

Σοφία ἄνωθεν versus ἄνω κλήσις?

Jas 3:15, 17 and Phil 3:14 in Comparison

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1. James in Light of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

The Letter of James alludes to Pauline letter-writing in many ways. This is most obvious in the case of Jas 2:14 ff. It is the discourse about deeds and faith where the letter-writer seems to argue against the background of similar discussions in Pauline epistolography (Gal 5; Rom 4).¹ Scholars – from Martin Luther's era down to more recent times – tend to understand James at least in parts in light of Pauline theology. Hereby Paul's letter to the Romans, Galatians and 1 Corinthians are in the center of interest. The question of whether James acts as an anti-Paulinist or whether he sees himself as someone following in the steps of Paul (e. g., M. M. Michell) is still open.²

In this essay, we will not move into the debate of qualifying "James' type or anti-type of Paulinism," but rather aim at – by (a) still proposing that there is some kind of (*intertextual*) relationship between James and Paul³ – finding (b) a literary concept, which could explain James' authorial intention⁴ when alluding

¹ Cf. FRIEDRICH AVEMARIE, "Die Werke des Gesetzes im Spiegel des Jakobusbriefs: A Very Old Perspective on Paul," *ZThK* 98 (2001): 282–309.

² Cf. MARGARET M. MITCHELL, "The Letter of James as a document of Paulinism?," in: *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James*, eds. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg, LNTS (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 75–98.

³ In most recent scholarship two interpretive models reach a balanced description of the James-and-Paul-relation: DALE C. ALLISON (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, ICC [New York: Bloomsbury, 2013], 62–67) treats the relationship of James and Paul as a matter of "sources" (51). Nevertheless, Allison reaches a convincing conclusion: "The evidence is insufficient to establish with great assurance that James knew Romans, 1 Corinthians, or Galatians ... James was ... more likely than not familiar with Romans and perhaps also with 1 Corinthians and/or Galatians" (67). ODA WISCHMEYER ("Polemik im Jakobusbrief: Formen, Gegenstände und Fronten," in *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur: Texte und Kontexte*, eds. Oda Wischmeyer and Lorenzo Scornaieni, BZNW 170 [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2011], 357–79) suggests to focus on James' own position instead of reading the letter as a response to Paul: "Die Polemik des Briefes ... gilt dementsprechend der richtigen Modellierung der Ethik, nicht der theologischen Auseinandersetzung mit theologischen Fronten" (375).

⁴ The concept of *intentio auctoris* can still be useful, see ODA WISCHMEYER, "Author – Text – Intention: A Case Study on the Letter of James," in *Biblical Exegesis without Authorial Intention?*

to Pauline epistolography.⁵ Let us begin by verifying in greater detail how James refers to Pauline language and thinking. And let us take Paul's letter to the Philippians – that is generally not in the center of the Paul-and-James-debate – as a test case.

As I have argued elsewhere,⁶ the Letter of James shares especially with Philippians – potentially influenced by 1 Peter (!)⁷ – language deriving from the semantic field of *ταπειν-* (Jas 1:9, 10; 4:6, 10). The semantic field of *ταπειν-* also includes the notion of *δοῦλος*, which already occurs in James 1:1. Does James refer to Paul's letter to the Philippians? And if so: How does James do so? What is James trying to accomplish by referring to Philippians?

In James, we find a *transformative imitation of Pauline thinking*: James' concise usage of the *ταπειν-* semantics indicates that the letter-writer must have been aware of the Pauline discourse about humility, humbleness, and Christ-believing lowliness. At the same time, James refrains from applying Paul's particular concept of a *Christ-oriented ταπεινοφροσύνη* as a principle of ecclesial ethics (Phil 2:1 ff.) to his understanding of *ταπειν-*. The attitude of *ταπεινοῦν* is rather used to characterize the "brother", the "rich" (man) specifically (Jas 1:9 ff.), and the human *coram Deo* in general (Jas 4:6, 10). James' overall usage of the semantics reflects the topic and goal of his own letter-writing: James is right from the beginning concerned with the possible lack of *σοφία* among his reading audience (Jas 1:5) – he envisions a situation of ignorance among his readers which he will later on describe most dramatically in dualistic terms (Jas 3:13 ff.). James basically wants his readers to reach a proper self-understanding.

Reasons for James not to take up Paul's concise concept of *ταπεινοφροσύνη* as defined in Phil 2:3 might thus be the lack of *ecclesial* thinking, which – in Paul – produces ethical guidance.⁸ The Christ-narrative or *-exemplum* is constitutive

Interdisciplinary Approach to Authorship and Meaning, ed. C. Breu, *BiblIntSer* 172 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 24–55.

⁵ The topic of the workshop – "Imitation in Hellenistic Literature" (Summer 2017 at Sandbjerg Estate, Denmark) – has offered potential helpful heuristics which I will apply later on in this essay (see below 4).

⁶ EVE-MARIE BECKER, *Der Begriff der Demut bei Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 188 ff.; in English, *Paul on Humility*, trans Wayne A. Coppins, *BMSEC* (Baylor University Press, 2020).

⁷ We cannot discuss in this contribution more comprehensively whether and how 1 Pet might act as a "hinge."

⁸ "Paulus schreibt an konkrete Gemeinden (*ἐκκλησία*), deren Glieder *κλητοί* sind, so wie er als Apostel 'berufen' ist. Die Haltung des *ταπειν-* nimmt also nicht nur Maß an Christus (Phil 2,6 ff.), sondern stiftet Gemeinschaft und Einheit unter den in einer Ortsgemeinde versammelten 'Berufenen'. Der Verfasser des Jak schreibt hingegen nicht an eine konkrete Gemeinde, sondern an die 'zwölf Stämme in der Diaspora' (1,1). Die Übung der Demut als ekklesiales Prinzip der Gemeinschaftsstiftung wird in der hier vorausgesetzten Situation der Adressaten kaum für die inter-personale Kommunikation in der Ortsgemeinde von Nutzen sein können. Gerade im Vergleich mit Paulus wird die sozialkritische und weisheitliche Prägung der Lexik im Jak evident werden" (BECKER, *Begriff*, 190).

in Paul's argumentation (Phil 2:1–11). James' usage of the ταπειν- semantics, in contrast, is much inspired by sapiential motifs – whether they come from the Septuagint directly (e. g., Sir 2:17; 3:18), or whether they were “filtered” by synoptic traditions (Lk 18:14) or Q-sayings in particular (e. g., Q 14:11 = Lk 14:11; Mt 23:12).

In general James avoids in his thinking about ταπειν- the use of the lexicon of καλέω κτλ. or κοινωνία (except: Jas 2:23) which is so crucial in Pauline epistolography, and which is – specifically in his letter to the Philippian community – directly related to the apostle's concept of ταπεινοφροσύνη (Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10, 14).

Since James – in contrast to Paul – addresses an audience, which is supposed to be in a *diaspora*-situation (Jas 1:1),⁹ Paul's placebound ecclesial concept of ταπεινοφροσύνη as an ethical principle of inter-personal interaction among the κλητοί is obsolete: it has to be transformed and to be adapted to the situation of the current probably dispersed reading audience.

James reaches this transformative interpretation of Pauline thinking by (a) picking up the ταπειν-motifs in Jas 1:9 f. and 4:6 f. in a different sense, (b) by replacing ταπεινοῦν κτλ. with πραύτης κτλ. in Jas 3:13 ff., and (c) by interpreting the πραύτης κτλ. language in 3:13 ff. as a virtue resulting from σοφία, not as an attitude of φρόνησις as Paul argues in Philippians.¹⁰

Are σοφία and φρόνησις in James and Paul to be seen as ideas that specifically stand in contrast to one another? And why does James potentially replace the Pauline connotation of ταπειν- by φρόνησις and καλέω κτλ. or κοινωνία in Philippians, with the concept of πραύτης κτλ. which derives from σοφία?

When reading Jas 3:15, 17 in comparison with Phil 3:14, we will see that the syntagm of the σοφία ἄνωθεν in Jas 3:15 plays a crucial role in James' construction of sapiential thinking. As I will argue, this syntagm functions as an intended transformation or a transformative imitation of Paul's construct of the ἄνω κλησις in Phil 3:14.

2. Jas 3:15, 17 and Phil 3:14 in their contexts

2.1. Jas 3:13–18

Most commentators of the letter of James agree that Jas 3:13–18 is a literary unit. Dale C. Allison suggests a subdivision of these verses into v. 13 (“the proof of true wisdom: good conduct”), vv. 14–16 (“the vices that accompany an absence

⁹ Current scholarship on James has stressed the concept of a “diaspora letter”, cf. e. g., THORSTEN KLEIN, *Bewährung in Anfechtung: Der Jakobusbrief und der Erste Petrusbrief als christliche Diaspora-Briefe*, NET 18 (Tübingen/Basel: Francke Verlag, 2011).

¹⁰ Cf. BECKER, *Begriff*, 195.

of wisdom from above”), and v. 17 ff. (“the virtues that accompany the wisdom from above”).¹¹ Allison translates the pericope as follows:

“(13) Who among you is wise and understanding? He must, by his good conduct, show that his deeds are done in the humility that comes from wisdom. (14) And if you have bitter envy and strife in your hearts, do not become boastful and false to the truth. (15) This is not the wisdom that comes down from above but is earth-bound, unspiritual, demonic. (16) For where there is envy and strife, there also will be turmoil and every vile deed. (17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, not divisive, without deception. (18) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”¹²

James 3:13–18 stands central in the letter-body – not only in terms of its actual place within the macro-context of 1:2–5:17, but also in terms of its content and literary style. In many ways, James combines in these verses structurally, linguistically, and stylistically the most crucial topics of his overarching letter-writing:

(a) James refers back and enlarges the debate about the possession or the lack of σοφία (already introduced in Jas 1:5).

(b) James picks up the lexicon of “humility/humbleness”, however, by using the term πραύτης here (introduced in Jas 1:21). The term πραύτης – though not *per se* to be seen as non-Pauline terminology (cf. 1 Cor 4:21; 2 Cor 10:1; Gal 5:23; 6:1) – does not occur in the frame of Paul’s most comprehensive argumentation about humility in his letter to the Philippians.¹³

(c) In chapter 3, James reaches back to his earlier reflections about “deeds” (introduced in Jas 1:4, 25; 2:14 ff.).

(d) Finally, the letter-writer lists vices and virtues in vv. 15 and 17 and construes, much beyond these listings,¹⁴ a dualistic mode of thinking: the σοφία from above is put into a sharp contrast to the earth-bound σοφία which is even characterized as demonic (Jas 3:15).¹⁵ “There is an obvious moral dualism here.”¹⁶

Oda Wischmeyer argues for reading James 3:13–18 in light of an early Jewish dualistic “wisdoms-theology” (“Weisheitstheologie”) as we can find it in 1 Corinthians 1–2. James, thus, would critically interact with Paul and his First Letter to

¹¹ ALLISON, *James*, 564. – Similarly, e.g., SCOT MCKNIGHT, *The Letter of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2011), 297 ff.: v. 13a, v. 13b, vv. 14–16, vv. 17–18.

¹² ALLISON, *James*, 561.

¹³ As noted above, James obviously uses contrastive language in 3:13 ff.!

¹⁴ According to CHRISTOPH BURCHARD, *Der Jakobusbrief*, HNT 15/1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 159 ff. only the listing in v. 17, though construed by James himself, can be seen as a parallel phenomenon to catalogues of virtues and vices.

¹⁵ In general: ODA WISCHMEYER, “Zwischen Gut und Böse: Teufel, Dämonen, das Böse und der Kosmos im Jakobusbrief,” in *Das Böse, der Teufel und Dämonen – Evil, the Devil, and Demons*, eds. Jan Doehhorn et al., WUNT II/412 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 153–68.

¹⁶ MCKNIGHT, *James*, 306.

the Corinthians in particular.¹⁷ Wischmeyer's analysis is convincing. However, while she limits herself in her analysis to look at how James 3:13–18 potentially interacts with 1 Corinthians 1f., I shall take another Pauline passage into account: Paul's letter to the Philippians, and Philippians 3:12 ff. in particular. I shall discuss whether and how James in chapter 3 potentially interplays with specific syntagms, motifs, concepts, ideas, which we find in Philippians 3:12–16.

2.2. Phil 3:12–16

Philippians 3:12 ff. are likewise to be related to the body of the letter (Phil 1:12 ff.). These verses follow directly the polemic speech (Phil 3:2 ff.) which is combined with an autobiographical *narratio* (Phil 3:4b ff.). The proper analysis of how to relate vv. 12 ff. to their micro-context is complex: On the one hand, Philippians 3:17–21 can be separated from 3:12–16, since v. 17 opens with an imperative. On the other hand, 3:1/2–21 can be seen as a literary unit, which is initiated in v. 1 by τὸ λοιπὸν, and demarcated from the following textual passage which starts in Phil 4:1 (ὥστε ...).

At the same time, Paul's notion of the ἄνω κλησικς in v. 14 "seems to prepare us for vv. 19–20 where Paul will mention the heavenly citizenship ... Paul is not referring to being called upward into heaven. The source of the calling is heavenly, the goal of the calling is resurrection."¹⁸ We will have to elaborate a bit more on the syntagm ἄνω κλησικς. For now, we shall state that the correlation of 3:12 ff. to their micro-context is decisive for their interpretation.

We might finally consider Philippians 3:12–21 to be a literary unit, which can be subdivided into vv. 12–16, v. 17, vv. 18–19, and vv. 20–21.¹⁹ Gerald F. Hawthorne/Ralph P. Martin translate vv. 12–16, which we will focus on, as follows:

¹⁷ WISCHMEYER ("Jak 3,13–18 vor dem Hintergrund von 1 Kor 1,17–2,16: Frühchristliche Weisheitstheologie und der Jakobusbrief," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 34 [2017]: 403–430) states: "Die Vorstellung von der geistlichen bzw. oberen und „psychischen“, d. h. physischen oder irdischen Weisheit und das irenische Weisheitskonzept bei „Jakobus“ lassen sich am ehesten als Echo des 1. Korintherbriefes verstehen. Aber der Verfasser des Jakobusbriefes hat durch die radikal ethische Reduktion des paulinischen Weisheitskonzeptes zugleich Paulus implizit kritisiert oder zumindest den komplexen theologischen Einfluss paulinischer Texte und Theologeme zurückzudrängen versucht. Das tut der Verfasser aber nicht in offener Diskontinuität zu Paulus: etwa durch Zitat oder offene Namensnennung oder explizite Polemik, sondern durch implizite Korrekturen. Für eine eigene Weisheitstheologie oder -christologie ist in seinem Denken kein Platz. Dass der Jakobusbrief überhaupt die σοφία-Thematik aufgreift, lässt sich am ehesten als Antwort auf eine vom Verfasser als gefährlich eingestufte Weisheitstheologie plausibel machen, die er in den Gemeinden und besonders bei den Lehrern findet oder zu finden meint ..." (429 f.).

¹⁸ BEN WITHERINGTON, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2011), 210 ff.

¹⁹ Cf. GERALD F. HAWTHORNE and RALPH P. MARTIN, *Philippians*, WBC 43 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 202 ff. PAUL A. HOLLOWAY, *Philippians: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 178 ff.

(12) I do not say that I have at this time grasped [the meaning of] Christ, or that I have already become perfect [in my knowledge of him]. But I keep pressing on to see whether I may apprehend Christ Jesus, inasmuch as [or, since] I was indeed apprehended by him. (13) Brothers [and sisters], I do not reckon that I have fully apprehended him yet. But I focus on one thing only: while forgetting what is behind me, and stretching out to what lies before me, (14) I keep running toward the goal-marker, straight for the prize to which God calls me up, the prize that is contained in Christ Jesus. (15) So this is the attitude all of us who are 'perfect' must have. But since you have a somewhat different attitude, God will surely reveal to you the truth even about this. (16) In any case, let us live up to whatever truth we have already attained.²⁰

In Phil 3:12–16 Paul envisions the believer's "perfection" by moving from an autobiographical (Phil 3:2ff.) to a generic "I." Paul himself could be seen as an example, or a prototype of someone aiming at religious "perfection." The anticipation of eschatological perfection, however, is not necessarily put into biographical constraints. Paul characterizes the "I" as an athlete and again indicates a rather generic way of speaking about the "individual" believer. Paul A. Holloway subdivides 3:12–16 in 3:12–14 ("self-correction") and 3:15–16 ("short exhortation").²¹

Only from v. 17 onwards does it become evident to the reader that the imitation of *Paul* as a person is needed – indeed, in order to receive clear orientation and to make the community resisting the "enemies of the cross" (v. 18) who are either already around in Philippi or to be expected in future times.²² In vv. 20–21 Paul moves into the speaking mode of the 1. person *pluralis* which has an inclusive function: Paul expects for himself as well as for his reading audience in Philippi the full participation in salvation in conformity with Christ.

So: what is the meaning of the ἄνω κλήσις in Phil 3:14 in this context? And how is the syntagm σοφία ἄνωθεν in Jas 3:15, 17 potentially to be seen as an imitative contrast to Paul's notion of the ἄνω κλήσις?

²⁰ HAWTHORNE and MARTIN, *Philippians*, 203.

²¹ HOLLOWAY, *Philippians*, 172.

²² The interpretation depends on how we read the polemic passages in Phil 3: are they referring to a historical situation, or does Paul admonish his community by presenting "fictitious" opponents? Cf. e.g., EVE-MARIE BECKER, "Polemik und Autobiographie: Ein Vorschlag zur Deutung von Phil 3,2–4a," in *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur: Texte und Kontexte*, eds. Oda Wischmeyer and Lorenzo Scornaienchi, BZNW 170 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2011), 233–54 – reissued in: EVE-MARIE BECKER, *Der Philipperbrief des Paulus: Vorarbeiten zu einem Kommentar*, NET 29 (Tübingen/Basel: Francke Verlag, 2020), 263–82.

3. The meaning of ἄνωθεν and ἄνω in Jas 3 and Phil 3

3.1. *The adverbs*

The adverbs (of place)²³ ἄνωθεν and ἄνω (often) shape a *spatial* understanding. In James 3 and Phil 3 the spatiality is basically a matter of how the Christ-believing congregation interacts with the divine.

In regard to Jas 3:15, James Hardy Ropes emphasizes that the “phrase is contrasted with ... three adjectives” (ἐπίγειος, ψυχική, δαιμονιώδης).²⁴ Martin Dibelius sees ἄνωθεν to be an “Wechselbegriff zu θεῖον”²⁵ (cf. already Jas 1:17). Hubert Frankemölle describes ἄνωθεν as a “offene Metapher”.²⁶ The “primäre Opposition” to ἄνωθεν in Jas 3:15, 17 is ἐπίγειος,²⁷ says Wiard Popkes, a term which also Paul uses in his polemics against the enemies of the cross in Phil 3:19 (cf. before that also Phil 2:10). While James describes the interaction with the divine by means of κατέρχεσθαι,²⁸ Paul uses the *verbum καταλαμβάνειν* (Phil 3:12 f.). κατέρχεσθαι allows the σοφία to be a *nomen actionis*; καταλαμβάνειν, in contrast, makes the ἄνω κλήσις to be an object of eschatological anticipation.

Both adverbs – ἄνωθεν and ἄνω – are not at all unusual in the New Testament literature (and related texts), even though they do not appear here extensively either.²⁹ In that sense, Jas 3:15, 17 and Phil 3:14 have much in common. But what do both *adverbs* mean in particular?

(i) Both adverbs represent the *spatial* notion of the division between the divine world or the Divine, and the earthly world, including the sphere of the Christ-believing community.

(ii) According to Friedrich Büchsel, the spatial contrast defined by means of the adverbs ἄνωθεν/ἄνω does not function – as is the case either in Philo or in Gnostic teaching – as a cosmological speculation, but as a religious construct.³⁰ Even though Büchsel’s distinction might not meet contemporary debates about

²³ Cf. LSJ, 169 and BDR § 103–104.

²⁴ JAMES HARDY ROPES, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1916), 247.

²⁵ MARTIN DIBELIUS, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, KEK 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 256.

²⁶ HUBERT FRANKEMÖLLE, *Der Brief des Jakobus: Kapitel 2–5*, ÖTK 17/2 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994), 538.

²⁷ WIARD POPKES, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, ThHK 14 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 249.

²⁸ Κατέρχεσθαι is a *hapax legomenon* in James – further references in the NT only exist in Luke-Acts (esp. Luke 4:31; 9:37; Acts 8:5; 9:32; 11:27; 12:19; 13:4; 15:1, 30; 18:5, 22; 21:3, 10; 27:5.)

²⁹ Cf. ROBERT MORGENTHALER, *Statistik des neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Zürich/Frankfurt: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1958), 75.

³⁰ FRIEDRICH BÜCHSEL (“Art. ἄνω κτλ.,” *ThWNT* 1 [1933]: 377) says: “Der Gegensatz zwischen oben und unten ist im NT ein wesentlich religiöser ... Eine Kosmologie des NT im Sinne der philonischen oder der gnostischen gibt es nicht.”

cosmology,³¹ it might still show to us how neither Paul in Phil 3:14 nor James in 3:15, 17 are interested in cosmological speculation as such.³²

(iii) The direction of motion differs in *ἄνωθεν* and *ἄνω*: *ἄνωθεν* describes a *descending* motion – from the divine down to earth; *ἄνω* signals an upward motion: Paul envisions an eschatological, i. e.: heavenly reward which is to be received by an *ascending* motion (see also 1 Thess 4:16–17).³³

(iv) While James in 3:15, 17 does not only shape a contrast between the divine and the earthly world, but also qualifies the *σοφία ἄνωθεν* positively (in v. 17), Paul limits himself to expressing the anticipation of the “divine calling”: The *ἄνω κλήσις* is, as an “eschatological ‘prize’”,³⁴ “der Ruf Gottes in Christus Jesus.”³⁵ The *ἄνω*-dimension is not further qualified in Paul – in contradistinction to how James qualifies *ἄνωθεν* in virtue-like terms in 3:17.

From here, we have to go one more step further in our analysis in order not only to define the concise meaning of the adverbs *ἄνωθεν* and *ἄνω* in Jas 3:15, 17 and Phil 3:14, but also to interpret their function as *part of the syntagms*: *σοφία ἄνωθεν/ἄνωθεν σοφία* and *ἄνω κλήσις*.

3.2. The syntagm σοφία ἄνωθεν/ἄνωθεν σοφία in Jas 3

In his commentary on James, Allison states – by referring to Hellenistic-Jewish and Roman sources – that the association of *ἄνωθεν* with *σοφία* in Jas 3:13 ff., expressing the idea of all true wisdom coming from God, “was conventional,” particular allusions to either Prov 2:6 or SapSal 7:25–30 are not excluded.³⁶ In that sense, the spatial construct shapes a dualistic thinking which can be contextualized in the broader frame of early Jewish wisdom traditions (cf., e. g., also SapSal 7:7; 8:21; 9:4; Sir 1:1, 9; 39:6).

However, Allison’s interpretation reaches further. It aims at finally showing an actual contrast made up by James between *σοφία* and humility: Allison wants to find in James “the thought that, since wisdom has its source outside the human being, humility (cf. vv. 13, 17) commends itself.”³⁷ Even though Allison leads us back to the observation made earlier of how James adapts Pauline thinking (in Philippians) transformation-wise, several questions emerge from Allison’s

³¹ On more recent debates, see e. g., JONATHAN T. PENNINGTON and SEAN M. McDONOUGH, eds., *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, LNTS 355 (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2008).

³² In the case of James, scholars agree not to find any kind of speculative cosmological thinking – as we can partly find it in Philo on the one hand, and gnostic thinking on the other hand.

³³ Cf. HOLLOWAY, *Philippians*, 175.

³⁴ HOLLOWAY, *Philippians*, 175.

³⁵ BÜCHSEL, “ἄνω κτλ.,” 377.

³⁶ ALLISON, *James*, 575 – with reference to, e. g.: Philo, *Fug* 138; *Mut*. 260; Horace, *Ep*. 1.3.27.

³⁷ ALLISON, *James*, 576.

interpretation, and force us to describe James' interplay with Paul's concept of humility in Philippians more properly.

First, we have to discuss the question of how to relate σοφία and πραΰτης.³⁸ Luke T. Johnson – also pointing to Sir 3:17 – rightly states that the “term *praus* is not accidental: the entire passage takes up the contrast between the qualities of mildness associated with God's wisdom and the harshness of a worldly wisdom based on envy.”³⁹ “Meekness” comes – even in Paul (cf. 1 Cor 4:21; 2 Cor 10:1; Gal 5:23; 6:1) – much closer to the concept of a moral value than the language of ταπεινοῦν κτλ. does.

The answer to the question of how to relate σοφία and πραΰτης in Jas 3 finally depends on the interpretation of the genitive in v. 13: ἐν πραΰτητι σοφίας. According to Allison σοφίας “is presumably a genitive of source”: the wisdom would function as the source of humility, or better: meekness then.⁴⁰ Popkes suggests reading the genitive in σοφίας as an adjective: “Der Gen. σοφίας ... vertritt das Adjektiv (‘weisheitliche Sanftmut’). Qualifizierender Faktor ist die Sanftmut” – Popkes also correctly distinguishes here between “Demut” (ταπεινοῦν κτλ. = humility) and “Sanftmut” (πραΰτης = meekness).⁴¹

Popkes's interpretation, which follows Martin Dibelius at this point⁴², is supported by the fact that Jas 3:13 is construed according to a “ring structure” (the verse leads from the τίς σοφός to the σοφίας) – a fact also noted, but not further evaluated by Allison.⁴³ According to Christoph Burchard, σοφίας “ist eher Genitivus possessivus oder auctoris ... als qualitatis”.⁴⁴ From these debates we must conclude: The function of the genitive is *not* distinct but gives room for a polysemous interpretation.

Second: In his excellent commentary, Burchard points out how the meaning of the syntagm ἐν πραΰτητι σοφίας depends not only on the definition of the genitive in σοφίας, but also on how the syntagm is associated to the other constituents in v. 13 – be it δειξάτω, be it τὸ ἔργα αὐτοῦ. Burchard prefers the latter: The syntagm “kennzeichnet dann entweder den Stil aller Taten ... oder eher, sie sondert einen Teil aus, den sie kennzeichnet”.⁴⁵

In conclusion: In light of how close σοφία and “meekness” (πραΰτης) interact in Jas 3:13 we must question Allison's suggested contrast of both. Rather – and

³⁸ Significantly, as we saw earlier, James does *not* use ταπεινοῦν κτλ. in the context of 3:13–18!

³⁹ LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 37A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 270.

⁴⁰ ALLISON, *James*, 571.

⁴¹ POPKES, *Brief*, 246.

⁴² Cf. DIBELIUS, *Brief*, 251: “... ein neues Beispiel für die Neigung des Autors zu diesen – semitisierenden? – Konstruktionen ... Der Genitiv vertritt das Adjektivum.”

⁴³ Cf. ALLISON, *James*, 567: “A σοφός need not to be a teacher: the word can designate any wise person.”

⁴⁴ BURCHARD, *Jakobusbrief*, 155.

⁴⁵ Cf. BURCHARD, *Jakobusbrief*, 154 f.

independent of how we define the genitive σοφίας, and how we subdivide the phrase of v. 13 – we have to conclude that to James “meekness”, which is best to be understood as the moral variant of ταπεινοῦν κτλ., derives from σοφία. In other words, James does not make up a direct contrast between σοφία and “humility”. Rather, by showing how “meekness” derives from σοφία, he replaces the Pauline concept of ταπειν- in a twofold way: “meekness” – seen as a heavenly gift and virtue – substitutes “humility”, which, in Paul, is a Christ-oriented human attitude that prepares for and accompanies the ἄνω κλήσις.

3.3. The syntagm ἡ ἄνω κλήσις in Phil 3:14

Paul’s notion of ἄνω in Phil 3:14 is likewise defined by the spatial connotation of this adverb. However, in Phil 3 the object of what is to be expected from the divine world is quite different: Paul does not expect the σοφία to descend, but he makes his readers alert for the anticipation of the divine calling.

“The expression ἡ ἄνω κλήσις is unique”⁴⁶ (only to be compared with Eph 1:18; 4:4). In Phil 3:14 the ἄνω κλήσις does not act as a subject, but is construed as a genitive object to βραβεῖον, which itself is only an accusative object to the (implicit) subject: Paul. Again, we have to discuss the function of the genitive here. Various suggestions are offered by commentary-literature: “The genitive of κλ. is the genitive of belonging. The prize is attached to the calling and involved in it.”⁴⁷ Vincent reads κλήσεως as a “heavenly reward.”⁴⁸

Holloway suggests reading the genitive as a “genitive of apposition ... ‘Calling’ would then mean not the act of calling itself ... but the condition or state to which the Christ-believer is called.”⁴⁹ John Reumann questions any link to “race-course background ...: evidence is lacking for *kaleo* at Olympic ceremonies.”⁵⁰ However, there can be no doubt that in Phil 3:12 ff. the so-called *agon*-metaphors are predominant.⁵¹ Ernst Lohmeyer understood the ἄνω κλήσις in Phil 3:14 as a call to the above world, which would have to be reached via martyrdom: The syntagm is “rein auf die individuelle Vollendung gerichtet ... So ist auch hier die Situation des Martyriums klar vorausgesetzt.”⁵²

⁴⁶ MARVIN R. VINCENT, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897/1902), 110. ApcBarGr 4:15 is similar, but probably should be seen as a Christian addition, inspired by Phil 3:14 (JOACHIM GNILKA, *Der Philipperbrief*, HThK 10/3, 4th ed. [Freiburg: Herder, 1987], 200).

⁴⁷ VINCENT, *Commentary*, 110.

⁴⁸ VINCENT, *Commentary*, 111.

⁴⁹ HOLLOWAY, *Philippians*, 175.

⁵⁰ JOHN REUMANN, *Philippians: A New Translation and Commentary*, AB 33B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 541.

⁵¹ Cf. in general: MARTIN BRÄNDL, *Der Agon bei Paulus: Herkunft und Profil paulinischer Agonmetaphorik*, WUNT II/222 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

⁵² ERNST LOHMEYER, *Der Brief an die Philippe*, KEK 9.1, 14th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 147.

The basic question, therefore, is whether the upward call is to be anticipated as an eschatological gift, or if it has an initiatory meaning – possibly to be related autobiographically to Paul’s mission: the call then would be the “entry into the race.”⁵³ Seen in light of a close parallel which can be found in Philo (*plant.* 23), Joachim Gnilka votes for the former: “Die mit ἄνω umschriebene himmlische Welt ... ist die lockende Verheißung, nicht ist sie als der Ort gedacht, von dem der Ruf ausgeht.”⁵⁴

3.4. *Jas 3 versus Phil 3?*

Up to now we could see that, even if both syntagms – σοφία ἄνωθεν/ἄνωθεν σοφία and ἄνω κλήσις – have much in common (esp. the aspect of spatiality), they differ substantially in regard to their conceptual meaning. In particular, the direction of motion is distinct.

In Phil 3:14 Paul envisions the idea of an eschatological reward which will lead to an *upward* motion. The reward is to be expected after an enduring race, in which the community – with Paul as its paradigmatic forerunner – has to prove itself. Paul implores the Philippian community to strive for perfection (Phil 3:15). In order to do so, the Philippians have to imitate Paul (Phil 3:17), as they learn to see Paul’s co-worker, and Christ in particular as *exempla* of “humility” (Phil 2). In Philippians, Paul declares the ταπεινοφροσύνη (Phil 2:3) to be the key principle of Christ-believing fellowship (κοινωνία).

In chapter 3 of his letter, James prepares his readers for the notion of a *descending* motion: The σοφία, which is obviously lacking among the reading audience, is of divine origin. It guides those who are peacemakers since it gives birth to virtues (v. 17) which enable the performance of “peace” (v. 18). The peace, finally, is to be seen as a “fruit of righteousness” (*ibid.*). James aims at implementing the “right” or “good” (καλή) ἀναστροφή (v. 13) which can be reached by “deeds” to be performed in “meekness” and σοφία. Σοφία, thus, is both: a divine gift and a tool to live according to the proper “moral conduct” (ἀναστροφή) which is expected of those who are among the twelve tribes in the *diaspora* (Jas 1:1). Just as in the later NT pseudepigraphic letters (esp. 1 Tim and 1 Pet) ἀναστροφή⁵⁵ here means the proper moral conduct which might consist of looking for company with the “righteous” and the “humble” (cf. also: Did 3:9; Barn 19:6).⁵⁶

In (and beyond) Phil 3 Paul focuses much on φρονεῖν⁵⁷ and makes the ταπεινοφροσύνη to be the key concept for the current time while anticipating the eschatological reward. In contrast, James in ch. 3 is interested in implementing

⁵³ REUMANN, *Philippians*, 550.

⁵⁴ GNILKA, *Philippenerbrief*, 200.

⁵⁵ Cf.: Gal 1:13; Eph 4:22; 1 Tim 4:12; Heb 13:7; 2 Pet 2:7; 3:11; esp.: 1 Pet 1:15, 18; 2:12; 3:1 f., 16.

⁵⁶ Cf. GEORG BERTRAM, “ἀναστρέφω κτλ.,” *ThWNT* 7 (1964): 715–17.

⁵⁷ Cf. the excursus on φρονεῖν in HOLLOWAY, *Philippians*, 176 ff.

σοφία by critically revealing its possible absence (v. 13), showing its divine/heavenly origin (vv. 15, 17), and establishing it as a tool of peace-making (vv. 17–18). Paul wants to implement in Philippi the right “mindset”, i. e.: the Christ-oriented φρονεῖν (and accordingly ταπεινοφροσύνη) in order to prepare – in a linear, i. e. temporal sense – for perfection and eschatological reward. James wants to install the divine “wisdom” as the atemporal source of virtues and a tool of peacemaking.

φρονεῖν/ταπεινοφροσύνη → perfection → βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως/upward motion
 σοφία from above → virtue-based life/καλὴ ἀναστροφή

4. James’ imitation of Paul’s letter-writing: From “mimetic ethics” to “sapiential conduct”?

Thus far, I have collected textual evidences for showing how James might have shaped a *transformative imitation of Pauline thinking* as, in particular, to be found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

In a final step I shall discuss how James’ imitation of Paul’s letter-writing can be illustrated in conceptual terms. After defining the ancient literary and philosophical concepts of *mimesis* and imitation (4.1) and discussing the concept of imitation in light of intertextuality (4.2), I shall finally mention the ethical implications and consequences of James’ imitation of Paul (4.3).

4.1 “Imitation” and *mimesis*: Definitions

In his book on “The Ideology of Classicism,” Nicolas Wiater states that the “term which designates the process of Classicist self-fashioning is *mimesis*.”⁵⁸ By studying two essays of Dionysius of Halicarnassus⁵⁹ – “On Imitation” and “On Dinarchus” – Wiater shows two dimensions in which Dionysius envisions his understanding of *mimesis*: On the one hand, Dionysius sees “Classical language as the carrier of Classical identity” so that he values “language as a means of self-fashioning.” And second, “by acting out a Classical way of life in Augustan Rome through language, the Classicists claim to be continuing the Classical tradition.”⁶⁰ In other words: Imitation – as a literary means of authorial self-fashioning – is

⁵⁸ NICOLAS WIATER, *The Ideology of Classicism: Language, History, and Identity in Dionysius of Halicarnassus*, Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 105 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2011), 77.

⁵⁹ On a comprehensive adaption of Dionysus of Halicarnassus for James, see: SIGURVIN LÁRUS JÓNSSON, *James Among the Classicists*, SANt 8 (Göttingen/Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021).

⁶⁰ WIATER, *Ideology*, 77 ff.

based on the appropriate usage of language and the idea of linking the present time to the past. The past hereby is thought to be made physically present.⁶¹

While the concepts of *mimesis* and *imitatio* in general can be distinguished in the history of ideas,⁶² *imitatio* develops as a key-concept in post-classical times – especially in Roman poetics and rhetoric. The rhetorician now has not only to reflect about how to “mimic” ethical norms or paradigmatic figures – a question to be discussed, both, in Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy *and* literary theory. In post-classical time imitation is far more seen as a rhetorical aim of emulating and competing with classical ideals (e. g., Horace, *Ars poet.* 268; Cicero, *De orat.* 2.90; 3.214; Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 10.2).⁶³

The debate about the concept of *imitatio* in the early Roman Empire is widespread, as Velleius Paterculus indicates. In his *opus magnum* “Roman History” Velleius gives some crucial insights into the increasing meaning and function of imitation (1.17 f.) as a literary strategy of emulation and competition:

“Though I frequently search for the reasons why men of similar talents occur exclusively in certain epochs and not only flock to one pursuit but also attain like success, I can never find any of whose truth I am certain, though I do find some which perhaps seem likely, and particularly the following. Genius is fostered by emulation, and it is now envy, now admiration, which enkindles imitation, and, in the nature of things, that which is cultivated with the highest zeal advances to the highest perfection; but it is difficult to continue at the point of perfection, and naturally that which cannot advance must recede. And as in the beginning we are fired with the ambition to overtake those whom we regard as leaders, so when we have despaired of being able either to surpass or even to equal them, our zeal wanes with our hope; it ceases to follow what it cannot overtake, and abandoning the old field as though pre-empted, it seeks a new one. Passing over that in which we cannot be pre-eminent, we seek for some new object of our effort. It follows that the greatest obstacle in the way of perfection in any work is our fickle way of passing on at frequent intervals to something else” (Shipley, LCL).⁶⁴

As we learn from post-classical discourse, imitation serves the authorial self-fashioning as a literary authority, which sees itself in competition with con-

⁶¹ Cf. WIATER, *Ideology*, 83.

⁶² Cf. on *mimesis*: H. KOLLER, “Mimesis,” *HWPPh* 5:1396–99; WALTER MESCH, “Mimesis,” *Wörterbuch der antiken Philosophie*, ed. Christoph Horn and Christof Rapp, 2nd ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2008), 280–82.

⁶³ Cf. MESCH, “Mimesis,” 280–82.

⁶⁴ *Huius ergo recedentis in suum quodque saeculum ingeniorum similitudinis congregantisque se et in studium par et in emolumentum causas cum saepe requiro, numquam reperio, quas esse veras confidam, sed fortasse veri similes, inter quas has maxime. Alit aemulatio ingenia, et nunc invidia, nunc admiratio imitationem accendit, naturaque quod summo studio petitum est, ascendit in summum difficilisque in perfecto mora est, naturaliterque quod procedere non potest, recedit. Et ut primo ad consequendos quos priores ducimus accendimur, ita ubi aut praeteriri aut aequari eos posse desperavimus, studium cum spe senescit, et quod adsequi non potest, sequi desinit et velut occupatam relinquens materiam quaerit novam, praeteritoque eo, in quo eminere non possumus, aliquid, in quo nitamur, conquirimus, sequiturque ut frequens ac mobilis transitus maximum perfecti operis impedimentum sit.*

temporaries and forerunners. Literary imitation functions on the basis of language. It aims at imitating “classical ideals” in order to re-present the past. How can these definitions taken from Greco-Roman literary theory potentially illuminate our comparative reading of Jas 3 and Phil 3?

4.2 Imitation as an intertextual device?

If we understand James’ construct of the σοφία ἄνωθεν/ἄνωθεν σοφία in its context as a transformative, or better: contrastive imitation of Paul’s concept of the ἄνω κλήσις in Phil 3:14, we define “imitation” to be a literary device of intertextuality or an element of rewriting tradition. How could we – in light of the definitions mentioned above – further differentiate between these theoretical concepts?

In his letter-writing James alludes to familiar epistolary motifs in order to make the past physically present (N. Wiater). James does so in order to shape the image of apostolic literary authority, by modifying and remodeling the particular Pauline motif of the ἄνω κλήσις and further theological or ethical ideas related to it. “Imitation,” in that sense, would be a phenomenon of *intertextuality*. However, the phenomenon of imitation exceeds the level of intertextual techniques or literary devices. From classical times onwards there is a philosophical and/or ethical claim bound to it.

And indeed, already in Philippians we meet another dimension of what “imitation” is about: Paul explicitly encourages the Philippians to “imitate” his way of living as a Christ-believer (Phil 3:17), by showing himself (Phil 1), Christ, Timothy and Epaphroditus (Phil 2) as further role models – exemplified in various short narrative *exempla*. In Philippians we thus find, what I have previously called, “mimetic ethics.”⁶⁵ In consequence, literary and rhetoric devices shape ethical discourse in Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

If we read James as a contrastive imitation of Philippians, we can presuppose that the author behind “James” does not only “imitate” Pauline epistolography in literary or motivic terms in order to establish his own, possibly pseudepigraphic⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Cf. EVE-MARIE BECKER, “Mimetische Ethik im Philipperbrief: Zu Form und Funktion paulinischer *exempla*,” in *Metapher – Narratio – Mimesis – Doxologie: Begründungsformen frühchristlicher und antiker Ethik*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn et al., WUNT 356 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 219–34 – reissued in: BECKER, *Philipperbrief*, 245–61.

⁶⁶ In this contribution I shall not discuss the question of authorship or whether and how “James” (Jas 1:1) points to an orthonymous or a pseudepigraphic author – see various other contributions in this volume. My sympathy tends to go with those researchers who see in “James” a pseudepigraphic author. ALLISON (*James*, 3 ff.) offers the most recent state of the art in James Studies. RAINER METZNER (*Der Brief des Jakobus*, ThHK 14 [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017], 10ff) has recently challenged the discussion by presuming that “James” could point to an orthonymous author, the “Lehrer Jakobus,” who is, however, not identical with the brother of the Lord.

literary authority. Rather, James' way of imitating Paul by means of lexical and rhetorical contrast also has impact on James' ethical concept. This is what we will look at in a final, brief step.

4.3 Imitative change of ethical concept(s)

According to Wiater, in Dionysius's "notion of 'Classical beauty' moral and political values are endowed with an aesthetic value just as the aesthetics of Classical style and language are politically and morally charged."⁶⁷ The literary concept of imitation and *mimesis* cannot be separated from political and moral implications and agendas. So: what kind of political and moral or ethical thinking in Paul does James in his letter-writing intend to imitate and possibly to counteract or at least to transform?

In Philippians, Paul's concept of ethical teaching is based on paradigmatic narratives, which concern to a large extent Paul, the apostolic *persona* himself (Phil 1 and 3), the Christ-figure (Phil 2:6 ff.) and two of Paul's close co-workers (Timothy, Epaphroditus: Phil 2:19–30). The narrative examples are taken from historical times, and even more: they are taken from more or less present days or the immediate past. By encouraging his readers to "imitate" himself (Phil 3:17), Paul in fact wants the Philippians to join the ethical paradigms of this immediate past and more current days.

James, in contrast, is hesitant in revealing any kind of apostolic identity. Does James, as a pseudepigraphic author, shape a concept of trans-subjective literary authority instead?⁶⁸ If so, he would initiate a different concept of ethical imitation also, which is based on the imitation of the Lord (Jas 2:1–13), to some extent the imitation of the law (Jas 4:11–17), and the imitation of most prominent paradigms deriving from the history of Israel (esp. Job and Elijah: Jas 5:10 ff.).⁶⁹

In 3:13 ff. James aims at instructing his readers about a virtue-based life. According to a proper moral conduct such a virtue-based life is drawing from σοφία as a gift from the above. We might thus best describe James' ideas about Christ-believing ethics as a concept of "sapiential conduct." James transforms Pauline "mimetic ethics" into a σοφία-based concept of proper moral conduct.

From Dionysius we can learn that the "focus of Classicism is ... not on the past ..., but on the present. The Classical past is an ideal which serves as a point of reference for the Classicists' self-definition."⁷⁰ Accordingly, James would be less interested in reiterating the past (= Pauline or apostolic times) as such, than

⁶⁷ WIATER, *Ideology*, 83.

⁶⁸ So NIELS PETER G. GUBI, *Forfatteridentitet og imitation: En profilering af 'Jakob'* (MA-thesis: Aarhus University, 2017). He uses a concept of NORBERT BROX, "Zum Problemstand in der Erforschung der Altchristlichen Pseudepigraphie," *Kairos* 15 (1973): 10–23.

⁶⁹ GUBI, *Forfatteridentitet*, 68.

⁷⁰ WIATER, *Ideology*, 92.

making it relevant for his present readers – of course, according to his own understanding of what is needed in the present. In ethical terms, then, “imitation” can no longer rely on paradigms of apostolic times: it has to orient itself to a trans-temporal “ideal”, in fact: the divine gift of σοφία, and to selected paradigms of Israel’s past, which then ought to come from “olden times.”

5. Short Conclusion

In his commentary on James, Allison discusses to what extent Jas 3:13–18 responds to a particular historical situation with which the “implied author” has to deal.⁷¹ Allison himself holds that Jas 3:13–18 “was composed in part or chiefly to promote irenic relations between Christian and non-Christian Jews in a synagogal setting.”⁷² We cannot illuminate the assumed historical setting here more comprehensively but shall rather read – as proposed in this contribution – the letter of James in the “Dunstkreis” of Pauline epistolography.

Lexical and rhetorical evidence suggests that James – in addition to Romans, 1 Corinthians and Galatians – also was “familiar”⁷³ with Paul’s letter to the Philippians. In various ways, James offers a transformative, partly contrastive imitation of Pauline thinking as developed in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. By doing so, James transforms the Pauline concept of “mimetic ethics” into a moral concept of “sapiential conduct”. As Oda Wischmeyer has highlighted at various occasions, James’ “Angst” must have been a driving factor when shaping his moral concept.⁷⁴

Seen in the light of textual, literary and ethical imitation, this contribution finally offers fresh insights into James’ relation to wisdom-theology. If James – especially in 3:13 ff. – interacts with Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we might even reach a more elaborated understanding of what σοφία means: By implementing and defining σοφία as a concrete source of proper *moral* conduct James might want to shape a decisive contrast to Paul’s notion of the ἄνω κλήσις as an eschatological idea. This might also mean that James’ theology finally refuses to be “Weisheitstheologie” as such.⁷⁵

⁷¹ ALLISON, *James*, 564 ff.

⁷² ALLISON (*James*, 565) says: “Our author wished to associate traditional vices with those guilty of religious intolerance, traditional virtues with those tolerating religious diversity.”

⁷³ Id., 67.

⁷⁴ WISCHMEYER, “Polemik,” 376.

⁷⁵ To the critique of “Weisheitstheologie,” cf., e.g., BURCHARD, *Jakobusbrief*, 158, and see note 17 above. – ERICH BENJAMIN PRACHT (Aarhus) has to be thanked for copy-editing the English manuscript.

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