations for war, and having lingered there long enough to cut one hundred and eighty runways across the channel of the river, he distributed its water into three hundred and sixty runnels, which flowing in different directions left the channel dry. (Seneca *Ira* 3.21.1-3)⁷⁴

Losing one’s possessions and being prevented from waging a war that you had planned to win are clearly losses. In this case, the protagonist interacted not with another sentient being, but with a river. This story is important because it shows how powerful the moment of judgment or evaluation can be with reference to emotions. Even when there

⁷⁴ Plutarch also records stories of people taking revenge upon “soulless implements” such as lyres, bows, seas, and mountains (Xerxes branded and lashed the sea and sent an angry letter to Mount Athos) (Plutarch 455D-E).

was no chance whatsoever that the “agent” in this vignette intended to harm Cyrus,⁷⁵ he nevertheless interpreted the harm as undeserved and thus became angry. As with the previous story, this one may also be outlined in terms of the three narrative components:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Provocation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Material loss: “one of the white horses which regularly drew the royal chariot was swept away” ... [the river was] “carrying away the retinue of the king” b. Plans thwarted: “with the purpose of taking Babylon, he was hastening to war ...” |
| Desire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the king became mightily stirred” and “swore that he would reduce that river” ... “to such proportions that even women could cross it and trample it under foot” |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Physical revenge: “[he] cut one hundred and eighty runways across the channel of the river, he distributed its water into three hundred and sixty runnels, which flowing in different directions left the channel dry” |

Even though the retaliation does not return pain for pain in the way Cyrus desired, Cyrus still acted upon the river as if it had been an agent who had caused him an undeserved injury.

In addition to the narratives that depict the satisfaction of anger, there are also examples that cut short or modify the impulse toward enacting revenge. Before getting into the examples, though, we should consider how it is that one might think it is possible to disrupt the movement from provocation to revenge. The answer is not repression of anger, as a Freudian theory might suggest, for repression assumes that the desire or drive exists in the human no matter what, and that no amount of reasoning or teaching could eliminate the desire. In an appraisal model, however, like that of the Epicureans or the

⁷⁵ Unless, of course, we attribute agency to rivers. This would not be terribly implausible, given the tendency of the human adapted mind to detect agency in non-agentive objects.

Stoics, the emotion arises as the result of a particular evaluation or value judgment of a certain scenario.⁷⁶ Seneca describes the process of appraisal in close detail:

Our [Stoic] opinion is that it [anger] ventures nothing by itself, but acts only with the approval of the mind. For to form the impression of having received an injury and to long to avenge it, and then to couple together the two propositions that one ought not to have been wronged and that one ought to be avenged—this is not a mere impulse of the mind acting without our volition. The one is a single mental process, the other a complex one composed of several elements; the mind has grasped something, has become indignant, has condemned the act, and now tries to avenge it. These processes are impossible unless the mind has given assent to the impressions that moved it. (Seneca, *Ira* 2.1.3-5)

We can see in this excerpt that the threefold structure is present and that Seneca has supplemented it by explaining the different contributing beliefs:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Provocation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Belief of harm, injury: “to form the impression of receiving an injury”; “the mind has grasped something” b. Belief that the harm or injury was undeserved: “one ought not to have been wronged” c. Belief that an undeserved injury is a bad thing: “the mind has ... condemned the act” |
| Desire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Belief that you did not deserve the injury: “one ought not to have been wronged” b. Belief that avenging the harm/injury is good: “that one ought to be avenged” |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. After assenting to the beliefs, the mind tries to avenge the wrong |

Stoic accounts of anger challenge the possibility of the truth of the above beliefs, thus rendering invalid the conclusion of revenge out of anger. Despite Seneca’s careful analysis of each and every move in human cognition related to anger, this should not be taken to mean that the ideal human (the sage) would have to think through every minute

⁷⁶ I do not mean to imply that Aristotle does not have a theory that may be explained in terms of a modern appraisal model, for he certainly does. The point here, however, is to explain how the appraisal of the situation in the Stoic and Epicurean accounts is different from the Aristotelian/Peripatetic account in that it attempts to curtail anger.

detail. This kind of careful deliberation, if always conducted in the precise and conscious manner depicted above, does not capture how the sage was thought to function on a day-to-day basis. Instead, after learning these steps of deliberation, the good person will, through practice and education, inculcate the virtues that result in an automatic and unconscious practice of proper deliberation.

The first sort of challenge is the belief that harm or injury occurred. As we saw in the above discussion, this usually involves defining injury in a way that means that one's virtue has been compromised. Once injury is defined this way, the ground is cleared to argue that a sage can never truly be injured because his virtue is something that always remains intact:⁷⁷

... the really great mind, the mind that has taken the truest measure of itself, fails to revenge injury only because it fails to perceive it. As missiles rebound from a hard surface, and the man who strikes solid objects is hurt by the impact, so no injury whatever can cause a truly great mind to be aware of it, since the injury is more fragile than that at which it is aimed. How much more glorious it is for the mind, impervious, as it were, to any missile, to repel all insults and injuries! Revenge is the confession of a hurt; no mind is truly great that bends before injury. (Seneca, *Ira* 3.5.8)

The prerequisite for desiring to avenge an injury is the belief that an injury has taken place; if the only true injury is that which damages virtue and if virtue can never be damaged, then belief in injury is misguided.

Seneca is careful to distinguish between an *act* of provocation (being struck, for example) and the *belief* that you have been injured by that act. Acts of provocation

⁷⁷ See, for example, Seneca, *Const.* 5.4-5: "Virtue is free, inviolable, unmoved, unshaken, so steeled against the blows of chance that she cannot be bent, much less broken. Facing the instruments of torture she holds her gaze unflinching, her expression changes not at all, whether a hard or a happy lot is shown her. Therefore the wise man will lose nothing which he will be able to regard as loss; for the only possession he has is virtue, and of this he can never be robbed. Of all else he has merely the use on sufferance. Who, however, is moved by the loss of that which is not his own? But if injury can do no harm to anything that a wise man owns, since if his virtue is safe his possessions are safe, then no injury can happen to the wise man."

happen all the time; this cannot be prevented.⁷⁸ What can be prevented, however, is one's negative evaluation of these acts: "The invulnerable thing is not that which is not struck, but that which is not hurt; by this mark I will show you the sage ... the sage is not subject to any injury. It does not matter, therefore, how many darts are hurled against him, since none can pierce him."⁷⁹ The point is that when you are provoked, you should not believe that it can really hurt you where it counts—your virtue.⁸⁰ Seneca offers several different accounts of people who have successfully disrupted the chain of events set in motion by the (false) belief that one has received a true injury, and a survey of these accounts reveals several different kinds of strategies (see Table Two, below).

Table Two: Stoic Strategies for Disrupting the *Provocation-Desire-Response* Process

1. Provocation	2. Response
a. Affirm that no harm has been received b. Do not affirm that harm has been received (sometimes expressed by not forgiving the provocateur, as in <i>Const.</i> 14.3)	a. No response b. Make light of the provocation/incident, ⁸¹ c. Bear it calmly d. Reconciliation, kindness (if the provocateur made the provocation in error) e. Mild teaching/instruction (if the provocation or the error involved ignorance) ⁸² f. Harsh teaching/instruction or punishment

A variety of responses may occur in place of revenge, and none of them are the result of anger. Sometimes the examples combine different responses together (bearing something

⁷⁸ Seneca, *Const.* 4.2-3.

⁷⁹ Seneca, *Const.* 3.3-5.

⁸⁰ This belief directly involves anger. See Seneca, *Const.* 9.3.

⁸¹ Humor is an important way of dealing with less serious matters (insults or slights, for example). See Seneca, *Const.* 10.4, 17.1-4, 18.5.

⁸² There is emphasis on the fact that all people do and will make mistakes and that we ought not to judge others, lest we ourselves be judged in turn. "This rather is what you should think—that no one should be angry at the mistakes of men" (Seneca, *Ira* 2.10.1).

calmly and also providing some instruction, for example). The first kind of response is a non-response (2a above), which is illustrated by Seneca with reference to Cato, who “when he was struck in the face . . . did not flare up, he did not avenge the wrong, he did not even forgive it, but he said that no wrong had been done. He showed finer spirit in not acknowledging it than if he had pardoned it.”⁸³ Seneca also offers an example of how he himself utilizes this strategy in the face of a slight:

Some jest at the baldness of my head, the weakness of my eyes, the thinness of my legs, my build. By why is it an insult to be told what is self-evident?⁸⁴

The second and third kinds of responses (2b and 2c, from above) acknowledge that some minor loss or pain did occur, but trivialize the loss or pain either through humor or through simply enduring the incident with calm. With reference to humor as a strategy, Seneca offers this anecdote: “Socrates, it is said, when once he received a box on the ear, merely declared that it was too bad that a man could not tell when he ought to wear a helmet while taking a walk,”⁸⁵ and with reference to bearing an incident calmly, he recounts a “story handed down about Pisistratus, the Athenian despot”:

At any rate, there is the story handed down about Pisistratus, the Athenian despot - that once when a tipsy table-guest had declaimed at length about his cruelty, and there was no lack of those who would gladly place their swords at the service of their master, and one from this side and another from that supplied fuel to the flame, the tyrant, none the less, bore the incident calmly, and replied to those who were goading him on that he was no more angry at the man than he would be if some one ran against him blindfold.⁸⁶

The difference between 2a (no response) and 2c (bearing the incident) seems to be that the non-response of 2a is an expression that the recipient of the provocation was not

⁸³ Seneca, *Const.* 14.3.

⁸⁴ Seneca, *Const.* 16.4.

⁸⁵ Seneca, *Ira* 3.11.2.

⁸⁶ Seneca, *Ira* 3.11.4.

pained in any way whatsoever, whereas 2c implies that something did happen but that it is bearable. There is not an inconsistency with the Stoic claim that the sage cannot be harmed and that he can be pained or suffer some minor loss. Pains or damages resulting from acts of provocation are not denied, but the claim that these pains or damages constitute true injury (*i.e.*, damage to virtue) is denied.⁸⁷ Proper evaluations of one's environment depend heavily, then, upon a proper definition of "injury" or "harm."

Depending upon the situation, some responses could involve responding to a provocation with kindness and a spirit of reconciliation (2d from above):

What is more splendid than to exchange anger for friendship? . . . Does a man get angry? Do you on the contrary challenge him with kindness. Animosity, if abandoned by one side, forthwith dies; it takes two to make a fight. But if anger shall be rife on both sides, if the conflict comes, he is the better man who first withdraws; the vanquished is the one who wins. If someone strikes you, step back; for by striking back you will give him both the opportunity and the excuse to repeat the blow; when you later wish to extricate yourself, it will be impossible.⁸⁸

And, similarly:

The wise man will have no anger toward sinners . . . And so the wise man is kindly and just toward errors, he is not the foe, but the reformer of sinners, and as he issues forth each day his thought will be "I shall meet many who are in bondage to wine, many who are lustful, many ungrateful, many grasping, many who are lashed by the frenzy of ambition." He will view all these things in as kindly a way as a physician views the sick.⁸⁹

If some teaching is required because the offense was committed out of ignorance, instruction might be in order (2e from above). Seneca offers a technique designed to allay anger that entails self-reflection. When one is faced with a situation that could instigate

⁸⁷ Seneca, *Const.* 10.2; Socrates, for example, in his comment about wearing a helmet, seems to admit that the blows to the head do indeed hurt. Seneca, *Ira* 3.11.2; Seneca, *Const.* 5.5. Also see his example of Stilbo in *Const.* 5.6 and 6.3-7.

⁸⁸ Seneca, *Ira* 2.34.4-5.

⁸⁹ Seneca, *Ira* 2.10.6-7.

anger, Seneca suggests that one recount to himself “how many of his acts stand in need of pardon” and to remember that “no just judge will pronounce one sort of judgment in his own case and a different one in the case of others.” Then, with the realization that all humans make mistakes in mind, the offended party is advised to offer instruction to the offender that could help him reduce the future possibility of offense and also contribute to moral progress: “How much more human to manifest toward wrong-doers a kind and fatherly spirit, not hunting them down but calling them back! If a man has lost his way and is roaming across our fields, it is better to put him upon the right path than to drive him out.”⁹⁰

In some cases, however, standard instruction or moral exhortation may not be enough to get through to the offender.⁹¹ For cases like these, the Stoics advise a harsher kind of teaching that could involve punishment (2f from above):

... he [the sage] will admonish them [wrongdoers] and inflict suffering and punishment, not because he has received an injury, but because they have committed one, and in order that they may desist from so doing. For thus also we break in animals by using the lash, and we do not get angry at them when they will not submit to a rider, but we curb them in order that by pain we may overcome their obstinacy. Now, therefore, you will know the answer to the question with which we are confronted: “Why, if the wise man cannot receive either injury or insult, does he punish those who have offered them?” For he is not avenging himself, but correcting them.⁹²

As is made clear in the passage above, punishment is not to be done for the purpose of “getting back” at the offender in a way that would bring pleasure to the one doing the

⁹⁰ Seneca, *Ira* 1.14.1-3.

⁹¹ Seneca, *Const.* 7.3-6. Also see *Const.* 13.1-2 and *Ira* 1.6.1-3.

⁹² Seneca *Const.* 12.3.

punishing, but rather for the purpose of enacting a change in the mind and soul of the wrong-doer.⁹³

⁹³ The beliefs that contribute to this are: a belief that the provocateur has done something wrong/unjust and a belief that it is good to correct or punish the wrongdoer and/or to bring aid or security to the victim.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that ancient Greek and Roman moral philosophers placed great importance upon moral psychology and the role of emotions in the good life. We have seen that although nearly all agree upon the definition of anger and the way it works in social relations, there is stark disagreement about its moral value. Whereas Aristotle and the Peripatetics valued anger for the way it served to enforce hierarchical social structures or for its role as a motivating factor, the Epicureans and Stoics took a more cautious approach. In order to lay bare the ways in which each philosophical school made its case for its view of anger, I proposed a three-fold schema based upon the examples used by various ancient writers.

In the next chapter, I turn to the anti-anger teaching in the Gospel of Matthew and analyze it in terms of the three-fold schema. I will show that the three elements of the schema are present and that the teaching attributed to Jesus follows the Stoic strategies for anger avoidance.

CHAPTER THREE

MORAL INSTRUCTION ABOUT HUMAN ANGER IN MATTHEW 5

Matthew 5-7, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount, depicts Jesus sitting on a mountain and teaching his students about righteousness. The teachings contained in this discourse involve ideas about moral psychology and emotion, such as the virtues of gentleness, righteousness, pity, and well-wishing, as well as vices such as hatred, anger, and desire. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the teaching in Matthew 5.21-26 is a moral teaching about human anger that follows the contours of the philosophical anger schema outlined in Chapter Two. This argument reflects the plain sense of the text, but by no means aligns with the interests or methods of current scholarship on the Gospel of Matthew. Thus I preface my claims with an analysis and critique of current scholarship that characterizes the contents of the teachings in Matthew 5-7 in way that excludes serious engagement with Greek and Roman materials. This does not mean that all or even most of the current scholarship on Matthew explicitly denies the importance of Greek and Roman influence. Many scholars do acknowledge that the context includes Greek and Roman culture, and some use Greek and Roman materials extensively in their work on the social setting of the “Matthean community.” When it comes to explaining the contents or overall message of Matthew’s gospel, though, interpreters depend primarily upon Judean sources. My aim is not to *replace* the Judean context with a Greek one, for this would be anachronistic and essentializing, but rather to show that a Judean context

need *not exclude* a Greek one; further, it is to show that a valuable and viable interpretation of the anti-anger teaching comes to light when the Greek materials are taken into consideration.

The chapter begins with a review of the ways that contemporary commentators have emphasized the importance of Judean materials for the interpretation of Matthew 5-7 and the anti-anger teaching in Matthew 5.21-26. I limit the discussion to contemporary scholarship so that I may make clear my location within the field as it is today, and have chosen to discuss three scholars, Hans Dieter Betz, Dale Allison, and Ulrich Luz, who have worked on the Gospel of Matthew, especially Matthew 5-7, and also have authored or co-authored commentaries that have generally been well-received and widely-used.¹ These scholars represent ways of reading Matthew 5.21-26, and not Matthean scholarship as a whole. There is a much broader corpus of scholarship on Matthew, but when it comes to the interpretations of 5.21-26, contemporary academic views can be boiled down to these three. It is in this sense, then, that I view these three scholars as representing the commonly accepted emphasis upon Matthew's "Jewish" context.

After reviewing the work of these scholars, I offer an interpretation of Matthew 5.21-26 and its larger context, 5.21-48, in terms of the Greek and Roman materials described in Chapter Two. In doing so, the chapter: 1) shows that the author of the Gospel of Matthew was familiar with philosophical schemata of anger, 2) points out the ways that this familiarity is consistent with Stoic prescriptions about anger and moral

¹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004); Dale C. Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004).

psychology, 3) suggests that, in the case of the Gospel of Matthew, the descriptor “most Jewish” need not mean “least Greek.”

Matthew 5-7 and a Judean Context

Although the first commentary written exclusively on the teaching in Matthew 5-7 was penned by Augustine (4-5c CE), writers as early as Irenaeus (late 2c CE) were commenting on various passages from that section. It was only with Augustine’s commentary, however, that the idea that Matthew 5-7 could be viewed as a literary composition distinct from the rest of the gospel was introduced.² Augustine distinguished Matthew 5-7 from similar teachings found in Luke 6.17-49 by positing that two different discourses had been given by Jesus on separate occasions.³ In this scenario, Matthew recorded one of the speeches and Luke recorded the other.

Augustine’s two-discourse proposal helped later theologians who were concerned about the doctrine of divine inspiration.⁴ Critics of the doctrine who assumed that Matthew and Luke had each recorded different versions of the *same* event, could point to the discrepancies between the two accounts as evidence against divine inspiration. At stake here was the idea that divine inspiration resulted in a kind of writing that accurately depicted historical events; if the two reports did not match each other, then how can anyone claim that the authors of those sources were writing inerrantly under divine

² Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, 11-12, 45-46.

³ Ibid., 20 n.144: “De consensus evangelistarum 2.19.43 (PL 34.1098).” Others, such as Origen, Chrysostom, Euthymius, and Theophylactus, however, claimed that the Matthew and Luke had each recorded different versions of the same event. For citations, see Ibid., 20 n.140-143

⁴ Ibid., 20.

guidance? A convenient answer to such questioning was, as mentioned above, that Matthew and Luke recorded two separate events, which explains why the two accounts are different.

Others, however, who believed that the Matthean and Lukan texts recorded only *one* speech,⁵ upheld the doctrine of divine inspiration by means of other explanations. One way of doing this was to say that one version was more accurate than the other because the spirit provided differing levels of inspiration to the authors of Matthew and Luke in order to teach “us that literalness is not necessary in matters of small detail.”⁶ Forced to make a decision, then, about which author was “more inspired,” pre-modern commentators have tended to say that the author of Matthew gives a more accurate account than does the author of Luke. Matthew is given credit for being the more “authentic” version, with Luke’s version revealing more inaccuracies and authorial freedom.⁷ In particular, some argued that whereas Matthew’s account was truer to the teachings of the Judean Jesus, Luke’s account contained more Greek material, which was thought to have been added later. Hence, the descriptor “most Jewish” was essentially intended in this one instance to mean that Matthew’s gospel had not been tinged by Greek ideas.

⁵ Origen, Chrysostom, Euthymius, and Theophylactus; *Ibid.*, 20, 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 21. This is a bizarre argument that takes the following steps: 1) acknowledge that two texts reporting on the same event are in conflict with each other, 2) explain the conflict by claiming that the authors were divinely inspired to give conflicting details of the same event, 3) claim that the spirit that inspired the authors to have conflicting accounts acted this way in order to show people that “literalness is not necessary in small detail.” This seems like too much work. Why not just say they are similar but different, and move on to a less-convoluted set of explanations? Why must a non-obvious being be invoked?

⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-24.

The line of thinking that maintains that Matthew provided a more accurate account of Jesus' life depends upon two sets of related assumptions. First are assumptions about the historical context of Jesus' travels and teachings: to claim that Greek ideas only seeped into the accounts of Jesus' Judean mission at a *later* stage assumes that first-century Judea was an area free from Greek and Roman influence. We know, however, from textual and archaeological evidence, that Roman Palestine was heavily influenced by Roman and Greek culture, and more Judeans than not lived outside of Palestine in Diaspora cities that also could be described as being culturally Greek in many different aspects.⁸ Second is the assumption that gospels are historical records of the life and teachings of Jesus, which shades into further assumptions about genre and authorial intent (i.e., that the gospel writers were "believers" who were trying hard to preserve an accurate history of the beginnings of the Christian movement). Because many interpreters have believed that the "Jewishness" expressed in Matthew's gospel matched their imagined historical context for Jesus' life, Matthew came out on top when it came to being more historically accurate.

Assumptions like these both contribute to and stem from a particular view of Christian origins, one which assumes that Jesus and his earliest followers were Judeans of

⁸ A brief sampling of readings concerning the topic of Hellenism and Judaism includes: Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006); John Joseph Collins and Gregory E. Sterling, *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2001); W. D. Davies and others, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Martin Goodman, *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 1st American ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period*, 1st American ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

a decidedly non-Greek sort and that the more accurate depictions of this movement reflected this.⁹ Thus when people claim that Matthew is “the most Jewish gospel” they often mean to say that it is the least Greek and the most authentic representation of the earliest Jesus movement. The two propositions (“Matthew is the most Jewish gospel” and “Matthew is the least Greek gospel”) entail one another in a curious circle in which the assertion of a non-Greek Judean Jesus is authenticated by the assertion that the Gospel of Matthew is accurate because of its depiction of Jesus as a non-Greek Judean. One way that this view of Christian origins plays out in scholarship on Matthew is in the common tendency to think that one can best (or sometimes, *only*) understand the gospel in terms of ancient Judean texts.¹⁰

One of the legacies of Augustine’s commentary is the near-universal identification of this material as a “sermon.”¹¹ We should remember, though, that Augustine was writing in the late 4th century CE, at a time when Christianity had become a religion with its own distinctive practices, one of which was sermon-delivery. I suggest, therefore, that referring to the monologue in Matthew 5-7 as a “sermon” is not an accurate way to describe the discourse in its proto-Christian context. The genre of the sermon—at least as it is understood today—is a particularly Christian one, invoking

⁹ This way of thinking about Christian beginnings is commonly attributed to Adolf von Harnack, who thought that the originary events of the Jesus movement were “Jewish” (by which he means a kind of Judaism untouched by Hellenism) and that Greek influence came later; see the discussion and critique in Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-5 .

¹⁰ Even in his commentary on the Greek text of the Gospel of Matthew, John Nolland asserts that “Jewish texts are the most appropriate context for considering Jesus and the Gospel of Matthew.” John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 329 n. 465.

¹¹ *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount (De sermone domini in monte)*.

images of pulpits, preachers, and parishes.¹² To say, then, that Matthew's depiction of Jesus' didactic discourse is the record of a "sermon" is anachronistic because the style of teaching at this point in the development of Christianity was still dependent upon pre-Christian educational practices. Thus I refrain from referring to Matthew 5-7 as a "sermon" because the images and definitions associated with this term—when applied to moral discourse in the first century of the common era—re-inscribe a modern understanding upon an ancient activity in a kind of self-justifying circular logic. To avoid anachronism, then, I refer to this text as the "Teaching on the Mount" (TM).¹³

Despite near-unanimous agreement that Matthew 5-7 is a Christian "sermon," many interpreters have taken great pains to show how these chapters may only be understood within a Judean context. The majority of modern commentators have explained its individual teachings as well as its unity with reference to ancient Judean texts and traditions. Among these explanations, the more enduring themes deal with the relationship between Matthew 5-7 and rabbinic literature, the Qumran scrolls, or the Pentateuch.¹⁴ It cannot be denied that Judean traditions play a role and are of great

¹² Although rabbis, especially Reform, also give sermons.

¹³ I have preserved, however, the use of the phrase "Sermon on the Mount" (SM) when quoting from scholars who use this language.

¹⁴ Examples are numerous and include: Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Dale C. Allison, "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106.3 (1987), 423-445; Herbert W. Bassler, *The Mind Behind the Gospels: A Commentary to Matthew 1-14* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009); Herbert W. Bassler, *Midrashic Form in the New Testament: A Study in the Jewish Rhetoric of Likes and Opposites* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 141-153; Hans-Jürgen Becker, "The Character and Function of the Antitheses in Matt. 5:21-48 in the Light of Rabbinical Exegetic Disputes" in *The Sermon on the Mount and its Jewish Setting*, eds. Hans-Jürgen Becker and Serge Ruzer (Paris: Gabalda, 2005); Hans-Jürgen Becker and Serge Ruzer, *The Sermon on the Mount and its Jewish Setting* (Paris: Gabalda, 2005); Hans Dieter Betz and William Schweiker, "Concerning Mountains and Morals: A Conversation about the Sermon on the Mount," *Criterion* 36 (1997), 12-26; Hans Dieter Betz, "The Hermeneutical Principles of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:17-20)," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 42 (1983), 17-28; Kent E. Brower, "Jesus and the Lustful Eye: Glancing at Matthew 5:28," *Evangelical Quarterly* 76 (2004), 291-309; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1989); J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Ascetic*

interest in Matthew; Torah is a central motif, but this does not mean that other motifs or interests can be ruled out.

Aside from a small number of studies,¹⁵ however, commentators on content of the TM have neglected ancient philosophical discussions of Greek and Roman virtue ethics. As should be clear from the previous chapter, this neglect cannot be due to a lack of Greek and Roman sources; plenty of literature has survived about ancient emotion theory as well as on individual emotions such as anger, most of which is accessible through critical editions and translations in a variety of modern languages. Similarly, this neglect cannot be due to the TM's dissimilarity with ideas and terms valued by Greek and Roman philosophers; as is shown in this chapter, the TM contains ideas that were common currency among the Hellenistic philosophers, and which, in some cases, has unequivocal associations with particular schools of thought. Finally, the lack of attention to Greek and Roman sources cannot be due to some kind of ancient abyss between "Greek" and "Jewish" culture; as mentioned previously, many, if not most, Judeans of the time spoke Greek, either in Diaspora regions, or within Palestine itself. As we know from educated figures such as Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, and the apostle Paul, or from texts such as

Discourse: An Explanation of the Sermon on the Mount (Ko'amar Eilsbrunn, 1989); Gerald Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (New York: KTAV, 1969); William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972); Dan Lioy, *The Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Kurt Schubert, "The Sermon on the Mount and the Qumran Texts" in *Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 118-128; Harold S. Songer, "The Sermon on the Mount and its Jewish Foreground," *Review & Expositor* 89.2 (Spr 1992), 165-177; Gerald L. Stevens, "Understanding the Sermon on the Mount: Its Rabbinic and New Testament Context," *Theological Educator: A Journal of Theology and Ministry*, 46 (Fall, 1992), 83-95; Dennis C. Stoutenburg, *With One Voice = B'Qol Echad: The Sermon on the Mount and Rabbinic Literature* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1996); Sinai Turan, "A Neglected Rabbinic Parallel to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:22-23; Luke 11:34-36)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127.1 (2008), 81-93; Francois P. Viljoen, "Jesus' Teaching on the Torah in the Sermon on the Mount," *Neotestamentica* 40.1 (2006), 135-155.

¹⁵ Hans Dieter Betz, "The Sermon on the Mount: Its Literary Genre and Function," *Journal of Religion* 59.3 (1979), 285-297; Marius Reiser, "Love of Enemies in the Context of Antiquity," *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001), 411-427.

4 Maccabees, some people assumed fluidity between traditional Judean and Greek philosophical ideas.

I suggest that the reason scholars emphasize a Palestinian/Judean “Jewish background” for the teachings of the TM involves a closely connected set of unquestioned historical and historiographical assumptions.¹⁶ First is the assumption that the author of the Gospel of Matthew and his intended readers or audience had accurate first-hand knowledge of “Jewish” practices and beliefs. One example of this sort of assumption comes from Hans Dieter Betz’s commentary on Matthew 5.23 (“Therefore, when you bring your gift-offering (to be placed) on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you ...”¹⁷). Concerning this verse, Betz says:

The use of the second person singular presupposes that the readers of the SM made such offerings regularly. Given the Jewish context, one must assume that the altar upon which the offering was to be deposited was the altar of burnt offering in the Temple of Jerusalem, most likely located in the courtyard. The narrative further assumes that the reader is familiar with the ritual, which is described briefly, accurately, and with technical terminology . . . If the SM conforms to Jewish practice in the Jerusalem Temple, this text contains important information about the Temple worship around 50 CE by Jerusalem Christians.¹⁸

Not only does Betz attribute accurate knowledge of Temple sacrifice to the author of Matthew, but he also assumes that the readers of his gospel regularly made burnt offerings upon the altar in the Jerusalem Temple courtyard.

The first part of this claim is unwarranted because we do not know anything about the author of the gospel of Matthew that could necessitate such a conclusion: we do not

¹⁶ But I also agree with William Arnal’s claims, that much of the emphasis on the Judaism of Jesus and the evangelists has to do with post-war guilt about the misuse of the NT in Nazi propaganda; Arnal, *The Symbolic Jesus: Historical Scholarship, Judaism and the Construction of Contemporary Identity*.

¹⁷ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, 198.

¹⁸ Ibid., 222-223.

know whether the author was Judean or Greek; we do not know whether the author was male or female; we have information neither about where the author was educated nor about where the author lived and wrote. All we can really say with certainty is that the author has had some level of education that allowed him or her to work with Greek sources, compose his own gospel in Greek, and to have some level of familiarity with Judean textual and cultic traditions. This does not require that the author lived in Judea or participated in the cultic activities of the Jerusalem Temple. The second part of Betz's claim (that the readers of the TM made offerings regularly) is similarly unwarranted, because we have no evidence about the earliest readers or audience of this gospel.¹⁹ To claim, then, as Betz does in the above quotation, that Matthew's readers participated in the Temple cult in Jerusalem is more than the evidence can sustain. Further, to use this claim as a basis for historical reconstruction of "Temple worship around 50 CE by Jerusalem Christians" borders on irresponsible; it is a circular reconstruction of cultic practices that uses the text both to construct a standard for Judean practices and to confirm that the practices in the text are Judean!²⁰

The result is that Betz seeks to understand 5.23 *only* with relation to the Torah and rabbinic literature.²¹ He says that it was "traditionally related to the commandment of

¹⁹ Such a claim implies that Matthew's gospel was composed before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, and fits with Betz's claim that Matthew 5-7 was a pre-synoptic composition, originating around 50 CE. Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 90.

²⁰ An example: "If the pants are blue, then they tell us something about the color blue" can only be valid if we have some basis for judging the color of the pants against a criterion that is external to the pants themselves. Thus, I am skeptical about claims resembling: "If the practices described in the text are descriptions of what happened in the Jerusalem Temple, then that text tells us something about the practices in the Jerusalem Temple." It is a tautology at best, and an invalid argument at worst.

²¹ While it might make sense on a theological level for a German post-war NT scholar to highlight the Judaism of the gospels, it is odd in this case because Betz positions himself as someone who takes the non-Judean materials very seriously.

neighborly love” in Leviticus 19.18-19, and that “this connection hints yet again that the commandment of Lev 19:18 stands behind the passage.”²² He then asks how the “reasoning [of 5.23-24] compare[s] with rabbinic theology”²³:

According to the rabbis, the case at hand would have to be judged as a conflict between a lesser and a more important obligation. What was more important and what would have to take precedence, the completion of the sacrifice or the reconciliation with the brother? If the latter, then to interrupt the sacrifice to be reconciled with the brother would be quite appropriate. Jewish theology was diverse, and the case could be made in rabbinic terms as well as in the terms of the SM [Sermon on the Mount].²⁴

He does not consider that sacrifices took place all over the Greek-speaking world and assumes that the only imaginative option available to the author and readers involved the altar of the burnt offering in the courtyard of the Jerusalem Temple, giving the impression that the text may *only* be explained with reference to the “love command” of Leviticus or with reference to the kind of reasoning undertaken in rabbinic literature. But even if Matthew *does* contain accurate information concerning Judea and Judean cultic practices, and even though he *does* make use of the Septuagint, this neither precludes his being informed by Hellenistic ideas nor necessitates his geographical location in Palestine or Syria.

Interestingly, Betz *does* engage Greek and Roman philosophical materials in his discussions of the TM. He does so, however, at the level of literary structure and form rather than at the level of content. In an article published in 1979, Betz asked whether the “search for literary analogs [is] necessarily limited to primitive Christian or Jewish

²² Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, 223.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

writings.”²⁵ His goal in writing the article was to identify the literary genre of the TM, and he did so by showing similarities between certain themes in Hellenistic ethical literature and the TM that deal with training or practice for living wisely. He notes the contrast between the prudent and foolish man (the *anēr phronimos* and the *anēr mōros*) in Matthew 7.24-27, points out that the concept of *phronēsis* was “highly valued by many [philosophical] schools of thought in antiquity,”²⁶ and claims that the ethical writings of Plutarch, the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus’s teachings composed by Arrian, and the *Kyriai Doxai* (KD) of Epicurus provide apt analogs for the genre and function of the TM:

... the basic concepts about the appropriation of ethical tradition are very similar in the SM, in Epictetus, and in Plutarch. As a matter of fact, large sections of the ancient world at the time of the SM seem to have shared many of these concepts and methods differing only in philosophical school terminology and in the cultural and religious milieu ... the common elements enable us to understand the literary function of the SM: This document is intended to stimulate and maintain what in Hellenistic philosophical terms is called *askein kai meletan*.²⁷

Betz identifies the genre of the *Enchiridion* and the KD as that of the philosophical epitome, which is a condensed version of more extensive philosophical teachings. The contents of epitomai usually were selected because they represented the most important or basic principles of the philosophy in question. We know from Simplicius, for example, that Arrian composed the *Enchiridion* by selecting those teachings of Epictetus that “were most important and essential for his philosophy and which have the strongest impact on the hearers.”²⁸ The point of philosophical epitomai was pedagogical, and

²⁵ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Literary Genre and Function*, 286. Much of this article is also contained in Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, 70-80.

²⁶ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Literary Genre and Function*, 289 n.29.

²⁷ Ibid., 291-292.

²⁸ Ibid., 293.

enabled those who did not have the time or education to study more lengthy treatises to grasp the fundamental principles and live according to them.²⁹

In this regard, then, Betz concludes that the literary genre and function of the TM is close to that of the philosophical epitomai such as the KD or the *Enchiridion*:

The literary genre of the SM is that of an epitome presenting the theology of Jesus in a systematic fashion. The epitome is a composition carefully designed out of sayings of Jesus which are grouped according to thematic points of doctrine considered of primary importance. Correspondingly, its function is to provide the disciple of Jesus with the necessary tool for becoming a Jesus theologian. "Hearing and doing the sayings of Jesus," therefore, means the enabling of the disciple to theologize creatively along the lines of the theology of the master. To say it pointedly: The SM is not "law" to be obeyed, but theology to be intellectually appropriated and internalized, in order then to be creatively developed and implemented in concrete situations of life.³⁰

Thus, Betz's claim is that Hellenistic philosophical epitomai and the TM are similar in literary genre because they both condense ethical teachings into accessible and memorable accounts; further, they both function as pedagogical tools enabling followers or students to grasp the basic guiding principles of the school in order to more readily apply them in day-to-day circumstances.

Betz's claim that the TM matches the literary genre of the philosophical epitome came under attack from scholars who did not think that Jews in the first century could have known about the philosophical genre of the epitome.³¹ As I have explained previously, however, the historical claim that authors writing in Greek about Judean

²⁹ Ibid., 292-294.

³⁰ Ibid., 296.

³¹ Charles E. Carlston, "Betz on the Sermon on the Mount - a Critique," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50.1 (1988), 47-57; Warren Carter, "Resisting and Imitating the Empire: Imperial Paradigms in Two Matthean Parables," *Interpretation* (July 2002), 260-272. Carlston claims on 50-51 that the Mishna is an equally compelling parallel (despite the fact that the date of its redaction is usually placed in the 3rd century CE). As was emphasized to me by Heidi Wendt, neither Betz nor his critics recognize that epitomizing was a pervasive and well-attested literary practice that need not be limited to the practice of philosophy; R. A. Derrenbacker, *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005).

traditions and topics would have had *absolutely no knowledge* of contemporary Greek and Latin intellectual conventions is not acceptable. Although I find critiques of this nature completely untenable, I do think that Betz is open to a different sort of critique. Rather than following the critique of Carlston, who claims that Betz has gone too far into Greek materials, I think he has not gone far enough: although his argument addresses the similarities between the TM and the philosophical materials on the level of genre and form, it ignores questions about the possible similarities in terms of content. He does not address whether and how the *teachings* of the epitomai of Epicurus or the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus may be analogous to those of the TM, and thus although Betz's article did push beyond the boundaries of Judean textual sources in his interpretation of the TM, it does so only on one level. In doing so, Betz preserves the false dichotomy between Judean and Greek thought that has plagued (even if implicitly) historical studies of the gospels.

Betz's more recent commentary maintains a similar line of argument, and even though his *Hermeneia* volume contains vast footnoted references to non-Judean analogs for certain sections of the TM, it still privileges Judean sources when it comes to explaining the contents or specific ethical teachings of the TM. In particular, he maintains that the contents of the TM are elaborations upon the "Jewish" love command. Running through Betz's work is an unexplained disjunction between Greek and Judean ways of life and thought. This shows up in his claims that the TM was for Judeans and the similar material in Luke (commonly called the "Sermon on the Plain")³² was for Greeks:

As Jesus was a Jew, all the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are Jewish in theology and cultural outlook.³³

³² Luke 6.17-49.

³³ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain* (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49), 1.

This is problematic because Jesus is not the person who authored the Gospel of Matthew or the TM. We have no way to verify that the teachings came directly from Jesus. Even if they *did* come directly from him, there is no reason to assume that Jesus' Judean context necessitated a unique theology and cultural outlook that stood in opposition to what Betz calls a "Greek cultural milieu."

While basically reflecting the same theology, the cultural outlook of the Sermon on the Plain is Greek rather than Jewish. The reason for this difference between the two Sermons seems to be that the Sermon on the Plain is directed at disciples coming from a Greek cultural milieu, while the Sermon on the Mount addresses those coming from a Jewish milieu.³⁴

Betz's later statements reflect a kind of ethnic essentializing, by which I mean the assumption that Judeans and Greeks would have required entirely different kinds of communication:

The differences between the SM and the SP are the result of the fact that they are different elaborations of similar material for similar purposes. The observation has been recorded earlier that the SM is designed to address an audience that is culturally Jewish, while the SP speaks to people who are culturally Greek. These different audiences require different arguments and other means of persuasion, so as to further their progress in comprehending and appropriating Jesus' message and ethos.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid., 2. "Milieu" is simply too vague. If he were to specify some kind of identifiable social practice (say for example Greek gymnasium education as different from a Judean non-gymnasium education), the claim would be easier to take.

³⁵ Ibid., 70. Also: "The SM focuses on the learning of the essentials of the Jewish religion, that is, the principles and methods of Jesus' interpretation of the Torah (SM/Matt 5:17-48), three main acts of worship (6:1-18), ground-rules for grappling with the daily life (6:19-7:12), as well as eschatological expectations (7:13-23). In contrast, the SP views the ethical teaching of Jesus from the perspective of Greek culture. That perspective is focused on ethical expectations concerning poverty and wealth (SP/Luke 6:20-26), the central importance of Jesus' love command as the ground-rule for personal relationships with the outside world (6:27-38), the fellow-student (6:39-42), and the self (6:43-45)" Hans Dieter Betz, "The Portrait of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 25.3 (1998), 171. Betz later claims that while the Beatitudes of the TM characterize the ideal students "in Jewish terms," the SP "works with Greek concepts, juxtaposing social types, giving the blessing to the poor (SP/Luke 6:20-23) and condemning the rich (6:24-26)" Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, 172. I simply do not see how the topics listed with reference to Luke's material in any way excludes a "Jewish" context, and Betz is wrong to draw this distinction.

This, of course, begs the question: what does it mean to be “culturally Jewish” as opposed to “culturally Greek”? Both the Matthean and Lukan texts are written in Greek, and so language must not be what he means. Both texts depict the discourse being spoken by Jesus, a Judean. Betz does not say what he means by “culturally Jewish or Greek” and thus his statement has no meaning. Without knowing what he means by this, it is impossible to figure out why and how the two presumed audiences would require entirely different kinds of argument or persuasion.

The failure to consider Greek materials as analogs for the content of the teachings in the TM is not limited to Betz, but also plays a central role in the other major contemporary commentators on the discourse in Matthew 5-7. We turn now to the work of Dale Allison, who has also written extensively on the TM, and has also co-authored an influential commentary on the Gospel of Matthew.³⁶ First, and to his credit, Allison is explicit about his reasons for emphasizing the continuity between the TM and Judean texts. His stated reasons have to do with his unease about the ways that Jesus has been characterized as a unique figure in the landscape of ancient Judaism. The background of his concern involves the anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic claims of German NT scholarship that have contrasted Jesus-the-grace-bearing-Christian against a legalistic and flawed kind of Judaism:

³⁶ Allison, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present*; Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*; Dale C. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1999); Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth : Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998); Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Jr Allison, "Reflections on the Sermon on the Mount," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44.3 (1991), 283-309; Dale C. Allison, "A New Approach to the Sermon on the Mount," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 64.4 (1988), 405-414; Allison, "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," 423-445.

... the superiority of Jesus and the church over against Judaism has been promoted by arguing that this word of Jesus or that expression of Matthew brings us, within the world of first-century Judaism, something startlingly new, or even impossible. Most such claims, however, do not stand up under scrutiny. What we rather have in the Sermon is the product of a messianic Judaism; and ... most of the sentiments found in the Sermon already appear, at least here or there, in old Jewish sources ... Responsible exegesis, therefore, will seek to highlight the continuity between the Sermon and Jewish teaching, whether within the Hebrew Bible or without, and moreover the immense debt of the former to the latter. The time of polemic against Judaism is over.³⁷

By connecting the teachings of Jesus with teachings found in Judean sources, Allison aims to undermine projects that highlight Jesus as not only as a foil to Judaism, but as a figure who has rendered the teachings of Judaism unimportant or invalid.

Allison connects the teachings of Jesus in the TM to Judean teachings in many different ways. He argues that Matthew depicts Jesus in what he calls a “Moses typology,” and compares the images and teachings of Jesus in Matthew to depictions of Moses in Judean texts such as the Hebrew Bible, the LXX, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, and rabbinic literature.³⁸ Allison’s argument, unfortunately, overdetermines the cultural knowledge-base of Matthew’s assumed readership.³⁹ Matthew’s gospel does not explicitly link Jesus with Moses, and Allison bases his argument upon the assumption that Matthew’s ancient readers were thoroughly familiar with the texts of the Judean tradition. It does seem possible to me that Matthew’s gospel could have been understood in this manner by certain ancient readers, but Allison’s claim that the Moses typology

³⁷ Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, xi-xii.

³⁸ Ibid., 17-19; Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*.

³⁹ Or audience, because it is not clear how the gospel was first received.

plays such as central, exclusive, and conscious role in Matthew's gospel is a bit too enthusiastic.⁴⁰

In addition to showing ways that Matthew's depiction of Jesus is reminiscent of known Judean figures, Allison argues against the common Christian claim that Matthew 5:21-48 "overturns" or "nullifies" Mosaic law. The idea that Jesus "overturns" or "renders invalid" the Jewish law is an idea that played a large role in the thought of Luther and also within Christian supersessionism. As Allison states,

This is why, through this commentary, an attempt has been made to read Matthew 5-7 as something other than a rebuttal of Jewish law and custom, and why my conclusions are often unlike the conclusions of those who have thought in terms of "Christ against culture." They have been able to maintain their radical views only by urging that Matthew's Jesus does in fact abolish the Hebrew Bible itself, or significant portions of it. But this, in the light of 5:17-20, is not credible.⁴¹

Rather than saying that the TM is a replacement for Mosaic law, Allison emphasizes that Jesus' teaching is that people "will achieve far more than they would if the Torah were their only guide."⁴² In other words, he views Matthew 5:21-48 as a supplement to the law.

Allison uses rabbinic literature and early Christian texts (the *Didache*, for example, although it cannot be dated with any accuracy) to frame his discussion. Mostly, though, he argues that the anti-anger teaching is Jesus' version of the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:

Our passage in all likelihood alludes to the story of Cain (which is also alluded to in Matt. 18:22 and mentioned in 23:35). To readers steeped in Jewish tradition,

⁴⁰ Similarly, he connects Jesus to the figure of the eschatological prophet from Isaiah. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 15-17. Allison uses the book of Isaiah as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls to make this case.

⁴¹ Ibid., 174.

⁴² Ibid., 30.

the mention of murder in conjunction with hating one's brother could readily have called to mind Genesis 4, particularly as the enmity between Cain and Abel grew out of God's rejection of Cain's sacrificial gift, and the offering of a gift is the situation described in 5:23-24.⁴³

Although I agree that the story of Cain and Abel does contain elements of murder and anger, and that perhaps readers familiar with Genesis 4 might have made a connection between the two, I do not think that this alone precludes our looking for other possibilities. As has been emphasized already, being "steeped in Jewish tradition" (whatever that might mean) does not mean being restricted from other frames of reference. Further, as I have suggested, we do not know that the early readers or the audience of Matthew's gospel were in fact "steeped in Jewish tradition." We neither need to assume that they were familiar with "Jewish tradition" in a way that excludes other kinds of cultural knowledge, nor that they had any first-hand knowledge of Judean traditions at all. Thus Allison's suggestion that ancient readers would have readily and only thought of Genesis 4 is unsubstantiated.

In addition to using Judean texts to help provide a context for the meaning of the anti-anger teaching, Allison uses Judean texts to demonstrate that the anti-anger teaching is not really an anti-anger teaching. After acknowledging that Jesus "seemingly prohibits the emotion altogether," Allison asks, "Where is the allowance for justified anger?" and offers a potential solution:

... the prohibition (perhaps hyperbole?) was never intended to cover all circumstances, to prohibit anger for every reason. The OT, which Jesus upholds (5.17-20), allows righteous anger and depicts heroes and God as angry; cf. Exod 4.14; 32.19; Ps 4.4; Jer 6.11 etc. Further, other early Christian texts allow anger (e.g. Eph 4.26), and Jesus himself gets angry in the Gospels; cf. Mk 1.41 v.1.; 3.5; and the overturning of tables in the temple. He also contradicts a literal reading

⁴³ Ibid., 62-63. Also in Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, 76-77.

when he calls others ‘fool’ (23.17). Some exegetes nonetheless find here a literal, blanket prohibition.⁴⁴

From a historical and literary point of view, these claims are completely unwarranted.

Setting the anti-anger teaching as depicted by Matthew in dialogue with other texts does not allow for a charitable interpretation of Matthew. By “in dialogue with” I refer to the activity of judging a text’s value or appropriateness with relation to another text. Rather than construe the text in its plain sense, Allison has argued, through a series of references to texts other than Matthew, that Matthew cannot have really meant to depict Jesus the way he did. Just because Allison may or may not agree with the way Matthew has portrayed Jesus does not give him the freedom to ignore the simplest and clearest interpretation of the text. Allison is engaged in Christian myth-making and theology rather than in serious historical or literary analysis.⁴⁵

Finally, we turn to the work of Ulrich Luz. Here, I focus mainly upon his two most recent publications, both of which draw upon his earlier research on the Gospel of Matthew. In his 2005 collection of essays, Luz prefaces the first chapter by expressing his concern “to understand Matthew’s Jesus story in its historical situation.”⁴⁶ His historical reconstruction includes claims about the author’s compositional techniques, readership,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 77-78 and Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination*, 63-64.

⁴⁵ As evidenced also by his claim that Jesus upheld the OT, which was not known as such until later.

⁴⁶ Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2005), 3. Luz’s other works on the TM include: Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, Rev. ed. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Luz, *Studies in Matthew*; Ulrich Luz, "Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew," *Harvard Theological Review* 97.2 (2004), 119-137; Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ulrich Luz, *Matthew in History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); Ulrich Luz, "Matthew's Anti-Judaism : Its Origin and Contemporary Significance," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 19.6 (1992), 405-415; Ulrich Luz, "The Son of Man in Matthew: Heavenly Judge Or Human Christ," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 48 (1992), 3-21; Ulrich Luz and others, *Matthew : A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989-2005); Ulrich Luz, "Sermon on the Mount/Plain : Reconstruction of QuMatt and QuLk," 22 (1983), 473-479.

and geographical locale. He claims that Matthew was a “traditionalist” for following the general narrative flow of Mark, but that he was also an innovator because he deviated and added additional information to his gospel that was not contained in Mark. Luz refers to these non-Markan materials as fictitious elements or narrative fictions. He assumes that the composition of these fictions was driven by the needs of Matthew’s community, and thus before Luz attempts to explain these sections of the text, he offers an account of “the historical place of Matthew’s Gospel in the story of Jewish Christianity.”⁴⁷ Through a series of mirror-reading techniques, Luz offers the following historical reconstruction about the Matthean communities:

Historically, the Matthean community is part of the post-history of the Sayings source Q. It is a Jewish Christian community originating in the activity of the Jesus messengers who were among the bearers of the Q tradition. Later, after the failure of the mission to Israel and the Jewish War, the community settled in Syria, where it received significant theological inspiration from the Gospel of Mark.⁴⁸

Rather than conceding that any speculation about the parameters of the “Matthean community” is hypothetical at best, Luz presents his claims about the community as if they were foundational for a verifiable historical context. Even more problematic is Luz’s assumption that the Gospel of Matthew was a metonym of community interest. We have no evidence to substantiate this, and thus his “historical context” is suspect. Concerning communities and composition, he says, “The Evangelists were not, as I see it, simply compilers who sat at their desks cutting and pasting together various sources. Rather, we must examine whether certain Christian groups are behind the various sources and

⁴⁷ Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 7.

traditions, and to what extent the history of the sources reflects that of the groups.”⁴⁹

Luz’s historical analysis assumes a romantic notion of composition that does not necessarily square with what we know about ancient writing practices.⁵⁰

With reference to the sort of writing that Matthew was doing, Luz sees the author of the Gospel of Matthew as engaging in midrash on the Gospel of Mark. He assumes that Mark’s gospel was an important text of the Matthean community, and Matthew is making that traditional text relevant for his own community’s situation.⁵¹ Luz describes one of the most important aspects of the life of the Matthean community as being the trauma experienced by the community upon leaving Palestine and relocating in Syria:

Overall their mission was a failure and they were not at Israel’s center but found themselves excluded from the synagogue. This must have been a traumatic experience. Matthew’s two-level story of Jesus seeks to work through the trauma and to give the community a new perspective based on Jesus.⁵²

On one level, then, Matthew preserves the historical account of the life of Jesus. On another level, though, he tells the story of his own community through his additions to the life of Jesus that he took over from Mark. In doing so, Luz claims, Matthew helped his community work through its trauma. This kind of interpretation is possible only in a post-Freudian culture that values the process of “working-through.” Luz’s use of the term “work through” is unqualified; how, in particular, does the gospel help the members of the community “work through” their trauma? Was it read aloud as a cathartic drama?

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁰ Pointed out to me by Stanley Stowers, who is currently researching the tendency of NT scholars to attribute authorship of the gospels to “communities” rather than to individuals.

⁵¹ Ibid., 34-35.

⁵² Ibid., 16. Also: “This narrative reflects the story of the Jewish Christian Matthean community after Jesus’ death. Unsuccessful in proclaiming Jesus’ message to Israel in Palestine, they later (after the Jewish War, and now separated from the synagogues) engaged in mission to the Gentiles in Syria. Matthew is not simply telling a historical Jesus story. He is telling the story of Jesus as foundational for the history of his own community” Ibid., 61.

Was it meditated upon in small support-group settings? Luz's proposal is unexplained, unwarranted, and historically unverifiable.

In his collection of essays about Matthew, Luz's chapter, "Fictionality and Loyalty to Tradition in Matthew's Gospel in the Light of Greek Literature," addresses questions of literary techniques and genre.⁵³ He sets out to look for some kind of precedent for Matthew's use of narrative fiction.⁵⁴ In order to situate Matthew's use of "narrative fiction" within a literary context, Luz turns to a description of different known Greek literary genres. He rules out the genre of history-writing as an analog for Matthew's gospel.⁵⁵ Luz also eliminates the genre of biography; his reasoning for this is based upon the chronological sequence of Matthew's narrative. Luz claims that because most ancient Greek biographies do not follow chronological order,⁵⁶ and because Matthew's gospel traces the life of Jesus in chronological order, Matthew's gospel cannot be a biography.⁵⁷ Further, he says that "there is no indication in Matthew—unlike in Philo—that he was familiar with the forms and rules of the biographical genre..."⁵⁸ Finally, Luz turns to Greek fiction and novel writing. After a long discussion of the roles of fiction in different genres of Greek literature, Luz concludes that the Gospel of Matthew has little to do with any of them. In fact, he claims, "Matthew has *no developed*

⁵³ Ibid., 54-79.

⁵⁴ The "narrative fiction" of Matthew are, according to Luz, those aspects of the Jesus-story that go beyond what was received from Mark, and which describe the Matthean community's issues as if they were part of the Jesus-story; Ibid., 55.

⁵⁵ Luz claims on several different occasions that Matthew made some "historically grotesque" claims. He says it cannot be historical because Pilate washed his hands, and we all know that only pious Jews washed their hands.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 75-76.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 76.

awareness of genre distinctions... Matthew gives no evidence of knowing Hellenistic historiography, tragedies, biographies, or novels.”⁵⁹ Thus, although Luz devoted an entire essay to the topic of Greek literature, he returns to an expected conclusion:

Following our survey of Greek literature, we may well ask whether there are other texts which could throw more light on the Matthean fictions. I think there are. The closest analogy to Matthew’s Gospel is the Gospel of Mark. ... Looking beyond the Christian community, I recommend some attention to Jewish literature. There we find similar transparency for the community to that of Matthew’s Gospel, for instance in Deuteronomy, where Moses gives the people in the desert a law that is valid for Josiah’s time, or in *Jubilees*, when the patriarchs keep laws valid for the time the book was written. One should also look out for fictions comparable with Matthew’s in the Jewish area, but this would go beyond the task we have set ourselves here.⁶⁰

While it is unclear where one might find “the Jewish area,” it is clear that Luz sees it to be incompatible with (perhaps even impervious to) Greek literature.

Luz uses Judean literature in a variety of ways in his interpretation of 5.21-26. To explain the contents of the anti-anger teaching, he makes not one reference to a non-Judean source. First, he claims that verses 21 and 22 are connected, because “already in Jewish wisdom tradition anger and (as its consequence) murder belong together. Thus there is no reason to separate v. 22 from the thesis.”⁶¹ As proof, he footnotes: “*Sir* 22:24; *T. Dan* 1.7-8; *T. Sim.* 2.11; *T. Zeb.* 4.11; *Did.* 3.2”⁶² His point here is to show that 21-22 came from Jesus as a connected unit, with neither 21 nor 22 being added later. Thus his proof for tracing 21-22 as a unified set to Jesus himself is that anger and murder are connected in Jewish tradition.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁶¹ Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 233.

⁶² Ibid., 233 n.4. These sources are problematic because, given the dating, all of them could have known Matthew except for *Sir*. His claim, then, that the idea was “already” known is entirely misleading.

Luz interprets 5.22 as hyperbole:

It becomes immediately clear that the three short sentences of v. 22 are only formally legal sentences; in reality the legal level is transcended. If a court had to deal with outbreaks of anger—indeed, if the Sanhedrin had to deal with simple abusive language—it would be hopelessly swamped. The sentences of v. 22 that appear to be sentences of law have the character of hyperbole. They want to say that what appears to be an insignificant expression of anger is the equivalent of murder that is subject to heavenly and earthly punishment.⁶³

He then proceeds to say that “Only a comparison of this heightened demand of Jesus with Jewish ethics makes clearer what the antithesis to the Torah might be”⁶⁴ and goes on to cite several examples of Judean texts that engage topics of anger.⁶⁵ Luz uses Judean texts because he wants to explain the anti-anger teaching as a teaching of Jesus, whose primary identity he sees as his Judean religiosity.⁶⁶ Although this explains Luz’s method, it does not mean, historically speaking, that he is correct.

Luz again turns to “Jewish parallels” to explain 5.23-34: “People have wanted to understand these verses as an example of how Matthew realistically made concrete the demands of the first antithesis. The opposite is true. A comparison with Jewish parallels shows that our example is not at all realistic.”⁶⁷ He again cites a number of Judean texts dealing with sacrifice and concludes that:

It [the teaching in Matthew 5.23-24] may have sounded especially harsh to Galileans, for whom the commandment to be reconciled with the brother before offering sacrifice as a rule meant a journey of several days back to Galilee. As is often the case with Jesus, we also have here a categorical, hyperbolically

⁶³ Ibid., 236.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 236.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 236-237.

⁶⁶ As argued by Brubaker, one’s ethnicity does not necessitate direct and complete agreement with the “group,” Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁶⁷ Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 240.

exaggerated, exemplary demand whose goal is a new basic attitude to one's fellow human being.⁶⁸

Finally, Luz invokes "Jewish law" again to make a historical point about Matthew 5.25-26: "Since imprisonment for debt was unknown in Jewish law, we are dealing here with the terror of a Gentile trial where the poor debtor is imprisoned until the last penny is paid. Matthew's community in Syria was as familiar with court officials (as torturers?) and imprisonment for debt as they were with the common Greek word 'liable' (*eunoeō*)."⁶⁹ In making this claim, Luz does not refer to any sources of "Jewish law" to support his assertion. On top of this problem, is the assumption that "Jewish law" was both prescriptive and descriptive, and that it was followed without exception.

Thus far, I have shown some of the ways that three prolific Matthean scholars have focused on Judean materials to explain the context of the TM. I now turn to a discussion of how they use the sources to explain the *contents* of the teaching.

Interpretations of Matthew 5.21-26

You have heard that it was said to the ancients, "Do not murder;" and one who murders will be liable to judgment. And I say to you that every person who is angry (*pas ho orgizomenos*) with his brother will be liable to judgment; and whoever says "airhead!" to his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says "fool!" will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matthew 5.21-22)⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid., 240.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 241.

⁷⁰ I have not followed the NRSV translation, "angry with a brother or a sister," because the text says "your brother" (*ho adelphos sou*). The NRSV translation committee added "or a sister" to counteract the traditionally pervasive male-centered practices of Christianity. Although this translation may make sense within an ecclesiastical setting, it does not accurately capture the sense of the ancient text. For a more thorough treatment of the modern tendency to translate NT references to "brother/brothers" (Greek: *adelphos/adelfhoi*) as "brother/brothers and sister/sisters" see Ross Kraemer and Jennifer Eyl, "Translating Women: The Perils of Gender-Inclusive Translation of the New Testament" in *Celebrate Her for the Fruit of Her Hands: Studies in Honor of Carol L. Meyers*, eds. Charles Carter and Karla Bombach (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. (5.23-24)

Show goodwill toward your opponent right away (*isthi eunoōn tō antidikō sou tachū*), while you are on the way to court with him, or your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will never escape from that place until you give back the last penny. (5.25-26)

Biblical scholars have accounted for the meaning of Matthew 5.22 and its relation to the larger section, 5.21-48, in different ways. Of direct relevance for this chapter is the question of how scholars have explained the problematic nature of anger with reference to 5.22. As seen in the previous chapter, the anti-anger teachings of the philosophers always specified why anger—or at least a certain type of anger—was wrong. Aristotle, for example, considered anger to be wrong when applied with ill-timing, to an inappropriate degree, or in the wrong circumstances; Philodemus deemed anger wrong when it was not grounded in a true assessment of the facts; Stoics claimed that anger was wrong because it was an irrational desire stemming from a flawed evaluation of one's circumstances and values. Although Matthew has not given an explicit reason for the anti-anger teaching in the form “anger is wrong because X, Y, or Z,”⁷¹ scholars have tended to offer two general kinds of explanations.

The first type of explanation is what I call the “causal view,” which casts Jesus as a teacher who is interested in the sorts of intentions or motives that lead a person to violate certain legal teachings. In the case of the legal injunction against murder mentioned in 5.21, then, Jesus is said to have singled out anger (*orgē*) as the root cause of

⁷¹ As does *Didache* 3.2: “Do not be angry, for anger leads to murder.”

murder. Similarly, in the case of the law against adultery, a causal analysis would say that Jesus identifies desire (*epithumia*) as the key reason why someone would violate that law.

Betz provides a clear articulation of the causal view:

The root cause of murder, as we are told, is anger directed against the “brother.” “Hatred of the brother” (μισαδελφία) [*misadelphia*], which inevitably follows from such anger, is the opposite of “brotherly love” (φιλαδελφία) [*philadelphia*] as commanded by the love-command in Lev 19:18 (SM/Matt 5:43). Simply stated, the source of murder is a broken relationship with the brother. The famous case of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel (Gen 4:8-16) comes to everyone’s mind, although it is not mentioned in the text. What, then, is the intent of the Torah commandment, “You shall not kill”? According to the SM, its intent—that is, God’s will—is that one come to grips with the root cause of murder. It is this root cause that precipitated the prohibition. Once the root cause is identified as anger, the ethical demand follows: one must control anger.⁷²

Several issues must be addressed. First, Betz interprets the passage with reference to Leviticus 19:18 (the so-called “love command”)⁷³ and Genesis 4.8-16 (the murder of Abel by Cain) and suggests that the teaching of central concern in 5.21-26 is murder, making the teaching about anger an ancillary means for refraining from fratricide. Betz invokes the narrative of Abel’s murder as self-evident justification for his conclusion that anger ends in murder. The text does not posit this kind of causal relationship between anger and murder. Further, the claim that anger is the necessary and sufficient cause of murder is simply false: people commit murder for reasons other than anger and people can become angry without committing murder.

⁷² Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain* (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49), 230. Luz also asserts without explanation that anger is the “root of human killing” and the “root of human murder” Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 236, 240. Also taking this position is Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 86, 87, 90, 91.

⁷³ Although the extent of the similarity between the Leviticus material and the teaching in Matthew is by no means certain; Reiser, “Love of Enemies in the Context of Antiquity,” 420-422.

If the primary teaching of 5.21-26 is about preventing *murder*, however, then it is not clear why Matthew would have illustrated this teaching with the examples found in 5.23-26. The first example is notably vague about what the source of trouble is between the person at the altar and his brother:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. (5.23-24)

It does not say anything to effect of, “if you remember that your brother has been trying to kill you” or “if you remember that your brother has something against you to the extent that you are fearful for your life.” It may be the case that the reconciliation is recommended to allay a murder, but the story is too vague to say for sure. It may or may not be an example of how anger can lead to murder. The second example, however, is clearly *not* about the kind of anger that leads to murder. Instead, it is about the kind that can land you in jail and in debt:

Show goodwill toward your opponent right away (*isthi eunoōn tō antidikō sou tachū*), while you are on the way to court with him, or your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will never escape from that place until you give back the last penny. (5.25-26)

The passage explicitly states the justification for showing goodwill: if you do not, you will end up in jail and you will not get out until you pay. The rationale here does not involve physical harm, never mind murder. If Matthew were interested in showing that anger leads to murder, he has done a poor job of it. He has done an even worse job of convincing anyone to avoid anger on these (ill-established) grounds. His first example is vague and his second is not even about murder at all.

When we look solely at the text in Matthew, it becomes apparent that the causal connection between anger and murder is not there. This is the thought process that I think lies behind those claiming a causal connection:

Murder → Judgment	If you murder someone then you will be judged
<u>Anger → Judgment</u>	<u>If you are angry then you will be judged</u>
Anger → Murder	Therefore, if you are angry then you will murder someone

The conclusion is completely unnecessary because the argument is invalid. To be a bit more charitable, perhaps this is what is going on for these interpreters:

Murder → Judgment	If you murder someone then you will be judged
<u>Anger → Murder</u>	<u>If you are angry then you will murder someone</u>
Anger → Judgment	Therefore, if you are angry then you will be judged

This argument is at least valid, but the burden is still on the interpreters to establish that Matthew expresses the premise “if A then M” ($A \rightarrow M$). The text itself neither asserts the causal connection nor contains the appropriate premises for us to grant it.

The second issue of interest in the above passage from Betz’s commentary has to do with his failure to account for the differences between the emotions of anger (*orgē*), hatred for one’s brother (*misadelpchia*), and love for one’s brother (*philadelphia*). Betz assumes without justification that hatred of one’s brother “inevitably follows” anger. Given Betz’s knowledge of Greek and Roman philosophy, I am surprised that he does not offer any analysis of the commonly accepted definitions or distinctions between the emotions of anger, hatred, or love.

Finally, Betz’s conclusion that the way to avoid murder is to “control” anger is vague and does not offer much by way of explanation. What would it mean, for example, to “control” one’s anger? Can you be angry up until the point just before you kill someone? Or must you not be angry at all? Can you “feel” anger but not “express” it?

Betz leaves these questions unanswered, but if we maintain the causal framework, controlling one's anger is not necessarily a good in itself, but rather is good because it stops one from committing murder. Thus, it would seem that controlling one's anger should involve keeping it from escalating into murder. This does not seem to be a difficult task (most people are not murderers, nor were they in antiquity) and hardly seems to be suited to a teaching about a *greater* kind of righteousness (5.20) or perfection (5.48).

In addition to the causal view, I introduce another approach that I call the "equivalence view." In this view, Jesus' teaching focuses on the importance of a person's internal state; anger is just as wrong as murder and lust is just as wrong as adultery. Not only are the internal and external wrongs viewed as equally bad, but the internal wrong is viewed as entirely equivalent to an external wrong. In terms of one's status with regard to righteousness, anger is *the same thing* as murder and lust is *the same thing* as adultery. This is similar to the causal view in that intention is important, but the equivalence view does not exploit the relationship between intent and action as much as the causal view. Here, anger and lust are considered to be wrong in and of themselves: they are wrong without result:

In the first two examples (murder and adultery), while there is no suggestion that the literal ruling is set aside, Jesus goes far beyond its outward observance (which can be observed and judged) to the thoughts and attitudes which underlie the action, whether they are carried into effect or not.⁷⁴

The equivalence view values the interior in itself, and not just as it relates to resulting action:

⁷⁴ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 196.

The principle of v. 22 is that the actual committing of murder is only the outward manifestation of an inward attitude which is itself culpable, whether or not it actually issues in the act of murder. Angry thoughts and contemptuous words (which equally derive from “the heart,” 12:34) deserve equal judgment ... [Jesus] adds a far-reaching new dimension by turning attention also to the motives and attitudes which underlie the act, and which are not susceptible to judicial process.⁷⁵

Sometimes proponents of this view use the language of radicalization, intensification, or spiritualization, usually with language about the equality of importance of “inner” and “outer” morality:

...evil includes both the overt act (Jesus does not deny that killing is evil) and an inner disposition (anger). In other words, overabundant righteousness is not limited to the realm of overt actions but also applies to the realm of feelings, inner dispositions, evil inclinations (evil *yetzer*) ... the disciples should have a view of evil encompassing both public, overt evil (killing) and private, inner evil (anger).⁷⁶

This interpretation seems to be saying that the point of bringing anger into the discussion of murder has less to do with its role as the cause of murder and more to do with the fact that a set of practices and attitudes all converge around the topic of disruptive relations, a category into which both anger and murder fit. Thus the two vignettes in 23-26 are described as being examples of how to repair disrupted or broken relations through reconciliation.

I think that the equivalence view has more merit than the causal view. As stated above, I do not think the text draws a strict causal relationship between anger and murder. Instead, I think the plainest reading of the text is that Matthew likens anger to murder on

⁷⁵ Ibid., 199.

⁷⁶ Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 78. It is not clear why Patte includes the Hebrew term “yetzer” here, or how inserting a Hebrew term somehow explains the meaning of the Greek text in Matthew.

the grounds that both actions make the one performing them liable to judgment. It is in this way, then, that I would formulate the teaching: both anger and murder are practices that require judgment and perhaps punishment, which is, formally, the same as saying that anger yields the same evaluative result as murder. When it comes to the resulting ramifications, anger is just as bad as murder because they are equally important to Matthew's view of righteousness and perfection. My formulation also explains why anger is equivalent to murder by situating this teaching within Matthew's call for righteousness.

Although one of the main claims or assumptions of the equivalence view is that one's disposition is important for morality and that anger threatens morality, nobody explains *why* or *how* a human disposition, thought, or emotion can be problematic. Allison, for example, is correct to say that "anger is in and of itself dangerous and deserving of condemnation," but he then explains this statement with reference to a causal argument:

Anger is not just perilous because 'anger leads to murder' (*Did.* 3.2): anger—the companion of hate, which is the opposite of love—is in and of itself dangerous and deserving of condemnation. It is insufficient to refrain from the act of murder, for the latter is simply the symptom of something else. The source of murder must be uprooted; anger must be eradicated.⁷⁷

In other words, the equivalence view is not a robust approach, but rather, a set of unsubstantiated claims that needs to be fleshed out. The claim that the text states that anger is just as bad as murder is correct, but it lacks the kind of explanation and contextualization that would make sense of its paradoxical nature.

The failure to offer compelling explanations for the equivalence between anger and murder is exacerbated by a tandem insistence upon looking only to Judean texts for a

⁷⁷ Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*.

suitable explanatory context. While Allison's proposition about the Cain and Abel allusion may be plausible, it still does not tell us anything that would help us understand why *Matthew alone* would have used the anti-anger teaching. Similarly, even if Betz is correct to connect the anti-anger teaching with the Leviticus text, this connection alone does not explain why the Leviticus text would have been of such interest for Matthew, or how it helps us to understand the anti-anger teaching within the context of Matthew's gospel. Finally, the narrow focus on Judean texts as a context for the anti-anger teaching has led some commentators to conclusions that are naïve and limited at best and just plain false at worst:

Anger is something to be avoided already in Judaism as leading to murder. This attitude was even a distinctive mark of the Jew (Billerbeck I, 276-282). Contentwise, Jesus has not said anything very new. The beginnings of this "absolute prohibition of *orge* are found in the Old Testament; anger is dangerous because it does mischief and has evil consequences and is thus to be avoided and placated (cf. Prov 6:34; 15:1; 16:14; 19:19; 27:4). Hence, the longsuffering person is praised as the true sage (Prov 14:29; 15:18; 16:32), while the angry person is condemned as a fool (Prov 14:17, 29). This exclusively negative judgment of anger found in Proverbs perhaps explains why the New Testament assessment of human anger is so severe.⁷⁸

A few comments are in order. First, as seen in Chapter Two, plenty of sources besides Proverbs contain discussions of anger. Second, the "beginnings" of the anti-anger teaching may not, with any accuracy, be pin-pointed to these specific verses from Proverbs. Third, the verses from Proverbs referenced above do not articulate a teaching similar to Matthew's. Fourth, there exists no unified "New Testament assessment" of anger. Fifth, even if there were such a thing, it is by no means clear that the anti-anger sentiments in Proverbs were the sole reason for its existence.

⁷⁸ Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 83-84.

Matthew 5.21-26 and the Anger Schema

I begin my interpretation of 5.21-26 with reference to my critiques of the equivalence view. As I described above, while I think that the view is correct in its assessment of the plain sense of the text, it fails to offer an explanatory context that would make sense of the paradoxical claim that anger and murder are equally wrong. Further, it fails to explain why or how anger could be as bad as murder, as well as how this teaching fits within Matthew's view of righteousness. Rather than offering vagaries such as "all antiquity knew anger was morally reprehensible"⁷⁹ or that an anti-anger sentiment was a "distinctive mark of the Jew,"⁸⁰ I suggest that an intellectual context for Matthew's claim that anger is equivalent to murder may be found in Stoic ethics, more specifically in the paradox about the equality of sins.⁸¹ Lest it sound strange that philosophers would talk about *sin*, I should point out that Greek term *hamartia*, often translated as 'sin' in NT texts, is the very same term used by Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and all other philosophers writing in Greek to refer to a mistake or error. If it strikes us as odd that pre-Christian philosophers would talk about sin, it is only because the term *hamartia* has taken on such a specifically theological meaning. When I refer to the Stoic doctrine of the "equality of sins," I refer not to the later Augustinian sense of "sin" as an inherent part of human

⁷⁹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, 219.

⁸⁰ Stock, *The Method and Message of Matthew*, 83.

⁸¹ Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 20-26. The paradox is one of a series of Stoic ethical teachings preserved by Cicero. Our other main source for these paradoxes is Philo of Alexandria; on this, see Erin Roberts, *Philo, Paul, Stoic Paradox* (A.M. Thesis, Brown University, 2004).

ontology.⁸² Instead, the term refers simply—in this context—to some kind of mistake or wrong-doing, be it mental, emotional, or behavioral.

The paradoxical nature of Stoic ethics is grounded in the claim that “virtue is the only good.”⁸³ This claim is paradoxical in the literal sense of the term because common opinion held that there were many goods in life, such as health, wealth, family, and virtue.⁸⁴ The Stoic claim, though, was that virtue was the *only* good. Other things were certainly valuable to varying degrees, but did not have the sort of value that was a necessary and sufficient condition of human excellence. Items or situations that are judged valuable but not essential to virtue are known in Stoic ethics as the “*adiaphora*” or the “indifferents.” Because virtue is a unitary good, it cannot have degrees of difference, meaning that if someone’s soul is in a virtuous or rational condition, it is good in an unqualified fashion.

As explained in Chapter Two, Stoic ethics emphasized the relationship between the unitary soul and the theory of virtue. When someone makes a moral mistake, it is because the entirety of the soul is mistaken or irrational, and it is in this way that even a seemingly small mistake constitutes deviation from rationality (or virtue), and thus makes the person just as irrational (or vicious) as if the infraction had been great. This principle is illustrated by Cicero:

⁸² The full title of this paradox given by Cicero is “*aequalia esse peccata et recte facta*”; he also provides the Greek, “*hoti isa hamartēmata kai to katorthōmata*”; PS 20.

⁸³ “*Quod honestum sit id solum bonum esse*” and “*hoti monon to kalon agathon*,” Cicero, PS 6. This paradox is discussed in PS 6-15, as well as in Philo of Alexandria. On Philo’s use of this particular paradox, see Ibid..

⁸⁴ In Greek, *para-* means “against” and *doxa* means “common opinion.” As Cicero explains, “These doctrines are surprising, and they run counter to universal opinion—the Stoics themselves actually term them *paradoxa*,” PS 4.

For just as it is a sin to betray one's country, to use violence against one's parents, to rob a temple, which are evils in results (*in effect*), so to fear, to grieve, to have erotic desires are each of them a moral offense, even without any result (*sine effect*). Truly these are sins not in their subsequent consequences, but straight from the start. So, too, the things that proceed from virtue are to be judged morally right on the basis of their first inception, not their completion.⁸⁵

Cicero clearly states the Stoic commitment to the evaluation of one's state of mind, apart from any resulting action: just as it is wrong to betray one's country, use violence against your parents, or to steal, it is equally mistaken to grieve, fear, or have lust: "All sins are equal (*omnia peccata esse paria*), every transgression a wicked crime. The man who wrings the neck of a cock when there was no need sins no less than one who strangles his father."⁸⁶ There is no gray area or room for negotiation. In the same way that we cannot breathe underwater, no matter how close we are to the surface, "so a man who has made some progress towards the state of virtue is in a condition no less wretched than he who has made none."⁸⁷

The Stoic paradox about the equality of wrong-doings offers an intellectual context not only for the equality of anger and murder in 5.21-22, but also for the equality of desire and adultery in 5.27-28: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with desire has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew's connection between desire and adultery has affinities with the Stoic principle of judging an action's moral value not in its consequence, but at its inception.

⁸⁵ Cicero, *De finibus* 3.32.

⁸⁶ Cicero, *Murena* 61.

⁸⁷ Cicero, *Fin.*

Another passage in close proximity to the anti-anger and anti-desire teachings also bears similarity to the Stoic paradox. In 5.17-20, Matthew has Jesus claim that anyone who violates even the smallest of commandments and who is not exceedingly righteous (or, *perfect*, as is said later in verse 48) will never enter the kingdom of heaven: “Therefore if someone breaks one of the least of these commandments, and thusly teaches other people, he will be called least in the kingdom of heaven” (5.19). Even the smallest deviation from perfection—as exemplified in the examples of anger and desire—entails failure. This idea is strikingly similar to the Stoic paradox about the equality of sins:

But in the conduct of life we ought not consider what penalty belongs to each transgression but how much is permitted to each person: we ought to deem whatever is wrong a crime, whatever is not permitted a sin.

“Even in the smallest things?”

Yes, inasmuch as we are not able to impose regulation on things, but are able to regulate our minds. If an actor makes a movement that is out of time with the music, or recites a verse that is one syllable too short or too long, he is hissed and hooted off the stage: in real life, will you, whose conduct ought to be more carefully controlled than any stage gesture, more accurately proportioned than any verse of poetry, say that you only transgress by a single syllable? ... every transgression is a transgression caused by the dislocation of system and order, but when system and order have once been dislocated nothing further can be added to make a greater degree of transgression appear possible ... ⁸⁸

Both texts emphasize the importance of human perfection by emphasizing that even the smallest mistake violates the larger system of righteousness or virtue.

The teachings in 5.17-20, 21-26, and 27-28 represent some of the most puzzled-over teachings in the history of Christian thought because these teachings run against the grain of common sense and popular morality: *How can it be the case, some ask, that*

⁸⁸ Cicero, *PS* 25-26.

breaking just one commandment could be the same thing as breaking the entirety of a legal system? Does it really make sense to say that anyone who feels anger or desire is truly as guilty as if he had killed somebody or committed adultery?

Some commentators (Martin Luther, for example) have answered such questions by saying that these passages are meant to highlight the *impossibility* of keeping the law. He claims that these teachings drive humans to an understanding of their own sinfulness and, consequently, drive them into the body of Christ. Other, more modern interpreters such as Hans Dieter Betz, claim that Matthew gives attention to thoughts and desires only for the purpose of preventing the subsequent actions. In this reading, as was described above, desire is wrong *because* it can lead to adultery, and anger is wrong *because* it can lead to murder. Betz's reading assumes that Matthew follows a sort of consequentialist ethics, which focuses more upon the end result of one's actions than upon the proper formation of one's soul. But this interpretation does not accurately capture the prominent modes of ethical discourse in Greek and Roman thought. Instead, the primary way of thinking about ethics was to focus on the individual person in such a way as to inculcate proper forms of thought and desire, and to value these activities for their *own* sake, not just in terms of their possible consequences. And thus, in order to explain how Matthew's teachings could have been appealing or even were comprehensible to people in his own time, we need a way of approaching the anti-anger teaching that corresponds with the moral discourse of the time, and that does not ignore the disagreement among Hellenistic philosophers about the nature of the relationship between a person's emotions, desires, and behaviors.

I have suggested that the intellectual basis for my reading of the plain sense of Matthew 5.21-26 lies in the paradoxical Stoic teaching about the equality of sins, and I now offer an analysis that engages Matthew's teaching with the moral discourse about anger outlined in Chapter Two.⁸⁹ In presenting Jesus as an authoritative teacher (Matthew 7.29) who takes an unequivocal position on the moral value of anger, Matthew touches a topic that was of great interest to moral philosophers. Drawing upon the intellectual positions taken by Plato and Aristotle, later philosophers generated a sizable corpus of technical psychological, physiological, behavioral, and moral analyses of anger. Simply knowing this fact helps us understand that ancient readers and writers could have seen Matthew's introduction of anger in a moral discourse as being part of the discursive formation of Greek moral psychology. Situating Matthew's teaching within the field of moral psychology allows us to make some interpretive claims about 5.21-26.

First, given the pervasive and near-unanimous acknowledgment that anger is a specific type of desire that arises from the perception of harm and aims at revenge, we may say that Matthew offers a teaching about the management of this desire in very specific types of circumstances and thus coheres with the philosophical discourse about anger that was discussed in Chapter Two. In particular, these would be circumstances that involve the perception of harm, ranging from verbal insults (5.21-22) to the broken or failed relations that may give rise to or result from a range of perceived harms (5.23-24), to open accusations or legal actions/sanctions (5.25-26). This, then, provides a context for some of the other teachings in 5.21-48 that deal with perceived harm and flawed or ruptured social interactions. In fact, 5.21-48 contain references to a variety of

⁸⁹ This type of comparison was inspired, in part, by Abraham J. Malherbe, "The Christianization of a Topos (Luke 12:13-34)," *Novum Testamentum* 38 (1996), 123-135.

circumstances that qualify as perceived or potential injuries: a brother has something against you (5.23), you are taken to court (5.25), someone does evil (5.39), someone strikes you on the cheek (5.39), someone sues you and wants your coat (5.40), someone forces you to go one mile (5.41), someone begs from you (5.42), someone wants to borrow from you (5.42), you have enemies (5.43), you are persecuted (5.44). All of these situations could be perceived as harmful. For my purpose, though, it is enough to say that Matthew depicts anger as arising from various types of perceived harm or injury.

Second, given the overwhelming tendency of ancient authors to discuss the social location of anger, we may say that Matthew follows suit by characterizing anger as a component of social practice. The anti-anger teaching in 5.21-22 relates anger to murder by making those who practice either one of them liable to judgment. This shows, despite modern Cartesian tendencies to view cognition as an entirely private and concealed activity, that Matthew considers observable behavior *and* one's state of mind to be actions or practices that are both open to the same kind of moral evaluation. Further, the two exempla in 5.23-24 describe established social practices (sacrifice and legal procedures) with norms and standards of their own. By introducing anger into the equation, Matthew shows that even established social practices may be disrupted, and that the occasion of a failed social practice requires attention not only to the accepted norms of behavior, but also to the disposition, emotions, and motives that are bound up in them.

Third, given the active position-taking of moral philosophers on the value of anger in the good life, Matthew's depiction of Jesus as the bearer of an anti-anger

teaching may be understood as a particular sort of intellectual position-taking. Chapter Two provided a map of various positions on the moral value of anger:

Proposed Descriptive Anger Schema with Prescriptive Variations

	Variation #1 (Aristotle & Peripatetics)	Variation #2 (Philodemus)	Variation #3 (Stoics)
Provocation	with pain at perceived slight	with pain at perceived harm	no perception of harm and thus no pain
Desire	with anticipatory pleasure	without anticipatory pleasure; with the goal of safety, security, or justice	rational assessment and thus no desire
Response	revenge, with pleasure	revenge, punishment, or teaching, with pain on the part of the one responding	punishment, teaching, or reconciliation

By locating Matthew's position on this map, we gain a better sense of how 5.21-26 would have been understood within moral discourse about anger. Of the three prescriptive variations outlined above and discussed in detail in Chapter Two, I argue that Matthew's anti-anger teaching fits most neatly within the Stoic variation because the material in 5.21-26 offers a teaching that allows no room for desire or revenge; in fact, the recommended responses to the perceived or potential harms correspond with those recommended in various Stoic sources.

Taken as they are, verses 5.21-22 do not provide explicit information about the causes or consequences of being angry with one's brother. All that is said is that the one who becomes angry will be liable to judgment. It may be the case that the name-calling

mentioned in the latter part of 5.22 is the *result* of anger, but it is not clear. It could just as easily be the case that the insults are the *provocations* for anger, in which case the provocateur would be guilty of causing anger in another person. In any case, as was explained in Chapter Two, insults and slights may function both as *stimuli* for anger (a person who is slighted via insult will become angry) and as *consequences* of anger (someone who is angry may retaliate by insulting the person who angered him), and here we have another possible illustration of the Stoic paradox of the equality of sins. Just as anger and murder will bring a person to the similar result of judgment, so too will insults or slights: “... and whoever says “airhead!” to his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says “fool!” will be liable to the hell of fire” (Matthew 5.22).

Matthew 5.21-22, though, does not offer any explicit guidance or teaching for how to avoid or prevent anger. Clearly, anger and desire do not figure into the greater righteousness advocated in 5.20 and again emphasized in 5.48. If the TM is in fact a discourse on morality that coheres with Greek and Roman virtue ethics, one would expect more than a statement of the requirements of righteousness and perfection, but also some kind of advice or guidance about how to make progress toward it.

As it happens, the anti-anger statement in 5.21-22 is followed by two short anecdotes that not only describe the kinds of situations that typically move a person to anger but also prescribe some of the ways that someone faced with these situations could properly respond:

Thus, if while you are offering your gift at the altar you remember that you brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother (*diallagēthi tō adelphō sou*) and then come and offer your gift. (5.23-34)

Show goodwill toward your opponent right away (*isthi eunoōn tō antidikō sou tachū*), while you are on the way to court with him, or your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will never escape from that place until you give back the last penny. (5.25-26)

These exempla, as I mentioned above, neither directly nor indirectly illustrate murder, and thus do not offer further elaboration on how—or even why—one would prevent it. These illustrations do not clarify the source of trouble between the person at the altar and his brother, or between the accuser and the accused. If anger is the main point of 5.21-26, then Matthew has failed in his depiction of Jesus as a teacher of ethics who is even *mildly* persuasive on the point of anger's inevitable end.

Being bound by the principle of charity, I am not yet willing to say that Matthew chose to include illustrations that do not support his claim. I believe that the onus is on the interpreter to try to make the best sense of the passage and to find a way that the argument could be a good one. In order to do this, I suggest that the point of 5:21-26 is *anger*, not murder. The threads that run between murder and anger are judgment and punishment, and Matthew's point seems to be that people ought to be very careful in all aspects of their social lives, and that sociability requires attention to emotions as well. The point is about living properly or suffering the consequences and Matthew is trying to show that living properly requires simultaneous attention to one's *interior* actions as well as one's *exterior* ones. But even this does not seem entirely correct, for it assumes the very dichotomy I am trying to avoid, that emotions are private, internal states, completely separate from the social world. Perhaps it is *more* accurate, then, to say that Matthew reflects the less-Cartesian view of emotion that characterized the ancient philosophical theories: that emotion (or at least anger) is embedded within social practice in a way that

is not highlighted in modern folk conceptions of emotions as highly internalized and individualized experiences.

If our two exempla are not about murder, then what *are* they about? I suggest that they are mini-episodes of Prescriptive Variation #3, the Stoic variation, of the anger schema. Each example contains the sort of provocation that is fully capable of leading to anger and revenge and is followed immediately by a teaching that emphasizes a non-retaliatory response. The teachings bear great similarity to those advocated by the Stoics. One appropriate response is a non-response, as illustrated by Seneca, with reference to Cato:

“But,” you ask, “if a wise man receives a blow, what shall he do?” What Cato did when he was struck in the face. He did not flare up, he did not avenge the wrong, he did not even forgive it, but he said that no wrong had been done. He showed finer spirit in not acknowledging it than if he had pardoned it. (Seneca, *Const.* 14.3)

Another appropriate response acknowledges that some minor loss or pain *did* occur, but aims at calmly bearing the pain, sometimes through the means of humor.⁹⁰

Socrates, it is said, when once he received a box on the ear, merely declared that it was too bad that a man could not tell when he ought to wear a helmet while taking a walk. (Seneca *Ira* 3.11.2)⁹¹

None of this should be taken to mean that the provocateur has done no wrong.⁹² In some cases we find accounts that focus not on the *harm* received by someone, but upon the *wrong* that the provocateur has committed. These cases involve teaching, correction, or

⁹⁰ Stoics would not deny that sometimes physical pain is involved in a provocation. See Seneca, *Const.* 10.2. What *is* denied is that these pains or damages constitute true injury or harm because true injury is that which compromises one's virtue.

⁹¹ Also see Seneca, *Ira* 3.11.4.

⁹² Seneca, *Const.* 7.3-6.

punishment, all of which can range from mild to harsh.⁹³ Finally, another kind of appropriate Stoic response to a provocation involves kindness and reconciliation:

Animosity, if abandoned by one side, forthwith dies; it takes two to make a fight. But if anger shall be rife on both sides, if the conflict comes, he is the better man who first withdraws; the vanquished is the one who wins.⁹⁴

Taken on their own, the two exempla in 5.23-26 do resound with the alternative responses to provocations just described. Both encourage a certain sort of social interaction that does not depend upon anger to resolve the effects of a provocation. But when this is paired with their placement just after the anti-anger teaching of 5.22, there is good reason to think that the entirety of 5.21-26 is about the practices surrounding the emotion of anger.

Luke, too, uses the example about settling things with your accuser on the way to court, but not alongside a teaching about anger, and not within a larger discussion about emotion or desire.⁹⁵ The example about being reconciled with your brother before offering a sacrifice is not paralleled in Luke, but does have a level of similarity with a passage from Epictetus, in which he recommends celebrating a thirty day hiatus from anger with a sacrifice to God.⁹⁶

In addition to these two provocation-response exempla in 5.23-26, the whole of 5.21-48 contains similar scenarios. If we keep in mind the idea that anger is the desire for avenging a real or perceived injury or threat, we can see how all of these provocations

⁹³ The beliefs that contribute to this are: a belief that the provocateur has done something wrong/unjust and a belief that it is good to correct or punish the wrongdoer and/or to bring aid or security to the victim. See Seneca, *Const.* 12.3, 13.1-2, and *Ira* 1.6.1-3.

⁹⁴ Seneca, *Ira* 2.34. 4-5. Also see Seneca, *Ira* 1.14.1-3, 1.16.6, 2.10.6-7.

⁹⁵ Luke 12:57-59.

⁹⁶ *Discourses*, 2.18.

could lead to anger. As Matthew arranges things here, revenge out of anger does not occur. Instead, he offers a series of ten provocation-response scenarios, none of which allow for anger or desire of any kind:

<u>Provocation</u>	<u>Response</u>
Brother has something against you ...	be reconciled with him
You are taken to court ...	come to terms with your accuser
Someone does evil ...	do not resist him
Someone strikes you on one cheek ...	offer your other cheek as well
Someone sues you and wants your coat ...	give the coat, plus your cloak
Someone forces you to go one mile ...	go the mile, plus another
Someone begs from you ...	give to him
Someone wants to borrow from you ...	do not refuse him
You have enemies ...	love them ⁹⁷
People persecute you ...	pray for them

Matthew addresses not only anger, but other negative types of desire such as lust, enmity, and hatred, and shows that none of these are appropriate for humans.

Of interest, though, especially with regard to my argument that certain aspects of the passage contain Stoic resonances, is that Matthew advocates a *positive* type of desire in place of anger. To illustrate this, I return to the second of the two exempla discussed above:

Show goodwill toward your opponent right away (*isthi eunoōn tō antidikō sou tachy*), while you are on the way to court with him, or your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will never escape from that place until you give back the last penny. (Matthew 5.25-26)

Matthew has followed his teaching about not engaging in the negative desire of anger with an illustration that depicts a possible anger-provoking scenario. His alternative response (show goodwill) should remind us of the Stoic *eupatheiai*, the “good” or

⁹⁷ Marius Reiser has argued that the only other evidence for this teaching (which is also paralleled in Luke) comes from Socrates and from the Roman Stoics; Reiser, "Love of Enemies in the Context of Antiquity," 411-427. The more commonly held belief was that the good person would love friends and hate enemies; Mary Whitlock Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

“rational” emotions. The Greek verb that I have translated as “show goodwill” is *eunoeō*, meaning to be favorable or well-disposed. *Eunoia* is classified by the Stoics as a specific kind of positive desire. In the Stoic classification of emotions, the negative genre emotion desire (*epithumia*) has a positive or rational counterpart called wishing (*boulēsis*), of which *eunoia* is a species.⁹⁸

The verb *eunoeō* and the noun *eunoia* are sometimes used more generally in ways that contrast or oppose the showing of goodwill or being kind toward someone with showing anger or being angry. Aristotle, for example, contrasts one who is in a favorable state of mind with one in an angry state while discussing the ways that a defendant or accuser can use the epilogue of the speech: “The object of an appeal to the hearer is to make him well disposed (*tou eunoun poiēsai*) or to arouse his indignation (*tou orgisai*), and sometimes to engage his attention or the opposite” (*Rhet* 1415a; 3.14.7). Although he does not explicitly say that there is a contrast, we can see that he is thinking in terms of opposites, when he in the next phrase says “or draw attention or the opposite.”⁹⁹

In addition to being a more general term of goodwill, kindness, or benevolence, the term *eunoia* took on a technical meaning in Stoic moral psychology. In a discussion about the three generic rational emotions (*eupatheiai*), Chrysippus reports that:

And accordingly, as under the primary passions are classed certain others subordinate to them, so too is it with the primary eupathies or good emotional states. Thus under wishing (*boulēsin*) they bring well-wishing or benevolence (*eunoian*), friendliness (*eumeneian*), respect (*aspasmon*), affection (*agapēsin*);

⁹⁸ The common translation, “wishing,” is misleading to some degree because it does not emphasize the belief or judgment aspect of the term. Perhaps a better translation would be “rational expectation” or “well-founded anticipation.”

⁹⁹ Other texts that contrast *eunoia* and *orgē* are Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1415a35; Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 3.438, *Antiquities* 7.259; 13.405; Plutarch, *Aristides* 4.1, *De fraterno amore* 483A7, 489C8, *Brutus* 7.5; Dio Chysostom, *Oration* 77.78, 42.2; 21.9.7.

under caution (*eulabeian*), reverence (*aidō*) and modesty (*hagneian*); under joy (*charan*), delight (*terpsin*), mirth (*euphrosunēn*), cheerfulness (*euthumian*).¹⁰⁰

Pseudo-Andronicus of Rhodes also attests to this categorization of *eunoia*. In his *Peri Pathōn*, he says that *eunoia* is wishing good things for someone else for his own sake (*eunoia men oun esti boulēsis agathōn <heterō> autou heneken ekeinou*). Similarly, long-lasting well-wishing (*eunoia epimonos*) is called good favor (*eumeneia*) and continual well-wishing (*adiastatos <eunoia>*) is called affection (*aspasmos*).¹⁰¹

And thus Matthew has not only introduced the teaching against the negative desire of anger, but has advocated the positive desire of goodwill in its place. Luke's version of the Q material does not talk about reconciliation, but instead advocates escaping on the way to trial:

For when you go with your opponent before an official, on the way make an effort to get away from him (*dos ergasian apēllachthai ap' autou*), lest you be dragged before the judge and the judge hand you over to the bailiff, and the bailiff throw you into prison. I say to you, you will never escape from that place until you give back even the last coin. (Luke 12.57b-59)

Further, it is not preceded by a discussion of anger, emotion, or desire, nor does it recommend *eunoia*. Instead, Luke's version simply recommends trying to get away from one's accuser on the way to court. Although Matthew has adapted this Q material to contribute to his portrait of Jesus as a teacher of ethics who is concerned with moral psychology in a way that is unique among the synoptic gospels, it is not at all unique within the context of Greek and Roman virtue ethics.

¹⁰⁰ DL 7.115 (Chrysippus, *Fragmenta moralia* 431.7).

¹⁰¹ Andronicus, *Peri pathōn* 5-10 (Chrysippus, *Fragmenta moralia* 432.7-9). Also see Chrysippus, *Fragmenta moralia* 112.3, 292.11, 359.6, 630.3).

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed Matthew 5.21-26 in terms of the anger schema set forth in Chapter Two. I argued that the singular focus on a Judean context for the teachings not only in 5.21-26, but also 5.17-48, has caused scholars to ignore the Greek and Roman interest in moral psychology, emotion, and anger. By contextualizing the teachings about anger and desire in Matthew 5 within virtue ethics, I demonstrated that the material unique to Matthew contains ideas that are distinctively Stoic. The interpretive payoff of this analysis is that we now have a means of connecting Matthew's anti-anger teaching with other similar ones in antiquity.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANGER AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The previous chapter showed that Matthew's teachings about human anger correspond with a known anger schema, and more particularly, with moral prescriptions associated with Stoic ethics and moral psychology. The dependence upon the Stoic paradox about the equality of sins, the condemnation of anger and other types of desire, the recommended strategies of *eunoia* and reconciliation, as well as the emphasis on perfection all point toward a Stoic reading of Matthew 5.17-48 and its prescriptions for the role of emotion in human life. We now take up the issue of *divine* emotion, with particular attention to anger.

A consideration of divine anger is important for two reasons. The first is that, of the four occurrences of the Greek term for anger (*orgē/orgizō*) in the gospel of Matthew, three presumably refer to the anger of god:¹ John the Baptist's apocalyptic message about fleeing "the coming anger" (Matthew 3.7) and two parables about anger in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18.34 and 22.7). A second reason for attending to matters related to divine anger and emotion is that Matthew relates human perfection and righteousness to divine perfection and, at times, recommends imitation of the "father in heaven" as a way

¹ I say "presumably" because although Matthew does not directly attribute anger to god, his depictions of the "kingdom of heaven" do in fact involve god's agency.

to achieve greater righteousness (Matthew 5.48, “be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect”).

As with Chapter Three, this chapter surveys some current trends in NT scholarship concerning the texts dealing with divine anger and then offers a new analysis that situates the texts within Greek and Roman philosophical discourse. My argument is that Matthew’s use of anger in the parables of 18.21-35 and 22.1-14 follows the anger schema outlined in Chapter Two and, further, that it is best understood within Matthew’s “kingdom of heaven” motif, which is introduced in Matthew 3.7. Through a comparison between Matthew’s images of divine anger and philosophical views of divine *apatheia*, the chapter addresses the divergence between Matthew’s teachings concerning human and divine anger. Finally, the chapter highlights the ways that modern commentators’ unitary focus on Judean materials prevents fruitful comparison with non-Judean discussions of divine anger.

History Writing, Rhetoric, and Matthew’s Parables

Parables play an important role in Matthew’s development of the “kingdom of heaven.”² It is well-known that the phrase “kingdom of heaven” (*hē basileia tōn ouranōn*) is used exclusively by Matthew, and most scholars assume that his use of this phrase is a pious attempt to refrain from referring to god directly, as he would need to if he used the phrase “kingdom of god” (*hē basileia tou theou*).³ Matthew refers explicitly to the kingdom of

² See, for example, the series of parables about the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13, as well as those in Matthew 18 and 22.

³ Although this claim is by no means closed to questioning; see Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

heaven thirty-two times.⁴ Of these, ten describe the kingdom of heaven through comparison by means of a parable or simile,⁵ and of these, two depict powerful men who are provoked to anger and who, in turn, enact revenge upon the provocateurs.

The first of these two parables is Matthew 18.21-35, which is usually referred to as “the parable of the unforgiving servant”⁶:

Then Peter, approaching, said to him [Jesus], “Lord, how often will my brother do wrong to me and I will forgive him? Seven times?”

Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. For this reason, the kingdom of heaven was likened to a human king who decided to settle a matter with his slaves. And when the leader began the settlement, one owing innumerable talents was brought to him. And because he could not pay, the lord commanded him and his wife and his children and everything he had to be sold and to be given as payment. Therefore the slave, falling down, kissed his hand, saying, ‘Be patient with me and I will repay to you everything.’

And being moved (*splangchnistheis*) for that slave, the lord dismissed him and forgave for him the loan. And on his way out, that slave met one of his co-slaves who owed him one hundred denarii, and taking hold of him, choked [him], saying, ‘Repay what you owe.’ Thus, falling down, his co-slave exhorted him, saying, ‘be patient with me and I will repay you.’ And he did not wish [to do this], but going away, threw him into prison until he would repay the debt.

Seeing this, his fellow slaves therefore were greatly grieved (*elupēthēsan sphodra*) at what happened, and going, they explained everything that happened to the lord himself. Then, calling him, his lord said to him, ‘Evil slave, that entire debt I forgave you when you beseeched me. Is it not necessary also that you show pity (*eleēsai*) to your fellow slave as also I showed pity (*ēleēsa*) to you?’

And in anger (*orgistheis*), his lord handed him over to the jailors until he paid to him the entire debt. Thus also my father in heaven will do to you if you do not forgive every brother from your hearts.”

⁴ Matthew 3.2; 4.17; 5.3, 10, 19 (2X); 5.20; 7.21; 8.11; 10.7; 11.11, 12; 13.11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16.19; 18.1, 3, 4, 23; 19.12, 14, 23; 20.1; 22.2; 23.13; 25.1.

⁵ Matthew 13.24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 18.23; 20.1; 22.2; 25.1.

⁶ Although Carter refers to it, instead, as “the unforgiving king and his unforgiving retainer,” Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire: Imperial Paradigms in Two Matthean Parables,” 262. His reading denies that the king in the parable may be likened to god.

Commentators have failed to analyze the role of emotion in this parable, and instead have focused on other issues. Although this section illustrates how these issues pertain to the parable in Matthew 18.21-35, the general trends highlighted here are also found in scholarship on the parable in 22.1-14 and on the gospel parables in general.

First is a focus on the question of the authenticity or originality of the parables, which involves questions about whether or not the teachings may be “traced back” to Jesus.⁷ This is driven by the aim of determining whether the teaching is Matthew’s own creation or whether it accurately recounts a “real” discourse given by Jesus. More often than not, commentators take the position that the gospel-writers have modified the original parables to varying degrees. In establishing this position, scholars frequently attempt to “reconstruct” what they think Jesus actually said.⁸ This necessarily includes investigation of historical details found in the parables as well as explanations for Jesus’ possible knowledge of these historical details and or how they could be historically plausible. One example regarding the parable in Matthew 18.21-35 has been the amount of debt owed by the first slave; because the amount is high, many scholars attempt to justify Jesus’ supposed reference to a slave’s having accumulated such debt.⁹ Lest

⁷ For a summary of the historicizing/reconstruction tendency, see Klyne R. Snodgrass, “From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus” in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, eds. James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 250-253, which discusses the work of Adolf Jülicher, C.H. Dodd, and Joachim Jeremias. Also, see Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 383, 432; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: In Three Volumes* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 794-795; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 469-471; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 47-50.

⁸ See references in previous note, as well as Robert Walter Funk, Bernard Brandon Scott and James R. Butts, *The Parables of Jesus: Red Letter Edition: A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988).

⁹ Especially Martinus C. De Boer, “Ten Thousand Talents? Matthew’s Interpretation and Redaction of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:23-35),” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988), 214-232.

someone think that the story is a complete fiction, or that Jesus had no real awareness of life around him, some commentators are careful to examine the various roles of slaves in relation to finance.¹⁰ Many solutions are offered, such as pointing out that slaves were often in charge of a household's finances, or that *doulos* may refer to a satrap or other high-level subordinate to a king.¹¹ I mention this example not to critique the investigation of slaves in antiquity, but rather to point to one of many cases in which scholars attempt to lend credibility to Jesus' teachings by verifying, or at least making plausible, the details of his teachings.

A second persistent pre-occupation of commentators is that of the "Matthean community" (i.e., Matthew's "church" or "congregation"). This is especially true of Matthew 18, which is thought to be a community rule for Matthew's church; as such, scholars assume that it provides reliable historical information about the flock to which Matthew was tending: "On the whole, the chapter [Matthew 18] seems to open a window directly onto the everyday life of Matthew's congregation."¹² Viewing the parable solely as a window onto historical circumstances requires that the emotion in the parable be explained in ways that correspond to the reconstructed history:

In view of the development of the story, the comment [about the slaves' being deeply distressed] is unmotivated; the king is not interested in the reactions of the fellow servants since the behavior of the unmerciful servant is harsh enough as such to provoke the anger of the king as well as the judgment of the

But see also: Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, 471. Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, 309; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 795-799.

¹⁰ De Boer summarizes the debate surrounding this issue, De Boer, *Ten Thousand Talents? Matthew's Interpretation and Redaction of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:23-35)*, 214-218.

¹¹ Ibid., 216-217; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, Rev. ed. (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1963), 210-212.

¹² Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew's View of Salvation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 231.

readers/hearers of the story on the unmerciful servant. *Perhaps the editor's comment here reflects his own stance on the disagreements in the real life of his community. Matthew himself belongs to those in his community who are 'greatly distressed' about the unmerciful attitude prevailing in his community.*¹³

This reading begins from the assumption that, historically speaking, a king would not be interested in the emotion of his servant, and moves directly to the unnecessary conclusion that the emotion in the text directly reflects the historical situation of the author's community. The above quotation explains the presence of emotion in this parable as a means by which Matthew inserted himself and his supposed community into the narrative.

Another method for reconstruction is to mine the text of the parables for what seem to be historical details. Jeremias, for example, notes that the term *basanistēs*, used in Matthew 18.34, refers to a torturer ("and in anger, his lord handed him over to the jailors/torturers [*tois basanistais*] until he paid to him the entire debt"). Jeremias's conclusion about Matthew's use of this term is as follows:

The punishment of torture was not allowed in Israel. It is again evident (see v. 25, 30) that non-Palestinian conditions are described here, unless the parable refers to Herod the Great, who made abundant use of torture, heedless of Jewish law—but could he have been credited with the generosity of v. 27?¹⁴

While the line of reasoning would make sense if this text explicitly aimed to recount an historical event, we must keep in mind that Matthew introduced this parable as Jesus' way of comparing forgiveness with the kingdom of heaven. The problematic aspect of Jeremias's analysis is that he assumes that the parable "describes" conditions as they

¹³ Ibid., 252. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*.

were on the ground, so to speak, rather than being a rhetorical illustration.¹⁵ I do not deny that writers are influenced on some level by their lived experience, but this does not necessitate our reading parables as if they were accurate historical descriptors.

Central to the points just discussed is the assumption that the parables may be used as textual evidence for the historical Jesus, the historical Matthew, and/or the historical situation and events of the “Matthean community.” Following in the wake of this assumption is the practice of situating the text within the genre of history-writing, and doing so in a way that is not sensitive to the contours of ancient writing practices. Although a full discussion of ancient historiography and the possible location of the gospels therein is not possible here, a few cautionary notes are in order.

First, it is clearly not the case that the gospel-writers were involved in a kind of history-writing that aims to offer an account of past events in a way that coheres with a modern correspondence theory of truth.¹⁶ More likely, the gospel-writers were engaged in a form of myth-making about the origins of the movement now known as Christianity.¹⁷ Thus, the gospels read more as foundation-myths—replete with images of heroes, mythic figures, miracles, communication with angels and gods, and divine lineage—than as records of history that would hold up under even the lowest standards of

¹⁵ Ibid., 212-213. Similar methods are employed in the social-science approach to the parables, summarized in David B. Gowler, *What are they Saying about the Parables?* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000).

¹⁶ One of the hallmarks of scientific historiography. See Curtis Michael Hutt, Brown University and Dept. of Religious Studies, *The Ethics of the Representation of the Religious Past*, 2007), esp. 1-19.

¹⁷ On the idea of myth-making (or, as Braun proposes, “sociomythic invention”) see, for example: Willi Braun, “The Schooling of a Galilean Jesus Association (the Sayings Gospel Q)” in *Redescribing Christian Origins*, eds. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 43-65; Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Burton L. Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament? the Making of the Christian Myth*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995).

positivistic verifiability. As such, then, the first methodological point about the interpretation of the parables relates to our knowledge of Greek writing practices. Of particular interest here is the combination of rhetoric and history writing.

I suggested above that the parables may better be understood as rhetorical illustrations than as historical record-keeping. It was not uncommon in antiquity for historical narratives to include substantial amounts of rhetorical fabrication.¹⁸ In particular, an author would need to employ his knowledge of rhetoric to create speeches for key historical figures when historical “evidence” was lacking. As Matthew Fox points out, in ancient writing we find a blurring of the lines

between what is rhetorically fitting to a particular occasion, and what was probably said on a particular occasion, given the absence of a reliable record. Failing a reliable textual or verbal record, Thucydides’ sense of what the speaker ought to have said in the circumstances will do as an indication at least of the general sense of what was in fact said. Modern notions of historical evidence recoil from such an absence of discrimination, but Thucydides is probably more careful than any other historian in even acknowledging that there is a difficulty in passing off reconstructed speeches as adequate, or at least valuable, records of what occurred.¹⁹

Fox also points out that we learn from Thucydides that popular history writing often included myths, legends, and other kinds of story-like elements. There was a strong tradition “of including myths and legends; Herodotus is clearly one example, though other lost historians were probably more obvious; subsequent Greek historians continued,

¹⁸ I have tried to avoid the terminology of “fiction” and “falsehood,” which would take us into a separate debate, filled with its own problems and complexities. See, for example, David Konstan, “The Invention of Fiction” in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, eds. Ronald F. Hock, J. Bradley Chance and Judith Perkins (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 3-17; J. L. Moles, “Truth and Untruth in Herodotus and Thucydides” in *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, eds. Christopher Gill and T. P. Wiseman (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 88-121; T. P. Wiseman, “Lying Historians: Seven Types of Mendacity” in *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, eds. Christopher Gill and T. P. Wiseman (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 122-146.

¹⁹ Matthew Fox and Niall Livingstone, “Rhetoric and Historiography” in *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric*, ed. Ian Worthington (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 549

despite Thucydides, to accommodate quantities of mythical material in historical guise.”²⁰ Thus even if one does choose to locate the gospels within the genre of ancient history-writing, one must recognize that it was common practice for an author to construct speeches that were rhetorically appropriate for the narrative rather than reporting what actually happened.²¹ As such, it is difficult to imagine that parables attributed to Jesus necessarily contain elements that would meet the standards of modern historical analysis. To treat an ancient text as a historical text without being sensitive to the possibility that it has a rhetorical aim seems unproductive at best and irresponsible at worst. Thus in what follows, questions about what the historical Jesus may have said will be set aside to make room for an analysis of the parables that takes into consideration their situation not only within the Matthean text, but also within ancient Greek writing practices.

A second cautionary note related to the assumption that the parables may be used as evidence for historical reconstruction of Jesus, Matthew, or Matthew’s community has to do with the ways that scholars use sources external to Matthew’s gospel to reconstruct historical scenarios. By this I simply refer to the ways in which scholars construct a framing interpretive narrative for the text; this was discussed in the previous chapter with reference to the anachronistic construction of an “essentially” or “purely” Jewish

²⁰ Ibid., 549. Fox also discusses histories being read at competitions, and the ones with the most story-like elements were the ones that the crowds usually found to be the most pleasing. Fox’s discussion shows that there were recognized criteria for what made a narrative more or less appealing and what gave it more traction. Without suggesting that gospel-reading involved competition such as this, it does make sense to posit that the gospels, also, could have held a similar competitive edge because of their use of legends, myths, and fantastical material (miracles, dead coming to life, and so forth).

²¹ This is mostly because these authors were not eyewitnesses and did not have access to what “actually happened” anyway.

thought-world in which to situate the moral teachings of Matthew 5. Of particular note for the parables is the pervasive interpretive recourse to rabbinic parables.²²

Trading upon the notion that everything in the gospels must be explicable in terms of Judean tradition and texts (Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, rabbinic literature), many scholars begin their explanations of the parables with reference to the Hebrew term *mashal*, which has a wide semantic range, including, for instance, proverbial sayings, prophetic oracles, and allegorizing similes.²³ Because the Septuagint renders the Hebrew *mashal* as *parabolē*, “one finds a common trajectory [in scholarship on the parables]: all move the discussion of the *mashal* closer to the discussion of *parable* in current rabbinic and New Testament scholarship, which is clearly seen in their greater willingness to refer to *mashal* as *parable*.”²⁴ Beyond a basic agreement that the Hebrew and Greek terms may be taken to represent similar literary figures, the question of comparing rabbinic *mashalim* and NT parables is fraught. The main concerns revolve around two basic questions concerning how scholars ought to account for the similarity between the rabbinic *mashalim* and the NT parables, and what interpretive or genetic relationship may one draw between the two.²⁵

The use of rabbinic parables in the interpretation of the synoptic parables may be critiqued on many fronts, but two critiques suffice for our purposes. First of all, the

²² Summaries may be found in Gowler, *What are They Saying about the Parables?*, 41-56; Snodgrass, "From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus," 258-261.

²³ Gowler, *What are They Saying about the Parables?*, 42-43. Although this issue is not without its own controversy; Ibid., 42-46.

²⁴ Ibid., 46.

²⁵ Summaries of these issues and references for further investigation are provided in Ibid., 52-56; Snodgrass, "From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus," 258-261.

synoptic parables pre-date the rabbinic ones, often by centuries. The problem here is not just that the rabbinic sources are later, but that they are *much* later. Second, while the rabbinic parables are used to support exegetical conclusions, it is not clear that this is what is happening in Matthew's gospel.²⁶ Thus, "suggestions of dependence between rabbis and Jesus, or vice versa, should probably be ignored, for direct dependence in either direction is unlikely."²⁷

Despite this, however, it is not unreasonable to consider the wider context in which the kinds of comparison offered in the parables may have developed. While scholarly consensus has generally accepted the contextualization of the rabbinic *mashalim* in terms of earlier examples in Judean texts, it has not generally accepted the practice of contextualizing the synoptic parables in terms of earlier examples in non-Judean texts. In 1899, Adolph Jülicher proposed that most of Jesus' parables may be compared with the Greek fables of Stesichoros (7-6c BCE) and Aesop (7-6c BCE), but his method "has not gained wide acceptance."²⁸ Scholars commonly have dismissed comparison between NT parables and Greek fables out of hand, with little justification.²⁹ But some scholars have nevertheless offered compelling arguments about common elements between Greek fables, near eastern stories, and Jewish parables.³⁰ Despite these

²⁶ Gowler, *What are They Saying about the Parables?*, 51; Snodgrass, "From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus," 260-261.

²⁷ Ibid., 261.

²⁸ Gowler, *What are They Saying about the Parables?*, 59.

²⁹ Ibid., 59.

³⁰ Ibid., 59-60. I say "Jewish" parables instead of "Judean" parables because most scholars focus on rabbinic parables. If we understand rabbinic literature as part of the beginning of the religion we now call Judaism, then referring to the rabbinic parables as Jewish parables does make sense.

arguments, scholars have preferred to contextualize the NT parables with reference to Judean materials.³¹

Even as recently as 2005, Klyne Snodgrass has noticed that “while numerous studies exist on the relation of the Gospel parables to Jewish parables, relatively little has been done by way of studying Graeco-Roman parables and their relevance for our understanding of Jesus’ parables. This is a serious lacuna that needs to be filled.”³² As Gowler puts it,

Although Jesus was a first-century Jewish teacher and wonder-worker, the parables, in their present contexts, are in Greek. The Jewish heritage of the Jesus portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels—who teaches in parables—merges with Hellenistic-Roman forms of speech, thought, and action, so that the “Synoptic Jesus” speaks and acts in roles that combine Jewish and Hellenistic-Roman modes of words and deeds. Because Hellenistic culture influences all Diaspora Judaism and Palestinian Judaism to a certain extent, the Jewishness of the Synoptic Jesus does not preclude the existence of Hellenistic elements. A careful reading makes clear that the gospels merge biblical patterns with Hellenistic patterns and conventions; they—and the Jesus they portray—are intercultural.³³

More recently, Ronald Hock has traced similarities between the gospel parables and the Greek *parabolai* back to the formal rhetorical criteria given in ancient rhetorical handbooks and to aspects of the Greek novels.³⁴ His findings are important because they demonstrate that texts interested in Judean motifs (i.e., the gospels) utilize literary techniques similar to those that show no interest in Judean motifs.

³¹ This tendency is well-documented by Mary Ann Beavis, “Parable and Fable,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990), 473-498.

³² Snodgrass, “From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus,” 261.

³³ Gowler, *What are They Saying about the Parables?*, 57.

³⁴ Ronald F. Hock, “Romancing the Parables of Jesus,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 29.1 (2002), esp. 11-15.

In what follows, then, I argue that the two parables under discussion may be profitably interpreted in light of the anger schema. Specifically, I argue that the two parables about anger in the kingdom of heaven follow the philosophical anger schema set forth in Chapter Two.

An Anger Schema in Matthew 18.21-35 and 22.1-14

As argued in Chapter Two, moral philosophical writings in both Greek and Latin portray anger as having three basic components: 1) it is a species of desire that aims to avenge a perceived injury, 2) it is a component of social practice, and 3) it is described as having a three-part narrative structure (provocation, desire, and response). Here, I show that Matthew 18.21-35 and 22.1-14 each contain the three general aspects of the anger schema. I begin with 18.21-35, and treat each of the three components of the anger schema in turn.

Desire for revenge arises from a situation in which someone has either been harmed or has the perception of having received harm. As explained in Chapter Two, many different kinds of events can count as harmful or injurious, and are not limited only to bodily injury. Social norms, for example, may be violated in a way that causes harm in terms of loss of status, respect, or expected fair-treatment. The parable in Matthew 18.21-35 depicts *orgē* as a desire for revenge because it portrays the reception of harm, the enactment of revenge, and anger (*orgē*) as the desire that connects the two in a causal relation.

At least two related kinds of harm are involved in the parable. The first involves a violation of the social norms for reciprocal relations. The slave whose debt was forgiven by the king did not return the favor when given the opportunity:

... that slave met one of his co-slaves who owed him one hundred denarii, and taking hold of him, choked [him], saying, "Repay what you owe." Thus, falling down, his co-slave exhorted him, saying, "be patient with me and I will repay you." And he did not wish [to do this], but going away, threw him into prison until he would repay the debt. (Matthew 18.28-30)

As Ronald Hock has convincingly argued, that slave has violated the rules of reciprocity, which require that any good deed be returned in some way, either toward the benefactor, or to someone else when the opportunity presents itself.³⁵

Hock agrees with the general scholarly consensus that 18.32-33 marks an important moment in the parable: "Then, calling him, his lord said to him, 'Evil slave, that entire debt I forgave you when you beseeched me. Is it not necessary also that you show pity (*eleēsai*) to your fellow slave as also I showed pity (*ēleēsa*) to you?'" Hock's analysis, which draws upon Greco-Roman literature and especially the Greek romances, illustrates the variety of social norms at play in the convention of reciprocity. There are certain norms for reciprocating a benefaction or merciful act, and these norms also extend to interactions between people from different levels of the social hierarchy.

In the case of a powerful person who does something good for someone much lower in status, who cannot reasonably be expected to reciprocate the good deed in like kind because of lack of money or influence, one is expected to offer a benefit to someone lower in status than he. In the case of the parable in Matthew 18.21-35, then, ancient readers or audiences—knowing the conventions of reciprocity—would have realized that

³⁵ Ibid.

the first slave, when faced with the opportunity to reciprocate the good deed of his lord by forgiving the small debt of another slave who owed him money, should have forgiven the debt as a way of adhering to the social norms of reciprocal relations. Thus, as Hock aptly illustrates, the parable does not reflect a new or *sui generis* teaching about a radical forgiveness introduced by Jesus or unique to Judean practice, but instead, reflects the commonly held social norms of Greco-Roman culture and offers an example of an instance when the standard social practices are breached. The first kind of harm received by the lord, then, was the non- or anti- reciprocal action of the slave to whom he had granted forgiveness.

I agree with Hock's argument, but want to go further into the analysis of the kind of harm received by the lord. In addition to the social practice of reciprocity, then, I suggest that the parable engages the norms involved in the intersection of status, honor, and emotion. These norms, as emphasized by David Konstan, depict not only the kinds of social circumstances in which certain emotions may arise, but also identify certain emotions with those located at specific levels of the social hierarchy. Anger, for example, is only accessible to those who have enough status or honor to be belittled or slighted.

In the span of this short parable, Matthew employs four emotions. First, when faced with the pleading slave, the lord has compassion (*splangchnistheis*) and thus forgives the debt. Second, some of the slaves who witnessed the lack of compassion from the first slave when faced with the pleading of the second slave, are described as being deeply pained or grieved (*elupēthēsan sphodra*). Third, when the lord rebukes the lack of compassion and forgiveness of the slave, he twice refers to pity: once when stressing that the slave ought to have shown pity (*eleēsai*), and again when referring to his own

showing of pity (*ēleēsa*) in the forgiveness of the large debt. Fourth, and finally, after rebuking the slave, the lord is angry (*orgistheis*) and punishes him by throwing him into prison.

Of interest here is the emotion of anger, its relation to the harm that the lord received, and its connections with the account of anger offered by Aristotle, which stresses that anger results from the perception of a slight. In addition to the existence of the harm of the reciprocity norms being violated, there is also the damaging presence of a slight, which is a belittling action done, either by an inferior toward a superior or by an equal to an equal, which threatens the status of the one who was belittled. Matthew follows the norm for depicting emotion, then, by attributing anger—rather than, say, hatred, envy, or one of a variety of other emotions—to the individual with the higher status.

The lord, who is obviously higher in status than the slave, displayed his virtuous character by showing pity toward an inferior by forgiving the slave the large debt. In this case, the slave—the inferior—showed proper respect by falling to his knees and pleading his case. The slave was in no way disrespectful and thus the lord had no reason to deny the slave's request or to punish him. The social hierarchy has been maintained on the part of the slave, and the lord has acted mercifully. Faced with the opportunity to be merciful toward someone else, however, the slave did not follow through:

And on his way out, that slave met one of his co-slaves who owed him one hundred denarii, and taking hold of him, choked [him], saying, "Repay what you owe." Thus, falling down, his co-slave exhorted him, saying, "be patient with me and I will repay you." And he did not wish [to do this], but going away, threw him into prison until he would repay the debt. (Matthew 18.28-30)

The text does not give any indication about the second slave's response at being denied his request for an extension on his debt payments. He is not reported to have become angry or to have sought revenge of any sort. This could be because Matthew did not think that the second slave's emotion was relevant to the story. But it might also be the case that he did not assign anger to this slave because, in some ancient discussions of anger, slaves were not considered capable of certain emotions.

For Aristotle, having anger requires the ability to exact revenge, and thus those without the power or the means to do so, simply do not have the capacity for anger (it is desire for revenge, after all, and if there is no possibility for revenge, the argument goes, then one cannot desire it).³⁶ Similarly, with regard to shame, Robert Kaster explains,

No slave is ever described as experiencing *verecundia* [shame], presumably because slaves—at least according to the ideology of Roman slavery—have no autonomous volition, hence no actual self, hence no face to maintain or lose: there is, accordingly, no need for an emotion to draw a line that the nonexistent self ought not cross.³⁷

The idea that certain emotions were associated with one's level of status and honor is reflected in Matthew's text. Matthew does not attribute anger to anyone who is not able to take vengeance.

Matthew does, however, depict the emotive responses to the lack of pity. First, the fellow-slaves are described as being pained or grieved at the denial of forgiveness:

“Seeing this, his fellow slaves therefore were greatly pained (*elupēthēsan sphodra*) at what happened, and going, they explained everything that happened to the lord himself”

³⁶ *Rhet.* 2.2, 1370b13-15.

³⁷ Robert A. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 23.

(Matthew 18.31).³⁸ Second, the lord became angry and enacted revenge. In my proposed reading, the fellow slaves recognized that a slight had occurred and they felt obligated to tell the king so that he could avenge it. They themselves had not been slighted, and thus are not depicted as being angry. When the lord received word that one of his slaves had been assaulted and denied pity—at the hand of the very slave to whom he had just previously shown pity—it is *he* who becomes angry. In this case, the anger of the lord could be understood to have arisen from being slighted. But how is this possible, when it was the *slave* who had been mistreated?

Although the lord himself was not directly harmed, his slave was, and this, for Aristotle, can count toward someone's becoming angry: "And [they become angry] at those belittling others whom it would be shameful for them not to defend, for example, parents, children, wives, dependants" (*Rhet.* 2.2.23). The king had an expectation that he and those near to him should be treated well by the first slave, not only because social standing required it, but also because the king had done a favor for the slave by forgiving his debt. Thus by counting the second slave as being near to the king, we can see how ancient readers would have understood that the first slave's ill-treatment of the second to be a form of belittlement:

Furthermore, a person [feels belittled by adverse remarks or actions of those] by whom he thinks he should be well treated. These are those whom he has treated well [in the past] or is [treating well] now (either directly by himself or through some of those near to him) or those whom he wants or has wanted to treat well. (*Rhet.* 2.2.8)

Rhetorically speaking, then, Matthew has constructed a parable that contains the necessary elements for anger to arise. Not only has the slave been mistreated, but the

³⁸ Here we have a form of *lupē* (distress or grief).

follow slaves brought their grief to their master because he had the power to avenge the mistreatment of the second slave.

The idea of someone of higher status exacting revenge on behalf of someone who cannot do so is found in Greek literature as well as in Aristotle. In the *Iliad*, for example, Chryses must “appeal to Apollo to take revenge in his behalf (42), but is not said to experience anger in his own right. Apollo, however, is ‘angry in his heart’ (*khōomenos kēr*, 44) and immediately punishes the Greeks for this slight to his divinity; he is, of course, entirely capable of doing so.”³⁹ Similarly, Matthew’s parable depicts slaves who, not being able to take revenge on their own, appeal to their master, who then acts on their behalf.

The stage is set for the king to become angry; the rhetorical gauntlet has been thrown down: a slight has been given to a merciful king who must now avenge the mistreatment of the second slave or else risk losing something of his honor. Matthew’s readers would expect it, and in the next verse, Matthew satisfies their expectations: “And in anger (*kai orgistheis*), his lord handed him over to the jailors until he paid to him the entire debt” (Matthew 18.34).

In a case such as this, Aristotle might say, anger is natural and necessary. An impassioned reader with Aristotelian or Peripatetic tendencies might even give a small cheer after that line, and Aristotle might be pleased because his definition of anger—that it contains both pain and pleasure—has come full circle. Matthew arranged the story in such a way that the reader felt grieved at what the first slave did to the second and then felt delighted at what the king did in return. An Epicurean reader might recognize that the

³⁹ Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*, 56.

anger could have been natural and necessary, but for different reasons than an Aristotelian might; he may acknowledge that the right thing was done, but not without some brief pain.⁴⁰ If we imagine an Aristotelian reader cheering when the lord takes revenge, we could also imagine a Stoic cringing at the same point in the text out of disappointment that the lord acted irrationally (i.e., acted in anger).

Regardless of how we interpret it, it is clear that Matthew has characterized anger in this passage as that which arises from the perception of harm and which motivates a direct response to the harm in the form of a damaging or injurious act. In other words, it is the desire for revenge. Thus the first component of the anger schema—the definition of anger as the desire for revenge—is established.

By the same token, though, the second criterion of the anger schema—that anger is a component of social practice—has also been fulfilled. The main question to answer is whether or not anger in this parable arises from and finds its satisfaction in human interaction. As described just now, the lord's anger was the direct result of a breach in social norms and practices. In this parable, the practices that were violated had to do both with reciprocal relations and also with the norms of behavior surrounding the maintenance of honor and status.

The above analysis has also shown that the parable contains the third criterion of the anger schema, namely, the three narrative elements involved in the depiction of anger: provocation, desire, and response. The outline below shows the three components and outlines the moments on Matthew's narrative that correspond with them:

⁴⁰ This refers to Philodemus's natural anger, which was described in Chapter Two. This kind of anger is appropriate but nevertheless comes with a measure of pain.

- Provocation:** The first slave provokes the lord:
- a) Violates the social norms of reciprocity by refusing to return pity for pity
 - b) Violates the social norms of honor and status; he slights the lord by harming those near to him by:
 - Physically injuring his fellow slave by seizing and choking him
 - Emotionally injuring the other slaves by causing them to be distressed
- Desire:** The lord perceives that harm or injury has taken place:
- a) Calls the slave evil and rebukes him
 - b) Becomes angry
- Response:** The lord enacts revenge upon the slave:
- a) Hands him over to the jailors

Thus we can see that the three components of the anger schema are present in the parable in Matthew 18.21-35. The parable is unique to Matthew, having no parallels in the other gospels. It clearly shows that Matthew⁴¹ understands that anger is the emotion that links provocation with revenge.

I turn now to the parable in Matthew 22.1-14. As with Matthew 18, the narrative of Matthew 22 unfolds as a story describing the kingdom of heaven. It is about a master and his slaves, a provocation, anger, and revenge. Here, however, what begins as a slight escalates to a blatant injustice:

And answering, Jesus again spoke in parables to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a human king, who gave a wedding for his son. And he sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding, but they did not want to come.

He again sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner. My bulls and the fattened calves have been sacrificed and everything is ready. Come to the wedding!’

And they, making light of it (*amelēsantes*), departed, one to his own field, and another to his trade. And the ones remaining, seizing his slaves, abused (*hubrisan*) and killed [them]. (Matthew 22.1-6)

⁴¹ Or at least whatever source Matthew might have used.

The king in this parable has done nothing wrong and in fact is being quite generous in inviting people to a banquet. He went to some expense to have the animals prepared for slaughter, sacrificed and prepared for eating, not to mention whatever other preparations had to have been managed. The invited guests did not want to come and we are given no reason why this is the case. Thus the first harm in this parable is a slight akin to what was found in the previous one. No physical or property damage occurred, but status and honor norms have not been followed. Clearly the guests are lower in status than the king.

Upon a second attempt to usher the invitees into the wedding, they again refuse. They make light of the invitation (*amelēsantes*) and some then leave to tend to their business, as if nobody of any merit had invited them. To behave this way toward a person of high merit most assuredly would be understood by ancient readers as a slight. Not only did they refuse one invitation, but they also made light of the second call. Two slights have been committed against the king. But if this were not enough, the stakes are raised when, after some of the invited guests went off to their own affairs, those remaining abused the slaves (*hubrisan*). This is one of Aristotle's three named ways of committing a slight, and is defined as arrogant abuse. Someone who exercises *hubris* does not aim to gain anything for himself, but rather takes pleasure in abusing someone else because he can get away with it. Finally, this abuse escalates to murder: "And the ones remaining, seizing his slaves, abused (*hubrisan*) and killed [them]" (Matthew 22.6).

Several offenses have been committed: disregarding the invitation of a king not once but twice, making light of the invitation, abusing the king's slaves, and killing those slaves after or in the course of the abuse. Rhetorically, Matthew has set the scene for the king to desire revenge, and the expected outcome follows next: "The king was angry

(*ōrgisthē*). He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city”

(Matthew 22.7). It should be clear that the parable follows the anger schema in all three aspects. First, it treats anger as the emotion that follows from injury and motivates revenge. Second, it clearly depicts anger as a component of social practice, in particular as the response to the failure to follow the accepted norms of an honor-based society. The king’s anger has arisen in this story from very specific actions (a series of slights and physical abuse) and has been satisfied in precise actions as well (murderers killed and city burned). Third, the three components of the narrative schema are present:

- Provocation:** Those invited to the wedding provoke the king:
- a) They disregard the first call to the wedding of the king’s son
 - violates the social norms of honor and status; slights the king
 - b) They disregard the second call to the wedding
 - again violates social norms of honor and status; slights the king
 - c) They abuse and kill the king’s slaves
 - Physical/property damage
 - Another violation of the social norms of honor and status
- Desire:** The king perceives that harm and injury has taken place:
- a) Becomes angry (22.7)
- Response:** The king enacts revenge upon the provocateurs:
- a) Physical retaliation
 - Sent troops
 - Destroyed the murderers
 - Burned their city

In the case of Matthew 18, which has no parallel in the other gospels, it was fairly easy to say that the schema existed because of Matthew’s authorship. This claim becomes more complicated in the case of Matthew 22, because the parable is also found in Luke and thus came ultimately from the Q source. Thus we have no way of knowing with certainty whether the version in Matthew or in Luke was identical to Q, and how much Matthew and Luke added or subtracted. It is instructive, nevertheless, to examine the Matthean and Lukan versions of this parable side by side:

Matthew 22.1-14

And answering, Jesus again spoke in parables to them,

saying,

“The kingdom of heaven is like

a human king, who gave a wedding for his son.

And he sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding,

but they did not want to come.

He again sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner. My bulls and the fattened calves have been sacrificed and everything is ready. Come to the wedding!’

And they, making light of it, departed, one to his field, and another to his trade. And the ones remaining, seizing his slaves, abused and killed them.

The king was angry. (*ho de basileus ōrgisthē*)

He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.

Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’

Luke 14.16-24

Then he [Jesus] said to him,

“Someone gave a great dinner and invited many.

At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.’ Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.’ Another said, ‘I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.’ So the slave returned and reported this to the master.

Then the owner of the house became angry (*tote orgistheis ho oikodespotēs*)

and said to his slave,

‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’

Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

With reference to the anger schema, a few comments on the differences between the two versions are in order. First, the Matthean account places more emphasis on the hierarchical distinction between the person offering the dinner and his invited guests. Whereas the Matthean text is about a king throwing a wedding banquet for his son, the Lukan version is about a man of less-than-kingly status; he is merely called *anthrōpos tis* in 14.16, but later in 14.21 is called *oikodespotēs*. Thus even as a head of a household, he still commands far less respect than a king. Matthew's version highlights the social hierarchy and disparity in status even further when he has the king identify his invited guests, whom he has already taken revenge upon, as not having any worth (*ouk ēsan axioi*).

Second, the nature of the provocation is far softer in Luke than in Matthew. While in Matthew the invited guests did not want to come to the wedding, those in Luke offered

explanations for why they could not come, as well as offering regrets. Those in the Lukan account may in fact have slighted the host of the dinner, but the social consequences in Matthew are far greater, given that the event was hosted by a king and not simply a “certain man (*anthrōpos tis*).” In addition, the slight was greater because the invitees in Matthew offered no explanation or regret for not being able to attend. They simply did not want to go.

Matthew’s version, unlike Luke’s, has the host sending a second envoy of slaves to bring the guests to the wedding. Thus a second refusal heightens the slight, but on top of that, the making light of the invitation and abusing the slaves elevates the offense to an even higher level. Luke’s invitees refuse only once, and with regrets at that; further, Luke’s invitees do not touch, threaten, or abuse the slaves. Finally, and perhaps most dramatically, they do not *kill* anybody.⁴²

Third, although Luke’s version does contain a provocation (albeit a softer one) and anger, there is no revenge. The host in Luke’s text becomes angry when he learns that the guests have offered excuses and apologies, but he does not avenge their refusals. Instead, he merely sends the slaves back out into the street to gather people so that his dinner does not go to waste. He is aggravated with the invitees’ refusals, but the Lukan text does not depict anger as resulting in revenge. More to the point, it does not even seem to depict anger as aiming at revenge at all. At the end of the passage, after the host instructs his slave to fill his house with guests from the street, he says, “For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.” This statement cannot count as revenge, but is, rather, a simple statement of the obvious. Those guests decided on their

⁴² Killing a slave would be viewed by a king both as an injustice and as a damage of property.

own not to attend the dinner and so their not tasting it can hardly serve as revenge. Luke does not lead his readers to be pained by the invited guests to the degree that Matthew does, and thus, does not provide sufficient rhetorical background for his readers to feel that revenge ought to be desired. In other words, Luke's narrative does not contain the proper rhetorical or philosophical prerequisites for anger and its satisfaction.

By contrast, Matthew's text clearly depicts the king avenging the series of offenses: he has the invitees killed and their city burned. This is depicted in Matthew as a direct response to the damages, both those with respect to status and honor, and those with respect to the abuse and murder of the king's slaves.

Fourth, Matthew's parable is about the kingdom of heaven, and Luke's is not. Fifth, Matthew's host, despite having received the greater harms, was slower to anger than Luke's host. Matthew's host avenged his losses, but he did so only when the offenses had accrued and become critical. I discuss this further in the next section.

Thus far I have shown that Matthew 18 and Matthew 22 conform to the anger schema. Both texts depict anger as a desire for revenge and both demonstrate the highly social and interpersonal aspects of anger. Anger results from a provocation and it instigates retaliation; it a consequence and a catalyst.

Anger in the Kingdom of Heaven

Now we turn to a discussion of how the depictions of anger in the kingdom of heaven relate to Matthew's ideas about repentance and the coming judgment of humans. I argue that Matthew 18.21-25 and 22.1-14 are best interpreted in light of Matthew's motif about the kingdom of heaven, which has two related but distinguishable aspects. First, the

kingdom of heaven refers to an apocalyptic process of judgment or punishment. It is at hand and somehow repentance will keep people from being like the chaff and getting burned up in the fire. This first aspect of Matthew's kingdom of heaven, which I refer to as KH1, is a violent time, where the good are separated from the bad. The bad are destroyed and the good are spared.⁴³

The second aspect of Matthew's kingdom of heaven, which I refer to as KH2, is something that the righteous and the repentant may enter as a reward. The first aspect, KH1, which involves judgment, punishment, and anger, is a time of moral testing, and those who pass due to righteousness or repentance become inheritors of the second aspect. Thus KH2 rewards the righteous who have made it through the traumatic judgment.⁴⁴ All people will be involved in the judgment and separation (KH1), but only some will make it through to KH2 without being burned.⁴⁵ Matthew's emphasis on greater righteousness in 5.19 and perfection in 5.48 fits within the TM, which offers teachings about righteousness that aim to prepare people to survive KH1 and move, unscathed, into KH2.⁴⁶

The motif of the kingdom of heaven as the coming anger (KH1) is introduced at the beginning of Matthew 3. Matthew introduces John as a wilderness figure imploring repentance because of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven: "In those days John the

⁴³ Matthew 3.2, 4.17, 11.12, 13.24, 13.47.

⁴⁴ Matthew 5.3, 5.10, 5.19, 5.20, 6.33, 7.21, 8.11, 11.11, 16.19, 18.1, 18.3, 18.4, 19.14, 19.23, 23.13.

⁴⁵ But even this is not tidy, because there is talk of being least or greatest in the KH. Does this mean in KH1 (separation and destruction of the bad people) or KH2 (survivors)?

⁴⁶ The connection between Matthew's ethical teachings in Matthew 5-7 and the coming judgment/punishment is discussed in Roger Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Mohrlang, however, does not explore the issue of Matthew's use of anger.

Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ‘Repent (*metanoieite*), for the kingdom of heaven has come near’” (Matthew 3.1-2). Matthew connects John to the prophecy of Isaiah, who spoke about “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight’” (3.3), and thus casts John as the herald of the approaching kingdom of heaven. It is clear enough from Matthew 3 that the author intends to associate the kingdom of heaven with an impending anger or wrath in which everyone who does not bear good fruit, repent, or be baptized will be destroyed. Those, however, who are righteous or repent of their wrong-doings, will enter the kingdom of heaven (KH2). Matthew associates the coming anger and kingdom of heaven with another more powerful figure who seems bent on the destruction of unrepentant and bad people: “I [John] baptize you in water for repentance (*eis metanoian*), but one coming after me is stronger than I; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you in holy pneumatic material and fire (*en pneumati hagiōi kai puri*). His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will scour his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the storehouse; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3.11-12).

Matthew connects this impending reckoning with anger in 3.7.10, which depicts John speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees who approached him for baptism:

But when he [John] saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the anger to come (*apo tēs mellousēs orgēs*)? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, god is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The idea that judgment and anger are coming from god and that even one’s association with the Judean traditional cult cannot save you from this judgment is also found in Paul: “Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of god? Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that god’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing

Matthew associates the coming anger with the kingdom of heaven, and claims that one may endure KH1 and enter KH2 via repentance in 3.1-2, 3.7, and 3.11-12. The connection between the kingdom of heaven and repentance in 3.1-2 is unique to Matthew. Whereas Luke follows Mark by describing John as “proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,” Matthew adds a tone of urgency by emphasizing the coming KH1, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Similarly, repentance in 3.11-12 is unique to Matthew. Again, Luke follows Mark by describing John’s baptism as a baptism “with water,” but Matthew’s text says that John baptizes in water *for repentance*. Finally, Matthew 3.7 is paralleled in Luke, likely because it comes from the Q-source. But only Matthew elaborates on anger, the kingdom of heaven, and repentance. All of these differences may be readily viewed in the following parallel:

Mark 1.2-8

(2) As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”

(4) John the baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 3.1-12

(1) In those days John the baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Luke 3.3-20

(3) He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,

up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when god’s righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will repay according to each one’s deeds: to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury” (Romans 2.3-8; NRSV). Also see Stanley Stowers, “Paul’s Four Discourses about Sin,” unpublished paper, 2010).

	(3) This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of the one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”	(4) as it is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. (5) Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of god.’”
(5) And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.	(4) Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. (5) The people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.	
(6) Now John wore clothes with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.		
	(7) But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from <u>the anger to come</u> (<i>apo tēs mellousēs orgēs</i>)? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise	(7) John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from <u>the anger to come</u> (<i>apo tēs mellousēs orgēs</i>)? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise

	up children to Abraham.	up children to Abraham.
	(10) Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.	(9) Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”
		(10) And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”
		(15) As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the christ,
(7) He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.		
(8) I have baptized you in water; but he will baptize you in the holy spirit.	(11) I baptize you in water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me;	(16) John answered all of them by saying,
	I am not worthy to carry his	“I baptize you in water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming;
		I am not worthy to untie the

sandals. He will baptize you in the holy spirit and fire.

(12) His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

thong of his sandals. He will baptize you in the holy spirit and fire.

(17) His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear the threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Mark does not connect the coming judgment with anger. In fact, the only occurrence of the term *orgē* in the entire gospel of Mark refers to the anger of *Jesus*, when he is in the synagogue and looks around in anger at people before healing the man with the withered hand (Mark 3.1-6):

Again he entered a synagogue and man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.” Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

This is not an apocalyptic or judgment scene, and the anger there has little to nothing to do with the coming apocalyptic judgment. Mark associates Jesus’ anger neither with judgment nor with an impending reckoning.

Luke’s account of John’s teaching, however, does associate anger with the coming judgment. In fact, the text of Matthew 3.7 and Luke 3.7 is nearly identical (as may be seen in the parallel above) and the formulation about the coming anger and the need to repent is exactly the same (likely because Matthew 3.7-10 and Luke 3.7-9 come from the Q-source). But whereas Luke introduces the Q material as following upon John’s baptism “of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3.3; this language likely

coming from Mark), Matthew has John saying “Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 3.2). Matthew makes John’s first line of dialogue in the gospel to be about the kingdom of heaven, something that is in neither Mark nor Luke (nor, presumably, Q). Both Matthew and Luke use the Q material about the coming anger, but only Matthew identifies the coming anger with the kingdom of heaven. Further, only Matthew elaborates upon the relation between anger and the kingdom of heaven through parables.

Matthew uses the idea of the coming anger and the kingdom of heaven in a way that highlights the importance of living a good and righteous life.⁴⁸ In this sense, god appears to be a harsh judge who responds with anger to those who do not live according to the higher righteousness outlined in the TM. Judging from the parables in Matthew 18 and 22, though, god’s punishment and anger do not appear to be unwarranted or premature. In other words, Matthew’s association of anger, punishment, and the kingdom of heaven do not necessarily indicate that Matthew thinks that god is generally prone to be angry without good cause. The idea that god uses anger and the threat of punishment to push people toward righteousness is articulated vividly in Plutarch’s treatise, *On the delays of the divine vengeance* (*De sera numinis vindicta*). Like Matthew, Plutarch underscores the existence of divine anger and punishment in relation to ethics, but also insists that god does not unleash his anger or punishment until people’s wrong-doings have amassed to a critical point.

The events of Plutarch’s treatise are set at Delphi, where Plutarch had been one of two priests of Apollo for many years. In the first part of the work, Plutarch distinguishes

⁴⁸ On the connection between Matthew’s use of eschatological punishment as an incentive for living righteously, see Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives*, 48-52.

his position on divine anger and punishment from that of Epicurus, who did not believe in providence, and thus did not think the gods punished people at all. What follows is a discussion that maintains that while god does punish people for their wrong-doings, he does not always do so right away, in this life, but only later. By “later,” Plutarch means either later in the person’s life, or, alternatively, in the person’s afterlife: when the soul leaves the earthly body and moves into the heavens.⁴⁹

One reason for god’s delay in anger and punishment, says Plutarch, is that god is a model for humans to imitate, and thus his patience and slowness to anger should inspire humans, also, to be slow to anger:

Hence it is that he [god] is slow and leisurely in his punishment of the wicked: not that he fears for himself, that by punishing in haste, he may be involved in error or remorse, but because he would remove from us all brutishness and violence in the infliction of punishment, and would teach us not to strike out in anger at those who have caused us pain, or when in its fiercest fever and convulsion

our rage o’erleaps our wits,

as if we were appeasing thirst or hunger, but to imitate his mildness and delay and resort to chastisement will all due order and propriety, with Time as our counselor, who will be least likely to involve us in regret.⁵⁰

Plutarch also claims that people, by recalling stories about humans who have not been quick to anger, will be able to form patterns and models toward which they may strive. But knowing that god himself is slow to anger functions in an even greater way in instilling a proper ethic in the one on the path toward righteousness:

If, then, the recollection of human sayings and narration of human acts can allay the harshness and intensity of anger, it is far more likely that when we see that

⁴⁹ Plutarch also introduces another aspect of “later,” which refers to the descendents of the wrong doers. But there is also another sense of later, which refers to the descendents of the wrong doer. There is the idea of genetic heritage of wrong-doing and there is discussion that god also punishes the descendents of wrong-doers for a few different reasons.

⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Sera* 550E-F.

god, who knows no fear or regret in anything, yet reserves his penalties for the future and awaits the lapse of time, we should become cautious in such matters, and hold the gentleness and magnanimity displayed by god a part of virtue that is divine, which by punishment amends a few, while it profits and admonishes many by the delay.⁵¹

A recurrent theme in Plutarch's discussion is that the punishment and anger of god is an aspect of his care for humans and for divine providence. Plutarch is careful to distinguish this from an image of god that casts him as an emotional or passionate being who acts without having the good of humanity in mind. Plutarch is aware that even though god expresses anger through punishment, the divine nature is not filled with negative passions or wrong-headed desires.

Similarly, Philo of Alexandria is able to talk about divine anger and punishment, but not in a way that makes god vulnerable to the negative emotions. Following the Platonic and Stoic ideal of god as entirely rational and thus not being associated with negative emotions, Philo explains the anger of god as found in the Judean texts he interprets as being an aspect of god's providential care for humanity. Philo solves the problem of conflicting traditions (Judean traditions that contain an angry god and philosophical traditions that maintain that god is not vulnerable to anger) by claiming that divine anger is god's way of dealing with humans who require a harsher kind of teaching. Philo interprets texts that describe divine anger in terms of *synkatabasis* or *condescensio*, arguing that Moses described god with human-like qualities because the mortal mind cannot understand the immortal.⁵²

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Sera*, 551B-C.

⁵² van der Horst, Pieter Willem Mozes, *Plato, Jezus: Studies Over De Wereld Van Het Vroege Christendom* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2000); translated for me from the Dutch by Andrea Goezinne, Brown University.

It is difficult to imagine that Matthew, whose gospel, as I have argued, is consistent with Greek philosophical thought, can accept the Judean traditions about divine anger without qualification. Although Matthew does not *directly* address this issue, it does seem that he suggests a potential work-around. Neither of the parables that deal with the issue of anger in the kingdom of heaven directly attribute anger to god; instead, they associate anger with the coming kingdom of heaven and the moral judgment of humans. Even Matthew's language, "the kingdom of heaven" rather than "the kingdom of god," suggests that he is hesitant to link god and the emotion of anger in a direct way. Instead, Matthew has depicted anger and the kingdom of heaven as being a motivating factor in human ethics and righteousness.

One possible explanation is to say that Matthew articulates different standards of righteousness for humans than for god. This would explain why human righteousness requires the absence of anger, but that divine justice sometimes *requires* anger. The idea that god is slow to anger was present both in the Judean⁵³ and the non-Judean sources, and perhaps Matthew approached the problem of divine anger with reference to god's delayed judgment. This explanation falls short, though, in light of Matthew's claim that higher righteousness requires being perfect "as your father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5.48). How could it be the case that being perfect requires *not* being angry (5.22), on the one hand, but also imitating god who, as depicted in the parables of Matthew 18 and 22, *does* become angry?

These two teachings might be resolved through comparison with a figure like Plutarch, who, in his treatise on the control of anger, refers to folk traditions about the

⁵³ In the Hebrew Bible, for example: Exodus 34.6, Numbers 19.18, Nehemiah 9.17, Psalm 86.15, 103.8, 145.8, and Proverbs 14.29.

gods becoming angry, but simultaneously maintains that god's perfection involves impassibility. The co-existence of folk-claims about divine anger and philosophical claims about divine *apatheia* does not present a problem for Plutarch, likely because he understands that he is dealing with two discrete views. Thus it may also hold true that Matthew's inconsistent presentation of the moral value of anger for humans and gods may nevertheless be coherent.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I compared two parables from the Gospel of Matthew with the anger schema. Both parables indicate similarly with the schema in terms of the definition of anger as the desire for revenge and anger as a desire that arises from and is satisfied within social interaction. In particular, the parables closely followed Greek and Roman conventions surrounding the relationship between social hierarchy and anger. I argued that Matthew's connection of anger with the kingdom of heaven is related to Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as a teacher of righteousness; not only do the parables show that those who do not live righteously will suffer anger in the kingdom of heaven, but they also provide examples of how god is slow to anger and thus may serve as a model for humans who desire to follow the teaching of Matthew 5.21-26.

CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation I have argued that the author of the Gospel of Matthew utilizes a philosophical anger schema in his depiction both of Jesus as a teacher of ethics and in his portrayal of the coming kingdom of heaven as the coming anger of god. By identifying the distinctively Stoic aspects of Matthew 5, I have provided the basis for a reading that makes sense of Matthew's depiction of Jesus as a teacher of moral philosophy who is interested in a greater righteousness that involves attention to motives and reasons for actions, and not solely on the actions themselves. By exploring a constellation of related problems in the field of New Testament studies through the topics of anger, emotion, and desire, I hope to have shown that attention to these topics is a fruitful entry-point for understanding some of the aspects of the distinctive nature of Matthew's ethical teachings. Further, because the connection between emotion and ethics was so prominent in Hellenistic theories of morality, this is an avenue that opens the way for future investigations not only in the Gospel of Matthew, but within the field of New Testament and Christian origins more generally. A thoroughgoing comparative analysis of Matthew's *entire* emotive vocabulary, for example, would expand the scope of our understanding of Matthew's engagement with Greek and Roman moral discourse. The implications and consequences of studies such as mine extend beyond the field of early Christianity, and contribute to a fuller understanding of emotion and ethics in the ancient Mediterranean.

The field of NT studies lacks sophistication and nuance with regard to the concept of emotion, and I offered a corrective by looking to other disciplines to construct a concept of emotion that takes into consideration advances made in fields such as classics, philosophy, anthropology, and history. I examined texts that represented intellectual or philosophical views of emotion prominent in Matthew's time. I found that authors and rhetors discussed emotion, first, as being intimately connected with moral psychology and thus with ethics, second, as being embedded in social practices and social hierarchies in a structured and organized manner, and third, as arising from one's embodied interaction with and appraisal of the social environment. By describing emotion in a way that is better historically suited to Hellenistic or Roman thought than a modern folk understanding of emotions as hyper-internalized or hyper-individualized "feelings," I constructed a concept of emotion that is more likely to bring interpretive gains from engagement with a variety of proto- and early- Christian texts.

Throughout the dissertation, I emphasized that the practice of separating a Judean context from a Greek or Roman context not only is historically inaccurate, but also is unhelpful for the task of explaining NT texts as products of their environment rather than as unique or inherently "sacred" texts. I highlighted examples of how scholars have constructed—consciously or unconsciously—a "Jewish" context that neglects the widespread influence of Greek and Roman virtue ethics and related intellectual practices. To combat this anachronistic construction, I proposed that we view Matthew as a cultural producer working within the field of Greek and Roman virtue ethics, and claimed that by doing so we can gain a fresh perspective on Matthew's innovations. My close analysis of one particular emotion underscores the value of my proposed comparative framework.

Additionally, I addressed a methodological problem related to the academic study of religion and its relative non-impact on NT studies in terms of the naturalization of the study of texts. By this I mean that even though theory of religion has long since moved beyond the idea that religion is a *sui generis* object of study, requiring a special logic and special methods of inquiry, NT studies still relies upon assumptions that necessitate special—and often uniquely Christian—models and interpretive methods.

One example of this is the pervasive assumption that behind Matthew's gospel stands a community of Jesus-followers, whose lives and concerns are enshrined in Matthew's text. The model upon which such a community is based sounds eerily reminiscent of modern ecclesiastical congregations: groups of "believers" led by an educated pastor who, through weekly sermons and teachings, addresses the difficulties and concerns of his or her "flock." The problem with this imaginative model is that churches or congregations with identifiable and educated leaders who sought to address the problems of the group though writing did not come into existence until later in the history of Christianity. Thus instead of viewing Matthew as the leader of an already identifiable group of "Christians," I suggest that Matthew was engaged in creating an attractive image Jesus as a teacher of righteousness, which would later come to exemplify the moral underpinnings of Christianity.

That Matthew casts Jesus as a teacher of moral philosophy may be demonstrated not only with reference to the *contents* of the teachings, as I hope to have shown throughout my analysis of emotion and anger, but also with reference to Jesus as a pedagogical and moral exemplar who had a devoted circle of students. The image of a teacher and students is sometimes obscured in interpretations of the gospels' portrayals of

Jesus, perhaps in large measure because of modern Christian translational practices. One example of this concerns the Greek term *mathētēs*, which is commonly translated in NT texts as “disciple.” The semantic range of *mathētēs* clusters around the idea of students, and usually does not refer to cultic or religious devotees. *Mathetai* could be students of dance, medicine, or physics. Most frequently, though, *mathētēs* refers to students of philosophers or rhetoricians. And thus, Socrates’ students are called *mathētai*, and in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, for example, we find that they have committed themselves to the moral care and training of Socrates. As Xenophon puts it,

[Socrates] cured ... vices in many, by putting into them a desire for goodness, and by giving them confidence that self-discipline would make them good men. To be sure, he never professed to teach this; but, by letting his own light shine, [Socrates] led his students to hope that they through imitation of him would attain to such excellence. (*Mem.* 1.2.2-3)

In addition to this, there is also the striking image of the students of Protagoras, the great rhetor and sophist. In the dialogue bearing Protagoras’s name, Plato vividly describes how Protagoras’s students follow him as he walks and teaches, aligning themselves carefully in his wake and moving quickly in formation so as not to be in the way when he makes a turn or doubles back. He describes the houses that Protagoras visited as being crammed with students eager to hear his wisdom and learn the craft of virtue.

And so, with this in mind, we can understand how the narrative penned by Matthew—who uses the term *mathētēs* an astounding 72 times, almost twice the frequency of Luke—could have conjured images of a teacher/student relationship not unlike the ones epitomized by Socrates or Protagoras.

The image of the philosopher-teacher with a close contingent of students was exploited heavily by the Hellenistic philosophers, who engaged in literary practices

perhaps best described as a kind of myth-making that aimed at securing direct lineage to certain legendary teachers in order to heighten the credibility and attractiveness of their movements. Such myth-making was especially important in the formative developmental stages of a movement or in cases where a new idea might gain greater capital by being attributed to a known and respected expert. Plato, for example, explored his idea of the forms and the intricacies of the soul through the figure of Socrates.

It only seems fitting, then, to conclude that the author of the Gospel of Matthew is also participating in a kind of myth-making akin to that of the philosophers. His image of Jesus, insofar as it resembled some of the great philosophical teachings of the day, would have been both palatable and appealing. In Matthew's case, however, he is not using an established *figure* as the progenitor of the movement about which he writes, but rather uses established and distinctly recognizable *teachings* to bolster his account of the beginnings of the movement that would, but only later, be known as "Christianity." By contextualizing Matthew's gospel within a larger field of cultural production, namely, the literary practices of philosophers, we can see that both Matthew and the Hellenistic philosophers engaged in a kind of retrospective myth-making that aimed to bring greater legitimacy to their respective movements.

Matthew has created a figure who is concerned with the proper formation of human character, and in particular, a kind of righteousness that involves attention to interiority. It is not implausible to think, then, that Matthew's greatest achievement was to re-cast and re-formulate the activities of the earliest Jesus movement in way that emphasized Jesus as a teacher of moral philosophy.

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