Michael Welker (Ed.)

Quests for Freedom

Biblical – Historical – Contemporary

Neukirchener Theologie

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

Umschlaggestaltung: Andreas Sonnhüter, Niederkrüchten
DTP: Hajo Kenkel
Gesamtherstellung: Hubert & Co., Göttingen
Printed in Germany
ISBN 978–3–7887–2831–1 (Print)
ISBN 978–3–7887–2832–8 (E-Book-PDF)
www.neukirchener-verlage.de

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Any attempt to tackle this broad subject in an essay cannot be more than sketchy. It shoots a multitude of rays through the focus of a few lenses and ends up projecting handy outlines – that is, simplifications. A detailed differentiation between individual ancient authors is hardly possible.[1]

A second warning flag needs to be raised. This paper will focus on thoughts that were exchanged within the discourse of an elite group of ancient intellectuals, on nothing more. Even when the thoughts of a slave about freedom were "quoted," as Dio Chrysostom, in the first century C.E., did in his *Oratio* 15, this slave is still a literary figure made up by Dio and not a real slave. The paper cannot reflect all views,

1 For still useful overviews, see H. v. Arnim, Die stoische Lehre von Fatum und Willensfreiheit, Wien: Phil. Gesellschaft Univ. Wien, 1905; O. Schmitz, Der Freiheitsgedanke bei Epiktet und das Freiheitszeugnis bei Paulus: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich, Gütersloh: Mohn 1923; H. Schlier, Art. ἐλεύθερος, *ThWNT* 2 (1935) 484-492; M. Pohlenz, *Griechische Freiheit: Wesen und Werden eines Lebensideals*, Heidelberg: Quelle/Meyer 1955; F. Mayr, Das Freiheitsproblem in Platons Staatsschriften, Diss. Wien 1960; D. Nestle, *ELEUTHERIA: Studien zum Wesen der Freiheit bei den Griechen und im Neuen Testament, I: Die Griechen*, Tübingen: Mohr 1967; C. Wirszubski, *Libertas als Politische Idee im Rom der Späten Republik und des Frühen Prinzipats*, Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft 1967 (for Stoicism and *libertas*, see 177-181); R. Klein, ed., *Prinzipat und Freiheit*, WdF 135, Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft 1969 (for *libertas* in Tacitus, see 391-420); J. Bleicken, *Staatliche Ordnung und Freiheit in der römischen Republik*, Frankfurter Althistorische Studien 6, Kallmünz: Lassleben 1972; D.C.A. Shotter, Principatus ac Libertas: *Ancient Society* 9 (1978) 235-255; K. Raaflaub, Freiheit in Athen und Rom: *Histor. Zeitschr.* 238 (1984) 529-567; idem, *Die Entdeckung der Freiheit*, München: Beck 1985; S. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon1998; eadem, The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem: *Phronesis* 43 (1998) 133-175; R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Oxford: University Press 2000; S. Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon 2004; A. Hahmann, *Was ist Willensfreiheit?: Alexander von Aphrodisias über das Schicksal*, Marburg: Tectum 2005.

not the sexually abused slave girls' feelings about slavery, for example. It cannot reflect the views on freedom of underprivileged free persons who did not have enough to eat, while the slaves from across the street were well provided for by their master.[2] Did these hungry people share Epictetus' Stoic view that "it is better to die of hunger, but in a state of freedom from grief and fear, than to live in plenty, but troubled in mind?"[3] Hardly. They probably did not care about inner freedom while they were starving.

Attempting to outline certain dominant tendencies in a discourse of intellectuals, this essay cannot claim to present anything like *the* Greek, Hellenistic or Roman concept of freedom – because such a thing hardly ever existed. One only needs to look at Dio Chrysostom's two speeches about slavery (*Or.* 14-15), where he juxtaposes and most often deconstructs all kinds of views on the terms "free" and "enslaved." He himself comes up with the Stoic concept that the wise person alone is free. Freedom is knowing what is allowable and forbidden (τὰ ἐφειμένα καὶ τὰ κεκωλυμένα); slavery is being ignorant in this respect. In this sense, a "man who is regarded as a slave and is so called and who... often has been sold... will be more free than the Great King" (*Or.* 14.18).[4] However, Dio Chrysostom is also aware of the popular view that when one person lawfully possesses another human, in the same way as he or she possesses "goods and cattle," and "has the right to use him as he likes, then this human being is ... the slave" of the first (*Or.* 15.24). Already in antiquity, different notions of freedom and slavery existed side by side, so that Dio – and the apostle Paul[5] – could engage in dialectical wordplays.

A last word of caution needs to be given, this time in regard to actual *practices* of freedom. When attempting to construct a picture of these practices, immediately methodological problems arise. How representative are our sources? Most of them were written by free, or at least freed, persons – even the sources to which we would turn first, the papyri and the inscriptions. Not only literary sources, but also inscriptions are "rhetorical" in the sense that they do not necessarily mirror

2 Cf., e.g., P. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte*, WUNT II/18, Tübingen: Mohr, 2nd. Ed., 1989, 158-160; Engl. translation by M.Steinhauser; *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, Minneapolis/London: Fortress/Continuum 2003, 189-193.

3 *Enchir.* 12.1.

4 Cf. the apostle Paul's dialectical formulation that a slave is a freed person of the Lord, and a free person is enslaved by Christ (1 Cor 7:22). In a similar way, Plato plays with the literal and metaphorical meanings. Free citizens are slaves of the law (*Leg.* 715d; cf. also *Ep.* 354e).

5 See note 4, above.

actual practices, but mostly free persons' *perceptions* of their social relationships. The analysis of the practices of freedom in the Greco-Roman world would again be a different project. This paper can only allow for occasional glimpses of actual practice.

1. Classical Greek Times: Freedom as External, Political Freedom

1.1 Collective External Freedom

"Freedom" is one of the features of the polis.[6] It denotes the political independence of the polis. A polis needs to be free both from tyrants[7] and from external enemies,[8] such as the Persians, that is, independent in interstate relationships, sovereign as a *res publica*. In this sense, the term ἐλευθερία comes close to αὐτονομία,[9] πολιτεία (in the sense of a free commonwealth, an independent polis)[10] and even σωτηρία.[11]

1.2 Individual External Freedom[12]

Only citizens of a polis enjoy individual freedom, not slaves, not residents without political rights. Only male citizens participate in the collective freedom of the polis. "Free" in this sense means to be able to govern and to *rule oneself* (τὸ ἄρχον ἑαυτοῦ);[13] it means to be free from others (ἀπ' ἀλλήλων),[14] which slaves are not.[15]

6 Plato, *Leg.* 693b-d; 694b; 697c-d; Aristotle, *Pol.* 1296b 17ff; Thucydides, *Hist.* 6.20.2; 6.89.6; Pindar, *Pythia* 1.61-63.

7 Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.78.

8 E.g., Aesch., *Persae.* 403 (ἐλευθεροῦτε πατρίδα); Plato, *Menex.* 239d; *Ep.* 355e; Thucydides, *Hist.* 3.54; Xenophon, *Hell.* 5.2.12; Homer, *Il.* 6.526ff; Pindar, *Olympia* 12.1; *IG* VII 48, 49, 1711, 1856.

9 E.g., Thucydides, *Hist.* 3.10.5; Xenophon, *Hell.* 3.1.20f; 6.3.7-9; Polybius, *Hist.* 4.27.5; 21.19.9; Isocrates, *Paneg.* 117.

10 Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 54.25.1 (τήν τε ἐλευθερίαν καὶ τὴν πολιτείαν); cf. 9.31.7; 48.13.6. A free commonwealth ruled by the citizens and not by a monarch or just a few aristocrats (e.g., Arist., *Polit.* 1279a 39; 1293b 22).

11 Cf., e.g., Thucydides, *Hist.* 3.59; Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.4.20; Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 45.31.2. Being liberated is being saved.

12 One particular aspect of "inner" freedom, the voluntary choice and decision, already discussed by Plato and Aristotle, will be treated separately in part 3 below.

13 Pseudo-Plato, *Defin.* 415a; cf. 412d: to have the control (ἐξουσία) in life over the things that concern oneself.

14 Plato, *Leg.* 832d 2; cf. *Resp.* 576a 5-6.

15 Slaves do not belong to themselves by nature but to someone else (ὁ γὰρ μὴ αὐτοῦ φύσει ἀλλ' ἄλλου ἄνθρωπος ὤν); they are pieces of property (κτῆμα), according to Aristotle, *Politica* 1254a 14-16. See also Dio Chrysost., *Or.* 15.24, above. Accordingly, free persons live for the sake of their own, not for the sake of another person whom they serve and who represents their purpose (Arist., *Metaph* 982b 25-26: ἄνθρωπος ... ἐλεύθερος ὁ αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα καὶ μὴ ἄλλου ὤν).

(a) However, this freedom is only feasible within the framework of a democratic polis, which is understood as a κοινωνία and φιλία of free persons:[16] The free individuals of a polis rule themselves by giving a νόμος to the polis. Individual freedom thus is tied to the *nomos* and limited by it.[17] The *nomos* expresses the free persons' own and common will, and protects their freedom against despotism and arbitrariness of individual tyrants (τύραννος) and mobs (πλῆθος).[18] *Anomia* therefore has nothing to do with the concept of freedom. There is only freedom under the protective law, not from it. The law, guided by reason,[19] creates a sheltered space to breathe and to live – at least for free male citizens.

(b) Secondly, as a free citizen you can only rule yourself if you are willing to have your share in governing (ἄρχειν) the polis. One free person after the other needs to participate in a rotating system of execution of power. In other words, "ruling" (ἄρχειν) and "being ruled" (ἄρχεσθαι) need to alternate in a free individual's life. Only in this way can you "live how you want it" (ζῆν ὡς βούλεταί τις).[20]

(c) It is obvious that this freedom can be achieved only within a democratic polis[21] where the legislature and jurisdiction (νόμος; see a) and the execution of power (ἄρχειν; see b) are shared by all free citizens[22] who enjoy *equal* (ἰσότης, ἰσονομία) political rights.[23]

16 Cf. Arist., *Pol.* 1279a 21; 1280b 30-39.

17 Cf. Arist., *Pol.* 1287a 18-33; Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.104.16-21; 3.38; Plato, *Ep.* 354e-355d; *Leg.* 715d (δοῦλοι τοῦ νόμου); Euripides, *Supplices* 429-432.

18 Cf., e.g., Arist., *Pol.* 1292a 4-32.

19 Arist., *Pol.* 1287a 28-33.

20 Arist., *Pol.* 1317b 2-3, 11-17; cf. Euripides, *Supplices* 404-408. In Rome, the concept of *libertas populi* was less ambitious. It did not mean the political participation of the citizens, only their equality in front of the law and their protection against caprices of the governing officials. Cf. Livius 3.54.6. This limited political notion of freedom made it possible for manumitted slaves, contrary to the practice in the Greek world, usually to receive Roman citizenship (until the *Lex Aelia Sentia* of the year 4 C.E. and the *Lex Iunia* of about 19 C.E. restricted this praxis). For the Romans, it seemed easier to grant citizenship because citizenship did not automatically entail participation in political power. Under the emperors, *libertas* dwindled to nothing more than personal and legal protection of the citizen. And for critical senatorial circles, *libertas* denoted nothing more than a faint memory of the past political power of the senatorial oligarchy in the Roman republic; they used the term *libertas* as a motto for their intellectual resistance against the Principate. Cf., e.g., Tac., *Hist.* 1.16.

21 Plato, *Resp.* 562b 11-c 2: Λέγεις δ' αὐτὴν (i.e., δημοκρατίαν) τί ὁρίζεσθαι; Τὴν ἐλευθερίαν, εἶπον. τοῦτο γάρ που ἐν δημοκρατουμένῃ πόλει ἀκούσαις ἂν ὡς ἔχει τε κάλλιστον καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ἐν μόνῃ ταύτῃ ἄξιον οἰκεῖν ὅστις φύσει ἐλεύθερος.

22 Cf. also Arist., *Pol.* 1291b 30-38 (...κοινωνούντων ἁπάντων μάλιστα τῆς πολιτείας ὁμοίως); 1275a 22f (πολίτης δ' ἁπλῶς οὐδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁρίζεται μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ μετέχειν κρίσεως καὶ ἀρχῆς); *Eth. Nic.* 1134b 15 (ἰσότης τοῦ ἄρχειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι).

23 Cf. Arist., *Pol.* 1255b 20 (ἐλευθέρων καὶ ἴσων); 1291b 31, 34-35; 1318a 9-10; *Eth.*

In detail, this equality means that they enjoy an equal right to *vote* (ἰσοψηφία),[24] equal right to execute *power* (ἰσοκρατία; see b), equal *honor* (ἰσοτιμία),[25] as well as the equal right of *free public speech* in official meetings (ἰσηγορία, παρρησία), which is a basic prerequisite of individual freedom. "Free is the tongue of the free," Sophocles writes.[26] In the private sphere, παρρησία denotes frank and open speech between friends.[27] Because the polis is perceived as a φιλία of free and equal citizens, the same frank speech can take place in the public arena. This illustrates how exclusive the circle of people is for whom freedom is conceptualized.

(d) Freedom is *endangered* whenever the authority of the common *nomos* is questioned. This happens as soon as a free person enjoys his individual rights so excessively[28] that he is estranged (*Entfremdung*) from the common law. Then he no longer perceives the *nomos* of the polis as his own expression of will – which it originally was. This person begins to create his own *nomoi*, which ultimately leads into the same misery as despotism does.[29]

Erosion also sets in as soon as the community as a whole amends and supplements the *nomos* by constantly creating ψηφίσματα, adapting it to ad-hoc desires of the crowds, e.g., by dissolving the borderlines between slaves and free persons[30] or between men and women.[31] Plato and Aristotle frowned on such attempts. The willingness to supplement the *nomos* allegedly opens the door for demagogues and leads

Nic. 1143b 15; Plato, *Resp.* 557a; 563b; Plutarchus, *Dio* 37.5.3-37.6.1; already Herodotus, 3.80.26.

24 For Republican Rome, cf. Tac., *Hist.* 1.16.

25 Only at the Saturnalia, the slaves were also allowed this privilege. Cf. Lucianus, *Saturnalia* 7.29; 13.5.

26 Sophocles, *Frg.* 927a; cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.78; Demosthenes, *Or.* 21.124.4; *Frg.* 13.21; Polybius, *Hist.* 2.38.6.1; 4.31.4-5; 7.10.1.5; Plato, *Resp.* 557b 4-5 (ἐλευθερίας ἡ πόλις μεστὴ καὶ παρρησίας γίγνεται); Lucianus, *Calumniae* 23.7 (ἐλεύθερον καὶ παρρησιαστικόν); Euripides, *Supplices* 438-441; Democritus, *Frg.* 226 (οἰκήιον ἐλευθερίης παρρησίη); Tac., *Hist.* 1.1, and *Dial.* 40 (for Republican Rome).

27 See, e.g., J. P. Sampley, "Paul and Frank Speech," in idem, ed., *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2003, 293-318; idem, "Paul's Frank Speech with the Galatians and the Corinthians," in: J. T. Fitzgerald/ D. Obbink/ G. S. Holland, eds., *Philodemus and the New Testament World*, Suppl.Nov. Test. 111, Leiden: Brill, 2004, 295-321.

28 Cf. Arist., *Pol.* 1316b 24-25.

29 Plato, *Leg.* 699e 4; 701a 5-701c 4; cf. 698a-b: ἡ παντελὴς καὶ ἀπὸ πασῶν ἀρχῶν ἐλευθερία is as bad as despotism; *Resp.* 561d 5-562a 2.

30 Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 563b; Arist., *Pol.*, e.g., 1254b 19-1255b 2. For Aristotle, slavery is δίκαιος (1255a 2).

31 Cf. Plato ibid.; Arist., *Pol.* 1254b 13f.

to the decay of freedom, to tyranny and arbitrariness. In short, too much freedom allegedly leads back to slavery.[32]

Gender roles and slavery thus were not questioned by either Aristotle or Plato.[33] Aristotle even stated that people are slaves or free persons *by nature* (φύσει).[34] Later the Stoics with their natural law maxim of fundamental equality and freedom of all humans as rational beings – as well as Pauline Christianity (Galatians 3:28) – came up with different ontological pictures, without, however, drawing the practical consequence of freeing slaves;[35] neither did some of the fathers of modern democracy, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.[36]

2. Hellenistic and Roman Times: Internal Freedom (Cynics, Stoics)

Freedom is still considered a *summum bonum*,[37] although (or because) the external freedom of the polis and the citizen's external freedom within the polis have faded. Since the decline of the Greek polis, the polis and its *nomos* have not been the frame of reference anymore; the *kosmos* and the inner self have become the individual's horizon.[38]

The Cynics try to maintain an external freedom by emigrating from society, becoming migrant drop outs, enjoying freedom from fear, from any human master (not from God: ἐλεύθερος ὑπὸ τὸν Δία) and using freedom of speech by openly criticizing tyrannical structures of society.[39]

32 Cf., e.g., Plato, *Resp.* 563e–564a (unbridled freedom ultimately leads to slavery and tyranny); *Ep.* 354e-355a; Arist., *Pol.* 1292a 4-36; Isocrates, *Areop.* 20.5-8.

33 Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 563b: Equality between the sexes and between slaves and free persons would mean too much "freedom of the crowd" (ἔσχατον, ὦ φίλε, τῆς ἐλευθερίας τοῦ πλήθους); it would be unhealthy for a good state. In reference to slavery, see Arist., *Pol.*, e.g., 1255a 1ff; 1255b 6ff.

34 Arist., *Pol.* 1254a 14.

35 Cf., e.g., Seneca's famous *Ep. ad Lucilium* 47. Before the Stoics, in 366 B.C.E., the rhetor and sophist Alcidamas stated that nature did not create slaves and that God bestowed freedom to everybody (*Frg.* 1).

36 An exception in this generation of U.S. Southern aristocrats was Robert Carter, who was driven by his newly embraced Baptist faith. See A. Levy, *The First Emancipator: Slavery, Religion, and the Quiet Revolution of Robert Carter*, New York: Random 2007.

37 E.g., Diog. Laert., *Biogr.* 6.71.11 (about Diogenes); Epict., *Diss.* 4.1.52, 54; 1.12.12; *Ench.* 1.4 (freedom and happiness are tied together); Dio Chrysost., *Or.* 14.1, 3.

38 Cf., e.g., Epict., *Diss.* 4.1.6-10; *Gnom. Stob.* 31, 38f; *Frg.* 35 in Florilegium, Cod. Paris. 1168 [501 E] (οὐδεὶς ἐλεύθερος ἑαυτοῦ μὴ κρατῶν); Diog. Laert., *Biogr.* 7.121f (about Zenon and the Stoics). At best, smaller communities than the polis become the frame of reference, e.g., the Epicurean community, in which Epicurus is praised as the "liberator of those being in company with him" (Lucian., *Alex.* 61.10f), or the Platonic Academy.

39 Diogenes Sinop., *Ep.* 7.

The Cynics thus combine their rough external freedom with an internal freedom (freedom from desires for external goods and from painful emotions such as fear, shame, etc.). But for those who dread the filthy existence of a Cynic and do not want to drop out of society, what is mainly left is the cultivation of internal freedom.

The individual person in Hellenistic and Roman times experiences a lack of external freedom when he or she cannot freely control external matters such as their own body,[40] their economic welfare, social relationships and politics.[41] The ultimate "freedom" is to act independently (ἐξουσία αὐτοπραγίας),[42] to live how one wants without being hindered or pushed,[43] thus to command and shape oneself. But this can only be achieved in regard to the inner personal life. The art of living is to distinguish wisely[44] between what we can command (τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν)[45] and what we do not have under our control (τὰ ἀλλότρια).[46] Autonomy and sovereignty only exist in regard to the inner self (τὰ ἔσω).[47] Only there are you free to rule yourself.

The inner freedom consists of (a) freely developing one's own ideas, opinions and plans, desires and aversions, choices and refusals. It consists of the faculty of choosing what, e.g., you want to consider true and false or morally right and wrong (προαίρεσις). It implies that you can choose in which way you want to deal with the external impressions of the world. You have this power of free decision.[48] Below, we will expand on this latter particular variant of freedom (part 3).

40 Epict., *Diss.* 1.1.11; 4.1.66, 73, 100: the body is an ἀλλότριον.

41 Epict., *Diss.* 1.22.9f.

42 Diog. Laert., *Biogr.* 7.121; Philo, *Omn. Prob. Lib.* 21; cf. 41.

43 Epict., *Diss.* 1.17.21; 4.1.1, 11, 62, 89f; 1.12.9; 2.1.23; 2.23.42; cf. Dio Chrysost., *Or.* 14.13. Already Aristotle, *Pol.* 1317b; *Eth Nic.*1110a-1113a 14, used this terminology, but when talking about being "not hindered" he referred to external powers or to the lack of external means, for example. For Epictetus, however, the unimpeded freedom relates to his inner life. As soon as he consentingly subjects his irrational impulses and reasoned choices to God (τὴν ὁρμὴν τῷ θεῷ, *Diss.* 4.1.89), who sends him fever and other unpleasant external things, nothing can rub him the wrong way. As long as he aligns his ὁρμή to God's will and its often unpleasant external manifestations that affect him, nothing obstructs this ὁρμή. In Roman philosophy, Lucretius picks up on these ideas (2.251-293; free from inner constraint and coercion); also Seneca, *Vita Beata* 15.6f.

44 Cf. Epict., *Diss.* 4.1.63; 1.22.9f.

45 Epict., *Diss.* 1.1.17.2; *Enchir.* 1.5.

46 Cf. Epict., *Diss.* 2.13.8; 4.1.83, 100f; 3.24.68; 1.1.21; *Enchir.* 1.5; 5; 19.2. One needs to learn to contempt these matters and to deprive them from any influence on one's emotional life.

47 Epict., *Diss.* 2.13.11; *Enchir.* 29.7.

48 Epict., *Diss.* 1.17.21-29; 1.1.12; 2.10.1; 2.15.1; 3.1.40; 3.24.69; 4.1.74, 100; 4.5.12; 1.19.8f; *Enchir.* 6; 9; *Gnom. Stob.* 31.

(b) The internal freedom consists of becoming free from all passions and emotions (ἀπάθεια), e.g., from fear, worries, anxieties, wrath, sadness, but also from caring feelings and pity![49] The ultimate, though almost unreachable goal is becoming free from fear of death.[50]

(c) Furthermore, freedom consists of being independent from the admiration of others,[51] and of developing an undemanding nature with a minimum of needs and desires; it means being free from the domination of false desires and yearnings (ἐπιθυμίαι).[52] If all of this is accomplished (at least wise models such as Socrates and Diogenes allegedly showed that it is possible),[53] calmness is gained (ἀταραξία), which is regarded as equivalent to freedom.[54]

A "happy flow of life" (εὔροια) is achieved once we have learned to distinguish between those things we can influence and those we cannot – and once we have learned happily to accept and to be content with those things that we do not have at our disposal. If God wants me to run a fever, I want it too.[55] Already Zenon as well as Chrysippus reportedly used the parable of a dog who happily runs beside the wagon to which it is tied. This dog is "free." The one who is dragged along by the wagon is not.[56]

3. Free Will?

The question could mislead us to compare ancient apples and modern oranges. The Greeks connect the concept of βούλεσθαι / βουλή, closely to intellectual functions, whereas "will" in modern philosophical concepts of the last three centuries often is more of an independent function of the human psyche and, for instance in Schopenhauer's thinking, a metaphysical principle.[57] "Free will," in modern terms, therefore cannot be part of the Greek freedom concept; it should not be read into it, not even into Aristotle's deliberations (see below).

49 Epict., *Enchir.* 16 (and 11-12); *Diss.* 2.1.21, 24; 4.1.82f; Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.5.3.

50 Epict., *Diss.* 3.26.38f; *Enchir.* 5. Epictetus knows that hardly anybody reaches this goal of perfection: 4.1.114ff, 123ff, 151ff; 2.19.24f.

51 Epict., *Enchir.* 19.2.

52 Epict., *Enchir.* 15; *Diss.* 4.1.87; *Gnom. Stob.* 38; Xenophon, *Apol.* 16.

53 E.g., Epict., *Diss.* 4.1.114ff, 123ff, 151ff.

54 Epict., *Diss.* 2.1.21; 1.24.8f; 4.1.84; 3.13.13; 3.15.12; 1.1.22; 2.16.41; 2.18.28; *Enchir.* 12.2.

55 Epict., *Diss.* 4.1.89f; 1.12.8f; 2.16.42; 2.23.42; *Enchir.* 53.1.

56 Hippolytos, *Philos.* 21 = SVF 2.975.

57 For the difference, see, e.g., Pohlenz, *Griechische Freiheit*, 131-141; cf. A. Dihle, *Die Vorstellung vom Willen in der Antike*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck/Ruprecht 1985. For criticism of Dihle, see R. Zöller, *Die Vorstellung vom Willen in der Morallehre Senecas*, München/Leipzig: Saur 2003, 7, 38; et al.

Nevertheless, Greek thinkers in general do not question their freedom of choice and decision – a decision-making based on rational thinking. For them, this freedom is self-evident.

Even when a god or a demon influences your thinking, you yourself are considered the author of the decision. No matter how much Athena tries to calm Achilles, he himself decides to be swayed by her (Homer, *Il.* 1.216; for a demon, see Aeschylus, *Agam.* 1505). Contrary to us, these authors do not feel the tension between divine influence and free human decision-making. Or, in other words, divine influence does not diminish the humans' responsibility for their own acts.

The freedom of decision is simply presupposed by the Greek thinkers, by Plato[58] and Carneades, as well as by Aristotle and his school, especially Theophrastus, by Zenon, Chrysippus, Epicurus and even the Cynic Oinomaos.[59] Zenon and Chrysippus, however, on the basis of their reflections about causality, are the first to seriously expound the problems of the notion of freedom of decision. But they do not shove it from the pedestal as the decisive factor that causes human actions.[60] In Hellenistic-Roman times, freedom of decision is included in terms such as αὐτεξούσιον,[61] freedom of choice, self-determination and, again, προαίρεσις. προαίρεσις, the choosing of one alternative over another, might be considered a forerunner of the modern concept of free will,[62] but nothing more. The following only briefly and selectively zooms in on the ancient discussion.

Aristotle's juridical distinction between ἑκών and ἄκων (willing versus involuntary) has nothing to do with the modern metaphysical problem of "free will;" it is aimed at solving the legal question of a person's accountability for his or her actions.[63] A starting point of the ancient discussion is the ethical question, already posed by Socrates and picked up by Aristotle,[64] whether our wrongdoing is voluntary or not. Do we voluntarily choose the wrong and therefore are responsible and

58 See below for the ending of the *Resp.*

59 For Aristotle, Zenon, Chrysippus, Epicurus, Arcesilaos, Carneades and Oinomaos, see, e.g., Pohlenz, 135-139. According to *Epicurus* and his consequent atomism, freedom denotes an event without causes and becomes a metaphysical principle. The individual's free choice between different options is not determined by any causes. For Epicurus' opposition against the Stoic determinism, cf. Diog. Laert., *Biogr.* 10.133f. In reaction to Stoicism, Epicurus and Carneades became radical representatives of indeterminism. Cf. Cicero (*de fato* 19, 23-28, 31f, 39-46) who himself opposed determinism.

60 Cf., e.g., SVF 2.974, 1000, and see below.

61 Cf. Epict., *Diss.* 4.1.62-75.

62 Cf., e.g., Epict., *Diss.* 2.15.1 (ἡ μὲν προαίρεσις ἐλεύθερον φύσει καὶ ἀνανάγκαστον).

63 See the clear reference to legislature at the beginning of his deliberations about free choice in *Nic. Eth.* 1109b,34, and cf. further, e.g., Pohlenz, 134f.

64 *Nic. Eth.* 1109b, 30 - 1115a, 3.

juristically accountable? For the ancients, the answer is self-evident: yes.

Socrates, however, complicated the discussion by claiming that our choosing is always dependent on our intellectual insights. This connection gave rise to a double notion of voluntariness. (a) Wrongdoing, according to Socrates, has its origin in wrong intellectual insights clouded by desires. The wrongdoer, in this sense, does not have the right knowledge; he is mislead by lack of knowledge and therefore acts involuntarily, because "nobody is willingly bad." Only the wise acts voluntarily; his acts are anchored in proper intellectual insights.[65] This Socratic definition of voluntariness is not to be confused with the psychological notion of freedom of decision espoused by Plato: (b) Even the wrongdoer has the freedom of decision. He, on his own, chooses between different options and is accountable for his action.[66] According to Plato, in our psychological freedom, we can choose to become unfree in the Socratic sense, by choosing to give in to the desires of the body and thus becoming intellectually clouded; we ourselves are responsible for this[67] — a view that combines both freedom notions. Whether or not Socrates himself consented to this notion of psychological freedom is unclear. According to the Peripatetics,[68] he did not.

Aristotle underscored the psychological freedom of choice and expressly refuted Socrates' opinion that nobody is willingly bad.[69] According to Aristotle, we act voluntarily (and are thus accountable) if we are not forced or held back by external factors and not ignorant about the circumstances in which we act (βίᾳ καὶ δι' ἄγνοιαν). Our personality then is the sufficient cause of our acts (ἄνθρωπος ... ἀρχὴ τῶν πράξεων).[70] This definition includes both the aspect of external freedom of our acting (not forced and not held back) and the internal aspect of freedom from deception about the circumstances. The προαίρεσις, our voluntary choice between good and bad, qualifies us ethically.[71] Aristotle did not ask any further questions about factors that might determine this προαίρεσις. Only much later did the Peripa-

65 Plato, *De justo* 374.a 7 and Arist., *Nic. Eth.* 1113b, 14f (οὐδεὶς ἑκὼν πονηρός); Xenoph., *Mem.* 3.9.4 (...νομίζω οὖν τοὺς μὴ ὀρθῶς πράττοντας οὔτε σοφοὺς οὔτε σώφρονας εἶναι).

66 Cf. Plato. *Resp.* 617ff, esp. 617e: ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀδέσποτον, ἣν τιμῶν καὶ ἀτιμάζων πλέον καὶ ἔλαττον αὐτῆς ἕκαστος ἕξει. αἰτία ἑλομένου· θεὸς ἀναίτιος.

67 Cf. *Phaedo* 81bff.

68 Ps.-Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* 1.9.7.3 (Σωκράτης ἔφη, οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν γενέσθαι τὸ σπουδαίους εἶναι ἢ φαύλους).

69 ἡ δὲ μοχθηρία ἑκούσιον *Nic. Eth.* 1113b, 16f.

70 *Nic. Eth.* 1112b, 31, and 1111a, 22-24, reads: Ὄντος δ' ἀκουσίου τοῦ βίᾳ καὶ δι' ἄγνοιαν, τὸ ἑκούσιον δόξειεν ἂν εἶναι οὗ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰδότι τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα ἐν οἷς ἡ πρᾶξις.

71 τῷ γὰρ προαιρεῖσθαι τἀγαθὰ ἢ τὰ κακὰ ποιοί τινές ἐσμεν, *Nic. Eth.* 1112a, 1f.

tetics push on further with the question.[72] Neither Plato nor Aristotle was interested in grand theories of freedom.

Although the Stoics propagated metaphysical monism, they nurtured an ethical dualism: the human being, characterized by the opposition between reason and rationality on the one hand and irrational sensuality and drives on the other, needs to overcome the latter with the aid of virtues. It is therefore important for the Stoics that the individual person has the free choice to do so. However, their pantheistic metaphysical monism, according to which all things in the universe, including human beings, are moved by the divine cosmic force within it, hinders this optimism. Are individual humans with their own personalities still the true cause (ἀρχή) of their own actions? Or are fate (εἱμαρμένη) and providence (πρόνοια) responsible? Is human freedom of choice still compatible with the determinism espoused by Chrysippus? For Chrysippus, nothing happens by chance. Everything is determined by antecedent causes (προηγουμέναις τισὶν αἰτίαις) and therefore necessary (ἀνάγκη).[73]

The Stoics, aware of the tension within their system, tried hard to defend the freedom of choice in light of their metaphysical monism. Contrary to their critics, they asserted that their determinism *is* compatible with the concept that humans cause their actions themselves so that they can be held accountable for them. How could they get away with this assertion? Chrysippus distinguished between *main* and *minor* causes, holding that the external circumstances, which are subject to the cosmic causal nexuses, are only ancillary causes, whereas the human personality functions are the main source of a decision. The person therefore voluntarily decides and acts.[74] Thus, we are back to the Stoic distinction between the uncontrollable, determined external things (the ἀλλότρια) and the internal things (τὰ ἔσω) that the individual can control (τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν; see 2. above): The ancillary causes of a decision belong to the sphere of the uncontrollable external things (ἀλλότρια), whereas the human personality with its internal life (τὰ ἔσω) functions as the main cause.

For the Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias, this was not enough. He pleaded for the ἀναίτιοι προαιρέσεις, the choices without a cause. Our decisions to behave in this or that way belong to "the things we can control" (τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν); they are "uncaused."[75] At the turn from the

72 See Alexander of Aphrodisias (about 200 C.E.) below.

73 Cf. Chrysippus, *Stoicus* (SVF II-III) 2.264; Plutarch., *de fato* 572; 574; *comm. not.* 1076; Cic., *de nat. deor.* 2.65.164.

74 Cf. Cic., *de fato* 41ff.

75 E.g., *Mantissa* 171.17-27.

2nd to the 3rd century C.E., Alexander laid a stepping stone towards the later conceptions of a free will.

The correlate of the ancient presupposition of freedom of decision was pedagogical hopefulness. Quintilian, for example, was driven by an almost unlimited pedagogical optimism[76] behind which the Stoic doctrine of individual progress toward wise perfection can be discerned. Any human being, regardless of age, can become better and strive towards perfection if he or she wants to do so.

Quintilian's passage *Inst.* 12.11.23 appears quite modern: Even elderly people can study and grasp what they really desire to learn. Correspondingly, 1.1.16-17, 19 asserts: Mental training and education conveying both *mores* and *litteras* should begin already in the first years of childhood and not as late as at the age of seven. In 12.1.42, Quintilian pleads for a liberal, pedagogically oriented criminal justice system. If culprits, "as commonly conceded," can meliorate their ethos, if they want to do so, then it is in the public's interest not to punish these delinquents.[77] Quintilian admitted that the inborn disposition of a person plays an important role – it is one of the uncontrollable externals – but the enhancements by learning and practice that individuals freely work on are as crucial.[78]

As the flipside of his pedagogical ideas, Quintilian nurtured a perplexingly optimistic, if not naive, image of humankind; for example, in 12.1.4: "Vileness and virtue cannot jointly inhabit in the selfsame heart, and it is as impossible for one and the same mind to harbor good and evil thoughts as it is for one man to be at once both good and evil." Choose the good and try hard – and you will succeed.

76 E.g. in *Inst.* 12.2.1; 12.11.11-13.

77 Cf. also 7.4.18.

78 E.g., 12.1.32; 12.2.2-4; 10.7.8-9, 24-25, 29; 11.2.1,50; 11.3.11, 19; 10.2.20; similarly, e.g., Chrysippus (see Pohlenz, 138). However, in *Inst.* 10.2.21, even Quintilian gives in to his classroom experience and admits that further labors are useless where the teacher runs "against nature." Not only Quintilian, also Plato, at least at the end of the *Respublica*, admits that our (genetic) predisposition plays a role. But for him, this does not restrict our capability of free decision-making and our responsibility for our acting. How is this possible? Plato uses a trick. He relocates our free decision-making into the pre-existence of our soul; before we enter the earthly life we freely choose which *daimon* will dominate our life (ὑμεῖς δαίμονα αἱρήσεσθε. πρῶτος δ' ὁ λαχὼν πρῶτος αἱρείσθω βίον ᾧ συνέσται ἐξ ἀνάγκης *Resp.* 617e). Therefore, our acting is still based on our free decision-making. If our soul chose to get this or that predisposition (*daimon*) that limits or facilitates our acting on earth, this acting is still the result of our free choice. See 617e, 619c.

4. Comments

The most problematic points in the ancient concepts of freedom have already been cited above: (a) discriminating gender differences and (b) the institution of slavery were not questioned.

Modern theorists applied the idea of external freedom to all humans. But even in modern times, attempts have always been made to declare certain groups of humanity less human, and therefore less deserving of freedom. In this way, the idea of freedom for all humans could be formally left untouched, but at the same time it was sarcastically eroded by a discriminating rhetorical trick. Modern slavery was justified in this way, and in the 20th century, the discriminating rhetoric of "subhuman beings" reached its devastating climax in the Nazi propaganda, which led to such horrible manifestations as the concentration camps.[79]

(c) The shift of emphasis from external freedom to inner freedom that we observed had possibilities and downsides.

- Inner freedom could much more easily be universalized than external freedom. *All* humans, even externally enslaved persons, could learn to live the Stoic inner freedom. The concept of inner freedom, developed at a time when the cosmos had replaced the polis as the frame of reference for the individual, comprised a universalistic tendency.

- The opposite is true about the Greek concept of external freedom, which was highly particularistic. An exclusive circle of males, with polis citizenship, appropriate education and financial means,[80] enjoyed this privilege.

- The reduction to inner freedom included a resignation: the admission that external freedom for all was unachievable. External freedom for all was not even conceptualized in theory, let alone tried in praxis.

- The concept of external freedom in a polis had a communal aspect. This kind of freedom required the biotope of a community. The individualistic conception of inner freedom, on the contrary, lost this aspect. The loss could yield very tangible consequences:

79 For an atrocious example, see, e.g., the book *The Revolt against Civilization: The Menace of the Under Man* (1925) by the racist anthropologist Lothrop Stoddard, which led to the Nazi's *Untermensch* propaganda. In 1930, Alfred Rosenberg, in *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, promptly quoted Stoddard (p. 214).

80 See Aristotle's deliberations about freely giving (ἐλευθεριότης) out of one's means as appropriate behavior of a free man (ἐλεύθερος; *Nic. Eth.* 1119b, 22ff). The expression "education fitting for a free man" (ἐλεύθερος παιδεία) can be found in Plut., *Non posse suaviter* 1094d, 9; *Consol.* 113a, 2; Diod. Sicul., *Biblioth.* 13.27.2.2; Lucian., *Anach.* 20.25; Ael. Arist., *Kata ton exorchoumenon* 414.15. See also Alcaeus, *Frg.* 72.12; Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 3.4.30.1.

(d) One of Epictetus' goals was freedom from caring feelings and pity. These feelings should be only superficial, not touching your inner self. Epict., *Enchir.* 16, reads like this:

> "Beware that you be not carried away by the impression (φαντασία) that the (suffering) person (in front of you) is in the midst of external ills (ἐν κακοῖς τοῖς ἐκτός) ... Do not, however, hesitate to sympathize with him (συμπεριφέρεσθαι; to go about with him) so far as words go, and, if occasion offers, even to groan (συνεπιστενάξαι) with him, but be careful not to groan also in the center of your being (ἔσωθεν)."

Epictetus was a former slave. He would have looked at the external ills of his former colleagues in the same way.

However, the criticism needs to dig deeper. (e) Aristotle was optimistic about being able to make ontological statements about freedom. He thought he could detect freedom in a person as a natural quality: somebody is free by nature (φύσει) or not.

Not only in Alcidamas' or Seneca's eyes[81] is this problematic, also from a postmodern perspective, especially a constructivist point of view. In a constructivist view, ontological statements about freedom, human dignity or the equality of human beings are not possible. There is nothing to *detect* in the ontic reality that could be called freedom. Freedom, dignity and equality, on the contrary, need to be *ascribed* and attributed to the human being by means of performative language, and this constructed new reality will give birth to behavioral consequences.[82]

(f) The concept of freedom of decision and its correlate of an almost unlimited pedagogical optimism, combined with an optimistic anthropology, would have caused the apostle Paul to shake his head; it made Augustine frown. For the apostle, followed by Augustine, the natural human being is a sin-dominated old Adam, lost forever, who needs to be changed radically by God into a new human being (e.g., Romans 6). For the Christian apostle, pedagogics was meaningless without this divine "new creation" and the infusion of the divine Spirit. Augustine later taught that hereditary sin burdens humans so heavily that, de facto, their God-given freedom of decision only leads to evil. Only through God's grace can the freedom of choosing the good be regained.

In modern times, the idea of freedom of decision was, of course, problematic for extreme deterministic thinkers such as the Marquis Pierre-Simon Laplace, but also problematic for Kant, whose *Reine Ver-*

81 See above n. 35.

82 Cf. further, e.g., P.Lampe, *New Testament Theology in a Secular World: A Constructivist Work in Philosophical Epistemology and Christian Apologetics*, London/New York: T & T Clark, 2012, 10, 37-41, 90.

nunft was not able to state that the human will is free. Only Kant's *Praktische Vernunft* came up with the solution that a person can feel free once he or she is confronted with an absolute claim of a law or another imperative.

Today's neurobiological results, at least at first glance, seem to question the existence of a free will (experiments by Libet and others):[83] What we *perceive* as our free decision to execute an action actually does not seem to be a free decision, because the brain activity that corresponds to this perception is *preceded* by another brain activity (unnoticed by us) that allegedly generates the action *before* we feel that we decide to perform this action. In other words, decisions are made in an unconscious "readiness potential" of our brain *before* we ourselves think we make a free decision. Who is steering this "readiness potential" in our brain? Athena (Homer, *Il.* 1.216)? A demon (Aeschylus, *Agam.* 1505)? Not the entity that we perceive as our Ego on the level of our consciousness?[84]

However, it is still our brain that makes the decision. At least experiments such as Libet's did not deal a decisive blow to the concept of free will—for several reasons. (a) Libet and his successors were wrong in presupposing that humans are able to exactly state the moment in which they feel they make a decision. Experiments by Keller and Heckhausen proved the contrary.[85] (b) Theoretically the conscious perception of making a decision might be simply a delayed feedback of what—as an act of free will—unconsciously goes on earlier. The concepts of "free will" and "consciousness" are not necessarily tied together. (c) But we do not even need this theoretical crutch. More recent experiments refuted that Libet and others succeeded in separating the actual decision-making from the perception of making a decision. An experimental study by C. S. Herrmann and his team demonstrated that the unconscious brain activity in the "readiness potential" does not prepare a *specific* movement; it only *generally* prepares the motoric apparatus for action. Thus, it does not determine which one of two alternative motoric actions a subject chooses.[86] In other words, the

83 Cf. further, e.g., P. Lampe, *New Testament Theology in a Secular World,* 37-41; C. S. Soon, M. Brass, H.-J. Heinze, and J.-D. Haynes, "Unconscious Determinants of Free Decisions in the Human Brain," *Nature Neuroscience* 11 (2008): 543-545.

84 For the Ego as a construct of our brain, see Lampe, *ibidem.*

85 I. Keller and H. Heckausen, "Readiness Potentials Preceding Spontaneous Motor Acts: Voluntary vs. involuntary Control," *Electroencephalogrphy and Clinical Neurophysiology* 76 (1990): 351-361. Subjects sometimes even identified the moment of their conscious decision-making as being 800 ms *after* the corresponding movement of the body had begun.

86 C. S. Herrmann et al., "Analysis of a Choice-Reaction Task Yields a New Interpretation of Libet's Experiments," *International Journal of Psychophysiology* 67/2 (2008): 151–157. Differently, however, Soon et al., "Unconscious Determinants" (2008),

actual decision to move my right finger to a spot above my eyebrow is not made in the "readiness potential." Thus, our everyday notion that a volitional act—the "self" feels in this act that it makes a decision—induces a motoric action has not become obsolete. The discussion is not over.

who, on the basis of the brain activity preceding the awareness that a decision is made, claim to be able to predict about 60% of the outcomes of simple choices.

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