

Paul, Community, Economy: Thinking Communitas through the Biblical Paul

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades Paul has had encounters with contemporary philosophers. While his importance in public thought has persisted since Christianity became a political force, the recent interest in, and use of, Paul is striking. Despite initial excitement by Pauline scholars, many were sceptical because of, especially, ‘anachronistic’ and allegedly naïve assessments and interrogations of Paul’s thought.

Despite such criticisms, this project utilises a range of conceptual apparatuses taken from Italian philosopher Robert Esposito that are appear immediately useful for re-figuring Pauline community. Paul has had no previous constructive project through an encounter with Esposito. And, such an encounter open a space for continuing to think about Pauline community. Because of this prospect, the project is concerned with the following question: How can contemporary work on the concept of community re-interpret Pauline communitarian efforts and orientations? Or, in order to qualify the question further, it can be asked: In what ways can the Espositoan elaboration of community and attendant concepts clarify and transform readings of Pauline community, and through such a meeting provide crucial material for both historical work, as well as the archives of philosophical communities?

Such questions can only be asked after one has an idea of several conceptual landscapes, though most notably Pauline and contemporary philosophical ones. And, in fact, such a base of knowledge also opens up for the development of a broad series of conceptual apparatuses that form an argument. Distilled down, an argument that would answer the initial question would simply be: Esposito’s conceptual understanding of community allows for a range of analytic re-arrangements, shifting the filters through which we understand Paul’s nascent community. The conceptual tools to be elaborated circulate around *communitas* and *immunitas*, which are intertwined with *munus*, a specific non-remunerative rendering of the gift. What emerges through such a re-arrangement are several things: 1) Pauline communities practice munificent gifting, as seen especially in imagery surrounding the collection project (2 Corinthians 8:1–15); 2) Pauline communitarian body rhetoric (intimately connected to Espositoan *communitas*) images a community bound up within the complex of individual and

community, a binary that often devolves into the problematics of alienation and appropriation (primarily the body rhetoric of Romans 12: 4–5; 1 Corinth 12:12–27) ; 3) and, Paul acts as a type of immunitarian agent for the community, determining the boundaries of the body. Through noting these elements that make up a broad argument, or series of evidences that answer our initial questions, a novel reading of Pauline community is explicated that has implications both for historical work on Paul, as well as analysing Paul from a political philosophical perspective.

INTRODUCTION¹

In fact here the story of two Pauls is narrated: the saint and the priest ... I am all for the saint, while I am certainly not very tender toward the priest ... [The screenplay leaves] the spectator to choose and to resolve the contradictions and to establish whether this THEOLOGICAL FILM be a hymn to Holiness or to the Church

-Pier Paolo Pasolini

1. Introduction: Transition and Translation

Fifty years after the tumultuous and revolutionary moment that was 1968, *Paul, the Apostle of Christ* was released in cinemas. Perhaps it seems unfair to contrast such a film with *St. Paul*, a screenplay by Pier Paolo Pasolini that exhibits well the subversive, undulating potential felt through the protests in France, and subsequent autonomic potentialities present in Italy. But, this juxtaposition of divergent Pauls brings forth a powerful universality: the apparent inability to reach beyond our figurations, the ubiquity of ideological content projected onto historical figures only seen partially through pinpricks in the sheet of time.

Elizabeth Castelli, translator of the screenplay and New Testament scholar, notes the autobiographical traces present in Pasolini's work. It is through these traces that we notice some of the essential elements of translation, committing both a form of violence against the object, but also permitting a necessary cultural carry-over; we have the ambivalent tension exaggerated, perhaps paralleling the loudly exclaimed archaeologies of Jesus scholarship that Albert Schweitzer wrote about.² Our historical figurations resemble ourselves. Pasolini (like all who translate historical figures to present people) reveals to us that Pauline figurations are mirrors.

¹ Some sections ended up being excised and published before this project was finished, namely the various excurses. Please see bibliography for the works that I was able to publish.

² Elizabeth Castelli, 'Introduction: Translating Pasolini Translating Paul', in *Saint Paul: A Screenplay*, by Pier Paolo Pasolini (London: Verso, 2014), xx-xxvi.

And this is also evident in our contemporary, biblicist Paul film. Although seemingly concerned with rendering the text faithfully into an on-screen format, it fills in gaps and relies on biblical texts that are recognised by scholars to be ideologically skewed in ways that make historical reconstructions difficult. Luke/Acts must be heavily qualified and the contents sifted to unearth Paul's story, working through the temporal tensions and anachronisms in the text. Further, as producer T.J. Berden notes about the film, Paul's 'life personifies "forgiveness," a concept that seems almost impossible today—but desperately needed'.³ Like all biblical films, there is a political message, one that shapes the figurations of the subject. Paul becomes a form who is filled with the message of the creator/s, a construction directed to the contemporary problem of cultural and political opposition.

Pasolini's work, as Armando Maggi insists, revolves around analogy and contrast.⁴ This is seen most evidently when noting the autobiographical elements of *Saint Paul*. As Maggi writes, '[the screenplay] works as a powerful revelation of what Pasolini identified as the ultimate sense of his work and existence'.⁵ The work, like all translations of the apostle, is inextricably bound to the translator. But, in this mixture Pasolini is able to expertly bring forth the difficult to spot contradictions in Paul, revealing points of departure from usual scholarship, opening up precious interpretive paths. Pasolini reads Paul as both instantiating the Church, founding an 'everlasting manifestation of a political and repressive power' while also inaugurating 'the end of times according to the contemporary Christian view of the imminent return of Christ'.⁶ Such a contradiction is banal, on one level, but it brings out tension that is evident when recognising Paul's apocalyptic flourishes, as well as his contradictory moments. These are the political realities that are bound up within Pasolini's figuration of Paul, and they are missed by our other

³ <https://variety.com/2017/film/news/james-faulkner-jim-caviezel-olivier-martinez-star-paul-apostle-of-christ-1202550703/> (Accessed 16/7/2018 at 13:03).

⁴ Armando Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 21, 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23. It is through such a contradiction, read through a particular understanding of Pauline community building as being alter-imperial, that I view Paul as a profound failure in his present. He seems to have dominated the long game, however.

translation of Paul, as bound up as it is in staging ‘forgiveness’ as a central Pauline trait that the audience is called to imitate during such a fractious political age. Pasolini recognises and brings forth the revolutionary spirits, those parallels between Paul’s historical experiments in political activity, and the revolutionary moments from 1938-1968. Such moments embrace political critique and movement, while also inviting one to fall back into the constraints of power.

1.2 Contouring the Pauline

The difficulties of navigating Pauline figurations are ever-present (as we see with the opposed constructions noted above) but need not end in paralysis. Indeed, such tension can catalyse careful navigation among the figurations, underscoring diverse elements making up these Pauls. A first unifying element between these Pauls is an acceptance of the *radical nature* of Paulinism. Whether Paul is read as a cultural conservative, or a radical anarchist, he departs from cultural norms.⁷ Secondly, in playing with Paul’s cadaver, or realising the efficacy of numerous figurations, we see widespread interest in the transformational capacity of a Pauline *community*. Other connections can be made, but these two—cultural departure and communal orientation—are unmistakably widespread. They, in fact, are often intertwined elements. Paul’s understanding of and role in initiating communal forms can be seen as part of that very radical departure.⁸ This is not only a Taubesian pronouncement, but also part of larger trends in NT studies attending to Paul’s probable withdrawal from ideological and social elements of the reigning empire. In other words, reading Paul’s community activities as political and oppositional is, and has been, usual.

⁷ Even when read through a social functionalist lens, Paul’s *departure* from norms allows cultural stability. What is startling is realising that a Pauline commentator like N.T. Wright recognises in Pauline thought a type of radicality that aligns with his conservatism. When a contemporary theological conservative rejects the viability of LGBTQ social acceptance, for instance, he can point to Paul as a theological crusader, bucking not only the norms of contemporary society, but also the ancient world. Contrast this with a more radical Pauline interpreter, like Neil Elliott or Richard Horsley, who ‘liberate’ Paul from such conservatism, pointing to Paul rejecting the social modes of organisation and exploitation in both the ancient and contemporary worlds.

⁸ I distance myself from ‘creation’ language because I seek to underscore the *inoperative* aspects of a Pauline community. Such technical language will become more clear as first section of the project progresses.

If ‘community’ is an important shared concept between readers of Paul, it causes us to interrogate the concept? Any transformational elements of community, if constituting socio-political transgression, are not merely spiritual, as if Paul is envisioning extracted, immaterial relations. Nor is it necessary to view Pauline community as simply immanent, as if a reductive counting of subjects and the material space they inhabit is Paul’s only concern. There may be a sort of non-reductive immanent option here, a figuring of community that is social and material, but also philosophically/theologically compelling.

Neil Elliott emphasizes that when conceptualising Paul, ideologically, the important question to ask is ‘*What enabled Paul to speak. . . of an alternative*’ to the political order of his time?⁹ Such a question reveals that Paul is much bigger than those varied Nietzschean interpretations, even if his letters are interpreted as being concerned with a transcendently oriented theological community; such a community focus would not erase the material aspects that Paul obsesses over.¹⁰ Contra Nietzsche and those who followed too close in his reading of Paul, there is not simply some pop Platonism characterising Pauline thought, as if only a passive nihilism is available to the spiritualised community of hope.¹¹ Distilling the vast corpus of Pauline (and pseudo-Pauline) writings to the latter in a naïve dichotomy between the ‘spiritual’ aspects of the letters and embodied, material movements and callings is misguided at best.¹²

⁹ Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 57. Paul’s concern encompasses both order (*taxis*) and justice (*dikaiosyne*), pointing toward the material and the larger communal realities, not individualised or hyper-spiritual commitments (pp. 52–57).

¹⁰ Paul focuses on different ends within different portions of his corpus. One cannot ignore the obvious particularities that make 1 Thessalonian and the Corinthian correspondence quite different in scope and purpose from Paul’s latter works (Galatians, Romans, Philemon, and Philippians). See, for instance, Teresa Morgan’s analysis of *pistis* language, and how this denotes different communal emphases in Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Chapters 6 and 7, but especially introduction to Pauline *pistis* on pages 212-214. See also the recent work done by The Paul and Faith Research Group which ended in the book *Saint Paul and Philosophy*. (Gert-Jan van der Heiden, George Henry van Kooten, and Antonio Cimino, eds., *Saint Paul and Philosophy: The Consonance of Ancient and Modern Thought* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

¹¹ Ward Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses: St. Paul and the Philosophy of Undying Life* (New York: CUP, 2014). Blanton helpfully traces out the Nietzschean root of Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze’s readings of Paul, and how these readings fail to sceptically assess past readings of Paul.

¹² Here, the inclusion of the pseudo-Pauline epistles is merely to gesture to the possibility that, though divergent theologically, it appears evident that the writer/s of these documents assume/s the overall milieu of their productions are suitably Pauline. It is also important to note that there has been increasing work done questioning the inauthenticity of some pseudo-Pauline epistles, particularly 2 Thessalonians. Douglas Campbell has attempted to

1.3 Community Manifestations and Radical Pauls

This project is concerned with the two intertwined elements above, attempting to bring together *radicality* and the shape of *community* in Paul. The community that Paul is allowing to become (if we think of it inoperatively) is connected to gifting, economy, and matters associated with this tripartite emphasis, this trinity of occurrences (community, gift, and economy) that intersect with the ethical, with inquiries of value, questions of sociality, anthropological articulations, and even metaphysical issues that call all of the above into question. However, in bringing together these elements I step away from common disciplinary mediums and intransigent boundaries. Departing from historical-critical work is difficult, but essential. This is not at all to suggest that there is no value in historical-critical scholarship, or more ‘traditional paths’ of biblical studies, nor that this project lays aside such methods absolutely; in fact, the contention is that supplementation is necessary. But, there needs to be a continual opening up of new paths in the discipline. Moulding new Pauline figurations requires *inviting* new disciplinary paths, rather than retreating from them. This is the long story of biblical studies, as Ward Blanton makes clear in his award-winning book *Displacing Christian Origins*: ‘it seems safe to say that historians of early Christian religion have generally lost their ability to interact with large portions of those complex philosophical environments within which so much of our New Testament scholarship was produced.’ He goes further, writing that we do

not have to read many of the philosophical treatises of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars of Christian origins, for example, to become convinced that, in comparison with this earlier period of the academic endeavour, a similar forgetfulness (or even active proscription) of a once vibrant “interdisciplinary” traffic has become part of the standard training of contemporary biblical scholars.¹³

destabilise the work of F.C. Baur through critically questioning his Hegelian leanings. Douglas Campbell, *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

¹³ Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2.

Note the most famous example, F.C. Baur, whose Hegelianism was crucial for his work on Paul.

This project seeks to join in on a larger set of works that attempt what Blanton laments in the above quote, as well as the archives figuring Paul in diverse philosophical and political directions.

1.4 Departing from Past Interventions

Figurations of philosophically oriented Pauls have a long history, but recent decades have seen Taubesian, Badiouian, Agambenian, Bretonian and Žižekian Pauls.¹⁴ What holds these together in their heterogeneity are radical political-philosophical interventions, following from the broader projects of the interpreters. Paul, then, emerges into critical thought despite his often controversial place in intellectual life. Departing from the theorist above, this project is concerned with a previously unused source for figuring Paul: Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito. Primarily, Esposito is known for his work on community, immunity, biopolitics, the impolitical, law, and political theology. These different touchstones in contemporary continental philosophy and critical thought connect to Paul in various ways, but going beyond this we can note something else interesting: Esposito utilises Paul frequently in his *oeuvre*.¹⁵

It cannot be missed that despite Esposito's connection to Paul he remains ignored when compared to the set of philosophers who have (ab)used Paul to tease future paths in, and test critiques of, political economy, political philosophy, truth procedures, and other related topics.¹⁶ Paul is, after all, only fleetingly glimpsed in Esposito's work. But, the flashes are illuminating,

¹⁴ See Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul* (Stanford: SUP, 2010); Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: SUP, 2003); Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: SUP, 2005).

¹⁵ See, for instance, Roberto Esposito, trans. Timothy Campbell, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford: SUP, 2010), 9–12, 16, 85; Roberto Esposito, trans. Rhiannon Noel Welch, *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics* (New York: Fordham, 2012), 15; Roberto Esposito, trans. Timothy Campbell, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2008), 125; Roberto Esposito, trans. Zakiya Hanafi, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 52–74 *passim*; Roberto Esposito, trans. Zakiya Hanafi, *Two: The Machine of Theology and the Place of Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Few seem to note the recurrence of Paul in Esposito's work, central among them being Eric Santner and Peter Langford. See, Eric Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 29; and, Peter Langford, *Roberto Esposito: Law, Community, and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 120–23. Langford importantly underlines that Esposito reads Paul as a crucial part in the immunitary paradigm.

revealing things of immense importance not only in regards to interpretive paths for reading Paul generally, but also for rethinking a Pauline community.¹⁷ After all, as Eric Santner notes, in Paul's writings on the body 'we find some of the first statements that inaugurate in the West the political theology of sovereignty, the biopolitics of states, and the rhetorical figures that organise their reciprocal exchange of properties and energies'.¹⁸

Certainly it is no question that another Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, has received much attention for his quasi-Heideggerian Paul. Agamben's Romans commentary originated through a series of seminars held at the College International de Philosophie in Paris during the month of October in 1998. The subsequent Italian publication, *Il tempo che resta. Un comment alla Lettera ai Romani*, occurred two years later, and the translation five years after that.¹⁹ Esposito, however, had his interesting intersection earlier in his tenth book, *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità*, which was originally published in 1998.²⁰ Of course, the differences are stark, perhaps accounting for the relative lack of attention given to Esposito. Not only is Agamben's work a sustained and overt treatment of Paul, but he undoubtedly interacted with the Heideggerian Paul much earlier than when he started his original seminar series, thereby relating back to the re-initiation of a post-Nietzschean philosophical use of Paul.²¹

Paul is broader than the usual re-engineering he receives from those few philosophers who appear to have jointly raised him from the dead, lifting him from the stifling tedium of strictly

¹⁷ A further question could be asked: for whom are the connections most illuminating? Esposito, or Paul?

¹⁸ Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 29.

¹⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), vi, ix.

²⁰ Robert Esposito, *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità* (Rome: Einaudi, 1998).

²¹ Theodore Jennings, Jr., 'Paul and Sons', in *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians* ed. by David Odell-Scott (New York: T & T Clark International, 2007), 91; Ola Sigurdson, 'Reading Žižek Reading Paul', in *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians* ed. by David Odell-Scott (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 225. Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 33–34. We can see Agamben's concern with Heidegger's reading of the Pauline *hos me* and recognize the significance this has within Agamben's reading of Paul.

Jonathan Short, 'On an Obligatory Nothing: Situating the Political in Post-Metaphysical Community', *Angelaki* 18, no. 3 (September 2013):139–40. If Short is correct in his argument, namely that 'Esposito's reading of the person and the fate or destiny of community emerges through his reading of Heidegger', then it may be that there is a connection with Esposito and Paul through Heidegger; nonetheless, this would require a more than cursory analysis of Heidegger's *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, among other texts.

ecclesial circles and territorialised historical-critical work. Žižek, Agamben, Badiou, Critchley, and Taubes are considered the main contemporary Pauline philosophical interlocutors; numerous monographs, collected editions, and articles have followed from their encounters with Paul. All the same, it may be that those corners where we do not check (such as Esposito, or the relatively neglected emergence of the Pauline *katechon* as a political trope among Italian philosophers, like Massimo Cacciari)²² are precisely where some of the more interesting work is going on, and for our purposes perhaps some of the most exciting work on conceptions of community. Pointing to Esposito fills a lacuna in contemporary philosophical work on Paul, opening up new threads on key Pauline theological and philosophical tropes that emerge through fleeting encounters, moments that can be enlarged when followed beyond their initial depth. In this project we take the Espositoan Paul to new places, then, adding to the initial sketches. Juxtaposing Esposito with the other philosophical Pauls highlights the connections, but also crucial differences. Through such a juxtaposition we can see that an encounter between Esposito and Paul is not about *merely* interrogating the form of his fleeting Pauline figurations. Instead, I go beyond this figuration, helping to sketch the form through Esposito's *communitas*.

Distilling this project down to a single question is difficult because of its diffuse and interdisciplinary nature. However, if pressed to do so, it would read: How can contemporary work on the concept of community re-interpret Pauline communitarian efforts and orientations? Or, in order to qualify the question further, it is asked: In what ways can the Espositoan elaboration of community and attendant concepts clarify and transform readings of Pauline community, and through such a meeting provide crucial material for both historical work, as well as the archives of philosophical communities? What argument does this project sustain, hoping to answer the question through? Such questions above, certainly, open up a broad range of possible tracks to take, but clarifying elements of the argument of the project help point to possible tracks to take. Esposito's conceptual understanding of community allows for a range of analytic re-arrangements, shifting the filters through which we understand Paul's nascent community. The

²² Massimo Cacciari, *The Withholding Power: An Essay on Political Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

conceptual tools to be elaborated circulate around *communitas* and *immunitas*, which are intertwined with *munus*, a specific rendering of the gift. What emerges through such a re-arrangement are several things: 1) Pauline communities practice munificent gifting; 2) Pauline communitarian body rhetoric (intimately connected to Espositoan *communitas*) images a community bound up within the complex of individual and community, a binary that often devolves into the difficulties of alienation and appropriation; 3) and, Paul acts as a type of immunitarian agent for the community, determining the boundaries of the body. Through noting these elements that make up a broad argument, or series of evidences that answer our initial questions, a novel reading of Pauline community is explicated. Furthermore—though only tangential—the hope is that by sketching this figuration of Paul a new philosophical appropriation of Paul can be elucidated, adding to the archive of not only philosophical Pauls, but also adding to the set of examples crucial for explicating political examples of community, providing grist for the mill of contemporary philosophical discussion on community.

1.5 Esposito and Communitas

Esposito's understanding of community is profitable for our project because of an understanding of gift that radicalises conceptions of community in, broadly, ontological and ethical directions. While this will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, let us remark on a few of elements of such an understanding that are helpful for this project, connecting this to its broader logic, and the elements of the argument detailed above.

Firstly, the gift that rests at the core of community is one that enacts *giving out*. While there have been numerous theoretical discussions in various disciplines about what exactly constitutes the gift (Derrida's impossible gift; Mauss's reciprocal gift), Esposito's *munus* is bound to duty and eschews return. This deontologically suffused gift retains a non-remunerative angle. *Communitas*, the Latin term at the centre of Esposito's delineation of political community, revolves around the *cum*, the with-ness of traditional understandings of community, but the *munus*, the element of gifting central to *communitas*, is the primary element.

This all does not obviate one of Esposito's main concerns, which is biopolitical (itself inextricable from the *communitas*). He is interested in the operations of sovereignty. Santner puts it this way: 'Esposito's own project proposes to rearticulate the relations of biopolitics and sovereignty as declensions of a single, though historically variable, paradigm concerning the relation of politics and life, that of immunization'.²³ This paradigm, as biopolitical, is concerned with the preservation of life. Esposito further explains, writing that

immunitas is revealed as the negative or lacking form of *communitas*. If *communitas* is that relation, which in binding its members to an obligation of reciprocal donation, jeopardizes individual identity, *immunitas* is the condition of dispensation from such an obligation and therefore the defense against the expropriating features of *communitas*.²⁴

It is the immunitarian agent who restores the borders in order to 'preserve life'. The play of *immunitas* and *communitas* is central to Esposito's broader work, especially after shifting to considerations of community in the 90s. What becomes clear in the interplay between the community circulated around gifting and the immunitarian agent who is given the gift of escaping the gift, is that such an interplay is bound to the complex of exchanges between the subject and the broader political body. In fact, such an interplay underscores one of the central problematics of community, namely death. Esposito shifts away from Bataillean terminology and captures well the atrophying of the body (the auto-immunitarian impulse) by pointing to formulations that end up typifying *communities of death*, which are communities that (often) end up dissolving through an imbalance of *immunitas* and *communitas*; the community atrophies by both rendering its border's impermeable, but also by attacking itself. Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan-State is the foremost example, and Esposito's reading of Hobbes will figure heavily in the first section of this project. Body becomes an essential touchstone, as well, because it will become apparent that there is a crucial relation between the individual bodies and the community that is made up of them.

²³ Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 14.

²⁴ Esposito, *Bios*, 50.

2. *Layout of the Project*

How will this project unfold? The first main section is comprised of three chapters. The first chapter lays out the broader philosophical orientation and logic behind Esposito's *munus* focused community, paying special attention to his use of Hobbes as a foil for *communitas* and various conceptual missteps, some of which are mentioned above. The next chapter maps out the wider conceptual landscape of *communitas* by fleshing out Esposito's main interlocutors and shared thinkers of community, such as Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben. The object of these first two chapters, then, is to identify Esposito's novel understanding of community through his broader work, but also the thinkers whose work is found within the broader web of thought he is found within.²⁵ Although these two chapters are dense, they are essential for elaborating the conceptual map that is so crucial for the argument. Reading Paul with only a cursory grasp of the analytic developed would be unhelpful.

The final chapter in this section further instantiates Espositoan community, but on a different level. This chapter juxtaposes neoliberalism with an Espositoan reading of Hobbes in order to underscore Esposito's warnings about a thanatopolitical community, thereby standing as a type of 'case study' exemplifying conceptions of *communitas/immunitas*, borders, subjectivation, and the connections between the subject and community. In other words, this chapter invites a reading of neoliberalism as a *type of community* through Esposito. This develops, then, a first step in utilising an Espositoan lens to read contemporary socio-political phenomena as a type of auto-immunitarian community. This initial, broad section serves the

²⁵ Kristen Hole, 'The Ethics of Community: Nancy, Blanchot, Esposito,' *Angelaki* 18, no. 3 (September 2013): 103. Here, of course, it should be noted that by the 'larger discussion' what is specifically being referenced is the common break from substantialist conceptions of community found in works mostly by those French and Italian theorists post 1980s, such as Blanchot, Agamben, Nancy, and Esposito; or, rather, a conception of community that as Hole says 'conceive[s] of community in terms of non-reciprocal obligation that renders the subject ek-static,' here referencing specifically Esposito, Nancy, and Blanchot. However, it would be remiss to forego interacting with those common interlocutors whose significance is clearly evident in the above listed author's work, including but not limited to Bataille and Heidegger.

purpose of providing the reader with the broad contours of Esposito's work and, more importantly, where his understanding of community fits.

The second section is a radical departure. The fourth chapter works out a broad hermeneutical path, calling for scepticism of readings of NT studies that cordon off critical theoretical and contemporary philosophical work. This criticism occurs by pointing to Rudolf Bultmann, noting Badiou's importance for reading Paul, and taking note of other non-historical readings. Why does this chapter matter to the broader logic of the project? It notes the importance of philosophical interventions, enlarges hermeneutical awareness, and serves as a transition between the previous section and the ending sections, which focus more specifically on New Testament studies. While there is little discussed specifically on Esposito, and the broader complex of concepts crucial to the project, it serves as a transitional section through developing the importance of the philosophical Pauls for a broader Pauline legacy, one that is tied to historical discussions of Paul, but is not reducible to disciplinary trends that demand methodological purity.

In the fifth chapter we turn explicitly to Pauline themes and contexts, utilising usual NT studies approaches. This chapter focuses on two major themes in Paul: 1) the body; and, 2) the collection project. These two themes are the basis for my reading of a radically oriented community. Why have I picked these instead of usual themes used to elaborate Paul's ecclesiology? Two reasons: 1) limitation of space and time; 2) alignment with Esposito's broader work, which forms the base of the argument. The first is a weak reason, but the latter is important. While Esposito does not pick up on the full range of possible uses the Pauline form could afford him, we are able to note striking parallels. Esposito's understanding of community—focused on a form of dutiful gifting, a type of emptying, but ongoing, gesture—is at the heart of the Pauline collection. Going further, in my reading, this is not merely the basis of Paul's collection project, but forms a type of deeper political/philosophical solidarity through withdrawal. Notions of the body connect at a deep level to my reading of Paul's political form, but they retain a deeper importance through Esposito's immunitarian emphases, the

organological moments in his broader work. With this we are not only confronted with boundary transgressions, but also with auto-immunitarian possibilities, which signal atrophy of the body.

The final chapter continues with these themes. Here, I contextualise Paul further, but provide a commentary on 2 Corinth 8:1–15. This commentary, however, is meant to provide an intimate encounter between the text and Esposito's concepts and themes. It is here that I most pointedly interpret Paul through using Esposito's work, offering a novel reading of Paul's community through collection work and Pauline bodies. This reading provides concrete expressions of political community that add and augment the archive of radical political philosophical community traditions, while also pointing to new ways of historically placing Paul's community. Paul is not merely the agent that founds some type of site of communal solidarity. Instead, he sometimes plays the part of a type of immunitarian agent, though one who initiates imagery through which boundaries are negotiated and formed. He isn't the inauguration of community, but rather plays the roles of a supplicating—and sometimes chastising—agent who, though exempt from some forms of the gift, engages the flows of the fluid, auto-gifting community.

These parallels catalyse the questions we want to engage. Espositoan interest in Paul, and realisation that he has something to say about community; the ongoing proliferation of Pauline figurations; the need for an opening of the boundaries of the discipline, allowing traffic to pass and infiltrate; and the parallels of gifting communities and body imagery and their political/philosophical inflections.

PART 1: THE ESPOSITOAN COMMUNITY

CHAPTER 1: ESPOSITO AND THE CONTOURS OF COMMUNITY

We need community. Here again, one must not think of a voice, like an external injunction, that addresses us from elsewhere but of something more inherent. We need community because it is the very locus or, better, the transcendental condition of our existence, given that we have always existed in common. The law of community is thus understood as that exigency according to which we feel obligated not to lose this originary condition--or, worse, not to turn it into its opposite. This is because not only is this risk ever present but it constitutes us as much as the law that puts us on guard against it. If we have always existed in the law, it is because we have always existed in "guilt," one might say, echoing Paul of Tarsus . . . , we ought to say not only that community has never been realized but that it is unrealizable.

-Roberto Esposito, 'The Law of Community',

pp. 14-15

1. Introduction

The recurrence is astounding. Paul continually appears as a touchstone, and if not a touchstone, a spectre haunting the corridors of civilisation. But, if this is true—if it is not a grand exaggeration to state such—then one has to contend with the problem of theologising, yet again building up History as yet another tale about successive Great Men who appear on the scene wholly abstracted from their social surroundings; these Men (and they always happen to be men) single-handedly change the flow of history. This is the focus of those multiple 18th and 19th century biographies of Jesus, a trend that still endures in some corners of historical Jesus scholarship; and we can also gesture to Paul as another Great Man. After all he was the so-called

creator of Christianity who opened up a space for successive revolutions and cultural ruptures.²⁶ Despite the possibility of tripping into this problematic theological chasm, we must note that Paul is found in a variety of spaces throughout the history of the West (if we can write such a trans-geographical/temporal designation). And Paul has, of course, seemed to appear quite suddenly as a figure ripe for philosophical appropriate and re-figuring.²⁷

With such a project it is necessary to start with a more thorough overview of our main interlocutor, Esposito. His work covers several decades, nearly always concerned with the conceptualisation of the political, but also (perhaps primarily) with *communitas* as a crucial concept for navigating the complexity of global ideological/political/social manifestations and reading possible political futures and pasts.²⁸ Despite community being important for his *oeuvre*, he is not a singular figure, a scholar whose work is arbitrarily confined to one solitary concept, nor is he somehow isolated from broader theorising of community. Ignoring this would approach idolisation, constructing a solitary genius whose work holds the key to a Theory of Everything, again coming too close to ‘theologising’ a thinker already bound up within a complex history of thought, relying on Heidegger, Nietzsche, Arendt, Nancy, Luhmann and many others.

Acknowledging the mountain of thinkers important to Esposito is a reminder to hike the broader, rocky range of other essential thinkers drawing on common sources, often entering into dialogue with one another’s work, and debating the fine points concerning political philosophy in

²⁶ Beyond these modern biographies of Jesus, one can note the pervasiveness of the capitalist Great Man of History, even in the wake of prominent academic schools and movement, such as French *Annales* school of history from the early 20th century, that fought against this type of individualising.

I recall taking a trip to the War Room museum in London. In actual fact, the museum was a love letter to Churchill. The dedication was an example of propagandistic excess, securing the legacy of a single Great Man (a term explicitly used, and capitalised, in the museum!). If not for this single man, of course, World War II would certainly have been lost, or so the museum implied repeatedly. A true Great Man, after all, holds the very future in his hands.

²⁷ By ‘contemporary’ I mean the curious resurgence of Paul as a critical philosophical source in the past few decades, perhaps starting with the mid-70s. Of course, excising such a period is difficult. After all, Taubes struggles with the *Nietzschean* reception of Paul. Heidegger, as well, is a critical source for thinkers like Agamben and Esposito, while also spending significant time in his early work on religion in general, and Paul in particular. See Martin Heidegger, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, *Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004).

²⁸ In his singular exposition of [a type of affirmative] biopolitics, we can see throughout his corpus both a robust reading of previous political forms, and also a yearning for experimental futures during our tumultuous political moment.

general, and conceptualising community (and all the things ‘community’ can entail) in particular. Many of these have already been mentioned in the introduction, but their work will be more fully detailed in both this chapter and the next. Contemporary work on community cannot be understood apart from this web of theory, and this work cannot conceptualise an understanding of community that interacts with Pauline studies without noting this archive. Paul’s mark is found throughout scattered documents, gesturing to his thought and legacy.

For this chapter in particular, the primary goal is to sketch a picture of Esposito’s work such that later chapters can interact more fully with Paul, both in philosophical and biblical studies modes. If it is true, as scholars from Yvonne Sherwood and Stephen Moore, to Ward Blanton and Elizabeth Castelli have written, that both philosophy and theory are either sorely neglected in biblical studies, or utilised in a pedestrian manner, then these next two chapters are especially crucial for charging our way forward in a novel and valuable manner. With such in mind, this chapter develops several conceptual apparatuses that persist throughout the project, including *communitas* and *immunitas*, but also *munus*, and the dangers of thanatopolitics, or the problematic of sliding into a community of death through falling into alienation or appropriation. This is partially accomplished through paying attention to Esposito’s broader corpus; however, significant time is spent on Esposito’s analysis of Hobbes, which so well illustrates important conceptual spaces, including auto-immunitarian missteps.

2. Describing Esposito’s Work

Esposito’s first main book-length text concerned with community was written in the late 90s. *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* was published during a crucial time; writings by Agamben, Nancy, and Maurice Blanchot that engaged the concept of community and the political had been gaining ground, elaborating crucial constellations of thought important for theorising the coming politics. Nancy’s 1983 essay ‘The Unworking Community’ was the initiation point that ignited the contemporary conversation, a catalyst for the first essay in Blanchot’s *The Unavowable Community* that invited further responses from Nancy in

monograph form.²⁹ It was only later that Agamben's *The Coming Community* was published, following on from the intense theoretical conversation between the two prior French philosophers.³⁰ Despite the shared motif, Esposito represents a departure from this coterie of writers working on community, though his connection to them is found primarily through a shared dissension from 'the perceived failure of political communities in the twentieth century and reflect[ion of] a desire to recuperate community in a non-oppressive way'.³¹ The danger of political community was obvious at the time. The forms of atrocities committed under the National Socialists were still fresh; the spectre of death haunted even those signifiers, related terms, that appeared related to such a monstrous past. One can see, for instance, the backlash against Nancy in the early 80s as he formed projects that attempted to broach the subject of

²⁹ Nancy's *La Communauté désœuvrée* (*The Inoperative Community*) was published in 1986, three years after his initial essay and Blanchot's response to it. It was not until nearly thirty years later, in 2014, that Nancy published *La Communauté désavouée* (*The Disavowed Community*), a further response to the discussions on community brought about by Blanchot's neglected *The Unavowable Community*.

³⁰ *Communitas*, while one of the first of Esposito's books to be translated into English, was preceded by several books that focused on a much different political philosophical project. *Categories of the Impolitical*, which was not translated until 2015, several years after *Communitas* and other important works that focused on biopolitics and community, is an important touchstone. In this volume Esposito is adding his own voice to the sustained work on the concept of the impolitical present in 80s political philosophical writing.

Maurice Blanchot, trans. Pierre Joris, *The Unavowable Community* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1988), xi. In the Translator's Preface to Blanchot's *The Unavowable Community* it is mentioned that this main collection of work on community by Blanchot is at least in part 'a response to Jean-Luc Nancy's *La Communauté Désœuvrée*,' and specifically Nancy's work on Bataille.

Emine Hande Tuna, 'The Underridization of Nancy: Tracing the Transformations in Nancy's Idea of Community,' *Journal for Cultural Research* 18, no. 3 (2014): 263. Tuna contends that in order to understand Nancy's thought on community it is essential to take into account his later works, namely *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, 'Is Everything Political?', and *The Truth of Democracy*. These works are significant elaborations of Nancy's understanding of community and how his ideas have steadily shifted, departing from a Derridean trajectory. It is also true that Blanchot's work on community was in response to the work of Nancy, and so this likewise had an effect on the shape of his later views on community.

³¹ Hole, 'The Ethics of Community,' 104; Roberto Esposito, trans by Zakiya Hanafi, 'Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,' *Angelaki* 18, no. 3 (Sept. 2013): 83.

Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, 5. Blanchot puts it this way: 'Why this call from or for "community"? . . . above all, the memory of the Soviets, the premonition of what is already fascism but the meaning of which, as well as its becoming, eludes the concepts then in use, forcing thought to reduce it to what is common or miserable in it, or on the contrary, pointing out what is important and surprising in it, which, not having been well thought out, risks being poorly combatted. . .'

It is crucial, here, to underscore a further point in order to head off criticism. These various ontological communities could easily be read, and criticised, as having nothing to do with the coming together of actual, lived, bodies. And, therefore, they would be removed from not only political thought, but also any possible connection to Pauline thought. But, here, it must be stressed that these experimentations in communal formulae come in the midst of catastrophe and upset, within times of tumult and interrogation. They are connected to lived life in the most intimate way possible. It is only through a radical decontextualisation that they are abstracted from real, political reality.

political community. Any step that seemed to head in the direction of the political sins of the immediate past and present, no matter the differences in specificity, seemed to breach a rather thin line.³² To talk of ‘political community’ brought reverberating images of the cultic attachments of the Nazi regime. Nancy’s work with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe from 1980–84 is an important landmark linked to the fear of disastrous pasts. Their creation of the Center for the Philosophical Study of the Political questioned the links between essentialisms and totalisms and forms of political community. This seems to help found a more contemporary initiation point for such thinking, providing an animating spirit to those coming discussions on how we ought to think of community.

The danger of community, however, is not simply a recent phenomenon (nor is the biopolitical spectre simply a modern governmental form);³³ the functioning of political machinery becomes ever more tenuous as populations grow, and political violence becomes more possible.³⁴ Imagining, perhaps in a paranoid manner, the devastation possible through the machinery of the political, a mechanism often employed by unknown means and for uncertain ends, is frightening. And, the imagery is easy to access. The history of the 20th century, and the nationalist populisms that have begun to erupt in the early decades of the 21st, in North America and Europe, confront us. And, seeing approximations of the damage (often propagandised) is only a click away. Fear of groups, ‘crowds’ and ‘mobs’, has further entered into public consciousness because of the popularisation of thinkers like René Girard, whose work has been utilised by conservatives to critique leftist political discourse (often reduced to ‘collectivism’, as

³² The fear of any hint of National Socialism was alive and well post-USSR, with some making connections between Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe and totalitarianism due to their reliance on Heidegger’s thought. See, for instance, Todd May, ‘The Community’s Absence in Lyotard, Nancy, and Lacoue-Labarthe’, *Philosophy Today* 37, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 275–84.

³³ See, for instance, Mika Ojakangas, *On the Greek Origins of Biopolitics: A Reinterpretation of the History of Biopower* (London: Routledge, 2016). Ojakangas makes a strong case for re-working the history of biopolitics; such a re-interpretation changes how we read the present. The same can be said, of course, for conceptions of community, a topic that intertwines with biopolitical work, especially in Esposito’s *oeuvre*.

³⁴ Robin Osborne, ‘Roman Poverty in Context’, in *Poverty in the Roman World*, ed. Robin Osborne and Margaret Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 7–8. Osborne points to poverty in Rome, and the rise of the poor as a political class that emerges as distinctions develop between citizens and others residing in urban areas, as a part of the complicated conditions fuelling unrest.

if we are repeating the opening of the 20th century), as well as pop cultural ‘intellectual’ conservative icons attempting to catalyse a resurgence of hyper-individualism.³⁵ ‘Collectivism’ has increasingly become a dangerous, elicited concept among large sections of the populace in the UK, Europe, and North America. This is all, of course, ignoring any discussion about community that involves the ancient world, nor the birth of individualism in the early modern era, epitomised in the work of Thomas Hobbes and Hugo Grotius.³⁶ Evidence from past eras, despite being prolific, seldom enters into the discussion, unless an earlier figure is being misappropriated.

2.2 *Overviews of Difference: Munus*

How does Esposito shift from other theorists who have significantly impacted the concept of community during the late 20th century? Common to many writers on community, he pays particular attention to philological aspects of *communitas*; however, the *scope* of his focus is the place of departure. Esposito shifts from a fixation on the qualifier *cum* to a more sustained engagement with the multivalent philological richness found in *munus*, a Latin term that is most simply read as ‘gift’.³⁷ While focusing on the *cum* (with-ness) of *communitas* provides promising avenues for dissection and philosophically inclined departure toward, perhaps, the ‘singular unity’ one finds in Nancy (what he terms ‘being-with’ or, ‘being-in-common’), focusing on *munus* allows for community to retain the singular importance of the ‘being-with’ while simultaneously presenting a focused engagement with problems of identity and property

³⁵ I hesitate to mention overtly the popular figures. I will leave the reader to infer the subject of the gesture.

³⁶ Both of whom engaged in biblical criticism often, with Grotius standing as the initiation point in Schweitzer’s re-telling of the history of Pauline interpretation. See Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 1–2.

³⁷ Short, ‘On an Obligatory Nothing’, 139. As Short notes, this is specifically how Esposito reads his difference with Nancy.

through issues of debt/gift in relation to *communitas*.³⁸ As Greg Bird succinctly notes, ‘when thinking about com-munity Nancy privileges the *with-* and Esposito privileges the *munus*.’³⁹

Excursus: Jean-Luc Nancy’s Ontological Community

Nancy communicates the importance of community through focusing on ontology. Denying ‘individualism’, Nancy conceives of the subject as a *singularity*, and for him the singular subject is always open to other subjects, never without other subjects; ‘there is always a coming to presence, a coming to the world that necessarily, essentially implies a multiplicity or plurality of “theres” that is neither juxtaposition nor fusion’. The Heideggerian influence should be quite obvious at this point. Existence is predicated by a ‘withness’ that includes other subjects through emphasizing a primacy of openness. The crucial difference from individuality is that *the singular is always considered as an intimate part of a larger existence*, a larger whole; however, that whole sidesteps the erasure of the self occurring in enclosed conceptions of community, where identity becomes necessarily lost.⁴⁰

For Nancy, those timeless questions about Being, foremost the question of ‘presence’ and the ‘production of a pure something from nothing’, only make sense when it is realised that ‘Being cannot be anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence.’⁴¹ Humans, in fact all things, then, exist as a portion of the opening or division of Being, a spacing that allows a ‘circulation’ that calls for all of those things that participate in Being to note the ‘we’ and ‘*by saying we to themselves* in all possible sense of that expression, and by saying we for the totality of all being.’⁴² The bringing in of circulation haunts the text with images of capital, questions

³⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: SUP, 2000).

John D. Caputo, ‘A Community without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community’, *Research in Phenomenology* 26 (1996): 25. Other scholars take a different etymological route. John Caputo, for instance, focuses on the seemingly militaristic aspects of *communitas*. *Com*, in his estimation, relates to the togetherness, but he focuses on *munire* for the root, which means to fortify or build a wall. Esposito’s specific breakdown of *communitas*, however, follows all of the major etymological breakdowns of the term. Or, so he states.

³⁹ Greg Bird, *The Coming Community: From Political Economy to Ontology in Agamben, Esposito, and Nancy* (Albany: SUNY, 2016), 93.

⁴⁰ Taylor Weaver, ‘Paul and Political Critique: Liberalism, Ontology, and Community’, *Biblical Interpretation* 24, no. 4–5 (Winter 2017): 591–608

⁴¹ Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 2–3. Emphasis in original.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3. Emphasis in original.

of valuation. But, this valuation is not concerned with setting prices, distinguishing the elements that make up Being, but instead to note the impossibility of evaluation; here, Nancy is sure to stress that value, and making sense of value, comes from the impossibility of being able to note the relation of being-with, the radical relationality of Being.⁴³ And, when thinking of people, with singularities, once again it is the distance, the spacing, which allows for continuities and connections.

From one singular to another, there is *contiguity* but not continuity. There is proximity, but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasizes the distancing it opens up. All of being is in touch with all of being, but the law of touching is separation; it is the heterogeneity of surfaces that touch each other.⁴⁴

The contours of *munus* edge around the social connotations found in its root (*mei-*) and suffix (*-nes*); further, the term ‘oscillates in turn among three meanings that are not at all the same and seem to make it miss its mark, or at least to limit the emphasis, the initial juxtaposition of “public/private”’.⁴⁵ The imposition of this binary opposition (public/private) is a crucial element in much modern discourse occurring during and after Enlightenment political philosophical concerned with community. Why is this so? Esposito highlights what is probably an obvious point: the ‘common’ is etymologically concerned with the opposition of the general and the individual, the common is what belongs to everyone; but in speaking of ‘belonging’ an understanding of community is underwritten that formalises property. Esposito writes of this dominance: ‘what is common is that which unites the ethnic, territorial, and spiritual property of every one of its members.’⁴⁶ Destabilising this dialectic is the initiation point of Esposito’s project, a desire to transcend what is diagnosed as a dead-end. Focusing on *munus*, he believes, will contribute to the deconstruction of contemporary foundational models of community, a

⁴³ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁵ Esposito, *Communitas*, 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 3.

destabilisation that re-forms in such a way that removes problematic issues of circulation around the *proper*, and does so in a way that is distinct from Nancy and other theorists.

The emphasis on the multivalence of the term, and its subsequent short-circuiting of an elementary distinction between the place of the proper in respective realms of discourse, is more than a mere etymological aside. The three terms that *munus* circulates among (*onus*, *officium*, and *donum*) are not merely linked through the unremarkability of linked signifiers. These terms are, more interestingly, connected by what they constitute in social/philosophical roles. There are the obvious connections between the first two terms, *onus* and *officium*, but *donum* seems relatively isolated, distinct from the latter two.

Signifiers are always equivocal; still, *onus* is popularly translated as ‘burden’ or ‘obligation’. There is, then, a clear link between *onus* and *officium*, with *officium* usually translated as ‘office’, ‘official’, or ‘duty’.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, *officium* has a rather polyvalent history, with its use in sensual Roman poetry signalling a link between the erotic connections of lovers and the ‘bonds of affection that structure political alliance.’⁴⁸ The two terms, then, have a variety of connections to a broad sense of ‘duty’. The connection between these two terms and *donum*, most often interpreted as ‘gift’, is not as readily apparent. *Donum* does not seem to have the same broadly reciprocal range of translations as *officium* and *onus* (they, after all, play off of each other) can have in certain circumstances, at least not in its a common, every day, intuitive use. As Bird notes, Esposito’s ‘etymological analysis of the *munus* can be read as an attempt to readdress the classical deontological problem of civic duty’.⁴⁹ Again, Esposito is concerned with, among other things, putting classic political liberal notions of the ‘proper’ in tension with conceptions of the civic community based on social contract models and ideas about citizenship, all of which are concerned with varieties of ‘duty’.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Charles L. Platter, ‘Officium in Catallus and Propertius: A Foucauldian Reading’, *Classical Philology* 90, no. 3 (July 1995): 215–17.

⁴⁹ Bird, *Containing Community*, 157.

What is apparent is that *donum* is an inescapable part of *munus*. The gift is bound up within *communitas* and its constituent part, *munus*. But there are shades of difference when it comes to the gift. As Esposito explains, ‘*munus* in fact is to *donum* as “species is to genus,” because, yes, it means “gift,” but a particular gift, “distinguished by its obligatory character, implied by its root *mei-*, which denotes exchange’.⁵⁰ After reckoning with the circulation of terms, and how they play off of each other, Esposito ends with interpreting *munus* as ‘projected on to the transitive act of giving’; this gift is obliged (‘this is the gift that one gives because one *must* give and because one *cannot not* give’), given, without expectation of receipt.⁵¹

Connections, ways of rendering gift, are further complicated by the history of ‘gifting’ and its popularity in contemporary theory. It is a difficult concept, and this can easily muddle what is happening in Esposito’s work. Before going further and exploring *communitas* through *munus*, and the connections between *donum* on the one hand and *officium* and *onus* on the other, we need to re-count the gift.

3. Gifting: A Brief Derridean Account

Perhaps a mixture of circular ambiguity is why interest in conceptions of ‘gift’ and ‘gifting’, especially among 20th century critical theorists and philosophers, cannot be erased; there are difficulties and surprises contained within the concept, and surprises open up moments, even if peripheral, of conceptual reinvention and experimentation. Global, reciprocal destabilisation ebbs and flows, and much of this is tied to political-economic upheaval. Does gift, something injected with the buzz of subversion in the mid to late 20th century, *provoke* hope?

While a modern, Protestant reading of ‘gift’ (or, grace, rather) may imply an almost ambivalence toward reciprocal receipt, instead focusing on different types of ‘perfections’, reciprocity saturates genealogy of the concept.⁵² If there is a link between gifting and the short-

⁵⁰ Esposito, *Communitas*, 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵² John Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 66–78.

circuit between giver and recipient it is often understood as a contemporary frustration, not a ubiquitous understanding of how ‘gifting’ works or how gifts function.⁵³ It is here, then, that one finds Derrida’s fascination with the ‘gift’ as paradox. The gift is usually conceptualized as not calling for return, interrupting the circularity of economy through an ‘aneconomic’ nature that refuses to give into the continual circularity of common practice.⁵⁴ Beyond just being outside of economy, the gift, for Derrida, represents ‘*the impossibility*’, a conceptual archetype of impossibility itself.⁵⁵ Impossibility is apparent when it is recognised that a gift, in its common reading, demands a contract between two subjects. The exchange of a thing from one subject to another calls for the second subject to ‘accord, lend, or give some attention and some meaning’ to what the donor allots.⁵⁶ The implicit contract is inescapable, which can easily be noted in examples of ancient benefaction; while not set into law, we can see ancient Mediterranean people, for instance, believing in the ‘common good’ of reciprocal gifting, a foundation element of social harmony.⁵⁷ Derrida is concerned with the seeming tautology involved in common outworking of the gift, and regarding this he points explicitly to the impossibility of the gift as such: for the gift to exist there, in fact, ‘must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter-gift, or debt’. He goes on to write:

If the other gives me back or owes me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift, whether this restitution is immediate or whether it is programmed by a complex calculation of a long term deferral or difference. . . [the gift] is annulled each time there is restitution of counter-gift.⁵⁸

⁵³ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ‘Gift-Giving and Friendship: Seneca and Paul in Romans 1–8 on the Logic of God’s χάρις and Its Human Response’, *HTR* 101 (2008): 16. Engberg-Pedersen is a perfect example of a Pauline scholar how picks up on the possible anachronism, detecting a Kantian ethic of duty in Derridean critiques of gift-giving. Of course, it does not seem to me that the anachronistic nature, and perhaps a charge of ‘presentism’, renders Derrida’s criticisms invalid. At the most, it seems that this would mean that we cannot put too much burden of blame on our ancient interlocutors.

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁷ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 45-46; Miriam Griffin, ‘*De Beneficiis* and Roman Society’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 93 (2003): 92–94; Seneca the Younger, *De Beneficiis* 1.4.2. See also Cicero’s *De Officiis*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

If there are distinctions between the signifier ‘gift’ and various signifieds (those complex differentiated definitions), then surely multiple genealogies could be traced from an initiation point of the contemporary work of Derrida and others who note the subtle, but crucial, difference between ‘sacrifice’ and exchange; and these tracings could also point to how benefaction can be understood in diverse ancient contexts that undergird contemporary discussions. William Cavanaugh, for instance, points to Luther’s anticipation of ‘the modern social imagination,’ where ‘the gift can only be defined as that which somehow escapes the overriding economy of exchange defining the West since the rise of the market’.⁵⁹ And, furthermore, connecting to Derrida, Cavanaugh notes the link between the portrayal of an unreturnable gift and Christian conceptions of martyrdom; the martyr is truly able to gift because accruing the satisfaction of the gift’s reception is not possible for her. The death of the martyr short-circuits the exchangeability, leaving the gifted ‘thing’ with the recipient.⁶⁰ Here, then, is it possible that we have the impossible pure-gift that Derrida talks about so often?⁶¹

There is also, of course, the question of anachronism, and whether we really need bother with the alleged dangers of anachronism when dealing with Pauline political philosophical constructions of community.⁶² Recent social-historical approaches to the New Testament documents in general, and Paul in particular, such as David Briones’ *Paul’s Financial Policy*, bring into question Derrida’s critical inquiry into the nature of the gift.⁶³ Derrida is a consistent reference in these types of works, though he is often read shallowly with a seeming dearth of

⁵⁹ William Cavanaugh, ‘Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Social Imagination in Early Modern Europe,’ *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 595–96. Cavanaugh goes on to note that ‘self-sacrifice is the only way of stepping outside the logic of exchange, for it is defined as the pure gift of the self without any reciprocal reception on the part of the giver’. Interestingly, I think this connects well to some of the analysis Esposito provides on Bataille and his rather peculiar experiments and writings on community.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 596.

⁶¹ Or, perhaps, even though the return to origin is impossible because of the martyr’s material absence, it could be that the gift is still re-circulated, even if that circulation becomes spiritualised. Reciprocal pinging energises a different subject. Or, perhaps, the martyrdom accrues some type of grace to the martyred, somehow detaining gift. Circulation would end, but the exchange would occur.

⁶² It has long been my contention that discussions of ‘anachronisms’ are over utilised. Heidegger notes, after all, that ‘History exists only from out of a present’. Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Religion*, 89.

⁶³ David E. Briones, *Paul’s Financial Policy: A Socio-Theological Approach* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 53–55; see also, Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 61–65, 66–67;

time wrestling with his thoughts on economy. A prime example of this can be seen in recent work published by Thomas R. Blanton, IV. His 2017 book, *A Spiritual Economy: Gift Exchange in the Letters of Paul of Tarsus*, notes the prominence of Derrida's work on gift and points to the 'impossibility' that is often seen as the distilled, simple version of his views on gift.⁶⁴ But it appears as if critics assume that Derrida had no basic understanding of the differences in social and cultural modes, or, even worse, that he had not read and consulted Mauss in a serious manner.

Too often a binary is created whereby Mauss's subject-oriented gift is hierarchically related to the inferior radicalised Derridean gift. Could it be that Derrida actually recognizes these fundamental criticisms and his reckoning of the gift is not due to a simplistic error regarding Mauss's ground-breaking work? Or, perhaps, that despite this infatuation with Derrida as a sort of anti-type for readers of the gift, there have been further responses to his work that need to be wrestled with?⁶⁵ For T. Blanton, Derrida appears to *create* the problem of gifting, rendering it an impossibility, because he views it primarily through the lens of economy and market exchange, and because of this Derrida misses the fact that in thinking of gifting socio-economically there is a natural expectation of circular, reciprocal movements that uphold social bonds.⁶⁶

Of course, these criticisms of Derrida are not new; his contemporaries challenged his dedication to the purity of gift. Jean-Luc Marion contended 'that there can be givenness without any object or "thing" given. . . [a] givenness without anyone giving; and givenness without anyone receiving. In short we can have givenness beyond the economy of the gift given and received.'⁶⁷ This goes to answer some of the hesitancy that Derrida has toward the usual operation of the 'gift' in contemporary society. This refusal to name that which is given possibly

⁶⁴ Thomas R. Blanton, IV, *A Spiritual Economy: Gift Exchange in the Letters of Paul of Tarsus* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 2–3, 8–9.

⁶⁵ Gerald Moore, *Politics of the Gift: Exchanges in Poststructuralism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

⁶⁶ T. Blanton, *A Spiritual Economy*, 2–3.

⁶⁷ Leask and Cassidy, 'Introduction' in *Givenness and God*, 6.

side-steps the problem of gift's commodification. The given is not some 'thing' that can be counted, put into its proper place in the ledger, or inserted into a spreadsheet. Like with Philip Goodchild's finale in his *Theology of Money*, there can be a shift from certain modes of 'valuing' whenever the account book is thrown into the fire. The paper is reduced to ashes and from here new paths of valuation that call for imaginative ways of re-thinking economy arise.⁶⁸ To quote a fuller passage from Marion:

We give without account. We give without accounting, in every sense of the word. First, because we give without ceasing. We give in the same way we breathe, every moment, in every circumstance, from morning until evening. Not a single day passes without our having given, in one form or another, something to someone, even if we rarely, if ever, "give everything." Also, we give without keeping account, without measure, because giving implies that one gives at a loss, or at least without taking into account either one's time or one's efforts: one simply does not keep account of what one gives. Finally, we give without account because, for lack of time and attention, most of the time we give without a clear consciousness of our giving, such that we give almost mechanically, automatically, and without knowing it.⁶⁹

These three parts, or types, of the gift are not fully commensurable. There is some contradiction, for instance, between the third and the prior two. With such contradictions in mind, countering Derrida, Marion notes that his attack on the gift can only occur through 'think[ing] the gift as such, irreducible to exchange and economy'.⁷⁰ With the hope of sustaining the concept of gift without developing a tepidly arbitrary account of it, Marion seeks to delineate gift by starting from gift rather from 'reason'. Starting from reasons ends in gesturing toward economy and exchange. Through justifying reason by preceding it the gift becomes a higher

⁶⁸ Philip Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 241–61. Re-imaging economy is something which comes up in numerous connected works and will be further explored in later sections of the current project. Although this project is focused on political community, the 'economic' cannot be excised out of the specific reading of community that is being explicated, which should already be evident from the Espositoan reading of *communitas* above. The political and economic are intertwined in both the ancient context, as well as our contemporary, neoliberalised one. But in imaging the economic, it must be remembered that such a term navigates around, and originates from, administrative 'rules' of management. And, it is here that I insist that such fluid imagery, based on forms of circularity, help re-imagine possible economies. See the final chapter for a re-reading of Pauline community using imagery of liquid flow.

⁶⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Reason of the Gift', in *Givenness and God*, ed. by Leask and Cassidy (New York: Fordham, 2005), 101.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

reason, transcending other notions of reason, or perhaps *founding* a different account of rationality. This allows for gift to occur prior to ‘duty’, sidestepping ‘debt’.⁷¹ While the method is different, the similarity with typical critiques in biblical studies is apparent. But, it is also possible to note the differences in ‘reading’ economy within the various critiques of Derrida. While T. Blanton (drawing on Bourdieu) and others may detect a latent capitalist reading, or a basic market economy standing as the foundation for Derrida’s reading of the gift, Marion seems to recognize a clever difference in Derrida’s operation.⁷² As Moore points out, Derrida, in discussions on economy, is employing a rather literal reading of the term, emptying out contemporary baggage and playing with

the management, or rather the law (*nomos*) of the *oikos*, meaning household or hearth, a place of identity (GT, 6 / 18; PC, 299– 300 / 320– 1 ; Johnson 1993: 57– 64). Economy thus refers to the law of identity, to that which returns or attempts to return to its perceived point of origin, its *oikos*.⁷³

In fact, contrary to popular perceptions about the direction of Derrida’s rumination on gift, he is less concerned with Mauss specifically, and more interested in ‘the modern philosophic tradition, of which Mauss remains a part of in spite of *The Gift*’.⁷⁴ Again, this is chiefly about, as Moore writes, ‘the economics of the subject’.⁷⁵

3.2 Gifting: Returning to Community

The gift implies reciprocity, and this reciprocal function occurs as a sociocultural duty. Here, then, we come to the communal and multi-faceted nature of *munus*, its intertwining of the concepts of duty and gift within the larger matrix of a collective. But, how does *munus* function, and does *munus* commit the same sins that Derrida pointed to, notably the problematic functioning found in Mauss that welds one to a subjective, essentialist project, a project that is committed to a form of mimesis that only allows more of the same, a necessary reciprocal

⁷¹ Ibid., 133. Here, as well, Marion evokes echoes of ‘Event’, creating a peculiar resonance with a Badiouian reading of ‘grace’, especially as seen in the work of John Barclay on Paul and gifting.

⁷² T. Blanton also incisively notes the implicit theological undertones to the notion of a ‘free gift’.

⁷³ Moore, *Politics of the Gift*, 11.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 12.

relationality that can never break from the proper?⁷⁶ A politics of the gift follows from Mauss' work throughout the 20th century, enlarging and expanding the depth of possibilities found in working through separate focal points. This is found, as has been pointed to above, Derrida's work, but is also present in Bataille's responses to the gift (including some significant uses of Nietzsche, discerning echoes of gift in his thought), and even further in feminist thinkers like Luce Irigaray, who noted and critiqued the place of women in reciprocal exchange as a form of commodity.⁷⁷ Esposito's *munus* is that genre of gift that goes beyond a generalised *donum*; *munus* exudes strong implications of obligation. This obligation modifies or 'even [interrupts] the one-to-one correspondence of the relation between gift giver [*donatore*] and the recipient [*donatario*]'.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Esposito writes: '[a]lthough produced by a benefit that was previously received the *munus* indicates only the gift that one gives . . . [*Munus*] is projected onto the transitive act of giving'.⁷⁹ This gift is concerned with obligations, with 'owing' the other, an outward gifting activity that is not necessarily focused on mutualities that *ask* or *demand* the return.

4. Reworking Community

How then does this enter into the larger political development of community? As stated earlier, Esposito follows a strategically different thread than Agamben, Nancy, and Blanchot who, *broadly*, have stressed the with-ness, the *cum*, of community.⁸⁰ Esposito is not merely

⁷⁶ Ibid., 14. Again, it is essential to note a likely interpretation of Derrida delivered by Moore: 'For Derrida, however, the point is that in seeking to separate out his own legacy from that of Heidegger, Mauss is ultimately complicit in the same kind of essentialist, politically dubious thinking of the gift in terms of self-presence, the inheritance of which would amount to a mimetic repetition of the same. We see this, on one hand, in terms of Mauss's nostalgic claim that "we can and must return to archaic society and to elements in it".' And, perhaps even more tellingly: 'The gift does not return economically to itself, but refuses conflation with presence by always returning to and from the future'.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 20–21. As Moore notes, Claude Levi-Strauss, after Mauss' work on gift, is the first to note the place of women as gifted objects who are not allowed to take place in the exchange. Irigaray, later, appeals to women to reject being forced to function as a commodity that is emptied out and forms a societal base.

⁷⁸ Esposito, *Communitas*, 5.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Significant work has been produced that is quite distinct from Esposito's reading of *communitas*, such as Victor Turner's mid-20th century explication of liminality and *communitas*. While interesting connections could be made between Esposito and Turner's use of the term, such is outside the scope of this study.

breaking from his contemporaries, either. Community as a theme in political and philosophical discourse is rather widely found, evident from the nature of these various discussions and the seeming unboundedness of the term ‘community’, what it is open to signify. The depth of difference found in community viewed through the lens of *munus* as opposed to *cum* may be most evident after a more thorough explication of work on community by Esposito’s peers. While community may appear to be a self-evidently political term, the variety of *difference* found in the signifier is not as apparent; community is a concept that often retains an intuitive meaning in the popular sphere. But, further, what this means is *not* that ‘community’ is a political term that has nearly infinite possible meanings rendering it meaningless without further, detailed and laborious explication; rather, the sort of genealogical, originary etymological breakdown that those *like* Esposito (those he departs from) perform at first glance seems to be clearer than it is.⁸¹ Again, because of popular understanding of community as self-evidently dealing with the *cum*, it becomes to slide into a homogenising conceptual family. The with-ness, the communality and being-with of community, is seemingly of the first-order, then, something that can be quickly noticed (though, without the full theoretical richness contained in Nancy’s elaboration) because it reinforces the importance of the common.⁸² Gift, duty, and the other varied concepts that Esposito underscores are in the background, shielded from view.⁸³ Because

⁸¹ John Schwartzmantel, ‘Community as Communication: Jean-Luc Nancy and Being-In-Common’, *Political Studies* 55 (2007): 461. As John Schwartzmantel points out the extremes of difference account for reading ‘community’ as from ‘an all-embracing totalistic community of organic unity, which suffocates or annihilates difference’ to ‘superficial and transient bonds between individuals’ and everything in between.

⁸² K. M. Stroh, ‘Intersubjectivity of *Dasein* in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*: How Authenticity is a Return to Community,’ *Human Studies* 38, no. 2 (June 2015): 24–347; Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 28–54; Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 103–4. Here, then, with the ‘being-with’, do we detect the Heideggerian exposure of those thinkers like Nancy and Agamben, of which Esposito follows but elaborates from? This is a primary understanding of (*Mit-*) *Dasein* in Heidegger, that the being-there is being-with, or the given of being-together-with-others (transcending the Cartesian subject).

⁸³ Hole, ‘The Ethics of Community’, 103, 104; Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, 15, 57n6; Moore, *Politics of the Gift*. It must be stressed that ‘gift’, as a signifier, appears in other writers, such as Nancy and Blanchot. The crucial difference is, of course, the *place* that gift appears within the figuration of community and the work of the writer. Hole notes correctly, for instance, that ‘the political genealogy that Esposito traces separates his account from [Nancy and Blanchot].’ Blanchot, in passing, mentions ‘gift’ in relation to Bataille’s experimental nonreligious mystical community, *Acephale*, and the logic of sacrifice Bataille plays with; however, Blanchot provides little elaboration into the logic of gift within community, noting simply that ‘To link oneself with *Acephale* is to abandon and to give oneself: *to give oneself wholly to limitless abandonment*’ (italics in original; p. 15), and, ‘There is the gift by which one forces the one who receives it to give back a surplus of power or prestige to the one who gives—

of these different emphases it is essential to tease out the contrasts between *munus* and *cum*. This is not *mere* difference, after all. And, particularly, when connecting a sketching of a Pauline community with these Espositoan ideas, we will be better able to grasp the differences between these divergent conceptions of community. Paul, after all, is wedded to societal relations that could rightly be read as reciprocal, as relating intimately to gifting as a base inter-associative interaction.⁸⁴ Gift, when read as a normative social action, is noticeable in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish contexts that inform his life and thought.

Differences, however, are not meant to point to irrelevance.⁸⁵ There are, for instance, important traces of gift found in Nancy's work that should not be ignored, as he makes quite clear that community is to be seen as 'given to us—or we are given and abandoned to community: a gift to be renewed and communicated, it is not a work to be done or produced'.⁸⁶ As well, we cannot ignore the implications of Esposito's reaction against notions of the proper/appropriation, which are crucial to Nancy and Agamben, informing their broader *oeuvre* as well as their particular works on community.⁸⁷

Community's connection to gift cannot be ignored, of course; as explored above, it is built into the etymological framework of the term and its usage. And, here, further, we have the creation of an opening that allows for ancient writers to dislocate temporally and enter into the

thus, one never gives. The gift that is abandonment commits the abandoned being to giving without any return in mind, without any calculation and without any safeguard even for his own giving being: thus the exigency of the infinite that resides in the silence of abandonment' (57–58). Such resonances are picked are thoroughly elaborated in Esposito's incisive reading of Bataille in *Communitas*.

⁸⁴ See further work I have done on this, Weaver, 'Paul and Political Critique'.

⁸⁵ See Bird, *Containing Community*, for an excellent example of the important connections between the work produced by Nancy, Agamben, and Esposito on community particularly in the 90s. Bird shows clearly the importance of this coterie of writers, and how they are crucially connected through questioning notions of the proper found at the heart of debates about not only ontology but also economy.

Jean-Luc Nancy, trans. Philip Armstrong, *The Disavowed Community* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016). Regarding these authors and the continuation of the community project, Esposito still publishes on community, with *communitas* still a primary concept within his political philosophy and understanding of the subject. While Agamben has not written extensively on community recently, Nancy has recently published a well-received volume entitled *The Disavowed Community*, which significantly interacts further with Blanchot's writings on community.

⁸⁶ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 35.

⁸⁷ See Bird, *Containing Community*.

discourse on community, bringing the Paulinist angle back into the mixture of a dialogic, an inter-penetration of temporal and geographic spaces in dialogue. Community is determined by gift; how, exactly, gift or benefaction is related to the community is to be explored, as the relation can intersect at levels of duty constituting the *communitas*, or perhaps a spontaneous swerve of ‘gift’ which brings forth community, or maybe on an ontological level found in Nancy’s work on being-singular-plural.⁸⁸ All of these options can, on different levels, relate to the Pauline material, and a possible Paulinist motif may be discerned in each. Esposito, certainly, does not have the monopoly on the importance of gift, nor on tentative connections with ancient community and Pauline activity (not that he makes such a bold claim). It may, in fact, be that Esposito’s continued biopolitical work on *communitas* leaves room for the ontological work of Nancy, thus constituting a dialectic, both shaping the other in nuanced ways resulting in a much more sophisticated synthesis, or a range of diverse elements to draw from, an archive of possibilities for thinking through community and the particularised place and figure of Pauline community.

Much more can be said about the importance of ‘gifting’ for Esposito’s reading of *communitas*, but a final few points are crucial. These point to other connections between the various angles within concrete conceptions of exchanged focused community; this directly connects political notions of gifting and compensation.⁸⁹ Esposito, in my reading, is concerned with communal duties; and, we can imagine ways that duties connect to political economic relations and problems of compensation. A reading of Esposito could, for instance, note the performance duties on behalf of the community, as a form of gifting, calls for exchange, or compensation because of debt accrued.⁹⁰ While several options exist for dealing with the problem of communal duties (providing compensation for duties leads to inequity; blanket

⁸⁸ Ward Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses: St. Paul and the Philosophy of Undying Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 41–45; 46–66 *passim*. Blanton utilises the ‘swerve’, or *clinamen*, both in Epicurean and Deleuzian senses, to point to ways of reading a Paulinist materialism of *klesis*. It is possible that this can inform out reading of gifting as well, perhaps a complication of desire in the realm of the Lacanian homeostatic.

⁸⁹ Bird, *Containing Community*, 157–60.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

remuneration to all political representatives is possible because of private interests; and, the ubiquitous communalisation of private property in orthodox communism simply absorbs the private, which leads to annihilation of the multitude by a homogeneous One), Esposito works to critique the annihilatory possibility by switching the common from the mode of ‘proper’ to ‘improper’.⁹¹ Social capital can no longer be accumulated and exchange is nullified.⁹² While the gift is often constituted as composed of an ongoing series of reciprocal exchanges, work done on gift exchanges, especially those of ancient societies, has made it clear that exchanges are often done explicitly for reasons concerning social capital; or, the proper form of the gift maintains social concord. Esposito is making the shift to the improper because, when taking into account his etymology of *communitas*, and his project to escape the dialectic he elaborates, the common must become that which is *not* proper.

Esposito notes that his understanding of the gift, with its centrality of *munus*, ‘has nothing to do with the ingenuous repositions of the paradigm of the gift’. Instead, ‘donativity’ always has a dangerous edge to it, ‘lacerating [one’s] own subjective identit[y]’. Community becomes a voided space that calls for one’s participation, and in the process lacerates the singularity that forms the heart of the communal entity.⁹³ If Esposito’s elaboration of *munus*, then, breaks from these ‘ingenuous repositions of the paradigm of the gift’, then an appropriate question for this project would be how this looks when placed on top of Paul’s communal elaborations and practices, which are also concerned with gifting.⁹⁴ In other words, gift is bound up within community, but an Espositoan community retains a peculiar place for gift. How does Paul look

⁹¹ Ibid., 158–59; Esposito, *Communitas*, 7. Esposito notes that ‘the common is not characterized by what is proper but by what is improper, or even more drastically, by the other; by a voiding [*svuotamento*], be it partial or whole, of property into its negative; by removing what is properly one’s own [*depropriazione*] that invests and decenters the proprietary subject, forcing him to take leave [*uscire*] of himself, to alter himself.’

⁹² Ibid., 160.

⁹³ Roberto Esposito, trans. Connal Parsley, ‘Preface to the Italian Edition of 1999,’ in *Categories of the Impolitical* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), xxx. It is important to mention that this preface was written after Esposito shifted from navigating work on the impolitical. He notes, for instance, that his ‘journey’ into the impolitical is ‘marked, or more precisely constituted, by the thought of community’ (p. xxviii). However, it is not until later that a ‘more mature form’ is exhibited in his writing (p. xxviii).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

when read in light of different communalities? For now, however, it is time to think further about the communitarian impulses unearthed through the work of Esposito and his contemporaries.

5. *Community, Political Philosophy, and Being*

Community is not simply a term which appears *ex nihilo* onto the contemporary scene of political philosophical discourse. Esposito, Nancy, Blanchot and others are working with community in light of early 20th century theory, taking the mantle up from Bataille, but also from those theorists whose thought he dialogues with, namely Heidegger and Sartre.⁹⁵ Beyond this, as Esposito works through community it becomes clear that he traces tributaries of thought flowing through the works of Hobbes, Kant, Rousseau, and other figures. These touchstones of western thought are foundational, intertwining with Heidegger, Bataille and others Esposito utilises to draw out a type of genealogy of community and the contradictions and cohesions found within it. Elaborations of these thinkers will continually be woven into our discussion, though elaborated more pointedly in Chapter 2. Some of the contours of Esposito's community have been touched, but further below we will delve into historical thinkers crucial for Esposito's reading community.

5.2 *Community, History, Humanity*

The dictates of the community are constantly overturned in the works of the thinkers mentioned above both through the diversity of originary myths of the political community (many of which underline the necessity of an *immunitary* element that is discussed below), but also through the constancy of conceptualizing community as what is 'proper', or as somehow related to identity; different 'proper' identities call for diverse nuances of what constitutes an appropriate community.⁹⁶ In pointing to a departure from some of the earlier political philosophers working on political community it may be important to gesture to the obsessive

⁹⁵ Esposito, *Communitas*, 112–34; Marie-Eve Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 72–95.

⁹⁶ Esposito, *Communitas*, 12–19; 139–40. See also Bird's *Containing Community*, where the reactions against strong notions of the proper are treated as foundational elements in not only Esposito, but also Agamben and Nancy.

impulse of attempting to sketch out communal origination.⁹⁷ William Desmond notes this is a larger theme; after Nietzsche, and the subsequent rise of genealogy, questions regarding origins become sparse as a discussion of origin was linked to the sort of transcendental that, most famously, deconstructive and post-metaphysical streams of thought sought to do away with.⁹⁸ Our quests for origin started to fade.

In a similar vein, Esposito points out that ‘political philosophy presupposes nature as the problem to resolve (or the obstacle to overcome) through the constitution of the political order,’ and we can see precisely in such an end an obsession with the myth of the originary, as this supplies the political philosopher with that which must be broken from, revised upon, or recaptured; the originary, however, is not the sole obsession, as ontic declarations follow from theorising declarations of the functionality and materiality of being. As will become clear below in an exposition on Hobbes, forms of political community that are theorized are often related to the theorist’s understanding of human nature; ‘anthropology’ is the key to understanding Hobbes, but the attention to human nature is hardly singular to him. Noting the nuances of the individual allows for positing ways to build or enhance a conception of community. One could note, as an example, the Girardian emphasis on scapegoating or mimesis, and from here attempt to explicate a conception of community that foregoes the problems Girard outlines, perhaps by attempting to conceptualize some form of positive mimesis; the point, however, is that what is inherent in human sociality shapes how problems and solutions are developed.⁹⁹ Or, to provide another example, focusing on Heideggerian *Dasein* results in a separate conception of a political community, one which could follow disparate paths depending on how one elaborates

⁹⁷ Timothy Campbell, ‘Translator’s Preface,’ in *Bios* by Roberto Esposito (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xli. Campbell is clear in his reading of such an attempt that it is ‘doomed to a melancholic search for a community that cannot be met.’ An origin for community is beyond our reach; nonetheless, Campbell notes that ‘recognizing the futility of such a search creates an opportunity, thanks to the contemporary immunity crisis, to think again what the basis for community might be.’ Although Esposito does not fall into the trap of earlier thinkers working on political philosophy and issues of community, noting their own discourse allows for a further re-development of where to begin and what is thoroughly futile.

⁹⁸ William Desmond, *Desire, Dialectic, and Otherness: An Essay on Origins* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 12–14.

⁹⁹ Esposito, *Bios*, 22. This is not to advocate for the Hobbesian, or this theoretical Girardian, path to determining a political community.

Heidegger's philosophy.¹⁰⁰ This is, perhaps, a particularly apt example, as Heidegger's ontology is undoubtedly a particularly strong source in not only Esposito's broader corpus, but also the work of Jean-Luc Nancy, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Agamben. As a source, however, there is a continual break, a realisation in the work of Esposito (and other beneficiaries of Heideggerian thought) that there are significant problems with Heidegger's ontology, not least because a Heideggerian community is always primed to delineate strong breaks between the proper and improper; thanatopolitics, a politics of death, is never far away in Heideggerian ontology.¹⁰¹

As Timothy Campbell has shown, in Heidegger's distaste for communism (or more particularly, in the technologisation of Bolshevism) there resides an explicit anthropologic break: humanity can be categorised as either proper or improper. As Campbell explains

In the distinction between mankind as a mass and mankind as species, it is technology that creates a tear in Being. Or differently, in man's attempt to master technology, it becomes possible to see on what basis a certain view of mankind as a bounded and protected entity depends on denying any sort of movement between the one who masters technology and the masses bounded on all sides from the untoward effects of technology. It becomes possible to distinguish between kinds of men and women, depending on the relation they enjoy with technology. On one side are those who continue to maintain a proper relation to Being, that is, to their own proper action when writing, and on the other, those others who, in mastering technology, have been altered such that they become a "kind of man" [*welche Art Mensche*].¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, while famously derided for being a Nazi, has seen a resurgence, with scholars like Catherine Malabou attempting to rehabilitate his thought through either pointing to specific forms within his larger philosophical corpus, or, in the case of Malabou, interpreting his work through using her own philosophical concept of plasticity. In fact, it seems impossible to escape Heidegger. Beyond Malabou and her work, all of the previously mentioned contemporary theorists of community rely heavily on Heidegger. Nonetheless, each is singular and distant from him and one another, Each of their conceptions of both the individual and community diverge, though remain related.

¹⁰¹ Martin Gessman, 'Heidegger and National Socialism: He Meant What he Said', in *Heidegger's Black Notebooks: Responses to Anti-Semitism*, ed. Andrew J. Mitchell and Peter Trawny (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 114–29. This is not merely a reaction against his famous allegiance to National Socialism, although there have been suggestions that his thought and Nazism are necessarily linked, as if Heidegger was merely following what conclusion came from his own work. He certainly seemed to think so.

¹⁰² Timothy Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 8. Campbell goes on to write that 'an implicit value is already given to one kind of man over another because of the context in which Heidegger elaborates it: on one side are those who are all made equal, and on the other is the individual who, by writing properly, enjoys a relation to Being that the former do not'. This becomes a theme that shows up again in Agamben and Esposito.

In order to detail more clearly the Espositoan break from past streams of political community we will use Hobbes as a main foil, both pointing to Esposito's analysis of the Hobbesian community, but also noting the natural slip of the Hobbesian community into a type of *community of death*.¹⁰³ Spending time with Hobbes (or, Esposito's reading of Hobbes) will allow us to paint a clearer picture of Esposito's community, perhaps most importantly by encountering a heretofore muted element. *Immunity* is an essential concept occurring alongside community in Esposito's work; immunity is an element that allows for community to exist and persist. Immunitarian impulses are easily discerned in many places, like contemporary nation-states, and this helps elucidate the political shifts that occurred through time.¹⁰⁴

5.3 Espositoan Foils: Hobbes and a Community of Fear

Negotiating between anthropologies leads to diverse avenues from which streams of political thought flow.¹⁰⁵ Hobbes, then, with his violent *homo homini lupus* fashions a foundational (negative) anthropology that notes the base and brutal essentiality of human relations, according to Esposito's reading.¹⁰⁶ Man has a problem, and only a strict deviation

¹⁰³ Esposito, when talking of a Hobbesian community of death, means something distinct from the use of the phrase in relation to Bataille, as seen in *Categories of the Impolitical*. Esposito, *Categories of the Impolitical*, 156–200 *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ Some political theorists disagree with the immunitarian paradigm. See Byung-Chun Han, trans. Erik Butler, *The Burnout Society* (Stanford: SUP, 2015), 1–7.

¹⁰⁵ Hermann Broch, *Politik: Ein Kondensat*, 204–5 (cited in Esposito, *Categories of the Impolitical*, 86–87). As Broch points out, using Saint Augustine as an example, an anthropology is often the means to describing the metapolitical, reflecting on the basis or 'roots' of the political reflection. While Hobbes may rely on physiological means, or on a striking description of the human as a wolf, Augustine 'sought to extract the essence, aim, and means of political action from the conception of man as the image and likeness of God'.

Karl Hefty, 'Theology and the Body Politic', in *Theology and the Political: The New Debate*, ed. By Creston Davis, John Milbank, and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 428–32. Hefty's contrast of the 'body politic' of Augustine and Hobbes is helpful here. He notes that 'Augustine begins ontologically with the good. . . [and] the body does not give life to itself, it exceeds itself in soul and so already implies a social relation and theological relation'. This goes on to reflect on to the household and the city. Hobbes, of course, does not posit the same essence, seeing instead a relation between the 'body and the body politic. . . in the similitude of passions'. These passions are, over all, fear and self-interest which rule over and unify all other passions. Because the social body is made up of such there is then posited a need for a 'sovereign authority' to serve as the mortal God of the system, or an artificial soul.

¹⁰⁶ MacPherson, *Possessive Individualism*, 9–29; Jaroslaw Charchula, 'Hobbes Theory of State. The Structure and Function of the State as the Key to its Enduring', *Forum Philosophicum* 15 (2010): 192–94. Note the qualifier 'according to Esposito's reading'. MacPherson, for instance, provides a contrary reading, one which seeks to negate the 'physiological' reading of the state of nature, instead noting that it comes from 'observation of contemporary society' and that the violence comes from thinking of the privation of the State in the midst of Hobbes'

from his natural state will allow for a smooth social-scape, for civic peace. For individuals to be able to co-exist harmoniously and side-step a natural state of antagonism, an antagonism that is built into the irreducible fabric of originary humanity wherein a tenacious hyper-individualism is present, *there must be a mediator*. This mediator, the State, must funnel the individual powers of the citizenry into a collective Power; this assists in ‘keep[ing] them in awe’ so that individuals obtain the capacity to break from the common status of continual war that is exacerbated by a brutish, selfish, and *interior focused* nature. At the same time, however, the modern state functions as ‘the accumulation of the natural right to violence, which was wielded over subjects who had relinquished theirs’.¹⁰⁷ In Hobbes’s conception of the state then, we detect the opposite mode of community from those meditations on *munus* found in Esposito’s *communitas*. Here, we have a heavy-handed wielding of coercive force, a threat of violence, through which the individual political subjects are allegedly voluntarily put into the count, allayed into their proper place so as to prevent the natural antagonism that can be imagined in the original state of primeval man, a mode of being that could, for Hobbes, still be detected within his contemporaries.¹⁰⁸

Although often characterized as unnaturally pessimistic about human nature, and perhaps rightfully so, Hobbes does have nuanced views regarding natural man that cannot be distilled *merely* to excessive turbulence. A Hobbesian originary political philosophy (ubiquitous war) as characterized above is true in that individual subjects of the sovereign give over their collective power to the Leviathan-State as they are assembled under it. This model of from lesser-to-greater

contemporary political scene. This is contrary to the general readings one finds in much literature on Hobbes which continue to see, Charchula notes, the state of nature as ‘pre-state condition’ of perpetual war. I think either way, one is left with a reading of Hobbes that points to a certain human nature that accords with Esposito’s interpretation.

¹⁰⁷ John Lechte and Saul Newman, *Agamben and the Politics of Human Rights: Statelessness, Images, Violence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 108.

¹⁰⁸ Max Weber, ‘Politics as a Vocation’, in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, 78; as quoted in William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 5. As Weber makes quite clear, a notion which is echoed in other thinkers, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, the state has no ostensible ends except self-preservation, and as we see with Hobbes this plays out specifically in a second important notion Weber makes clear: the state is a ‘human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory’. Who legitimates the violence? The state, which is the entity that likewise decides the criteria for legitimacy.

is likewise bound to the character of that natural state. For the natural man a foundational natural right exists. Hobbes, taking a line of thought from Grotius, recognizes this foundational right as that of *individual preservation*.¹⁰⁹ What Hobbes finds, however, is that there is no singular governing reason common to all humans that allows for consistency when it comes to the fear that the individual has toward their neighbour. While violence is allowed, even up to killing, in order to preserve oneself (and *only* for the use of preservation) each person interprets social situations differently; there is no universal, static mode of individual reaction, a steadfast interpretive rule for the near infinite situations in life. What one individual interprets as a threat to life, another may read as a mere joke, or a minor provocation with no physical harm intended. The variables are just too great, as are the physiological limitations (aural, optic, cognitive).¹¹⁰ Hobbes political views follow from his larger philosophy which follows a sort of Cartesian path, noticing the ambiguity in regards to perception; or, rather, that all senses are filtered. In the early chapters of *Leviathan* Hobbes lays out a rather simplistic account of his physiological understanding of man, especially of the senses. He writes, for instance, that the ‘appearance [of objects to the senses] is fancy. . . and though at some certain distance, the real and very object seem invested with the fancy it beget in us; yet still the object is one thing, the image or fancy another’. Furthermore, for Hobbes, the senses are all based on the diverse flows of fluidities and pressures within the body and put upon sense organs. This implies that differences in flows impact interpretive ability; interpretive problems extend beyond the lack of ubiquitous, equal reason. Cognition, and the passions, are connected to flows and pressures.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Glasgow: Fount Paperbacks, 1983): 145–46. As Hobbes writes, the ‘right of nature, which writers commonly call *jus naturale*, is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything, which in his own judgment, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.’

Esposito, *Immunitas*, 83–87. Esposito picks up on those elements in Hobbes that are crucial for relating the biopolitical resonances in his work. Namely, the realisation that the *cum* is ‘constitutionally risky for self-preservation’, and the only cure is a ‘homeopathic’ one that heals through the very fear found in the state of nature, but hear disseminating from the *Leviathan*, a type of equilibrium of potential violence that saves the body (pp 86–87).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61–62. Bernard Gert, ‘Hobbes’s Psychology’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorrell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 157–58.

Because of these physiological limitations the individual, in order to preserve their life, commits to the State, giving over power and governance to determine diverse matters.¹¹¹ Again, quoting from Hobbes we see the important intertwining of the state and the individual, and particularly the place of fear: it is a central part of what keeps the individual from judging situations correctly. Speaking of bonds through mere words and trust, Hobbes writes,

bonds of words are too weak to bridle men's ambition, avarice, anger, and other passions, without the fear of some coercive power; which in the condition of mere nature, where all men are equal, and judges of the justness of their own fears, cannot possibly be supposed.¹¹²

The State becomes both an agent of interpretation, as well as the primary means of authorised force, saving the individual from violence, but also moral evils like vainglory.¹¹³

5.4 Hobbesian Communities: Espositoan Renderings.

Using Hobbes as a lens to view Esposito delineates the latter's conception of community. Esposito often falls back to the origination of the modern political project in order to refine community as *communitas* and *immunitas*. Hobbes represents a form of community bound to essentialities, at base. The human essentiality is found in the common ability to kill, an equality of violence, penetration of boundaries, and a shared interpretive fallibility such that humans cannot interpret their neighbour's actions with accuracy; Esposito interprets through this shared potentiality what he terms a 'community of crime'. As he explains:

If the relation between men is in itself destructive, the only route of escape from this unbearable state of affairs is the destruction of the relation itself. If the only community that is humanly verifiable is that of crime, there doesn't remain anything except the crime of the community: the drastic elimination of the social bond. Naturally, Hobbes doesn't express himself in these terms; his discourse has an intonation and an intention that is "constructive." He intends to build the new state in a form that is in itself outside mutual conflict. Yet, and this is the decisive point, such a form is that of absolute dissociation: only

¹¹¹ Ibid., 151.

¹¹² Hobbes, *Leviathan*. See also Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, I.8.3–4.

¹¹³ Richard Tuck, 'The Utopianism of *Leviathan*', in *Leviathan after 350 Years*, ed. Tom Sorrell and Luc Foisneau (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 135.

by dissociating themselves from any relation can individuals avoid lethal contact.¹¹⁴

Humanity's essence demands dissociation. And, here we have the peculiarity of the Hobbesian social bond. While there is commonality, this commonality founds the need for a *rejection* of community as such; what would seem to connect is actually a destabiliser. Man is bound to others through common exclusion from others lest he suffer premature death, a death which can most readily be absolved through submission to the Leviathan-State. Esposito rightly recognizes, then, that there is no real 'community' for Hobbes, and although one may be able to identify a 'lack' in the emptying of individual or familial power to the state, thereby building up the state's power and giving permission to the state to act on the individual's behalf, there is no 'being-in-common', and neither is there a proper mixture of *communitas* and *immunitas*.¹¹⁵

Connected to the above, and giving primal origination for the criminal community, is the primeval, originary fear that constitutes, at least partially, the foundation of the state of nature *as* fear.¹¹⁶ Violence, and the horizontal and equitable dimension of it, is what creates the space whereby man is compelled to align himself with the state, thus giving over his power. This

¹¹⁴ Esposito, *Communitas*, 27; Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 141. Hobbes says of the equality founded upon violence that 'though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man and man is not so considerable. . . [f]or as to the strength of the body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy of others, that are in the same danger as himself'.

Arash Abizadeh, 'Hobbes on the Causes of War: A Disagreement Theory'. *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 2 (May 2011): 298–303. Abizadeh notes that there are three primary interpretations, with varying degree of textual warrant, that account for the source of conflict in Hobbes' writings: competition for resources; an evil, natural drive for domination; or, individual fear of death and uncertainty regarding others' intentions. While Abizadeh purports a novel 'psycho-ideological' interpretation, his reading allows fear and uncertainty to remain as essential parts of the human experience, though this does not discount the importance of 'rationality'. The psycho-ideological account notes the importance of fear being transferred to the Leviathan-State in order to keep the peace. This is an ideological move, but it also reflects the Espositoan emphasis on the Hobbesian community as one based on fear.

¹¹⁵ Nick Mansfield, *Theorizing War: From Hobbes to Badiou* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 16. As Mansfield intimates regarding Hobbes' thought, 'no power without abdicating power, no fulfilment of desire without some ceding desire'. The state of nature also causes and cries out for the sovereign state, because through the ceding of power and desire is, for Hobbes, the only way that power and desire can truly come about for the individual. Again, from Mansfield: 'Self-interest calls out for sovereignty to both control and fulfil it, inhibit and allow it in the one act. The drive to self-preservation is what defined us in the state of nature, but it is also what motivates us to formalise and legalise a power over us'. We can see the obvious comparisons here with Esposito's biopolitical gloss of Hobbes.

Immunitas, as a concept, will be detailed later, but for now see the Introduction for a brief overview.

¹¹⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 143–45.

fixation on fear, which serves as the catalyst for the Hobbesian community's existence, produces a negative anthropology precisely because man's essence rests in the previously described 'community of crime'. In order to evade the interpretive uncertainty that results in lethal contact, fear becomes a necessary element of what it means to be human. And in order to secure the natural right of preserving the self each subject must be bound up with fellow humans in a community of disassociation; the result here is a bizarre form of universalism that calls for all to cower under the umbrella of the Leviathan-State, while also maintaining an extreme form of individualism.

In Esposito's later work focusing explicitly on *immunitas* it becomes even more apparent that Hobbes illustrates the dangers of auto-immunity. Esposito makes sure to note the theme of immunisation quite early on in his dissection of Hobbes, writing that his specific form of sociality contains communal destabilisation: 'the *communitas* [of Hobbes] carries within it a gift of death. From it inevitably arises the following: if community is so threatening to the individual integrity of the subjects that it puts into relation, nothing else remains for us except to "immunize [ourselves]" beforehand and, in so doing, to negate the very same foundations of community'.¹¹⁷

And, here, we must go further with Esposito, quoting in length his thoughts on the Hobbesian solution to the problems of community:

The keenness of Hobbes's observation is matched by the drastic nature of the solution. Since the common origin threatens to drag down with it into the vortex all those that it attracts, the only way to save oneself is by breaking cleanly from it; by limiting it in a "before" that cannot be joined to what comes "after"; to institute between before and after a border that cannot be crossed without catastrophically falling back again into the condition which one had wanted to escape. What is to be loosened is the link with the originary dimension of common living . . . via the institution of another artificial origin that juridically "privatistic" and logically "privative" figure of the contract.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Esposito, *Communitas*, 13.

Also see Esposito, *Immunitas*, 84–86; Jacques Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone ', in *Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford: SUP, 1996), 1–78.

¹¹⁸ Esposito, *Communitas*, 13.

6. *Immunitarian Shift*

Missing from the discussion on Esposito thus far, though hinted at in the previous section, is *immunitas*. The idea of ‘immunisation’, and the radical and destructive consequences of the saturation of an immunitary agent (or, as Derrida would call it, the problem of auto-immunity, a limitless concept that appears most forcefully in his thought during the 90s) is not a completely novel concept in contemporary philosophy.¹¹⁹ Besides Esposito we can see Derrida, for instance, a few years earlier thinking through immunitarian concepts.¹²⁰ Esposito, in fact, notes how he himself is caught up within, though distinct from, several contemporary scholars working through the conceptual problems of immunity. Peter Sloterdijk, Agnes Heller, Donna Haraway, and of course Derrida are prime examples.¹²¹ Despite the contemporaneous links, Esposito notes that work on immunity has preceded the critical theoretical and contemporary continental obsession with it. As he notes, ‘Nietzsche, and then continuing with [Helmuth] Plessner and [Arnold] Gehlen’s philosophical anthropology, and then to [Niklas] Luhmann, who sees the immunitary system of our society in law.’¹²² Esposito, then, is drawing off a much larger archive found throughout several disciplines.

Immunitas cannot be cordoned off as a concept isolated from Esposito’s main concerns. Issues surrounding immunity are not tangential precisely because it is bound to community and determined vis-à-vis *munus*; *communitas* cannot be understood without recognising that the “immune” is within the spatial parameters of the community and yet absolved from the duty of the community. While exempted from the *munus* (understood as office, duty and/or gift, a simultaneity of these connected and varied performances of *munus* instead of merely one or the other), *immunitas* is privileged in relation to the community’s context. The immunitary element

¹¹⁹ See, Jacques Derrida, trans. Peggy Kamuf, ‘Autobiophotographies’, in *Points... Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elizabeth Weber (Stanford: SUP, 1995), 228–254; Jacques Derrida, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford: SUP, 2005), 124.

¹²⁰ Jacques Derrida and Giovanni Vattimo, *Religion* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Elizabeth Rottenberg, ‘The Legacy of Autoimmunity’, *Mosaic* 39, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 3–4.

¹²¹ Robert Esposito and Timothy Campbell, ‘Interview’, *Diacritics* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 53; Timothy Campbell, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in *Bios*, by Esposito, vii–ix, xii–ixiv.

¹²² Esposito and Campbell, ‘Interview’, 53.

touches the *communitas*, and so it's 'semantic focus is more on difference from the conditions of others than on the notion of exemption itself' as an abstracted concept.¹²³ *Immunitas*, then, is not merely the absence of *munus*. Instead it is more properly the antonym of *communitas*. While the community is concerned with common duty, the proliferation and mutual non-belonging, *immunitas*, 'whether it refers to an individual or collective, it is always "proper," in the specific sense of "belonging to someone" and therefore "un-common" or "non-communal".' And, to explicate our interest in *gift*, we see that

immunitas is not just a dispensation from an office or an exemption from a tribute, it is something that interrupts the social circuit of reciprocal gift-giving, which is what the earliest and most binding meaning of the term *communitas* referred to.¹²⁴

Through representing what is separate from the logic of the community the immunitary function is a and necessary, stimulating element of the community; or, as Esposito writes, 'once its negative power has been removed, the immune is not the enemy of the common, but rather something more complex that implicates and stimulates the common'.¹²⁵

In a properly Derridean fashion, then, we paint a picture of the binary opposition of, on the one hand, the logic (the operations bound through the *munus*) and realisation(s) of community, and on the other hand, that which is immune from the logic of the community; but, the binary is always close to collapsing, the hierarchies and proper places disturbed.¹²⁶ If the immunitarian agent is hegemonically placed, then an auto-immunitary function will likely initiate.¹²⁷ There is a grave necessity for proper balance, otherwise death or mortal constriction

¹²³ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 5–6. Esposito is careful to point out that this is true of both ancient and modern definitions of *immunitas*.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18. Throughout the text of *Immunitas* Esposito deepens and navigates the complexities of numerous readings of how the immune should be understood, especially in light of modern advances in medicine and biology, as compared with, for instance, his earlier work, *Communitas*. In the above quote Esposito briefly alludes (in his mentioning the 'complex[ity]') to, as an instance of the intricacies in biological immunity, the nuanced relationship between a mother and the fetus within the womb.

¹²⁶ On a related note, in later Derrida's work, he seems to regard 'auto-immunity' as coterminous with deconstruction, one of the many related terms that point to the destabilisation of systems.

¹²⁷ This is a strikingly different understanding of immunity than what one finds in other places. To take a well-known example, Derrida's understanding of immunity. For Derrida, immunity tends to slide to autoimmunity. The immunitary gesture is auto-immune, essentially. Esposito doesn't go this far.

will occur.¹²⁸ This is true both when speaking of literal bodies (too little immunity results in the death of the body; too much causes the immunitarian agent to destroy the body), but also of political bodies.¹²⁹

6.2 Political Philosophy and a Performance of Death

As briefly mentioned above in the section on *communitas*, one can see the breakdown of the balance of community and immunity in the political philosophy of Hobbes. Because we have already explored and described relevant Hobbesian motifs, it would be beneficial to once again co-opt Hobbes as sort of foil in order to bring out more fully the crucial concept of *immunitas*. In using Hobbes it becomes apparent that the Hobbesian community is a profoundly unhealthy political body. The immunitary function, instead of highlighting or stimulating the common, starts to break the community down, much as one can see an autoimmune disease cause the dissolution of the biological body.¹³⁰ The Hobbesian community, despite being delineated by Hobbes as a constructive, necessary mechanism for society to function healthily, is profoundly destructive to community as such; or as Esposito writes, the relations of individuals within the

¹²⁸ ‘Balance’ does not mean sameness, or a complete equality of the common and the immune. Instead, balance should be understood in the same way one understands it when baking bread. Instead of equal measures of each ingredient, it is most prudent to make sure that there is a balanced measure of yeast, wheat, water, sugar, and salt, as well as correct water temperature for yeast activity. If balance that is proper for the end of making edible bread is not attended to, then the bread may not rise, or catastrophes of other types may occur. The stakes are much higher, however, when thinking about binaries such as community: immunity.

¹²⁹ Timothy Campbell and Frederico Luisetti, ‘On Contemporary French and Italian Political Philosophy: An Interview with Roberto Esposito’, *The Minnesota Review*, no. 75 (Fall 2010): 114. Here, one can think of the exact governmental attitude of contemporary Western democracies, which Esposito says are ‘fundamentally immunitarian in the sense that they have placed at the top of their agenda security in a form that risks opposing the dangerous and expropriative semantics of *communitas*.’ The opening of *communitas* has been subsumed under the immunitarian function, and this leads to a constricting desire mode of existence whereby securitisation hinders and dissolves an opening of community.

¹³⁰ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 162–65. While autoimmune disease constitute a rough category, they range in severity, function, and manifestation. What is common, however, is the contradictory element: ‘rather than a failure, a block, or a flaw in the immune apparatus, they represent its reversal against itself’ (p. 162). And, as Esposito notes, while it is tempting to characterise autoimmunity as the effects of an overzealous army utilising monstrous ordinance (constituting, then, ‘overactive defense, lack of precision, target error’ [p. 163]), the autoimmune problem is much more sinister. The destabilising element of autoimmunity is self-reactivity, civil war. There is no external enemy. The self-reactivity, however, is precisely because the autoimmune agent is acting *properly* according to the logic of the immune system. It opposes ‘*everything* that it recognises, this means that it has to attack the “self” whose recognition is the precondition of all other recognition’, (p. 164; italics in original).

Hobbesian state rely upon state security to a degree that it ‘*preserve[s] individuals through the annihilation of their relation.*’¹³¹

Esposito’s corpus frequently refers to Hobbes, using him as an interlocutor. Why? He represents an initiation point within modern political philosophical interest in the community/immunity juxtaposition.¹³² Esposito writes, for instance, that ‘Hobbes is responsible for inaugurating modernity’s most celebrated immune scenario’.¹³³ ¹³⁴ The immunitarian is traced back to Hobbes. Esposito again: ‘Hobbes not only places the *conservatio vitae* at the center of his own thought, but conditions it to the subordination of a constitutive power that is external to it, namely, to sovereign power, the immunitary principle has virtually already been founded’.¹³⁵

At the least, if Mark Lilla’s account of Hobbes’ work representing ‘the Great Separation’ between an era of Christian political theology that relied upon explicit assumptions about revelation toward a nascent trajectory that calls for an interrogation into the basis of how to discuss the political in relation to revelatory materials is true, then Hobbes represents an even

¹³¹ Esposito, *Communitas*, 29. Emphasis added.

¹³² Esposito, *Communitas*, 12–15; Esposito, *Immunitas*, 86; 113–16; Esposito, *Bios*, 185. In *Immunitas*, Esposito writes that ‘Hobbes is responsible for inaugurating modernity’s most celebrated immune scenario...’ *Bios* is full of references to Hobbes, especially as a definitive example, alongside Carl Schmitt, of a negative biopolitics. Esposito, *Categories of the Impolitical*, 2. It may be prudent here to note that in *Categories of the Impolitical*, he is already gesturing toward the issues with Hobbes that he incisively points to a few years in later in *Communitas*. He points to, for instance, political neutralization where ‘Hobbes succeeds in “eliminating” conflict only at the cost of a strategic depoliticization of society in favour of the sovereign.’ This is likely an implicit gesture to the basic immunitary role that Hobbes’ Leviathan-State plays.

¹³³ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 86; 113–16. Note the profound immunisation of the Leviathan body; the ‘body-machine’ encased in a cocooned armour rendering it permanently static as ‘it has no gaps, no openings, no wounds—it is entirely coincident with itself and therefore everlasting’. Inevitable death of the individuals is utilised for the durability of the Leviathan.

¹³⁴ Matthew Rose, ‘Hobbes as Political Theologian’, *Political Theology* 14, no. 1 (2013): 5–31; Aristede Tessitore, ‘Political Theology and the Theological-Political Problem’, *Perspectives on Political Science* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 5–12; Ludwig Mikael Gelot, ‘Thomas Hobbes Leviathan and the Theological Origins of Secular International Politics’, *Political Theology* 12, no. 4 (2011): 533–76. It cannot be overstated the importance of Hobbes within the broader history of the negotiation of the political, especially with the place of the theological within his political philosophy. Here, of course, we run across different delineations of the history of political philosophy and the place of the theological within it. Does Hobbes represent a decisive break from political theology? Or perhaps, he is the originator of political theology as one who brings about the modern distinction between the political and the theological?

¹³⁵ Esposito, *Bios*, 46.

greater historically significant in-breaking of various iterations of what we can call ‘modern’ (however these may be classified). As Lilla remarks, ‘Hobbes did the most revolutionary thing a thinker can ever do: not refute somebody, but change the subject.’¹³⁶ While discussing Hobbes’s place in a genealogy of political theology is a side issue, it retains importance because we find in Hobbes a possible separation of political anthropologies.¹³⁷ Do we not have within previous political theologies a general account of humanity diverged from by Hobbes not only through his materialistic account of man (including a fluid physiology) but also an account of the state of nature metaphorically linking man to wolf?¹³⁸ Does this then, as well, break man from a sort of Aristotelianism, and even then more strongly a Thomism, that accounts for a rationality essential to the animal body of man? As well as these sorts of breaks that point toward a distinct anthropological divergence, Hobbes provides a metaphysical break from previous accounts of sovereignty through the clever modification of the image of the sovereign individual, as seen in the famous frontispiece depicting the sovereign made up of the peoples of the state; what is not often noticed is that not only is the sovereign made up of the populace, but he is holding the sword and bishop’s crosier in such a way as to imagine a reversal of medieval papal power.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Mark Lilla, Jose Casanova, John Milbank, and Michael Jon Kessler, ‘A Conversation’, in *Political Theology for a Plural Age*, ed. by Michael Jon Kessler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 15–16. See also, Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008).

¹³⁷ There is a significant problem with reckoning philosophical anthropology drawn out by Esposito, but I do not want to negotiate that here. Instead, I want to use the term in a vague sense to gesture to composition of persons without tumbling into the mire of essentialisms. See Esposito, *Immunitas*, 83–86.

¹³⁸ As noted above, if true that, as Broch brought out in the example of Saint Augustine, anthropology presents the rootedness of the metapolitical, then noting the anti-theological, or new theological anthropology, of Hobbes (new, in the sense that instead of breaking from political theology he creates the category itself; anti- in the sense that Hobbes counters the previous reliance on a theological anthropology) changes the lens through which one interprets Hobbes political community.

¹³⁹ Paul Fletcher, ‘The Political Theology of the Empire to Come’, *Cambridge Review in International Affairs* 17, no. 1 (April 2004): 52. As Fletcher notes, ‘Seldom appreciated is the fact that the sovereign’s power and authority is represented in a rather peculiar fashion: he holds a bishop’s crook and a sword in a manner that reveals the status of modern sovereignty. As Jacob Taubes has argued, the fact that the figure holds the crook in his left hand and the sword in his right is no accident (Taubes 1980). It is a conscious reversal, and therefore a repudiation, of the medieval version of papal power. Inverting the relationship between spiritual and temporal power, the frontispiece confirms that the earthly city has acquired an authority that is nothing less than a *plenitudo potestatis* (fullness of power)’.

One has to wonder if here we see a further example of the immunitary at work. Instead of ridding the State’s body of religious authority, the State acts as a counter-force (discussed below); the State is, at its core, religious, and becomes so to rid the body of, not religion, but authority of the religious as found outside of the sovereignty of the Leviathan-State. This makes all the more sense after noting the abundance of not only biblical referents in Hobbes (now the vitality of religious texts is under the control of the modern sovereign, and this extends to hermeneutics),

Here, then, we may have a significant break from certain pasts, although what was sketched briefly above is necessarily generalising conceptual differences that existed in the millennia before Hobbes.¹⁴⁰

If immunity's place within a biopolitical frame is genealogically elaborated, then we have a prototype that is easily noted in Hobbes. As Esposito points out

we can certainly trace back a prototype to Hobbesian political philosophy: when Hobbes not only places the problem of *conservatio vitae* at the center of his own thought, but conditions it to the subordination of a constitutive power that is external to it, namely, to sovereign power, the immunitary principle has virtually already been founded . . . Hobbes . . . is not fully cognizant of the specificity (and therefore also of the contrafactual consequences) of the conceptual paradigm that he in point of fact also inaugurates.¹⁴¹

We have in Hobbes, then, a sort of prototypical beginning, a kernel, of the immunitary. The community *that can only persist through self-violence* is found in the centre of a Hobbesian state; this violence provides the base and overall structure of the Leviathan.¹⁴² That Hobbes did not intentionally bring forward the immunitary emphasis does not erase any genealogical connections; Hobbes provides a space for the consequential reaction that overemphasises the immunitarian.

Esposito points to an important functionary trait found in the immunitarian element. As with the specific bio-logic of the immune, the immunitarian paradigm functions reactively. The

but also covenantal language found in political philosophy during Hobbes life, which trumps covenantal theology. See Victoria Kahn, *Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640–1674* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 157–59.

¹⁴⁰ Clare Monagle, 'A Sovereign Act of Negation: Schmitt's Political Theology and its Ideal Medievalism', *Culture, Theory and Critique* 51, no. 2 (July 2010):115–27. The stories we tell about the past are, however, sometimes much more complicated. Monagle complicates Schmitt's political theology, predicated as it is on a mistaken reading of an undifferentiated union between politics and theology in the Middle Ages, through a historicisation of the Fourth Lateran Council.

¹⁴¹ Esposito, *Bios*, 46–47.

¹⁴² Not only do we have a type of immunitary entrance in Hobbes, we also have a political site of emerging liberalism. This brings up the further question of how liberalism and the immunitary are linked, if at all. This also depends on whether or not there are breaks in the emergence of immunity, and how immunity functions in different political bodies. In Esposito's biopolitics the immune has an important place, however, the specific site of the biopolitical is distinct from other constructions of the biopolitical site, including Foucault, Hardt and Negri, and Agamben.

conservatio vitae, the specified conservation of life found in Hobbes, is reactive precisely by being ‘a repercussion, a counterforce, which hinders another force from coming into being’.¹⁴³ And, this reactivity means that the immunitary mechanism already has within it those forces it is meant to counter; if we consider the imagery of the body, for an immune system to function properly it must be able to take into itself a portion of what must be excluded. Dangerous materials are absorbed into the boundaries of the body so that a proper inoculation can occur and the body can fully *include* harmful materials; what is normally deadly becomes manageable. Agamben puts it well when he writes that

in the Hobbesian foundation of sovereignty, life in the state of nature is defined only by its being unconditionally exposed to a death threat (the limitless right of everybody over everything) and political life—that is, the life that unfolds under the protection of the Leviathan—is nothing but this very same life always exposed to a threat that now rests exclusively in the hands of the sovereign.¹⁴⁴

In Hobbes, then, we can see that the force of violence, the supposed originary anthropology that notes a complication of physiology that naturally erupts into violence, which is held in check by the Leviathan State actually functions as a counter-force.¹⁴⁵ Esposito writes

[the] immune mechanism functions precisely through the use of what it opposes. It reproduces in a controlled form exactly what it is meant to protect us from. The relationship between the protection and negation of life that is the subject of this book [*Immunitas*] thus begins to take shape: life combats what negates it through immunitary protection, not a strategy of frontal opposition

¹⁴³ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 7.

¹⁴⁴ Giorgio Agamben, trans. Vincenzo Binette and Cesare Casarino, *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 5. Agamben continues this thought, writing: ‘The *puissance absolue et perpetuelle*, which defines state power, is not founded—in the last instance—in a political will but rather on naked life, which is kept safe and protected only to the degree to which it submits itself to the sovereign’s (or the law’s) right of life and death’.

¹⁴⁵ William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 31–33. Here, one has to wonder about a connection with the state as counter-force (read: performing the violence, mirroring the violent possibilities of the state of nature found in individuals), and the need to legitimate the monopoly of the state by exacerbating problems posed by the possibility of ungovernability made palatable by peacefulness. Here, thinking specifically about the horrific events occurring after Pinochet’s coupé in Chile in September, 1973, and the incidents of exacerbation that William Cavanaugh notes in his book analysing torture, and the anti-liturgy of the state which creates a social imagination through which it *subsumes* civil society.

but of outflanking and neutralizing. Evil must be thwarted, but not by keeping it at a distance from one's borders; rather it is included inside them.¹⁴⁶

The evil, then, or the force that must be kept in check, is nearly ubiquitous. Man has it within himself. The force is naturally occurring within the physical make up of humanity, a physiological fact of unknowability and indeterminacy, and it is the Hobbesian contention that we are all equally capable of committing forms of violence that lead to death. No matter the differences in physical characteristics like strength and agility, these ultimately do little to tip the balance of power.¹⁴⁷ Humanity, as a tool fashioning species, levels physiological differences. Weapons (which, often, are determined only by imagination) balance out major physical differences that benefit those who are above average physically; tools easily flip the difference. It is even possible to hide the appearance of weakness by equipping deadly weapons and defensive gear.¹⁴⁸ But, despite the gap that differences in technology create, human ability is determined by more than *just* material technologies. Techniques of war incorporate methods and strategies that allow for countering the importance of tools. A knife may be more powerful than a fist, and a gun more efficacious than a knife, but a person with the right *strategy* can just as easily kill his opponent with his hands, or whatever may be readily at their disposal; killing can be a creative act when desperation is a factor.

Despite the gaps in efficiency, material technologies, and strategic knowledge, we remember: the victories of the the American colonies over the well-funded British army (the American Revolution); the intransigence of the native Koreans and Vietnamese when confronted by technologically superior armies; the failure of the US to maintain any hold in the Middle East throughout the 90s in the Gulf War; and the utter failure of the so-called War on Terror to have any lasting, positive effect. In all of these cases, those with superior material technologies and funding have found themselves embarrassed by their enemies. The knife can, sometimes, beat

¹⁴⁶ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 8.

¹⁴⁷ See n87 above.

¹⁴⁸ This has been made all the more obvious in recent years with the rise of conservative violence. Alt-right protests, like the Unite the Right rally (August 12, 2017), have been attended by large contingents of internet trolls who projected physical dominance by equipping defensive armour, carrying home-made shields, and using various home-made weapons.

the M16A4. But, going beyond simply the physiological limits that open up for violence, the state of nature causally enacts (through obsession with the conservation of life) the formalization and legalization of the Leviathan's collection of the power of individuals.¹⁴⁹

War, or the state of nature, 'unfolds as a way not of fulfilling specific desires but of maximising the possibility of desire's expanding beyond itself, the impulse that was life'.¹⁵⁰ That emphasis on life is important because it is that *foundational* human desire giving rise to the commonwealth, which opens up to the sustaining paradox of Hobbes' state, a perfect example of the immunitary function. As Nick Mansfield explains

Sovereignty then is the double of war, its twin, pair and analogy. It delivers what war [as preservation of life] promises, but cannot achieve. It instantiates the individual will that the state of nature encouraged and licensed but could not realise. It does not elude war, and produce a higher state of development that leaves war behind. It succeeds where war fails. It does what war claims as its own, but cannot actually achieve. It is war despite itself. The war defies and abominates, ridicules and defeats, always remains its meaning. . . Civil society, and indeed sovereign authority itself, therefore, do war's work, while attempting to quell it.¹⁵¹

Avoiding death is not, necessarily, a universal good. Ascetic traditions, some east Asian philosophical/religious/ethical systems, and streams of Christian thought consider death in a much more complicated light. At the least, death and pain are not universally considered an overriding concern in an ethical calculus rendering the good, as can be seen in many strains of materialistic ethics that maintain that suffering and pain are considerable evils, and the consideration of such often makes up the basis of the ethical system (permissibility is found on

¹⁴⁹ Mansfield, *Theorizing War*, 16.

Sandra Field, 'Hobbes and the Question of Power', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52, no. 1 (2014): 61. It is important to note here the use of power in Hobbes' work, a term that has several related but diverse usages, though deployed toward similar ends. As Field notes he starts with a view of 'the power of individuals as their natural faculties, and that then envisages these powers being compounded together by covenant to form the power of the commonwealth'. However, Field discerns that there are shifts in his use of power, with Hobbes modifying his usage of it in three ways. First, singular power is 'reconceived as a socially constituted capacity', secondly, 'human powers are now understood constantly to form combinations, even without covenant', and lastly 'a distinction emerges between the causal capacity (*potentia*) and the authority (*potestas/imperium*) of the sovereign, where these had previously been conflated',

¹⁵⁰ Mansfield, *Theorizing War*, 17.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

what does not cause suffering or death to one's fellow human). We can see this, of course, in Hobbes' discussion on natural laws and rights. Here, precisely, is why Hobbes sees suicide as being irrational; humans naturally resist their own death, and therefore they have the right to maintain their life through whatever means are necessary. Suicide, though not a good, was due to mental illness or some other type of extreme distress.¹⁵²

While Hobbes rejects a *summum bonum* or *finis ultimus*, he believes that nature endows man with an innate disavowal of the greatest evil: an immobility that leads to the ultimate end of death. If there is an ultimate evil to forestall, it is found in the stillness of death, as total immobility disallows the values of 'goodness, power and felicity'. Through a combination of these factors, and others, the most viable solution for ensuring civil peace is through giving the flow of one's power to the Leviathan-State. Taking part in this necessary social contract ensures that the natural right of man is not impeded, that natural right being survival and doing whatever needs to be done to evade 'immobility'.

This trajectory of thought brings us back to what we have already encountered above regarding Hobbes, namely that man is necessarily fallible when interpreting signs and signals because of physiology, especially the flows of pressures in the body that, according to Hobbes, determine our interpretive abilities and the strength of our passions. Human ability to correctly identify the necessity of violence in a situation is particularly prone to error. There is a need, then, for a counter-force that provides the basis of judgement for citizens.

Esposito, as noted above, specifies that the immunitary is the counter-force to that which must be cleansed from the body. In the Hobbesian state the Leviathan sustains community through immunitary action and is able to deal with violence in a necessary fashion precisely because it transcends the physiological limitations of the subject. The state is the means of correct judgement and subsequently enacts any necessary punishment; such punishment includes

¹⁵² For a look at the complexities of thought about suicide in Hobbes's context, see Thomas Tierney, 'Suicidal Thoughts : Hobbes, Foucault and the Right to Die', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 32, no. 5 (2006): 617–25.

the possibility of dealing death or, on an international level, engaging in war.¹⁵³ It is important to note that the state is not a singular body that is divorced from other bodies that transcend its geographical or political limits.¹⁵⁴ In fact, it may be that by mirroring, or countering, the force within the body the state finds itself as the force within a larger arena.¹⁵⁵ Nation-states are not concealed within a vacuum, and war is not a means of peace-making, but is instead an intimate intertwining of politics, or so a popular line from Clausewitz suggests. Or, perhaps not. As Foucault notes

the role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals. This is the initial meaning of our inversion of Clausewitz's aphorism—politics is the continuation of war by other means. Politics, in other words, sanctions and reproduces the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war¹⁵⁶

This quote seems concerned primarily about the state itself, the play of power in the political that constitutes war. As Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero point out, it is here in Foucault's discussion on Clausewitz that he points to war as a 'grid of intelligibility from which modern accounts of liberal political subjectivity, in particular, arise'.¹⁵⁷ But, at the same time,

¹⁵³ Delphine Thivet, 'Thomas Hobbes: A Philosopher of War or Peace?', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16, no. 4 (November 2008): 706–7; Abizadeh, 'Hobbes on the Causes of War'. Mirroring the natural right of self-preservation found in man, Hobbes presents the same right to nations, namely that war is considered legitimate only in its use of self-preservation.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 7–8. Hardt and Negri have some interesting thoughts that connect to our discussion regarding Hobbes, the state, and war, and a resurgence of Hobbesian and Lockean reasoning: 'A new transcendent power, "tertium super partes," primarily concentrated in the hands of the military (the one that rules over life and death, the Hobbesian "God on earth"), is, according to this [Hobbesian] school, the only means of constituting a secure international system and thus of overcoming the anarchy that sovereign states necessarily produce' (p. 7).

¹⁵⁵ Thivet, 'Thomas Hobbes', 705. Thivet points to the essential role that the passions play in Hobbes anthropology, but realizes as well that Hobbes work on the passions (which is crucial to understanding the physiological reliance in his anthropology) is as well primary for understanding his writings on war.

Tuck, 'Utopianism', 135. Hobbes is, of course, quite confident in the Leviathan. States, after all, are not subject to the passions of ambition or vainglory like individuals are. Or so he confidently suggests.

¹⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 15–16.

¹⁵⁷ Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero, 'Biopolitics of Security in the 21st Century: An Introduction', *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 2 (2008): 275.

Fletcher (Fletcher, 'Political Theology', 56) agrees with Foucault's broader reversal of Clausewitz's aphorism, saying 'It is the mediating function of war that has all but disappeared in the combination of war and politics as an eschatological event. In the present quest for *infinite* justice there can be no goal, no realizable *telos* and, if the terror (rather than any geopolitically specific antagonist) is the object of this endless war, there is no longer an enemy as

this political play occurs between distinct nations. States are in constant encounter, and states as subjects then take on the same place as the subject within the state takes. Furthermore, somewhat ironically, Stanley Hauerwas points to Kant's work on *Perpetual Peace* and how certain rational aims that are found, Kant thinks, centrally in his own *oeuvre* actually work against the project of sustaining peace between nations.

While this all seems tendentiously linked to Hobbes, and the larger discussion on *immunitas*, violence, natural rights, and the place of the state, I think it points to the strange tension that occurs in the Hobbesian state, a tension that creates what Esposito calls a community of death.¹⁵⁸ Hauerwas writes that for Kant perpetual peace is foremost found in international conditions that call states to

pledge not to enter into secret treaties; they must refuse to acquire other states through inheritance, purchase, or gift; they cannot have standing armies though they can create citizen militias for defence; they cannot go into debt to sustain the military; they must not interfere with the internal constitution of another state; nor can they use assassins or try to subvert other governments¹⁵⁹

As one of Hauerwas' interlocutors, W. B. Gallie, points out on this particular pamphlet of Kant, he seems to rest his ideas on an extension of the rights that states grant to their citizens and the treatment afforded to those citizens outward toward other states and the citizens of those states. Conditions of unity within individual states, then, and the specific rationality behind what forms

such. Everyone and anyone is potentially dangerous and a universal police operation results in the criminalisation of any and every adversary. What we are witnessing is the perpetuation of war as an end without end. Politics, in consequence, is the continuation of war by pure means and the enemy in this war is evil itself.

¹⁵⁸ It is a community of death both through the strange relations that arise between citizens, according to the Hobbesian anthropology, but also a community that interacts with other communities in the same way that the natural man interacts with other men. Opposition, fear, and an inability to calculate and judge right action are foremost the tensors that relate state to state. Perhaps, as well, one can read this as a 'community of death' in the same way that Nancy reads post-World War I patriotic sloganeering ('dying for one's country') as signalling such. Here, it is through a sacrificiality that immanentises the sacrificed; this is the same community that Esposito fears, one that ends in a total erasure of identity. However, Nancy seems to make a distinction between a 'community of death' and the revelation of community through death. In the latter, death serves the purpose of emphasising the impossibility of a immanentisation of community, or it points out the otherness of the 'I's' in community. Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 13–15.

¹⁵⁹ Stanley Hauerwas, 'War and Peace', in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, ed. by Nicholas Adams, George Pattison, and Graham Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 365.

that unity is to be regarded as a template of inter-relation between separate nations.¹⁶⁰ However, Kant's own theorisation of sustained peace between nations assumes an equilibrium that is brought about by war itself; as states become threatening to other states, confederations of the threatened state must wage war in order to bring about equilibrium.¹⁶¹

What is interesting about this, however, comes through looking into the previously examined *physiological* limitations of humans. While the state is able to deal death through various means, the sentence of punishment is always carried out by individuals who make up the body, and significant work has been done that suggests humans are not often able to psychologically cope with killing other humans, even if those other humans take the form of lethal threat through interpersonal contention, war, or other duties of the state (such as capital punishment, i.e. execution).¹⁶²

7. Conclusion

Through sifting through various works of Esposito, and using Hobbes as an explanatory foil, we have noted the various elements present in Esposito's *communitas*. This includes a specific understanding of gifting, a type of gift that is not mere *donum*, but is instead a multi-spectral *munus* that is connected to duty and a non-remunerative gift, highlighting a kind of impossible community. This is a circulatory type of community, not requiring any strong form of identitarian connection. Further, this Espositoan community departs from forms of community

¹⁶⁰ W. B. Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), as quoted in Hauerwas, 'War and Peace', 365.

¹⁶¹ Hauerwas, 'War and Peace', 366.

Dillon and Reid, *The Liberal Way of War*, 130–32. War becomes, however, much more complicated in the contemporary international scene where recognised nation-states and confederations of states must protect against non-national groups that pose tactical problems, such as the 'targeting of key infrastructure projects', as seen in intelligence reports on 'terrorist' groups, such as Al-Qaeda and the IRA. The contemporary international scene, however, is complicated in a different way than the early days of proto-liberal and early liberal writers, such that the key referent 'biopolitical' must enter into the discussion of what war is, who the targets of political articulation are, and of course the emphasis on the 'fructification of life'.

Mansfield, *Theorizing War*, 23. Mansfield notes that, like Hobbes, there is an inseparability of war and peace in Kant, much as there is in Hobbes.

¹⁶² Stanley Hauerwas, *War and the American Difference: Theological Reflection on Violence and National Identity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

that centre on the *cum*, or with-ness, in favour of the *munus*. *Immunitas* has also been outlined as an element that intertwines with *communitas*, necessary for preservation. The immunitarian agent is, broadly, concerned with the borders of the *communitas*; in this sense, it is given the gift of not being bound to the *munus*. Immunitarian impulses, however, can easily destabilise, slipping into auto-immunitarian trajectories and destroying the political body, a problem exemplified in Hobbes' community of death. This linked conceptual arrangement (*communitas/immunitas*), however, is not simply about abstracted community, but also has to do with the real question of the relation between the subject and wider political body, which is helpfully brought out by the appropriation/alienation binary. Esposito's broad conceptual apparatuses will be discussed further in the next chapter, where the conceptual map will be filled out. As will be seen, Esposito's understanding of community does not occur in a vacuum.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEMPORARY ORIENTATION OF COMMUNITAS:

'there cannot be knowledge without a community of seekers, nor inner experience without a community of those who live it . . . [C]ommunication is a phenomenon which is no way added to Dasein, but constitutes it.'

-Georges Bataille, Interior Experience, 24

1. Introduction

Any proper description that side-steps a reductive gloss (inconveniently distilled down to the barest drops of relevance) requires a determined and frank positioning. Examples: 1) In order to understand Marx's political economy it is essential to picture the broader context 19th century social context, as well as the territorial battles surrounding the work of Hegel. 2) To situate Kierkegaard's broader corpus and interpret it more fully, it is crucial to recognize that he is partially reacting against Hegel. 3) And, to tease out nuances of Paul's writings, it is important to have a good understanding of contemporary varieties of Judean religious/political/social traditions, not to mention diasporic histories, the shape of Roman societies, and other relevant information that paints a possible reconstruction of Paul's general milieu. We have to recognise broader situations in order to begin the difficult work of contextualising and figuring subjects and their work. This does not exhaust viable ways of reading texts, of course. But, it is a helpful place to start.

To an extent, Esposito's direct work on community has been discussed and delineated in a general manner. While using Hobbes as a foil to paint a picture of the *communitas/immunitas* paradigm provided a basic view of community in Esposito, his initial work (which interacts with a form of the contemporary continental library on community) analyses other main thinkers and

trajectories contributing to contemporary discourse on community. Going beyond Esposito to the figures he discusses and those other philosophers doing similar work, then, allows us to determine some of the overall themes in the discussion and place Esposito more clearly. For the broader project, it helps navigate themes that seem difficult to relate to the Pauline emphasis and also may potentially provide a re-situation of the Pauline communal focus, which circulates around body imagery and *χάρις*. While it is necessary to point to some of the main figures in the previous chapter, this chapter looks more closely at the important links between Esposito and other, similar thinkers of community (Nancy and Agamben, foremost).¹⁶³ Esposito, after all, is engaged in a larger political philosophical project concerning the recent history of philosophical community; likewise, recognising the particular formulations of community found in his contemporaries helps to ground precisely why Esposito is an important key for the ongoing conceptual re-founding and re-imagining of the constitution and mechanics of community. But, first we must do a more thorough job recounting some of the figures found in *Communitas*, thinkers that help elaborate the enigma and problematics of ‘community’. This project’s argument, namely that the conceptual landscape Esposito brings to the fore shifts models of Pauline community, is grounded through *communitas/immunitas*, *munus*, the problem of the complex of the individual and the community, and the body. Through noting the place of various thinkers crucial to Esposito’s reading of community these shape of these concepts comes more into focus.

2. Before Esposito: A Web of Communities

Hobbes, while a recurring character in the broader corpus of Esposito’s work, is hardly the only thinker included in the concentrated genealogy of community elaborated in *Communitas*. Community’s occurrences in the work of Kant, Rousseau, Heidegger, Hegel, and even Bataille is explored, and through unpacking iterations of community Esposito is able to come closer to a conception of *communitas* that eludes the various conceptual traps found in

¹⁶³ It is important, as well, to point to any possible missteps in their conceptual stories.

other versions of community; these conceptual problems could helpfully be divided into two main failures that expose the communal subject to delegating community to thing-ness: alienation and appropriation.¹⁶⁴ For Hobbes, this is exhibited by a community founded through fear, a base that creates a state that falls back into what the state is attempting to save the communal subjects from. In Esposito's story, from Hobbes'¹⁶⁵ failure come reactions from Rousseau, who incisively critiques the sacrificial nature of Hobbes' work.. Esposito reads Rousseau as interpreting Hobbes as theorising 'a community preserved by sacrifice is for that reason promised to death'.¹⁶⁶ This is a critique we have noted previously. Esposito goes further, noting that Rousseau recognises that such a community 'originates in death and to death it returns, not only because the sacrifice always calls forth another sacrifice but because sacrifice as such is the work of death. Sacrifice *to* death, precisely when community should protect from death'.¹⁶⁷ Kant next plays an important part in Esposito's story, falling into the contradictions in Rousseau's community as well.¹⁶⁸ Following from Kant, Esposito then travels through the important aspects of Heideggerian, and finally Bataille, community.

2.2 Rousseau's Individualist Community

Rousseau notices Hobbes's commitment to a robust individualism. Nonetheless, as Esposito writes, drawing from Émile Durkheim, Rousseau takes the same steps as Hobbes despite his criticisms, positing the individual as 'fully and perfectly closed'.¹⁶⁹ From this robust Rousseauian individualism flows a sacrificial element to community, the same sort of

¹⁶⁴ Greg Bird, 'Roberto Esposito's Deontological Communal Contract', *Angelaki* 18, no. 3 (Sept. 2013): 33–35.

¹⁶⁵ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 9. What is interesting, as a further note regarding the various contemporary sketches of community, is how Nancy does not regard Hobbes as the starting point for contemporary community, rather picking Rousseau as 'perhaps the first thinker of community'. The difference, of course, comes down to the emphases that occur in the singular, multi-faceted term. We will provide a deeper antinomy below.

¹⁶⁶ Esposito, *Communitas*, 43

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Italics in original.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 62–63. 'In a word, what links the two philosophers is the primacy of the will, even if it is articulated differently. Kant remains within a Rousseauian semantics: the Kantian categorical imperative here is nothing other than the interiorization of Rousseau's principle of the freedom of willing' (p. 63).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 50. Further still: 'Natural man is entirely for himself. He is a numerical unity, the absolute whole which is relative only to itself or its kind'. And: 'I aspire to the moment when, after being delivered from the shackles of the body, I shall be me without contradiction or division and shall need only myself in order to be happy'. Rousseau, as quoted in Esposito, *Communitas*, 51.

immunitary element that a Hobbesian community is built on. This results in the dissolution of the individual into the whole of the community, a transformation of the individual to being merely a part of the ‘greater whole’ of the community; here, the dialectic of appropriation and alienation becomes apparent, with the *aporia* of Rousseau’s obsession with closed individualism and originary communitarian existence mixing together, a result of the immediate problem of imagining community as a ‘property’.¹⁷⁰

This is a misstep that the range of continental philosophers working on community attempt to avoid, navigating the minuscule, precarious paths between a community of erasure and a disconnected, individualism. Even those theorists who promote the salvation of democracy, like Marcel Gauchet, note the deleterious effects of an individuated community and that the present age of neoliberalism promotes an unhealthy ideology, ending in a commitment that grows so-called practical ideas such as the following: that there ‘is nothing but individuals, individuals considered in isolation, who come together in competitive cooperation to ensure respect for their rights and the pursuit of their interests’.¹⁷¹ This, then, is a danger evident not only to those committed to certain forms of socialism and communism, but also to reformists!

This Espositoan reading notes the invitation of totalitarianism within the Rousseauian project of community. The sacrificial element that links Rousseau and Hobbes is the indivisible element of the individual, that even though Rousseau desires and attempts to detail a communality that allows for complete individuation, the individual is still dissolved into the greater whole (Our sweetest existence is relative and collective, and our true self is not entirely within us’);¹⁷² and, in fact, this calls for a re-working of human nature in relation to the property of community, such that each individual is transformed in such a way that he finds himself, in regards to life and being, dependent on the whole.¹⁷³ It is a strange paradox, indeed, that

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 52; Bird, ‘Deontological Communal Contract’, 36.

¹⁷¹ Alain Badiou and Marcel Gauchet, *What is to be Done: A Dialogue on Communism, Capitalism, and the Future of Democracy*, trans. Susan Spitzer (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 79.

¹⁷² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Roger Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith Bush, *Judge of Jean-Jacques* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1990), 118.

¹⁷³ Esposito, *Community*, 52.

Rousseau's project of instituting the solitary individual results, through a sort of myth of the perfect, organic community, into an existence predicated on one's identifying of 'every one with everyone else and all with every one'.¹⁷⁴

Here again we find that the emphasis on anthropology is key; the essence of community flows directly from a negotiation of the essence of humanity. Community cannot skirt past anthropology; it will always be intimately connected to originary myths, religious/spiritual persuasion, context, and the social setting of the particular writer who is putting forth a picture of community.¹⁷⁵ Here, then, we note as well the construction of community by our main interlocutor. Esposito, taking his particular place in the dialogue on community, is only understood through this particular genealogy that he traces in *Communitas*, through his negotiation of the past line of political philosophy done on community, and on a particular gloss of the social character of *munus*.¹⁷⁶ His critique of the dialectic of appropriation/alienation, which intimately mixes an understanding of community as property and a particular 'deontological' community that plays off of Heidegger, Bataille, and Nancy are limiting sources for his particular work on *communitas*.

Returning to Rousseau, going beyond his link to Hobbes, we do find a separate, distinct reading of the signifier 'myth of community', one which disconnects from the prior issue of myth's ties to a primeval or unknowable past (though this is alive and well in Rousseau): the unrealisability of community. Community is mythical in this sense because it is both impossible and necessary. As Esposito explains: 'Not only is [community] given as a defect (it never is fully realized) but community is defective, in the specific sense that what is held in common is

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ This is precisely why the previous discussion concerning the political theological persuasion of Hobbes is an important key.

¹⁷⁶ It does not stop here, of course, as *communitas* is bound up within the larger biopolitical frame. And, here, we have the more complicated story of the interweaving of different constructions of community in contemporary continental philosophy. These varied communal equations point to diverse constructions and are only understood after painting the various pictures of community making up the larger architectonic surrounding Esposito. Here, then, is where the insertion of Pauline community into the equation causes particular interest. What happens in the intersection of Paul and modern accounts of community? In what ways does Paul accent the ongoing discussion on community (and in what ways does the ongoing discussion of community augment Paul?)?

precisely *that* defect, *that* default, *that* debt . . .'¹⁷⁷ And, this Espositoan reading of Rousseau links him directly to the *essence* (though we only speak of such things tentatively) of community that is pointed out by contemporary philosophers, most notably Nancy and Blanchot (taking a cue from Bataille), both of whom recognize this as a defining feature.¹⁷⁸ Rousseau undoubtedly noticed this as well, writing in *Emile* that

Men are not naturally kings, or lords, or courtiers, or rich men. All are born naked and poor; all are subjects to the miseries of life, to sorrows, ills, needs, and pains of every kind. Finally, all are condemned to death. This is what truly belongs to man. This is what no mortal is exempt from.¹⁷⁹

If there is a union between subjects, that union is precisely found in a type of community of death; but, here, any defining features are those emptying elements that skate between the infinite individuations of a subject and universalising possibilities. Our communal link, as will become more evident, is precisely that impossibility of union, a common debt, that lack of universal, linking characteristics.

2.3 More Impossible Communities: Kant

Departing from Rousseau directly, Kant is placed in this same mode of a spaced community. His interpretation negotiates around an understanding of the subject found in direct opposition to Rousseau. Instead of being a return to the originary nature of the human, revolving around an idealised, primeval man, Kant fits community into the broader architectonic of law. Because human nature 'contains within it a seed that is the exact opposite of law' Kant sidesteps what later thinkers of community recognize as the folly of an alleged golden age of the past.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Esposito, *Community*, 53–54. Italics in original.

¹⁷⁸ Morin, Nancy, 83–94; Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, 11. Blanchot, as an example, draws on Rousseau when he notes that 'the community that is not a community of the gods is neither a community of heroes nor of sovereigns'. Furthermore, the unworking characteristic of community, acknowledges the fleeting and unrepeatable essence of community, that it is never created, but always a chance of excess which does not allow for the continuation.

¹⁷⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: Or, on Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York : Basic Books, 1979), 222; as quoted in Esposito, *Communitas*, 54.

¹⁸⁰ Esposito, *Communitas*, 65. Nancy, for instance, in *Inoperative Community* makes plain the fallacy of the originary myth.

Following from the theme hinted at in Rousseau, Blanchot, and Nancy, Kant recognises the ‘impossibility’ of community, constructing a vision of it that unites around a finitude of subjects that heads off the excess of the subject found in later thinkers of community. Impossibility is found precisely in the eternal division between individuals (echoing the division found in Hobbes and Rousseau); however, this space is precisely what all have *in* common. Impossibility is the paradoxical element that allows for a type of community, but the enactment of unity erases community because it rejects the ‘non’ that is precisely what makes up the essence of commonality.¹⁸¹ We are all the same in our inability; or, the common *munus* is this division.

That ‘the law is the law of the community’ means for Esposito’s reading of Kant that community as imagined is ‘our fixed abode’, but also that the subject must always retain an inconsistency exhibited through disobedience, or never following the law completely. For Esposito, this is because obeying in full would mean emptying transcendence from the law; law would become an object that would overcome all the subjects of the community, incorporating them coextensively in such a way that they would be emptied of identity and rendered indistinct.¹⁸² For Kant, then, in attempting to avoid the alienation of the subject the community must remain as delineated above: a necessary impossibility; or, necessarily impossible.

2.4 Breaking from the Appropriation/Alienation Dialectic

Community often entails anthropology; a delineation of the human subject flows directly to/from community.¹⁸³ Or, similarly, a dialectic exists between the forces that allow for a break from the originary spot detailed in specific conceptions of the subject. Community is concerned with ‘creating tiny schisms that open up new passageways between ontology and ethics or politics where new ontological modalities, mannerisms, or means can be found’.¹⁸⁴ Esposito

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 76–77.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 84–85.

¹⁸³ And, with Esposito we can extend this to ontology as well.

¹⁸⁴ Bird, *Containing Community*, 117. In this passage, Bird is specifically discussing the broad aims of Agamben in his *The Coming Community*. Important, however, is his insistence that this is a shared aim of community among Agamben, Nancy, and Esposito. Another crucial point, however, is found in later passages where Bird notes the

spends much time, as elaborated above, inspecting the interrelation of community, subject, and immunitarian gestures; this can be seen through the larger explanatory section wherein Hobbes is implemented as a foil of Espositoan *communitas/immunitas*. But, Esposito's larger deconstruction of liberal communitarian theories (as obsessed as it is with political-liberal tropes such as property, universalism, specific forms of social contract, and individualism) is confounded by numerous positive accounts that make up the background of his own project. Here, then, we find relation to Esposito in not just his contemporaries, but the shared background between his work, the work of his contemporaries (Nancy, Agamben, Blanchot) and the broader corpus of Bataille and Heidegger. As will become more apparent in our final section, this problematic, namely complexes of interrelations between community and the individual (alienation/appropriation), is important for thinking about our main Pauline question. Perhaps most relevant at this point, it has to be wondered how body terminology in Paul (Romans 12:4–5; 1 Corinth 12:12–28), terminology that revolves around the dialectic of the individual and the community, is augmented by these various structures of community that experiment with problematics that have been elaborated above, and others that will be detailed below.

Much of what characterised previously detailed communities above falls under what Bird terms the appropriation/alienation dialectic. Bird writes of appropriation that even 'theories that openly concede that the subject, collective or individual, can never be rendered whole continues to work within the parameters set out by this dispositif', parameters that consist of 'negating the negation', among other things. Appropriative models call for the individual to hypostatise community, treating it like a 'thing, and not just a simple nomination for relationships'; through this 'each is expected to appropriate not only property but the community itself'.¹⁸⁵ This dialectic disallows any possible political community to break from division-without-sharing or sharing-without-division. Bird asks the question: 'How can each participant appropriate the community without annihilating it, or, conversely, how can each participant be appropriated by

difference between Esposito and Agamben regarding duty: 'Agamben's ontological formulations are. . . far less ethical than Esposito's ontological formulation'.

¹⁸⁵ Bird, *Containing Community*, 22.

community without being completely absorbed, and thus annihilated, by it?’¹⁸⁶ The options , then, seem to be either an erasure of identity for the sake of a totalising community, or a façade of community bounded by an infinity of difference between individuals through appropriative activities that divides without sharing. The latter is what Nancy would characterize ontologically as exhibiting the separation between ‘individualism’ on the one hand, and ‘singularity’ on the other.¹⁸⁷

Above, there was the brief reference to the recent history of continental philosophical discussion on community. As elaborated, Nancy published an article which was responded to by Blanchot through a volume, *The Unavowable Community*. From this volume, Nancy responded to Blanchot with his longer book, *The Inoperative Community*,¹⁸⁸ which expounded on his earlier essay. *The Inoperative Community* largely centred on nuanced differences in readings of Bataille and understandings of literature, among other things. This shared interest in Bataille, and his influence on discussion of community that sought to side-step the alienation/appropriative pitfall, extends to Esposito. And, though Bataille ultimately falls short of presenting a full account of community that rejects the fetishisation of the proper and a primacy of nearly universal territorialisation, Esposito reads him as lying ‘at the end of Heidegger’s philosophy: no longer within it, and not simply outside of it either, but rather in that no-man’s land that delimits a discourse, placing it within its own exteriority’.¹⁸⁹

Heidegger is the spectre that haunts the works of Nancy, Agamben and certainly Esposito.¹⁹⁰ His work is disseminated all throughout the conceptual background of the work

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹⁸⁷ Morin, *Nancy*, 27, 36–37. Singularities are existent and exposed, and this goes beyond merely human entities, always then opening up to other singularities, which pushes back against posited conditions of ‘individuality’ that assert radical autonomy; this is easily contrasted with the radically individualistic political philosophies we have already touched on, elements that characterise political liberalism.

¹⁸⁸ And, much later Nancy responds further. Jean-Luc Nancy, trans. Philip Armstrong, *The Disavowed Community* (New York: Fordham Press, 2016).

¹⁸⁹ Esposito, *Community*, 112.

¹⁹⁰ Ian James, ‘Ground of Social Being’, in *Being Social: Ontology, Law, Politics*, ed. Tara Mulqueen and Daniel Matthews (Oxford: Counterpress, 2015), 22, 24–25. James notes Heidegger’s influence on Nancy’s earliest work, coming after his Kantian commentaries; but beyond this, it cannot be ignored how important the ontological trajectory of *Mitsein* is for Nancy.

done by these figures, and by critical theorists and political philosophers broadly despite his well-known political and ideological alignments.¹⁹¹ Heidegger is an important source for Esposito,¹⁹² constantly appearing alongside Esposito's writings as he thinks through various subjects such as personhood, political theology, and biopolitics; these subjects, in fact, are intimately connected to any discussion of community, though 'biopolitics' as a named phenomenon is relatively contemporary.¹⁹³ But, how does Heidegger stand out in an interrogation of *communitas*? Precisely, as Esposito notes, in that

for Heidegger the community cannot be realized as point of fact if not, as we will see soon, in its historical and fated corruption [*pervertimento*]. The reason isn't that it represents an unreachable target but simply that it *already* is given even before we place the lens in front of us. This means that community isn't a destination, nor exactly is it a presupposition—archaeology coming together with teleology—if not in the arch-originary form in which the presupposition is a law unto itself.¹⁹⁴

Esposito is emphasising two significant points, one of which is a constant companion in this discussion: 1) ways of understanding community in relation to ontology. This is something we have come across previously, as seen in Nancy's strong valuation of being-in-common, his extraction, or perhaps transformation, of Heidegger's being-with (*Mitsein*).¹⁹⁵ Esposito follows the same path in his broader discourse on Heidegger; we cannot miss here, then, that Esposito, as with Nancy, does not dismiss the basic importance of elaborating an ontology, going beyond (though not forsaking) the basic point of mere anthropological importance for any discussion of community. But, 2) he is also emphasising a type of inability for the community to be some

¹⁹¹ This may be another reason for vehement reactions against Nancy's early work that focused on political community.

¹⁹² See, as a small sampling, Esposito, *Bios*, 151–57; Esposito, *Communitas*, 86–111 *passim*.

¹⁹³ As Bird, Bill Elliot, and others have shown community, as it occurs in some of the late 20th century continental philosophers influenced by Heidegger, is connected to a particular understanding of the person. This should be obvious from what has been written here thus far. The question of how the individual and the communal interact cannot be easily glossed over, being central to conceptions of political community and related questions of sovereignty, the place of citizen, and how the individual pushes back against oppressive power.

¹⁹⁴ Esposito, *Communitas*, 90.

¹⁹⁵ Even here, I hesitate to use 'ontological', but it seems appropriate.

created thing, as if a subject instantiates or initiates the foundation of community. It was already there. We were already linked through impossibilities.

2.5 Bataillean Shift

Despite Heidegger's thought, especially his ontological insights standing in the background of the wider discussions on community, it has to be asked what going 'beyond' with Bataille provides? What is it that Bataille's work adds to the broader discussion that goes beyond Heidegger, settling into the work of more contemporary writers of community, especially Esposito? Or, so that we may orient ourselves around the current status of *communitas*, in what ways did Bataille provide a shift beyond Heidegger in the discussion, and in what ways were our contemporary writers able to think beyond Bataille?

Bataille's *oeuvre* covers a wide range of significant topics, circulating around his central influence, Nietzsche, and an obsession with the concept of sacrifice. In some ways, this fixation on sacrifice is helpful because it posits a model of gifting that breaks through some of the central issues that came up previously in the work of Derrida and Marion. This is, perhaps, also why Esposito pays particular attention to Bataille in the final section of *Communitas*. There is an important resonance between the themes of sacrifice and gift in Bataille and Esposito's delineation of community as a type of deontological contract, a gift that is built around a form of duty that informs a community of impossibility.

In any final account of Bataille's rendering of community, it does not quite go beyond what he writes here: '[when] separate existence stops communicating, it withers. It wastes away (obscurely) feeling that *by itself it doesn't exist*'.¹⁹⁶ Esposito goes as far as to say that this 'passage sketches out well enough the contours of Bataille's conception of community'.¹⁹⁷ It should be noted how close this is to other theorisations of community with which we have

¹⁹⁶ Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, trans. Bruce Boone (New York: Paragon House, 1994), 23. As seen in Esposito, *Communitas*, 120.

¹⁹⁷ Esposito, *Communitas*, 120.

looked. Note as well the specific use of ‘communicating’, rather than speaking merely of ‘community’. The contemporary discussion on community that we have been concerned with (Nancy to Blanchot; back to Nancy; then to elaborations by Agamben and Esposito) has always had an interest in ‘communication’, with Nancy’s initial essay and subsequent book,¹⁹⁸ and Blanchot’s response to Nancy concerned with community’s connection to communication. But, going deeper into the Bataillean community, Esposito notes how he struggled with one of the immanent dialectics that constitute the problem of negotiating community. ‘Where for [Heidegger] the community is the modality of our existence’s excessive and painful extension over the abyss of death. It is death and not life that holds us within the horizon of the common’.¹⁹⁹ While Heidegger reads death as an authenticating, proper means of commonality, for Bataille ‘death represents the nullification of every possibility in the expropriating and expropriated dimension of the impossible: death is our *common* impossibility of being what we endeavour to remain, namely, isolated individuals’.²⁰⁰ But, death, for Bataille, is not primarily about the death of the self. Instead, the focus is on the *other’s* death because

the death of the other returns us to our death, not in the sense of an identification and even less as reappropriation. The death of the other instead directs us again to the nature of *every* death as incapable of being made properly one’s own: of my death *as* his since death is neither “mine” nor “his” because it is a taking away of what is properly one’s own, expropriation itself.²⁰¹

This is the ‘solitude that cannot be lessened but only shared’. And, here, perhaps we can see why the *Acephale* experiment was so important, why a curious sacrifice persisted in Bataille’s thought. But, in ending this small section on the importance of Bataille’s community, and its resonances in Esposito, we should consider it as the obverse of the originary problem of

¹⁹⁸ Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, 9–10; 12; 1–41 *passim*.

Jean-Luc Nancy and Marcia Cavalcante Schulback, *Being With the Without* (Stockholm: Ax1 Books, 2013), 19. In a moment of frankness during a discussion session, Nancy says this of ‘being is communication’: ‘If I wrote “being is communication”, then by communication I mean every way of being together. It is not communication of signification but communication of the sense, communication through art and friendship, love, proximity, and intimacy’.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

community found in Hobbes. Esposito notes that the spectre of the Hobbesian community is powerfully confronted through Bataille's thought. In opposition to the Hobbesian community, fuelled through fear, the rejection of non-Leviathan community, and an extended *conservatio vitae* that 'sacrifices every other good to its own realization', Bataille welcomes the breach of boundaries, contact with elements that threaten the 'solidity of the individual', and 'finds in the community a contagion caused by the breakdown of individual borders and the mutual infection of wounds'; finally, he, as Esposito writes, 'sees the culmination of life in a surplus that continually exposes it to death'.²⁰²

In contrasting these opposing views, Esposito brings out the community bound to the *munus*. While Hobbes inspires a restriction to a form of contractual economy, Bataille points instead to a 'munificence' that is 'purged of any mercantile remnants'.²⁰³ Hobbes desires prostheses that erect protective walls for the weaknesses of the body in a bid of compensation; Bataille emits a human-centred, universal 'superabundance of energy' with an end to be 'unproductively consumed and to be wasted without any limits whatsoever'.²⁰⁴ What is this but the continually emptying gift?²⁰⁵

Before ending this chapter we need to turn to one more crucial theorist of community, Agamben. While Agamben's work is in tension with Esposito, he is undoubtedly theoretically connected, sharing essential motifs.

2.6 Agamben's Coming

Agamben has made fleeting appearances thus far, himself forming a portion of important work on community during the crucial period we have been detailing. While Esposito rarely interacts with his work, his presence cannot be excised from the discussion not only because his

²⁰² Ibid., 124.

²⁰³ Ibid., 124–25.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 124.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 125. A more complete quote from Esposito: 'This is the reason that the gift par excellence, that which has no motivation or demands another gift in return, emerges in the Bataillean community as that of life, of the abandoning of every identity not to common identity but to a common absence of identity'.

shadow looms large in the work of Esposito (one cannot help but sense that his relative absence in Esposito is deliberate, perhaps because they approach biopolitics from a very different place, but from a place that must acknowledge the other's difference). Note Esposito's departure from Agamben's understanding biopolitics. Instead of engaging in a project that attempts to go beyond biopolitics (Agamben), Esposito instead believes that the biopolitical shift cannot be stopped, and thus must be reconceived as an affirmative biopolitics.²⁰⁶ But, Agamben's presence is felt also because he has similar theoretical affections; one cannot escape, for instance, Heidegger or Arendt in Agamben, touchstones that are indispensable for Esposito. While Agamben is not our primary focus, this section looks at community, and other aspects of his thought, in order to fill out the conceptual landscape surrounding Esposito.

While Agamben's corpus is large, and undergoes several crucial shifts throughout his scholarly career, what is most important for the ends of this chapter is a look at his book on community, and how some of those themes reach outward to other portions of his body of work. Agamben writes in *The Coming Community*, his important contribution to contemporary discussion on community, that

Since being most proper to humankind is being one's own possibility or potentiality, then and only for this reason (that is, insofar as humankind's most proper being—being potential—is in a sense lacking, insofar as it can not-be, it is therefore devoid of foundation and humankind is not always already in possession of it) humans have and feel debt. Humans in their potentiality to be and to not-be, are, in other words, always already in debt; they always already have a bad conscience without having to commit any blameworthy act.²⁰⁷

It should not be forgotten that Agamben draws on the Heideggerian notion of ontological debt, being-guilty, that is, for Heidegger, a base originary condition following from one's existence. It also should not be ignored that this being-guilty of the individual resonates with the originary guilt that flows from Heidegger's Lutheran interests following crucial breaks from

²⁰⁶ See the helpful analysis of contemporary discussion on biopolitics in Thomas F. Tierney, 'Toward an Affirmative Biopolitics', *Sociological Theory* 34, no. 4: 358–81.

²⁰⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 43–44.

Catholicism after World War I.²⁰⁸ There is a theological resonance here, one that admits basic creedal realities that have been a major part of the Christian theological tradition since at least Augustine.²⁰⁹ Connected to this are notions of inoperativity that show up continually in Agamben's work, and go beyond basic Heideggerian notions of debt. Sergei Prozorov notes that inoperativity 'denotes a specific kind of action that [. . .] does not minimise but rather augments the possibilities of use', which will become more clear as we explore examples of political movements close to Agamben.²¹⁰

This is, at base, ontological for Agamben, and, like his contemporary Nancy, at best *seems* to result in a weak politics, as if Agamben is, as Greg Bird writes, 'incapable of grappling with real material relationships'.²¹¹ No one denies that this is one of the more frustrating aspects of Agamben's work. Despite the political angle of Agamben's work, overt prescriptive aspects are absent precisely because he does not touch contemporary political drama, instead working on subjects that seem tangential.²¹² The question remains: Where does the theoretical work touch the practical, on-the-ground reality of a situation? Thus, through this absence Agamben is often glossed as entertaining either a pessimistic nihilism, or a head-in-the-cloud messianic mysticism.

²⁰⁸ See, also, Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*. While Heidegger was raised Catholic, he was indebted to Lutheran thought and regarded Paul as connected to Protestantism. See Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (London: Verso, 2012), 166–68. Paul retains that Lutheran framework in the broader recent renewal of philosophical interest in Paul. This is especially evident in Badiou's *St. Paul and the Foundation of Universalism*.

It should be noted, as well, that Agamben relates many key Pauline concepts to a variety of philosophical thinkers in *The Time that Remains*, including Walter Benjamin (whose work includes incisive readings of messianism), Hegel, Marx, and Weber.

²⁰⁹ One can, of course, read certain Pauline texts as advocating this basic theological reality, that humans are guilty from the beginning of their existence due to the sin of Adam. It is appropriate, however, to note that being-guilty has wider ramifications within Heidegger's broader philosophical system.

²¹⁰ Sergei Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 33.

²¹¹ Bird, *Containing Community*, 105. For recounting of this critique among Agamben, Esposito, and Nancy, as well as an attempt to get beyond it, see Alexandros Kioupkiolis, 'Commoning the Political, Politicizing the Common: Community and the Political in Jean-Luc Nancy, Roberto Esposito and Giorgio Agamben', *Contemporary Political Theory* 17, no. 3: 283–305.

²¹² Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics*, 30–32. As Prozorov notes, Agamben's political mode is described as 'paradigmatic' in a Kuhnian sense. A singular instance, such as the *Muselmann*, or *homo sacer*, 'illuminates the set to which it belongs'. Such specific historical phenomena (though, a paradigm can escape strictly historical phenomena, such as the figure of Bartleby) have significance that go beyond their context, establishing a "'broader problematic context'".

If Agamben's project has a political end, it appears to many that this end is a brotherhood of monks, an isolated community caricatured as out-of-touch, 'religious', committed to forms of life that are essentially privileged and therefore exacerbate tensions,²¹³ in other words, a-political in most senses of the term. Agamben becomes a thinker whose concerns and theoretical projects are easy to brush aside because they are read as abstracted musings with no visionary form.²¹⁴

But, to entertain inoperativity further, though perhaps thinking of it as a type of political passivity: here, we can note that one of the pervading issues for Agamben is thinking beyond the "proper" and the 'improper' (or, *dispositifs* of body and community), something he notes in a conversation with Badiou about his landmark volume *The Coming Community*, a disorienting series of meditations on community, politics, and the 'whatever being' (his gloss of Aristotle's *quodlibet*). The connection between the improper and the proper is analogous to the ongoing, pervading concerns in Agamben's larger *Homo Sacer* series: that is, are attempts to exclude ultimately an inclusion of the excluded? The classic example is of the *homo sacer*, the subject who has been declared to have bare life: 'The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life, that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed—is the life captured in this sphere', writes Agamben in a famous section that describes the situation of bare life.²¹⁵

The Coming Community, like the larger *Homo Sacer* series, is concerned with a larger problematic, namely the subordination of being by modern politics and ethics. Or, put another way, Agamben seeks an attempt to think being that renders it inoperative. In fact, in *The Coming Community* he makes clear that the 'paradigm of the coming politics' is 'inoperativeness and

²¹³ Giorgio Agamben, trans. Adam Kotsko, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

²¹⁴ Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics*, 2–3. Prozorov notes that typically readers of Agamben miss his 'affirmation of a radically new politics', and that even when this politics is noted it is normally dismissed as 'utopian, naive and incoherent'.

²¹⁵ Giorgio Agamben, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 83.

decreation'.²¹⁶ This represents an eschewal of attempts to ground human communal nature in specific, proper blueprints, such as *homo oeconomicus*, or *homo approprians*. The human subject is only grounded in a common precisely in the inability of humanity to be united. Or, as Agamben writes, 'humans are being separated by what unites them'.²¹⁷ If there is politics utilising social power, it is only found in impotence, for Agamben.

In a general sense this expresses a radical potentiality. In another, more specific sense, it is a gloss on the history of political work read as the 'work of man as man'. This account of political work has usually been read as a type of operativity, and thus always excludes a certain kind of inoperative life. Operativity, then, has made the slide from metaphysical and political task to the biopolitical, or to life itself. Operativity is the subsumption of life into the cascading machines of operations. We can see here the beginnings of Agamben's biopolitical concerns, a concern that comes most to the fore after *The Coming Community*. Agamben points to the possibility of impotentiality, or that there could be instead of a compulsion to 'work', or to be utilised, an improper inoperativity. For Agamben, then, the impotentiality resides in being one's own lack, or in relation to one's own incapacity. Agamben draws on *Bartleby the Scrivener*,²¹⁸ for instance, as a source for liberation that follows from potential re-imaginings of forms-of-life 'by deactivating the dispositive of the sovereign exception through the exposure of the hiatus, silence, discontinuity between band and life'.²¹⁹ As Alejandro Vallega suggests, in order to escape the problems of operativity, there must be a rethinking of 'ontology beyond metaphysics and the rationalist logic of production'.²²⁰ Perhaps more important for some of the broader purposes of this project are the Paulinist resonances that are deeply intertwined with these

²¹⁶ Bird, *Containing Community*, 111, quoting Agamben, *La comunita che viene*, Torino, Italy: Bollati Boringheri, 2001, 92.

²¹⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 115.

²¹⁸ We will set to the side the criticisms of Agamben's reading of Melville.

²¹⁹ Alejandro A. Vallega, 'After Lives: On Giorgio Agamben and the Coloniality of the Sovereign Exception (from a Latin American Perspective)', in *Contemporary Italian Political Philosophy*, ed. Antonio Calcagno (Albany: SUNY, 2015), 181.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

concepts of inoperativity. These are keenly pointed to by Ward Blanton when he notes in his article about radical passive communities, Agamben, and Paul that the agitative affects of communities of withdrawal participate in a coming politics when we recognise the importance unplugging from the ‘everyday function of contemporary life’ with a ‘view to the transformative wonder about how the new life, the new age, might “reappropriate” and “reinvent” our inherited identities and modes of living’.²²¹ This, for Blanton, is made manifest in a realisation of the law’s uselessness, and becomes quite clear when thinking about concrete political realities connected to Agamben.

3. Conclusion

This chapter spent time detailing a variety of figures important for Esposito’s work on community. These thinkers are important for a variety of reasons. Many are present explicitly in Esposito’s work, especially his early work on *communitas*, often appearing as significant chapters in his story of community in political philosophy. We can see, for instance, Heidegger appear in a variety of places, but especially in conversation with Bataille. Or, we note the importance of Rousseau, especially as an extension out from Hobbes. But, besides those important thinkers that make appearances in Esposito’s work on community, more elaboration was given on contemporary thinkers of community. These thinkers are not regularly, overtly used by Esposito, but they provide the crucial backdrop for contextualising Esposito’s work. Nancy, for instance, does not make many appearances in Esposito’s work, but they are connected both through the similarity of their work, and personally. They have had numerous published dialogues, such as ‘Dialogue on the Philosophy to Come’, as well as providing introductions to each other’s books.²²² Most importantly for the broader project, though, was the constant touchstone between some of the crucial problems of community mentioned in the first chapter

²²¹ Ward Blanton, ‘The Invisible Committee as Pauline Gesture: Anarchic Politics from Tiqqun to Tarnac’, in *Saint Paul and Philosophy* eds. George van Kooten, Gert-Jan van der Heiden, and Antonio Cimino (Berling: De Gruyter, 2017), 300.

²²² Roberto Esposito and Jean-Luc Nancy, trans. Timothy Campbell, ‘Dialogue on the Philosophy to Come’, *Minnesota Review*, no. 75 (Fall 2010): 71–88.

and figures of community that Esposito is reacting against; or, perhaps, *reading beyond*. Foremost was the alienation/appropriation dialectic, which deals with the problems of the connection between the individual and the community; but, further, we can note the importance of the lack at the centre of community. Community is not bounded by identitarian concerns or interests.

CHAPTER 3: NEOLIBERAL COMMUNITIES: THE HOBBSIAN SPECTRE

Only in community [with others does each] individual [have] the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible.

Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 83

As Deleuze and Guattari worked out in Anti-Oedipus, in a novel reading combining Marx's analyses of debt with Nietzsche's genealogical studies, both logically and historically, the institution of credit preceded the relationship between production and wage labor. At the foundation of this relationship there lies something very close to what we have defined as the dispositif of the person . . . a modular construction of a subjectivity indebted to others and to itself. . . The increasingly extensive and pervasive mechanism of capture inside the cage of debt cannot be separated from the government of subjectivity, and, indeed, from the form of subjectivation, practiced by neoliberal governance

Esposito, Two, p. 207

1. Introduction

The communist question will never leave us. There seems to be an infinity of decisions, a train composed of variations of solutions, or variations of non-solutions (a created solution is, after all, often a break from the inoperative nature of certain communitarian discourses) whose complexity is intensified through diverse considerations. Ontology, anthropology, gift, contract, property, ethics, metaphysics. The list can continue, but elaboration must cease at some point, a rather mundane truth forced by the reality of spatio-temporal decay. Limitation is a necessity, built into the fabric of humanity.

The nexus of ideas and thinkers we are concerned with is finite and centred on Esposito. There, our brief discussion on modern questions of community allows for a further elaboration of Espositoan concern, a concern that runs throughout his writing. Our thinkers of community are all centring complex discourse on politics and community, aware of the communist question that has only intensified following the fall of the Berlin wall and the atrophy and eventual dissolution

of the USSR in the decades immediately preceding the new millennium. We cannot, of course, forget as well the transformation of China as the 20th century ended and the 21st traverses forward, diverse interconnections with capitalist modalities appear and persist even in one of the last communist countries in existence.²²³ Capitalism, perhaps, was never far from the various instituted communisms.

Francis Fukuyama's insistence (later retracted) that the fall of the Berlin wall ushered in the end of history is repeated *ad infinitum*; and, as often as it occurs, many writers have noted the naïveté of this sentiment in the midst of a cultural malaise that has unconsciously accepted the proclamation. Despite the triumph of capitalism, leftist thinking has hardly ceased deconstructing the bases of capitalistic fervour. Public intellectuals, especially among continental audiences, notably appear from corners of academia or working life that are anti-capitalistic, or at the least highly sceptical of certain (allegedly mutated) forms of capitalism. Of course, the strength of the public intellectual may match the captivation of Hollywood's 'subversive' themes, tropes which applaud the triumph of the underdog over elitists. This hardly signals a break from the dominant ideology; in fact, it often seems to reinforce it.²²⁴

All of the recent thinkers of community are concerned with the communist question, and in their diverse works a ubiquitous scepticism can be detected that is directly applicable to concepts essential to capitalism, main among them property, individualism, possibilities of community, and elaborations of universalism that prop up the endless cycles of commodification

²²³ Isabella M. Weber, 'China and Neoliberalism: Moving Beyond the China is/is not Neoliberal Dichotomy', in *The Sage Handbook of Neoliberalism*, ed. Damien Cahill, Melinda Cooper, Martijn Konings, and David Primrose (London: SAGE, 2018), 219-33. As Weber makes evident, the diffuse readings of China's political-economic system are diverse, with some scholars reading China as a fully capitalist and neoliberal states, and others decrying the ways that China disrespects the rules of the market.

²²⁴ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (London: Zero Books), 2. Fisher, following a thread common to Žižek and Fredric Jameson, notes that it is much easier to imagine the end of the world than the collapse of capitalism. Fisher coins the phrase 'capitalist realism' to point to the 'widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it'. While different than an obsession with the underdog, the fixation on dystopias, especially ones caused by the powers-that-be, serve to point to the inevitability of the causes of the symptoms. There is no escape from those systems that wreak havoc. We simply accept, in this instance, capitalism oppression and pick up the pieces after catastrophes.

that are essential to capitalism's longevity and transmutation. Esposito, along with these contemporaries, engages in critiquing capitalism's conceptual foundations. In fact, in dealing with the contemporary discussion of community there cannot be any isolation from the dominance of capitalist logic; it appears that the majority of contemporary persons are trapped within a particularly robust neoliberal paradigm, continuously transforming, evolving and re-asserting itself even in the midst of its continual collapses.²²⁵ And, the paradigm is not invisible to them. This is precisely why there is a curious repetition compulsion that contributes to the proliferation of not only neoliberal logics, but also those never-ending academic examinations of neoliberalism.

For our purposes here, examining *communitas* in the contemporary moment necessarily puts one into contact with neoliberalism. Detailing a culture of *communitas* necessitates contending with the culture of neoliberalism, which is not merely a form of economic speculation. It goes beyond what is usually constituted as 'economics' in our time, a term that is too often relegated to matters of trade. We can speak of 'trade' in relation to neoliberalism, but in doing so it becomes something much more symbolic, and something much more pervasive.

If there is a close relation between the ideas of community, anthropology, ontology, and biopolitics, then neoliberalism takes centre stage as a prevailing cultural norm, an important relational paradigm. While Weber speculated on the 'spirit' of capitalism, a similar project is worthy when dealing with neoliberalism. As an end of capitalist logic, it provides a cultural trajectory transforming and determining the content of community, anthropology, ontology, and biopolitics. And, with capitalism, neoliberalism's globalising reach universalises and flattens these terms, much as liberalism seems to have done in a previous era. *Along with the Hobbesian Leviathan*, neoliberal culture directs conceptions of humanity. *Along with the Leviathan*, the neoliberal order, to bring peace (directed order, concord, peace of a type are crucial for

²²⁵ William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 9. With this, Connolly can note that 'defining characteristics of capitalism display a degree of indeterminacy, room to be stretched, evolutionary potential', of which neoliberalism is one instantiation.

sustaining methods of accumulation), must spread and subject individuals' power to its form of order.²²⁶ Peace is, however, always in the eye of the beholder; and, it is not normally sustainable within systems that are underwritten through oppressive action.²²⁷ Peace obscures the rot that resides under a veneer of civility.

Neoliberalism is largely global, though stratified.²²⁸ What way to deny it? How can one step beyond this universalizing paradigm fashioning humans in a certain Hobbesian orientation? The referencing of Hobbes is hardly incidental. Esposito's work is concerned with the sustained character of economy; but it should be noted, as has been explored in the previous chapter, that the spectre of Hobbes, always haunting Esposito's work, functions as a negative presence. The ghost still roams the passageways that make up the broader house of political philosophical thought. Hobbes is a continual presence in the broader political philosophical sphere, a figure who 'formulated the political problem to which [his thought] represents a solution . . . by reifying the workings of power'.²²⁹

²²⁶ I point to 'directed' versions of these, because I recognise how crucial wielding of power has become for some economic systems. Where would the United States be without endless wars driving economy?

²²⁷ I can only gesture to this briefly here, but it seems clear that for neoliberals economics is viewed as a naturalised system for bringing order. Peace is only possible when brought about through the justice of a natural system that pays attention to the particulars of how a reality understood through the free market works. This is juxtaposed with the 20th century's bloody history of communism, a political economic order that rejected the truth of the free market. It has become increasingly evident, post-Fordism and in the wake of neoliberal policies beginning with Thatcher and Reagan, that austerity policies and increased privatisation have only impoverished and agitated working classes and the already disadvantaged, catalysing social and political unrest. As governmental machines march onward, fuelled through war-making practices, peace becomes yet another mirage in the desert of capital accumulation as the primary evaluative criteria.

²²⁸ For an elaboration of the contextualised varieties of neoliberalism, see Rachel S. Turner, *Neo-Liberal Ideology: History, Concepts and Policies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

²²⁹ Leonie Ansems De Vries and Jorg Spieker, 'Hobbes, War, Movement', *Global Society* 23, no. 4 (October 2009): 454; Germano Maifreda, *From Oikonomia to Political Economy: Constructing Economic Knowledge from the Renaissance to the Scientific Revolution* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 11; 203. As De Vries and Spieker point out, Hobbes's work was highly influential and helped set the stage on which political liberalism performs, and thus it's understandings of power, peace, sovereignty, and the law are reified. Maifreda points to Hobbes as part and parcel of the transformation of 'modern science' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, much like Bacon was (p. 11). While Maifreda is referring to the broader legacy of Hobbes, which springs from his conceptions of the body (he was, after all, interested in circulation as a paradigm for the anatomical performance of bodies, but also in physics and economics [p. 203]), it reminds us that a specific conception of the body is foundational to Hobbes proto-liberal project. How does this continue to affect contemporary liberalism if De Vries and Spieker are correct about the reification of Hobbes's work?

But, this spectre roams because *community* still haunts us as well, lingering above the actualized moments of human civilization. Perhaps because community cannot be forcibly ‘created’, only available inoperatively, unavowedly. Esposito engages those forms of community, but the primacy of the *munus commune* stretches back not to only the ancient formulations and enacted experimental communal forms of Paul, but to Hobbesian distortions as well. Perhaps the foremost way to escape the current iteration of Hobbesian community, as seen in neoliberal individualism, is found in the Espositoan and the Pauline, spaces where the ancient (Paulinist community) and the contemporary (Espositoan biopolitical project) provide a way forward and beyond the modern liberal (Hobbesian) and the contemporary neoliberal. As Esposito notes in his attempt to elaborate the diverse issues surrounding the political theological machine, ‘the problem we are facing is to transform this oppressive chain [of debt] into a circuit of solidarity’.²³⁰

1.2 Layout of the Chapter

The dual question becomes: Whose community? Which solidarity? Dual, because these are inextricably intertwined questions that promote interrogating and overturning economy. While a simple, structured binary opposition is too reductive, it becomes essential to realise the separate and particular conceptions and outcomes of the diverse answers to these questions. How do we chart these? Or, what does our broad narrative, a very particular analysis of the state and recent discussions of community, hypothesize?

Neoliberal culture results in habits, postures, and determinations of humanity that fit into a Hobbesian paradigm. The Espositoan/Pauline communal strategy buck up against these habits, postures, and determinations of humanity and allow for a breaking of a binary opposition that has dominated the 20th century, namely the false dichotomy of ‘liberal vs. communitarian’ which became especially pronounced following World War II.²³¹ Initiating this project with

²³⁰ Esposito, *Two*, 209.

²³¹ Turner, *Neo-Liberal Ideology*, 47–48.

Esposito set the scene: there is a long history of competing communities, communities of varied postures which have resulted in numerous starts and mutations. All along our analysis is dominated with the question of communism, or how to enact community that breaks from, among other difficulties, the dialectic of *appropriation* or *alienation*.

This chapter follows from the path of the prior two by utilising the various analytic concepts gleaned from Esposito's work to think about neoliberalism. In this sense the analysis is a crucial 'case study' of sorts, pointing to important connections between community and our other concepts. Because Hobbes has remained a crucial example, this chapter will promote a crucial relation, or parallel, between neoliberalism and Hobbesianism. This chapter will first discuss briefly various readings of neoliberalism. However, while there have been numerous (often diametrically opposed) readings of neoliberalism, this chapter will eschew a detailed historically oriented reading. While some of this is necessary in order to make juxtapositions between an Espositoan reading and neoliberalism overt, on the whole promoting such a view seems unnecessary. Instead, this chapter will spend more time reading neoliberalism through the analytics that have already been woven throughout the book. Primarily among these will be underscoring the thanatopolitical qualities of neoliberalism. This reading will be elaborated after the initial descriptive section, and this will firmly underscore the importance of this project's use of Esposito's conceptual landscape, gesturing to our eventual reading of a Pauline community through these concepts.

2. The Individual and the Market

Neoliberal communality parallels nicely the political theology of the Hobbesian project. Briefly in chapter one it was mentioned that Hobbes represents a dual rupture conceived as both the end and the beginning of political theology. The Hobbesian state breaks from earlier political compositions; or, to be more plain, modernity represents that process of reducing God to certain spheres, eventually, through attempting to master nature; or, perhaps murdering God, to gesture to the overwhelming Nietzschean imagery. Hobbes is a part of this process, and in turn

creates/destroys political theology by causing a division in the common nexus of religion and politics. Hobbes represents a type of initiatory blaspheming because he transforms the place of God within social and political life.

However, this mastery, this Hobbesian artistry, also coincides with the reduction of the individual and the enclosure of the sphere of common reality. The common is sliced up into separate, individualized, disconnected realities. As Philip Goodchild remarks regarding Nietzsche and the death of God, modernity produces an ‘enclosure of the commons, the replacement of communal resources with private property, changes the function of work from producing for one’s community to producing for the market’; this relational form also creates an “enclosure” of time, whereby the quantity of labour takes on more significance than the lived experience of work’.²³² The forms of abstractions created by the particular market system, upheld by notions of private property, means that life is ‘regulated economic rationality’, while previously it was ‘limited by a consensus on the limitation of needs’.²³³

Daniel M. Bell, Jr. notes that capitalism needs to be interrogated. However, the question to be asked is not ‘Does capitalism work?’ Instead, we ought to be wondering ‘What work does it do?’ Bell, drawing from Alasdair MacIntyre, notes that even *if* capitalism succeeds in alleviating poverty in certain specific situations, it is still deficient because of the ends that are prized, because of the *picture of humanity that capitalism delineates*, and because of the forms of desire that capitalism inculcates.²³⁴ Bell, and MacIntyre, while specifically referencing Christianity and its relation to capitalism, also point to issues with capitalism that go beyond just the specific concerns of Christian traditions. As has been pointed to above, in both this current chapter and the previous, notions of community are tied in with anthropological projections.

²³² Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002), 27–28.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 28.

²³⁴ Daniel M. Bell, Jr., *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 84–92; Alasdair MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1995), xiv, as cited in Bell.

As Bell's interrogation of capitalism also points out, the analysis of the goods or ills of capitalism is dependent on the reckoner's hypothesis, not the other way around. And, while one can attempt to point to the theological pretensions of Enlightenment rationality (after all, does not such slide easily into, if not Christianised triumphalisms, then certainly boasting with undercurrents of theologisation?), perhaps evident in Steven Pinker's analysis in *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, it is crucial to point further to the elaborations of 'goods' and what is entailed by them. It is immediately obvious that, as with Bell's points regarding capitalism, a 'good' is dependent on who is doing the accounting. Like the accounts manager who is tasked with noting the capital contained within specific divisions of a multinational corporation, there is no relevance given to, say, the moral dimension of the actions of the company. The account of the situation is stunted. In the case of Pinker, the calculation is thoroughly capitalistic and modern, leaving divergent readings of contemporary life open; he cannot see these.

In fact, it seems increasingly obvious that these accounts which amount to little more than positive economic propaganda tell little of the story because, to come back to Goodchild, economics 'has no direct concern with such "moral" and "cultural" issues.'²³⁵ But, even this does not quite express the reality of, specifically, neoliberal culture. Goodchild's use of quotations is apt, as a *type* of moral and cultural reality is supposed, but couched in *scientific* language. This allows for a high handed deflection of critique, as, pointing to the scientific attributes of economic analyses sidesteps criticisms. It is a clever power move. Pretension of knowledge accrues power, and makes legitimate criticisms difficult to make because criticisms can be labelled 'conspiratorial', akin to flat earth theories or convoluted 'proof' that the moon landings were faked.

2.2 Neoliberal Origins

Neoliberalism may seem a pejorative term, or even a malapropism in certain contexts. It has, undoubtedly, often slid from precision to a bogeyman figure, a term of near universal

²³⁵ Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, 47.

derision quickly and vaguely proposed as a causal factor in nearly any contemporary transgression.²³⁶ Neoliberalism's broader context is, however, figured in numerous ways, and these contextualisations help propose useful genealogies connecting it to the purposes of this chapter.

Neoliberalism has often been read as a culture of economic and political policies that emerge in the 1930s, but are intensified and legitimated as they are put into place by governmental frameworks in the 1970s and 1980s. Others limit their analysis solely to the reign of the Thatcher and Reagan eras up to contemporary times. Interestingly, other analyses seek to reach back to the emergence of modern economy in Adam Smith, or even Bernard Mandeville.²³⁷ This latter genealogy encourages, as well, the admission that neoliberalism has a complicated relation to neoclassical economics and capitalism as a whole; this highlights *the contingency of the current situation*, that neoliberalism certainly did not occur within a vacuum. This particular story of the neoliberal political economic regime, a regime which says something very specific about the ontology of man and the world, is not merely reactionary, as if, once again, neoliberalism is a divine monster who must be traced out, a sort of universal and omnipresent reality. Instead, it provides a counter-narrative to the strategy of pluralising capitalism such that one can separate out and point to positive, responsible, and pure iterations of capitalism standing in contrast to 'crony' and 'irresponsible' capitalisms, apparently heretical

²³⁶ Turner, *Neo-Liberal Ideology*, 4; 82–84. It is true that, for the most part, neoliberals do not use this term to describe themselves. However, the term, coined in 1938 by Alexander Rustow (though he used it to 'indicate the distinction between the prevailing pro-collectivist liberal ethos and the principles of traditional liberalism') did have important ordo-liberal tendencies. And, while there are definite, strong connections between these early instantiations and contemporary neoliberalism, one cannot make a simple one-to-one correspondence; this would be like saying Lockean liberalism is perfectly consonant with contemporary political liberalism.

²³⁷ James Carrier, *After the Crisis: Anthropological Thought, Neoliberalism and the Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 2016), 3–4. '[Neoliberalism's] intellectual foundations were laid with the work of Adam Smith, if not of Bernard Mandeville, and [it was] developed by the marginalists in the final third of the nineteenth century; its institutional foundations were the organisations and networks that were in place in Western Europe and North America by the end of the Second World War' (p. 3).

See also David E. Lowes, 'Neoliberalism', in *The Anti-Capitalist Dictionary: Movements, Histories, and Motivations* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 170–71. This entry notes that the 'advocacy and practice' of key tenets of neoliberalism trace back to Smith, but 'have a more direct association with neoclassical economic traditions of the nineteenth century'. Neoclassical is distinct from classical economics through, among other things, interest in presenting more 'precise mathematical forms'.

instantiations.²³⁸ Sketching a family tree of neoliberalism that points directly to neoclassical economics, however, allows for a simultaneous critique of much of what is classified as capitalism, whether pure or not. Likewise, this allows for a much simpler connection between neoliberalism to Hobbes, who fits neatly into broader capitalist forms.

Neoliberalism is not merely a concern of economists. This is clear from the naming of it as a specific controlling regime which must be reacted against and the sheer number of resources that casually point to it as a causal factor in some way, the time spent elucidating its spatiality, examine how it has effected contextually specific agents, or work to delineate particular genealogies of it. It is a cultural propagation; its effects concern those broader subjects that we have navigated our way through thus far. Economic theories put into practice have broader consequences. This is, *prima facie*, obvious. The 2007–08 worldwide financial crisis did not happen inexplicably, but instead certain understandings of how markets react, not to mention conceptions what capital is, and how to properly determine value, contributed to the problem. After the collapse started, picking up speed like a snowball being rolled down a snowy hill, actions were taken to mitigate the dire circumstances. The actions that were taken followed from rationalizations that emerge from, once again, specific ideas about the nature of markets and capital. But, it is not simply static, concretised, isolated economic theory that contributed to those moments where economy causes effects. Economics purports to be a ‘hard science’, and in its isolation from the humanities (most obviously in this case ethical theory) it obfuscates its contextualisation and limitations.²³⁹ This is a standard account that can be clearly seen in the beginnings of economics as it split off into its own domain of study through the work of Adam

²³⁸ This should be expected when dealing with something that retains a high degree of malleability. It becomes more and more difficult to nail down the ‘essence’ of capitalism or, more pointedly, neoliberalism. So, one can point to models of capitalism or neoliberalism that appear more ethical. For an example, see Philippe Van Parijs, ‘Basic Income Capitalism’, *Ethics* 102 (April 1992): 465–66. Such an idea has gradually picked up steam, such that now it is usual to hear discussions of Universal Basic Income. It has to be noted that despite the popularity of such a proposal, the ‘bulk of the means of production is privately owned’ (p. 465).

²³⁹ D. Stephen Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2–5. Long notes that economics, in its self-nomination as a hard science, erects *a priori* strict walls between descriptive facts and valuations. This is a usual critique, but it is incisive and powerful.

Smith, who initially begins his work as an exercise in *moral philosophy*.²⁴⁰ And, theories of morality often entail a theological pretence; namely, ethics and morality have often interacted with (theological) anthropology, even extending out into questions of ontology, not to mention questions of God and meaning.

2.2.1 Starting Points

The cultural propagation of neoliberalism is not incidental, and certain genealogies make this explicit. Rachel S. Turner, in her book *Neo-Liberal Ideology*, begins by detailing the meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947, immediately following the global upheaval of World War II. Turner states, ‘a new ideological movement met at the Mont Pelerin in Switzerland to expose the dangers they felt were inherent in collectivism and to create an international forum for the rebirth of liberalism’.²⁴¹ The MPS meeting, then, begins as an inchoate form of specific ideological revival, birthing ‘a huge intellectual network of foundations, institutes, research centres, ideologues, and scholars who relentlessly publish and package new ideas that would restore the liberal faith and redirect the course of Western civilization’.²⁴² Turner notes this as a particular point of formation for neoliberalism, a political trajectory based around certain core concepts that develop in diverse ways dependent on the intellectual traditions of particular contexts in which it is advertised, pushed, and enacted.

Other writers on neoliberalism disagree with Turner’s elaboration of the initiatory stages of neoliberalism. In Pierre Dardot and Christienne Laval’s *The New Way of the World*, they claim the citing of the MPS as a starting point is incorrect. Instead, the founding event is the Walter Lippmann Colloquium, which occurred over five days starting on August 26, 1938, a good nine years before the meeting of the MPS. In Dardot and Laval’s analysis, the delineation of neoliberalism crucially depends on the beginning point; determining where and when the

²⁴⁰ Alan Christopher Finlayson, et al., ‘The ‘Invisible Hand’: Neoclassical Economics and the Ordering of Society’, *Critical Sociology* 3 (December 2005): 517–18; D. Stephen Long, ‘Metaphysics and the Principle of Economy’, *Anglican Theological Review* 92 (2010): 672.

²⁴¹ Turner, *Neo-Liberal Ideology*, 1.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

eventual site occurs is not merely pedantic squabbling. No matter the origination the beginnings were formed around supporting a very specific ideological form, and guarding against non-liberalism.

While the MPS meeting emphasized a unified opposition to certain forms of state intervention and the rise of collectivisms that were in opposition to liberalism, and ‘rall[ied] different currents of neoliberalism. . . thus making it possible to smooth over differences that had emerged before [World War II]’, the earlier Lippmann Colloquium concentrated on ‘the theorization of a specifically *liberal* interventionism’.²⁴³ This particular emphasis, one of neoliberal emergence, allows for Dardot and Laval to underscore the importance of *interventionism* in neoliberalism; we can note the undertones here, drawing out Hobbes’s ectoplasm, his spectral remnants resting in the foundations, the walls, under the carpets. Emphasising specific forms of interventionism also allows for an elaboration of neoliberalism that correctly sidesteps the metaphysical dead-end of *laissez faire*.²⁴⁴ And, while these genealogies, these divergent explanations, find themselves going beyond the analysis that set the stage for contemporary discussions on neoliberalism (Foucault’s *Birth of Biopolitics*),²⁴⁵ they all note the centrality of liberalism’s mode of government which is seen as a “‘politics of society” whose intelligibility, scale, and rules of functioning is grounded in the market’.²⁴⁶ Again, the question of communism cannot be ignored, especially as we note the emphasis, which is present in any elaboration of the centrality of liberal (and subsequent mutations [neoliberal]), on individualism and liberal conceptions of private property.

²⁴³ Pierre Dardot and Christienne Laval, trans. Gregory Elliot, *The New Way of the World: On Neo-Liberal Society* (London: Verso, 2013), Kindle loc. 1178. Emphasis mine.

²⁴⁴ Dardot and Laval’s notion of the liberal interventionism present in neoliberalism is a crucial point, one which Wendy Brown also makes very well in *Undoing the Demos*. While neoliberal ideologues often use libertarian terms and talking points, neoliberalism is dependent on the state in crucial ways.

²⁴⁵ This ‘going beyond’ means, as well, that often analyses of neoliberalism are too rigid. Their ‘going beyond’ is always fixed to the presence of Foucault, who remains the ultimate referent and grounding place for the discussions.

²⁴⁶ Maurizio Lazzarato, ‘Neoliberalism in Action: Inequality, Insecurity and the Reconstitution of the Social’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (Dec 2009): 115.

2.2.2 Family Trees

For Turner, while the emergence of neoliberalism converges around the MPS meetings immediately following World War II, the family tree is diverse and continues to spread, entangle, fuse and draw apart in particular ways dependent on the geographical location, historical situation of the place affected, and the globally intertwined (and particular) nature of the modern nation-state or smaller governed area.²⁴⁷ This is not a completely novel reading of neoliberalism, of course. Most of the recent scholars writing on the conceptual landscape of neoliberalism point to the difficulty of concrete description because of the layers of contextual elements noted above. Each instance of neoliberalism may, then, have varied states of being, and these states may even be in flux because of contingencies found in those contexts.

It is worth quoting Wendy Brown at length here:

It is a scholarly commonplace that neoliberalism has no fixed or settled coordinates, that there is a temporal and geographical variety in its discursive formulations, policy entailments, and material practices. This commonplace exceeds recognition of neoliberalism's multiple and diverse origins or the recognition that neoliberalism is a term mainly deployed by its critics, and hence its very existence is questionable.²⁴⁸

Taking this into account means that particular, detailed, static, listed descriptors for the signifier (neoliberalism) are onerous, perhaps even untenable. It becomes difficult to talk about neoliberalism in the abstract unless we admit that there will always be some tendentiousness when we come to its qualities within particular contexts. In the light of the above, noting the Hobbesian spectre of mutated community becomes another narrative serving the purpose of tracing a possible line within the sketch, it becomes another lens through which neoliberalism can be read, but also through which community, as an encompassing political term, can be considered.

²⁴⁷ This becomes complicated when we start to realise that there are diverse instantiations of liberalism as well. There isn't some nice, stretching trunk, feeling its massive, strong singularity upwards until it starts to project its various branches off into other directions. Liberalism is, quite plainly, highly stratified.

²⁴⁸ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos* (London: Zero Books, 2015), 20.

2.3 Genealogies

Returning to genealogies, we can inspect further traces. Foucault's *Birth of Biopolitics* is perhaps the most famous elaboration of neoliberalism, and Wendy Brown's 2015 volume, *Undoing the Demos*, carries the weight of Foucault's determination with significant updates. Marxist accounts of neoliberalism are significant to the discussion as well, and inspecting David Harvey's numerous works on neoliberalism provide a well-trod path of dissecting and analysing the current politico-economic-ideological regime. Numerous maps are present, critiquing neoliberalism from different angles (economic critiques, sociologically oriented readings, political power, etc).²⁴⁹

While these are important genealogies, these few are not meant to be exhaustive of the landscape; small libraries have been written on the numerous constructions of neoliberalism, and a clear picture of neoliberalism, while important for the purpose and situation of this chapter, is not central to the logic of the current project; furthermore, even an indistinct picture of neoliberalism serves the broader aims of this specific chapter. Instead, elaborating these neoliberal narratives produces a broad picture of the contours (whether sharp or obscured) of the subject to come into being, and points to the specific objective of elaborating the vision of the political subject created by the current dominant, globalising mode of political economy.

The bulk of Brown's most recent detailed elaboration of neoliberalism interacts with Foucault's, playing off his foundation in delineating the rationality and political life of neoliberalism. Brown, despite her reliance on him, notes specific ways in which Foucault misses a full and complete analysis. While some of his failures are due to the context of the account and inability to predict the possible future developmental paths of neoliberalism, other perceived missteps grow out of Brown's disagreement about points of initiation, or where the genealogy's analysis should begin. She, for instance, questions Foucault's 'formulation of the political, his

²⁴⁹ Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, trans. Melinda Cooper, 'Foucault, Neoliberalism, and Europe', in *The Sage Handbook of Neoliberalism*, ed. Melinda Cooper, et al. (London: SAGE, 2018), 193–94.

arguments that *homo oeconomicus* originated in the seventeenth century, his odd neglect of capital as a form of domination, and above all, his eclipse of the effect of neoliberalism on constitutional democracy and the democratic imaginary'.²⁵⁰

Despite these qualms with the Foucauldian delineation of neoliberalism, some of the basic outlines of Foucauldian neoliberalism remain as useful starting points for analysing the effects and hold it has globally, especially as these are contrasted with a broadly Marxist approach, which some contend has outlived its descriptive capabilities.²⁵¹ Despite emphasising ideology, for instance, Foucault does attempt to step beyond discussing just super-structural points and ideology, to noting neoliberal art of government. And, on the point of broadly ideological manifestations, no one doubts the importance (historical or otherwise) of Foucault's elaborations of neoliberal subjectivity.²⁵²

The problems of capital pointed to by Marxist thinkers of neoliberalism is helpful, but globalising power is hardly reducible merely to its origination point in the seeds of capitalism in the burgeoning post-mercantilist era; or so Brown contends:

If Marx's analysis remains unequalled in in [sic] its account of capitalism's power, imperatives, brutality, and world-making capacities, this analysis also presumed subjects who yearned for emancipation and had at hand a political idiom of justice—unrealized principles of democracy—through which to demand it. These subjects and principles can be presumed no longer.²⁵³

Marxist accounts of neoliberalism are related, but diverse, such that a common history can be pointed to. Edges of that history may be structured in different ways depending on the

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 73. Of course, as a thinker who reacts quite strongly against Marx in many of his writings, is it any wonder that Foucault would neglect 'capital as a form of domination'?

²⁵¹ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 59. The main contention comes from, as Brown points out, navigating the causes of neoliberalism. Many Marxist analyses point to a 'crisis of capitalist accumulation', while a more Foucauldian take would point to liberal governmentality. See also Neil Davidson, 'Neoliberalism as a Class Based Project', in *The Sage Handbook of Neoliberalism*, ed. Melinda Cooper, et al. (London: SAGE, 2018), 55–68, for a longer evaluation of David Harvey and his lasting influence on Naomi Klein and others.

²⁵² Dean, 'Neoliberalism Controversy', 43; 46. Dean notes that even some of Foucault's most stringent critics, like Lazzarato, admit the strength of his elaboration of neoliberal subjectivity. Dean, nonetheless, rejects a reading of Foucault that highlights subjectivation, instead seeing Foucault as 'a way out of subjectification, a way out of the double-bind that ties the production of who we are to our domination, the making of subjectivity to subjugation' (p. 46).

²⁵³ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 111.

context and space allocated by the writer attempting to elucidate neoliberalism's past. As well, diverse tendencies exist, and we can see this most clearly in the differences between a Foucauldian inspired account and a Marxist or neo-Marxist reading of the inner mechanics of neoliberalism. Nonetheless, there are common traits that can be underscored, characteristics that, following Brown and Foucault, change social dynamics and actually inflect anthropological constructions (whether, ultimately, such is intended or not). These, of course, augment any reading of community, and especially determine the focus of any iteration of political community. As Paul discovered in his desperation to craft normative communities of solidarity with visions directed toward some end, possibilities become rarefied; sovereignty often dictates the ends of humanity. Is there, then, any significant difference from a biopolitical account, one that takes seriously the domination of *homo oeconomicus* and the so-called 'indebted man'?

3. Mechanisms of Terror

Neoliberalism, rather than strictly a theory of the market, or even a strictly economic theory, may be read in light of Carl Schmitt's understanding of the modern age as a Foucauldian take on disciplinary power, biopolitical governance, and, ultimately, the nexus of neoliberalism, all of which seem to rest in the metaphysical core of Schmitt's work.²⁵⁴ This shared metaphysical core allows for a reading of modernity as the automaticity of society through the rationalization of the Economy-State, a rule of the self-sustaining machine that requires no personal guidance. For Foucault, here, there is agreement with Schmitt that the operator of the machine is largely immaterial: the machine is driven forward regardless of automator.²⁵⁵ It is no coincidence, then, that Schmitt views Hobbes as the originary thinker of the machine-state.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Mika Ojakangas, *A Philosophy of Concrete Life: Carl Schmitt and the Political Thought of Late Modernity* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006) 67–68.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 69–70.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

As he notes, ‘Once the state becomes a leviathan, it disappears from the world of representations’.²⁵⁷

At this point, it may be necessary to point back to Esposito’s ontological community’s disavowing a politics of, as Greg Bird terms it, ‘alienation and appropriation.’²⁵⁸ As elaborated above, these missteps in a certain conceptual genus of community can be viewed as orbiting around the central problem of the proper; for Bird this highlights problems with some strains of both Marxist and anarchist rebuttals of capitalist hegemony. They both, to different degrees, centre on property, even if this notion of the proper is a community of propriety rather than an explicit or concrete notion of ‘property’.²⁵⁹ Bird emphasizes this through drawing from Proudhon: ‘The members of the community, it is true, have no property, but the community is the proprietor, and proprietor not only of goods but of persons and wills’.²⁶⁰ Esposito, and other theorists of community we have examined, then, have tried to locate (or perhaps dis-locate) the centrality of property and the concept of the proper from theories of community (Bird points to the ‘de-having’ that is central in Esposito).²⁶¹ It is here that the work of community encounters the neoliberal conceptual frameworks. As Turner has pointed out, ‘private property and individual ownership are integral concepts for neo-liberalism, as they are indispensable to the spontaneous order of the market’.²⁶² Even beyond this, for some neoliberals like Hayek, it becomes the ‘most fundamental of civil liberties and that individual freedom can only reign within a free-market system’.²⁶³

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 104. Citing Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism*, 21. This, while speaking directly of art and aesthetic creation, speaks directly to the reality of the mechanistic state’s form that allows for the conceptual space of neoliberalism to take shape.

²⁵⁸ Bird, *Containing Community*, 186.

²⁵⁹ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, trans. Donald R. Kelly and Bonnie G. Smith, *What is Property?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 196, as seen in Bird, *Containing Community*, 5.

²⁶⁰ Bird, *Containing Community*, 5.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 153. Bird succinctly sums up Esposito’s work writing: ‘Politically, he develops a radical mode of republicanism where communal duties and obligations are prioritized over private rights, interests, and property. Existentially, his community unfolds in an ontology where *being* takes precedence over *having*’.

²⁶² Turner, *Ideology*, 192; F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London: Routledge, 1944).

²⁶³ Ibid.

For the American political system this becomes a sanctified concept from the inception of the experiment of the United States. Property becomes a natural right that, presumably, builds up the common good of the state. Turner points to a tripartite framework including ‘the sanctity of individual property rights, the attainment of personal property through individual labour and the repudiation of aristocratic privileges’.²⁶⁴ This liberal framework, brought to the forefront yet again in the neoliberal projects of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, undoubtedly bucks up against the rise of communitarian work found in the same, general timelines, as can be seen in the work of Esposito and Agamben, among many others.

4. *The Entrance of the Hobbesian Spectre*

As detailed as the previous conceptual elaborations are I want to draw forth another, crucial element. This is found in elaborating the elements of subjectivity found in neoliberalism, highlighted through Esposito’s broader work, but more specifically his writings on Hobbes. Namely, neoliberalism, in its individualising tendencies, creates a subject that can best be understood through the dialectic of individual and community. We have gestured to the importance of this dialectic above, noting the work of Bird and his contention that community is often bound by the limits of appropriation and alienation. Those two poles are the two extremes of this dialectic; either the individual is subsumed into the One and essentially erased, or the subject is bound to a community that encounters modes of appropriation that lead to radical forms of individualism.²⁶⁵

A connection between Hobbes and capitalism and economics is hardly something new.²⁶⁶ Macpherson, for instance, spends significant time in *The Political Theory of Possessive*

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 198.

²⁶⁵ Bird, *Containing Community*.

²⁶⁶ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J.C. Addison Gaskin, 2nd edn (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 168. Hobbes discusses economics in several places, often relating it back to his interest in the foundation of circulation, which lies at the heart of his conception of human anatomy and even physics: ‘The conduits, and ways by which [money] is conveyed to the public use, are of two sorts; one, that conveyeth it to the publique coffers; the other, that issueth the same out again for publique payments. Of the first sort, are collectors, receivers, and treasurers; of the second are the treasurers again, and the officers appointed for payment of severall publique or private ministers. And in this also, the artificial man maintains his resemblance with the natural; whose

Individualism pointing to the political obligation of the market in Hobbes broader corpus.²⁶⁷

MacPherson tests possible market systems against Hobbes' theorization of society in this section, finally postulating that out of three possibilities, a 'possessive market society', which fits contemporary markets, meets the requirements of Hobbes' society.²⁶⁸

MacPherson's work is dated, but connections between Hobbes and contemporary forms of economy continue. Economist Jesus Labiano notes 'Hobbes is the first author to present in speculative form a philosophy of the businessman, of economic man. In his writings appear the essential elements of *homo economicus*, with its distinctive characteristic, individualism'.²⁶⁹

Labiano's observation is correct. Individualism is essential to the Hobbesian system, but this has to be qualified. The Hobbes' thought is distinct from other liberal conceptions of the person, and while he may retain a foundational place in the genealogy of political liberalism, he is distinct from other liberal thinkers like Locke through his theorisation of the importance of a contract of submission. The individual must 'limit [their] own liberty, accepting the rules which the head of state enforces'.²⁷⁰ Connal Parsley points to the individualism of Hobbes as well, noting that his elaboration of the person

works with a relatively stable and atomistic, and certainly pre-social, notion of the individual. The idea of an individual agent who acts self-interestedly, guided into a social and political covenant by fear and self-preservation, implies in Hobbes an individualist distinction of self from social or political role.²⁷¹

This is true, of course, even when one notes, as Parsley shows, that Hobbes' conception of the person is complicated through Ciceronian gestures to the theatrical mask, which causes one to

veins receiving the blood from the severall parts of the body, carry it to the heart; where being made vital, the heart by the arteries sends it out again, to enliven, and enable for motion all the members of the same.'

²⁶⁷ C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: From Hobbes to Locke* (, 1962), 9–100 *passim*.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 53–68.

²⁶⁹ Jesus M. Zaratiegui Labiano, "A Reading of Hobbes' Leviathan with Economists' Glasses," *International Journal of Social Economics* 27, no. 2 (2000): 134.

²⁷⁰ Maifreda, *From Oikonomia to Political Economy*, 198. Of course, in an unqualified sense, most conceptions of the political admit to the need for boundaries of liberty. American libertarians, for instance, admit need for governmental forces to police private property rights. The state here has a very limited role, however.

²⁷¹ Connal Parsley, 'The Mask and Agamben: the Transitional Juridical Technics of Legal Relation.' *Law Text Culture* 14 (2010): 15.

note the complexities of representation. This connection is not arbitrary, but instead links directly to the personifying dimension of the Leviathan, which rests on its nature as a ‘single “personified” figure and not a parliamentary body corresponding proportionately to a populace’.²⁷²

While Hobbes is not cited by all scholars working on either capitalism or neoliberalism, it should not be overlooked that Hobbesian motifs do appear, haunting the pages of theory’s engagement with the exploitative movements of late modernity’s economic structures. Alex Callinicos in *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*, for instance, mentions the ‘sword of Leviathan’ at a crucial moment.²⁷³ With such language he is stressing the spread of capitalism beyond the economic sphere, the intertwining of the market within geopolitical and military maneuvers. Callinicos cites, quite tellingly, Thomas Friedman who, writing merely a year before the attack on the Twin Towers, notes that the ‘hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist’.²⁷⁴ He moves on to Hardt and Negri’s *magnum opus*, *Empire*. The piece reads ‘Empire’ as a peculiar capitalist entity that relies on globalising tendencies stressing the hegemony of property and capital, perfectly mirroring and moving like the Hobbesian Leviathan, an undulating creature-state that is legitimated through specific forms of violence, reason, and justice, propped up by the submission of citizen power. Crucially, these are forms exclusively building up the market-state, and Hardt and Negri use language of the Leviathan to point to the negotiation of capital and sovereignty.²⁷⁵ They write that ‘Hobbes established the spatial metaphor of sovereignty for all modern political thought in his Leviathan that rises above and overarches society and the multitude’, and that ‘sovereignty operates through the striation of the social

²⁷² Ibid., 18–19.

²⁷³ Alex Callinicos, *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2003), 50.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 325. See, also, n128 above. Their reading of the instantiation of a modern, international Hobbesianism is timely.

field'.²⁷⁶ This, while not using the specific language, is a proper description of certain readings of neoliberalism elaborated below.²⁷⁷

Hobbes, then, remains as a sort of spectre haunting some of the work on capitalism in general, and neoliberalism in particular. Leviathan is the arbiter of what is truly central, shaping the social field. Utilising themes found in the Espositoan reading of Hobbes elaborated in previous chapters, epistemology comes through the means of the Economic-State (a state resting upon the rationality and logic of economy); similarly, *value* is accorded through the lens of the Economic-State. Value determines the role and signification of the subject. They, then, allow for the *signification* (the sign-making of the subject; *homo oeconomicus*), the signifying process through assigning subject-reality, because subjects have explicitly given up their power to the Leviathan-State. In this submission one can note as well that in this anthropological account humans reason in a precise cost/benefit calculation that almost seems to echo neoclassical economic reading of human reasoning; after all, as Hobbes says, 'when a man *reasoneth* hee does nothing else but conceive a sum total, from addition to parcels; or conceive a remainder, from subtraction of one sum from another'.²⁷⁸ This is one of the primary emphases that emerge from a close reading of Esposito's work on Hobbes. But, this is not simply an analysis of Hobbes. More importantly, it is an analysis of a type of *community*.

Hobbes is merely the foil to understand, and recognise the application of, a specific method of interpreting community and its ethical, ontological, and social possibilities. With these

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 325–26. They elaborate the connections between sovereignty and capital, but note how they seem opposed. Such an opposition is founded on sovereignty's place in direction social striation on the one hand, and on the other capital's operation 'on the plane of *immanence*, through relays and networks of domination, without reliance on a transcendent center of power' (p. 326). I augment, however, Hobbes' along with Esposito and note how, yes, there is an 'overarching' Leviathan, but there is an individualising effect that is present in the Hobbesian state aligns with our reading of neoliberalism and they types of 'communities' that each create.

²⁷⁷ Harvey, *A Brief History*, 7–8,

²⁷⁸ Maifreda, *From Oikonomia to Political Economy*, 215–216; 218, quoting from Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 27. Italics in original. As Maifreda shows, this is a part of a general trend that can be shown in intellectuals producing work in the same period as Hobbes. Taking epistemological methods from hard 'scientific' disciplines and applying them to social and political sciences became a mode of production in social, political, and economic work (p. 218). Foucault is perhaps the most famous among those who have noted the trend of quantification and data gathering in the modern period, and how this constitutes the early moments of the biopolitical state.

possibilities we too often, as Esposito writes, ‘put off [community] until later, to a distant and indecipherable horizon,’ as if it is some indeconstructible concept like late Derrida’s understanding of justice or truth or *khora* or deconstruction itself (or Christianity?), concepts that are impossibilities, often only glimpsed on the horizon, inescapable and yet not totalising, systemic, or hierarchical enough to delimit reality and fall into deconstruction.²⁷⁹ Instantiations of community are both theorised and enacted often; the problem is the status of the community. Is this community the ‘house’ that enfolds, enclosing concretised insiders and repelling the improper? Is the community a diversified body of subjects, letting outsiders in for assimilation if they pass the immunitary agent? Do these communities appropriate the subject, falling into a liberal/capitalist account of the proper? Does the community annihilate the subject, subsuming it into the community like a nebulous, undifferentiated mass? Is the subject alienated, always disconnected from the full range of co-subjects?

4.2 Hobbesian Themes

Using Hobbes as a foil for explicating Esposito’s theory of community, as occurred in the first main chapter of this project, has allowed a basic overview of Hobbesian motifs to be delineated, especially in relation to themes surrounding the community discussion (identity, subjectivity, appropriation, alienation). Making these broad comparisons between diverse systems is inherently tendentious and may give into certain anachronisms. It is true that ‘neoliberalism’, as we have seen above, is an existent, but highly diverse and geographically delimited political-economic-social ordering, one that is subject to various (often) incommensurable readings.²⁸⁰ We can read them as *nearly* incompatible because, despite different emphases, there are crucial common elements among the various analyses. It is true, as

²⁷⁹ John D. Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 128; Jacques Derrida, ‘The Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority’, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*.

²⁸⁰ Damien Cahill, et al., ed., *The SAGE Handbook of Neoliberalism* (London: Sage Publications, 2018). *The SAGE Handbook* provides an excellent and detailed overview of the seven or so main readings of neoliberalism, not all of which have been explored in this chapter. Exploring the various tensions between diverse interpretations of neoliberalism is beyond the scope of this study.

well, that unlike neoliberalism, the Hobbesian state was never an enacted political development, a deployed political form entering the historical scene, even if it played into the broader political consciousness of the day. Instead, it was the description of a necessity given a particular reading of human nature, meaning a way of seeing sociality, hermeneutic possibilities, the place of the subject, subjective identity, and the physiology of humanity. It is here within a snapshot of such interconnected dimensions that the core of neoliberalism I have sought to highlight enters the foreground and aligns with basic Hobbesian motifs.

The dual point of this chapter has been to draw out these comparisons more explicitly in order to note: the continued importance of Hobbesianism; and, *primarily*, the connection between the individual and community, pointing to contemporary individualist fictions that shape the landscape of community in opposition to current theorizing about community. Our interpretations transform the subject; our interpretations have material effects.

While there are several ways that these community typologies can be interpreted, here we will stick with the broad readings typified by our main interlocutor, Esposito (though also drawing on the inter-related works of Agamben and Nancy). This is not only because our interpretation of Hobbes springs from Espositoan sources, but also because Esposito's theory of community is the primary, general branch of sources for this broader Pauline communitarian experimentation. The centripetal force of our investigation flows from Paul and Esposito as primary source materials, and this neoliberal-Hobbesian secondary experiment seeks to point to the importance of contemporary communitarian philosophical sources for (eventually) thinking and utilizing Paul.

This means that, as has been obvious to anyone who has worked on the issue of community, many sociological sources normally used for speculating on individual-collective activity have been glossed over or ignored. There is, then, an obvious dearth of references to

thinkers like Victor Turner, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tönnies, and others.²⁸¹ The tightly woven discussions about community have generally revolved around Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian thinking. As Bird points out, the previous sociologists ‘suppose that there is a “pure outside” and a “pure inside,” which [Nancy] points out like Heidegger, would render it impossible to conceive of relationships let alone togetherness’.²⁸² In other words, the salient point found in the work of thinkers like Heidegger, Nancy, Agamben, and Esposito is the pitfall of usual non-ontological conceptions of ‘community’ that continually leave something out. This ‘something’ is crucial to the structure of this project.²⁸³

In Bird’s incisive reading of the debates about community that occurred in the late 20th century it becomes clear that ontology is at the forefront of communal projections precisely because ontologically focused conceptions allow for a side-stepping of a-ethical challenges despite seeming abstraction from political issues. Agamben is often charged with writing opaque and convoluted abstractions from pragmatic political engagement, despite touching the boundaries of political projects. For all of those involved, however, community allows for anthropologies to form through ontological engagement (even if we want to quibble with the use of ‘anthropological’, or perhaps even prohibit it altogether). For Esposito, again, this is the primary conundrum of conceiving of a community that side-steps the problems of appropriation or alienation. And, those issues, the various human formations of community, help with the emergence of different constitutive subjects; subjects are elements of a larger constellation.

4.2.1 Hobbesian Fluids: Bio-logic

Hobbes entire oeuvre is centred on anthropologic constitutions. This is precisely why, even in *De Homine*, he starts his initial nine chapters detailing precisely how he conceived the

²⁸¹ Esposito, as well, points to foundational elements of private property present in the work of social scientists, such as Weber and Tönnies. A question may be how these can be traced genealogically, how they still constitute foundational elements of the social sciences.

²⁸² Bird, *Containing Community*, 89.

²⁸³ Ibid., 90. Nancy’s reading of community, for instance, is best described as, instead of an ‘ontology of society’, ‘ontology itself as “sociality” or “sociation”’.

study of optics. Even before this, in one of his earlier works on civil society, *De Cive*, Hobbes makes known to the reader in the preface that his project, as it read at the time, followed from foundational sources. He highlights the importance of first philosophy, before noting the crucial initiation of human faculties, here both pointing to the bodily limitations of humanity, but also to humanity's ubiquitous hermeneutical myopia. As mentioned above, the limitations of physicality lead to the need of the Leviathan-State. As Esposito notes, this Hobbesian reading of human naturalness led to an artificial division between natural life and political life, a division that is weakened by the advent of biology as a discrete science in the 19th century.²⁸⁴ But, even here it has to be admitted that the division is through biology. Biological realities precede political realities (or, at least *seem* to in the distinct moments pointed to), or perhaps said more incisively, the *biological is itself political*, in that the state of nature is itself a political state, but a political state that is in error, non-manageable, and leads ultimately to a suspension of desire. If death is the converse of whatever could be considered a supreme good (though Hobbes doesn't allow for those antique notions), then the state of nature is the initial causal reality that delivers and steadies that converse *mal*.

The biological is not the only dimension of the human subject, as if the subject is to be understood as a discrete, individualisable thing, reducible to a mechanised body. There is always the social dimension with which to contend. The biological determines, to a degree, the social. But, the social is made up of abstract powers, powers that the Leviathan-State relies upon, that come through the authority of the State, but simultaneously through a form of contract with subjects. And, here we can begin to see the broad contours of similarity between the general socio-political condition of the Leviathan-State, producing what Esposito calls a community of death, and a broad neoliberal reading of the human subject, viewing the subject as an abstracted, individuated unit that is complicit with the neoliberal institution through its contract (accepting itself as a part of this system; complicit, yet unable to break free from the system; caught up

²⁸⁴ Robert Esposito, 'Biological Life and Political Life', in *Contemporary Italian Political Philosophy*, ed. Antonio Calcagno (New York: SUNY Press, 2015), 13–15.

within a form of freedom that, as Han notes, constrains freedom),²⁸⁵ gives its power to the neoliberal institution, and also gains broad meaning through its attachment to the institution. The subject can neither escape from neoliberalism, nor reside within the system as a whole. The subject is never whole because it is abstracted from social life in its innumerable possibilities. But, is this in any way unexpected? Foucault details the difference, the shift between the government in the Middle Ages, following a naturalness that is upheld through the sovereignty of God, and the government of the modern age, a liberalism that breaks from this prior understanding of the ‘natural’, instead ‘state reason proposes the artificiality of a “Leviathan”—which provokes the charge of atheism . . . nature reappears as a point of reference for political action’.²⁸⁶ Is it any surprise that what appears along with this specific understanding of political governmentality is a shift in economic rationality? As Lemke notes, political economy emerges quite soon after the advent of liberal and proto-liberal rationality. Political economy admits, here, ‘the idea of spontaneous self-regulation of the market on the basis of “natural” prices’.²⁸⁷

If the Leviathan-State represents the supremacy of political sovereignty, neoliberalism represents a shift from political sovereignty to economic sovereignty. If we could once upon a time discuss Hobbes in relation to political theology, now we can recognise a shift to an ‘economic theology’, spreading through the work of the pre-eminence of diverse economised calculations. Giorgio Agamben has, of course, pointed to this in his biopolitical writings, but numerous other thinkers have noted this shift as well. Ward Blanton, Jean-Pierre Dupuy, Esposito, Žižek, Mario Tronti, as well as numerous other Italian philosophers not well-known in the larger English speaking portions of the academy. Economic theology is not merely the recognition that economic rationality has retained a primary place in the political and social decisions, but it is a recognition, as well, that this form of calculus has wide-ranging

²⁸⁵ Han, *Psychopolitics*.

²⁸⁶ Thomas Lemke, ‘The Risks of Security: Liberalism, Biopolitics, and Fear’, in *The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism*, ed. Miguel Vatter (New York: Fordham, 2014), 61.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

implications.²⁸⁸ What is crucial to recognise, then, is not simply that neoliberalism is something alien to political sovereignty, but that it is a shifting of power and partial form to economic rationality. The partiality of form allows for an intensification of the hyper-individualistic community that we find in Esposito's reading of Hobbes.

Peter Sedgwick notes, specifically, links between Hobbes's work in *Leviathan*, the nature of sovereign power, and money that contribute greatly to the overall argument of this section, bolstering the similarities of neoliberal rationality and Hobbesian political and governmental forms.²⁸⁹ 'Money', as Sedgwick notes, 'is, for Hobbes, a universal standard of estimation.'²⁹⁰ Money, in fact, helps to *create* political life, bearing the weight of the body's life as the circulating power source, the life blood of the political body. Hobbes's Leviathan-State is the pre-eminent proto-biopolitical formation, precisely because it is concerned with the governing of the populace, with the art of the sustenance of the political body. Furthermore, Sedgwick notes, 'The sovereign, as has been shown, must take the role of managing the flows of economic activity since it is above all else a consumer of the economic behaviour of those who are rendered subject to it. The sovereign feeds off the world of production...'²⁹¹ It has been elaborated above that the Leviathan-State ensures a model of community based on the form of antagonism and violence that it eschews. The state of nature is held at bay by an extracted form of violence, while also sustaining power through the accumulation of social pressures exerted by the populace 'signing' a social contract. Because of this, it should be no surprise that management is attained through engaging in that which is managed.

²⁸⁸ We can also note Devin Singh's *Divine Currency* (Stanford: SUP, 2018). Singh, however, uses different terminology. This 'theopolitical economy' is not constrained to the 'political' and the 'theological', merely, but notes the weaving of monetary imagery and economic reasoning in theology, and the crucial connection between politics and economics. There is a crucial relation between all three of these conceptual spheres.

²⁸⁹ Peter R. Sedgwick, 'Hobbes, Sovereign Power and Money', in *Credo Credit Crisis: Speculations on Faith and Money* ed. Laurent Milesi, Christopher John Müller, and Aidan Tynan (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 39–64.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

The Leviathan represents a form of sovereignty that is moulded around the pressures and flows of the political body, pressures and flows that are made up of the population. But, this occurs in several ways. Firstly, through the social power of the abstracted individuals who have engaged (whether intentionally or not) in a form of social contract; and, secondly, through the productive flows of money that are bound up within exchanges enacted by those individuals. These two points are intertwined. The social power of these extracted individuals is bound up within a social contract that enacts a form of the community of death that Esposito reads Hobbes as forming in his broader political work. This social contract also enacts a social-scape that calls for individuals to engage in the productive flows of economy that result in distinctions between holders of forms of property, as well as the individuals existing within those larger grouped levels of owned properties. The Leviathan only protects certain propertied classes. For those who are poor there is ‘no more security in the civic community than they would find in the condition of being excluded from it’.²⁹² Further, although ‘subjects situated within a commonwealth, the poor ultimately remain timeless beings, passively unhistorical entities dwelling in a narrative of the “people” which excludes them even as it draws them into itself as subjects of sovereign power.’²⁹³

Although all engage in the social contract, not all are afforded the protections provided by the state. There are levels of proper engagement with the Leviathan-State. And, within these levels, subjects are further individuated, resulting in what Esposito calls a community of death. It is hard to deny that neoliberalism is comparable to this proto-liberal Hobbesian reality. This is especially evident when taking into account Sedgwick’s recognition that *Hobbes is essentially engaging in a form of biopolitical rationality*. Governance is concerned with population, while also being bound up within the flows of capital. The individual is both governed by the Leviathan, kept safe through the power of the social contract and the abilities of the Leviathan to discern reality in a much more objective manner, and distinguished in such ways as to create an

²⁹² Sedgwick, ‘Hobbes, Sovereign Power, and Money’, 52.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 53.

infinite space between individuals that disallows solidarity, ontologies of resistance, or community that reaches beyond speculation and auto-immunitarian tendencies.

Before engaging neoliberalism specifically using an Espositoan lens, there is one more important puzzle piece to fit into the comparison between neoliberalism and the Hobbesian state. In the same volume that Sedgwick's direct engagement with Hobbes, sovereignty, and money is found there is a crucial work by Hollis Phelps that utilises Philip Goodchild's ground breaking volume *Theology of Money*. I do not want to be interpreted as writing that Phelps's intervention is singular, breaking from all other works that deal with similar themes; nonetheless, in 'The Materiality of Belief: On the Real Death of Mammon' he brings together several crucial themes and thinkers, assembling them and interrogating in such a way that we find a crucial step forward.²⁹⁴

Mammon is a theological subject. This is perhaps one of the most important insights in Goodchild's book. Phelps points to this elaboration, reading the theological aspect of Mammon as calling for pietistic affectations, demanding our time, attention and devotion. Mammon functions in such a way as to 'exert power and control over individuals' as well as, Phelps writes, 'attract belief in itself as the value of values in terms of structural, affective and sovereign dimensions via debt'.²⁹⁵ In pointing to Lazzarato's recent book, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, Phelps places another puzzle piece into place, allowing us to recognise the structure and social role of neoliberalism as a subjectivating force.²⁹⁶ Neoliberalism indebts subjects, forming them to operate in terms of credit and debit, thereby organising activities and thought. Lazzarato also follows Deleuze and Guattari, pointing to 'machinic enslavement' which deterritorialises

²⁹⁴ Hollis Phelps, 'The Materiality of Belief: On the Real Death of Mammon', in *Credo Credit Crisis: Speculations on Faith and Money*, ed. Laurent Milesi, Christopher John Müller, and Aidan Tynan (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 185–207.

²⁹⁵ Phelps, 'The Materiality of Belief', 185. Mammon is 'money, wealth and the various attitudes, practices and institutions that support them' (p. 185).

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 195–96.

individuals by ‘activat[ing] *pre-personal, pre-cognitive, and pre-verbal forces*’. Subjects are caught up in the flows of economic arrangement.²⁹⁷

5. *Neoliberal Communities of Death*

There has been significant attention paid to an Espositoan reading of Hobbes, an interpretation that frames Hobbes through the lens of *communitas/immunitas* and biopolitics. In order to complete the comparison this chapter is concerned with, this final sub-section will read neoliberalism through this same lens, stepping a bit further than the gestures toward neoliberalism as a type of ‘community of death’. The comparisons made above are crucial, but transitioning to the language used by Esposito drives home how closely these relate, and thus demonstrates how neoliberalism operates a form of individuating community, a community of death.

Political bodies are subsumed beneath the Leviathan of the neoliberalised situation. But, this is not simply a reality that is exhausted by its formation in political bodies. It is not simply that, for instance, Australia is a neoliberal state, or that the United States acts in such a way that economy functions as the base for political and governmental situations, austerity being a perfect example. This is, for the neoliberalised state, held in tension with thoroughly biopolitical aims. It is not as if agents that help determine the aims and strategies of austerity do not as well recognise the importance of the broad *bios* of subjects. The subjects of biopoliticisation are important because they represent one criterion for determining the strength of a state. This way of ordering is, of course, one piece of the puzzle. But, what is crucial is that this ordering ‘trickles down’ to the rest of the state. Subjects are not just political subjects, but they are also bound up within different associations within the social-scape of the governing institution. These associations work as further governing institutions. These institutions call for the social power of the individualised subjects all the way done.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 196; Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines*, 27, 31. Italics in original.

What is crucial to see is that the call for social power is likewise a call to allegiance. Workers, as a broad and nebulous category that has ballooned beyond early 20th century readings of the working class subject, are called to the allegiance of those that provide capital for their labour. But, beyond that, workers are increasingly pacified by these institutions as well as determined morally to regard capital and debt as reigning indicatives/imperatives that determine the shape of life and call for subjects to shape their life in specific ways. Shaping life in these specific ways, enacting and enframing reality such that it takes shape with these indicatives/imperatives in mind, separates subjects. This does not allow for imagining forms of organising, agitating, or resisting neoliberal institutions.²⁹⁸ Communal activity, unless it is superficial or distanced, is viewed with suspicion, even though it has liberative capacities. A prime example of this has been the dissolution of labour organisations that protect the rights of workers. Union power has receded greatly since the advent of the neoliberal age. The precarity that distinguishes modern neoliberal rationality forces each subject to entrepreneurialise to one degree or another, entering into often quite convoluted practices in order to actualise their possibilities; in this sense, as Han notes above, workers exploit themselves because they appear to own the means of production.²⁹⁹ Becker noted, during the nascent beginnings of post-Fordist and post-Keynesian neoliberalism that, ‘homo oeconomicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of the self’.³⁰⁰ And, as Melinda Cooper notes, after the rejection of Fordism we have instead an ‘economy of short-term contractual relations, in which everyone becomes an independent contractor in personal services’.³⁰¹ Lazzarato writes that ‘[w]ith neoliberal deterritorialization, no new production of subjectivity takes place’, which spells trouble because neoliberalism

²⁹⁸ Can we not admit this after the exemplary resistance displayed by University faculty and staff during the labour strike that took place between February and late March in the UK?

²⁹⁹ Han, *Psychopolitics*. While the point is an important one, there are definite differences between the self-exploitation of a modern ‘entrepreneur’ who is stuck working at Deliveroo and forms of exploitation by those who own the means of production in the usual sense of the term.

Is this not, basically, one of the main take-aways from Foucault’s work on neoliberalism, and its legacy among even those who challenge his work? This is, essentially, what is meant by ‘neoliberal subjectivity’ as elaborated earlier in this chapter.

³⁰⁰ Becker, *Treatise on the Family*, 226.

³⁰¹ Melinda Cooper, ‘The Law of the Household: Foucault, Neoliberalism, and the Iranian Revolution’, in *The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism*, ed. Miguel Vatter and Vanessa Lemm (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 42.

dissolves previous subjectivities, leaving a void which, too often, may be filled in dangerous or precarious ways.³⁰² Nonetheless, ‘the ubiquity of entrepreneurial subjectivity’ persists, calling for individuals to transform themselves into more employable subjects, in fact into discrete businesses, which results in several paradoxes.³⁰³ Lazzarato notes these paradoxes as both a heteronomy created by the increased needs of employability, and the impoverishment of existence that results from the burden of constant pressure to resist ‘homogenization’.³⁰⁴ This could be framed in another way. Namely, that neoliberal subjects are bound up within the realities of a situation that indebted them (constituting a form of their subjectivity), but that they accept namely because the form of indebtedness saves them from something worse.³⁰⁵ If this is a proper reading of the situation, then it underscores the importance of Han’s critique of Marx’s usefulness for neoliberalism; the worker is put in a situation where they must exploit themselves. Perhaps like the panoptic policing of a modern, auto-recording society the neoliberal subject has learned to ‘police’ themselves, to constrain and fashion in such a way similar to the entrepreneur trying to sell his start-up to a group of venture capitalists.³⁰⁶

6. Conclusion

The realities of the situation call for a form of contract between the subject and the complex hierarchical forms that they persist under. These forms, and the call to a form of heteronomy, complicate community for the neoliberal subject. Allegiance is owed to hierarchical forms precisely because of precarity. Nonetheless, capitalism is able to shrewdly resist responsibility. The indebted, neoliberal subject falls in line. Like a subjectivity resulting from a Hobbesian community of death, the neoliberal subject is disastrous.³⁰⁷

³⁰² Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines*, 9.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 10. Lazzarato writes that the ‘indebted man, at once guilty and responsible for his lot, must take on himself the economic, social, and political failures of the neoliberal power bloc, exactly those failures externalized by the State and business onto society.’

³⁰⁶ Han, *Psychopolitics*.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 11. He goes on to note that ‘[e]conomics and subjectivity go hand in hand’, that economics governs behaviour. And, in a sense, this corresponds well with the discussion of reciprocal gifting below, namely that

In the above chapter, it becomes obvious that not only are there parallels between these communities of death, but also that Esposito's analytic is strong, providing conceptual categories that open up for new descriptions of neoliberalism. By putting a general frame of the relations between the community and immunity, but also by pointing to the problems of the appropriation/alienation dialectic (a dispositif of the proper), it becomes more clear the form of community that emerges out of a general neoliberalism. This form, like the Hobbesian community, divides the subject, resulting in a hyper-individualism that seems inescapable.

practices of gifting are important for both the maintenance of society (the organisation of subjects in relation to one another), but also that this larger organisation of subjects (inter-subjective relations) forms the individual. Gifting, of course, is not simply synonymous with 'economy'. Nonetheless, they both serve as distinctly political relations in most senses of the term. Gifting is, after all, what I am determining to be an important 'political' reality for Paul, precisely an area where religio-political community is formed over and against competing subjectivities. Lazzarato's point, also, coincides with some of the broader Espositoan themes that, especially, Bird brings out when he highlights the conceptual problems with the 'proper', how this problem shows up in many theoretical leftist critiques of capital, and how Esposito, Agamben, and Nancy attempt to theorise community in such a way that 'de-having' and appropriation are eschewed.

PART 2: DELEGATING A SPACE

The first section of this project elaborated notions of community in diverse ways. Firstly, the opening chapters detail both a specific moment in intellectual history that has continued to transform and birth other moments, but also elaborates a specific comparative case. Post-Heideggerian accounts of community are diverse, yet they weave into each other, creating a tightly woven conceptual blanket whose bright colours and intricate patterns can only be properly grasped when stepped away from, allowing the pattern to emerge. In order to bring out some of the patterns, or perhaps transpose these patterns into a different medium, a medium that lets light play off the of the patterns differently, neoliberalism was theorised through the lens of an Espositoan framework. Namely, the final chapter of the first section attempted to think of neoliberalism through the transgressions of an imbalanced *communitas/immunitas* binary, and specifically how different balances, and different forms of community tie into different subjectivities. Because of the time spent on Hobbes, and Hobbes's place in the work of Esposito, he was a proper foil to pull up beside certain accounts of neoliberalism and economic (economic theological) encroachment. My hope is that even if the reading of neoliberalism as properly comparable to Hobbesian political thought is a stretch, it succeeds in bringing out elements of both that showcase the most pertinent point: communal forms assist in creating different human subjectivities. This entire first section, then, notes how Esposito's particular conceptional understanding of community brings to the fore a web of 'analytical tools' to be considered. They allow for a re-arrangement of how community can be considered, and these will be important for understanding Paul's nascent communities. This first section has set up the framework necessary to continue the argument necessary for re-thinking Paul, an argument that requires imaging community through munificent giving, body rhetoric, and the place of the immunitarian agent (including, of course, the dangers of thanatopolitics). And, so, through the web of communities, including neoliberalism and Hobbesianism, we have seen the place of the munus, the circularity of *communitas*, *immunitas*, the precarious alienation/appropriation dialectic, and the dangers of falling into auto-immunity.

The second part of this project, however, makes a crucial departure from the previous work. This departure is disciplinary, with a move to hermeneutical issues, New Testament studies (broadly conceived), as well as the problems of disciplinary boundaries. But, the problems that emerged in the opening sections are not left far behind. They are merely placed aside until the right moment, when their explicit acknowledgement may provide new avenues for the dual, circulating discourse between philosophical issues in community and the Pauline legacy (in all of its multiplicities). In that respect, while some of the analytics will not be as overt in the next two chapters, they will nevertheless be present. In the next chapter, the section on Badiou will briefly mention subjectivation, though mostly in relation to Badiou, and with no explicit connection to an Espositoan Paul. The real point of the next chapter is centred on opening up hermeneutical space for reading Paul with the philosophers. The penultimate chapter on Pauline studies does not centre on Espositoan discourse, but instead attempts to join the main analytical discourse from a separate edge. And, so, the Pauline gift is mentioned, as well as the broad social character of Paul's context. This is, once again, setting the stage for a type of Paul who can more easily and directly be read with Esposito. Such a reading takes place, finally, in the last chapter, which brings forth those analytics with Paul.

CHAPTER 4: READING PAUL THROUGH DISTORTED OPTICS

1. Introduction

History is the ineffectual medium through which we piece together pictures, creating a collage of varied colours, shapes, and sizes that, from divergent vantages, seems to flow into coherence. The collage is subject to a nexus of factors; whoever chooses and arranges these factors changes the nexus. Assemblages vary, always constrained and aligned by the current consensus of scholars who dominate the *methods* and *modes* through which those colours, shapes, and sizes are formed, contrasted, and fit together. Scholars, however, are also not simply dominating through these diverse methods and modes that fluctuate, entering in and out of favour while enjoying continued clarity, perfect perspicuity. It is a well-trod point, but we see through a mirror darkly. This has been a significant point made in the history of biblical (and historical, broadly) scholarship. Albert Schweitzer may reign as producing one of the pre-eminent examples of the problem of ideology and epistemology in NT studies, but in recent decades the inescapability of ideology has been a pervasive point in critical work.³⁰⁸ Beyond Schweitzer's expressive example, we cannot forget the substantial work of thinkers like Foucault, whose works have been paramount in detailing how the ordering of knowledge in systems produces specific results, a point poignantly highlighted in *The Order of Things*.³⁰⁹ These types of work

³⁰⁸ Two very recent books illustrate this nicely, James Crossley's *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism*, and Robert J. Myles' *The Homeless Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*. Both point out, specifically, how neoliberal ideology in scholarship has shaped historical Jesus scholarship, as well as how the pretence of objectivity is mistaken. James G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism: Quests, Scholarship and Ideology* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012); and, Robert J. Myles, *The Homeless Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014).

³⁰⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2005); See the application of this in Todd Penner and Davina Lopez, *De-Introducing the New Testament: Texts, Worlds, Methods, Stories* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 31–66.

An 'ordering of things' is concerned with an origin point. What originary event we recognise acts as an ordering principle for a particular system or worldview. As Penner and Lopez point out, this is also crucial for understanding how something like the study of the New Testament works (pp. 40–44). What point we consider to be an originary moment affects how we construct and organise the story we are telling. As an example, we can note the different stories that are told by scholars when they choose either Paul or Jesus as the foundational person (bound up within an originary event) for the institution of Christianity. The nexus of factors that describe the situation of the event, of course, determine how exactly the story plays out. Regarding the methodology of the discipline, Penner and Lopez write: 'it is worth deliberating whether we are doing more of a disservice to our study of the ancient past by consistently constructing our subject . . . as having a single moment of beginning at a fixed point in time' (p. 45).

have highlighted the contingency, especially, of post-Enlightenment textual play; significantly, however, it was early modern work on the Bible that revealed just how contingent our assemblages can be, questioning, partially because of the legacy of Protestantism, the legitimacy of biblical texts, and the traditions that lay at the foundations.³¹⁰

And, yet, with Paul we note that, as with the trajectory of historical Jesus scholarship, historical chaos allows a diversity of reconstructions, some that are radically different than others.³¹¹ It is quite easy to detect the wide range of Pauls when surveying the diversity of scholars who are utilizing his broad corpus. There are the divergent Continental Pauls wherein a radical, often materialist, figuration is present, a Paul who resembles a proto-leftist militant of one type or another.³¹² There are other Pauls that seem to roughly correspond to Protestant theological models, championing a particular theologised grace as the salve achieved through faith.³¹³ And, one cannot forget the current consensus Pauls that seem to be in flux, but which

³¹⁰ Jeffrey L. Morrow, 'The Acid of History: La Peyrère, Hobbes, Spinoza, and the Separation of Faith and Reason in Modern Biblical Studies,' *Heythrop Journal* LVIII (2017): 169–80. See also Dirk van Miert, Henk Nellen, Piet Steenbakkers, and Jetze Touber, *Scriptural Authority and Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Golden Age: God's Word Questioned* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Van Miert, et al. note that: the 'historicization of the biblical text went hand in hand with a reconsideration of the normative values that were attributed to the Bible. Of course, the Bible remained an inspiration for countless believers, but at the same time critical scholarship more and more saw the book as the artefact of a distant, extinct civilization that waited for rediscovery through assiduous, painstaking historical research. In the seventeenth century a tension between biblical criticism and systematic theology cropped up. This applies first and foremost to Protestant believers, for whom the doctrine of the Bible as the sole spiritual authority (*sola Scriptura*) was a pillar of faith'.

³¹¹ Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956). Like Schweitzer's earlier Jesus book, this one represents the ever-present difficulty with reconstructing historical figures. One need only survey Paul's constructions since the advent of normative strains in biblical studies (e.g. historical-critical) to note the diversity. Reaching back to the coming-into-being of Christianity brings about even more possibilities. It isn't only Pauline constructions mirror scholars, but that the evidence allows for seemingly endless possibilities in light of evolving methodologies.

N.T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015). While very different than Schweitzer's earlier work on the broad scope of Pauline studies, Wright's is an important update to a wide-ranging, though very flawed, reading of the state of the discipline. The void left by a lack of important feminist voices is, for instance, very noticeable, as is a lack of ideological critical works. Further, while philosophical reception of Paul is noted, it is a shallow reading that lacks critical nuance.

³¹² This includes, of course, the oft mentioned figurations by Žižek, Badiou, Agamben, and the varied Blantonian Pauls, but also non-materialist Pauls, like Stanislas Breton's.

³¹³ The most obvious examples of these types of Pauline figurations are among Lutheran(-esque) scholars, and include some philosophical Pauls, including Heidegger's and Badiou's, both of whom remain embedded, even if on the outskirts, in a Protestant reading of Paul emphasising universalisms and guilt. This is, of course, a tricky point to underscore, not least because of temptation to conflate universalisms and guilts. Does Heideggerian guilt, for instance, leak into the work of Agamben? How wedded to Paul is existential guilt, something collective and inescapable? Perhaps one way forward is to distinguish these concepts. Can there, for instance, be a Pauline

attempt to take his Jewishness seriously; this current trend, a diversity of ‘new perspectives’, is not a monolith, as *none* of these rough collection of Pauls are. Instead, there are constant tweaks. Scholars like Chris Tilling and Douglas Campbell, for instance, are reacting against certain modalities in the movement away from previous Lutheran and broadly Protestant Pauls, creating a ‘post new perspective’ distinct from constructions following from the work of scholars like Wright, Dunn, or E. P. Sanders.³¹⁴ Instead of monolithic enterprises, we have a sliding scale, or a complex circular graph whereby different outer sections in the graph point to specific tendencies or points of greater or lesser emphasis. Not only are our Pauls bound up within the personalities of the academics who engage in historical reconstruction, but we have to note the institutional contexts, the sites of production that help lead and dictate historical work. Contemporary Pauls are numerous, and yet too often philosophical reception of Paul seems at best seen as a curiosity, rather than an exemplar of a broadening of methodology that can in fact be important for Pauline studies, both in its historical and literary modes. Instead of a mere curiosity, these Pauls can have—and have had—impact on the field, as seen in Agamben’s understanding of Paul’s deactivation of the law, and as will be shown with Badiou’s Paul in this chapter. Further to the interests of this chapter, in order to exemplify the broader landscape with regards to reading Paul, I will use Bultmann as a type of foil, similar to the use of Hobbes above.

1.2 Introduction: Trajectories

In order to continue with our discussion on Paul and community the mire of Pauline work needs to be navigated. But in what way? While it would be legitimate to provide a survey, or review of literature, the trajectory for this chapter will attempt to accomplish several goals simultaneously so that the broader connection between continental philosophical work on

universalism that is not tainted with the issues that Daniel Boyarin forcefully opens up in his work, *A Radical Jew?* See also Mika Ojakangas, ‘Apostle Paul and the Profanation of the Law’, *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 10, no. 1 (2009): 47–68. Ojakangas, contra the recent surge of radical Paulinisms, contends that, actually, the Lutheran Pauline conception of the law has resulted in a non-sacred, rational apparatus. Paul, through rendering the law ‘inoperative’ frees it’s use, while also closing off any type of messianic possibility, contra Agamben.

³¹⁴ See Chris Tilling, ed., *Beyond Old and New Perspectives on Paul: Reflections on the Work of Douglas Campbell* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).

community (what we have already explored) and a Paulinist community (which will be sketched out later) can interact. Firstly, it is here that a heuristic will be outlined that touches on hermeneutical emphases. This is, quite obviously, important. Bringing forth a hermeneutical path, even a tendentious or eclectic one, clarifies future Pauline textual engagement with Esposito. Furthermore, it is quite clear that there has been some backlash against philosophy's treading onto the sacred grounds of biblical studies; therefore, a discussion of this nature will need to briefly mention the projects of those continental thinkers who have done significant Pauline projects, and likewise will need to discuss some basic biblical studies groundwork.³¹⁵ It is inevitable in order to move past those charges of anachronism, which are so familiar to those creating space of confrontation between Paul and philosophy. As Christian Petterson and Roland Boer note '[We] find it curiously naive the suggestion that one should use approaches that have been applied by the ancients themselves. This proposal is supposed to avoid methodological anachronism without being aware that all of the approaches we use are anachronistic'.³¹⁶ Methodological anachronism is hardly the primary problem in biblical studies, and undue fear of such anachronism has resulted in tip-toeing around new methodological paths. But, secondly, this chapter sets up a *general* theoretical trajectory from which this project will build, which is elucidated through noting some of the ways that Paul has been utilised for philosophical projects in the past.

The difficulty of interdisciplinary work comes with tying together several approaches that have diverse *telos* (if we can speak of ends, or goals, here). Biblical studies has transformed throughout its brief history, but is currently quite comfortable admitting the relevance of sociology, anthropology, and other 'sciences', not to mention recent changes that can be seen in various corners of the field due to a wider interactivity between biblical studies and other disciplines in the humanities and so-called 'soft sciences', including even moments when

³¹⁵ See, for instance, John D. Caputo and Linda Alcoff, *St. Paul Among the Philosophers* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009). What emerges here are, often, the usual divisions between historical-critical scholars and those 'outsiders' who do not jump through the specific hoops of professional biblical scholarship.

³¹⁶ Christian Petterson and Roland Boer, *Time of Troubles*.

utilising psychology was popular.³¹⁷ The ‘sciences’ are not the only relevant disciplines from which we can seek to think through biblical texts. Literary theories, post-structuralism, critical theory, feminist criticism, postcolonial criticism, ideological criticism, psychoanalysis, Marxist criticism, postmodernism(s), and varied philosophical approaches have brought about a resurgence in reading ancient texts in diverse ways. In this latter list is where this work fits most comfortably. Here, the various works on community that we are interacting with are broadly theoretical in nature, meaning that continental philosophical work, critical legal work, and literary criticism can fit comfortably within, emphasized to various degrees. It is difficult to delineate these subjects neatly; instead they quite smoothly overlap in places, such as the ways one can see ‘history’ and ‘sociology’ overlap today, perhaps being labelled as ‘social historical’ work (although, ‘social history’ as a method can also be read as a reaction against ‘pure’ social scientific research).³¹⁸

In summary, then, a general theoretical frame will be outlined that acknowledges the difficulty of my broader approach, makes a positive case for it, and does so through interacting with a diversity of recent hermeneutical strategies. Doing so will allow an even clearer case of my strategy to be outlined, while also interacting with Pauline scholarship broadly. This will set the stage for the next chapter which will focus on Pauline work *specifically* as it has occurred in contemporary biblical studies, as well as directly paying attention to certain contexts that are

³¹⁷ Some scholars have been unreceptive, or at least sceptical. Some scholars in biblical studies thought the social sciences were ‘anachronistic’, fundamentally unable to deal with the texts in non-reductive ways because the social sciences come with assumptions that skew the data (i.e. the biblical texts). There are appropriate reservations to have. Nonetheless, it may be that a degree of anachronism is built into any discussion about ancient texts, that there is no way to truly escape from this gap. For a relevant discussion about this gap, see Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996).

For an example of psychological interpretation, see Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987); and Terrance Callan, *Psychological Perspectives on the Life of Paul: An Application of the Methodology of Gerd Theissen* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1990). For an example of a strong rejection of such method see Zeba Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin: Gruyter, 2004), 13–30.

See Yvonne Sherwood and Stephen Moore’s *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar*.

³¹⁸ David G. Horrell, *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 15–18. For an example of ‘social historical’ approaches one can look at the work of John Barclay as an exemplar, but many other well-known New Testament scholars fit this mould well. It is also crucial to recognise, as Horrell notes, that ‘there is no sustainable methodological distinction between history and social science’ (p. 17).

important for my particular reading of Pauline community. After dealing with specific texts that point toward my emphasis on *communitas*, in the final main chapter these texts will be looked at using a specifically Espositoan framework, emphasising what *communitas/immunitas* and his broader biopolitical work can provide for reading Pauline community.

It is here that I must briefly highlight again the dearth of philosophical focus by Pauline scholars and those in biblical studies. Ward Blanton points toward the lack of interdisciplinary work and the continued growth of the gap between disciplines.³¹⁹ Such has not always been the case. Blanton notes the work of Albert Schweitzer as a positive example, but also the prolific early work of Heidegger, who focused on Paul in his broader theorising of religion, but was also important for biblical scholars, most notably Bultmann.³²⁰ For much of the 20th century, and on into the 21st, this trajectory has been lost; however, there is room for growth and imagination within the field, ways of moving forward through our archives in order to do interesting work that furthers the scope of interdisciplinary work involved in diverse projects.

2. *Hermeneutics, Theology, Philosophy*

Troels Engberg-Pedersen drew out the possibility of a Stoic Paul anew, and did so with an enlarged project seeking to note the possible Stoic hills within the broader Pauline landscape, eschewing merely paying attention to specific, isolated textual sections, as if such parallels could point to a deeper, qualitatively interesting comparison.³²¹ Not only was this bold, but Engberg-Pedersen made sure to develop a tentative framework that side-stepped the impossibly large chasm that Bultmann both dug out, and (according to popular discourse in the field) became trapped within. Bultmann, as is well known, was a pre-eminent New Testament scholar, but the

³¹⁹ This occurs, of course, whilst interdisciplinary focuses are fetishised, turned into commodities the modern university system seems to push for, and yet are ignored by particular disciplines that become more and more insular. Thankfully, since Blanton has pointed to this dearth in biblical studies some work has gone to rectify this, such as Timothy Luckritz Marquis recent work on Paul in *Transient Apostle*, Laura Nasrallah's spatial studies, and Cavan Concannon's use of Deleuze.

³²⁰ See Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, 129–66; 105–28. Also, see Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 47–87 *passim*.

³²¹ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

framework for his hermeneutical project relied on a distinctly modern philosophical discourse, namely Heidegger's existentialist philosophy (or so the story goes). As Engberg-Pedersen points out about his own Stoic Paul project in relation to Bultmann:

As already noted, there are clear similarities, but also marked differences [between Engberg-Pedersen's Pauline philosophy and Bultmann's Heideggerian-Lutheran Paul]. The similarities include Bultmann's well-known focus on Paul's 'anthropology' and self-understanding and his use of philosophy (in Bultmann's case, the Heideggerian descent) to elucidate the 'anthropology'. The similarities also include Bultmann's insistence that the anthropology cannot be separated from the 'theology' and Bultmann's clear recognition of the problem this raises since Paul's 'theology' cum 'cosmology' is so thoroughly marked by its 'mythic' features.³²²

Unlike Bultmann, however, Engberg-Pedersen's project attempts to skirt the chasm of 'reinterpretation', or the problem of supplying a reading that could not be 'historically anchored in Paul himself, as Bultmann himself had, at least partially, claimed for it.'³²³

It is easy to read the present scholarly map as a variety of diverse paths branching off from each other. Many of these roads appear simultaneously and from the outset, leading to different possible representative models, each built from the scattered materials found along the scholarly journey. Each branching path can emerge along the different, divergent paths available from the outset. There are the proper (in the Espositoan sense!), usual paths that include opportunities to pick through the materials of historical-critical scholarship and build a model that is *prima facie* acceptable (or, as would be claimed, results from an objective analysis of the evidence). And, there are the paths that lead to defective materials, materials that allow for creation of models that are structurally deficient and often *either* distort the buried and murky images of the 1st century communities, social patterns, cultural realities, and distinct individuals so important to New Testament studies, *or* collapse altogether as if a delicate structure easily toppled by a strong gust of wind. Such a binary can be broken down easily, but is instructive for the moment. Often the former leads to the latter, and someone like Engberg-Pedersen would read

³²² Ibid., 28–29.

³²³ Ibid., 19.

the history of Bultmann's scholarship as a prime example of this. While popular for a few decades, it was soon largely abandoned, finding relevance mostly genealogically within surveys of NT studies.³²⁴ Unfortunately, we hardly see Bultmann's work, except as an example of scholarly path to avoid in biblical studies.³²⁵

Perhaps whole disciplinary cities are built along these paths. The borders, however, are of different degrees of permeability. In some cities, this permeability allows for a flow of diverse thought to take shape, bringing in profitable denizens from other disciplinary cities and creating new cityscapes, which likewise bring new laws as the social-scape mutates. In other places, the borders of the disciplinary city are much more stringent; the mirror a type of Espositoan community where the immunitarian agent reigns supreme.³²⁶ The danger of immunity is, of course, sliding into the wreckages of auto-immunitarian tragedy, eating the body from within, or merely resulting in structural atrophy.

Bultmann correctly identified the importance of pointing to a Pauline anthropology. This is certainly a concern that has been identified above in a delineation of a Hobbesian-neoliberal anthropos. A particular account of the human person can, likewise, be seen through the broad 'theological' outworking of the Pauline materials. In fact, it may be that one cannot escape the inevitability of being bound up within the interconnecting spaces of theology, philosophy, and anthropology (given specific understandings of these terms) when dealing with a historical-critical reading of Paul. It is crucial to note that Engberg-Pedersen's project attempts to get beyond these Bultmannian issues. While maintaining the viability of a philosophical framework undergirding Paul, he couches this from within a historically viable framework, instead of an

³²⁴ We can note, then, who Bultmann taught and influenced, such as Ernst Käsemann. For a good review of Käsemann's legacy in, especially, Pauline studies, see David V. Way, *The Lordship of Christ: Ernst Käsemann's Interpretation of Paul's Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

³²⁵ For some exceptions, see David Congdon, *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann's Dialectical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Fortress Press, 2015).

³²⁶ And, of course, when we inquire about the immunitarian agent, we have to note both the gifts of the community (the obligations of the communal agents) and what it means for the immunitarian agent to be absolved of the obligation. At the edges of the obligation, how are the borders policed? How easily does the community slip into auto-immunity?

alleged re-interpretation of Paul into modern discourse. Bultmann's problem, according to Engberg-Pedersen, was mixing an inward (confessional) interpretation with historical-critical (objective) engagement. Confessional projects negate the viability of and cloud proper historical-critical interpretation.³²⁷

Translating a form of Heideggerian existentialism into the Pauline form, or, rather, moulding the Pauline form around Heidegger, resulted in a novel possibility. But, the possibilities developed here went beyond just a ram-rodging of insider interests into the Pauline form, bursting the delicate skin. The Heideggerian interest extended to 'anthropology', and here we encounter the positive novelty found in the Bultmannian project. If the embracing of anthropological discussion opened up possible new ways to encounter and read Paul, the theological pretensions seem to have negated them, at least according to the consensus of scholars who followed historically after Bultmann. It may be, however, that his Paul was not radical *enough*, the true weakness being a suspension of anthropology, or an implicit anthropology where Paul's voice was muffled. Anthropology, as contemporaneously understood, remained on the outside, rather than considered a legitimate aspect of Pauline thought. In order to unearth Paul's anthropology he had to be translated, perhaps.

Engberg-Pedersen provides a current critique of Bultmann, a source for reading back the legitimate criticisms that have been levelled against him over time. And, this also serves as a broader model for a particular way of thinking about how to engage Paul, and for thinking precisely *what* we are wanting to do with an engagement of Paul. He does so in a way, as well, that points to the importance of the link between philosophy, broadly conceived, and Paul, a concern that is key to this project. It is true, for instance, that there is a constant temptation to

³²⁷ Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (London: Yale University Press, 1994), 2–3. And, of course, the problem of confessional reading is no stranger to the history of interpretation. One can merely take a look at one of the earliest readers of Paul to note this, namely Augustine. As Stanley Stowers points out, '[Augustine's] reading of Romans shaped the understanding of his own conversion, and his experience in turn shaped the way he understood the letter'. It becomes amusing then when we note, along with Stowers, that there is a direct genealogy from Paul to modernity, and thus historical-critical scholarship. It becomes even more interesting when we realise how Augustine has so coloured our understanding of Pauline psychology, leading to a Lutheran understanding of Pauline guilt, something that can be felt strongly in Bultmann.

view Paul's live options as our own. The chasm separating the historical character, Paul, and contemporary peoples is wide. Because of this, Engberg-Pedersen is explicit in his rejection of a theological reading of Paul, one that reads 'Paul's theology' as 'talk about God, Christ and more which presents that talk as at least a real option, if not the actual truth about human beings and the world'.³²⁸

It may be that 'talk about God, Christ and more' is inaccessible to the modern man, as Bultmann as well suggested. It also may be that Bultmann's existential contentions, and his Lutheran, individualist Paul, is antiquated when compared to modern Pauline scholarship. But, we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. While Bultmann, as characterized by Engberg-Pedersen, seems to parallel modern Paulinisms that follow political, philosophical, and economic readings, my contention is that this is not quite true. Bultmann was on to something, and the connections between a Bultmannian reading and later philosophical/political/economic readings of Paul are legitimate from several angles. While these connections may seem tangential to the structure of this chapter, working through the hermeneutical issue is essential. The most common critique of the breaching of the borders of the discipline by philosophers has been couched firmly in the same way as has the rejection of Bultmann in the mid-20th century.

A first obvious connection between many of the philosophical readings of Paul and Bultmann's figuration of Paul is the Heideggerian background, which is indispensable to the works of Agamben, Badiou, Žižek, Esposito, and many others, though in diverse ways (positively and reactively) and to different degrees.³²⁹ The Heideggerian connection points to the obsession with the subject, with *Dasein*, being-there. This is most explicit in Bultmann,

³²⁸ Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 29.

³²⁹ We can see, for instance, the different ways that later philosophers used Heidegger. Nancy, for instance with his extension of *Mitsein*, an ontological re-ordering in line with Heidegger. David Congdon, 'Is Bultmann a Heideggerian Theologian?' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, no. 1 (2017): 19–38. It is important to gesture to this recent article that attempts to push back at the long held consensus that Bultmann developed a theology that was particularly Heideggerian. Instead, Congdon demonstrates that much of Bultmann's theology was already in place before he met Heidegger. The link between the two is still present, but the relationship is changed. However, this does not detract from the broader point of this section, which relates to hermeneutical styles.

whose translation of the New Testament mythos to a contemporary social and cultural structure is foremost a type of evangelistic project.³³⁰ Modern man, after all, cannot accept the reality of the ancient writer who believed in a three-tiered, pre-Copernican universe. The *kerygma* that he points to as the centre of the *euangelion*, however, transcends the social and cultural realities of the ancient writers, according to Bultmann, and can be translated into terms modern man can accept. This is partially because the interpreter can never truly attain the desired level of objectivity; there is never a Rawlsian suspension of subjectivity for the good of the method of historical criticism.³³¹ The New Testament texts are re-read as being oriented toward, foremost, humanity's existential longings, addressing 'humankind much as Heidegger's *Dasein*, who is a participant, not a spectator'.³³² In a peculiar way, Bultmann is able to stay true to a specific 19th century Lutheran reading of Christianity precisely by translating the NT texts through Heidegger, his fellow German who, despite being nominally Catholic, was fascinated with Luther.

2.2 *Going Beyond the Usual*

But, despite the many critiques of Bultmann, what is crucial to realise is that NT studies is not bound to only certain forms of reading and de-proprating (or, rather, going beyond any type of logic of the binary proper: improper, including the dispossession of 'expropriating) texts. This is, perhaps, an issue that can be levelled at Engberg-Pedersen's critique of Bultmann. But, let's try to refine this a bit more. It is *not* that Bultmann is not mistaken in his larger project of appropriating texts for a theological project, that he is skipping past any problems with theologising some of these texts in the ways that he does; instead it is suggested that one can critique his appropriation precisely through placing themselves in a certain location in relation to the text, which shifts how one sees Bultmann's work. Our disciplinary methods matter, orienting

³³⁰ Rudolf Bultmann, 'On the Problem of Demythologizing', *The Journal of Religion* 42, no. 2 (April 1962): 96–102.

³³¹ Anthony Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 176.

³³² *Ibid.*, 177.

our evaluation of both prior methods, and how we read the texts in question. Bultmann is not mistaken merely because he does not toe the disciplinary line, in other words.

This is the basic rhetorical strategy of those who critique philosophical projects that utilise Paul.³³³ It could be that a broad ideological critical project would unearth the specific relations that lead to a disavowal of alternative ways of reading texts. Anachronism is, of course, the usual charge levelled against methods of reading texts that do not align unilaterally with historical-critical methods. Thus, despite the increasing use of critical theory in biblical studies, and the advent of postcolonial and feminist criticism in the latter half of the 20th century, these methods are largely marginal and often critiqued for not adhering to the dominance of historical-critical methods; furthermore, critics of these methods and trajectories in biblical studies often exaggerate how pervasive they are within the field, setting up a disciplinary scenario whereby the ‘pure’ discipline is under siege by non-pure agents who infect and misunderstand the goals of the field at a fundamental level.³³⁴ Again, perhaps the discipline is close to an auto-immunitarian scenario.

A prime example of utilising theory for reading NT texts critically would be Elizabeth A. Castelli’s book *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*.³³⁵ While this appears in the early, but burgeoning, years of continued experimentation with literary theory in biblical studies, Castelli’s book is exceptional (even if a bit short) because of her use of Foucault’s broader corpus to unearth nuances of how power operates. And, this brings out certain aspects of Paul’s work that would be missed otherwise, while also cutting through significant problems in NT studies,

³³³ For a prime example see, Paula Fredriksen, ‘Historical Integrity, Interpretive Freedom: The Philosopher’s Paul and the Problem of Anachronism’, in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, ed. John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 61–73. Badiou isn’t simply attempting to construct a historical-critical rendition of Paul.

Dale Martin, ‘Teleology, Epistemology, and the Universal Vision in Paul’, in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, ed. John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 105n17. Martin writes in this note, ‘For biblical scholars, this [truth as elaborated in Badiou’s philosophical system through Paul,] all sounds like the role played by the notion of the early Christian *kerygma* . . . in the thought of Rudolf Bultmann’.

³³⁴ Sherwood and Moore, *Inventing the Biblical Scholar*.

³³⁵ Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

namely those connected to imitation and ideology.³³⁶ These two terms represent pervasive, intertwining problems in NT studies, which she demonstrates in the first chapter, following that demonstration with a possible theoretical discourse providing concepts and words to the hunches one may feel when butting up against some of the issues in many traditional strains of biblical scholarship, as heavily imbued with theological and confessional angles.³³⁷

Castelli's book is significant because of her methodology. In specific ways, this connects to the broad map we are sketching out in this chapter, providing an example of NT scholarship utilising theory in an effective and keen ways. Thus, we have an initial and important example in Bultmann's broader work, a wide corpus that had come under intense scrutiny in the mid to late 20th century. This represents a break from strict, historical-critical work, an attempt at utilising philosophy in order to expand textual possibilities. We've noted Engberg-Pedersen as an example of a scholar who continues in the historical-critical tradition who recognises the importance of ancient philosophy (Stoicism), while eschewing methods that he sees as sliding into an interior (theological) space, especially if they utilise 'anthropology'. Castelli, however, is a representative of a break from this, paying attention to both NT studies and contemporary theory, and what may be found through using contemporary theory.

3. Paul and the Philosophers

The three scholars we discussed above are merely touchstones representing differing attitudes, implementations, and focuses when it comes to texts, methods, and theory. Castelli's is the most sophisticated when it comes to noting the effects of ideology on the text, while also demonstrating how ideology shows up in the text itself from a Foucauldian perspective. Nearly

³³⁶ Ibid., 21–22; 24–33. Paul exhorts some of his followers to imitate him. It is crucial to interrogate what it means to 'imitate'. Does it call for homogeneity? And, what do we make of the asymmetric relations that come with calls to imitation? Going beyond the text, Castelli interrogates the tendency of interpreters to accept Paul's authority, which reveals ideological trends flowing through traditions in NT scholarship.

³³⁷ Ibid., 21–33; 35–58.

three years prior to Castelli's book, another work came to the fore that represented the renewal, however, of an enduring, philosophical interest in Paul.

3.2 Contemporary Sources: Stretching the Texts

Jacob Taubes effectively began the recent turn to Paul in philosophy, a turn that is not merely a negative critique of a conservative Pauline figuration, one that follows from matter-of-fact readings that can be found in Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze. These interpretations of Paul follow directly from the Nietzschean tradition of reading Paul as not only a pre-eminently negative character who introduces a 'Platonism for the masses', but also as a strong foundational moment for Christianity as the celebratory, triumphant figure who parades a particular, originary vision of reality, a figure that we can point definitively to as negatively historically significant.³³⁸ In other words, the Paul being expounded upon is a rather old-fashioned figuration who stays true to traditional visions of the apostle and his work, standing as a foundational moment. Ward Blanton puts it best when he writes,

In a word, observing the range of philosophical *problēmata* constituting recent philosophical encounters with Paul led me to see more clearly ways our thinking is not yet attending to some background discursive economies which have both organized and been solidified by the name Paul, a name which—we must never forget—has functioned (and continues to function) as a founding and foundational exemplar or organizational *apparatus* of Western culture. What the apparatus illumines in its organizational captures of life, not to mention what it captures in its illuminations, is something this literature is only beginning to understand.³³⁹

³³⁸ Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses*, vxii; 4

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4–5. Blanton goes on: 'I think we must effectively press diagnoses of Paulinism as a cultural touchstone well beyond those undertaken by Nietzsche, Freud, and Derrida alike. Even when these thinkers want to read Paul as a kind of original antihero (e.g., as Nietzsche's most guilty originator of a "Platonism for the masses" or Derrida's very similar first-Christian purveyor of anti-Jewish metaphysical dualisms), it is still the fact that they read Paul as the one who knows, the one who founds, the one who is himself the guarantee of an ideal (even if self-deceptively imagined) origin named Christianity'.

Perhaps in an even more telling portion, Blanton is keen to suggest the importance of overturning these origins, and in his own work he plays with a reading of Eusebius as constructing a Pauline origin myth. He writes, 'The legacy has lent and continues to lend itself to repetition in diverse cultural spheres, which is to say that the legacy is effectively powerful in its capacities to organize huge swaths of discursive territory. But this openness to repetition is simultaneously an indication of the way the legacy is also open to transformation, to being repeated differently. It is in this sense that I have wanted to say that the contemporary study of Paul must attend to the Pauline "signature," those instances of an effect that is neither merely historical nor merely conceptual but some quasi-transcendental

But, even so, even realising the critiques given by Blanton, it is essential to note the archival break that Taubes seems to represent. Here, we have a reinvigorating re-appraisal of the philosophical importance of Paul (by someone well-versed in Nietzsche!), going from a symbol of the originary beginnings of Christianity (the mythic past), and so a proper source of critique of the Western tradition, to a source for political philosophical invigoration through a provocative messianism.³⁴⁰ While there may be similarities in Taubes' work on Paul and the critiques that Blanton notes above, Taubes' work breaks from treating Paul as simply an important figure to be critiqued in a genealogy of the West. Or, if only we can discern the ills found in Paul that infect the long trajectory in the West, then we can finally diagnose and move past these issues. Paul, for Taubes, becomes a 'loose thread on which to tug in order to subvert important strands within the still-vibrant Western theologico-political legacy'.³⁴¹

Many of the contemporary philosophical works on Paul do move past this more trenchant Nietzschean critique. Badiou, for instance, while engaging the usual trope of the Paulinist event as the initiation of something new, a break from the situation with the impossible, doesn't utilise this Pauline trope as origination of some enduring thing only, but instead as a form that points toward an in-breaking of a new regime of truth that can break from the usual. Paul remains as an important touchstone for our universalist tendencies, while also pointing to possibilities of further events. It is a revolutionary moment, but one that isn't an end in itself, instead remaining as a moment that underscores new impossibilities.

We can see different ways that each of these recent Pauline interpreters read the apostle. A question could be asked about each of these philosophers. Namely, do they fall into the supposed chasm that Bultmann could never quite escape from? Or, do they attend to Paul in a theoretical fashion through ways parallel to what Elizabeth Castelli, and other astute biblical studies scholars who utilise theory, has done? Is there a massive gulf between utilising theory for

apparatus putting both into operation at one go. We should not just refuse the historico-metaphysical dynamics of someone like Eusebius: we might also steal from his bag of tricks, repeat his story differently'.

³⁴⁰ Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul* (Stanford: SUP, 2004).

³⁴¹ Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses*, 25.

reading texts, and performing the same interpretive moves as Bultmann? We could travel down several separate avenues in order to wrestle with this question, but the majority of the rest of this chapter will look specifically at Badiou, especially because his approach seems to mirror Bultmann's closely, which can be seen clearly in criticisms of his Paul.³⁴²

In order to do this, I want to critique Badiou by augmenting his use of the Pauline form. Instead of utilising a stripped down Pauline figuration that ignores recent historical and sociological work on Paul, I want to point to some recent work on crucifixion in the ancient world that allows for a modified Pauline form that highlights the critiques of contemporary social and political structures that Badiou is partially concerned with. Here, then, we can point to how theory and biblical studies can, in tandem, point to alternate ways of reading a text in an interesting (perhaps even *historically* interesting) way. If Blanton is right about the nexus of biblical studies and philosophy in the infancy of the discipline of biblical studies, it may be beyond just beneficial to note the possibilities in new ways of appropriating this nexus in the current state of the field.³⁴³

4. *Badiou and Paul: Re-Orienting the Badiouian Figuration*

Badiou's broader project has to do with 're-founding a theory of the subject which subordinates its existence to the random dimension of the event, as to the pure contingency of multiple-being, without sacrificing the motive for truth.'³⁴⁴ And, while Badiou's magnum opus, *Being and Event*, was organized in such a way as to work through a theory of the subject that centred on event, he found in Paul a clear illustration of subjectivation through a truth-procedure

³⁴² Colin Wright, 'Resurrection and Reaction in Alain Badiou: Towards an Evental Historiography', *Culture, Theory and Critique* 49, no. 1 (April 2008): 73–92. Wright's article deals with a strong critique of a-historicity in Badiou's philosophical project, the charge that Badiou doesn't really care or reckon with historiography. This is said often by Pauline scholars, and allows for a comparison with Bultmann. But, this is hardly a defeater of Badiou's work in general, or his work on Paul in particular. For a nuanced reading of Badiou's Paul that undercuts many of the usual criticisms, see Daniel Boyarin, 'Paul among the Antiphrasists; or, Saul among the Sophists', in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, ed. Linda Alcoff and John D. Caputo (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 109-41.

³⁴³ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*.

³⁴⁴ Alain Badiou, trans. Ray Brassier, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 5.

of the event. In Badiou's work, what this all means is that there are those things that 'are', that can be accessible to knowledge, a multiplicity, a situation. These are things that are countable, that are ontologically reliable and realized. But, for truth to emerge, and for a subject to exist, something has to arise out of the situation in a 'contingent, unpredictable, and undemonstrable way'.³⁴⁵ And, furthermore, this event's 'effect has been to raise a challenge to some well-established . . . dominant system of values and beliefs'.³⁴⁶ What arises is an event, but the event is never in isolation, it has to be recognized by a subject, and in this way the two are mutually dependent. The event gives rise to the subject, and the subject sustains the event through fidelity to this event that leads to 'a reconfiguration of the initial situation from which it has unexpectedly arisen'.³⁴⁷

Badiou's opening chapter in *Saint Paul* represents a dual attempt to describe the specific political situation he is concerned with, and also to introduce Paul as a modified formulation for describing the importance of the Event in breaking from this current situation.³⁴⁸ What I think is crucial to realize is that while Badiou's larger project is concerned with truth, fidelity, subjectivation, and the possibility of a militant subject, it is also coming during a time of globalised marketisation, and as a Marxist (Maoist) thinker Badiou is concerned, in the contemporary situation, with breaking from the dual machine of identitarian concerns (pluralisation) and reduction of all to capital (a false universal which assumes infinite and ubiquitous circulation).

As Badiou explains,

For each identification (the creation or cobbling together of identity) creates a figure that provides a material for its investment in the market. There is nothing so captive, so far as commercial investment is concerned, nothing more

³⁴⁵ Alain Gignac, 'Taubes, Badiou, Agamben'. in *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians*, ed. by David Odell-Scott (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 171–72.

³⁴⁶ Christopher Norris, 'Alain Badiou: Truth, Ethics and the Formal Imperative', *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 65 (2009): 1106–07.

³⁴⁷ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 172.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4–15.

amenable to the invention of new figures of monetary homogeneity, than a community and its territory or territories.³⁴⁹

Event, in his system, brings about a true universality in contrast to the false universal of capital, and the *form* he sees Paul take represents precisely what he is attempting to sketch in his *magnum opus, Being and Event*.³⁵⁰ Paul does not pre-exist the event, but is subjectively constituted through his encounter with the resurrected Christ, which occurs out of place and breaks from the two dominant regimes of discourse (Jew and Greek), according to Badiou, in reference of the opening section of 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and other passages.³⁵¹ These regimes of discourse are paralleled with his contemporary concerns, with the Jew lining up with identitarian concerns, and the Greek aligning with the false universal of capitalism. With Paul's break, a new regime of discourse is created, Christianity, which neither relies on a false universal (cosmic wisdom) nor on exceptional, particularistic identity (prophetic sign). The new discourse is essential because the Greek and Jewish discourses do not allow for a universality, as 'each supposes the persistence of the other' and 'that the two discourses share the presupposition that the key to salvation is given to us within the universe'.³⁵² Or, to put it another way, neither breaks from the count-as-one; both discourses occur within the situation.

Badiou reads Paul, however, as announcing the discourse of the Son, or Christianity, which has the 'potential to be universal, detached from every particularism', precisely through its rupture into the existing realm of discourses.³⁵³ The rupture, the event, is the Resurrection, which is not, for Badiou's Paul, 'of the order of fact, falsifiable or demonstrable. It is pure event, opening of an epoch, transformation of the relations between the possible and the impossible' which 'testifies to the possible victory over death'.³⁵⁴ It is neither cosmic mastery, nor is it based on a mastery of signs or a literal tradition; it eschews mastery. Instead of mastery, Christian discourse is obsessed with the foolish (as opposed to the wisdom of the Greek) and the weak (as

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 10.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 14–15.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 40–41.

³⁵² Ibid., 42.

³⁵³ Ibid., 42–43.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 45.

opposed to the power of mastering signs and traditions); and likewise, Badiou points to Paul's statement that 'God has chosen the things that are not [*ta me onta*] in order to bring to nought those that are [*ta onta*]'. It is here that Badiou notes a sort of 'ontological subversion to which Paul's antiphilosophy invites the declarant or militant'.³⁵⁵ ³⁵⁶

4.2 Criticisms of Badiou's Universal Paul

While Badiou's Paul fits into the broad formula that he desires for the purpose of signifying his wider project, it is no secret that he is no Pauline scholar, nor does he claim to be.³⁵⁷ Nonetheless, interesting paths can be taken up from the sketch Badiou has rendered. It may be that for the sketch to become more aesthetically pleasing some erasing, shading, and line work has to be done, but the form, or skeleton, of the work provides an adequate angle to see Paul through, and points to a militant Pauline theology.³⁵⁸ Badiou's broader project invites reading Paul through a new vocabulary, and using the Badiouian vocabulary, entering into the Badiouian system, allows for thinking Pauline theology anew through reframing Paul's situation.

Nonetheless, with the rise of Empire criticism and the so-called New Perspective(s) on Paul, it has to be stressed that the nice, clean divisions that Badiou envisions through the delineations of specific Jewish and Greek regimes of discourse are inaccurate and misleading.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 46–47.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 2, 18. Badiou is familiar with the text and even consults the Nestle-Aland; nonetheless, he is clear that his purpose is neither 'historicizing' nor 'exegetical' in nature. However, it is clear that Badiou is at least broadly acquainted with Pauline scholarship, noting, for instance, the 'retrospective construction' of Acts (p. 18) and the 'apocryphal nature' of the contested Pauline epistles (ibid.). But, of course, outdated scholarship, or at least contested claims are made often, such as the claim that he comes from a 'well-off family' (p. 21).

³⁵⁸ James G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism: Quests, Scholarship, and Ideology* (Durham: Acumen, 2013), *passim* 69–98; Robert Myles, 'The Fetish for a Subversive Jesus', *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 14, no. 1 (2016): 52–70. There is a temptation to qualify Paul as subversive; however, there is a thoroughgoing problem in New Testament studies with certain high profile figures utilising the term 'subversive' as gesturing toward anti-whatever-one-is-against. Noting the neoliberal tendencies in labelling figures as 'subversive' has been championed most significantly in the work of Crossley (who notes the individualization of the Great Man of history found in work on the historical Jesus) and Myles (who notes explicitly the trope of 'subversiveness') with the figure of Jesus, but it can just as easily be applied to constructions of Paul as well.

³⁵⁹ Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 46–57. Elliott notes how (even among the NPP) often 'discussion fails to take into account the political pressures in which ethnic identities are constructed' and how 'rich and complex discussions of political pressure on Jewish identity in the Roman world do

Paul is hardly enacting a new religion that breaks from Judaism. Instead Badiou's work portrays a thoroughly Protestant Paul, one which, starting with Krister Stendahl in the 1960s, has been reacted against quite sternly.³⁶⁰ However, one must be gentle with Badiou on this point. He stresses that his work on Paul is 'subjective through and through', that his intention is 'neither historicising nor exegetical'. While it may be that Badiou wants to have his cake and eat it too, to provide a complete critique of Badiou's work in light of Pauline scholarship has been done thoroughly in other places.³⁶¹ As well, doing so distracts from the deeper and more profound theological possibilities found through augmenting Badiou's work, through noticing what it draws out of Paul and how what is drawn out can be utilized.

Thus, while Badiou can be forgiven for his errors that relate to some specificities of scholarship, especially in light of his insistence that he is interested in the mere *form* of Paul, criticisms need to be levelled at the particular weak Pauline form that is presented; the criticism need not be, however, a means to rewriting the content to fit the form of Badiou's Paul. Presented as a foil, Badiou, as I have said, provides a nice framework for thinking about Pauline theology as breaking from regimes of discourse, encountering a subjectivating Event, and providing a means of critiquing marketisation. Here, however, we need to pay attention to two main failures: foremost, the truncating of the Christ-event; and secondly, neglecting the importance of the Pauline communal form. Both of these weaknesses highlight Badiouian insufficiency in creating a Paul who has something to say about capitalism, whose philosophical

not carry over to interpretation of Paul'. Connecting these lingering (universalizing) misconstructions to Badiou is easy.

³⁶⁰ Neil Elliott, 'Ideological Closure in the Christ Event', in *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision*, ed. Douglas Harink (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), 148-50. As Elliott points out, 'Badiou follows . . . a flawed tradition of Protestant scholarship going back to at least F. C. Baur. . . [and] wrongly places a supposed opposition to Judaism, Jewish identity, and the "exceptionalism" of Jewish law as such at the center of Paul's thought'. Krister Stendahl, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199-215.

³⁶¹ Daniel M. Bell, Jr., 'Badiou's Faith and Paul's Gospel', *Angelaki* 12, no. 1 (April 2007): 97-111; John Barclay, 'Paul and the Philosophers: Alain Badiou and the Event', *New Blackfriars* 91 (2010): 171-84; Elliot, 'Ideological Closure in the Christ Event'.

and theological possibilities can perform the militant function that Badiou so desperately wants.³⁶²

4.3 A Pauline Emphasis on Death

For Paul. . . the event is not death, it is resurrection. . . suffering plays no role in Paul's apologetic, not even in the case of Christ's death. . . What constitutes an event in Christ is exclusively the Resurrection.³⁶³

Such words would be anathema to some Protestant sects, as fixated as some of them are on a particular understanding of the atonement that requires a judicial and substitutionary function to be present for the crucifixion to have full theological meaning. Nonetheless, one cannot help but sense that a reaction against Badiou's truncation of the Christ-event is perhaps in order, and not simply for the purpose of defending penal substitutionary atonement. Paul, especially in Romans, makes it quite clear that death has a central place: 'Being united with Christ in a death like his. . . our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is free from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him'.³⁶⁴ Death is mentioned as well in various other Pauline passages, such as 2 Corinthians 4–5, and the constant description of 'crucified' in relation to Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18 names the gospel as a 'message about the cross') is obviously gesturing toward death. Suffering imagery is peppered throughout Paul's writings, and while some may be for rhetorical purposes (such as Paul recounting his suffering in 2 Cor. 11:16–33), often it has a specific theological, and perhaps even political, agenda.³⁶⁵

³⁶² Bell, 'Badiou's Faith', 103. Bell's criticisms note the universalising system of Badiou is a mere rival, and therefore leaves open for the viability of a capitalist system. We can see this, particularly, in Badiou's strong reaction against community because of the asociality of the eventual break: 'He denounces every invocation of community as antithetical. Fundamental to his vision is the critique of any communal notion of relation or "being together." Such being together is but the product of the assemblage of particular, animal interests, which is contrasted with the solitary immortal singularity sustained by the sheer subjective conviction that is fidelity to the truth-event'.

³⁶³ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 66–68.

³⁶⁴ Romans 6:5–8

³⁶⁵ 2 Corinth 1: 5–7. 2 Corinth 13:4, Gal. 2: 19–20, 5:24. Phil. 1:21; 2: 6–11; 3:10–11.

‘The event consists in’, Badiou writes, ‘Jesus, the Christ, dying on the cross and coming back to life’.³⁶⁶ However, it remains painfully obvious that the cross is only important insofar as it functions as a chronological mechanism, something which allows for the Resurrection to take place. L.L. Welborn has pointed toward the immense symbolic importance the cross had in the time period surrounding Paul.³⁶⁷ For example, Cicero, in a moment where he betrays his social class, insists, ‘The mere mention of [the cross] is shameful to a Roman citizen and free man’; the daily lives of slaves is saturated with the very real possibility of being put to death in such a manner.³⁶⁸

Welborn points to the ubiquity of the cross for slaves, and its play upon the psyche of the slave, through surveying popular literature, novels, satires, poems, and paying attention to popular taunts used between slaves (such as cross-meat or cross-bird).³⁶⁹ While for Badiou, the point of death’s connection with the Resurrection is to allow for the Event, Badiou also conceives of death in Paul’s corpus as designating merely those discourses that have been broken up by the Resurrection: “‘death’ does not signify a biological terminus, but rather a subjective stance or path, a way of dying to life within life, a living death’.³⁷⁰ Coming back to Welborn, in his analysis of a ‘handful of recent studies, critics of Silver Age literature have noted the number of works in which characters seem to be dead *before actually dying*’.³⁷¹ Summarizing these works, Welborn points to a ‘fundamental split’ in the nature of subjectivity that seems to occur in the 1st century B.C.E. that seems to lie in the ‘political and cultural order around the figure of the emperor’.³⁷²

³⁶⁶ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 65.

³⁶⁷ L.L. Welborn, ‘The Culture of Crucifixion and the Resurrection of the Dispossessed: The Interpellation of the Subject in the Roman Empire and Paul’s Gospel as “Truth Event”’, in *Paul and the Philosophers*, ed. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 127–140. Also, see Gunnar Samuelsson, *Crucifixion in Antiquity: An Inquiry into the Background and Significance of the New Testament Terminology of Crucifixion* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 176–84.

³⁶⁸ Cicero, *On Behalf of Rabirius* 5.16., as cited in Welborn, ‘The Culture of Crucifixion’, 135.

³⁶⁹ Welborn, ‘The Culture of Crucifixion’, 134–35.

³⁷⁰ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 129.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 130; Here Welborn draws from T. N. Habinek’s, *Politics of Latin Literature*; P. A. Miller’s, *Subjecting Verses*; and B. Dufallo’s, *The Ghosts of the Past*. Emphasis mine.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 130–31.

Paying attention to Ovid’s exile poems allows one to note their being a ‘testament to the consolidation of Augustus’ power’ and their being a ‘model of imperial subjecthood’, all while being saturated in images of death.³⁷³ Welborn goes on to note that much of the literature contemporaneous to Paul’s mission ‘give[s] expression to a deepening disillusionment with the realities of Roman rule, especially in the aftermath of the Caligula crisis’.³⁷⁴ Along with Welborn, Ted Jennings notes the contemporaneity of injustice and crises among the political class during the time of Paul, interpreting Romans 1:18–2:5 as having explicitly to do with political class, specifically with the behaviours of Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero.³⁷⁵ If this is the scene that we find Paul’s presentations of his gospel in, then it may be, especially coupled with Welborn’s work on crucifixion, that ‘death’ and the cross take on completely different significations not only for slaves, but for many common people.³⁷⁶

It is precisely here that we find in Paul a sort of proto-Marxist figure, one whose rhetoric and explicit message align with the ‘nothings’ and ‘nobodies’ of the first century.³⁷⁷ Fixating on Paul’s consistent obsession with crucifixion and a message that is oriented toward minute figures of no importance is a slap against the insistence of Badiou that death is temporally related, and when it is mentioned should be taken strictly as symbolic and functioning within the operations of subjectivation. Instead, death and crucifixion work as symbolising that, quoting Welborn,

God’s intervention in history was not the liberation of a universal subject from the path of death, but rather the redemption of the many oppressed, whose

³⁷³ Ibid., 131.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 131–32.

³⁷⁵ Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Outlaw Justice: The Messianic Politics Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 31–40.

³⁷⁶ Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 100; Samuelsson, *Crucifixion in Antiquity*, 176–84. Samuelsson notes that in Cicero, and other places, crucifixion (in its many variants and usages) isn’t just for slaves, but also traitors, pirates, and others of low prestige. The punishment fits the crime; it is reserved for those who occupy both certain social spaces, but also those who’ve committed crimes that put them into certain social spaces. One who is a traitor, for instance, even if a Roman citizen, has now occupied a new social space. Glancy writes that in the early Christian period crucifixion was not *reserved* for slaves, it ‘was reserved for persons of low social status and was particularly associated with the execution of slaves’.

³⁷⁷ Myles Lavan, ‘Slavishness in Britain and Rome in Tacitus’ *Agricola*’, *The Classical Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (May 2011): 297–303. One can see clearly the ‘nothingness’ of slaves through Tacitus’ writings, specifically in *Agricola*, which contains a psychology of the slave, slavish traits (compliance, passivity, and silence), and notes the complicity of slaves in enslavement.

Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 2. Badiou compares Christ and Paul to Marx and Lenin, respectively.

identities are submerged in shame and whose lives are in danger of disappearing on account of the annihilating power of the cross [of Empire].³⁷⁸

Crucifixion, likewise, is significant in regards to its often referring to ‘suffering’ broadly. This, of course, widens the impact of statements of solidarity. The audience isn’t comprised solely of slaves, but a broad social range of those who have variously suffered, especially in the class struggles of living under Roman rule.³⁷⁹ While there is much contention regarding precise percentages, Bruce Longenecker, Steven Friesen, Justin Meggitt, and others have done a remarkable job in establishing that both in Christian associations and in broader society often individuals lived near subsistence level or below.³⁸⁰ Meggitt, especially, has pointed to the strong possibility of Pauline churches being composed completely of the non-elite, and also the crucial survival role of being related to an association, such as the various churches that Paul was connected to.³⁸¹ That is, Paul’s churches were demographically identical to the wider public within the Roman Empire, an empire that, unlike contemporaneous western nations, was not composed of elites, upper class, middle class, and several levels of poverty; as Meggitt mentions, ‘over 99% of the Empire’s population, could expect little more from life than abject poverty’.³⁸² Poverty, here, points to much of the populace living at or near subsistence levels.

But how is it that the proclamation of the cross, a symbol of shame and fear, brings about redemption for the hearers of Paul’s news? Welborn goes on to recognize that these proclamations of Paul’s summon the weak into the material density of the cross, where ‘Christ’s willingness to suffer the very death that threatened their existence became the resource for living in [justice]’. And, going on, one realizes in the sections comprising chapters 4 and 5 of 2 Corinthians that Paul makes a decisive shift, such that his fixation on Christ and Christ’s death forms the event followers participate in. Paul says, ‘For Christ’s love compels us, since we have

³⁷⁸ Welborn, ‘The Culture of Crucifixion’, 137.

³⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:22: ‘those who have nothing’.

³⁸⁰ Bruce Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010); Steven J. Friesen, ‘Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus’, *JSNT* 26 (2004): 323–61; Justin Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

³⁸¹ Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 97–154.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 50.

reached this conclusion: if One died for all, then all died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who for their sake died and was raised'.³⁸³ Here, then, is where the oppressed class finds hope and solidarity, and if Paul is a worker for the poor then the emphasis on the cross makes sense.³⁸⁴ To quote Stanislas Breton, connecting to the Philippian Christic hymn (a paranetic section): 'The sign of the cross is not only the object of proclamation or preaching. In Christ, that word was made flesh, the palpitating flesh of a slave'.³⁸⁵

However, despite being on the correct investigative path, Welborn misses a possible exposition of personhood in Roman law (and, likewise, in the various ontological conceptions of the slave's body in Greek literature), and I think this could bring two main differences to tweaking Badiou's work.³⁸⁶ If Esposito, Agamben, and other writers are correct that personhood existed on a spectrum, or continuum, such that slaves were appropriated as possessed *things*, not full persons, then the solidarity of a crucified and resurrected Christ ruptures the stigma of thinghood, incomplete-personhood, possessed by the slave class.³⁸⁷ The dead things, then, are opened up through the solidarity of the humiliated dead god; this is certainly a break from the 'regime of discourse' one finds in the Greeks, to play into Badiou's Pauline formation. Power is inverted in such a way because while resurrection is noted by Paul as a crucial theological element, death becomes much more significant, or at least significant in a different social-theological way. *Crucifixion is no longer merely the means to get to the end of Christ's arising from death; or, subjectivation is not merely tied to the resurrection.* The material conditions of

³⁸³ 2 Corinth. 5:14–15.

³⁸⁴ This reading is, then, not merely redemption through suffering, as if the act of suffering is what bestows some sort of supernatural or theological blessing itself. There are obvious communal implications found in this imagery. Being drawn to the material density of the cross is, as Meggitt has shown, a strategy of survival. Those living near subsistent level come together in associations, praising a crucified being; doing so allows for a continuance of their own material lives through solidarity with their fellow non-elites.

³⁸⁵ Stanislas Breton, trans. Joseph N. Ballan, *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 146–47.

³⁸⁶ For a detailed discussion on the master/slave relation in Aristotle, especially as it relates to selfhood, and ways to rethink selfhood, see Giorgio Agamben, trans. Adam Kotsko, *The Use of Bodies* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2016), 3–114 *passim*.

³⁸⁷ Roberto Esposito, 'The *Dispositif* of the Person,' *Law, Culture and The Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2012): 17–30; Esposito, *Third Person*, 9–13; 76–79.

the slave and other members of the unfree labour class must be taken seriously. This is, following from Welborn, another way that the slave points, through alleged ‘foolishness’, to the realized foolishness of the old discourse.

But secondarily, after exposing through solidarity, Paul’s specific forms of community open up personhood as it pushes back at seemingly immovable particularities, as seen in Galatians 3:28 (there is no. . . slave or free), in the *Haustafel* codes present in some of the Pauline epistles, in Paul’s naming the slave Onesimus as a ‘brother’ (and no longer merely a slave, but more than a slave) to his owner in Philemon (16), and in Paul’s exhortation for slaves to free themselves as possible, and to avoid becoming slaves of men (1 Corinth. 7:21-23).³⁸⁸ Personhood ruptures through to those who are deemed unworthy, and as Badiou realizes, Paul’s break from past regimes of discourse focuses on the reversal of power, such that those things that are not, and those things that are foolish, are considered pre-eminent. Paul points to the figurative deadness of Abraham’s flesh (Romans 4: 19 ‘...σῶμα νεκρωμένον...’) and Sarah’s womb, though they continued on hoping in a coming promise (Romans 4: 17–21). Paul proclaims, ‘I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me’ (Gal 2.19–20); and here, the importance of the identification of being crucified is underlined by the pervasiveness of the present perfect tense; crucifixion, is an ongoing identifier that aligns the fidelity of the subject to the Event. Paul, then, pronounces solidarity with the low through theologically inverting the place of death, and through this inversion (rupture from a generic, non-binary regime of discourse) points to the broader Christ-event, which re-subjectivates those interlocutors who become members of Pauline theological communities. This new community of

³⁸⁸ Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), ‘Paul and Slavery (I): 1 Corinthians 7:21’. All of these are subject to a diversity of interpretive stances. The 1 Corinthians passage, especially, is open to completely opposite possible translations, which Elliott spells out well as resting completely on what the translator/interpreter considers the direct object of what Paul calls for the slave to ‘take advantage’ of. What an interpreter/translator considers is, obviously, further dependent on contextual issues, namely how other terms are translated and understood. It becomes clear, through Elliott’s work, that much rests on anachronistic understandings of ‘calling’ within the Corinthian section. This ‘calling’ has less to do with ‘station of life’, and everything to do with a calling to belong to Christ.

those who have been subjectivated and pledged fidelity to what they have encountered as truth, then, allow for a conversion of social ideals as well, which includes a re-situation of those who identify with death and a life of suffering and near or below subsistence. Life is found, now, precisely *through* death. The process of subjectivation through death is all but incidental to rupturing from previous regimes of discourse. This, of, course, centres Pauline theology by acknowledging the full range of movement needed for subjectivation to occur, opening up Paul beyond merely the resurrection.

While Badiou is seems opposed to notions of ‘community’ (perhaps because conservative notions often tend to follow from emphases on communitarian orientations), his hesitance bucks up against the a primary element of Paul’s ‘regime of discourse’. In fact, it is through a community of personhood, one that revolves solidarity with/as the slave, that one finds a connection from Welborn’s Marxist Paul to the Paul that brings rupture to gifting practices that extend reciprocity, and engage systems of patron/clientage on upwards among the class pyramid. While Paul appropriates gift as a normative mode of action, it has to be realised that Paul infects gifting with a subversive element that upends the larger foundational logic of the system, an idea that will be fleshed out in our final chapters. Or, to put it more directly, Paul’s playing with gift and his building connected intra and inter-city associational bonds provides a sort of Bartleby-esque withdrawal from the dominant social order, and challenges the more overt suppressive imperial elements. Here, economics, social system, and imperialism are bound closely together, and through reworking the dominance of an order of symbols that Paul challenges. Paul ‘prefers not to’, as do others aligned with his politico-religious order.

Consider the inter-related scenes painted in 2 Corinthians 8: scenes consisting of joyful emptying out during difficult circumstances within associations; a meditation on Jesus emptying of self through benefaction language; and a transumptive section, echoing equality through calling forth to his hearers YHWH’s provision to the wandering Israelites. In all of this, Paul notes the dynamism of his project, the inner logic that constitutes relations between communities, but we can also see the subsumption of the communities under a logic of lack

whereby their mutual-relational strategies are viewed as a sort of ‘auto-gifting’, whereby the individually dual, or in certain instances tertiary, nature of the exchange is hidden through lack. Here, the lack is due toward the Patron, Paul’s God, but the inter-relational strategy causes the negation of the group that has been caught up under one grouping mechanism; whatever is ‘owed’ isn’t directed toward the patron, but to the self, illustrating the ‘auto-gift’. This is, likewise, an expectation of Paul toward the sections within the larger architectonic structure; or to use a Pauline organological metaphor, the body is a whole with the diverse parts of the single organism to be upbuilt.

In the main Pauline texts referenced above we can see the emphasis towards emptying out, and this emptying is founded precisely on the Event of the encounter Paul has with the impossible (his encounter with the resurrected Christ); but, Paul connects his political communal strategy with the scandalous stupidity of reversed power, an identifying power with a dead, crucified messiah. The constant emphasis in Pauline texts, which can be seen in the communal ties through celebratory eucharistic practices, are on the event of crucifixion, the identification with this lack of power, and how this foundation subverts power as seen in the impossible resurrection of Jesus.³⁸⁹

If there is a hope to subvert the oppressive and seemingly ubiquitous powers that dominate Paul’s contemporary landscape, it can only be found in a side-stepping and short-circuiting of centres of power of which there are various permutations of socially, politically, and economically intertwined structures. While a contest of brute force seems the most obvious of modes in which a proper winner is decided, it is apparent that any such strategy will end in utter failure, as can be seen with the various attempts made in the centuries before and decades after Paul. The Bar Kokhba revolt is a relevant example of such failure, indicative of the destruction

³⁸⁹ Esposito, *Communitas*, 9–11. Esposito opens with noting the important double move—historical-institutional and theological-philosophical—of early Christian community, highlighting the powerful Pauline imagery of gift-giving, participation, emptying out, losing something, and sharing ‘the fate of the servant’. In the Eucharist ‘what one participates in isn’t the glory of the Resurrection but the suffering and the blood of the Cross’.

inevitable in any attempted, overt rebellion against the Roman Empire. But, more importantly, the Maccabean Revolt is still pertinent for Paul.³⁹⁰

Paul's community of lack sketched above, then, plays a purely negative role on his contemporary social scene, rather than a positive and violently antagonistic role. Coming back to the 2 Corinthians section we can see that not only is Paul's community taking the form of lack, but that through doing so it also mirrors the subversive stupidity of a dead messiah. Certainly there are not many other images that capture as forcefully a reversal of power than collecting bodies around a leader who is counted as conquering precisely through his painfully tortuous execution and mutilation.³⁹¹ In struggling to start an intra-communal collection of money, staying within the particular communal ties, Paul short-circuits a system of patron-clientage that follows a triangular or pyramid of power up to and into Imperial forces.³⁹² Or, to expand the scene's detail, within a social system that relies upon public displays of honour and shame, honour is ultimately accounted toward certain ends in Paul's communities which do not lead to the common *telos*, the civil imperial religious public economy of honour (here, the ultimate benefactor is reckoned as something else). As Richard Horsley insists regarding Paul's project of mutuality, 'By contrast with the vertical and centripetal movement of resources in the tributary

³⁹⁰ Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 107–23. It does not seem likely that Paul sought any type of noble death, or martyrdom (though, noble death traditions appear in later Christianity [pp. 120–23]). Such revolts were certainly in the minds of Jews and the early Christians who were intimately familiar with their past.

³⁹¹ Halvor Moxnes, 'Asceticism and Christian Identity in Antiquity: A Dialogue with Foucault and Paul', *JSNT* 26, no. 1 (2003): 3–29. There may be a crucial connection here, as well, with the idea of shaping the 'identity' (and, I want to be careful using that concept) of those crowding around a body that is characterised by mutilation, ascetic practices, and withdrawal. Moxnes draws out *askesis*, pointing to prohibitions Paul tasks the male body with, namely renouncing and repressing sexual activities that highlight forms of masculinity (p. 21–22).

³⁹² John K. Chow, 'Patronage in Roman Corinth,' in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity International Press, 1997), 104–25. 'Patron-client ties tend "to arise within a state structure in which authority is dispersed and state activity limited in scope, and in which considerable separation exists between the levels of village, city and state."' One ancient historian actually suggests that patronage was the secret to the integration of the Roman empire. . . The networks of relationships in Corinth can roughly be seen as a hierarchy made up of the emperor, Roman officials, local notables, and the populace'.

political economy of the empire, Paul organized a horizontal movement of the resources from one subject people to another'.³⁹³

4.4 Badiouian Paulinist Augmentation: Possibilities or Improbabilities?

The Badiouian insistence is determined resistance to capitalist hegemony. The neoliberal age is dependent on a particular reimagining of the person, such that Wendy Brown can riff off of Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics*, insisting that in the neoliberal age *homo oeconomicus* is the ubiquitous mode of human reality, permeating all spheres of social and political existence.³⁹⁴ Likewise, the ubiquity of this neoliberal spirit has provoked a new order of slavery, such that Lazzarato can talk of the 'indebted man'.³⁹⁵ These issues are contemporaneous and concern the broad scope of Badiou's philosophical project. And, as he makes clear in his dialogue with Gauchet, mere reformism of parliamentary democracy will not solve the global issues of capitalist hegemony.³⁹⁶ Paul's form, however, is of the order of eventual break from a dual regime of discourse, causing a discourse that challenges the logic of the former master to emerge. This, once again, has to do with breaking from an Empire; this aligns with the desires of Badiou's Marxism, a calling to revolutionary action rather than reformism of contemporary political slavery, no matter the particular mode it takes.³⁹⁷

If these are the current problems, and if the Pauline analogy constitutes the continuing political importance of Paul then, contra Clayton Crockett, Paul can remain a militant figure for

³⁹³ Richard A. Horsley, '1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society', in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 251.

³⁹⁴ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*.

³⁹⁵ Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*.

³⁹⁶ Alain Badiou and Marcel Gauchet, trans. Susan Spitzer, *What is to be Done?: A Dialogue on Communism, Capitalism, and the Future of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 70–72.

³⁹⁷ A final note on auto-gifting: the form of lack that is entailed in my theorisation of auto-gifting is distinct from that of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism entails individualistic forms of subjugation, whereas auto-gifting is concerned with a flow of duty that eschews individualism and instead is defined through what I would characterise as a complex landscape of pools of subjectivity, where water (resources) flows to where it is most needed, emptying out in order to fill lacking areas, and in turn being filled without asking or anticipation. This imagery will be detailed in the final chapter, connecting to Esposito.

strategising against capitalist hegemony.³⁹⁸ This insistence solidifies Badiou's Pauline theological importance. But, this Badiouian importance must incorporate the crucial element of death. This centrality of death re-imagines Paul's community, reminding the reader who the audience is. The community, the association of Paulinist Christians, does not exist simply for the sake of existence, but instead is a *political* form which exists in a *politically* antagonistic way, challenging, through a sort of Agambenian withdrawal, hegemony.

5. Critiquing Completion

It is evident, then, that a form of hermeneutics is present in Badiou that draws out important motifs in Paul, though for a specific purpose, one which would be much more satisfying, as I tried to demonstrate, if it paid attention to motifs in Paul that go beyond elements in 20th century scholarship that are attached to a Lutheran Paul, a Paul that still finds himself wedded to peculiar, and often times explicit, anti-Judaism.³⁹⁹ From a certain angle it appears that Badiou (funhouse) mirrors Bultmann, and in this sense is on to something quite interesting. As noted above, Badiou is concerned with the *form* that Paulinism takes. Attention to this form is important for Badiou's overall project, one that is concerned with questions of truth, but also theorising and critiquing contemporary iterations of capitalism. But, when Paul is utilised in a more attuned manner, one which attends to some of the nuances of contemporary scholarship, a more concrete and radical Pauline form can emerge, one which acknowledges the uniqueness of Paul's thought without simply theologising or fetishising him; we have to interrogate our tendencies to create liberal Pauls whose anti-imperialism escapes colonial tendencies unscathed. One of the more pervasive problems, as has been mentioned earlier, is idolising Paul to an

³⁹⁸ Clayton Crockett, 'Radical Theology and the Event: St Paul with Deleuze', in *Radical Political Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

³⁹⁹ I am reminded of the peculiar motif of the 'self-hating Jew'. In writer Larry David's acclaimed HBO comedy series *Curb Your Enthusiasm* he is confronted by a fellow Jewish man, enraged after hearing David whistling Wagner. I can't help but note the connection here with Paul, who has been read often as a type of 'self-hating' Jew, one who was eager to throw away particular cultural realities, both antagonising his past and constructing a future whereby essential cultural forms are erased. But, unlike the post-Reformation stereotype of an aggrieved Jew who practically conspires to undue his cultural heritage, Paul is best understood *as* Jewish, within the framework of the broad umbrella of 1st century Judaism. Like David, who is within the broad umbrella of 21st century American Judaism despite liking Wagner, Paul is not some self-hating cultural traitor.

unhealthy degree, such that his words are taken as ‘gospel’, or self-evident truth which must be imitated.⁴⁰⁰

Badiou, in working with his own interest in forms, however, does allow for both reinvigorating and reinvesting in some of those areas of Pauline scholarship that may appear either at a standstill, too theologically oriented, or bereft of ideas that help to liberate scholarship from staid forms. A perfect example of this is John Barclay’s obvious Badiouian interest, which can be seen in his work on grace, gift, and event. Barclay makes apparent his interest in Badiou, and what an evental understanding can offer NT studies, in an article that appeared in *New Blackfriars* that critically examined Badiou’s St. Paul book.⁴⁰¹ Barclay later published a book on Paul and the concept of gift/grace, *Paul and the Gift*, in 2015 in which the Badiouian influence can be unearthed in certain moments.⁴⁰² The interest in a Pauline form, one which is often lambasted for not adhering properly to the alleged pure essence of Paul, being devoid of Pauline content, appropriating Paul as a virus for spreading inappropriate diseased concepts, is in fact precisely a vehicle for thinking Paul in ways that nuance scholarly discourse. We can note this in at least two ways.

⁴⁰⁰ Castelli underscores this well in the beginning of her monograph on Paul and imitation. Criticism about giving Paul the benefit of the doubt remain useful. It is difficult for many to question motives or attentions of highly theologised historical subjects. On the other hand, it can be quite easy to bathe in scepticism, such that every action or phrase of Paul’s becomes pernicious and manipulative.

R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 14–16; 22. While this project is not explicitly postcolonial, it benefits from postcolonialism. One of the great insights of postcolonial work in biblical studies has been a renewed attention to some of the problems that have arisen through insufficient attention to the messiness and contradiction of biblical characters and authors. Thus, Paul is often trusted implicitly by scholars as a source of accurate information. Likewise, his corpus is often read as *prima facie* consistent. Inconsistency springs from poor hermeneutics. Postcolonial works also emphasise the place that these texts have had on the history of colonisation and western universalising. It should not be forgotten the place of the Pauline texts for legitimising slavery or colonisation. On a different note, it should also be noted that postcolonialism has provided new strategies for reading texts, perhaps most important being Edward Said’s contrapuntal method (p. 22), which utilises marginal texts as lenses through which one can see episodes of resistance in practice.

⁴⁰¹ John Barclay, ‘Paul and the Philosophers: Alain Badiou and the Event’, *New Blackfriars* 91 (March 2010): 171–84. Barclay affirms here the radical break (subjectivation) evident in Badiou’s reading of Paul, despite noting how controversial it would appear to Pauline scholars invested in emphasising the Jewishness of Paul, or his connection to the ‘narrative’ of scriptures.

⁴⁰² Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 354, 395.

Firstly, this addition to the broader archive of works that utilise a figuration of Paul provides a *foil* for discussing Paul whether this figuration is accurate enough to be appropriated for historical construction or not. In the case of Badiou this is evident because his Pauline figuration is (anti)philosophical while eschewing previous negative, Nietzschean philosophical receptions of Paul (Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze). Secondly, there is a curious dialectical effect that occurs through experimenting with Pauline figurations formed through utilising what could be classified as ‘philosophical models’. It may be a ‘philosophical model’ that one finds in someone like Badiou is not as immediately applicable as Context Group readings, but it certainly supplies a framework for re-reading a set of texts in a broadly consistent way.

5.2 *Diversifying Interpretive Methods; or, Angering the Gatekeepers*

The (augmented) Badiouian Paul that I mentioned above fits a *broad framework* that is viable for engaging in the aims of this project, aims that seek to both illuminate a Paulinist community utilising Esposito’s *communitas/immunitas* and biopolitical work, and also to point to possible further thinking about the philosophical conception of community through looking closely at Paul’s communal strategy. I intentionally describe this as a ‘broad framework’, both because I don’t intend to make strong claims about models or methods. In this sense, mining the archives eschews some of the so-called ‘scientific’ scholarship that claims to work objectively with the text and socio-cultural context(s). This could be exemplified nicely by pointing to the (gestured above) Context Group and, specifically, Bruce J. Malina’s social scientific work on the New Testament.⁴⁰³ Malina and the Context Group (or past iterations of it) exist on the ends of scholarship utilising social scientific and anthropological models for interpreting New Testament texts.⁴⁰⁴ This is not to suggest that they are marginalised, or extreme, but rather that the methods

⁴⁰³ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993). Malina’s *The New Testament World* is one of the most well-known examples of the use of models gleaned from cultural anthropology and sociology, but Jerome Neyrey and Philip Esler are also lively contributors to this sub-discipline within the field. The Context Group have had their fair share of criticisms.

⁴⁰⁴ Malina, of course, is singular in some ways, seeming rather intransigent regarding the use of models. Not every member of the Context Group is the same, with Philip Esler standing as a sort of obverse in the particular sub-group within the NT studies. Newer work is even more distanced from older productions, especially seen in the work of scholars like Sarah Rollens and Crook.

they employ are not median within the discipline, though as the years have gone by their methods have become more usual. Other scholars utilise social scientific methods that allow for flexibility, recognising the tendentious nature of recognising specific models in reading ancient texts.⁴⁰⁵ In particular, scholars James Crossley distils down postcolonial objections when he points the orientalisising tendencies inherent in assuming models taken from contemporary anthropological work in the near east are viable representations for use with texts two thousand or more years ago. It is not at all obvious that there has been no cultural change in such a long time, and it falls into fetishisation.⁴⁰⁶ Other scholars outside of the discipline of biblical studies have been critical, as well, of particular corners of the social sciences, particularly the reductive nature of many of the diverse, stratified areas within such a fragmented discipline.⁴⁰⁷ Plenty has been written cautioning and criticising the use of social scientific and anthropological models, as well as some of the specific errors exemplified in Malina's work.⁴⁰⁸ These criticism will not be rehearsed here.

Instead, it may be helpful to gesture to places where biblical scholars have used broad frameworks, ones that utilise contemporary 'anachronistic' concepts to peer into a text, ask new questions, posit interpretations.⁴⁰⁹ Jeremy Punt's *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation* is a helpful

⁴⁰⁵ David G. Horrell, for instance, has critiqued the Context Group in general, as well as Philip Esler in particular, for utilising models, while also generalising about the use of social sciences in biblical studies, claiming that all approaches to the text use 'models' to interpret or construct what lies behind the text. Of course, here 'model' becomes such a weak signifier that it ceases to be helpful in the least. See David Horrell, 'Models and Methods in Social-Scientific Interpretation: A Response to Philip F. Esler', *JSNT* 78 (2000): 83–105; and, Philip Esler, 'Models in New Testament Interpretation: A Reply to David Horrell', *JSNT* 78 (2000): 107–13.

See also Neil Elliott, 'Diagnosing an Allergic Reaction: The Avoidance of Marx in Pauline Scholarship', *The Bible and Critical Theory* 8, no. 2 (2012): 7–9. Elliot provides an incisive critique of Malina's brand of social scientific interpretation of the NT, noting especially how quickly these interpretations skirt past any acknowledgement of class difference, possible economic analysis of NT context, or the material conditions of the poor.

⁴⁰⁶ James Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Projects for a New American Century* (London: Equinox, 2008), 111–28. The analysis goes beyond this section, but Crossley lays out voluminous quotes from high profile figures like Malina and Esler that are rather startling.

⁴⁰⁷ Paul Mattick, Jr., *Social Knowledge: An Essay on the Nature and Limits of Social Science* (Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1986).

⁴⁰⁸ Please see Crossley above on the importance of postcolonial criticism for the so-called scientific models used by Malina.

⁴⁰⁹ We can also point to Heidegger's overinterpretation of Kant, which Heidegger justified by claiming that often an author, no matter how brilliant, may not recognise the logic of their own thoughts. On the whole, this isn't really a controversial statement. This is, certainly, why elaborate theologies are often attributed to biblical writers, or

example of this. In his introductory chapter he points to the ubiquity of perspectival frames, something that should be apparent to all interpreters, whether of biblical texts or not:

In one way or another, all work, all projects, all interpretation and all studies are always framed. The Pauline interpretation is exemplary of a very particular, influential and enduring frame as the perennial formulation of other, new perspectives on Paul's letters also seem to indicate . . . Reframing Paul rather speaks to the disillusionment of many with traditional Pauline interpretation; and also aims at the inclusion of many other, non-traditional (so to speak) voices in and outside of the academy, especially the ecclesial-aligned academy. Reframing Paul also entails the realisation that asking different questions and using different tools are bound to render different answers and different results.⁴¹⁰

'Different tools are bound to render different answers and results'. This statement is both pedestrian and profound, a reality that cannot be discounted, and yet is too often cordoned off to only very specific positions within the broader discipline of biblical studies. This is precisely why biblical studies is often several decades behind cutting edge methods found in the broader humanities, and also why one can detect an exaggeration of the use of unusual methods among those who advocate for more pure and foundational avenues of research.⁴¹¹ Diverse methods/orientations reveal the multiplicity of voices within texts, pointing to divergent possibilities and opening up not only interpretive possibilities, *but also historical possibilities*. In the example of postcolonial studies, Sugirtharajah notes that 'colonialism dominates and determines the interest of biblical texts and we could reasonably describe the Bible as a colonial document.'⁴¹² This is so not only because of the long and bloody history of biblical texts (consider the use of texts to legitimate slavery), but also because of examples of biblical characters either colonising or acquiescing to colonisation, and broader narratives that exhibit

perhaps deconstructed by later interpreters who bring out the contradictions or weak spots that result in systemic collapse.

⁴¹⁰ Jeremy Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation: Reframing Paul* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 4–5.

⁴¹¹ Sherwood and Moore, *Invention of the Biblical Scholar*.

⁴¹² Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, 19.

colonisation.⁴¹³ Of course, here, too, we must be open to the contemporaneity of concepts, ones that were not named or explicitly realised in their originary moments.⁴¹⁴ This is not to claim that various authors were blind to colonial powers, but it is to say that the precise nuances of coloniality are diverse. When we utilise postcolonial readings (as simply one outsider discourse to mainstream biblical studies) we are admitting that our reading is contemporary, that it is always a reframing, even when it uses concepts, terms, and narrative arcs that are ancient. There is always a revealing gap.

In his eighth chapter, ‘Paul, Body, and Resurrection in an Imperial Setting’, Punt points to the broader discourse on ‘body and corporeality’ and how this affects the text. He writes in a footnote that its ‘usefulness is situated in its non-essentialist epistemology, focussing on the contextual nature of the body and seeing it as a site of revelation; in short, the body is deemed a social construct constituted and imbued by issues of power and control’.⁴¹⁵ But, this discussion of the body that Punt is concerned with is precisely a discussion that is endowed with concepts that are contemporary, questions that are composed after critical periods emerging in the 20th and 21st centuries. Like with Castelli, Punt notes the importance of applying modern questions concerning power to possible constructions of the past. If we are to understand Paul, we have to utilise conceptual distinctions that have occurred once again in the modern period, some of which could only be distinguished through the social sciences, or through philosophical investigation. When we look at a text critically, it isn’t simply enough to think hard about from a traditional historical standpoint, or how ancient people may have read or understood the text; categories have to be created and applied to a text, and then evaluated in light of possible

⁴¹³ John Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008). Also see Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation*, 170–74. Punt notes the difficulty of reading Philemon, especially in light of the history of Christian allowance of the cultural practice of slave-holding.

⁴¹⁴ Joshua Ramey, *Politics of Divination: Neoliberal Endgame and the Religion of Contingency* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). Another definitive example is found in Joshua Ramey’s work on neoliberalism, where he traces the essence of neoliberalism to ancient divination rituals. Here, we can note that divination rituals enhance how we can think about neoliberalism, providing a genealogy that elucidates the origins and functions of neoliberalism. But, we also learn something more about the ancient past when we re-work the angle of the larger sculpture as the monument of the past-present-future is unearthed. Recognising the connections provides new possible interpretations, especially when we think about and name past moments as exemplifying religions of contingency.

⁴¹⁵ Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation*, 176n4.

narratives. Beyond Punt and Castelli, Kathy Ehrensperger also looks into the possibilities inherent in the concept of power, and how modern Western discourse on power can shape a reading of Paul.⁴¹⁶ Once again, it would be unwise to read modern concepts as simply obfuscatory for a discussion about the ancient world. ‘Anachronistic’ concepts can (and often must) be used when reading ancient texts, as the above quote by Petterson and Boer suggests.

For Punt, then, to further his discussion on Paul, the body, and power, it may be helpful to go even deeper in asking pointed questions that take into account contemporary ideas surrounding the body. Punt, thankfully, notes those nuances that occurred in the mid-90s, most notably through the work of Dale Martin, that pointed to the non-individuated understanding of the body. But, what happens when we understand the body as located within the interstices of an undulating and complicated web of power relations? Power relations, as primarily socially located, is spelled out well enough in New Testament studies. Many scholars note the hierarchical relations of the social classes in particular contexts, what is proper or improper for diverse classes to do, how communication occurs (epigraphic thanks, sculptures, chains of patron-clientage, socio-religious structures, etc).⁴¹⁷ But, what can a scholar who is engaging in social archaeology note, those who are trained in different methods and within alien disciplines, such as Foucault, or even Agamben? If we think of power as a more diffuse social element, one which is even wielded by those lower down in the social class system, how does this change the questions, heuristics, and/or models that we contemplate and create? Furthermore, how does this change our approach to the text, our field of possible interpretations, and even our attempts at (re)thinking history? Breaking past, or stretching the limits of acceptability is fruitful, not to mention essential, for the approaching these ancient texts and their circumstances of production.

⁴¹⁶ Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 16–17.

⁴¹⁷ A prime example could be the series of books edited by Steven Friesen, *Corinth in Contrast*. Steven Friesen, Daniel Schowalter, James Walters, ed., *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Steven Friesen, Daniel Schowalter, Sarah James, ed., *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). These books contextualise Corinth around elements mentioned above, and other, motifs. Much of this is proper, non-radicalised, work not explicitly shaped by some of the work and possibilities noted above. But, many chapters within these volumes point to how life may have been lived materially in Roman Corinth.

And Paul, because of his particular place in contemporary theory and historical study, is especially ripe for such disciplinary inflation.

Blanton illustrates the insufficiency of a cordoned off biblical studies, a simple mastery of disciplines, well when he writes, speaking of the conference from which the edited volume *St. Paul among the Philosophers* emerged, that ‘some august lights within biblical studies did not seem to be able to stop tutting at the “anachronistic” or “ahistorical” readings of Paul by Badiou and Žižek. . . but never . . . do we get the sense that the biblical scholars present were interested in what they had to say’. Blanton finds this particularly deleterious for the guild because

Badiou and Žižek themselves make a living thinking, talking, and writing about time and historical change! Again, assertions of mastery become all the more forceful in the face of an evident weakness or lack of mastery. On this occasion biblical scholars wanted to police appropriate boundaries and proprietorial limits, all the while failing to say nothing [sic] illuminating about the very constitution of the very laws they wanted to enforce.⁴¹⁸

As with the example of an opening of the text through paying attention to contemporary works on power and embodiment, Blanton makes clear that the partitioning off of disciplines as if they are particular, minute subjects that only touch those areas of scholarship that are already determined to be worthwhile is detrimental, not to mention foolish. Not only does the discipline as a whole atrophy, but the particular points of mastery will always be lacking significant intellectual expansion.⁴¹⁹

6. *Coming Back Around: Bultmann and the Philosophers*

The purpose here is neither to critique nor defend Bultmann; like Hobbes in our initial section, his fleeting appearances in this chapter merely serves as a foil for broader themes. It is difficult to ignore him precisely because he is the pre-eminent example of a NT scholar too often read as sacrificing scholarship for philosophical and theological speculations, ideological forms that vividly reshaped how to think of texts, and where texts can take us. He has technical

⁴¹⁸ Blanton, ‘Mad with the Love’, 211.

⁴¹⁹ Blanton, *Displacing Christians Origins*.

mastery, as evidenced by his earlier works in ‘pure’ biblical scholarship; but, purity is corrupted by outside, Heideggerian influences (and theological affections prior to Heidegger). In the sense that the philosophers’ can be seen as typifying a hermeneutic that mirrors Bultmann’s, we can discern a sensitivity to the broader issues that Engberg-Pedersen has elaborated.

The purpose of this project is not to suggest that Esposito has a grand theory elaborated in a close, exegetical reading of Paul. Badiou and Agamben, and perhaps Breton, would be premier examples of those who have fleshed out a larger theological, political, or philosophical agenda through reading Paul. This was demonstrated above with Badiou, whose work utilises Paul for the specific purpose of engaging a larger philosophical project concerned an ontology of the Event. He is not intentionally adding material to the broader discipline of NT studies; if not Paul, another historical figure could work, though perhaps not with the same easily identifiable radical break which is so nicely underscored by the Lutheran tradition that Badiou constructs his Paul through.⁴²⁰ However, beyond this, and to return to Paul and Esposito, it is evident that they both have their own projects, and that these respective projects, orientations, and affections are conducive to one another.

What is remarkable is how significant Badiou’s work is for thinking through Paul, even if an elaboration that actually engages historical Paul studies is incidental, which is what I have shown above. Like Bultmann, the charge is that ‘theory’ or ‘philosophy’ has clouded the eyes of the researcher, instead detailing a fantastical character who merely mirrors the scholarly reconstruction. This is, of course, true of all historical reconstructions, but especially of biblical characters, subject as they are to both theologisation, or being caught up within diverse internecine ecclesial conflicts, and political co-optation. We should not forget Schweitzer’s masterful works on both Jesus and Paul, detailing the mirrored delineations of each throughout the history of critical scholarship. Or, to gesture to a contemporary example, Blanton states that

⁴²⁰ Paul, also, happens to be a figure that Badiou is interested in, for one reason or another. An interesting aside: Bruno Bosteels, in a paper delivered at MLA and later uploaded to his Academia.edu account, noted that Badiou told him in 2008 that ‘if he could do things all over again, the one book he would not publish is Saint Paul’. Why Badiou said this is open to speculation.

‘there is no alchemical process which effects a retrieval of a “simple body” in the past, as if we would uncover the past in order to invest it with fantasies of pristination’. Instead we are found in a ‘genealogical struggle with which where we are going, where Paul is going . . . [is], strangely, “in front of us,” as if on the way by virtue of the strategies that constitute our labors’.⁴²¹ Here, Blanton is gesturing partially back to the foundational moment for his grand tour of materialist Paulinisms, to the fact that Paul was, early on, a failure fitted in ‘concrete shoes’. Christian history augmented Paul, something Blanton shows specifically through pointing to a compelling reading of Acts, as well as close look at the early Christian historian Eusebius.⁴²²

With Badiou, the aim of his reading of Paul, and the hermeneutical path he trod to get there, are distinct from both the pristine objectivist reading desired by Engberg-Pedersen, but also the existential reading of Bultmann. Badiou is making no grand claims about the text in itself, or how a modern interpreter can appropriate ancient texts; nor is he claiming that the text exists strictly for the purpose of calling the reader toward something, warning the reader, or existing as an address of proclamation.⁴²³ Several aspects of Bultmann’s broad work, such as the above, demonstrate how distinct it is from Badiou’s project. We have to remember that Bultmann’s is a larger project, one that entails specific relations between the subject, the text, and historicity. As Thiselton points out, quoting Bultmann,

Bultmann poses an either/or rather than a both . . . and . . . At the conclusion of his *Theology of the New Testament* he claims that the interpreter can either interrogate the New Testament as a “source” for the reconstruction of the history of primitive Christianity “or the reconstruction stands in service of the interpretation of the New Testament writings under the presupposition that they have something to say to the present.”⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses*, 68.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 3, 4, 6–25. Also, see Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

⁴²³ Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 272.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 275. Italics and ellipses in original.

Despite no explicit hermeneutical project present in Badiou's treatment in Paul, we can gesture to the fact that Badiou is not interested in the former of the either/or. His reading of Paul is primarily to note what Paul has 'to say to the present', and in this sense seems to align with a typical Lutheran distance between works and grace, whereby the subject is 'called' by the grace of the agent that calls; this is, as detailed above in our discussion of Badiou, similar to the Badiou's discussion about re-subjectivation through the eventual encounter that produces truth.⁴²⁵ This is quite different than any (of my) use(s) of Esposito's work, or the interest Esposito may have in Paul.⁴²⁶ But, it also is not simply a 'Lutheran' reading, as if Badiou is reading Paul along with the pre-eminent Reformer. Instead, like Bultmann, Žižek, and others there is a sense that his reading of Paul fits perfectly in line with a Pauline theological orientation of break extrapolated in a radical fashion. This is, then, taking Paul seriously as a thinker of reality, as a writer noting the exigencies of existence. While Blanton is speaking specifically of Žižek here, the following quote fits Badiou nicely:

the authentic Pauline moment is that moment of action which happens, precisely, without ready-made guarantee, orienting knowledge, or simple repetition of the past. Seamlessly woven together, therefore, are a philosophical postfoundationalism, a story of "Christian origins" as a break with "law" and inherited forms of life, and a revolutionary theory of historical change.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 276; John Barclay, 'Philo and Paul in Dialogue', in *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches*, ed. Paul Middleton, Angus Paddison, and Karen Wenell (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*. This is not suggesting a conflation of the two. A clear use of Badiou's event, and useful investigation of grace and event, can be seen in Barclay, especially because he sees the similarities between Badiou's insistence on Event and the eventual nature of God's *ex nihilo* subjectivation of Paul.

We can note the distinction between a Lutheran reading of grace, and the divisions it entails, and a recognition that 'grace' is understood in terms of relationality, and in early Christian sources can be interpreted as a subjectivating encounter. As Thiselton notes, grace springs from address and call, while the construction of models represents a form of works, according to 'turn-of-the-century Lutheran pietism' (p. 276).

⁴²⁶ These two are certainly distinct. This project is interested in the use of Paul by Esposito, of course; nonetheless, what is separate, and perhaps more interesting, is how Esposito's larger theorisation of *communitas* can be applied to Pauline community. These fit together, however, in those moments when Esposito points explicitly to early Christianity, Paul, and the Eucharist.

⁴²⁷ Blanton, 'Mad with the Love', 201.

6.2 Bultmann and the Philosophers: Agamben

Agamben's Pauline project is distinctive from Badiou (and Esposito), despite being often classified in the same category, as a sort of vague, philosophical reading. Colby Dickinson and Adam Kotsko both recognise that Agamben's commentary on Romans, *The Time that Remains*, can be seen as a work that 'best encapsulates what is at stake in Agamben's philosophical project'.⁴²⁸ As with Badiou's use of Paul, Agamben's work is worthwhile because it is not solely an explication of Paul utilising some of the major themes that are threaded throughout Agamben's corpus (concepts of redemption, the *homo sacer*, the proper, the messianic, the use of the law, sovereignty); instead, Agamben's various forays into Pauline motifs and texts reveal legitimate ways of thinking and looking at Paul. Foremost, Agamben deftly finds an interstitial space between the various interpretations of the law's place in Paul's thought.⁴²⁹ Rather than lay with the usual aporia evident in Paul's various texts concerning the law, Agamben reads the law as deactivated, inoperative.

Unlike Badiou, however, Agamben plays his cards close to his chest, while also maintaining a primary aim of restoring the Pauline trajectory to the place of the premier messianic *oeuvre*. Paul's letters are not 'dead', and deserve to re-emerge along with renewed focus on Pauline Jewishness, as a founding Western text.⁴³⁰ This is, of course, vaguely in line with currents in New Testament studies since the break inaugurated through Krister Stendahl's work, and carried on by subsequent scholars.⁴³¹ Agamben's attempts at reading Paul are often attempts at being 'faithful to the text' in a way that traditional biblical scholars would respect; furthermore, his reading exhibits the importance of stretching outward from historical-critical work by acknowledging how the texts connect with foundational concepts, how 'messianic time' is something that must be read contemporaneously and in line with the past. We understand Paul

⁴²⁸ Adam Kotsko and Colby Dickinson, 'Introduction', in *Agamben's Coming Philosophy: Finding a New Use for Theology* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 10.

⁴²⁹ Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 97-98.

⁴³⁰ Krister Stendahl, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199-215.

⁴³¹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 1-2.

both through his context, and through what we have learned about our world today, recognising concepts that elucidate the past, opening up possible interpretive paths.⁴³²

6.3 Bultmann and the Philosophers: Žižek

Blanton points to Žižek's use of Paul and, importantly for how we have structured this section here, notes the natural connections that are apparent between Bultmann and Žižek. Like with Badiou, Žižek stresses the importance of a radical break, and in this cannot escape from the Lutheran Paul filtered through Heidegger and Bultmann. For Žižek, like Hegel or Heidegger, philosophy is the proper place for a '*repetition* of the original Pauline moment', as Blanton writes.⁴³³ And, like Bultmann, Žižek stresses the place of Paul as the event of Christianity, and that this break constitutes the primary place for a 'countercultural invention of something new'.⁴³⁴

What is important about all of these diverse thinkers' approaches to Paul is found in noting the productive process enabled through them. An honest criticism, I believe, is able to appreciate respective approaches' productive ability to read the text *qua* text, but also to feel around possible historically fruitful ways of thinking about Paul's theology and all attending categorical compartments. This is, after all, inevitable in our attempts to elucidate texts, evident in the history of the field of biblical studies. We haven't truly gotten beyond Bauer or Bultmann, despite triumphal proclamations about the objectivity of the field; we cannot step outside of the boundaries of humanity, our fleshiness and facticity continue to de-limit us, to contextualise us.

7.1 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the importance of diverse hermeneutical and philosophical approaches, particularly the importance and viability of approaches found at the edges of the

⁴³² This is, as I have pointed out in other places, the importance of recognising positive aspects of 'anachronism'. Attending to methods and concepts that are not usual to historical critical work, some of which are disdained by those who practice such forms of criticism, open up possible novel and constructive avenues.

⁴³³ Ward Blanton, 'Mad with the Love', 200. Italics in original.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

discipline. The following penultimate chapter will break from this discussion in order to shape the scope of the Pauline materials and the usual ways of interpreting them within the discipline. Doing so does not rely primarily on the examples that have been provided above. Instead, the final chapter will come back to this, utilising Esposito directly, augmenting his work on *communitas/immunitas* and biopolitics to provide a novel reading of Pauline community that follows from themes surrounding body imagery, but primarily Paul's resource collections. In other words, this reading does not neglect any usual methods of reading Pauline texts (historical-critical, social scientific, etc), but instead is a heuristic that provides forms that mark the Pauline community in different ways, and lead to readings of evidence that can only exist on the margins of our usual disciplinary boundaries. However, in an upcoming (and perhaps upsetting to some) section, this reading of Paul's community will be used to think alternatively about the philosophical nature of community. It is hoped by the author that this will not appear to be some appropriative gesture, where Paul is read *as if* he is some recognisably 'liberal' figure, providing a path to a Eurocentric universalism. Instead, the dual gesture of this final section is to note both contemporary philosophical work's importance for reading Paul, while also pointing to the importance of the continued use of Paul as a philosophical, or critical, source.⁴³⁵ This is, of course, underscored by something that should become steadily more evident: our juxtaposition of the projects of Paul and Esposito are mutually beneficial (even if we focus on how Esposito benefits Paul). In the next chapter, with its focus on social organisation, gifting, and the body, the parallels become more clear, and we get closer to generating the 'answer' to the initial question of what Esposito's work adds to our reading of Pauline community.

⁴³⁵ I think it is proper, and crucial, here to remind the reader about the previous discussion, especially following Blanton's gesture to the easy, simplistic dismissal of philosophical readings of Paul provided by Badiou, Žižek, and others. The final chapter, then, is committed to underscoring the importance of contemporary non-specialist discourse for Pauline studies, but also the immense importance of Paul as a thinker of the contemporary, especially in light of the ethical problems of economic justice and political philosophical irruption.

CHAPTER 5: PAULINE COMMUNITY: APPROACHING THE FIGURE

Surely, no bona fide Christian discourse would dispute that God's grace is God's gift. Yet, while the association that comes immediately to mind is one of gratuity and graciousness, this is but an instance of veiling what is really at work: an order of economy and exchange.

-Stathis Gourgouris, 'Paul's Greek', p 371

1. Introduction

Paul has made quick, fleeting entrances throughout the previous four chapters, showing up intermittently on stage only to be hustled expeditiously from the hungry eyes of the audience. However, the majority of the project thus far has been focused on setting up a broad theoretical framework of community, detailing recent philosophical work on theories of community and what shape it broadly has when interpreted from a specific collectivistic, inappropriable, and perhaps 'inoperative' framework.⁴³⁶ Our question has been, In what ways can the Espositoan elaboration of community and attendant concepts clarify and transform readings of Pauline community? And, the arrangement of the argument has followed lines of these various concepts, noting their broad importance in the stakes of contemporary discussions on community. With

⁴³⁶ I am taking a different path than many others attempting to do research that is relevant for New Testament studies in general, and Pauline studies in particular. While some have utilised contemporary work on concepts like 'imitation' or 'power' (see, for instance, Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power*), very few have followed with the level of analysis I have for attempting to read Paul with theory in mind. In this sense, I am attempting a middle path that is not merely about Paul's conceptual forms (Badiou) for philosophical thought, nor the relevance of a theory as it occurs here or there. Instead, my approach is more immersive, attempting to spell out specific, and detailed, notions of community in contemporary theory, noting how these operate conceptually by applying the model to contemporary social/economic/political phenomena, before stepping back in time and reading Paul in light of these theories. In other words, in what ways can noting the dynamics of community challenge or augment how we read Paul's situation? And, further, can applying these dynamics to Paul unearth other possible nuances to the project of conceptualising community? Are there dynamics within Paul's body language, his collection project, or images he uses related to community or χάρις that can develop how we conceptualise political community? The latter question may seem unrelated to usual questions and projects within biblical studies, but are still important for the discipline.

this chapter, the argument enters into a new stage where past Espositoan conceptions should remain firmly in the background as explicitly Pauline studies work is sifted through (though, of course, overt combinations will be explicated in the final chapter).

In this chapter, however, we finally turn explicitly to work in New Testament studies. The importance of doing so was shown in the previous chapter and is *prima facie* important in a work that is concerned with both the philosophical legacy of Paul and the historical situation of his person (a precarious balance, indeed). Balancing these concerns is difficult because of differences in focus and methodology; however, detailing Badiou's Pauline figuration performed several relevant functions, one of which was to exhibit the importance of paying attention to New Testament studies when connecting the Pauline legacy to radical philosophical trajectories. Not only does this add to possible historical readings, but it also opens up a space for more potent philosophical visions, ones of solidarity, resistance, and that contribute to recent work in empire studies, for instance; what forms of resistance, transgression, or subversion are taking place? It is not enough to simply grasp at the Pauline form, as Badiou does. It is also not enough to rely on outdated, simplistic divisions. These are helpful for heuristic purposes, but such binaries (in Badiou's case, Jew: Greek) need to be transcended, they need to be complicated with the supposed event of Christianity in a different way that recognises the continuing solidarities and the artificiality between divisions.

What this chapter focuses on, then, is specifically work done in Pauline studies, utilising both traditional methods (historical-critical, social scientific, exegetical), but also marginal methods banished to the boundaries of academia (ideological and Marxist) on issues of community. Part of the difficulty here is detailing exactly what constitutes Pauline community, what can be drawn upon as evidence for painting a picture of community. *One* of the main difficulties that this project is interested in addressing is: how do we read 'community'; or, what

can different models of community do for our reading of Paul?⁴³⁷ In order to confront such questions it is essential that we carefully select Pauline texts and contexts.

I want to head off the charge that I am begging the question, that I assume an answer, specifically through already having a particular vision of community in mind. Instead, this chapter is less about building a specific case for the nature of community, and more about noting parallels that are evident between recent work on community and the Pauline project, before making tentative steps toward reading Paul through the lens of contemporary work on community in the penultimate chapter. In other words, the purpose of this chapter is explicitly an attempt to read Pauline community, with a specific model of community in mind, through New Testament studies. This is not intended to be a shoe-horning of Paul into a specific mould. It is, instead, a tentative step into experimenting with a divergent conception of community using the evidences best able to be ‘tested’.

It must be admitted that any *model* of community is necessarily contextual and synchronic. When Weber, Tönnies and other early social scientists and anthropologists were constructing models of community (for instance *Gemeinschaft*), they occupied a particular place in intellectual history; because of this, they did not practice pristine methods that transcended overlaying contemporary concepts onto antique social forms, but instead were ‘of their time’.⁴³⁸ Models and concepts often come from reading ancient texts and observing contemporary peoples from areas where comparisons seem appropriate, playing with the construction of models and noting explanatory scope. Prime examples can be seen in the well-known Geertz article on the Azande tribes, illustrating the observational nature of anthropology and the social sciences, as well as the crucial role of the researcher in unearthing enduring realities, such as the nature of

⁴³⁷ And, conversely, what do these readings of community, when elaborated through a Pauline framework, bring back to Esposito’s work on *communitas*?

⁴³⁸ It is unfortunate that, to date, no significant projects have paid ideological critical attention to these thinkers and other early sociologists who are foundational for thinking about contemporary work done in the social sciences utilised by biblical studies. Important questions need to be asked about the place of capitalist ideology in imagining the place and function of communities and individuals for these thinkers, and how this has affected subsequent social scientific work that has been utilised by biblical scholars.

symbols in diverse cultures and how their relations. These observations, after being interpreted, are able to be used for extrapolations, or models, for how specific societies interact on social levels; furthermore, they often lead to postulations about the ‘nature(s)’ of humanity itself, not simply the way that specific social groups interact.⁴³⁹ This final point is not necessarily an object of any one model, but models are not divorced from the materiality or psychology of humanity, or other constructions of (whether reductive or not) of the mechanicity or possible postulation of human activity. If there is any charge of presupposing a model of community to serve as a comparison with some of the ancient materials, it would apply just as well to these ‘scientific’ extrapolations.

As Horrell has consistently emphasised (with Anthony Giddens and other sociologists, such as Philip Abrams), the usual types of disciplinary divisions erected between history and the social sciences are artificial.⁴⁴⁰ Their goals are often shared. Both Abrams and Giddens, for instance, are well-known for bringing up the problem of structuring. Abrams writes that

Both [history and sociology] seek to understand the same puzzle of human agency and both seek to do so in terms of the process of social structuring. Both are impelled to conceive of those processes both chronologically and logically, as both empirical sequence and abstract form.⁴⁴¹

Or, to draw from Mitchell Dean, a keen writer on sociology, theory, and relations between these disciplinary forms and history, the work of Abrams and Giddens essentially pose the question: ‘how do actions of human subjects constitute a social world that in turn constitutes the conditions of possibility of the actions of those subjects?’⁴⁴² What he points to with such a difficult question is that, according to Abrams, Giddens, and by extension Horrell, the methods of history and sociology cannot be simply separated ‘because the dualism between agency and

⁴³⁹ For NT studies examples, see Philip Esler.

⁴⁴⁰ David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 9–31; Horrell, ‘Models and Methods in Social-Scientific Interpretation’.

⁴⁴¹ Philip Abrams, ‘History, Sociology, Historical Sociology’, *Past and Present* 87 (1980): 5.

⁴⁴² Mitchell Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault’s Methods and Historical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 9.

structure cannot be maintained'.⁴⁴³ This seems to cohere with some strains of Marxian theorising, as well as strains of theory that take seriously the materiality of agency, and (Deleuzian) readings of bodies' place in the environment.⁴⁴⁴ Lukács notes, for instance, that the commonality between the agency and structure is found precisely in their foundations, which is ultimately relational. History is bound up within, and made through, the social relations of humanity.⁴⁴⁵ This does not require, however, any sort of functional bias, such as is found in much New Consensus work, which has often been concerned with showing the social stabilising effects of early Christianity.⁴⁴⁶ There may have been stabilising effects, but pointing to them must not cover up any destabilisation.

1.2 Goals and Structure

What is the scope of this chapter? Unfortunately, it is not possible to detail *all* aspects of relevant material found in Pauline texts. Because of spatial and temporal limits, I will attempt to build a case that the substance of the Pauline community can be seen in Paul's 'body' language and his collection project(s) for Jerusalem, with emphasis on the latter.⁴⁴⁷ What do I mean by substance? In part, theoretical limits, portions of Paul's theological framing; this does not preclude the extent of enactment, but is not limited by it; the possible interactions between Paul and actually historical peoples is of obvious interest. However, while I am interested in physical forms, with actual social connections, I am much more interested in diverse ways of reading

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Spatial studies have, especially, been illuminating for connecting agency, structure, and a foundation of materiality, especially the work of Henri Lefebvre.

⁴⁴⁵ George Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*: (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 48–49.

⁴⁴⁶ John B. Thompson, 'Rethinking History: For and Against Marx,' *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 14, no. 4 (Dec 1984): 543.

⁴⁴⁷ Body language is important for theorising foundational imagery of Christian communities, as it comprises crucial sections in Paul's corpus. Georgi, for instance, underlines 1 Corinth 12:1–27, noting the 'participatory democracy that [Paul] understands as the body of Christ' (p. 58–59). Furthermore, it is 'pluralistic and egalitarian' (p. 59). This may overstate the case, even if Georgi finally notes the explicit connection to 'Hellenistic and Roman political philosophy' (p. 60). But, in this chapter, the idea is to connect the resonances undergirding body language to those broader images and mentalities found in both the collection as well as language associated closely with the collection (for instance, *χάρις*). Body language is obviously political and hierarchical. How, then, does this relate to the less apparently ideological structure of Paul's overt, practical arrangements seen in the collection effort?

those connections, or how community can be framed through Paul's possible intentions.⁴⁴⁸ This would confine the chapter, primarily, to the Corinthian correspondence, portions of Romans (15: 25–28),⁴⁴⁹ and a possible reference in Galatians (Gal. 2:10) ; however, for the purposes of this project, and because of limitations, this chapter will deal less with exegetical matters and instead will focus on historical and theoretical backgrounds to Pauline texts.⁴⁵⁰

In addition to body language and the collection this chapter will focus on some research pertaining to 'gift' and 'grace'. Why? Benefactive and reciprocal language is built into the understanding of the collection being employed here, especially within 2 Corinthians 8–9. Even more important for our purposes, we note that gifting terminology is a common, crucial point of reference for not only Paul, but also Esposito, whose political/ethical *communitas* parallels Paul's own reciprocal vision of community.⁴⁵¹ Furthering the connections, Esposito also relies often on biological/body imagery. For these reasons, Pauline body and collection imagery are crucial for any meeting between Esposito and Paul. Using body imagery and the collection as crucial evidence for figuring Pauline community does not come out of left field. Horrell, for instance, notes the importance of body imagery for Paul's construction of community as a model

⁴⁴⁸ I am not confining myself to merely the literary merits of these formations. I do have an interest in this, and it may be helpful for viewing the Pauline community I am 'constructing'. But, I am much more interested in noting the multiplicity of Pauline thought available through textual base and socio-material possibility.

⁴⁴⁹ James Harrison, 'Paul's "Indebtedness" to the Barbarian (Rom 1:14) in Latin West Perspective', *Novum Testamentum* (2013): 311–48. Harrison opens up for a more wide-ranging play on reciprocity in Romans that makes for interesting textual interconnections between some of language used in conjunction with his collection section in Romans 15.

⁴⁵⁰ David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 33–37. Downs complicates the Galatians reference, disagreeing with Joubert and Longenecker, who both see 'remember the poor' as referring to Jerusalem. Downs draws from Martyn who offers the possibility that Paul was engaged in multiple collections. I find this much more persuasive because of several omissions that are glaring if Paul were referring to Jerusalem.

⁴⁵¹ See, for instance, Kyle B. Wells, *Grace and Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism: Interpreting the Transformation of the Heart* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2015), 188–206, 209–23, 247 *passim*. While Wells' argument is often focused specifically on discussions of moral agency and the will of the subject in relation to grace, what is equally important are the reciprocal dimensions of grace. While seemingly antiquated (grace: works) it fits well emphases Crook, Harrison, and others have noted: benefaction is a two way street.

of ‘solidarity and difference’ that side-steps homogeneity and possibly short-circuits accepted hierarchies.⁴⁵²

Body terminology shows up in several places in the uncontested Pauline corpus. The two most important references are found in Romans and 1 Corinthians.⁴⁵³ The use of Paul’s body language is eye-catching for several reasons: its social content; its theological gestures; connections to existent of community;⁴⁵⁴ possible political nature of such imagery; and its place within broader argument of each respective epistle. And, we have to mention the use of χάρις terminology, even if such terminology has a very different referent. Paul is certainly dealing with ‘gift’ here, but the form of gift, *what is meant by* gift, is very different.

There will necessarily be a certain level of abstraction here. Body imagery is being read as a connecting tissue that helps the reader understand the broad form of Pauline community. Its primacy, then, will be demonstrated, but also abstracted from some other, larger concerns. Paul’s full *oeuvre* cannot be detailed, and so ‘community’ as being constituted by these two particular themes (collection and body) is limited. But, making this connection, especially through noting the organologic of the Pauline community through focusing on body imagery as well as the flow of *munus* in Paul’s collection, will be helpful in reading Pauline activity. Further, these evidences connect directly to Esposito’s broader thought on political philosophical community.

2. Reading Pauline Community

This is a different angle than usual constructions of Pauline community. Usually, attention is focused on overt textual or linguistic evidence. Specifically, a scholar may focus on the uses of ἐκκλησία, κοινωνία, or related terms.⁴⁵⁵ Building off these specific terms, a possible

⁴⁵² David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (London: T&T International, 2005), 121–23.

⁴⁵³ 1 Corinthians 12:12–27.

⁴⁵⁴ Yung Suk Kim, *Christ’s Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

⁴⁵⁵ These terms, then, become the basis for reading lived practices or the construction of a given congregational form. A prime example could be seen in noting the theological structure of rituals, such as the Ευχάριστος, and reading these singular practices as extrapolations of the entirety of communal life. Finding themes, then, that are revealed in rituals projecting them onto the social space of the community. This is, of course, not ubiquitous. But, what is

general idea of what a Pauline community consists of is built, related as well to the ways these words function socially within the ancient context.⁴⁵⁶ This is a valid approach and has been helpful in detailing semantic possibilities of specific terminological groups. Teresa Morgan's recent book *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* is a premier example, a highly detailed account of contextual uses of *pistis* and *fides*, showing how the uses of these words provides ranges of possibilities in texts, breaking past a usual historical limit found in Augustine's theological works. With Morgan's work, faith is no longer simply a theological term, but instead forms around specific modes of use, breaking free from conceptual constraints that limited how a reader can note function. Several other excellent works on χάρις also reveal a similar strategy, Crook's *Reconceptualising Conversion*, James Harrison's *Paul's Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context*, and Stephan Joubert's *Paul as Benefactor*.⁴⁵⁷ And, equally as important, would be attempts to break from readings of κοινωνία that shift emphasis from simply ecclesial interests. As Julian M. Ogereau notes,

the tendency has been (to attempt) to rediscover the presumed theological significance of κοινωνία in the NT, especially in the letters of the apostle Paul, who, many have come to think, developed a particular theological understanding of the term which he frequently employed to express participation in the gospel, in Christ, in the Spirit, and in the Eucharist . . . Such research has often been conducted with a view to extract from the NT ecclesiological and pastoral precepts that could be applied to modern ecclesiastical contexts, or even to develop a "theology of κοινωνία," which has not been without posing some methodological problems.⁴⁵⁸

Semantic possibilities are determined by context, and readers are not limited to just the New Testament texts, but instead to the wider possible mentalities present around the author.

common is pointing to particular themes and utilising them beyond their use for constructing the logic and functioning of 'community'.

⁴⁵⁶ Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 79; Philip Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 27. Both Downs and Harland point to a variety of different terms used in antiquity by civic institutions and more broadly that related to diverse types of groupings. These included *koinon*, *synodos*, *thiasos*, *synedrion*, *eranos*, *synergasia*, *symbiotai*, *hetairoi*, *mystai*, *synagoge*, and *speira* among others. A popular Latin term used in Italy and the West for, broadly, associations in scholarly literature is *collegia*.

⁴⁵⁷ Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*; James R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Stephan Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection*, reprint (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).

⁴⁵⁸ Julien M. Ogereau, 'A Survey of Κοινωνία and its Cognates in Documentary Sources', *Novum Testamentum* 57, no. 3 (2015): 276.

This is a recognisable shift, and one that Morgan and others represent well. It is the force behind a work that pays attention to the wide variance of a term and how it operates inter-culturally. Andrie Du Toit notes that the ‘study of origins may certainly help us to understand the genesis and development of NT notions. It may also provide us with important clues as to their semantics. But we should be cautious. Genetics are not decisive’.⁴⁵⁹ Instead, he notes that the most decisive element is how early ‘Christians [*sic*]’ adopted, adapted and contextualized these notions into their own religious universe’.⁴⁶⁰ This is an important, though often recognised, point. How specific terms operate is determined not merely by reading an argument, nor the specific letter it occurs within, nor an author’s corpus, and certainly not just taking into account the larger body of work determined to be relevant for contemporary or ancient Christian life, despite what students may learn in biblical survey courses. Instead, mentalities, social formations, and cultural bounds must be taken into account. This is why the current chapter is not concerned as strongly with explicitly exegetical work from the outset; a mere, surface commentary on a set of texts will not unearth strong conceptualisations of community.

2.2 Associational Promise

Paul and his contemporaries are not simply Jews, nor were they vaguely Hellenistic, or merely subjects inhabiting the Roman Empire, isolated from broader socio-cultural contexts. They were intertwined within diverse social realities and inhabited diffuse, vibrating identities. Some New Testament research has come too close to reading Christian congregations and Jewish synagogues as distinct from their social context, deliberately isolated ‘sects’ that are ‘placed on the negative or ambivalent social relations that existed between the sect and surrounding society’.⁴⁶¹ Following Harland, these diverse communities are paralleled with, and compared to, associations: ‘social groupings in antiquity that shared certain characteristics in common and that were often recognized by as analogous groups by people and by governmental

⁴⁵⁹ Andrie Du Toit, ‘*Paulus Oecumenicus*: Interculturality in the shaping of Paul’s Theology’, *New Testament Studies* 55, no. 2 (April 2009): 143.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ Philip Harland, *Dynamics of Identity*, 25.

institutions'.⁴⁶² Further, they 'were often small, unofficial ("private") groups, usually consisting of about ten to fifty members . . . that met together on a regular basis to socialize with one another and to honour both earthly and divine benefactors, which entailed a series of internal and external activities'.⁴⁶³ Allowing for analogies between Jewish and Christian communities and broader associational groupings allows for a great depth of possible social readings of these early 'religious' movements. As Downs notes, many recent scholars understand the need for 'greater taxonomic flexibility' with regards to classifying religious groups.⁴⁶⁴ The strict divisions that are underlined by sociological 'sects' discourse is not helpful any longer, and strict distinctions between these types of communities quickly break down.⁴⁶⁵ Meeks, for instance, notes four main criteria that characterise a sect: 1) exclusive and totalistic; 2) more inclusive and socially stratified than associations; 3) uncommon terminology absent from pagan associations; and, 4) that Christian sects did not have extralocal links.⁴⁶⁶ Each of these traits have been challenged rather successfully since Meeks' early work on Christianity, allowing for useful analogies with a wide variety of associations and other groups.⁴⁶⁷

Many studies also pay particular attention to discrete locations with the goal of elucidating Paul's activities and the structure of the communities he interacts with and (sometimes) helps to form.⁴⁶⁸ The diversity of material here, however, is focused on 'both/and', attempting to break beyond simply noting diverse locations and communities, but also to particular actions and the logic behind those actions (through reading Paul), as well as the shape of contextualised mentalities. With that said, this chapter gains much productivity from utilising,

⁴⁶² Ibid., 26.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 79.

⁴⁶⁵ Similarly, 'voluntary' associations are not a helpful category, despite its wide use in New Testament studies. Voluntary associations typically refer to modern, capitalist organisation of small, privatised groups made up of modern individuals, rather than typified by those found in early Christian communities. Not only is label anachronistic, but it obscures the social location of early Christian communities. Localised groups often banded together for reasons of survival, rather than simply coming together voluntarily because of similar interests. The class dimension is often missing when scholars utilise 'voluntary' association, and thus crucial ideological critique is bypassed in favour of descriptive, late capitalist motivations.

⁴⁶⁶ Wayne Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 78–80.

⁴⁶⁷ Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 81–85; Richard Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 162–90.

⁴⁶⁸ See, for instance, Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*.

especially, those works that have centred on Corinth, an important city for Paul's broader community-building, as well as his collection, efforts.

The types of studies mentioned above are crucial. Why, then, is the attempted route (focusing on body images and the collection project) different in this study? Because it is attempting to sidestep the dangers of premature disciplinary delimitation. As noted in the previous chapter, biblical studies is quick to police the boundaries of the disciplinary city, and so this project seeks to push against the walls in order to widen heuristically useful models, as well as highlight unusual evidence. This reason is partial, but important, because it has to do, precisely, with what is considered viable hermeneutical evidence and strategy. Another reason for this particular path is that much has been written on terms like *κοινωνία* ('community' or 'fellowship'), but if the 'body' is a political/social metaphor, then it is conceptually connected to the forms community takes;⁴⁶⁹ or, Paul uses body terminology in socio-political ways that suggest importance to an understanding of community.⁴⁷⁰ And, the same goes for the socio-political implications of the collection project. In other words, instead of focusing simply on how specific terms may operate within a text, the focus is on how social concepts function, where

⁴⁶⁹ This is not to say that this is a singular or exclusive connection. Body language, however, adds another level to this politicisation.

⁴⁷⁰ It has to be noted that much written on *κοινωνία* has been ecclesiastical (bringing in already formed ideas of religious community), or heavily theological. Furthermore, because of the dearth of explicit references, it becomes difficult to utilise *κοινωνία* as a basis for Pauline community. This does not empty the term, and concepts related to the term, of their importance. *Κοινωνία* is important, but cannot be the sole basis for reading Pauline community; instead, there needs to be a broader reach into various Pauline texts/actions. What I want to focus on are diverse ranges of possible evidences that mix together in order to underscore what 'community' is in the Pauline context. Instead of merely concerned with 'identity' as some discrete marker, community is a fluid mixture of time and space grounded by, rather than 'having' or 'owning' an identity, a voidal form. This is, also, an idea that is in direct contrast with mid-20th century scholarship that insisted Christian communities were best understood as 'sects'. For an example of a poor use, see Luke Timothy Johnson, 'Koinonia: Diversity and Unity in Early Christianity', in *Contested Issues in Christian Origins and the New Testament: Collected Essays* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 499–514. *Koinonia* contains a sort of mysterious, vague quality, some essence or property owned by early Christians. Johnson gives it no sustained attention, and instead it becomes a proper identity marker of early Christian groups. In my own speculative reading of Pauline Christianity, I reject this strong essentialism and instead opt for reading early Pauline groups, tentatively, around notions of community that cohere with Esposito's *communitas*.

they occur, and what they contribute when placed next to evidence connected specifically to terminological nuances.⁴⁷¹

3. *The Pauline Social Body: Gifts in Common*

Body's importance is determined by terminological nuance, but also through attendant activity. Consider two different instances of this: 1) gifting in various ancient contexts (particular); and, 2) social clubs as they operate in Paul's relative spatio-temporal context (general). Gift terminology, as a philosophical concept, has been discussed above. In the above commentary on contemporary philosophical work, *munus* is the common duty that founds the community of non-identity, a type of impossible community. But, also referenced in past sections were the importance of Mauss's interruption onto the scene of the social sciences, and the importance of this for subsequent readings of Paul. Briones's socio-theological reading of Pauline financial policy must wrestle with post-Maussian readings of gifting, as do the various other various scholars like Barclay, Crook, and Harrison.⁴⁷² While Mauss's legacy in the intellectual history of the gift is important, it has already been placed above.

Because there has already been discussion on divergent readings of 'gift', there will be a focus on contextualised readings of gift, pointing to Paul's general milieu. Gift is, of course,

⁴⁷¹ There have been some interesting work in this aspect, of course, much of which has been published recently. Some of these have even focused partially on societal relations, and specifically the importance of the Jerusalem collection. However, none has paid attention to work being done on contemporary concepts of community and how these elaborate or shift what we can say about Paul and the operations of community. Ogereau's work attempts to think through the political dimensions of the collection (neglected by most scholarship on *κοινωνία*, too often focused on theological reasoning). However, it becomes clear that the political dimension is often subsumed within a larger theological reading. Paul is primarily, if not solely, enacting solidarity that attempts to function as a theological embodiment of the Kingdom of God. More interesting would be instead questioning the material reality of the collection process, what political dimension drives Christians to do so, how it interacts with larger political realities. What are the class dimensions present? Or, further, presenting the political reality of communities before noting how a communal-collection breaks from the normative socio-political reality. The alternative is too close to reading political-action as simply subsumed under theological realities.

Julian Ogereau, 'Paul's *κοινωνία* with the Philippians: Societas as a Missionary Funding Strategy', *JSNT* 60, no. 3 (2014): 360-78; Julian Ogereau, 'The Jerusalem Collection as *Κοινωνία*: Paul's Global Politics of Socio-Economic Equality and Solidarity', *Journal of New Testament Studies* 58, no. 3 (2012): 360-78.

⁴⁷² Several of these works have already been mentioned in previous chapters, but most prominently see Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*; Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy*; Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*; and, James Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

important for this chapter because, as Barclay notes, ‘the traditional role of the gift in creating and reproducing social ties entails that gifts create obligations and expect returns, mixing disinterest and self-interest in ways that confound modern categories’.⁴⁷³ The Espositoan resonances are apparent, and further, χάρις is deeply embedded in the texts that we are most interested in, namely Paul’s collection project section in 2 Corinthians. Going beyond these resonances, as we will see below body discourse implies an interest in cosmic and social ordering, which connects to the hierarchical implications of the gift.⁴⁷⁴

Gift terminology is not merely made up of groups of terms that, broadly, describe actions that occur between two, distinct subjects; instead, gifting is a social activity that breaks from the individual, discrete couple of subjects isolated from the social scene and includes the make-up of social reality. Or, to give a gift is to enter into the broader social-scape that is a crucial part of the material reality of society. But, Esposito’s *munus* must also be attended to. The location of *munus* is comparable to contemporary readings of reciprocal gifting for social affectivity; but the place of *munus* has a negative trait, in that it is not an obligation of the immunitary agent, who retains a role in community.

3.1.1 The Pauline Social Body: Collectivities, Social Forces

Social clubs including associations, synagogues, congregations and other similar social gatherings utilised gifting and reciprocity (in all of its multiplicity). These smaller social gatherings, or types of communities, are intertwined within each other and the broader body of society; a synagogue or congregations is not a sect, isolated from the wider society. Scholars like Harland have shown recently how interconnected these social communities could be, with members bound up within distinct and diverse communities and with communities occupying

⁴⁷³ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 59.

⁴⁷⁴ While there may be important connections to draw out from a different sort of gift language present in Pauline texts concerned with ecclesial arrangement of gifts, this would be stretching beyond my interest in political order in the body.

socio-political spaces that operated within the purview of the larger social sphere.⁴⁷⁵ Jewish synagogues, for instance, were not secluded from the broader social sphere, or from the reciprocal relations that dominated public life; instead they functioned as unofficial associations that interacted with patrons and forms of imperial authority.⁴⁷⁶ This is also certainly true within early Christianity.⁴⁷⁷

Connected to this reality is the fact that even talking about Christian communities, generally viewed as social bodies, is supremely difficult when recognising that within the larger body of work on Christian social formations there is the tendency to have, as Stanley Stowers writes, a ‘working premise that there were Christian communities everywhere that there is evidence for some activity—e.g., teaching and writing about Jesus Christ’; furthermore, abandoning such assumptions ‘holds promise for opening a space to imagine more historically explanatory social formations’.⁴⁷⁸ The assumption, however, that the Pauline letters being interacted with here are connected to Christian communities of some sort is strong and will be presupposed. Corinthian, Galatian, Philippian communities, and other various Christian social bodies Paul is writing to are evident. Otherwise, Paul’s addresses would make little sense. These

⁴⁷⁵ Philip Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

Nonetheless, it can be noted in both the work of Josephus and Philo that there were groups of Jews who either abstained from benefactive relations that could be viewed as pagan in orientation, or riffed on these benefactive relations. Again, from a thorough survey of these early associations it becomes quite clear that they were not homogeneous.

⁴⁷⁶ Interaction with imperial authority would be expected and was a social reality from the beginning of the colonisation of Jews by the Roman Empire. This takes on several forms, but generally Jews are left to their own devices, allowing retention of distinctive identities. But, while this is a usual reading of Jews under Romans, the situation is quite diverse and different than any simplistic stories about communal autonomy, or radical sectarian isolation (though such did exist, such as the group at Qumran). While elements of this will be discussed below, it is important to note here that epigraphic evidence points to synagogues setting up inscriptions and monuments to non-Jewish patrons for their financial assistance. Furthermore, beyond this, it is well known in the field that there are complex questions relating to enculturation.

Harland, *Dynamics of Identity*, 40. ‘Synagogue’ was, during certain periods, a designation that was not limited to Jews, but was widespread. There are, for instance, references to a ‘synagogue of Zeus’ or a ‘synagogue of barbers’.

⁴⁷⁷ Cavan Concannon, *Assembling Early Christianity: Trade, Networks, and the Letters of Dionysios of Corinth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 209. Concannon shows well how early, 2nd century Christianity could be conceptualised as ‘a series of networks that occasionally interacted with one another and that emerged, proliferated, grew, and decomposed.’ I think this is quite obviously true of 1st century Christianity, both because of its associational qualities, and also through the work of early Christian organisers like Paul.

⁴⁷⁸ Stanley Stowers, ‘The Concept of “Community” and History of Early Christianity’, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 (2011): 253.

communities were intra-local, linked despite their distances.⁴⁷⁹ Furthermore, these associations were not homogeneous, all reacting and being comprised of the same characteristics; there is remarkable differentiation between the dislocated associations. Stowers' criticism of tendencies to construct communities based on writings, then, perhaps hits another important, related point: the assumption that a given writing connected to a specific larger location exhausts the stratification, diversity, and multiplicity of communities in that location is mistaken.

3.2 *Koinwōnía and Other Crucial Terms*

What string of signifiers are associated with these social formations? Synagogues, associations, and congregations are popular terms associated with social groups, but ἐκκλησία and κοινωμία show up frequently as well, especially in NT related materials.⁴⁸⁰ Cognates related to κοινωμία have been exhaustively probed, but on the whole there seem not to have been many widespread investigations into documentary sources. Julien M. Ogereau notes, for instance, that 'documentary sources have so far been entirely neglected, thereby depriving the scholarly community from a rich source of, potentially, highly relevant philological materials.' Instead, 'emphasis was generally placed on semantic questions as determined by syntagmatics, without

⁴⁷⁹ Cavan Concannon, 'Economic Aspects of Intercity Travel among Pauline Assemblies', in *Paul and Economics: A Handbook*, ed. Thomas R. Blanton IV and Raymond Pickett (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 336–37. Concannon critiques the common presumptions that Christianity spread 'like a virus'. He favours an image that I will develop later, namely a type of Deleuzian image that better fits Pauline intra/inter-city relationality. 'We might do better imaging. . . [early Christian movements as] nonlinear networks that emerge, endure, and fall apart, thinking, in Deleuzian terms, *rhizomatically*'. Italics in original.

⁴⁸⁰ J.Y. Campbell, 'The Origin and Meaning of the Christian Use of the Word ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ', *The Journal of Theological Studies* 49, no. 195/196 (July/Oct 1948): 130–42; Wolfgang Schrage, "'Ekklesia" und "Synagoge": Zum Ursprung des urchristlichen Kirchenbegriffs', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 60 (1963): 180–86. Campbell's work on ἐκκλησία represented shift in how to understand the emergence of the term which had, previously, been seen as a direct translation of Hebrew (*qahal YHWH*), which is a general term for Israel as the 'people of God' (p. 130). Campbell opened up the importance of noting the Hellenistic connections, here. Εκκλησία is not a mere translation from Hebrew to Greek, simply denoting a direct correspondence of signified for diverse signifiers, but has a larger semantic range and history. Schrage furthered the discussion, opening up the political resonance of the term; nonetheless, Georgi finds criticisms in his account, particularly his contention that ἐκκλησία is used by early Christians to distinguish themselves as a sect separated from Judaism. *Koinwōnía* shows up in the NT 19 times, with its most frequent usage (12) found in the uncontested Pauline epistles. These are further concentrated in the Corinthian correspondence (twice in 1 Corinthians, and four times in 2 Corinthians). Philippians has 3 occurrences. While this is substantial, I find much more interesting the fact that Paul uses the term most frequently when speaking to, as a whole, the Corinthian followers. If the Corinthian correspondence is part of a larger concord discourse, then it makes sense that Paul would stress 'participation'. Important for my purposes here, as well, is the term's use in collection passages, most notably 2 Corinthians 8–9.

necessarily giving much attention to the contextual and pragmatic usages of the cognates in the *lingua franca*'.⁴⁸¹

Documentary sources are valuable because they provide us with a wide range of a terms use in diverse cultural settings, which we have already noted in connection with Morgan's work on *pistis/fides*.⁴⁸² Ogereau's collection of a broader set has value because it assists in diversifying interpretive possibilities; further, we see this especially in some of the specific texts that we have picked out as valuable for our thinking about community in the Pauline corpus.⁴⁸³ This comes to bear most importantly for our endeavour when we recognise *κοινωνία* is usually interpreted as 'to take part/participate', while one of the more popular interpretations of the 'nominal derivative of the adjective *koinos*' is 'someone who has something in common with someone else' or 'someone who takes part in something with someone else'.⁴⁸⁴ Instead of denoting something akin to close, identitarian connection with others, the general sense is of *participation in something in common with other participants*.⁴⁸⁵

3.2.2 ἐκκλησία

In comparison it is interesting to note that ἐκκλησία, in all of its cultural multiplicity, most often refers to an active meeting, a singular occurrence of diverse subjects coming together, instead of 'the body of people which assembles or meets together'; nonetheless, it often retains a strikingly political bent.⁴⁸⁶ Numerous times ἐκκλησία shows up in the NT, with nearly half of the

⁴⁸¹ Ogereau, 'A Survey of Κοινωνία', 275–76. Italics in original.

⁴⁸² It has to be noted that the difficulty is, of course, developing range of possible meanings within the wider use of a term. This is a significant problem, and it does not seem to me that we can shorten the possible range precisely. We are stuck within moments of gestural traction, relying on possibilities that constantly shift.

⁴⁸³ Bodies: Romans 12:4–5; 1 Corinth 12:12–27. Especially see 2 Corinth 8:1–15 for specific collection imagery.

⁴⁸⁴ Ogereau, 'A Survey of Κοινωνία', 10. Ogereau pulls from a wide variety of sources, but most notably: F. Hauck, "κοινωνός," TDNT 3 (1964) 797; BDAG, κοινωνός; L&N, κοινωνός; Campbell, "ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ," 353; Seesemann, ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ, 19–20.

⁴⁸⁵ J. Y. Campbell, 'ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ and its Cognates in the New Testament', *JBL* 51, no. 4 (Dec 1932): 353.

⁴⁸⁶ Campbell, 'The Origin and Meaning', 132. As Campbell goes on to say, in normal Greek 'when the meeting breaks up that particular ἐκκλησία ceases to exist' (p. 137). While there is concern that this boundary does not quite hold in the NT, particularly with Paul, I would contest the claim. Most notably because Campbell's work is outdated regarding the function and scope of early Christian environments. There is no 'local' church, but instead a multiplicity of churches in diverse locations within a city or setting.

occurrences in the uncontested Pauline epistles. While it appears in phrases that appear to specify a more theologised element ('church of God' in Gal 1:13, for instance), on the whole it appears innocuously, not being significantly transformed in Paul's writing, which enhances any political flavour. Campbell finds this significant because this seems to show that ἐκκλησία has no strong doctrinal element, and particularly that it is not meant to refer to the NT churches/Church as the 'true Israel'.⁴⁸⁷ My own contention is that this may very well be true, but it has to be noted that Paul is not writing systematic theological treatises; we should not expect 'theology' to only show up in specified forms, signposted for the reader. Banality carries Paul's theology. There is no neat separation of Paul's theology from his exhortations, imperatives, paranesis, or seeming mundane portions of Paul's epistles.⁴⁸⁸ Have not Pauline greetings, rather than a slightly altered rote opening, been recognised as possibly displaying politico-theological emphases? It has become rather standard, for instance, in reading Romans to note these transgressive elements, a part of the broader political swerve of the epistle directed to the heart of Empire. One can, along with Robert Jewett, emphasise the reversal of values through emphasising his 'missionary obligation' to the undeserving barbarians (Romans 1:14–15),⁴⁸⁹ or note the more directly political-theological elements of replacing Caesar with a different ruler, Jesus.⁴⁹⁰ Ernst Kasemann points to *kurios Iesous* as setting up an opposition with 'the lords of the Gentile world', and further that 'in antithesis to the deities of the mystery cults, that Kyrios became the dominant christological title'.⁴⁹¹ Noting an opposition between lordships is nothing new, even if the last few decades of work on the political Paul have attained a more sophisticated level. Joseph D. Fantin, for instance, succinctly establishes the different spheres of lordship, further showing the multiplicity of types of lordship. Paul's use of lordship in relation to Jesus presents, in Fantin's reading, an opposition of supreme lordships, of which there can only be one within a

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 141.

⁴⁸⁸ Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2009), 207–28.

⁴⁸⁹ Robert Jewett, 'Romans', in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul*, ed. J.D.G. Dunn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 92–93. Jewett writes that this was particularly political because 'the barbarians in Spain, who had repeatedly resisted the Roman rule, and were viewed ... as a lethal threat to civilization.'

⁴⁹⁰ Much has been bade of this in recent years. But, it also shows up in martyrdom accounts that circulate in, the 2nd and 3rd centuries. See 'Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul in Rome'.

⁴⁹¹ Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 13–14.

cognitive environment.⁴⁹² Whether political analyses of Paul's augmentation of traditional epistolary greetings evidenced well or not, it remains that they can legitimately be read as theological, and politically, significant. This possibility of the banal being caught in those theological/political moments may point to a different way of thinking about Paul's assemblies.

The significance of a word is tied to not only linguistic details, but also through the activities and conceptual monuments erected through a term's use. It is not merely Paul's *use* of a term that is significant for understanding something about community, but also connections with images and activities. Communal activity points to the reality and 'essence' of community. Gerd Theissen is well known for being one of the first New Testament scholars to utilise social scientific work. Theissen's early work on divisions in the Corinthian associations provides an excellent example of eschewing the story that distils differences to theological disagreements attached to specific rituals.⁴⁹³ Social conflict is consonant with theological disagreements and questions regarding rituals and the actualised effect of rituals as they take place within specific social settings. While it would be a crude mistake to reduce social tension to models that would display mechanistic action among material subjects, as if discourse only occurs and causes change due to the material effects and tension, it would also be a mistake to discount place as a crucial element in the various disagreements between Christian communities.

3.3 *Questioning the Body*

How can we understand 'body' references in Paul? What are the various ways that the body functions? What does the body refer to? What are possible social and cultural contexts that help us to locate Paul's use of body language? How does the body operate as a link of subjectivities? Is body terminology connected to specific Pauline turns of phrase that may

⁴⁹² Joseph D. Fantin, *The Lord of the Entire World: Lord Jesus, A Challenge to Lord Caesar?* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2011), 188–90.

⁴⁹³ Gerd Theissen, 'Social Integration and Sacramental Activity: An Analysis of 1 Cor 11:17–34', in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* ed. David G. Horrell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999): 250–73.

elucidate the social and political aspect of the body?⁴⁹⁴ These questions are both important and difficult, and must also be clarified. Thinking through the functioning of the discourse of the body in this section is not concerned primarily with connecting Paul directly with specific texts. Echoing Dale Martin in his landmark work *The Corinthian Body*, instead of comparing different texts as sources for Paul's thought I want to think about how the 'unspoken logics of corporeal construction is implicated in particular ideologies that construe the body in certain ways as a result of certain societal interests . . . not tracing backgrounds or influences'.⁴⁹⁵

Pointing to Livy, Epictetus, political texts, or medical texts (as Martin does) is less about saying who Paul is drawing on, or what he has read, and more about noting ideological constructions, contexts, ways to place Paul within a broader cultural scene, and how certain images can function. There are problems, as well, with making direction connections. What should one notice immediately when relying on texts like Livy and Epictetus, much less Seneca or Aristotle? These texts, by and large, are productions of specific social places radically different than Paul's social and cultural location, as well as the complexity of material relations and lawscapes that denote his 'space'; they must be read with such contexts in mind.

The social space of an individual is important for locating their values and social attitudes.⁴⁹⁶ But, it also notes the experience of the individual. Experience is always coloured by the social location of the individual, because it determines *who* they meet, *where* they meet, *how* they live their everyday lives, and their relative *privileges or disadvantages*. The authors mentioned above are all members of a social class that is most likely far removed from Paul. It is important to note, for instance, that Livy was a well-regarded historian who was acquainted with Augustus and Claudius; Livy even, according to Suetonius, was influential in Claudius's

⁴⁹⁴ James W. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul: Rediscovering the Community Conformed to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

⁴⁹⁵ Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), xiii.

⁴⁹⁶ For an illustration of useful attention to space, see Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in his Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Laura S. Nasrallah, 'Spatial Perspectives: Space and Archaeology in Roman Philippi,' in *Studying Paul's Letters*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

education, encouraging him to write history. This does not eliminate any relevance of his writing for thinking about, specifically, social context. But, as many NT scholars have noted, especially as historical work has steadily changed in the last century,⁴⁹⁷ it is crucial to pay attention to events and movements as they occur to those occupying the bottom classes.⁴⁹⁸ Seneca the Younger came from a wealthy equestrian family, was briefly a senator, and was well-known as a tutor and leading member of Nero's *amici principis*, a connection that brought obscene wealth.⁴⁹⁹ While numerous studies have compared Paul and Seneca, especially regarding gifting, such contextual differences are important for emphasising how they understood the social importance of something like gifting.

3.4 Metaphorical Bodies

Perhaps the most recognisable use of body terminology is as a rhetorical device to say something about the relation between Christ and the diverse multiplicities that constitute the 'church', as well as the relation between those diverse subjects that make up the body. Christ, in these sections, represents the fullness of the body, or the 'head', a motif that occurs most prominently in Colossians 1:18, the Pseudo-Pauline epistle Ephesians 4:4, 5:29, 1 Corinthians 12: 12–28, and Romans 12:4–5. Such body imagery is not novel. Body imagery similar to Paul's is common, especially in political writings.⁵⁰⁰

Paul's body terminology could be read through a binary lens. Paul is either offering a metaphorical reading or, conversely, providing a type of ontological reference to the socio-theological make-up of the Christian community. Such a reading would differ from possible

⁴⁹⁷ *Annales* school of history, for instance.

⁴⁹⁸ Furthermore, even if Paul was a ready student of those writers mentioned above, reader-response criticism has underscored the fact that our social and cultural location, not to mention our individual life experiences, can dramatically change how we read a text, even if the text is written by those who occupy privileged spaces or intend to underscore the relevant powers-that-be within their social location.

⁴⁹⁹ Susanna Braund, 'Seneca Multiplex: The Phases (and phrases) of Seneca's Life and Works', in *The Cambridge Companion to Seneca* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 21. Perhaps Seneca's own discussions on gifting and relinquishment of pleasure is equivalent to Ivanka Trump quoting Marcus Aurelius on contentment on immaterial goods.

⁵⁰⁰ Livy, 2.32; Epictetus, *Diatr.*, 2.10.4–5.

ways of reading the political body in other ancient writers. Martin notes, for instance, that body language refers not just to the order of classes within the political body (this is not simply about abstracted, discrete bodies and where they individually fit), but that this relates to a macro-cosmic vision of reality. We fit where we fit within the social-scape precisely because there is a form of imitation, a definite relation, between the organisation of human bodies and the organisation of the cosmos. The importance of order cannot be simply forgotten or brushed aside. Likewise, it connects directly to religious realities as well. Religion, after all, is not a disconnected private affair in the ancient world. The demarcation of religion into a separate sphere can be read genealogically as a Christian intervention. But, doing so requires, as well, a reader of early Christianity to ignore the demarcation, as this division is not present in the broader New Testament documents, nor specifically in the Pauline epistles; it develops over time.⁵⁰¹

It is crucial to read Paul's context as one that lacks an explicitly religious dimension, as if 'religion' is some discrete, disconnected social sphere. Ittai Gradel write incisively that 'it is absent in the sense that "the divine" or the "other world" forms a whole with other aspects of human experience, including politics, and can be separated and dissected on its own only at the peril of understanding'.⁵⁰² Like with Martin's points about the vision and importance of body

⁵⁰¹ Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 5. Gradel makes this move, claiming the Christian roots are 'clearly found', before using Jesus' saying in Matt. 22:19ff and John 8:23 and Augustine's distinction between the two cities as evidence. I do not reject a broader, genealogical reading, but I am wary about reading these Gospel texts as either advocating or expressing some basic distinctions between religion and politics. This strikes me as naive. Furthermore, our earliest Christians sources are Pauline texts. I am unsure that we should take much later sources (Matthew and John) as constituting some basic, elementary foundations of Christianity. The early movements were not monolithic, and I see no reason to think that early members revolutionised socio-cultural realities in ways that posited a strong distinction between religion and politics as conceptual categories. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: 1933), 7–8; Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Religion, Religions, Religious', in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (London: University Chicago Press, 1998), 281–82. The above rejection of 'religion' as a strong category of distinction is not connected to arrogant Barthian attempts to set Christianity apart from other social/religious/political phenomena. Instead, push back from the term is because using it allows for neat excisions of 'religious' realities from the broader social-scape. This does not negate any importance the term has in certain corners within scholarship. Smith notes, for instance, that it helps to establish 'a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as "language" does in linguistics or "culture" plays in anthropology'.

⁵⁰² Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 6.

(political) terminology, the divisions that we often take for granted are later imposed on a much more intertwined and layered understanding of reality.

Metaphors refer to reality; nevertheless, the way in which they refer to the constitution of reality varies widely. Furthermore, determining the layers of removal are always determined by the reader, complicating how one interprets the metaphor. Timothy Carter, writing on the body in Paul, notes that ‘one should beware of underestimating the power of metaphor to communicate profound truths about reality’.⁵⁰³ Drawing on Ricoeur he writes, further, that ‘the symbol opens up the creative interpretation, a new way of seeing or understanding the world, which both respects the original enigma of the symbol and also brings out and seeks to express its meaning systematically’.⁵⁰⁴ It is precisely in a metaphor’s uncanny ability to express, to varying degrees, realities that divert from usual ways of reading an object or situation that it is able to open ontological reflection. In noting this, the binary opposition destabilise and allows the interpreter to think about the metaphor, and reality, in new and diverse ways.

Scholars rely on competing, but similar, understandings of the operation of metaphor. Acknowledging this is necessary for thinking about metaphor and interpretation broadly, but also particularly about body imagery. In David Downs work on how understanding cultic metaphors helps interpret Paul’s collection project, he points directly to the work of I. A. Richards, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Max Black. These works are undoubtedly helpful for any discourse surrounding metaphor and Pauline texts. Ricoeur distinguishes, however, his reading of metaphor from these other mid-20th century writers, especially Richards and Black.⁵⁰⁵ In the case of Black, for instance, Ricoeur notes that the main theory of metaphor here relies on the latter in an opposition of genuine and trivial metaphors. Genuine metaphors are *evental* in nature, novel, while trivial metaphors are situated as usual or contextualised within a community as a

⁵⁰³ Timothy L. Carter, ‘The Metaphor of Christ’s Body in 1 Corinthians 12’, in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* edited by Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 96.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Paul Ricoeur, ‘Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics’, *New Literary History* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1974): 99–100, 101–2.

sort of literal meaning that can be identified within the history of language.⁵⁰⁶ Downs takes up work that is based on Black's scholarship on metaphor and starts from the basis that Paul's conceptual metaphor for the collection is connected to cultic worship.⁵⁰⁷ But, one wonders, in this instance, whether it is proper to both determine the collection based on a specific metaphorical form found in Paul that leads to discussions solely on cultic worship, and also, more importantly, whether or not we can definitively classify this metaphor as trivial/general rather than evental/genuine. Suffice it to say that the importance of the distinction between types of metaphor, as well as how metaphor can function, is important and crucial for reading Paul's discussion of the body. This does not exhaust the importance of what a metaphor can, and does, do especially in instances where it is genuine. Furthermore, this does not exhaust other political implications found in the rhetoric (e.g. What organisation do they imply, and what effect does this have?), and how these play out in the lived context of the Corinthians.

Following on Downs' work, it is essential to note that, while there may be divergent ways of interpreting precisely the mechanics of a metaphor, both underscore the fact that, drawing from Lakoff and Johnson, '[n]ew metaphors, like conventional metaphors, can have the power to define reality . . . The acceptance of the metaphor, which forces us to focus *only* on those aspects of our experience that it highlights, leads us to view the entailments of the metaphor as being *true*'.⁵⁰⁸

3.5 *Non-Pauline Bodies*

Livy and Epictetus represent a common way of using body imagery. Body metaphors are sustained attempts to make something clear about the political body, about societal connectivity and those different elements in society. What is being expressed in these particular passages? Perhaps most importantly, they operate as apologies for the allocation of particular classes, harmonising hierarchy. The metaphor serves as a reminder that there is a necessary connection

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 99–100.

⁵⁰⁷ Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 120–26.

⁵⁰⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live*, 156, quoted in Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 126.

between the different elements of the body. These elements are socio-political, denoting separate and distinct classes. But, more importantly, they represent deliberative rhetoric. As Martin notes, deliberative rhetoric is ‘rhetoric urging a political body toward some course of action- a popular topic was concord or unity’.⁵⁰⁹ And, on this basis, Margaret Mitchell and others have interpreted the whole of 1 Corinthians as paralleling concord speeches, speeches in the Graeco-Roman context that were performed in order to encourage the readers/hearers toward unity during a time of crisis.⁵¹⁰

Denise Kimber Buell, in her book *Why This New Race*, provides some interesting interventions in discourse surrounding identity as it pertains to ethnicity and race; however, in her examination on this topic, Buell underscores elements that may be helpful in a discussion on body imagery and concord. Drawing on sociology and anthropology, Buell displays the dialectic of fluidity and fixity in relation to group identity in general, and ethnicity in particular.⁵¹¹ Modern sociology has attempted (successfully) to articulate that ethnicity and race are socially constructed, rather than simply built into the genetics of an individual. While there is a definite fluidity in the precise ‘essentials’ of an ethnic or racial group, it is evident that socially constructed boundary markers exist; these markers have definite material affects that can chiefly be seen in the insistence by groups that certain traits lay out the boundaries of the group. Individuals will also often pick their ethnic markers depending on the situation and context.⁵¹² A foremost example of this is found in Paul’s divergent self-designations that range from ‘all things to all people’, to definitive Jewish heritage; he is not fully malleable, but he does shift into different modes depending on context and who he engages.⁵¹³ The fluidity present does not detract from other Pauline statements that point to rhetoric of fixity in regards to ethnic boundaries, however questions of rhetorical strategy must also be entertained, especially with

⁵⁰⁹ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 38.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 38-39; Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

⁵¹¹ Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 6–7.

⁵¹² Caroline Johnson Hodge, Anthony Smith, quoted in Concannon, 16.

⁵¹³ Most prominently 1 Corinth 9: 19–22.

regard to political effect. Fluidity is also present in what Harland notes is ‘the internalisation of external characteristics’, by which he means ‘a particular group adopting, adapting or reacting to outsiders’ labels or definitions of them’.⁵¹⁴

This ‘dual discursive construction’ (fluidity and fixity) calls for the writer or speaker to employ essentialist rhetoric (here, body terminology that places persons into specific classes) in contexts where cohesion is threatened.⁵¹⁵ The employment of this tactic of concord (and, by doing so, layering this ‘dual discursive construction’ onto our broader discussion), however, accepts that there is an element of fluidity, otherwise the concord speech would not be crucial for solidifying the socio-political body. Body speech is about harmony, but this harmony is achieved precisely through practices of subjectivation.

3.6 The Body in Corinth

How would this imagery have played out in Corinth? How would it relate to the Corinthian context? In order to recognise possible readings of the situation, utilising epigraphic and related evidence is vital in order to build a picture of the city and its social location.⁵¹⁶ As Laura Nasrallah has written ‘What is often missing from studies of early Christian literature is . . . attention to space, architecture, and art—an understanding of the broader material environment in which this literature was written and the varieties of responses that Christians had to the spaces of empire’.⁵¹⁷

Corinth was a Greek city with a long and prestigious history. It was well-known, and after being conquered in the 2nd century BCE and resettled by the Roman Empire in the 1st century BCE continued on as an important seaport, trading stop, famous location for sex work,

⁵¹⁴ Harland, *Dynamics of Identity*, 37; 161–81 *passim*.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

⁵¹⁶ Epigraphic, inscription, and other written evidence however has to be noted as limited. These forms of evidence generally leave out lower class attitudes, evidence about the broader picture of social life in any given location.

⁵¹⁷ Laura Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second Century Church amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2-3, as cited in Cavan Concannon, ‘*When you Were Gentiles*’, 18.

and cultural centre, as well as operating as a thriving capital of the province of Achaia.⁵¹⁸ Strabo noted that ‘Corinth is said to be wealthy on account of commerce, since the city is situated on the isthmus, and is master of two harbors—one being near to Asia and the other to Italy . . . and it makes exchanges of cargo easy for partners who stand so far apart’.⁵¹⁹ Corinth, then, was well-renowned as an important place for commercial transition and connection.

Corinth was the originary point for several foundational Greek myths, further highlighting its cultural prestige. Both the taming of Pegasus, and the Medean drama took place in each of the two main fountains in Corinth.⁵²⁰ Because of the importance of Corinth, its location, and role as a seaport many people from, especially, the Greek East migrated in order to take advantage of opportunities, most notably freedpersons, who likely were a predominant group within the city.⁵²¹ In fact, one of the more important social aspects of the composition of the city is the high number of freedmen and the place of some of them among elite citizenry; perhaps this points to a difference in broader social attitudes toward marginalised and oppressed persons? Millis points out, as a prominent example, the career of freedman Cn. Babbius Philinus who ‘was a Corinthian notable and prominent benefactor during the Julio-Claudian period’.⁵²² Although the source of his wealth, and much about his life, is a mystery, he

⁵¹⁸ Benjamin W. Millis, ‘The Local Magistrates and Elite of Corinth’, in *Corinth in Contrast: Studies of Inequality*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Sarah A. James, and Daniel N. Schowalter (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 38; Nancy Bokidis, ‘Religion in Corinth: 146 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.’, in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Steven J. Friesen and Daniel Schowalter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 148; L.L. Welborn, ‘Inequality in Roman Corinth: Evidence from Diverse Sources evaluated by a Neo-Ricardian Model’, in *The First Urban Churches 2: Roman Corinth* ed. James R. Harrison and L.L. Welborn (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 48-51. To add to Corinth’s social provenance, it may be pertinent to reference Bokidis’ work, that points to the abundance of cults within the city, many of which were not found in other places and were, likely, based on local heroes. These included Athena Chalinitis, Hippias the bridle, and Hera Bounaia. These were popular during the Hellenistic era of the city, but some of their material remnants persist after the recolonisation.

Welborn notes Corinth’s fame as a cultural centre, but also points to some remarks that Plutarch makes that reveal a major source of wealth there: money lending. Corinth was, undoubtedly, an important banking centre and Plutarch points to the trend of wealthy citizens becoming indebted in order to pay for inscriptions and other public monuments that increased honour.

⁵¹⁹ Strabo, *Geographica* 8.6.20 in *Strabonis Geographica*, ed. A. Meineke (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), II, 535.

⁵²⁰ Betsey A. Robinson, ‘Fountains and the Foundation of Cultural Identity at Roman Corinth’, in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Steven J. Friesen and Daniel Schowalter (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 111–40.

⁵²¹ Millis, ‘The Local Magistrates’, 38.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 39. While this is not discussed specifically in the chapter cited above, it is also important to recognise the dearth of information we have about slavery in general. The problem of essentialism in discussions on slavery in the

was perhaps best known for providing the funds to develop the western end of the Forum, including the Poseidon Fountain.⁵²³

Because of the prominence of Babbus Philinus some scholars have drawn quick conclusions about the social structure of Corinthian society, namely that it was egalitarian, perhaps even comparable to some form of proto-liberalism.⁵²⁴ But, this is would be a hasty position ignoring the full reality of ancient Mediterranean life, much less the nearly intransigent reality of class divisions within the Roman Empire and evidence that points to the lived life of Corinthian citizens.⁵²⁵ Even so, it is crucial to point out that freedmen made up the largest group of members of the elite class in Corinth, larger than a combination of Roman elites and provincial Greek elites.⁵²⁶ This was a rarity within the empire, where freedmen were not generally allowed to attain elite places of privilege and power. In Corinth, unlike some other places in the Roman empire, it seems that availability of privileged positions was determined primarily on ability to foster and develop wealth, meaning an intimate knowledge of the city's abilities in trade and transport was crucial.⁵²⁷ A broader view, noting the general living conditions under the rule of the Roman Empire, would take into account the emergence of 'systemic violence' as a means through which authority, and Roman peace, are instantiated.⁵²⁸ Connected to this is the importance of recognising that Corinth was, essentially, a 'colony' in the sense that after siding against Rome and joining the Achaean league; this led to devastation, though the exact nature of such is relatively unknown.⁵²⁹ It's prominence as a cultural capital

Roman Empire is not often acknowledged. Obviously, knowing more about the type of household Babbus Philinus comes from would change how to think about the overall social structure of Corinth, and likewise the possibility of social mobility.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Millis, 'The Local Magistrates', 40. Millis points to Meeks as a prominent example of seeing a typical 'rags to riches' story here.

⁵²⁵ Welborn, 'Inequality in Corinth', 57. It appears from skeletal evidence that a large proportion of Corinthians suffered from 'malnourishment and stressful, hard work'.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁵²⁸ Penner and Lopez, *De-Introducing the New Testament*, 105.

⁵²⁹ David Horrell, *The Social Ethos*, 64. See, especially, Sarah James, 'The Last of the Corinthians? Society and Settlement from to 44BCE', in *Corinth in Contrast*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Sarah James, and Daniel Schowalter (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 17–37. James questions the extent of damage done to Corinth and presents some good evidence to the contrary. Archaeological evidence is slight, many remnants of occupation have been found in recent

was interrupted by its colonisation, abandonment, and subsequent decades of being relatively unoccupied before finally being resettled. Despite re-settlement, being colonised by the encroaching dominance of Rome, what could not be wiped away from the location is the remnants of its Greek roots. Years of looting did not erase the foundations, embedded as they were in the architecture, the land, the remnants; there is no blank slate.⁵³⁰

3.6.2 *Harmony and the Order of Things*

Divisions within the body are almost universally presented as between those who occupy the lower and upper classes, those who have and those who do not. *Homonoia* (concord) speeches, then, are concerned with presenting this arrangement as natural and necessary. Likewise, these speeches ‘always assume that the body is hierarchically constituted and that *illness or social disruption occurs when that hierarchy is disrupted*’.⁵³¹ The Body Politic, then, is a mirror of nature. Sociality functions best when it imitates that which is presented as natural and proper. ‘The ideological purpose’, as Martin writes, ‘of *homonoia* speeches was to mitigate conflict by reaffirming and solidifying the hierarchy of society’, which is nearly ubiquitously framed through showing how ‘the political hierarchy of the city mirrors the harmonious hierarchy of the cosmos’.⁵³² Harmony occurs through imitating nature. The cosmos functions harmoniously precisely because cosmic entities naturally follow the regularity of personalised function, doing what they are meant to do in a nearly teleological manner. This essentialisation guarantees hegemonic relations, parading the common good as the justification. But, order is nearly always mutable, and the cosmos is hardly intransigent. When we note the obsession with harmony and a specific form of order is usually connected directly to those who occupy certain

years, and many of the historical accounts are collected well after the fact and are presented in rhetorical and poetic writings.

⁵³⁰ It is crucial, then, to keep insights from postcolonial work in mind here. Can we think about Corinth a bit differently if we reckon its formation?

⁵³¹ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 40. Emphasis added.

⁵³² *Ibid.*

classes, it becomes possible to question what harmony benefits. This theme will come back when we look at gifting.

If this is usual, then what do we make of Corinth, a city where there appears to be social mobility? Even if it is not possible to make a formal correspondence between 21st century ideals of liberal social mobility sustained on modernist values of equality, it is difficult to deny the fact that freedpersons were able to attain higher class levels. Nonetheless, a closer investigation shows that while social mobility was a possibility, it seldom occurred, and when it did occur it was only open to those who had *already attained* a certain level of mobility; furthermore, any mobility to higher status was often due to being ‘invited’ in, not breaking through the glass ceiling, or pulling oneself up by their own bootstraps through clever machinations and hard work (not unlike today, in some respects). In the case of Cn. Babbius Philinus it was not simply due to his own shrewdness or capability that he attained a higher level of class. As Millis writes he was

very unlikely to have been any kind of self-made man or to have come to Corinth with his fortune and reputation still to be made. Without wealth, and more importantly, without the backing of a powerful supporter, most likely his former owner, Babbius would never have been able even to begin his progress through Corinth’s magistracies and offices.⁵³³

Welborn notes that a nearly complete picture of Corinthian elites can be glimpsed through numismatic and epigraphic work. Detailed pictures that have been sketched reveal that

⁵³³ Millis, ‘The Local Magistrates and Elite of Corinth’, 50.

Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 39; Sheila Briggs, ‘Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society’, in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, edited by Richard Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 111–12 It is important, as well, to point out that Babbius Philinus, while not only relying on his former master’s connections to attain his level of class, was bound up within complex networks of power. This includes ‘bonds of good faith and loyalty’, according to how freedpersons related to their former masters usually. Gradel points out that, while not under the *potestas* of the master, unlike slaves the master may have dominion over, the freedperson still owes *fides* to the *patronus* (the master, in this case). It may be a rather pedestrian Foucauldian point, but one cannot ignore the complexes of power that enter into the equation here, complexes that furthermore are present ubiquitously (to one degree or another) within society. As Gradel continues, ‘[i]n a strict legal sense [the freedperson] did not belong to the [master’s] household, but in a more general sense the bond of *fides* and the ex-master’s status as their *patronus* implied that they were still very much a part of it’. Briggs provides some elaborations that fill out Gradel’s important details about freedpersons and patronage. She notes that freedpersons were, under Roman law, ‘required to perform services (*operae*) for their patrons’, and in fact manumission was in the interest of the patron, as the manumitted slave was still bound to the patron while also able to be more valuable business agents with their new status (p. 111). Further, for some institutions of slavery, most notably in the Greek east, being manumitted often resulted in a much more stressful condition than being a slave, coming with different pressures and responsibilities to the patron (p. 112).

often occupation of status was familial. Welborn writes, ‘Corinth was a city with an entrenched elite, a political oligarchy that perpetuated itself over generations by its control of wealth, office, and honor’.⁵³⁴ Furthermore, ‘occasional admission of a new man to the *ordo* on the basis of wealth and connections *actually served to strengthen the system by legitimizing the principle of the rule of the few*’.⁵³⁵ Agreeing, broadly, with Millis, Welborn notes that Babbius Philinus was likely unusual, and furthermore that Corinth was itself an aberration within the Roman Empire.⁵³⁶ It was no oasis of egalitarianism, even if one were simply thinking about it comparatively as an analogue.

On the basis of this brief sketch of Corinth, it is reasonable to assume that body language would have brought to mind usual connotations connected to its political purposes: intransigent social hierarchy and attendant cultural values that align with such a social hierarchy. Paul’s alternative body is a deviation, and would appear to be so even in a city as singular as Corinth.⁵³⁷

3.6.3 Pauline Composition: Back to Associations

Paul occupies a lower status within the broader class structure, and according to general readings of the social situation would be obliged to attend to those in a higher position in order to preserve social harmony. In contrast to freedpersons who have migrated to higher social positions, Paul, while not a freedperson, slave, or someone who is of another lower status, is marginal, and perhaps even a source of embarrassment for some congregations.⁵³⁸ There have been vigorous debates about what social position Paul came from, how he considered himself, and how he was considered by others within the social structure of the ancient Mediterranean

⁵³⁴ Welborn, ‘Inequality in Roman Corinth’, 58–59.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 59. Emphasis added.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ Being a deviation is, of course, very different from being singular or unique.

⁵³⁸ Here, I am obliged to remind the reader that I recognise the diverse possible social and material realities of enslaved life. It was possible for a slave to be materially comfortable, perhaps much more so than Paul who was consistently changing locations and engaging in dangerous travels. For the shameful, and suspicious, aspects of Paul’s menial labour and predilection for travel, see Marquis, *Transient Apostle*, 41–46.

world.⁵³⁹ Similarly, scholars have questioned the place that Paul occupies in relation to those associations with which he has close ties; do members capitulate to his authority, and if so, how far does this capitulation go?⁵⁴⁰ New consensus authors, like Theissen, have maintained that the Corinthian church was socially diverse, made up of actors from most of the main sections of social divisions.⁵⁴¹

New consensus scholarship reckoned that, for the most part, these communities probably consisted of a majority of below subsistence and subsistence peoples, along with elite, or near-elite individuals who would sustain these communities.⁵⁴² Justin Meggitt published a trenchant critique in 1997 that destabilised some evidence used by new consensus authors, noting the importance of reading society through a binary composed of the 99% of near or below subsistence persons, and the 1% of elites.⁵⁴³ New models by Steven Friesen and Walter Scheidel distinguished between different levels of social stratification in ancient Rome, building from earlier models by Friesen that centred on urban populations, and on early Christian groups in particular, with varying degrees of accuracy.⁵⁴⁴ However, even with new models by Bruce

⁵³⁹ Ibid. See also Ronald Hock, 'Paul's Tentmaking and the Problem of his Social Class', *JBL* 97, no. 4 (1978): 555–64; Todd Still, 'Did Paul Loathe Manual Labor? Revisiting the Work of Ronald F. Hock on the Apostle's Tentmaking and Social Class', *JBL* 125, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 781–95; Ronald Hock, 'The Problem of Paul's Social Class: Further Reflections', in *Paul's World*, ed. Stanley Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 7–18.

⁵⁴⁰ Thomas R. Blanton IV, 'The Benefactor's Account-book: The Rhetoric of Gift Reciprocation according to Seneca and Paul', *New Testament Studies* 59, no. 3 (2013): 396–414.

⁵⁴¹ Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

⁵⁴² Zeba Crook, 'Economic Location of Benefactors in Pauline Communities', in *Paul and Economics: A Handbook*, ed. Thomas R. Blanton, IV and Raymond Pickett (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 183–204. Zeba Crook and others have suggested this view is largely correct. Evidence has been used, primarily, through comparative studies of early Christian communities and other ancient associations. Questions abound about these communities, primarily about the *object* of capital provision needed to maintain proper associational practices. Meals, burials, and possible other projects required resources, though quantifying amounts needed is elusive.

⁵⁴³ See for instance Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 40–44; Holmberg, 'Methods of Historical Reconstruction'; Dale Martin, 'Review Essay: Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*', *JSNT* 24 (2002): 51–64; and Kari Syreeni, 'Paul and Love Patriarchalism: Problems and Prospects', *In die Skriflig* 37, no. 3 (2003): 12–16. Some of the objections to Meggitt's work are insufficient. Syreeni, for instance, in critiquing mutualism draws on Stoic parallels of self-sufficiency initially developed by Engberg-Pedersen that are a simplification of Pauline thought.

⁵⁴⁴ Walter Scheidel and Steven Friesen, 'The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 99 (2009): 61–91.

Longenecker (often postulating around 7 different levels of economic scale), the levels of elites (ES1-3) maintained at about the same level, moving from 1% to 3%.⁵⁴⁵

Despite these more nuanced models, Meggitt's work retains importance because it used available evidence to detail survival strategies among urban, impoverished peoples. This allows us to reframe early Pauline congregations as impoverished groups sustained through mutualist strategies.⁵⁴⁶ While it may be true that a binary division (99%: 1%) is inherently simplistic, the simplification does not detract from the vast percentage ranges of subsistence or near subsistence levels; it retains heuristic importance, helping to frame the broad situation of early Jesus group composition, and pointing to the vast differences between lower and higher strata. Stark binaries are still useful when recognising the reality of various levels of exploitation and the range of deleterious living situations (even if some are marginally better than others); that multiple class levels exist does not eliminate the heuristic importance of a binary, nor disconnect class struggle from relations between the arms of the binary.⁵⁴⁷ Frankly, then, this is a model of the exploiters opposed to exploited, and the survival of the exploited through utilising forms of gifting, or of reciprocal exchange extracted from the broader stage of social relations.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 36–59. It must be stressed that my position is not concerned with the relative accuracy of the diverse scales used. I contend instead for modifying how we read and utilise binaries, and that doing so may bring us closer to noting the 'economic relations' that Welborn, Friesen, and others point to.

⁵⁴⁶ Ryan S. Schellenberg, 'Subsistence, Swapping, and Paul's Rhetoric of Generosity', *JBL* 137, no. 1 (2018): 215–34. While Meggitt's work was subject to controversy because of its departure from new consensus work, recent research by Schellenberg has gone a long way to evidencing mutualist strategies and historical claims about possible Pauline congregational stratification, albeit of a different and less radical character than Meggitt's work. See also the forthcoming Taylor Weaver, 'Rethinking Pauline Gifting and Social Functions: Class Struggle and Early Christianity?', in *Class Struggle in the New Testament*, ed. Robert J. Myles (Grand Rapids: Fortress Press, 2009).

⁵⁴⁷ Peter Oakes, "Constructing Poverty Scales for Graeco-Roman Society: A Response to Steven Friesen's 'Poverty in Pauline Studies,'" *JSNT* 26, no. 3 (2004): 368–69. I admit, as well, the difficulty of discussing "subsistence." Peter Oakes makes an insightful point when he notes, in response to Friesen's work, the insufficiency of relying on past metrics like caloric intake. "Poverty" means much more than simply how much food is available. Friesen begins to note this in later scholarship, however, drawing on the work of Amartya Sen and noting the importance of a range of factors, including 'mortality, nourishment, health, occupation, education, and income' (p. 33). See Steven Friesen, 'Paul and Economics: The Jerusalem Collection as an Alternative to Patronage', in *Paul Unbound*, ed. Mark Given (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 33. Also, Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York, Knopf, 1999).

⁵⁴⁸ Noted above, recent work by Boer and Petterson solidifies the binary by pointing to the importance of augmenting conceptions of slave economies to include a wider range of unfree labour'.

Social stratification is important for contextualising the situation of the associations that Paul has connections with, although only estimations are possible. Nevertheless, it allows one to recognise approximations of societal divisions and the importance of associations in the daily life of subsistence and near subsistence peoples. Richard Horsley points out, rightly, that early Christian assemblies are not simply ‘political-religious’ entities, but also ‘political-economic’ (language gesturing to Marxist analysis). This political-economic dimension is concerned with strategies of sharing that Horsley reads as exceptional within the ancient Mediterranean world. And, this exceptional quality is ‘[d]iametrically opposite to the upward and centripetal movement of resources and wealth’.⁵⁴⁹ They may have been, as written above, ‘extracted from the broader stage of social relations’.

3.6.4 Pauline Composition: Paul’s Social Place

Paul, in the estimations of many new consensus authors, most likely came from a higher class position, and because of the convictions found upon his new religious commitments, deigned himself to working and travelling frequently between different cities. Paul was, however, reluctant in taking up a marginal social position, never quite forgetting his earlier life of high esteem.

What becomes clear is that Paul, whether he was an artisan or not, as a traveller and a usual person occupying a social place in the Roman Empire, was not very far above subsistence levels. He was, in the estimation of Meggitt, still a part of the 99%. Strikingly, he calls for those in the Corinthian church to imitate him. Imitation of Paul is a reversal of the usual cosmic vision, a short-circuiting of how the body naturally operates. Martin notes that in calling the Corinthians to imitate him he is advocating a ‘disruption of the stable hierarchy of the political and cosmic

⁵⁴⁹ Richard Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentary Series (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 223–24. This is bold talk that has been challenged in New Testament scholarship. There are questions to be posed, specifically, to the ‘exceptional’ nature of inter-communal associational connections and resource sharing. At the least, we can note parallels to the type of resource sharing we see in Pauline assemblies; the question becomes ‘what are the particular differences, and what do these differences *mean*?’ For an overview of competing views, see Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 85–118.

body'.⁵⁵⁰ Martin's comments remind us that Paul is relentlessly putting forward an alternative theological and social vision. However, as we see in Castelli's work imitation is bound up in a specific estimation of Paul's power. Despite the importance of imitation for 'transgressive' Pauline discourse and activity, problematic elements of Pauline thought or practice highlighted in feminist and postcritical criticism remain (as seen below).⁵⁵¹

It could be countered that his place within the *religious association* allows him primacy and honour. And, this could be bore out to an extent when attention is paid specifically to the fictive kinship terms that Paul uses in, specifically, the Corinthian correspondence. Paul does have a place of honour. But, what also has to be admitted (and it has been suggested that what follows caused social tension in Corinthian associations) is the fact that Paul refused to engage in benefactive relations with Corinthian congregations, instead rejecting a patron-client relationship with Corinthian associations, which caused consternation and suspicion.⁵⁵² Furthermore, for Paul to occupy a place of honour, does this not point to that clear, reversal of the cosmic body? How often are those who occupy a similar social space allowed to attain such a level of influence over diverse associations? Or, even more interestingly, are we recognising in Paul's correspondence an attempt at attaining those levels themselves through manipulation of the congregations? Paul certainly occupies an authoritative position in certain congregations.

More crucial points, however, are essential for any discussion regarding Paul and his relation to the Corinthians. It is essential to interrogate normative reductions and calculations involved in figuring Paul and constructing models of Corinthian associations. As Cavan Concannon notes, pulling from Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, the Corinthians are often 'vilified' and stereotyped as 'sexual libertines, ascetics, or factions, or associated with other Others, such as Gnostics [sic] or charismatics'.⁵⁵³ These constructions flow from what Schüssler Fiorenza describes as a 'politics of Othering', and in this case results in a naturalisation of the political

⁵⁵⁰ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 68.

⁵⁵¹ See Concannon, 'When You Were Gentiles'. See also below Buell; Økland; Schüssler Fiorenza.

⁵⁵² Marquis, *Transient Apostle*, 56–58.

⁵⁵³ Concannon, "When you Were Gentiles", 8.

constructs that Paul puts forward in the incomplete texts available, texts that only show one side of the conversation. Paul is trusted implicitly, with no apparent interrogation; this is the misstep that Castelli notes above, lamenting the authority deferred to Paul.⁵⁵⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, Concannon, and others point to the necessity of deconstructing the binaries that Paul provides, thinking of different possible reconstructions of the Corinthians.⁵⁵⁵ This transforms how one reads Paul's arguments and constructions of the Corinthians, but also how one figures Paul himself as a political actor and agent of social organisation. Re-thinking the vilification of the Corinthians, furthermore, does not mean falling back into a binary opposition by figuring Paul as the villain in the discourse. But, it does allow one to paint a much more complicated picture of Paul.

One cannot rely *simply* on Paul's texts to construct the Corinthian congregations, and that other evidences have to be taken seriously as well. Stephan Joubert notes that there is an 'asymmetric balance of power' present in the Corinthian correspondence, and thus Paul 'claimed the right to exercise influence over the formulation and reproduction of the symbolic order that defined and shaped the nature' of the projects he confronts the Corinthian church with (namely, in this instance, the collection).⁵⁵⁶ Paul engages in 'social modes of control' when addressing the church about his collection project; however, as Concannon and Schüssler Fiorenza note above, this goes well beyond Paul's collection project.⁵⁵⁷ Joubert notes the danger, then, of taking Paul's theologising at face value regarding his collection efforts, but the 'ideological manipulation' goes well beyond just that project.⁵⁵⁸ Thinking about the body, and how the Corinthians and Paul think about the body, means going beyond Paul and reaching out to the margins of what can be definitively seen and historically constructed. Any semblance of certainty is low.

⁵⁵⁴ Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, 26–33.

⁵⁵⁵ Concannon, "When you Were Gentiles", 8–9.

⁵⁵⁶ Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 11.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Returning to Martin, it is hardly a controversial claim that Paul champions a flipped set of social and theological values, even if we can point to problematic chauvinistic tendencies present in certain Pauline figurations. Paul's larger corpus has been read in recent decades as containing implicit codes that point to anti-imperial, or counter-imperial, messages, as noted above. The viability of readings that maintain anti-imperial codes are subject to a level of controversy, but what breaks through these contested issues is surely the strict differences in ideology, distinctions between broader imperial values and those that follow from Paul's broader theology/ethic.⁵⁵⁹ It is for this reason that, following from Wei Hsien Wan, it may be much more beneficial to pay attention to the ideological differences rather than 'colonized-colonizer dyad with Rome', which comes too close to moulding these communities in the image of Rome.⁵⁶⁰

Counter- or alter-imperial messages may be read all throughout the Pauline corpus. Neil Elliott, for instance, notes the importance of reading Romans with an eye to an eschatological ethic of solidarity that holds the epistle together. As Elliott writes, 'The eschatological horizon is fundamentally at odds with the Roman vision of the nations united in offering tribute to Caesar' and "clashes inevitably with the cultic performances meant to unite all peoples in worshipful subservience to Rome'.⁵⁶¹ Normative hierarchies are confronted with a social ethic of 'not thinking highly of oneself', contributing to the well-being of other followers, showing hospitality to strangers, and 'making one's way with the oppressed'.⁵⁶² It is with this last portion of Elliott's reading of Paul's social ethic that one can detect an ability to further distance oneself from mere

⁵⁵⁹ Harry O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Images, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). There has been much discussion on imperial references in Paul, and many recent works have advanced the discussion significantly. Maier expertly brings out the politicisation of space in his book. I think, also, that paying attention to the Pastorals is a great boon. This helps to draw out the possibility of a pervasive counter-imperialism underlying Pauline thought, as it persists even in the decades following his death.

It is important, as well, to note that even if one does not agree with those who champion the anti-imperial Paul, specifically that Paul had the Roman Empire in mind, his transgressive interests are certainly at odds with usual values. Even John Barclay would have to agree.

⁵⁶⁰ Wei Hsien Wan, *Reconfiguring the Universe: The Contest for Time and Space in the Roman Imperial Cults and I Peter*, thesis submitted to University of Exeter in 2016.

⁵⁶¹ Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 152.

⁵⁶² Ibid. The latter quotation is Elliott's own gloss of Romans 12:16.

identity based loyalty.⁵⁶³ There are further connections to Pauline divergence from usual forms of patronage.

The reality that freedpersons are able to be socially mobile does not mean that some level of equality has been achieved. Equality was a broad ‘value’ in Paul’s broader context. But, what it refers to is equivalent to what one may usually think of when they read the term. Welborn notes that

the term “equality” was appropriated by the oligarchs, once the democratic revolutions of the fifth century had made “equality” “the loveliest name of all,” as Herodotus puts it, and invested with new meaning. The intellectual supporters of oligarchy argued that “true” equality must be proportional in recognition of the differences in the worth of individuals.⁵⁶⁴

Instead, it merely means that the imperial values are intact even in more diverse situations. Instead of ‘subverting’ imperial values, it is an even deeper reification of those values.⁵⁶⁵

Excursus: Judaism in the Roman Empire and Pauline Identity

It is important to pause here, noting some crucial contextual realities that further elaborate the view of Paul being sketched. Scholars have wrestled with the degree of how ‘Jewish’ or ‘Hellenistic’ Paul is, not to mention the broader demographics of early Christian movements. Certainly, assemblies connected to Paul were likely mostly ‘Gentile’ congregations. Paul’s self-designated mission, after all, was to the Gentiles and so it seems to make sense that the congregations he was primarily related to were not associated strongly with Judaism, even if they included God-fearers. Nonetheless, allusions and references to Jewish scriptures abound in

⁵⁶³ By ‘identity based loyalty’ I am thinking particularly of an anachronistic reading of the situation. As if, a freedperson as a freedperson attaining a level of social privilege is somehow a necessary good. This is the same logic that has been decried by some feminists when it is stressed that a woman in a place of power, wherein her place of power is attained through utilising patriarchal technologies, is somehow ‘good’.

⁵⁶⁴ L.L. Welborn, ‘Paul’s Place in the First Century Revival of the Discourse of “Equality”’, *Harvard Theological Review* 110, no. 4 (2017): 543.

⁵⁶⁵ Regarding reification: mobility and ‘equality’ in this context do not equate to any type of revolutionary ethic in that same way that a female CEO is no boon to feminism, but is instead a reification of the values of capitalism and patriarchy. ‘Equality’ within a dead system is not a revolution.

Paul's letters.⁵⁶⁶ As well, Paul was undoubtedly Jewish. The question, however, revolves around precisely what it means to be 'Jewish' in the 1st century, and how persons navigate such diverse designations. The dynamic inter-mixture of such a complicated designation makes the discussion even more fraught.

This is important to clarify precisely because it is essential when thinking about how to read and theorise with Paul, as well as place his writings and interpretive possibilities within the communities he is writing to. Closely related issues have been pointed to above and will not be repeated in detail. Instead, it is noted that Judaism was highly stratified in antiquity and should not be read through the lens of 'sect', as elaborated above. Recognising the lamentable quality of 'sect' as a useful descriptor allows the reader to further note the broad evidence that points to the high level of social engagement of Jews under Roman rule. Synagogues regularly engaged in reciprocal relations with patrons and other benefactors, honouring them with statues and inscriptions for monetary involvement.⁵⁶⁷

But, can more evidence be pointed that helps direct our vision of Judaism under Roman rule? This is a particularly difficult task because of the diverse arrangements and assemblages of synagogues, the vast differences in geographical contexts, not to mention the relative dearth of evidence for each of these specific contexts. A complete picture is not probable, especially in an excursus. Yair Furstenberg writes, for instance, that 'the reality on the ground was that of great diversity among the local *synagogai* and ἐκκλησίαι throughout the Empire'. Furthermore, it is essential to recognise that 'Jews and Christians [sic] were compelled to negotiate their immediate civic surroundings, and the flourishing of local associations resulted in a variety of organizational patterns within both groups'.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ As well as, if we can discern this, gestures to other sources, namely philosophy and Jewish wisdom literature.

⁵⁶⁷ Harland,

⁵⁶⁸ Yair Furstenberg, 'Introduction: The Shared Dimensions of Jewish and Christian Communal Identities' in *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Yair Furstenberg (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2016), 1.

In detailing a more complete picture of Paul, however, it is crucial not to rely on data related to Judaism under Roman rule solely. What is equally important is paying attention to the inflections that Paul puts on, for instance, ethnicity. This is a particularly important topic when detailing the complexities in the Corinthian correspondence and goes beyond the evidence we have pulled from thus far in a broad overview of pertinent data about, especially, Roman Corinth. Ethnicity is certainly not abstracted from the images, logics, and rhetoric of community that Paul presents to and engages with the Corinthian associations.⁵⁶⁹ While ethnicity is not a main topic of this project, it remains an important subject because of its close connection to conceptions of community, as well as the assumptions of much modern scholarship emphasising the universal, non-placed status of Christianity.

The broad ethic Elliott points to is concerned precisely with what has been discussed above, and what Martin points to, namely that there is a core reversal of values. Paul's imitative call is anti-cosmic (or, on a related note, calls for a different picture of what the *image* of the cosmos is, and is then necessarily concerned with ontology, *as all politics is*), calling for a value system that breaks from normal systems of valuation, a reversal of dominant sub-sets of social values. It is beside the point whether or not Paul's ideological valuation is original (unlikely); what is important, instead, is 1) how relatively abnormal it is and 2) what analogies may reveal about content. Paul, as a political thinker, is stressing an obverse system of values, one that is not particularly politically normative or useful; it is not as if reversing valuation systems, transgressive activity, has potential for large-scale programmatic reversal.

Important, as well, is noting that Corinth was not simply a cultural capital in some of the ways mentioned above, but that it was heavily entrenched in the political-religious milieu of the broader empire. In contrast to its distinction as a city where freedpersons could attain higher civic duties and class status, Corinth was quite usual in its sustenance of the broader Roman

⁵⁶⁹ Concannon, "*When You Were Gentiles*".

imperial cult (and, related, the normal stratification of religious cults, of which Judaism was marginal and distinct), a socio-cultural reality that has been influential in locating Paul's work contextually.⁵⁷⁰ As far as images of the body go, concord is developed through emphasising class distinction and 'proper' place. These are broader social realities, not unique to possible constructions of the imperial cult.

The purpose of Martin's book on the body is to think about how paying attention to contextual ideologies can serve the purpose of reading Paul's letters. Medical and political texts appear heavily in the first section of Martin's work, and for a good reason. The body (no matter the signified, here) is an organism, and this translation of political and personal realities to organic realities is an important transfer. We can speak, then, of the mutilation, castration, invasion, atrophy, or the strengthening of the body. And, in each of these, the translation refers to actual lived scenarios, each subject to differing verbal or adjectival qualifications based on the reality of the pronouncer. One man's atrophy, is another man's diversification.

The body is a social reality, both in a political sense and in the fact that our socio-political entities are made up of bodies. The body is also read differently, and this is dependent both on the particulars of a text (including diverse possible readings of that text), and also the context of the readers/hearers and the writer/s. The intermixture is obviously complex, and this is precisely why a diversity of materials and methodologies need to be taken into account when thinking about body language in Paul. This is not necessary solely for those who attend to historical readings of the text, but also attends to ways of negotiating signifiers as they appear within a text, whether extracted/protracted or developed within view of a larger body of

⁵⁷⁰ Mary E. Hoskins Walbank, 'Evidence for the Imperial Cult in Julio-Claudian Corinth', in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity*, edited by Alastair Small (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1996), 201–14. As cited in Bookidis, 'Religion in Corinth', 156.

The evidence provided by Walbank, cited by Bookidis, is quite strong, showing definitively that the imperial cult was heavily in place in Corinth during the first century CE. Bookidis writes, citing Walbank, that there were 'at least sixty-two inscriptions [that] make reference to the imperial cult, beginning with an altar to the Divus Iulius'. As well as statues to Divus Augustus, dedications to the Lares Augusti, the Genius Augusti, Saturnus Augustus, Providentia Augusti, Salus Publica, and Victoria Britannica, all of which are connected to the imperial cult in various degrees. There are many more inscriptions, epigraphic evidences, and dedications that Walbank point to, making the connection definitive.

literature. In other words, paying careful attention to the above is important whether we are limiting ourselves to historical-critical work in order to paint the ‘correct’ exegetical picture, or we attempt diverse readings that are informed by the (lamentably) marginal outskirts of the discipline.

Coming back to Martin, with ideological issues in mind we can attempt to discern different ways the body can be read in diverse contexts. For Corinth, this may sound different than in other, less ‘diverse’ places within the Roman Empire. Even more particularly, this may sound different to ancient Christians inhabiting a minor place within a larger religio-political landscape, existing as predominantly low class, marginalised figures. Contra new consensus authors, if those addressed in the Corinthian correspondence were non-elites, perhaps existing near the subsistence level, the ‘body’ will represent something quite different than it may to someone like Cn. Babbius Philinus, or other higher status freedpersons.⁵⁷¹ The political structure, though drawing from a popular rhetorical form and likely being employed for reasons of concord, is filled with different political purposes, references, and essence. The Pauline context is comparable, but the social situation for the assembly members is different. Further interrogations can be employed, as well, that call into question Pauline ‘body’ imagery and Paul’s interest in equality and the shape of his counter-imperial image. If concord is vital for Paul, and plays a primary (though not solitary) role in the use of body imagery, then what chaos is Paul attempting to soften?

Does body imagery imply hierarchical political structures? And, if so, does it follow then that body imagery in Paul’s writings, especially the Corinthian correspondence (here, attempting to maintain unity), is harmonising the political body of the intra-communal gatherings into a hierarchical, perhaps proto-episcopalian, structure? Furthermore, does this implication regarding the socio-political angle expand out to an understanding of the cosmic structure? As has been implied earlier, this is likely so in its ancient context. When we talk about the body as a

⁵⁷¹ This will appear more clearly below, where a discussion on the direction (horizontal: vertical) of reciprocal relations will occur.

political body, the implication is that the political body mirrors the structure of the natural world.⁵⁷² Nevertheless, Paul seems to flatten, and almost reverse, the normative course of such a structure. And, this makes sense if Paul is acting as a type of ‘immunitarian’ agent, though such a tentative reading will have to wait for the final chapter.

With our discussion on body exhausted, we will now turn to Paul’s collection, and back to gifting practices. While an interest in gifting seems disconnected to body terminology, we will see that there are some interesting connections, specifically dealing with harmony. Like with Esposito’s broader analytics, we note that the body is closely connected to the sociality present in gifting.

3.7 Pauline Collection

Body terminology lends itself to discussions of political community. The historical application of body rhetoric is contextually important, occurring in high profile places by elite and influential people within the broader cultural space of Paul and the early communities. Paul appears to use it for very particular reasons, namely in order to harmonise opposition and hierarchical place within the Corinthian community. Furthermore, the rhetoric corresponds to a very specific understanding of the composition and ordering of the cosmos, which Paul seems to transform.⁵⁷³

Utilising such rhetoric solely is, certainly, beneficial for considering the forms and content of Pauline community. However, in order to broaden a possible reading of Pauline community this section focuses on Paul’s collection project. This is important for several

⁵⁷² Jorunn Økland, *Women in their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005). This is the basic macrocosmic vision that Martin stresses in his work cited above, but, as Jorunn Økland points out in her work, is not merely something that affects the compartmentalised ‘political’ reality, but is a usual social structure that is present in religion as well.

⁵⁷³ I refrain, here, from concluding anything definitive about what this reversal means. Namely, I want to distance myself from asserting this reversal as merely a ‘subversive’ act, a claim often made about Paul’s alleged anti-imperial actions. It seems that too often this rhetoric is exaggerated, or fails to register the possible imperial conclusions of Paul’s own distinctions and actions. Again, it is becomingly increasingly apparent that there is a grave importance within the discipline to refrain from ‘theologised’ readings of Paul that set him up as some infallible ethical foundation.

reasons, but importantly it connects back to previous discussions on the social composition of associations and normative action that could be expected in the broader 1st century social space. Firstly, as referenced above, the collection is a wide-ranging and taxing project that Paul engages in. As well, the collection shows up in several uncontested Pauline epistles and Acts;⁵⁷⁴ it is, then, wide-ranging in NT literature and retains immense importance. Third, Paul uses highly nuanced theological/religious imagery to convince the Corinthian congregations (and possible other communities)⁵⁷⁵ to engage in this behaviour (2 Corinth. 8–9), although I will not argue that the project simply follows from his theology; the connections to already available social practices is key for any reading of the collection.⁵⁷⁶ Lastly, and connected to the third point, some crucial terms are used by Paul in the collection project. Foremost for our purposes, Paul is obsessed with χάρις. Gifting terminology is crucial for our larger discussions on the logic and operation of community in our final chapter connecting Esposito’s *communitas* project and Paul’s community orientation.

⁵⁷⁴ Acts, however, has a different chronology.

⁵⁷⁵ Kieran J. O’Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion: A Sounding in 2 Corinthians 8–9* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 23–24. O’Mahony interestingly suggests that, like 1 Corinthians 15, Paul’s collection appeal may have come from frequently arguing for the importance and viability of the project. The examples used in 2 Corinth 8–9, then, were possibly in wider circulation both orally and in epistolary form. If true, this would certainly inflect the purpose, and possible readings of such a section. However, such a reading would require a more in depth discussion regarding the composition and structure of 2 Corinthians, including the possibility that 2 Corinthians is composed of several, independent epistles that were later compiled with no mind toward chronology and for unknown reasons. There is a long history of partition theories, starting in, at least, the eighteenth century with Jacob Baumgarten’s posthumously published *D. Siegmund Jacob Baumgartens Auslegung der beiden Briefe St. Pauli an die Corinther* (Halle: Gebauer, 1761). Most notably was Johann Salomo Semler’s *Paraphrasis II: Epistolae ad Corinthios*. For a thorough history of different theories of composition and unity, see Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 3–36.

⁵⁷⁶ Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 73–74. Joubert notes that ‘Most scholars uncritically advance from the presumption that the secondary level of theological also functioned as the basic framework, within which the Pauline communities were persuaded to become involved in this project. However, Paul moved to the secondary level of reflection only when he wanted to place the collection within a broader framework of meaning, or when it encountered specific difficulties’. And, further, it is benefit exchange that provides the ‘interpretative framework within which Paul placed the collection’.

3.7.2 Charting Collection(s)

Paul's collection has not been given the sustained attention that it is due, especially when compared to other aspects of Paul's biography.⁵⁷⁷ One of the more noted studies devoted to Paul's Jerusalem collection was published in 1965, written by New Testament scholar Dieter Georgi, and titled *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem*, originally published in German as *Die Geschichte der Kollekte des Paulus Fur Jerusalem*. A second, important work that followed along with Georgi's was Keith Nickle's *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy*, originally published in 1966 and subsequently re-published by Wipf and Stock in 2009. Nickle does not mention the previous, well-received volume by Georgi. This could be expected because of how close the publication dates are, even if Nickle could have obtained the initial German version of Georgi's important volume.⁵⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the titles are similar in remarkable ways and laid the groundwork for much important work done subsequently on Paul's collection.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁷ Craig Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13–839. While commentaries on relevant sections in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians engage the collection (often times poorly; see Keener p. 138), few monographs have explored the collection in depth. Other works that one would expect to utilise these foundational texts ignore them, however, a prime example being Richard B. Hays's well received volume, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*. Despite paying attention to 'possessions' and 'sharing', it neglects much scholarship on the subject, which. Likewise, Barclay's *Paul and the Gift*, spends comparatively little time on Paul's collection, ignoring any sustained treatment of 2 Corinthians 8–9. For a book that spends so much time detailing notions of 'gift', this seems to be quite an oversight. Nonetheless, Barclay provides great criticisms of significant conceptual points in other works that spend considered time on the collection, perhaps foremost Harrison's *Paul's Language of Grace* (p. 180–82).

Steven J. Friesen, 'Paul and Economics: The Jerusalem Collection as an Alternative to Patronage', in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010) 27. Friesen notes (in 2010) that out of the majority of books published on Paul since 1995, nearly none have spent time on anything to do with economy or money. This has changed in recent years, but there is still a dearth represented. For recent work, see Thomas R. Blanton, IV, 'Review Essay: Economics and Early Christianity', *RelSRev* 43, no. 2 (2017): 93–100

⁵⁷⁸ Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992). Georgi's volume was finally translated into English in 1992.

⁵⁷⁹ See, as an example, Sondra Ely Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 76; Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*; David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 231–39. Although Georgi is not used pervasively throughout Wheeler's section on 2 Corinthians and collection imagery, it is in the background analysis.

Other important monographs that pay significant attention to Paul's collection project include: B. Beckheuer, *Paulus und Jerusalem: Kollekte und Mission im theologischen Denken des Heidenapostels* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1997); Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*; Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*; and Thomas R Blanton, IV, *A Spiritual Economy: Gift*

The most comprehensive recent research done on both the chronology, relevant sociocultural practices, and contextualised theological readings of the collection is probably found in David Downs's *The Offering of the Gentiles*.⁵⁸⁰ Downs's volume sifts through recent evidence important for detailing chronology, taking into account the previously mentioned staples of research found in Georgi and Nickle, as well as entertaining possible cultural contexts that are utilised for interpreting the context of the collection.⁵⁸¹ Was Paul, for instance, enacting a temple tax (a common early to mid-20th century reading of the purpose of the Jerusalem collection)? Is Paul's collection project an attempt at enacting solidarity, entreating the Gentile Christians to capitulate themselves to their Jewish counterparts in a sort of cultural patronage? Furthermore, using social historical work, what can we say about the social roles that Paul and the various associations are playing? Do benefactive models help explain the materials and relations between Paul, the congregations, and the poor in Jerusalem? What does benefaction, if important, reveal; perhaps, as O'Mahoney suggests, the allure of benefactive language is in the prestige (social capital?) that 'giving' affords the giver?⁵⁸²

Many other books have attended to Paul's monetary practices, with attention paid to the Jerusalem collection as a subsidiary focus. The collection is, after all, important for any discussion regarding gifting practices, as well as questions of ritual, community, and missional strategy in Paul. But, in regards to *gifting and monetary practices* specifically, two recent volumes are worth paying attention to, both having significant differences in focus that both Downs and the earlier, important works by Nickle and Georgi. These volumes have been

Exchange in the Letters of Paul of Tarsus (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*; Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy*; Verlyn Verbrugge and Keith R. Krell, *Paul and Money: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Apostle's Teachings and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015); Timothy Brookins, *Corinthian Wisdom, Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Richard Last, *The Pauline Church and the Corinthian ἐκκλησία: Greco-Roman Associations in Comparative Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

All of these works add to the discussion surrounding the collection, but in different ways, and not many of them are as focused on the Pauline project in the same way that Georgi or Nickle's works are.

⁵⁸⁰ Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*.

⁵⁸¹ Downs, compared to other texts subsequent to the publication of both Nickle's and Georgi's work, heavily utilises both author's work, both being some of the top referenced scholars in the book.

⁵⁸² O'Mahoney, *Pauline Persuasion*, 148–49.

mentioned previously in this project, but they are worth mentioning again. David Briones's *Paul's Financial Policy* and also T. Blanton's *A Spiritual Economy* provided significant materials to the important discussion around Paul's monetary practices and his overall community building strategy. Both of these are methodologically distinct from Downs, but also divergent in sub-disciplinary focus from one another. This is quite evident, at a glance, from the titles of the works, with Briones focusing on a 'socio-theological' orientation, and T. Blanton eschewing the theological scope of that method. Unfortunately, Briones hardly pays attention to the 2 Corinth 8–9 and the collection. T. Blanton's work is heavily sociological, relying on Bourdieu, Mauss, the rhetoric of Seneca in contrast to Paul, and Carole Crumley's notion of 'hetarchy'. The book itself is focused on gifting practices, but primarily through an interdisciplinary use of social sciences, classics, and biblical studies.⁵⁸³ The use of social sciences is welcome within the boundaries of NT studies; however, it is proper to note that often there are specific theorists and models that are championed above others, and so noting the efficacy of the 'social sciences' as if it is some singular, amorphous discipline can be obfuscatory. The reception of Marxist criticism is a perfect example of a major categorical difference within work that can be rightly categorised as social scientific. As is well known, the use of Marxist categories in interpreting biblical texts is controversial, and it is largely ignored in works on gifting noted above.⁵⁸⁴

The three studies mentioned above (T. Blanton, Briones, and Downs), while different in focus, follow from other important works that occur in the early 21st century. While most of the works that have wrestled with the collection project in one way or another have been indebted to the work of Nickle and Georgi, many have also focused heavily on theological motifs in Paul, pointing to explicitly theological reasoning that may have spurred Paul on into such a project, a strategy of interpretation that some scholars, like Joubert, have eschewed. With the shift in focus

⁵⁸³ T. Blanton, *A Spiritual Economy*, 11–14.

⁵⁸⁴ For a Marxist reading of Pauline gifting strategies, and a critique of most NT studies eschewal of Marxist criticism, see Taylor Weaver, 'Rethinking Pauline Gifting and Social Functions: Class Struggle and Early Christianity?', in *Class Struggle in the New Testament*, ed. Robert J. Myles (Grand Rapids: Fortress Press, 2019), 191–208.

in New Testament studies toward social historical and modelling approaches in the 80s, continuing to the present day, it was only a matter of time before models were used as interpretive tools for reading the collection project. While one can note the important possible theological and textual connections that a scholar like B. Beckheuer notes in his *Paulus und Jerusalem*, Joubert, as a premier representation in a shifting focus in studying the collection, is able to come to novel conclusions by utilising sociological models.⁵⁸⁵ Joubert emphasises that his approach (which, becomes more common in writings about the collection) is ‘neither exclusively inductive (that is, from material to hypothesis), nor exclusively deductive (from model to material)’, instead including both.⁵⁸⁶ Such a tactic is important because, as has become more evident as scholars have attempted to utilise social scientific and cultural anthropological models, there is a dearth of evidence in the New Testament documents. There is not close to enough to allow any sort of certainty, and has been noted in the previous chapter on hermeneutics, there are serious problems with using contemporary models in order to make sure pronouncements about ancient texts.

Nonetheless, sifting through diverse models and sociological material helps think through visions of community, noting the flow of relations, hierarchies, and ideological minutiae that are presented through reading the relevant Pauline materials in concert with contextual information. This is precisely why paying attention to the various interpretations mentioned immediately above, and seeing them in parallel, is important to a broader reading of the collection. They each provide diverse, nuanced ways of constructing community (if such is possible) through reciprocity, benefaction, and gifting practices.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁵ Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 11–16; Beckheuer, *Paulus und Jerusalem*, .

⁵⁸⁶ Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 15–16.

⁵⁸⁷ And, likewise, this is a reminder that how we reckon constructs like ‘community’ and ‘gift’ make a difference in thinking precisely about a *Pauline* community.

3.8 Community, Gifting, and the Collection

While gifting practices are not attended to in detail within the early, influential works of Nickle and Georgi, gifting and benefactive activity cannot be ignored in later, more contemporary works.⁵⁸⁸ The main, contemporary works that have been mentioned above all develop significant sections on the logic of gifting, and note how gifting connects to *χάρις* (grace/benefaction). Any detailed reading of the collection must include a discussion centred on *χάρις* precisely because Paul develops significant descriptive visions of the collection that are founded on grace, even if such inclusion of the term is not the full picture.⁵⁸⁹ Benefaction, as a social concept, is a foundational ingredient providing insight into Paul's collection formula. Furthermore, as will be developed further in this project, gifting can be centred for general societal formulas⁵⁹⁰; this has been gestured to previously, but as with body language, gifting helps to establish concord and is a broader social practice that helps prop up the 'common good' of society. This, I hope to show, is an integral part to understanding the broad shape of Pauline community, and thus plays a central role in an Espositoan reading of Pauline community.

Class has continued to be an important descriptor of social category in contemporary New Testament studies despite push back from some within the discipline who view Marxist historical analysis as either too ideologically entrenched, or naively believe it to be wholly reductive because of the centrality of materiality. While gifting is viewed by many scholars as, sociologically, a central and pervasive institution in the ancient world, the contention here will be that such a central social convention would be useful in class struggle, and possibly was appropriated by Paul in such a way in his collection attempts. Gifting has, of course, been

⁵⁸⁸ Nickle, for instance, in *The Collection* has no significant sections on 'gifting' or grace terminology and how it connects to the social logic of the gift, neither has he noted the possible importance of Mauss's work for thinking about the ancient world.

⁵⁸⁹ It is true that despite the importance and prevalence of *χάρις*, Pauline collections do not simply rely on such terminology. Nonetheless, it plays a pivotal role in important collection sections, providing a foundation for Pauline metaphors and theological imagery.

⁵⁹⁰ Please see sections above on Martin's elaboration of the Body. See also John M. G. Barclay, 'Benefiting Others and Benefit to Oneself: Seneca and Paul on "Altruism"', in *Paul and Seneca in Dialogue*, ed. Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 111–12. Barclay points to the emphasis in scholarship on the importance of gifting as an exercise in social solidification, something pointed out by Seneca, himself.

discussed previously in this book. In both this chapter and the initial chapter on Esposito contemporary work on gifting has been discussed. In what follows, some of this material will be re-iterated, while also focusing more pointedly on specific work found in biblical studies and classics. What will not be discussed in any explicit way are various theologies of grace that have developed in the long history of secondary and tertiary readings of Pauline grace. While these are valuable for both developing broader Pauline theologies and/or particular Pauline figurations, such is outside the scope of this study.⁵⁹¹

3.8.2 *Reading the Gift: The Complexity of Social Webs*

Gifting, as a range of abstracted conceptual social events, is ineluctably tied up with *χάρις*, never far removed from reciprocal movements. However, when thinking about the ancient world it would be a grave mistake to assume some sort of flattened, one-sided reading of such a term and its social usages. Antiquity, after all, is not some singular place or time, corresponding to definite, discrete moments or snapshots as if they capture a literal, fulfilled picture of ancient life and how singular subjects, or groups of interconnected subjects (no matter the social body: family, association, synagogue, etc.) may have existed. Instead, it is important to view these snapshots as mere moments within the film of ancient life. Perhaps capturing a frame that reveals broader life, but often simply appearing as a blurry, obfuscating movement.

Crook distils the terminological functioning of *χάρις* into four semantic contexts, most of which are closely related: beauty; beneficence; concrete gifts or benefaction; and gratitude.⁵⁹² He reads the first three as conceptually linked and leading from abstract to concrete. When *χάρις* is meant to denote beauty it usually ‘represents the aesthetically pleasing quality of an object or words’, and can be used to describe everything from speeches and bodily movement, to

⁵⁹¹ This, however, is not stating that the nuances of theology are irrelevant for such a discussion. It is an obvious point that the various texts by Paul, and the texts and traditions that Paul draws from, are engaged in theology. Social action is often bound up within prior theological ideas; furthermore, Christian rituals are, among other things, complex theological expressions exhibited through act and symbol. It is for this reason that Esposito, a non-biblical scholar, draws upon Pauline expressions of the eucharist for pointing to community.

⁵⁹² Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 132–36; these follow closely BDAG’s *χάρις* entry.

jewellery and portraits.⁵⁹³ Crook goes on to describe the meaning of *χάρις* in instances where it points to the ‘quality of a person that makes them likely to be generous’ (or, beneficent), the activity of benefaction (relating to a concrete thing, or to giving ‘favour’, which is conceptually distinct from having the characteristic quality that would lead one to bestowing favour), and finally the acknowledgement of benefactive activity.⁵⁹⁴ Crook’s work goes well beyond just noting the terminological possibilities, namely in that while the popular reading of ‘grace’ as concerned with the ‘generosity of the giver’, too often analyses of grace rest solely on this reading, and indeed perfect, theologise, and render it unnaturally unique. Thus, the other aspects of grace are ignored, and instead Paul can be read as a highly original theological thinker who is concerned, almost solely, with the unmerited generosity of God.⁵⁹⁵ Nuances are lost when this is done.

Thinking about how a concept/term can function may come into better focus when pointing out a specific historical figure. In this case, we have been discussing Paul, primarily. But, even though we have an embarrassing wealth of [occasional, one-sided, and autobiographical] information on Paul (especially when compared to other historical persons of antiquity), so little can clearly and unequivocally be said about how his understanding of a term such as ‘grace’ (and the correspondence of concepts of gifting and benefaction bound up within *χάρις*) may have functioned for his system of thought (as complicated, contradictory, or, on the contrary, as consonant and harmonious it was), despite years of theological study often pontificating on the place of ‘grace’ in Paul’s thought.⁵⁹⁶ One cannot escape the abundance of information (even if much is tertiary) on early Christianity’s place in the ancient world, and

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 133–36.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 136–39. See these pages for Crook’s criticisms of previous analyses of grace by James Moffatt, William Manson, and Han Conzelmann.

⁵⁹⁶ For an reception of Pauline grace, see Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 79–182. While this is a long section in Barclay’s magisterial book, it provides a thorough reading of many historically influential readings of Paul as seen in figures as diverse as Marcion, Augustine, Luther, Barth, Bultmann, Sanders, and even Badiou. Such an overview is important in thinking about the development of ‘grace’ as a theological mainstay, and particularly how it transformed after important figures like Augustine (pp. 85–97) and Luther (pp. 97–116), continued haunting discussions of Paul, even in biblical studies.

similarly Paul's background (Hellenistic Jew, Pharisee, persecutor of other Jewish sects, contemporary of Philo, etc.) and possible resonating influences (Gnosticism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, imperial cult language, Torah, prophetic and apocalyptic literature, diverse rabbinic traditions, apostolic traditions, etc.).⁵⁹⁷ These broad, intertwining socio-cultural influences direct a reader to different ways that 'grace' can function, of systems of reciprocity (in all of the social diversity such a term can have), and gifting.

Stumbling through concise, direct interpretations of Paul and other social actors becomes increasingly complicated, with competing readings of the social concepts, as well as interaction of these diverse classes of social interaction (reciprocity, benefaction, grace). There is a further hurdle for thinking about Paul and gifting/grace/benefaction, and that is the political/social situation he is involved in, one that calls for a type of harmony in relation to any singular reading (i.e. avoiding any discrepancy between the social/political situation and interpretations of these terms), an imperative to note how Paul's use and understanding of gifting may affect his political/social context and provide a solution, even if that solution does not provoke an immediate response. Any interpretation of Paul's understanding of gifting that does not take into account his political and social context, and the interactions that occur within that context, are insufficient. Acknowledging these realities was partially behind the earlier discussions on body terminology, the elucidation of the social and political context of Corinth, but also the gesturing to Marxist criticism, as such work eschews what Friesen calls capitalist interpretation and, therefore, unveils neglected political readings of the text. The elements noted obviously connect to Paul's use of grace, but we have to go a bit further, nuancing Paul's context from a few different angles.

⁵⁹⁷ An abundance of different examples could be given, and it would be nearly impossible to do so exhaustively. Body language, for instance, has been discussed above, as have benefaction and reciprocity. A salient example could be those theological concepts that have diverse possible foundations. Did Paul, for instance, find influence solely from Judaism for sacrificial atonement, or can these be seen in Hellenistic and Roman sources? From where does Paul's main influences come from in his soteriology? It seems *prima facie* to be Jewish, but is this satisfactory? As Georgi notes, the commonalities between Paul's framing of Jesus's death parallel nicely with Roman political ideology and propaganda pertaining to the civic *soter*. See Sam K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* (Missoula: Scholar's Press, 1975), as seen in Dieter Georgi, *Theocracy*.

Excurses: Gifting and Hierarchy

We have gestured to Seneca above, but in order to ground gift's connection to harmony (and further politicise 'grace') he requires more sustained attention. Seneca the Younger (c. 4BCE–65CE) is one of the ancient writers who informs us of the concept of gifting and its place in the ancient world. His *De beneficiis*, written before he fell into disfavour with the Roman Emperor Nero, is a well-developed work of Stoic philosophy that probes proper social etiquette when it comes to gifting. In the ancient world, gifting occupies a much different social space than in modern times.⁵⁹⁸ For Seneca, gifting is an absolute moral obligation, and even a thing of beauty, as seen in its characteristic harmonious circularity. To elaborate, Seneca points to the cultural icon of the Three Graces, an image of three goddesses dancing hand-in-hand, exegeting it thusly:

Some would have it appear that there is one for bestowing a benefit, another for receiving it, and a third for returning it...Why do the sisters hand in hand dance in a ring which returns upon itself? For the reason that a benefit passing in its course from hand to hand returns nevertheless to the giver; the beauty of the whole is destroyed if the course is anywhere broken, and it has most beauty if its continuous and maintains an uninterrupted succession...They are young because the memory of benefits ought not to grow old... (*Ben.* 1.3.3–5)

Such imagery illuminates Seneca's understanding of gifting, a reciprocal flow of goods between subjects. Nonetheless, in order to probe deeper it is crucial to recall that, as stated previously in this chapter, Seneca is a privileged individual living in the ancient world, interpreting social reality through the eyes of Stoicism. He undoubtedly, as an wealthy, elite, political thinker from an equestrian background who was also a senator for a time, tutored Nero, and was also a leading member of his *amici principis*, valued supreme political values; he was certainly very different from Paul, who represents a mirrored obverse, in some ways.⁵⁹⁹ Seneca may praise poverty, but it is curious that he only attempts to embrace it after falling from grace.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ With this in mind, John Barclay, for instance, devotes much space to these differences, with a particular eye to Seneca's work. See *Paul and the Gift*, 46–51. Cf. Stephan Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*; James Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*; Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*; Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*.

⁵⁹⁹ Susanna Braund, 'Seneca Multiplex: The Phases (and phrases) of Seneca's Life and Works', in *The Cambridge Companion to Seneca* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 21.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 19. Seneca asks Nero to take back the wealth he had bestowed on him after their relationship grew cold.

Concerning the individual and Stoic nature of the work, Barclay notes that it should be remembered that *De beneficiis* is largely interpreted as ‘a restatement of largely common assumptions about gift-reciprocity’. concerned with providing ‘an intelligent analysis of the problems of gift exchange’, and advocates for Stoic solutions to those problems, with an aim of ‘keeping the system of benefit exchange operational for the good of *all*’.⁶⁰¹ Sometimes, however, ‘all’ does not quite mean ‘all’.

This last point is worth highlighting. Underlying Seneca’s noble concern for the ‘good for all’ is an elite interest in social harmony: the elimination of discord within the social body.⁶⁰² Crook notes the cosmic importance of patronage and benefaction for Seneca, that he even goes as far as saying that agitating through neglect could spell the end of humanity.⁶⁰³ Gifting is a reciprocal relation between diverse actors that forms an important part of the ancient social world, preserving harmonious relations, keeping the peace.⁶⁰⁴ Peace and security allow for the flows of goods, relations, and charity to remain stable. *Pax Romana* certainly brought a *form* of stability. Perhaps all this is to be expected. Who desires chaos? Are not harmonious relations ‘better’ for everyone than tumult and disaffection? Even those in relatively oppressed conditions may develop a sort of social Stockholm syndrome because of the ‘peace’ that occurs through the sword of empire.⁶⁰⁵

The place that the wide range of benefactive and patronage practices had within society, outlined by Stephan Joubert, aligns with what Seneca believes about gifting. Joubert explains that these gift exchanges ‘led to the constitution of specific, institutionalised forms of exchange that fulfilled two primary functions, namely to create bonds between individuals and groups, and also to establish superordination’.⁶⁰⁶ Here Joubert helps to make clear the observation that gifting extends out from mere dyadic practices to practices that touch groups. Gift-reciprocity is not just bound to two people in relation to each

⁶⁰¹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 45–46. Italics added.

⁶⁰² Further, fruitful connections could also be made between broader discussions on body imagery, cosmology, and political rhetoric that would elaborate the social importance of concord, as well as its place in attending to the “good for all” that we recognise in Seneca. See Martin, *The Corinthian Body*; and, Elizabeth Castelli, ‘The Body’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Ancient Near East*, ed. Barbetta Stanley Spaeth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 258–62.

⁶⁰³ Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 69.

⁶⁰⁴ Here, I am drawing on work done by scholars like Margaret Mitchell and Dale Martin, who in different ways note the social importance of harmony. See Martin, *The Corinthian Body*; Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

⁶⁰⁵ While chaos can be utilized for specific social/political purposes (a military coupé, for instance), it is too unbounded to be strategically sustainable.

⁶⁰⁶ Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 69.

other; patronage is concerned with group activity as well. Dyadic relations may help solidify concord, but even more so do relations between individuals and groups, for instance between elite patrons and those occupying lower classes. Seneca is often concerned with interpersonal relations, which seems to limit the usefulness of his reading of benefaction. When viewed from afar, however, interpersonal relations reveal systemic realities. And Seneca declares the overriding concern of elites with social harmony. When wanting to understand the ‘all’ within practices that are allegedly beneficial for the ‘good for all’, it is paramount to recognise that practices which promote social harmony also legitimate existing social hierarchies.⁶⁰⁷ This is the maintenance of social division.

It is unlikely that a satisfactory figuration of Paul will ever emerge. But, what can be decisively said is that Paul was a Jew who was undoubtedly influenced by both cultic and larger social contexts. And, this admits his Hellenistic background, that like his contemporary Philo, Paul is both heavily influenced by his religious/ethnic background and his social and cultural context.⁶⁰⁸ Jews living under Roman rule were not somehow extracted from larger social spaces or diverse social networks, existing within some sort of fantasy vacuum.⁶⁰⁹ Furthermore, this type of social interaction allows for diverse, stratified social bodies to develop; we must

⁶⁰⁷ Ste. Croix, ‘Early Christian Attitudes’, 346. Ste. Croix writes that ‘a ruling class seldom tries to rule by force alone; some kind of ideology is usually devised which both justifies the privileged position of the rulers and also seeks to persuade the ruled that the existing state of affairs is only right and proper and is even in their “own best interests”’.

⁶⁰⁸ For work comparing Paul and Philo on grace language, see John Barclay, ‘Philo and Paul in Dialogue’, in *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches*, ed. Paul Middleton, Angus Paddison, and Karen Wenell (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Kyle Wells, *Grace and Agency in Paul and Second Temple Judaism: Interpreting the Transformation of the Heart* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 188–206.

Dieter Georgi notes the important influences of ‘non-Jewish’ ideas (possibly through ‘the Hellenistic synagogue’), perhaps foremost being ‘the political philosophy of Hellenism, which Paul also knew in its Romanized form’. The importance of this claim, namely that Paul is influenced by the wider political-social order within his broader Graeco-Roman context, is important to the broader reading being built here. Georgi, *Theocracy in Paul’s Praxis and Theology*, 7.

⁶⁰⁹ Indeed, Jews were often just as bound up within common associational practices, including honouring non-Jewish benefactors. This does not mean that many Jews did not refrain from certain aspects of, for instance, *euergetism*; Material evidence suggests that Jewish leaders ‘rigorously avoided statues and other images of human figures’. See Gregg Gardner, ‘Jewish Leadership and Hellenistic Civic Benefaction in the Second Century B.C.E.’, *JBL* 126, no. 2 (2007): 327–43. For more recent material evidence of honouring practices, see Noah Greenfield and Steven Fine, ‘“Remembered for Praise”: Some Ancient Sources on Benefaction to Herod’s Temple’, *Journal of Jewish Art & Visual Culture* 2, no. 1 (Jan 2008): 166–71.

remember that there are diverse Judaisms⁶¹⁰ in existence, and that they continue to develop within their numerous social contexts.⁶¹¹

Why is it necessary to point to these well-known minutiae? Because each Pauline social equation is tied directly to distinct versions of benefactive practice and mentality. Furthermore, the benefactive intricacies are multiplied in socially stratified and inter-mixed situations, which perfectly describes Paul and the diverse congregations he associates with, build up, and agitates. For this very reason Harrison notes distinct traditions interpreting grace language exhibited in the Hebrew Bible.⁶¹² The use of *χάρις* and connected language in the Hebrew Bible relates only partially Jewish understandings of grace, which requires paying attention to rabbinic works, apocryphal sources, pseudopigraphal writings, the works of Josephus, Philo, and available sermons by writers like Pseudo-Philo.⁶¹³ Paul's understanding of grace/benefaction is surely effected by traditions of reading the Hebrew Bible and theologies of grace that mutate over time. Philo serves as an excellent example. While work on Philo has marched on, what Harrison has pointed out regarding *χάρις* has not substantially changed. Often Philo's grace language is extracted from its benefactive core, and furthermore Philo seems to critique types of benefactive language that brings him close to Paul.⁶¹⁴ Notably, Philo brings out the 'mercenary nature of mutually advantageous relationship between benefactors and beneficiaries'.⁶¹⁵ Harrison sums it up, writing that for Philo 'benefactors "sell" their benefits in exchange for praise and honour;

⁶¹⁰ Multiplying 'Judaism' beyond some simple undifferentiated mass is important for our purposes, and is fairly uncontroversial. See, especially, Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton, *Judaism in the New Testament: Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 1995). For disagreement with stratification see, Michael Satlow, *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 5. Satlow notes that the semantic difference invites a neglect of the profound unity of Judaism.

⁶¹¹ And, in this instance, we do learn about Paul's broader context, his particular sectarian ties, from biographical statements made. But, this does not come close to exhausting an investigation into Paul's diverse influences.

⁶¹² Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 160–65.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 114–15.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 131

conversely beneficiaries “buy” their benefits, with deference, gratitude, and public honours for the benefactor being the currency of trade.’⁶¹⁶

Further work has been done on both Roman and Greek practices of reciprocal giving and benefaction; tied to this would be Hellenistic Jewish practices of grace/benefaction/giving. It is not true that benefactive practices are wholly Graeco-Roman, while Hebrew social practices emphasised mercy, or some other social practice that plays an essential role in the proper functioning of the society.⁶¹⁷ There are important comparisons to be made, then, between these various, disparate cultures that interacted through forms of subjugation, enculturation, and transgressive action, as well as contrasts to be found between forms of reciprocal practices between these various cultures. It is not as if Paul or other Jews are encountering complete novelty. Benefaction is an important part of the ancient world, though diverse forms exist which emphasis different ‘values’.

4. Social Activity and Associations

The most important work on these links and the communal importance of gifting can be seen in Downs’ work. Not only is Downs’ book, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, a provocative reading of the Jerusalem collection, but he provides a thorough distillation of research into *eurgetism*, benefactive practices, and the social activities of associations. The last item in that list is crucial for his work, as well as others other scholars like Crook, John Kloppenborg, Harland, and others.⁶¹⁸ Associations are one of the most useful social formations to use as a framework for reading early Jesus movements.⁶¹⁹ Many characteristics of associations are likely applicable

⁶¹⁶ Ibid. Philo makes further distinctions between God and the usual ancient benefactor, as God is ‘animated by unconditional generosity’(p 131).

⁶¹⁷ For a recent, well-researched alternative account that interprets Jewish systems of exchange as quite different than usual Graeco-Roman benefactive practices, and based on Jewish imagery and notions of *hesed*, see Susan Sorek, *Remembered for Good: A Jewish Benefaction System in Ancient Palestine* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010).

⁶¹⁸ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*; Harland, *Dynamics of Identity*; Crook, ‘Economic Location’, 183–204; Richard Ascough, *What Are They Saying About the Formation of the Pauline Churches* (New York: Paulist, 1998).

⁶¹⁹ Harland, *Dynamics of Identity*, 25–26. Harland mentions that the turn to associations has actually been a relatively recent one, being preceded by a form of ‘orthodoxy’ in categorising early Christian groups as sects.

(with caveats) to Pauline communities. Furthermore, the *social activities* of these associations are also directly applicable to the Jerusalem collection. When we understand how associations functioned, we are better able to construct the purpose, function, attitude, and normality of the Pauline collection. Many scholars focus on how unique Paul's benefactive practices were in the ancient world, positing that singularity delivers theological and socio-political importance. I think, in contrast, that judging regularity is misguided and makes it easy for the interpreter to normalise the situation. Planting a model on top of the Pauline social situation ignores what Horsley points to in a separate analysis on social stratification of early assemblies. It 'does not yet move toward an analysis of the historical power relations' between different class levels.⁶²⁰

Downs points to numerous associations' social activities in the ancient world that can be compared to Pauline communities in general and the Pauline intra-communal benefactive practices in particular.⁶²¹ These associational activities include the following: benefaction within associations; the existence of common funds; monetary collection within associations; caring for the poor; and the possibility of translocal links between associations. While it may be difficult to making clear parallels between Pauline groups and other associations because associations are often understood in a broad sense to be 'associations of persons more or less permanently organized for the pursuit of a common end, and so distinguishable from the state and its component elements on the one hand and on the other from temporary unions for ephemeral purposes'⁶²², and thus such a broad category seems to make strict comparisons quite fuzzy, it is notable that scholars have noticed the clear interrelations between seemingly disparate

⁶²⁰ Horsley, 'Paul's Shift in Economic "Location"', 92.

A perfect example of scholarly distance can be seen in several places within the same edited volume that the above quote by Horsley comes from. A prime example is Crook's entry which, despite being an informative piece, makes it clear that the analysis done is unnecessarily extracted from the larger social reality. Crook writes that '[t]hough it has obvious social and political aspects, patronage is at root an economic act' (190). While this is rather short quote, it makes clear that any full reading of the social situation will be set aside, that reading these practices as strictly 'economic' is the most viable course. But, 'economics' is never divorced from the 'political' or the 'social'. This should especially clear to those living post-Recession and at a time when Marxist analyses of the social/political/economic situation has made a resurgence. Read below for further comments on the problem of this type of extraction. Crook, 'Economic Location', 190.

⁶²¹ Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 73–119.

⁶²² Tod and Hornblower, 'Clubs, Greeks', in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 351.

associations. Associations, while often having clear characteristics for public unity (occupational guilds, religious associations, ethnic connections), mixed between categories and often ‘sponsored cultic as well as social activities’.⁶²³ The comparisons between Christians and other groups is not new. Tertullian (ca. 160CE–ca. 240CE) noticed this, as did the 19th century English theologian Edwin Hatch, who looked at contemporaneous groups to try to understand where early Christian ecclesial offices came from.

But, there are distinctions between different groups. And, this is true not only of Christianity, but also of other associations. Different demographics would seem to point to differences in both ability and interest. Downs notes, for instance, that ‘associations typically drew upon two sources of income to fund their activities: membership dues . . . and substantial benefactions from wealthy individuals or families.’⁶²⁴ The social stratification (or, available resources dependent on class level) of an association, however, could create vast differences in social activity on several levels. Is it not possible that political-religious activities and beliefs of an association could determine what benefactions were available? On another level, what are the likely monetary levels of membership dues for different associations? And, how do these influence the activities of the association? Crook has proffered that, while we have next to no evidence about the membership levels and actual activities of early Christian groups, the economic aspect calls for us to imagine what type of giving may have been expected.⁶²⁵ This is done using the only available evidence, which would be the activities of other associations. There are problems with such comparisons.

The most obvious would be the differences between the objects being compared, making any definite conclusions tenuous. In reading ancient inscriptions, we can see that the amount members may have donated (or the dues they paid for membership) denote different class levels (Crook: ‘the person who can give five denarii (and who is a member) must have some surplus

⁶²³ Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 79.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid*, 89.

⁶²⁵ Crook, ‘Economic Location’, 191–201.

and therefore be living below subsistence’).⁶²⁶ However, we simply do not have any of this information available to us for early Christian congregations. If membership dues were an important part of the operations of Pauline congregations, there is no information about the average amount, nor the ranges, nor the minor possibility that dues were not universally collected.⁶²⁷ At most we can make informed guesses on the social level of the individuals that Paul mentions in various lists.⁶²⁸

A second major problem is related to the categorisation of associations and their activities. The questions to be asked are, ‘How do we qualify the activities, benefactive or otherwise, of associations?’, and ‘Are associations dissociated from their activities in such a way as to allow for purely “economic” considerations to be singled out? Are there not identitarian concerns here that qualify associations and their activities in diverse ways?’ These types of questions destabilise attempts at creating historically reductive pictures of early Christian communities and their typical social practices; likewise, they help curb our predilections to cordon off readings of early Christianity that *do not allow room for imagination or novel methods of interpreting* the limited evidences we possess.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 198. And, I would think would not be a member who was living on subsistence, or even barely above.

⁶²⁷ It is important to remember that thinking about this sort of ‘collection’ is quite different than the ‘collection(s)’ taken up for Jerusalem. Obviously, there is a difference in scope, purpose, and most likely amount; this is not to say that a shared theological justification may have existed.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 202. Crook rightly suggests that these individuals are named for some reason, tentatively suggesting that perhaps these lists function analogously to inscriptions.

Much has been written on the social levels of the various individuals that Paul mentions in place like Romans and 1 Corinthians. I do not intend to wade into the larger discussions going on in this area because the scope is too wide for this project. Nonetheless, it does appear as if the confidence exhibited by some scholars (exemplified by older new consensus scholarship) regarding the advanced social level of these individuals is too high. I would rather be much more hesitant on this point, allowing instead for a different diversity of social ranges to be present in Pauline congregations.

In regards to the final point, while I only tease the possibility, I do think that it is certainly within the realm of possibility that monetary collections for the individuals associations may deviate from other examples we have the ancient world, especially when we take into account how little information we have about non-Christian associations. Not to mention, is it really outside the realm of historical possibility that a religious association partially built on politicised ideas about poverty and alternative kingdoms would have found alternative membership structures? If the answer *is* that it is outside of historical possibility, then I fear we have become much too reductive in our readings of early Christianity.

⁶²⁹ See L.L. Welborn’s critique of Bruce Longenecker, where he notes the importance of ‘cultivat[ing] an awareness of the inconspicuous strategies that ensured survival and flourishing for oppressed classes’.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has been a whirlwind of discussions pertinent to some of the themes that are important for drawing out a type of Espositoan Paul. We have looked a diversity of materials that surrounding broad, thematic, contextual themes in Paul, most notably the body, the gift, and the collection. If this were a project that eschewed Esposito, then each of these themes would have deserved a chapter. However, for our purposes, they have grounded a general understanding of Paul's context so that our final chapter can finally get more 'textual', and encounter very specific places in order to point to a new 'philosophical' reading of Paul, both impacting, but also cutting through, more staid figurations. These conceptual elements noted in the chapter included, most importantly, a detailed sketch of the social conditions and place of Paul's communities. But, the chapter also paid careful attention to several themes that show up in Paul, most notably the gift, community, and body. While there was some consideration of the importance of the politicised layer of body discourse, as well as the socio-political notion of gifting, what becomes clear is how intertwined these themes are. Paul's 'gift' isn't merely an abstracted theological concept. Nor is it merely reductive activity. Instead, it is bounded to the further political idea of the body, and informs a type of circular solidarity.

From here, our next chapter will finally employ an Espositoan reading of Paul by drawing on some of the elements mentioned above, but also by filling out a new picture of a Pauline community, including Paul's place as a type of immunitarian agent. In order to do this, the chapter will pay particular attention to one of the most important sections on gifting in Paul, 2 Corinthian 8:1–15. Not only is this section theologically rich, it also is a detailed, and complex, collection of imagery concentrated on the collection. Beyond exposing the importance of this section on the collection project, the next chapter will also spend extended time on bodily themes, imagining Paul's political body texts through Esposito.

CHAPTER 6: THE PAULINE *COMMUNITAS*: NEW POSSIBILITIES, SPECULATIVE FUTURES

'it is a good method to extract from an author the truth that escaped her. . . . If a search for the good is truly thorough and impassioned, it can find itself lost on a path, without a full awareness of where it is being taken. Seeking my own path, I can become interested in the seduction experienced by one who believes they follow the opposite path. The confluence of wholly opposed spirits can have a probative value.'

Bataille, 'La victoire militaire et la banqueroute de la morale qui maudit'

1. Introduction

Previous chapters have covered a broad range of materials. The initial section of this project was concerned with laying the foundations for an Espositoan reading of community by both surveying Esposito's oeuvre and situating it within contemporary philosophical work on community. From there, in order to more firmly establish the importance of community, and the interchange between identity, the subject, and community, contemporary neoliberal ideology was paralleled with Hobbesianism through utilising Esposito. This chapter's purpose was as a type of 'case study' that gestured more firmly to the effect that social realities, or forms of (Hobbesian) community/immunity, have on the individual/political body. This marked the first main section of this project, one which focused on contemporary theory and community. Our second section opened with a chapter concerned with broadening interpretive methodologies in NT studies, preempting any resistance to using not only contemporary theory for reading Paul, but also other marginal methods. After this chapter we focused most specifically on Paul and community, picking out several promising avenues, but most explicitly underlining the importance of body terminology and gifting, especially as it is elaborated in Paul's collection efforts. While this crucial chapter focused on broad discourses contained within NT studies, it was also written in

such a way that it circulated through implicit Espositoan motifs, namely community (difference) and immunity (contagion), gifting, and the body. The implicit nature is important for the purpose of the staging of this project, which has reciprocated through distanced disciplines.

In a sentence: *we have moved from contemporary philosophical interrogations of concepts concerning community, to suggesting broader ways of reading NT texts that allow for diverse methods through interdisciplinarity, and on to particular, focused community motifs in Paul using a diversity of more traditional methods.* Now, after several chapters of setting up theoretical foundations, Paul can explicitly encounter the figure of Esposito. The whole project, in all of its turbulent and winding wanderings, has had this short chapter as a final goal, setting up relevant frameworks so that readers from either discipline can recognise the importance of the other. In an Espositoan fashion this rejects, then, any ‘conservative syndrome of self-preservation, which inevitably becomes thanato-logical’ and instead embraces the notion that ‘Otherness is not a limit and danger from which we have to defend ourselves in a self-centred purity, but the source of life’.⁶³⁰

In mitigating the cacophonous results of reading Paul with Esposito (and, in another respect reading Esposito with Paul), I focus on a particular place in the Pauline corpus. Once again, the scope is concerned with an area that is concerned with communal imagery, Paul’s focus on resource collection and allocation in, especially, 2 Corinthians 8:1–15, and a diversity of the body imagery present in the Pauline corpus. The previous chapter has pre-empted this meeting by focusing on the social location of Paul’s community in Corinth, body imagery as pertaining to community, and how benefaction plays out in Paul, even paying particular attention to this interesting portion of 2 Corinthians. These elements coalesce into setting a wider scene of Paul and his Corinthian congregation, as well as some of the issues surrounding the collection, namely the purpose, scope, and cultural parallels of Paul’s collection project. But, attending to particular texts was delayed until now, precisely because the texts are to be read along with

⁶³⁰ Lorenzo Chiesa, Boštjan Nedoh, and Marco Piasentier, ‘Introduction: Italian Biopolitical Theory and Beyond: Genalogy, Psychoanalysis and Biology’, *Paragraph* 39, no. 1 (2016): 2–3.

Esposito, utilising his incisive work on *communitas* to re-frame Paul's community, through body.

As noted earlier in this project, I consider Esposito to have some important resonances with those other philosophical interpreters of Paul. Not only does he spend time on *katechonic* language, but Paul has an interesting place in his initial discussions on *communitas*.⁶³¹ Pauline eucharistic elements show up in *Communitas*, as well as references to *κοινωνία*, and for a good reason: Paul plays with imagery and language that correspond to crucial notions of community that Esposito is interested in (even if he does not bring out all of these parallels in their fullness).⁶³² I am not the only one who has noted this. Eric Santner spends a considerable amount of time dissecting Esposito's Pauline Eucharist.⁶³³ Santner notes the Pauline initiation of political sovereignty, biopolitics, and images of energising reciprocities. He notes, as well, how Esposito reads Paul as guiding the transfiguration 'of the flesh into the animating principle of corporate integrity and unity'.⁶³⁴ But, this as well is an 'incorporation into an organism that is capable of domesticating flesh's centrifugal and anarchic impulses'.⁶³⁵ Santner notes that it is only through the desublimation of God that man is able to finally encounter the sublimation of the technology of the Eucharist. For Esposito, the culmination of the aftermath of Pauline political theology is a sort of separation of the body from the flesh, which Esposito reads as a type of irreducible excess.⁶³⁶ It is here that the real separation of the flesh from the body occurs,

⁶³¹ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 52–79.

⁶³² Esposito, *Communitas*, 9–11.

While Esposito is probably not aware of the scholarship, it is important to note here that there is a large amount of research on the importance of meals for not only *expressing* religious and social identities, but also in *forming* those identities. While communal meals and banquets were hardly confined to Jewish and Christian communities, they certainly express and form different attitudes in those communities. For more on meals in the ancient Mediterranean, see Susan Marks and Hal Taussig, ed., *Meals in Early Judaism: Social Formation at the Table* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

⁶³³ Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 29–31 ; Roberto Esposito, 'Flesh and Body in the Deconstruction of Christianity,' *Minnesota Review*, no. 75 (Fall 2010): 89–99. It may be important to note, as well, that images of the Eucharist appear in other places in Esposito. Namely, his article concerned with Nancy's work on flesh, body, and the deconstruction of Christianity. This Nancean reading of the logic of the Eucharist, however, is a significant departure from Pauline communal images caught up in the ritual.

⁶³⁴ Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 29.

⁶³⁵ Esposito, *Bios*, 164.

⁶³⁶ Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 30; 5. Santner, in his discussion of flesh, reads flesh as referring to the 'substantial pressures, the semiotic and somatic stresses, of what I have elsewhere characterized as "creaturely life". . . [which

where Jesus' incarnation takes away the fleshy exigencies of life, doing away with bare life and performing an almost Hobbesian manoeuvre, whereby the pernicious elements of the state of nature are erased through a community's emergence, and subsequent contract with a sovereign body. Of course, it may be that paying attention to particular aspects of Paul, specifically munificent gifting, side-step this problem that seems attached to certain readings of Pauline theology.

Other connections have been made previously in this project, most notably the confluence of the gift. Peter Langford notes this as well, drawing on some previously mentioned Espositoan ideas. Explicating, and quoting Esposito, he writes that

In Saint Paul, the community, as a *koinonia*, is one in which the horizontal common bond is dependent on 'the gift (here surfaces again the *munus*) that God, through the sacrifice of Christ, makes to him'. This originary gift is that 'from which we come and toward which we are called'. The unconditional gift from God creates an obligation to respond, but the response is necessarily 'inadequate, wanting, purely reactive'. Participation in the common bond of the Christian *koinonia* entails 'not the glory of the Resurrection but the suffering and the blood of the Cross'. For 'the gift is withdrawn from us in the precise moment when it is given to us; or that it is given to us in the form of its withdrawal'.⁶³⁷

More could be said about Esposito's various Pauline glosses.⁶³⁸ He truly opens a unique figuration, exposing the Paul who, in Ward Blanton's terms, was weighed down with concrete shoes by those early Christian triumphalist historians, like Eusebius.⁶³⁹ It is for this interest that I hope to not only contribute to work on Paul, but also to further use of Paul within contemporary discussions on community. As we have seen, Pauline communal imagery is hardly confined to

is] a mode of exposure that distinguishes human beings from other kinds of life'. And, what ultimately distinguishes human life from others is a realisation of the foundationless of the forms of life that 'distinguish human community' (p. 5).

⁶³⁷ Peter Langford, *Roberto Esposito: Law, Community, and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2015), 71.

⁶³⁸ A confession: at times it was tempting to devote the fullness of this project to a Espositoan Pauline figuration, in order to fully inaugurate him into the army of philosophical Paulinists, even in the midst of the story he tells about Paul. Instead, as seen here, the end has been what I would call a more 'full' account of what an Espositoan Paul could be. Much like the Badiouian experimentation in chapter 4 section 4, I skirt past some of the authorised readings and instead offer my own gloss of Paul through Esposito, thereby creating a more Espositoan Paul that Esposito.

⁶³⁹ Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses*, 6–7, 9, 12.

the Eucharist, but extends into body imagery and, importantly, his collection project (including *κοινωνία* and *χάρις* language).⁶⁴⁰ These motifs are necessarily communal, providing crucial imagery that informs on the contours of community. But, as well, immunitarian imagery is present, as if the Pauline role is to keep life alive, to fulfil a type of political role for the nascent communities, even if this immunitarian gesture is not fully commensurable with the advent of such a paradigm in a Hobbesian politics.

The chapter will be split into several sections. The first, short, portion will focus on reviewing some basic features of Espositoan thought that were covered in the initial chapters. Because many diverse materials have been covered, it is necessary to refresh the reader's mind about these important concepts. The next, much longer portion will utilise these concepts to interpret the collection project (with the communitarian themes discussed in Chapter 5 contextualising the text and operating as a foundation for the discussion) and the broader concept of the body, including *communitas*, *immunitas*, and biopolitical possibilities in the text. This final portion is necessarily tentative and experimental, but will pull out the Espositoan from a haunting Pauline spectre.

2. *Reviewing Espositoan Themes*

Max Weber wrote: 'The communalization of a social relationship occurs if and insofar as the orientation of social behavior—whether in the individual case, on the average or in the idea type—is based on a sense of solidarity: the result of emotional or traditional attachments of participants'. And, in this quote he exemplifies an understanding of community that Esposito is at pains to note and extend beyond. Extracting the common, Esposito finds, leads to recognising that defining features circulate around ownership and property, appropriation and the features that one shares with others. This further interrogation unveils the paradox that the 'common' is 'defined exactly through its most obvious antonym: what is common is that which unites the ethnic, territorial, and spiritual property of every one of its members. They have in common what

⁶⁴⁰ It is in v.8 that Paul uses both of these terms, bringing together sharing (community) and gifting.

is most properly their own; they are the owners of what is common to them all'.⁶⁴¹ This understanding of community, a delimiting dialectic of the proper, is the trap that Esposito attempts to reach beyond; Esposito's emphasis on de-having is precisely meant to frame community as unconcerned with ownership, especially of identity, as this closes the boundaries of the community and stabilises *munus*. Instead of *immunitas* being the exception to *munus*, the *communitas* is able to non-remuneratively give. And, while such an understanding has ontological elements, it cannot be excised from overt political gestures as well, concrete embodied movements that circulate without laws of circulation. Noting the contours of a community is a political act, and in Esposito's enacting a conceptualisation of community that circulates around flows of *munus*, the lens through which the political angle can be seen is focused.

To quickly recap my reading of Esposito's community, it revolves around the circulation of *munus*, the deontological gift that is non-remunerative. This gifting is the conceptual base of community that also highlights the nothingness at the centre of community. What this means is that the community is not bound to distinct, firmly defined identifiers that neatly cordon off the blessed members from the outside. Boundaries remain permeable, and these walls are only policed by the immunitarian agent who is exempted from the *munus*. But, this agent invites the dangerous elements, because this is the mechanism through which the *communitas* is immunised. Harmful elements are neutralised and strengthen the body through their incorporation. It is when the immunitarian agent goes too far, tightly encloses the boundary with an eye to purifying the body, that the political body becomes *thanatopolitical*, a community of death that falls into Hobbes' worst fear (a fear that his community enacted), the end of circular flow, a stopping that signifies death and the erasure of vitality. Such a community is but one example of the broader dangers associated with community, dangers that are concisely summarised through the alienation/appropriation dialectic, a comprehensive dispositif of the proper. Appropriative models call for the individual to hypostatise community, treating it like a 'thing, and not just a

⁶⁴¹ Esposito, *Communitas*, 3.

simple nomination for relationships’; through this ‘each is expected to appropriate not only property but the community itself’. As Bird asks: ‘How can each participant appropriate the community without annihilating it, or, conversely, how can each participant be appropriated by community without being completely absorbed, and thus annihilated, by it?’⁶⁴²

2.2 *Klesis/Calling*

In a sense, any realisation of community is un-reproducible. Not only is there an impossibility of making, or of enacting, such a space in a way nearly synonymous with the inability of a subject *to* deconstruct something (deconstruction, after all, is not primarily due to the activity of an agent, but the instability of a hierarchical, symbolic structure: what is deconstructed is responsible for its own destabilisation, it is auto-deconstructive), but there is no appropriative aspect present, such that would allow a subject to obtain community (and the identity of that community) as if a property to grasp and own. The community is bound up within the logic of impossibility, a notion that Esposito shares with Nancy (and much in the Derridean tradition, and elaborations of the gift). The relations between subjects are, in some way, connected to the significance of difference and its commonality, the inability to possess characteristics necessary to universalize subjectivation.

If there is a binding it is found in unbounded heterogeneity, but also through the *possibility* of the gift. This is the very form of the gift that we have inspected before, one that differs from the generic understanding of the gift that is antagonised by Derrida. As Esposito stresses, the ineliminable founding of *communitas* is captured in the *munus*, the gift that is an admixture of its own generic nature, emptying gestures, and the duty, or official character, of instantiating such discrete, innumerable events. We are bound through forms of gifting that are in-appropriable, that empty with no expectation (thereby side-stepping the problematic transgression of *expecting reception*), and are a type of *klesis*, or perhaps an interpellation (to

⁶⁴² Bird, *Containing Community*, 22, 23.

bastardise Lacan). We can already feel the Pauline remnants, the echoes, manifesting coalescence.

The gift is not universal. This absence, the dissolution of universality, is in the presence of the antonym of *communitas*. *Immunitas* retains a space bound up within the *munus*, but here there is negative relation to the gift. The boundaries of community, as well as the bonds, are connected to the seeming dialectic of the two notions, found inextricably in relation. Such a relation, the mere presence of the antonym, reveals the necessity of the negative element that relates to the gift precisely through *not* being bound to duty. It's absolution leaves the space to welcome from without *into* the permeable membrane of community. This is the defensive move, a manoeuvre that essentially welcomes through extraction, disassembling through the logic of that which is extracted. Or, the defence utilises the logic of that which it is defending the body from. This suspension of the gift *is* the gift of *immunitas*.

The Hobbesian connection is noticeable, here. The Leviathan who, in order to suspend the state of nature must subsume that state through utilising a totalising, authorised violence. And, this violence extends to mediums beyond physical action. The Leviathan demands hermeneutical loyalty, the privilege to interpret from an authorised place; and, such a demand leads directly to the failures associated with the dispositif of the proper, namely the problematic dialectic of appropriation/alienation. However, Esposito notes that '*immunitas* is not just a dispensation from an office or an exemption from a tribute' (though, this is part of the character we have mentioned above), 'it is something that interrupts the social circuit of reciprocal gift-giving', or from *communitas* in its earliest forms.⁶⁴³ *Immunitas* is that which *catalyses*, rather than dampens or chokes; it 'constitutes or reconstitutes community precisely by negating'.⁶⁴⁴ These themes should be familiar, even if truncated, as the first three chapters dealt with the difficult logic of *communitas*, *immunitas*, and the dangers of auto-immunity.

⁶⁴³ Esposito, *Immunitas*, 6.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

3. *Paul and Circuitous Gift*

Collecting resources becomes an important part of Paul's political activity, as we have seen. But, such activity is not singular. It is not as if Paul is the only agent, travelling to different places extracting resources from locations that he has set up systematically with the infrastructure needed to fuel a large-scale collection project. His activities have both a specific direction, but also are comprised of a delayed reprisal. A circularity is apparent, but it involves several, disparate actors; activity is not confined to two agents, but a multiplicity. Further, the circularity is not bound to univocal travel; it is not some Coriolis force, following a singular direction based on the (social) forces that dictate how one gives, what direction a flow takes place.

In this section, I want to note the parallels between Esposito's rendering of gifting, and his model of *communitas*, and Paul's activation of collective agency, which suggests a *type or mode* of Pauline community. In this mode of community, we can see the economising forces that are present, namely a concern with the placement and elaboration of sources. If we speak of this economically, the structure follows most closely to the body of Christ, not in a free-formed hierarchy (Christ as head, the rest following), but a sort of emptied agent whose de-having fills others without completely exhausting, a deontological gift that has neither interest in boundary, nor essentialised identity. This is, of course, not a 'historical Christ', but instead the signifier that we encounter in Paul's tripartite imagery in 2 Corinth. 8:1–15, as well as a type of flattened, grounding discourse present in the various of the body passages (Romans 12:4–5; 1 Corinth 12:12–27). And, this envisioning of Christ side-steps the direct political theological legacy that Esposito notes above, namely the constitution of the sovereign that separates flesh and the body in a somewhat Hobbesian manner.

3.1.2 *Impoverished Impoverishment*

Paul's imaginative reminder to the Corinthians, his developed imagery imploring them to remember their previous commitment to provide resources for the poor in Jerusalem, comes

imprecisely placed in a letter redacted to such a degree that attempting to delicately trace the correspondence in any diachronic manner appears improbable. While the various reconstructions, or re-alignments, of the text appear arbitrary, we can still note the purpose of 2 Corinth 8:1–15, which *prima facie* is a rhetorically complicated attempt to convince his interlocutors to continue setting aside resources for those in Jerusalem who need it. But, *what are the resources?* And, through what *strategy* are these *resources* collected? Paul answers both of these questions, though the answer, and purpose, of the second question may be more complicated.

3.1.3 Resources

It is tempting to view poverty as a virtue. As Hans Dieter Betz notes, ‘spiritual poverty’ is an important part of the broad Christian experience, and perhaps early traditions of spiritualising poverty is a ‘revaluation . . . accomplished in Jewish terms, so the whole theme must go back to Jewish Christian theology’.⁶⁴⁵ Betz is, here, gesturing to his well-received work on the Sermon on the Mount. This can be a valid interpretive background for collecting these resources, but noting their place as an engagement with charismatic⁶⁴⁶ terminology can inflect the flow of resources differently. While Paul is concerned with collecting and gifting tangible, monetary elements, such signs can operate in different ways. Betz points to a spiritual element. Impoverishment attains a spiritual dimension, as if not-having, eschewing certain signs fills the subject with something else, a sort of spiritual currency that is only gained through emptying. If so, then the resources being collected are bound up within a more complicated ‘theological’, but also thoroughly material (the social is material, after all), flow. Socio-theological accounts highlight this sort of immaterial flow; we also noted older readings of the collection that focus on theological elements. While there is merit to picking out Paul’s theological angle, there always needs to be care that the theological does not cloud the socio-material and political realities of

⁶⁴⁵ Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 43–44.

⁶⁴⁶ I am intentionally avoiding using the term ‘charismatic’.

the situation.⁶⁴⁷ In the previous chapter the intertwining of social, material, and political elements present in community was elaborated. While this will not be reiterated at length, it is important to recall some specific points that fit into the broader logic of this chapter. Horsley points to some of the dynamics I am drawing out when he writes that to ‘understand the Pauline mission, we want to understand economic relations in particular, but we cannot understand them as separate from the broader structure and networks of social-political-religious relations in which they are embedded’.⁶⁴⁸ Separating these dimensions makes the same mistake of a ‘religion: politics’ binary; strong distinctions between these spheres simply did not exist in the ancient world and hardly exist in our own, despite formal distances between public and private. Dissolving these distinctions, furthermore, results in transformative readings of certain associational practices, such as the sharing of resources. Forms of sharing are not merely contained within a singular, reductive field.

The resources are self-evidently monetary. While this does not exhaust other possible resources to be gifted, and in fact other communities in the ancient world practised non-monetary gifting, in this instance it was most convenient. Paul collected resources from a wide range of diverse places. Without a convenient, non-perishable, universal, and transportable element any resources collection would have become exponentially more difficult. Money is a sign that is easily diverted into a broader flow of resources.

Still, theologies of abundance are directly connected to Paul’s minute letter in 2 Corinth 8. Sondra Ely Wheeler notes God’s place as a supplier of ‘super abundance’, the agent that fills the poverty of the Macedonians and of the continually emptying Jesus.⁶⁴⁹ Those engaged in the

⁶⁴⁷ Joseph O. Holloway, III. *ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΕΩ as a Thematic Marker for Pauline Ethics* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992.), 81. This, however, does not obviate the importance of noting a broad duty with regards to diverse situations, as if an ethical form, the call to *munus*, is individualised. Holloway, for instance, notes that certain Pauline paranetic sections (most importantly where Paul uses a ‘walking’ metaphor) call for walking ‘according to God’s call in whatever circumstances is a basis for life in community’. When the members of the community ‘walk as God has called in whatever circumstance is to make room for mutual acceptance in the community’.

⁶⁴⁸ Horsley, ‘Paul’s Shift in Economic ‘Location’’, 96.

⁶⁴⁹ Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation*.

circuitous flows of benefaction could be seen here, following from Briones' work, as the lynchpin, the brokerage agent, of the benefaction, neither simply the patron, nor the client, but a subpatron/client who takes on the role of both; this model results in, rather than hierarchical relations, a flattening, mutualist flow between material agents.⁶⁵⁰ Not only are they the agent of transference, but such a transfer materially affects them. It is a true emptying called by duty that exemplifies de-having; material resources enter the flow, but the flow transfers to a trans-local group that changes the 'community', ultimately destabilising attempts at identitarian refinement.

3.1.4 Further Strategies; Or, Avoiding Improper-ty

Paul was playing with fire. It is no secret that relations were tense between Paul and the Corinthians. This seems self-evident with even a cursory read through 1 Corinthians. Understanding these relations is much more complicated with the seemingly Frankensteinian nature of 2 Corinthians. Not only are we dealing with the usual one-sided conversation afforded to us by Pauline epistles, but there is the further problem of arranging the redaction; or, if we accept the order, it is crucial to wrestle with the varied attempts to construct what actually occurs in the letter. There is, for instance, the abrupt transition between chapters 9 and 10. Does this signal a re-alignment? Dieter Georgi is incredulous, in his reading, exclaiming that he 'cannot see how anyone could attribute strategy to Paul in order to explain this striking contrast'.⁶⁵¹ Older scholarship has wrestled with the composition with Günther Bornkamm, for instance, reasoning that the lateness of 2 Corinthians use by Christian groups points to its compilation.⁶⁵² Both 8 and 9, in Georgi's reading, were likely excised sections from independent letters that dealt with the collection; this would mean that the collection could possibly have been an even longer ranging project than usually thought.⁶⁵³ If two separate letters, some scholars, like Bornkamm, Georgi, and Johannes Weiss suggested that chapter 8 was older than 9. Various

⁶⁵⁰ David Briones, 'Mutual Brokers of Grace: A Study in 2 Corinthians 1.3-11', *NTS* 56 (2010): 536–56.

⁶⁵¹ Dieter Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 9.

⁶⁵² Günther Bornkamm, *Die Vorgeschichte des sogenannten Zweiten Korintherbriefes*, 33.

⁶⁵³ Recall as well the suggestions by Downs and Martyn that the Galatians reference, often read as referring the Jerusalem, points to a multiplicity of collections.

theories have suggested their relation, and how they temporally related to the Corinthian discourse.⁶⁵⁴ Perhaps they were sent out at the same time to different congregations much earlier than other portions of 2 Corinthians. Or, maybe the time between them was longer. Or, once again, they could fit together seamlessly as a single epistle that was delivered to the Corinthians before either chapters 1–7 and/or chapters 10–13. The history of scholarship reconstructing the timeline and redactional history of 2 Corinthians is complicated.

Despite Georgi's incredulity, scholars have attempted strategies to mitigate the differences between the sections. C.K. Barrett summarises some of these attempts: Lietzmann supposes that a restless night causes the change in mood, and Denney thinks the abrupt shift is because Paul finishes his dictation on one day and finishes the next.⁶⁵⁵ Some scholars have applied ancient rhetorical strategies to the letter, and on this basis Frederick Long lays out a case that the letter is a unified apology rather than a series of letters stitched together.⁶⁵⁶ In his 2 Corinthians commentary, Jerry W. McCant interprets the entire epistle through the lens of parody. McCant reads chapters 1–7 as parodic, with Paul playing the role of a 'persecutor' of the Corinthian congregations, followed by chapters 8–9 as a 'subversion of expectation as Paul upends all the expectations of the patronage system'.⁶⁵⁷ In this portion of the parody, God becomes the benefactor instead of the Corinthians. This reading does have some merit, especially when paying attention to the role a broker can play in some examples of patron-client relations. Brokerage allows for a middle agent to act as the medium through which resources or gifts are passed.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁴ Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 27. Weiss thought chapter 8 was likely written before the Corinthian crisis, and chapter 9 afterwards. Schmithals thought this should be reversed. Georgi and Bornkamm reckoned little time passed between the two and that they were addressed to different churches.

⁶⁵⁵ C.K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973 [1976]), 244.

⁶⁵⁶ Frederick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶⁵⁷ Jerry W. McCant, *2 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 101.

Hans Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924), 316. Perhaps similar to McCant, Windisch suggests that later boasting sections in chapters 11 and 12 that include self-designations of 'foolish' are portions where Paul is role-playing, following in mimic or, perhaps, parodic rhetoric; Paul is engaging in a type of theatricality.

⁶⁵⁸ Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy*, ; David Briones, 'Mutual Brokers of Grace'.

No matter our construction, Paul proceeds defensively throughout 2 Corinthians. This is to be expected as, after all, he is dealing with opponents whose theological, and likely social, affirmations deviate from Paul's. Despite the temptation to affirm Paul's position, it is important to take seriously work referenced in the previous chapter that calls for scepticism. It is easy to reconstruct early Pauline Christianity as engaging in a normalising, universal discourse that flattens differences; this shapes how one reads the balances of power, it shapes figurations of both Paul and his opponents. Paul is extracted from his community, and this extraction is engaged in centripetal forces that centre Paul. The possible arguments, characterisations, and concerns of non-Pauline factions are Othered.⁶⁵⁹

At this point, possible reconstructions are not crucial to the primary point being emphasised, which is that there was immense tension between Paul and other factions surrounding, and within, the Corinthian congregations. This is true no matter the literary construction and time line of 2 Corinthians. Paul is engaged in defending the body, in playing the role of the immunitarian agent, in balancing his exemption from types of gifts (and through such an exemption acting as a catalyst) without falling into auto-immunity. The stakes are high.

3.2 *Macedonian Generosity*

Γνωρίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δεδομένην ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Μακεδονίας, ² ὅτι ἐν πολλῇ δοκιμῇ θλίψεως ἢ περισσεΐα τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτῶν καὶ ἢ κατὰ βάθους πτωχείᾳ αὐτῶν ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτῶν. ³ ὅτι κατὰ δύναμιν, μαρτυρῶ, καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν, ἀθαίρετοι ⁴ μετὰ πολλῆς παρακλήσεως δεόμενοι ἡμῶν, τὴν χάριν καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἀγίους— ⁵ καὶ οὐ καθὼς ἠλπίσαμεν ἀλλ' ἑαυτοὺς ἔδωκαν πρῶτον τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, ⁶ εἰς τὸ παρακαλέσαι ἡμᾶς Τίτον ἵνα καθὼς προενήρξατο οὕτως καὶ ἐπιτελέσῃ εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὴν χάριν ταύτην·

Strains of Christian theology have often promoted the virtues of redemptive suffering. While the language Paul uses here could be construed that way, this is not the object, nor the

⁶⁵⁹ See Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles", 8–11.

substance, of Paul's opening section. There is an obvious rhetorical angle in Paul's exhortation to gift. He is, after all, reminding the Corinthians about both the situation and their previous intention to assist.

Not-having is distinct from an Espositoan de-having, from de-proprative tendencies in the Espositoan ethical community, the form of *communitas* centred through a non-remunerative *munus*. This is a crucial point. Such a form of gifting is not related to triumphalist spiritual poverty, as if the Macedonian community attains spiritual currency *through* poverty. Poverty is not centred, and doing so may instead be due to reading the section in light of the Beatitudes; on the contrary, the activity of gifting is emphasised.⁶⁶⁰ In fact, for the Macedonians, poverty is only important in contrast with their generosity, highlighting socio-material conditions, but also a sort of ethic. They are not blessed for having little; instead, they exemplify dutiful giving, firstly, and secondly trust in a socio-material-theological system that provides a multidimensional connectivity. Harris glosses this connectivity as expressing 'in a tangible way the interdependence of the members of the body of Christ'. This connection between 'body' language and the collection's interconnection is important, and this is crucial no matter one's interest in the theological elements.⁶⁶¹

What does this have to do with resources in the gifting activity? I want to emphasise the *material* element of gifting, because the materiality of the gift shifts the emphasis. It shifts how we view the collection, but also changes the emphasis on Paul's *χάρις* language, which as we saw in Crook's work has too often been prematurely theologised; the point will not be belaboured, as the previous chapter spent significant time on *χάρις*. But, the materiality allows for the type of ontological (Bird's '*being* rather than *having*') discussion opened up by Esposito's reading of community. *Communitas* opens up for a specific reading of the flow of

⁶⁶⁰ At the same time, we cannot forget the place that suffering plays in Paul, namely in forms of solidarity that were explored in chapter 4 section 4. Again, the suffering has a direct material connection.

⁶⁶¹ Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald Hagner (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 553.

χάρις, a non-remunerative form of gifting that connects to some of the other, broader themes found in Espositoan *communitas*.

This one section contains four cognates of χάρις, but *how can they operate?* We have looked at several meanings attached to χάρις. Too often it represents Christian novelty, especially among interpreters of the Corinthian discourse. One can look at some New Testament Greek lexicons and note the prevalence of reading χάρις as ‘a new Christian sense, often with a defining genitive, of the divine *favour, grace*, the freeness and universality of which are shown in the inclusion of the Gentiles within the scope of the love and care of the God of the Jews’.⁶⁶² Such interpretations of χάρις are not only thoroughly theologised, but they also ignore or downplay the benefactive angles of χάρις, which easily and naturally fit into collection discourse concerned as it is with the flow of resources.⁶⁶³ Some influential lexicons do note the benefactive importance of χάρις, even gesturing to the Jerusalem collection.⁶⁶⁴ Obviously, the nuances of interpreting the collection occur in the complexities of weighing social contexts, and following from a prior figuration of both Paul and the Corinthians

However, continuing to follow the economic implications of χάρις, flowing from the emptying-out of the impoverished groups provides imagery that de-proprieates the subjects involved in the extension to resources from themselves. The gifting takes on the specific characteristics of *munus* that we have been building up in various ways through Esposito’s *communitas* frame. While Paul is not using technical paranetic language often accompanying moral exhortations, he seems to be appealing to a wider *duty* of provision.⁶⁶⁵ Benefaction, while

⁶⁶² A. Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 281.

⁶⁶³ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 320–23. Dunn is a prime example of this tendency. While he notes the background of benefaction, he makes clear that the overriding element of grace has to do with God’s favour, which connects most clearly to Hebrew Bible notions of *chesed*. Dunn ignores any possible economic element, does not mention benefaction, or pay much attention to possible material angles of grace.

⁶⁶⁴ BDAG, of course, retains a nuance that is lacking in many sources. 3rd entry for χάρις points to benefactive element of Jerusalem collection, but also gestures to divine element.

⁶⁶⁵ Nikolaus Walter, ‘Paul and the Early Christian Jesus-Tradition’, in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A.J.M. Wedderburn (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 68. Walter, on the contrary, suggests that 2 Corinth. 8:9 is an example of ethical paranesis through its reference to Jesus.

not a legal category, is nonetheless a social responsibility, which can be seen in other ancient writers like Seneca the Younger. Appealing to a complex web of benefaction between diverse agents underlines a type of strong moral appeal. While not appealing significantly to the collection, Welborn provides another angle to the importance of (what I would characterise as) duty through centring interpretation of the Corinthian correspondence on political speech, most notably concord.⁶⁶⁶

Regarding paranesis, following Victor Furnish, there is no boundary that distinguishes neatly moral exhortation from departures from overt paranetic writings.⁶⁶⁷ For an example, consider how Elliott points to Romans as an example of an epistle that is functionally paranetic, fitting into a loose genre of letters organised around moral exhortation.⁶⁶⁸ I do not want to press this line of argumentation too far because Elliott points to specific rhetorical conventions that can signal a moral exhortation. And, Furnish borrows a Bultmannian elaboration of exhortation tied to baptism. The latter is not helpful because of the limitation 2 Corinth 8, and the former requires a full text; redaction complicates things.

The Macedonians participate in a sharing out of resources in the midst of poverty. Their engagement with this sharing out is their benefactive activity that engages a parodic distemper revealing a de-propriative communal orientation. The economic (flow of sources) is political (revealing the character of the de-having community). The *munus* shapes the bodies that circuitously empty out into other bodies. Curiously, the Macedonians' concern (according to Paul) never centres around the poor in Jerusalem; Paul does not mention them. Could it be that doing so, pointing directly to the recipient, could too easily shift the activity to a circuitous engagement that *calls* for a response? Through eschewing the possibility of response, the *munus* firmly engages in the non-remunerative gift.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁶ L. L. Welborn, *Politics and Rhetoric in the Corinthian Epistles* (Macon: Georgia University Press, 1997).

⁶⁶⁷ Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 91–98.

⁶⁶⁸ Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 19.

⁶⁶⁹ Sze-Kar Wan, 'Collection for the Saints as an Anticolonial Act: Implications of Paul's Ethnic Reconstruction', in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, ed. Richard A. Horsley

3.2.2 Poor Jesus

⁸ Οὐ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν λέγω ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἐτέρων σπουδῆς καὶ τὸ τῆς ὑμετέρας ἀγάπης γνήσιον δοκιμάζων· ⁹ γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὢν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσητε.

Paul shifts his attention from Macedonian reciprocity to Jesus. Benefactive language shows up again. An accusative, this instance points to, as BDAG renders it ‘a beneficent disposition toward someone’, which the entry allows for room to read as benefactive in the sense of reciprocal relation. Jesus stands in as a second example, distinct from the Macedonians. His grace, likewise, is found in an generosity that economises the Christ-event. This occurs immediately after an exhortation (v.7) to be ‘full of this grace’ like the Macedonians. What is the connection between the two? Further, while it seems self-evident what it means to be ‘full of this grace’ like the Macedonians, what would it mean to extend this to the Jesus example?

Welborn reads Paul as a significant point in the genealogy of the rupture of *oikonomia*, the entrance of economy as a distinct sphere. Specifically, Paul’s ‘belief in a deity who voluntarily “impoverished” himself’ established ‘a paradigm of economic relations under the sign of “equality”’.⁶⁷⁰ Barclay interprets Paul’s use of Jesus here differently, seeming to delimit a space for an economic reading at first glance by noting that what is being emptied from Jesus is not simply a ‘transferable property’ changing hands.⁶⁷¹ This may make sense, especially when noting Jesus’ place as a ‘source’ of grace, an image that I fill out below; nonetheless, Jesus is certainly ‘transferring’ something. The transference, however, is not in a mundane sense as if

(Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 196, 210; Steven J. Friesen, ‘Paul and Economics: The Jerusalem Collection as an Alternative to Patronage’, in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, MT: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 49–51.

⁶⁷⁰ L.L. Welborn, ‘“That There May Be Equality”: The Contexts and Consequences of a Pauline Ideal’, *NTS* 59 (2013): 75.

⁶⁷¹ John Barclay, ‘Manna and the Circulation of Grace: A Study of 2 Corinthians 8:1–15’, in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 422.

See also Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 418.

numbers from Jesus' account book are shifting over to those the collection is intended for. Nor is Jesus merely a symbol of abundance, as evident from Paul's stressing his poverty. Instead, Jesus is like an aquifer whose water, emerging on the surface and replenishing the thirsty is always coming just to the end of vitality himself; but, even more strangely, it is the impoverishment itself that founds and establishes Jesus' characteristics. This is a form of self-sacrificality that is usual to characterisations of Jesus.⁶⁷² He becomes, in the end, an archetype of the ever-giving agent who thinks not to being filled, but instead is singularly bound up within the deontological gloss. The Espositoan resonances are particularly acute.

3.2.3 *Inexplicable Abundance*

¹⁰ καὶ γνώμην ἐν τούτῳ δίδωμι· τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν συμφέρει, οἵτινες οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θέλειν προενήρξασθε ἀπὸ πέρυσι· ¹¹ νυνὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι ἐπιτελέσατε, ὅπως καθάπερ ἡ προθυμία τοῦ θέλειν οὕτως καὶ τὸ ἐπιτελέσαι ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν. ¹² εἰ γὰρ ἡ προθυμία πρόκειται, καθὸ ἐὰν ἔχη εὐπρόσδεκτος, οὐ καθὸ οὐκ ἔχει. ¹³ οὐ γὰρ ἵνα ἄλλοις ἄνεσις, ὑμῖν θλίψις· ἀλλ' ἐξ ἰσότητος ¹⁴ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ τὸ ὑμῶν περισσευμα εἰς τὸ ἐκείνων ὑστέρημα, ἵνα καὶ τὸ ἐκείνων περισσευμα γένηται εἰς τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα, ὅπως γένηται ἰσότης· ¹⁵ καθὼς γέγραπται· Ὁ τὸ πολὺ οὐκ ἐπλεόνασεν, καὶ ὁ τὸ ὀλίγον οὐκ ἠλαττόνησεν

Paul has a final image in this section. Here we can connect back to the hints of exhortation we noted earlier, but also to a new thematic that enters the equation, augmenting previous images. Paul emphasises, here, equality (8:14; ἰσότης) as a type of encouragement to the Corinthians, perhaps paralleling in an important way Philo; they both appeal to a same manna text in Exodus 16:18.⁶⁷³ This appeal is connected directly to both the abundance of the Corinthians juxtaposed with the lack (2 Corinth 8:14, ὑστέρημα) of the Jerusalem saints.

This section, and Paul's allusions, however, point to more than simply a vague encouragement. We have already looked at notions of inequality, especially in regards to the

⁶⁷² Barclay, 'Manna and the Circulation of Grace', 421.

⁶⁷³ Welborn, 'Paul's Place in a First Century Revival', 547.

broad demographics in the first century, likely replicated in early Christian associations.⁶⁷⁴ As Welborn notes, there was a cultural tussle over what equality pointed to, with elite's participating, snatching the semantics and destabilising equality; for them it points to the harmony of class, though hidden in the language of 'just desserts'.⁶⁷⁵ In Philo's use of Exodus 16:18 we can get a bit more warrant to read this Pauline gloss as reaching beyond oligarchic and hierarchical imagery. The manna is given to all who need it. Inexplicably, emerging as it does from seemingly nowhere, except the irreducible and unexplained 'miraculous' swerve of material entrance. Philo emphasises administration, as if the supplier revels in the accounting of proportionality.

Juxtaposing Philo is important for Georgi who notes that rather than 'entering upon the expected argument over the "measure" and the "purpose" of the collection, Paul refers back to its *ground*.'⁶⁷⁶ This ground, according to Georgi, would be the legal and political grounding of equality. But, as Welborn notes, Georgi feels compelled to come back to a Philonic concept, and instead connect this to divinity. The equality is thoroughly grounded in a divine force.⁶⁷⁷

Richard Hays tries to connect this text beyond a vague notion of equality in a different way. Hays is well known for utilising a tempting echo hermeneutic that points to reverberation qualities within text. Allusions, for Hays, often are relaying a full story, not just a quality of overt aspect of the story or larger section to which an allusion relates. And, this is obvious for the right audience. Hays rejects, then, Philo's use of Exodus 16: 18 as having an connection to Paul's use, instead containing an 'economic parable whose moral is that God provides those who rely on him for their daily bread, taking no thought for the morrow'.⁶⁷⁸ And, going beyond a simple maxim, Hays's chastises other interpreters that miss the full echo:

⁶⁷⁴ Walter Scheidel, 'Stratification, Deprivation and Quality of Life', in *Poverty in the Roman World*, ed. Margaret Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40–59. Scheidel makes clear that elites were becoming richer, while extracting resources from lower classes.

⁶⁷⁵ Welborn, 'Paul's Place in a First Century Revival', 542–43.

⁶⁷⁶ Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 87. Also noted in Welborn, 'Paul's Place', 556.

⁶⁷⁷ Welborn, 'Paul's Place', 556–57.

⁶⁷⁸ Richard, Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 89–90.

[other interpreters] fail to register the full range of resonant significations evoked by Paul's metaleptic use of quotation. . . . The quotation does not just state a principle of equality; rather, by implicitly likening the Gentile Corinthian church to Israel in the wilderness, it suggests an extensive series of suppressed correspondences--silent echoes--that Paul chooses to leave unexplored here. Israel redeemed and graced, Israel as a pilgrim people, Israel grumbling and unfaithful.⁶⁷⁹

Several points are immediately obvious. While I don't want to wade into the complicated debates about how useful Hays's intertextual echoes are (for our purposes we will grant its viability for this case), Welborn's contextualising work must be put into the mix. Hays spends no time discussing the possible demographics of the congregation. This is fair enough, as he is attempting, here, a literary critical (in the broadest sense) approach. But, in disturbing the boundaries and not caring about retaining a pure methodological alliance, we have to wonder what Welborn's exhaustive history of the public fights over equality do to the text. What is the audience familiar with? Do these discussions of equality, then, mix with these others of equitable provision that consider a 'superfluous store' a sort of auto-immunitarian gesture, causing the atrophy of the body through inappropriate use of a gift? As Welborn notes, Georgi had cold feet in taking such a path, one that underscores the 'legal' correspondence in the text.

Superabundance is a theme that we have encountered before, a continual subject in this larger Pauline gloss on the gifting community. But, here, we have superabundance in the face of emptying. The gift is bound up within the deontological contract of the community that, if receiving (an inexplicable surprise) is compelled to give outwardly. This renders a type of emptiness, as what is shared between the individuals is precisely their willingness to send out what they receive. If there is an equality it is found in that shared nothing that connects the intra-local ecclesial remnants. As a culmination of the collection imagery, there is a short-circuiting that occurs, a side-stepping of the problems of the dispositif of the proper exemplified in the alienation/appropriation dialectic. The community held socio-materially together through the gift is not a property that is had, and in such a having creating enclosures that render thinking

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 90.

relations impossible. Neither is it concerned with owning specified, delineated identities. The call to participative activity does not engage ownership of community, or identity, as if one is bonded to others through a social contract that inserts an ineluctable division. If there is any ownership, such ownership is coproprietorship, a mutual engagement. But, likewise, there is no absorption into the community, as if the subject is erased and there is merely a sharing that nullifies any division.

4. Bodies and the Pauline Immunitarian Agent

In the previous chapter we looked at elements in body discourse. But, how does this connect to both *communitas* and Espositoan communal bodies? There are overt implications in immunitarian rhetoric, perhaps most crucial for us the projection of body imagery onto the corpus of the community. In the first section in this project *immunitas* was elaborated. In chapter five body imagery in Paul's writing was elaborated, especially through the lens of Martin's work on the body.

With the scope of this work so far we can think about bodies, Paul, and Esposito in two different ways, prompted by questions. 1) How does thinking the body reinterpret the collection, especially in light of cosmic values and hierarchical balance; and, 2) How is Paul's explicit body discourse (Romans 12: 4–5; 1 Corinth 12:12–27) related to the previous questions' interrogation of the flows of gift (*communitas*), and can we detect immunitarian elements in such a political body?

4.2 Disconnected Bodies, Flattened Hierarchies

A Deleuzian body is an assemblage of subjects inhabiting spatial flows, connecting through intertwined, often unrealisable material forces. A flock of sheep is a body, a material group inhabiting a space, moving together as an assemblage. But, the body can also be the field they inhabit, their hooves stuck to the ground in that moment where seemingly distinct materials touch, their individual bodies consuming the grass that grows from soil, roots snaking and

intertwining in an irreducible multiplicity that endures, fails, connects, disconnects. Like a forest, who can say where the end is? The outline is fuzzy. Attempts to pinpoint a precise end fail. The modernist intuition that we capture nature and classify, that we reduce objects to their distinct and disconnected spaces, is continually frustrated by the permeable walls of undulating assemblages.

The community is a body. But, with Esposito's insistence, the community is not a construction, an essence, an identity; nor is it an operation. It is inoperable in the Agambenian sense; in fact, this is a broad consensus among the major thinkers of community we have been concerned with, including Nancy, Bataille, and Blanchot. As Esposito writes, 'community is not proscribed, obscured, or veiled by the nothing; it is constituted by it.'⁶⁸⁰

The Pauline body is a vision of community with political undertones; we cannot ignore the long history of harmonious, body politic speech. For a Pauline body, the reversal of valuation is necessarily political, and it retains a politicisation through its obverse; there is no requirement for desperate political pronouncements because it's mere existence agitates what it juxtaposes. It is social, concerned with interactions between the diverse assemblages of agents who make up the broader body. Through reversing valuation it destabilises the *essence* of community. This, as remarked in the previous chapter, is a concern shared with the reciprocal flows of gifts: social harmony. This is the political-economic-religious dimension, upending foundational concord. Any theological meaning contained in body imagery is not merely theological. As with our previous focus on gifting, the theological antagonism is necessarily political.

While Paul does not mention a Church, instead concerned with trans-local instantiations— sometimes several sparse congregations in the same urban area—connections persist. Perhaps we can, again, think of this like a loosely connected area populated with pools connected through tributaries and streams, or perhaps a type of persistent deluge. Like the rhizomatic Deleuzian body, there is and there is not a dis-locatable element to the assemblage.

⁶⁸⁰ Roberto Esposito, 'Community and Nihilism', *Cosmos and History* 5, no. 1 (2009): 27.

The body is assembled, but the stream of materialities shifts and flows change, they swerve, saturate, desaturate.

4.3 *Christ/Cephale/ConclusionsF*

Paul imagines a head. This is problematic for our empty, flattened, community. The head is the potentate, ruling the body. But, the head is also the source, and for our reading the flow that appears and saturates the flattened, undulating body that shares viscous fluids, vital gifts, through emptying. If foundational, the new *cephale* disturbs on a political and social dimension. Class is flattened, or there is an attempt at flattening. The *cephale*, as source, is not the head that sits atop the animal body, but instead is the burbling liquid that escapes the aquifer and supplies the flow. It is, akin to Blanton's materialist Pauline *clinamen*, the swerve that initiates a reactive of abundance. The head does not initiate a direction, but instead is the automotive source that allows for the direction of flows to fill pockets of need, equalising materials. In this sense, Hobbes' insistence that fluidity is of material interest is correct. While his scientific posture was inaccurate, our material instantiations are fluid, reacting with the *boundaries* of socio-material relations (the land on which the deluge takes place), and following the *gravity* of those same socio-material realities. The translocal nature of nascent, burgeoning communities follows this fluidity, bounded by sources of the fluid and the jagged landscape, but also determined by the undulating pulls of social and material forces acting on the body/assemblage.

The body accepts difference, it is made up of difference (Romans 12:4, multi-limbed mal-functioned assemblage that undulates as members become 'members with one another; 1 Corinth 12:12–28, individualisable, irritated organs); the impossibility of this community is found both in its continual fading (it never quite lives up to the perfections of the originary, mythic community; like the deluge, it undulates and shifts depending on material forces acting upon it), it's continual emptying, and moments of non-solidarity. Like the fleshy corpus, it accepts dangerous elements to inoculate against infirmity, even though these dangerous elements often weaken the body (1 Corinth 12:26, the dishonourable, suffering organ; the atrophying

failure held up through the gift of solidarity).⁶⁸¹ This destroys the Paulinist bodies, eventually.⁶⁸² But, in the meantime Paul plays the role of the immunitarian agent, absolved of a type of gift; 1) he rejects the Corinthian gift of resources, and 2) he plays with rules for maintaining communities. What does this mean in Espositoan language?

The associations are mixed, and do not call for specific identitarian markers. The body engages in a dialectic of fluidity/fixity, shifting with social composition. And, while the *munus* calls for a form of emptiness, and directs the members to gift with no expectation, dangerous elements persist. A type of universalising discourse is present, but the immunitarian agent is there precisely to inoculate the body, in all of its open, permeable, multiplicity. This is not the type of naive tolerance that allows for any entry; but, it is also not the panoptic auto-immune state that counters speculated danger with termination, or indefinite detainment, the weeping and teeth gnashing of Guantanamo Bay.

This does not necessitate an operativity, then, as any maintenance that goes beyond the gift is done in the name of being absolved of that very gift. This is certainly not an auto-immunitarian destabilisation. Paul can hardly keep up, as thinly as he is spread between the intra-local body/bodies. Esposito wants to theorise an affirmative biopolitics, and Paul's community represents a type; preservation of life, but likewise a community on the brink of dissolution through its adherence to the *munus*. Likewise, Paul's immunitarian role is engaged precisely in the interstices of law and body, of the institution of a circulating sense of non-dutiful duty to preserve the life of the congregants. Paul's community is not spiritual, in this sense, but is engaged in that mutualist struggle for existence. Even in a spiritual dimension, it is not 'merely' so, as if those elements are distanced from the organisation of life. Esposito laments the Pauline political theologic that haunts the West, helping to inaugurate a form of the Christian future. But, this gloss of the Pauline spectre inaugurates a form of profound political-theologic/political-

⁶⁸¹ Contra the insistence that Christ, as sovereign, takes away the 'flesh', the exigencies of life.

⁶⁸² Pauline bodies do not persist through time, but fail quickly. This is precisely why it was so easy for Eusebius to re-direct the Pauline theatre.

philosophic failure of a different sort. Long live the failure, because through Pauline failure, new forms emerge over time as the body shifts, relating to its past existence in new ways.

CONCLUSION

This project sought to contribute to the broader discourse surrounding Pauline studies (in all of its multiplicity) and theory. Specifically, it sought to contribute to scholarship in philosophical Paulinist circles by pointing to an underutilised source (Esposito) and an underutilised disciplinary city. To be even more specific, the aim was to contribute to research on Pauline *community* through the conceptual lexicon of Esposito (as well as, to a lesser degree, Nancy and Agamben). While any discussion of Paul necessitates an interaction with biblical studies, normally the balance is one-sided. This is no different than what Ward Blanton has pointed to as the dearth of philosophical interest, widely considered, in biblical studies. This project sought to balance the sources by using a broad variety of biblical studies scholarship in various sub-disciplines to elucidate Pauline community through body language, the gift, and the collection. But, it also sought to leave aside usual exegetical methods in favour of initiating a balance between theory and NT studies without alienating, or privileging, any one discourse. Through taking such a path, the project was intended to be an initiation for future Pauline figurations, especially following an Espositoan path. The pertinent question, then, was if an Espositoan elaboration of community and attendant concepts clarify and transform readings of Pauline community, and through such a meeting provide crucial material for both historical work, as well as the archives of philosophical communities? And, this question was answered using a general analytic gleaned from Esposito and used to approach Paul's community. Such a community was read specifically through nuances of gifting and the body. Noting the importance of these Pauline elements underscores just how important Espositoan *communitas/immunitas*, *munus*, the appropriation/alienation dialectic, and the dangers of auto-immunity. Such conceptual devices can be laid on Paul's corpus, providing a new reading of his community.

But, a further question could be asked: 'So what? Why does bringing forth this particular figuration matter?' The question could be answered in several ways, but I will limit myself to two angles. 1) Through the course of the project several philosophically important Pauline figurations were either confronted (Badiou) or gestured toward (Taubesian, Agambenian). Such

a project adds to the range of philosophical Pauline figurations. Further, it represents a ‘concrete’ figuration of an Espositoan Paul that may paint a new picture of an Espositoan community, playing with possible modes, and ways that *communitas* and *immunitas* may be read; this project may also open up a mode for reading Paul through a different political theological genealogy, closer to Blanton’s in that it assumes a Pauline failure. This does not assume, however, some ‘orthodox’ Esposito, as if some misstep in theoretical attribution destroys the project immediately. 2) This project also, while experimenting in Pauline figurations within and around NT scholarship also opens up the viability of hermeneutical paths. If not constructing a pure and acceptable Paul, it points to the Pauline figurations that open up through figuring Paul with diverse, heterodox methods. Our experimentations with a Badiouian Paul sought to underscore this, but most explicitly the final chapter opened up a reading of Paul in concert with theory. My hope is that further radicalised, failed Pauls will emerge from the work done here, and that they will continue to underscore possible Pauline communities that circulate around the *munus*, that will stimulate genealogies that open up economic stories, and will provide possible theoretical grounds for novel political philosophies and theologies, not to mention intervene in historical work.

A Pauline community opens up that is viable for possible historical paths, but it does so through a new analytics, co-opting political philosophical operations concerned with non-remunerative practices that are close in form and essence to Paul’s material operations. Further, this analytics notes the immunitarian role of Paul. While he has been seen as a ‘community builder’ in the past, noting his role as an immunitarian agent his distinct activities, and calls for other activities to be read in new light. And, finally, this project read Paul through an analytics that skirts past some of the historic difficulties with understanding community, namely the dispositif of the proper, an understanding of communal forms that seeks to avoid thanatopolitical tendencies. If Paul persists, it seems that it is partially due to an openness of communal form that avoids sliding into a community of death.

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