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Paul, σκύβαλα, and the Boscoreale Cups

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A century ago Martin Dibelius informed New Testament scholars of the value of a cup, found in the treasure of Boscoreale, for the interpretation of Phil 3:8 (τὰ πάντα ... ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα). A skeleton on the cup stands over one lying on the ground and makes a drink offering accompanied by the exhortation: εὐσεβοῦ σκύβαλα. Dibelius interpreted the exhortation as a designation “in popular pessimism of human remains as dung [*Dreck*].”¹ His view that the inscription expresses “popular pessimism” has dominated subsequent scholarship.² Although Dibelius did not mention it, the cup is a pendant (one of a matched pair). The general philosophy of the cup and its pendant articulates a vision of life which Paul explicitly rejects in 1 Cor 15:32.

However, in one important aspect, the cups’ attitude toward life indicated both in the iconography and by the usage of σκύβαλα in one scene is far closer to Paul’s perspective on his past in Phil 3:8 than any other usage of the word discussed by NT scholars. The exhortation (εὐσεβοῦ σκύβαλα), the iconography, and Paul’s statement in Phil 3:8 express a fundamental and shocking inversion of cultural values. This warrants a comparative study of the two paired cups and Paul’s state-

¹ Martin Dibelius, *Die Briefe des Apostels Paulus: II. Die neuen kleinen Briefe*, HNT 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1913), 59–60. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

² Dibelius, *Die Briefe*, 59–60. He also mentioned another inscription on the cup, τοῦτ’ ἄνθρωπος (“this is human being”) to support his interpretation. Dibelius makes no other remarks on the cups.

ments in 1 Cor 15:32 and Phil 3:8. The cups are part of a stunning hoard of silver and gold objects that were discovered in 1895 in a villa rustica near Boscoreale, Italy.

Although several commentators since have mentioned the cup, none have apparently found it significant enough to merit any sustained attention. Since the Boscoreale cup is a pendant, an analysis of both is necessary.³

THE SEMANTICS OF σκύβαλον

Paul's harsh word for his ethnic identity and accomplishments is somewhat ambiguous and first appears in Hellenistic Greek. For such interpretive problems, one of the most useful tools of semantic theory remains the distinction between sense and reference.⁴ The referential meanings of σκύβαλον were diverse: excrement, garbage, leavings, kitchen scraps (after a meal), remains (of ashes or a corpse), flotsam or jetsam, and something thrown to dogs.⁵ These usages can be reduced to two basic senses: 1) refuse, scraps, remains; and 2) dung or manure. In

³ The cups are in the Louvre. See Antoine Héron de Villefosse, "Le trésor de Boscoreale," *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 5 (1899): 7–284 (with 36 plates), esp. 58–68, 224–225, plates 7–8. For details, see below.

⁴ Cf. Kurt Baldinger, *Semantic Theory: Towards a Modern Semantics* (New York: St. Martins, 1980); Beatriz Garza-Cuarón, *Connotation and Meaning*, *Approaches to Semiotics* 99 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991); Cornelia Zelinsky-Wibbelt, *Discourse and the Continuity of Reference: Representing Mental Categorization* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000). Sextus Empiricus traces the distinction to the Stoics (Math. 8.11 = SVF 2 § 166 Chrysippus).

⁵ Cf. BDAG, s.v. σκύβαλον; LSJ, s.v. σκύβαλον; Friedrich Lang, "σκύβαλον," *TDNT* 7:445–447; Franco Montanari et al., *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), s.v. "refuse, rubbish, residue, excrement"; John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 491–492.

either case Paul's view of his identity, knowledge, and experience is shocking.⁶

The first sense is easily illustrated. Leonidas (third century BCE) asks a mouse: "Why do you mine in that corner, O lover of dainties, | since you won't taste any scrap from my supper" (τῷ τί μεταλλεύεις τοῦτον μυχόν, ὦ φιλόλιχνε, | οὐδ' ἀποδειπνιδίου γευόμενος σκυβάλου).⁷ Sirach compares the refuse of a sieve with that of a human, in an enigmatic text: "With a shaking of a sieve, refuse remains, | so a person's offal in their reasoning about themselves" (Ἐν σείσματι κοσκίνου διαμένει κοπρία, | οὕτως σκύβαλα ἀνθρώπου ἐν λογισμῷ αὐτοῦ).⁸ Clement of Alexandria uses the term for the corpse of Melicertes: "at Isthmus, the sea spit out the miserable remains, and the Isthmian games lament Melicertes" (Ἰσθμοῖ δὲ σκύβαλον προσέπτυσεν ἐλεεινὸν ἢ θάλαττα καὶ Μελικέρτην ὀδύρεται τὰ Ἰσθμια).⁹ The Suda proposes a fictional etymology of the noun as "something thrown to dogs" (σκύβαλον, κυσίβαλόν τι ὄν, τὸ τοῖς κυσὶ βαλλόμενον).¹⁰

⁶ Dorothea Bertschmann, "Is There a Kenosis in This Text? Rereading Philippians 3:2–11 in the Light of the Christ Hymn," *JBL* 137 (2018): 235–254, esp. 253: "The moment of renunciation expresses a fierce gesture of discarding prior values, triggered by the knowledge of Christ."

⁷ *Anth. Pal.* 6.302. Philo *Sacr.* 109, etc., can use the word for refuse such as that left on the threshing floor. In *Anth. Pal.* 7.382, Philip of Thessalonica (mid first century CE) uses it for scraps of human ashes: "Giving up my corpse to the land, harsh sea | you drag away the remaining scraps of my ashes" (Ἡπείρω μ' ἀποδοῦσα νέκυν, τρηχεῖα θάλασσα, | σύρεις καὶ τέφρης λοιπὸν ἔτι σκύβαλον).

⁸ Sir 27:4, NETS trans. mod.; Wolfgang Kraus and Martin Karrer (eds.), *Septuaginta Deutsch: Das griechische Alte Testament in deutscher Übersetzung* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2009), have "Unrat" ("refuse," "dung"). Similarly, the KJV has "filth." The Swedish Bibel 2000 has "uselhet" "(moral) wretchedness," and the NRSV has "faults." Clearly, the text is ambiguous.

⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 2.34.1. Compare with a funerary epigram of Hegesippus, *Anth. Pal.* 7.286 (ca 250 BCE), reading "Out of the salt the nets brought up a half-eaten | man, much lamented refuse of a sea voyage" (Ἐξ ἁλὸς ἡμίβρωτον ἀνηγέγκαντο σαγηνεῖς | ἄνδρα, πολὺκλαυτον ναυτιλῆς σκύβαλον).

The second sense appears early and often. Medical writers naturally employed it for “excrement”—usages which constitute at least 156 of the 544 occurrences of the word in the TLG (although Galen avoided it).¹¹ Diocles of Carystus (fourth century BCE) and Praxagoras of Cos (fourth century BCE) analyzed the causes of ileus, according to a later testimony:

In a similar way the ancient physicians unanimously explained the origin of ileus. For they believed that it originates in a stoppage of the intestines, which are obstructed either by hard excrement ...

Εἰλεοῦ αἰτία. ὁμοίως καὶ τὸν εἰλεὸν συμφώνως εἶπον οἱ ἀρχαῖοι γίνεσθαι· ἔμφραξιν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν ἐντέρων ἥτοι ὑπὸ σκληρῶν σκυβάλων ...¹²

Philo, Josephus, and Symmachus use the word in this sense.¹³ The word is not an obscenity (*αἰσχρολογία*), because it appears in medical writers, philosophers, and so forth and not in “[o]ld comedy ... satirical and sub-literary prose ... graffiti, curse tablets, and magical texts.”¹⁴

The noun and derived verbs appear in some funerary inscriptions from later antiquity. An epigraph from Tomis (third century CE) below a marble bust speaks to the onlooker:

You see a famo[us (person) ..., O]
p[asser-by],

¹⁰ Suda Σ 698. Robert Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden: Brill 2010), s.v. σκύβαλον, mentions a possible Hittite source; *išḫuḫai-i*, “to throw (away),” “shake (away).”

¹¹ 130 occurrences are Paul’s phrase or variations of it.

¹² Diocles frag. 124 (van der Eijk). Translation from Fritz Steckerl, *The Fragments of Praxagoras of Cos and His School: Collected, Edited, and Translated* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 74 (= Praxagoras frag. 57). Cf. Erastriatus (third century BCE), frag. 76 (Garofalo); Strabo 14.1.37; Plutarch, *Is. Os. I 4*, 352d; and P. Fay. 119 (ca 103 CE, Euhemeria).

¹³ Philo, *Sacr.* 139; Josephus, *Bell.* 5.571; Ezek 4:12, 15 (both Symmachus).

¹⁴ Alan H. Sommerstein, *Talking about Laughter: And Other Studies in Greek Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15–42, esp. 31–32. Had Paul wanted to use an obscenity, *σκῶρ* was available; see Jeremy F. Hulton, *The Ethics of Obscene Speech in Early Christianity and Its Environment*, NovTSup 128 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 150–153.

[who l]ies dead among tho[se who decay (or “the dead”),
 filth that has been dragged away;
 [wh]o lived reverently the life of the bless[ed].

[τὸν κ]λεινὸν ἐσο[ρᾶς ~ ~ ~ ~ ~, ὦ]
 π[αροδῖτα],
 [κείμ]ενον ἐν φθιμένοις ἐ[λκόμεν],
 ον σκύβαλον·
 [ζ]ήσαντα σεμνῶς τὸν μακάρω[ν]
 βίωτον.¹⁵

Werner Peek compares the inscription to an epigram attributed to Epicharmus: “I am dead, and a dead person is filth/dung, and filth is earth | but if the earth is a god, I am not dead, but a god” (εἰμι νεκρός· νεκρός δὲ κόπρος, γῆ δ’ ἡ κόπρος ἐστίν· | εἰ δ’ ἡ γῆ θεός ἐστ’, οὐ νεκρός, ἀλλὰ θεός).¹⁶

Two verbs, *σκυβαλίζω* and *ἀνασκυβαλίζω*, are important for understanding the context of Paul’s metaphor in Phil 3:8. LSJ glosses the first as “look on as dung, reject contemptuously.”¹⁷ Sir 26:28 is an example:

¹⁵ IScM ii, 368 (Tomis) = SEG 27, 405 = SEG 39, 683. From the SEG: “Six fragments of marble plaque; above upper edge part of a bust.” The conjecture of SEG 39, 683, ἐ[λκόμεν]/ον σκύβαλον (dragged remains/filth), is based on a reinspection of the stone by Dan Slușanchi, “Tomitana graeca,” *Pontica* 21–22 (1988–1989): 305–311, esp. 309–310 (Romanian). Slușanchi translates σκύβαλον as “remains.” Cf. Werner Peek, “*Compositis componendis*, Grabepigramm eines Bithyniers in Tomis,” *Studii Clasice* 17 (1977): 113–116. I thank Alexandru Avram for sharing his preliminary edition of IG x,3 3 with me and for help with Slușanchi’s Romanian.

¹⁶ (Ps.) Epicharmus 23 B64 Diels/Kranz = Schol. in Homer. *Il.* 22.414. Cf. Peek, “*Compositis*,” 114. Cp. Heraclitus 22 B96 D./K.

¹⁷ Cf. LSJ s.v. *σκυβαλίζω*. Jeanne and Louis Robert, “Bulletin épigraphique,” in *REG* 90.430–431 (1977): 314–448, esp. 400 § 423, link both verbs and define *σκυβαλίζω* as “reject as remains or as excrement” (“rejeter comme des restes ou des excréments”). IEph 2204 = PHI Ephesos 2130 (imperial period) *σκυβαλίσαι τι τῶν ἐνόνητων* (“defile/treat as dung any of these remains”) indicates that “reject as remains any of the remains” is not a good option for understanding the sepulchral usages.

By two things has my heart been grieved, | and by a third anger came upon me:
| a warrior wanting on account of indigence | and intelligent men when they are
treated contemptuously ... (NETS)

Ἐπὶ δυσὶ λελύπηται ἡ καρδία μου, | καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ τρίτῳ θυμὸς μοι ἐπήλθεν· | ἀνὴρ
πολεμιστῆς ὑστερῶν δι' ἔνδειαν, | καὶ ἄνδρες συνετοὶ ἐὰν σκυβαλισθῶσιν ...

An alternate translation would be “intelligent men when they are treated as dung.” An epitaph from Synnada (first to second century CE) has: “whoever then w[i]ll defile/treat as d[ung] these bones | may (s)[he be cu]rsed” (τίς οὖν π[ο]τε τὰ ὄσ/τέα σ[κυβλίσε]ι κατάρα | αὐ[τῶ] γένο[ι]το).¹⁸

The commentators naturally are divided in their translations of Phil 3:8, and many list several options. Dibelius and others understand the word to mean “Dreck” (filth/dung).¹⁹ John Reumann is straightforward: “I consider all these things crap.”²⁰ “Rubbish” is Markus Bockmuehl’s choice, and he affirms that the word “literally means ‘dung’ or ‘refuse,’

¹⁸ MAMA iv, 84. See Sardis 7,1 165 (third to fourth century CE) (σκυβλίσε); TAM v,1 213 (231/232 CE); Tabala (Lydia) (σκυβαλλίσαι); Perinthos-Herakleia 158 (third century CE) = IG ii² 13221 = SEG 27:28 (ἀνασκυβαλίσε); Milet vi,2 518 (imperial period) (σκυβαλίση); Alt.v.Hierapolis 97 (σκυβαλίσει), 338 (<ἀπ>οσκυβαλί<σα>ι).

¹⁹ Martin Dibelius, *An die Thessalonicher I, II; An die Philipper*, HNT 11 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1937), 88. Cf. Edouard Cunitz, Johann-Wilhelm Baum, and Eduard Wilhem Eugen Reuss (eds.), *Ioannis Calvinii opera omnia quae supersunt* (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1895), 48, have “but stinks to him like excrement” (*sed sibi instar stercoreis foetere*); Jean-François Collange, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens*, CNT 10a (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1973), 115, has “déchets” (“waste,” “offal”); Ernst Lohmeyer, *Der Brief an die Philipper*, KEK 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 131, has “Kot” (“filth/dung,” “a crude word of the street”); as does Ulrich B. Müller, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Philipper*, THKNT 11.1 (Leipzig: Evangelische, 1993), 153 (the word implies what is “repulsive, settled, and done away with”); and Thomas Schmeller, “Zwei Narrenreden? 2 Kor 11,21b–33 und Phil 3,2–11 im Vergleich,” in *Der Philipperbrief des Paulus in der hellenistisch-römischen Welt*, edited by Jörg Frey and Benjamin Schliesser, WUNT 353 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 189–205, esp. 192, mentions “Dreck” and “Kot.”

²⁰ Reumann, *Philippians*, 491.

sometimes in the sense of food scraps to be thrown away, but also in the sense of excrement.”²¹ Dorothea Bertschmann writes that “the expression ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα most strongly resists a kenotic reading, whether σκύβαλον is translated as ‘rubbish,’ stressing the uselessness, or as ‘filth,’ stressing the revulsiveness.”²² None of the authors before Paul—with the possible exception of Sir 27:4—seem to have used σκύβαλον as a metaphor for some aspect of human life.²³ Sir 26:28, however, did use the verbal form to discourse regarding an intelligent person contemptuously/as dung. The sepulchral inscriptions, which with one exception are post-Pauline, also use the verbal derivations to denote defiling graves—that is, treating human remains as dung.²⁴ In Sir 26:28 and in the inscriptions the verbs express a contemptuous rejection of human beings or human remains.

PLAUTUS AND APULEIUS

Johannes J. Wettstein mentioned several Latin texts that are illuminating comparisons with Paul’s perspective in Phil 3:8.²⁵ Plautus describes a slave named Cyamus who is disgusted with his master’s decision to shower his lover, the meretrix Phronesium, with gifts. Diniarchus “regards his possessions as dung” (“qui bona sua pro stercore habet”), be-

²¹ Marcus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC (London: Black, 1998), 204, 207.

²² Bertschmann, “Kenosis,” 246. In a kenotic reading, Paul “willingly and humbly gives up his Jewish privileges and embraces suffering and death in conformity to Christ; in the same way, Christ willingly ‘emptied himself’ of his divine privileges and obediently embraced suffering and death” (235).

²³ I base this statement on the TLG, the Papyri.info database, the PHI (epigraphy.packhum.org), and the SEG database.

²⁴ MAMA iv, 84 (first to second century CE) is the exception (i.e., possibly not post-Pauline).

²⁵ Johannes J. Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum Graecum*, 2 vols. (Graz: Akademische, 1965), 2:275–6 (Phil 3:8).

cause he is in love.²⁶ Even more apt is a tradition about Crates the Cynic in Apuleius. Crates, after hearing Diogenes and others like him, “burst into the forum, threw away his property as if it were a load of dung, more burdensome than useful” (“denique in forum exsilit, rem familiarem abicit velut onus stercoreis magis labori quam usui”).²⁷ Neither Plautus nor Apuleius envision property owners actually making the comparison between their goods and dung. The slave Cyamus and Apuleius’ narrator do, however, produce similes that resemble Paul’s metaphor in Phil 3:8.

THE BOSCOREALE SILVER CUPS

The commentators have occasionally mentioned a silver skeleton cup from the Boscoreale treasure that in my view is more illuminating of Phil 3:8 than the Greek texts reviewed above. Dibelius called scholarship’s attention to the silver *modiolus* with the intriguing inscription, εὐσεβοῦ σκύβαλα.²⁸ The silver treasure was found during excavations of a *villa rustica* on 6 April 1895 next to a skeleton of a man surrounded by valuables.²⁹ The villa was for the production of wine and oil and was not one of the many pleasure villas in the region where one would have

²⁶ Plautus, *Truc.* 555 (OCT Lindsay).

²⁷ Apuleius, *Florid.* 14.1 (cp. 22.1–6). Translation from Christopher P. Jones (ed.) *Apuleius: Apologia, Florida, De deo Socratis*, LCL 534 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 279. In Gabriele Giannantoni (ed.), *Socratis et Socraticorum reliquiae*, 4 vols. (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1990), similar traditions of Crates are V-H (vol. 2) frags. 4–12 (Apuleius = frag. 5); see also Ps. Diogenes, Ep. 9.1 (first century BCE to second century CE); cf. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, “Cratès de Thèbes (C 205),” *DPhA* 2 (1994): 496–500. It is apparent that “onus stercoreis” is Apuleius’ comment and not Crates’. I thank Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé for this point (personal communication).

²⁸ Dibelius, *Die Briefe*, 59–60.

²⁹ Grete Stefani, “La villa del tesoro di argenterie di Boscoreale,” in *Argenti a Pompei*, edited by P. G. Guzzo (Milano: Electa, 2006), 190–200, esp. 182 (and compare the photo of the *torcularium* and the entrance to the cistern on page 183).

banqueted with such *modioli*.³⁰ The silver vessels were wrapped in a cloth in a wine tank—a cistern two meters below the villa's *torcularium* (wine press)—before the eruption of Vesuvius.³¹ Katherine M. D. Dunbabin notes that the two cups which portray skeletons are now generally dated to the Tiberian era.³² The early history of the cups, and how they came to form part of the Boscoreale collection, is a mystery.³³ The silver cup mentioned by Dibelius is a member of a pair.³⁴

³⁰ This can easily be deduced from the floor plan (the visitor immediately sees the wine press). Cf. François Baratte, *Le trésor d'orfèvrerie romaine de Boscoreale* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1986), 12–13 (with plan); Villefosse, “Le trésor,” 8, 11–20 (with plan); Angiolo Pasqui, “La villa pompeiana della Pisanella presso Boscoreale,” *Monumenti antichi pubblicati per cura della reale accademia dei Lincei* 7 (1897): 397–554, Tav. 14 (plan), 509, 521–523 (the villa was inhabited by the vilicus and not the dominus, “at the time of the eruption”); and the discussion, photographs, and very extensive bibliography in Laurentino García y García, *Scavi “privati” nel territorio di Pompei: Disiecta membra di antiche strutture e villae rusticae* (Roma: Arbor Sapientiae, 2017), 100–115.

³¹ Villefosse, “Le trésor,” 27, 133 (there were 109 silver pieces, of which 102 were in the Louvre, six in the Rothschild collection, and one in the British museum); cf. Baratte, *Le trésor*, 10. They now weigh 30 kg (Baratte, *Le trésor*, 15). The around 1000 aurei found in the tank (and 37 elsewhere) are the equivalent of 100,000 sesterces (see Villefosse, “Le trésor,” 30, for the number, and Baratte, *Le trésor*, 15, for the value). See also Stefani, “La villa,” 182, on the 635 grams of gold jewelry found next to a woman's skeleton in the torcularium.

³² Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, “Sic erimus cuncti ... The Skeleton in Graeco-Roman Art,” *JDAI* 101 (1986): 185–255, esp. 231, with bibliography; cf. Karl Schefold, with Anne-Catherine Bayard et al., *Die Bildnisse der antiken Dichter, Redner und Denker* (Basel: Schwabe, 1997), 300 (ca the Claudian era). Two paired cups from the hoard depict Augustus and Tiberius respectively, see Ann L. Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus: The Case of the Boscoreale Cups* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and F. S. Kleiner, “The Boscoreale Cups: Copies of a Lost Monument?” (review of Kuttner, *Dynasty*), *JRA* 10 (1997): 377–380.

³³ I owe this formulation to Katherine Dunbabin (personal communication).

³⁴ Both drawings are from Baratte, *Le trésor*, 65.

On the underside of the other cup is an inscription which identifies a one-time owner as a woman named Gavia along with the weight of the two cups.³⁵

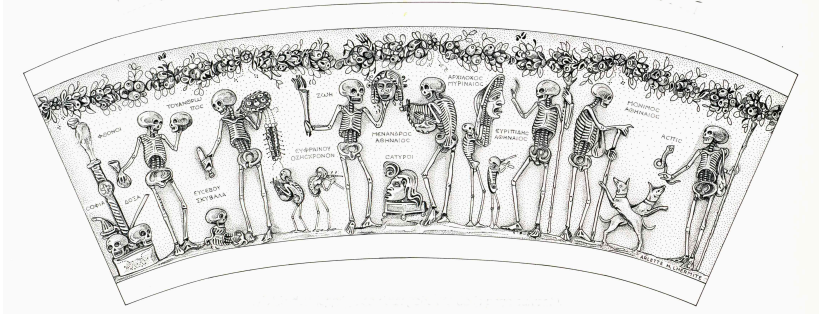


Image 1: *Cup A. Louvre, Bj 1924*

credit: Arlette M. L'hermite; used by permission

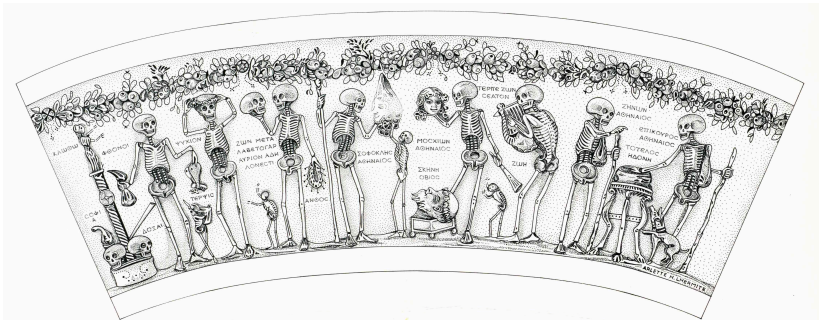


Image 2: *Cup B. Louvre Bj 1923*

credit: Arlette M. L'hermite; used by permission

³⁵ Villefosse, “Le trésor,” 62 (= ILS 8618): “Gaviae. vas(a) ii P(ondo) ii, uncias viii, scripula iiiii” (“belonging to Gavia. 2 pounds, 8 ounces, 4 scruples” [now: 479 grams for cup Bj 1923, Bj 1924 is 410 g.]). After Gaviae, someone later inscribed vas(a) ii. Villefosse, “Le trésor,” 63, thought he detected very faint traces of another name on the cup (Maxima?). The cups are 10.40 cm high, and the diameter of the orifice is also 10.40 cm (7.80 cm at the bottom). Maxima’s name is on 37 pieces of the treasure, and she may have been the last owner (Baratte, *Le trésor*, 16). On the history of the cups’ sale, see Kuttner, *Dynasty*, 8; and Stefani, “La villa,” 185 (“clandestine export”).

Baron Edmond de Rothschild bought the silver treasure and donated it to the Louvre in 1895. Antoine Héron de Villefosse subsequently published the fundamental study of the discovery.³⁶ Unfortunately Dibelius' rather superficial examination of the *modiolus* has resulted in a misleading interpretation of the inscription and the entire cup. Instead of the "popular pessimism" that Dibelius (and subsequent interpreters dependent on his work) saw, the cup indicates an Epicurean appreciation for the joys and limitations of life. New Testament scholarship on the cup has not advanced beyond Dibelius' evaluation.³⁷ François Baratte notes a very similar setting in the "Banquet of Trimalchio" ("cena Trimalchionis"):

⁸ As we drank and admired each luxury in detail, a slave brought in a silver skeleton, made so that its joints and sockets could be moved and bent in every direction. ⁹ He threw it down once or twice on the table so that the supple sections showed several attitudes, and Trimalchio said appropriately: ¹⁰ "Alas for us poor mortals, all that poor man is is nothing. So we shall be, after the world below [Orcus] takes us away. Let us live then while it can go well with us."

⁸ potantibus ergo nobis et accuratissime lautitias mirantibus laruum argenteam attulit servus sic aptatam, ut articuli eius vertebraeque luxatae in omnem partem flecterentur. ⁹ hanc cum super mensam semel iterumque abiecisset et catenatio mobilis aliquot figuras exprimeret, Trimalchio adiecit: ¹⁰ "eheu nos miseros,

³⁶ Héron de Villefosse, "Le trésor," esp. 58–68, 224–225, plates 7–8. See also G. M. A. Richter, *Portraits of the Greeks*, 3 vols. (London: Phaidon, 1965), 1:67, 132, 138, 2:163, 189, 199, 229, 243, figs. 1697–1704; Baratte, *Le trésor*, 35, 65–67, 91; Dunbabin, "Skeleton," 224–228, figs. 37–42 (she demonstrates the ubiquity of skeletons, often related to symposia, on gems, mosaics, Arretine ware, etc.); Schefold, *Bildnisse*, 300–303, figs. 175–182; and Stefani, "La villa," 186–187, fig. 272 (= Bj 1923).

³⁷ Dibelius, *Philipper*, 89 (the skeletal remains of the person are "Dreck"), Lohmeyer, *Philipper*, 135 ("vulgar pessimism"), Müller, *Philipper*, 153 ("vulgar pessimism"), and Reumann, *Philippians*, 492 ("pessimistic inscriptions on a cup").

quam totus homuncio nil est! sic erimus cuncti, postquam nos auferet Orcus.
ergo vivamus, dum licet esse bene.³⁸



Image 3: Cup A, Louvre Bj 1924

credit: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY; Hervé Lewandowski

³⁸ Petronius, *Satyricon* 34.8–10, translation from M. Heseltine and W. H. D. Rouse (eds.), *Petronius: Satyricon, Seneca: Apocolocyntosis*, LCL 15 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 61–63. John Bodel, “Trimalchio’s Underworld,” in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, edited by James Tatum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 237–259, esp. 237, notes that “esse” is a “typically atrocious” pun that can mean “eat” or “be.” Articulated skeletons (including a silver one from Pompeii) have been found (cf. Dunbabin, “Skeleton,” 196–199).

The cups that once belonged to Gavia were probably meant to be used in such symposia, and Roman women certainly participated in banquets, as they did in Trimalchio's feast in his estate at Cumae.³⁹ The *modioli* were "for the most elegant of drinking parties" according to Dunbabin.⁴⁰ At the time of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE, however, they "would already have been treasured antiques."⁴¹ Perhaps one would have used them on special occasions, however.

A garland of roses surrounds the tops of both cups. Beneath are groups of skeletons in high relief (*repoussé*). The inscriptions are hampered (*pointillé*). The pair of skeletons of particular interest includes one who holds a plate of small cakes, two wreaths, and an *unguentarium* from which it pours a libation (probably perfumed oil or wine) on a skeleton that has been reduced to a pile of bones. εὐσεβοῦ σκύβαλα can be translated as "reverently honor the dung" or "honor the refuse."⁴² The scene illustrates Roman libations to the dead which often included flowers, wine, myrrh, and so forth.⁴³ Lucian satirizes such piety toward the

³⁹ Petronius, *Satyricon* 22–77. Trimalchio's wife Fortunata later takes part (67, 70, 74–76), and Habbinas' wife, Scintilla, is also at the banquet (66–67, 69–71, 74–75); cf. Elke Stein-Hölkeskamp, *Das römische Gastmahl: Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Munich: Beck, 2005), 73–91 (see page 81 for a fresco of women dining at Pompeii).

⁴⁰ Dunbabin, "Skeleton," 224.

⁴¹ I owe this formulation to Katherine Dunbabin (personal communication).

⁴² Cf. Villefosse, "Le trésor," 65: "piously honor the dungs" ("honore pieusement les ordures"); Baratte, *Le trésor*, 66: "honor the dungs" ("honore les ordures"); Dunbabin, "Skeleton," 226: "reverence the worthless dung"; Bertschmann, "Kenosis," 246: "rubbish" or "filth."

⁴³ Cf. Richmond Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 126–137. On *unguentaria* used in chrismation of the dead, see Joseph L. Rife, *The Roman and Byzantine Graves and Human Remains*, Isthmia 9 (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2012), 198 (designed for "water, wine, honey, oil, or ointment"); and Virginia R. Anderson-Stojanović, "The Chronology and Function of Ceramic Unguentaria," *AJA* 91 (1987): 105–122. CIL 8, 27331 = GVI 2092 (Thugga, second or third century CE) has: "pouring wine and white myrrh over the bones of my child" (οἶνον καὶ μύρα λευκά ὀστοῖς τέκνου περιχέουσα,

dead in his tractate on mourning where a dead son argues with his living father:

What is the wreathed stone over my grave? Or what can pouring out unmixed wine do for you? Or do you think it will trickle down to us and penetrate all the way to Hades?

τί δὲ ὁ ὑπὲρ τοῦ τάφου λίθος ἐστεφανωμένος; ἢ τί ὑμῖν δύναται τὸν ἄκρατον ἐπιχεῖν; ἢ νομίζετε καταστάζειν αὐτὸν πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ μέχρι τοῦ Ἄιδου διέξεσθαι.⁴⁴

During Trimalchio's feast, the banqueters honor a dead slave's bones with wine libations.⁴⁵ Later Trimalchio himself has a slave bring in nard and wine for his own funeral rites:

Meanwhile, Stichus, bring me the grave-clothes in which I mean to be carried out. And some ointment, and a sample of that jar [*amphora*] which has to be poured over my bones.

Interim, Stiche, profer vitalia, in quibus volo me efferri. Profer et unguentum et ex illa amphora gustum, ex qua iubeo lavari ossa mea.⁴⁶

translation from Lattimore, *Themes*, 128). IGLSyr 3,1 912 = SEG 7, 69 (Antioch, first century CE?) reads: “and he has been propitiating you with libations on your tomb and wreaths of annual flowers—not without tears” (κῆπιτυμβίοις χοαῖς καὶ στεμμάτεσσιν ἀνθέων ἐτησίων μειλίσσετ’ οὐκ ἄδακρυς). CIL 5, 7906 (Cemenelenum) a collegium of textile dealers donated money for the birthday of a dead member reads: “that they might perform a sacrifice with a goose and cake where his remains were buried, and that by custom they might feast in the temple, and that they might bring roses in season and cover his statue and wreath it” (“ubi reliquiae eius conditae sunt sacrificium facerent ansare et libo et in templo ex more epularentur et rosas suo tempore deducerent et statuam tergerent et coronarent”).

⁴⁴ Lucian, *Luct.* 19; cf. *Char.* 22, *Schol. in Aristophanem Lys.* 601: “The honey-cake was given to the dead, as if to Cerberus” (Ἡ μελιτοῦττα ἐδίδοτο τοῖς νεκροῖς, ὡς εἰς τὸν Κέρβερον); Vergil, *Aen.* 6.420: “a cake made soporific by honey” (melle soporatum ... offam); and Apuleius, *Met.* 6.19: “a morsel” (offulam).

⁴⁵ Petronius, *Satyricon* 65.11.

⁴⁶ Petronius, *Satyricon* 77.7 (translation from Heseltine and Rouse, *Petronius*, 181). Stichus then opens “an ampulla of nard” (ampullam nardi) and anoints the banqueters.

A proper expression of *pietas* toward the dead appears in an inscription from Carthago Nova (50 BCE–50 CE) in elegiac couplets:

For this (reason), even my ashes and my bones are resting piously relieved
because my brother who loved me arranged it as a show of his respect (*pietas*).
Traveler enjoy life and may you be healthy; remember that you are mortal.
Strive to live for yourself; realize that you will have to leave it all.

hoc etiam cinis ossa pie sedata quiescunt,
quod pietati etiam frater amans statuit.
hospes, uiue uale: mortalem te esse memento.
tibi u[e]iuas facito: cuncta relinquenda uidet.⁴⁷

The libation scene on the cup clearly satirizes these venerable customs and attitudes.

The maxims on the cups for the most part are philosophical, and some are openly Epicurean. The skeleton on cup A who faces the libation bearer gazes at a skull, above which is the inscription τοῦτ' ἄνθρωπος (“this is human being”)—an obvious reflection on mortality.⁴⁸ A philosopher on a stele in Syria likewise gazes at a skull at his feet, and the epigram begins Ἄνθρωπος τοῦτ' ἐστί (“this is human being”).⁴⁹ The reflective skeleton holds a purse that is labeled φθόνοι (“envies”). Underneath a small figure on a pedestal two skulls are labeled σοφία (“wisdom”) and δόξα (“opinion”). Above a small skeleton that plays a double flute, the maxim is: εὐφραίνου δ' ἔης χρόνον (“rejoice during the time you are alive”).⁵⁰ The Epicurean Diogenes of Oenoanda in the second century CE wrote “for while we live, we rejoice just like the gods” (ὅτε μὲν γὰρ ζῶμεν, ὁμοίως τοῖς θεοῖς χαίρομεν).⁵¹ The skeleton identified as

⁴⁷ Concepción Fernández Martínez and Ricardo Hernández Pérez, “*Tibi Vivas Facito*: Nueva lectura e interpretación de un epigrama sepulcral de Carthago Nova,” *ZPE* 205 (2018): 102–106 (their translation modified).

⁴⁸ Cf. Dunbabin, “Skeleton,” 226, and image three for the reading (there is a slight error in the drawing).

⁴⁹ ISmyrn 558 (second century CE) = Smyrna 276 on the PHI; cf. Dunbabin, “Skeleton,” 242–244, fig. 53.

⁵⁰ Cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.1.19: “they live rejoicing” (ζῆν εὐφραينوμένους).

“Menander the Athenian writer of comedies” (Μένανδρος Ἀθηναῖος) holds a comic mask of a young woman and a torch next to the inscription ζωή (“life”).⁵² The mask next to Menander’s feet is labeled σάτυροι (Satyric dramas). Archilochus the lyric poet, identified as a Myranean (Ἀρχίλοχος Μυριναῖος), plays the lyre.⁵³ The skeleton of Euripides the Athenian (Εὐριπίδης Ἀθηναῖος) faces a smaller skeleton holding a tragic mask. The skeleton of Monimos of Athens (Μόνιμος Ἀθηναῖος), the Cynic philosopher, holds a staff and a beggar’s bag.⁵⁴ He faces an unidentified skeleton that Héron de Villefosse believed was Demetrius of Phaleron due to the presumed snake below an inscription that he read as Α[Σ]ΠΙ[Σ] (“asp”).⁵⁵ The snake’s head is no longer visible. The staff and beggar’s bag are commonly marks of Cynic philosophers.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Epicurus, *Epistularum fragmenta* 72a (see Graziano Arrighetti [ed.], *Epicuro, Opere* [2nd ed.; Turin: Einaudi, 1973]) = Diogenes of Oenoanda, frag. 125, col. 4 (see Martin F. Smith [ed.], *Diogenes of Oenoanda: The Epicurean Inscription* [Naples: Bibliopolis, 1993]).

⁵² Cicero describes the flaming torches of the furies “as you see on the stage” in Roman drama (“Pis. 46 ut in scaena videtis ... furialibus taedis ardentibus”), see Alan Hughes, *Performing Greek Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 56, 57 fig. 18 (“a torch bearer ... costumed as a comic actor”), 86, 90, 111, 150, 288, etc. Torches appear with skeletons in other contexts (Dunbabin, “Skeleton,” 224).

⁵³ Normally he is associated with Paros, however Μυρσινέα is a locality (“deme”) on the island. Cf. IG xii,5 244 = SEG 28, 709.

⁵⁴ Stobaeus, *Anth.* 4.31c.89 = V-G frag. 4, Giannantoni (Monimos): “wealth is the vomit of fortune” (Τὸν πλοῦτον εἶπε τύχης ἔμετον εἶναι); cf. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, “Monime de Syracuse (M 190),” *DPbA* 4 (2005): 549–552.

⁵⁵ Villefosse, “Le trésor,” 66, admitting that only the first letter is clearly visible and that the third and fourth letters are “assez confuses” (“rather confused”). Cf. Diogenes Laertius 5.78–79 for Demetrius’ death by the bite of an ἀσπίς (“cobra,” “asp”). See François Queyrel, “Démétrius de Phalère (D54),” *DPbA*, 2 (1994): 633–635, who is skeptical of the identification.

⁵⁶ Cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.13 (Antisthenes), 6.33 (Diogenes criticizes one without a πήρα); Alciphron, Ep. 2.38.2 (a Cynic son), 3.19.5 (Pancrates). The beggar’s staff and bag occur with skeletons in other contexts (Dunbabin, “Skeleton,” 213–214).

There are four pairs of skeletons on cup B. A small skeletal figure of Clotho (Κλωθώ), one of the three Fates, stands on a pedestal. Beneath a purse labeled σοφία is a skeleton's head and underneath a papyrus scroll the inscription is δόξαι ("opinions"). A skeleton holds a purse identified as φθόνοι ("envies") in its right hand, and in its left hand, underneath the label ψυχίον ("little soul"), it holds the wing of a butterfly (the iconographic symbol of the soul).⁵⁷ Next is a skeleton who places a wreath of flowers on its head. Above a small lyre-playing skeleton is the label τέρψις ("joy," "pleasure") and facing it is another small skeleton who dances.⁵⁸ In the next pair, the skeleton on the left holds a skull in its right hand and a wreath identified as a flower (ἄνθος). Underneath the skull the inscription reads ζῶν μετάλαβε· τὸ γὰρ αὐριον ἄδηλον ἐστί ("take, while you are alive; for tomorrow is uncertain").⁵⁹ The skeleton on the right is identified as Sophocles the Athenian (Σοφοκλῆς Ἀθηναῖος) holding a staff (*thyrsus*?). Its left arm points at a presumably tragic mask that is supported by a smaller skeleton.⁶⁰ On the left of the next pair, the skeleton of Moschion the Athenian (Μοσχίων Ἀθηναῖος), the tragic dramatist, holds a tragic mask of a woman with curled hair in its right hand and a torch in its left, above which is the legend ζωή ("life"). At its feet is a stool with a mask of a bald, bearded man who is wreathed in ivy. Above the mask the legend is σκηνὴ ὁ βίος ("life is a

⁵⁷ Cf. LSJ, s.v. ψυχή § 6; Dunbabin, "Skeleton," 213, 215, 224, 238, 242, 245. Otto Brendel, *The Visible Idea: Interpretations of Classical Art* (Washington, DC: Decatur House, 1980), 11, believes that the skeleton "tortures the poor butterfly" with "envy" (φθόνοι).

⁵⁸ For Democritus (68 B188 D./K.), the standard of what is advantageous and disadvantageous is pleasure and displeasure (ὄρος συμφόρων καὶ ἀσυμφόρων τέρψις καὶ ἀτερπία).

⁵⁹ Philodemus, *Mort.* col. 37, affirms that "not only is tomorrow uncertain, | but also the present" (ἄδ[η]λὸν ἐ[σ]τιν οὐ τὸ αὐ[ρι]ον μόν[ο]ν | ἀλλὰ καὶ [τ]ὸ [αὐ]τίκα δή). See Epictetus, *Ench.* 15.1 (comparing life to a symposium): "stretching out your hand, take it modestly" (ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα κοσμίως μετάλαβε).

⁶⁰ There is a hole in the cup at this point (the hand is not visible). The cup is very damaged here (e.g., the mask is not fully visible).

stage”).⁶¹ The unnamed skeleton that accompanies Moschion plays a lyre, above which is the legend *τέρπε ζῶν σεα[υ]τόν* (“enjoy yourself, while you live”).⁶² The skeleton of Zeno of Athens (*Ζήνων Ἀθηναῖος*) on the left, with a staff in its left hand and a beggar’s bag on its right shoulder, points its right hand at an arch philosophical rival, Epicurus the Athenian (*Ἐπίκουρος Ἀθηναῖος*). Epicurus’ skeleton, with a staff in its left hand and beggar’s bag on its shoulder, places its right hand on a large cake, perched on a three-legged table, above which is the legend *τὸ τέλος ἡδονή* (“the goal is pleasure”)—a crude misinterpretation of Epicurus’s teachings.⁶³ He actually taught:

When we say that pleasure is the goal, we do not mean the pleasures of the profligate and the pleasures of reclining in sensuality, as some who are ignorant and who do not agree or who wrongly understand think, but pleasure is not being in bodily pain or being disturbed in one’s soul.

“Ὅταν οὖν λέγωμεν ἡδονὴν τέλος ὑπάρχειν, οὐ τὰς τῶν ἀσώτων ἡδονὰς καὶ τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας λέγομεν, ὡς τινες ἀγνοοῦντες καὶ οὐχ ὁμολογοῦντες ἢ κακῶς ἐκδεχόμενοι νομίζουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μήτε ἀλγεῖν κατὰ σῶμα μήτε ταραττεσθαι κατὰ ψυχὴν.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Democritus (68 B115 D./K.) said “the world is a stage, life is a performance (or ‘entrance’): you came, you saw, you went away” (*ὁ κόσμος σκηνή, ὁ βίος πάροδος· ἦλθες, εἶδες, ἀπῆλθες*); cf. Sent. Pythag. 175a = Stobaeus, *Anth.* 4.42.14: “life resembles a theater” (*Ἐοικεν ὁ βίος θεάτρῳ*); and Palladas (fourth century CE) apud *Anth. Pal.* 10.72: “all life’s a stage and a mime” (*Σκηνὴ πᾶς ὁ βίος καὶ παίγνιον*). See also Marcello Gigante, *Civiltà delle forme letterarie nell’antica Pompei* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1979), 115–120.

⁶² Cf. Mimnermus, *Epigr.* 9.50 = *Anthol. Pal.* 9.50: “rejoice your heart” (*Τὴν σαυτοῦ φρένα τέρπε*), a saying that appears twice in Theognis (*Eleg.* 1.794; *Idyll.* 27.14).

⁶³ Epicurus, *Ep. ad Menoec.* 128 = Diogenes Laertius 10.128, commenting on the absence of pain, writes: “and therefore we say that pleasure is the beginning and end of living happily” (*Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος λέγομεν εἶναι τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν*). However, “Cleanthes said, if pleasure is the goal, then wisdom has been given to humans for evil” (*Κλεάνθης ἔλεγεν, εἰ τέλος ἐστὶν ἡ ἡδονή, πρὸς κακοῦ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὴν φρόνησιν δεδόσθαι*); SVF 1 § 556 = Stobaeus, *Anth.* 3.6.66.

⁶⁴ Epicurus, *Ep. ad Menoec.* 131 = Diogenes Laertius 10.131.

Below the envisioned Epicurus two dogs are mating, taking their pleasure.⁶⁵

Dunbabin compares the scenes on the two cups to Lucian's *Nekyomanteia* in which Menippus the Cynic sees the philosophers and other famous individuals in Hades reduced to bare bones and fully resembling each other (ἅπαντες γὰρ ἀτεχνῶς ἀλλήλοις γίνονται ὅμοιοι τῶν ὀστέων γεγυμνωμένων).⁶⁶ Clotho, the weaver of human fate, the philosophers, dramatists, and poets are all reduced to skeletons—the scenes encourage the viewer to accept the relativity of human achievement and fame in a satirical and humorous mood. But pessimism is not the overarching theme. Baratte argues that the cups affirm the value, although limited, of life with their “appeal to gaiety” and their lightweight philosophical maxims. The scenes illustrate the “fragility and vanity” “of the human condition.” “The humor is corrosive, the derision of the human and of life is without any final appeal” (sans appel).⁶⁷ Dunbabin concludes that “the wisdom of the philosophers, their maxims, and their conflicts, offer no escape; piety and religion can do nothing to save us; therefore enjoy the moment while it is here.”⁶⁸ The libation bearer's Roman pietas—with its liquid offering, garlands, and cakes—is relativized by the humorous legend: εὐσεβοῦ σκύβαλα. The attitudes toward life that these cups articulate is not an isolated phenomenon in that non-literary sources, material and epigraphic, illustrate what was apparently a widespread attitude, with which Paul would certainly have been familiar, but of which one finds only occasional or indirect references in the top-level literary sources. There was an entire undercurrent of this sort of thing in sub-literary culture.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Marie-Bénédicte Astier reasonably suggests that this detail “represents the triumph of Epicureanism” (<https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/boscoreale-treasure-0>).

⁶⁶ Lucian, *Men.* 15, Dunbabin, “Skeleton,” 229.

⁶⁷ Baratte, *Le trésor*, 66–67.

⁶⁸ Dunbabin, “Skeleton,” 229. Cf. her remarks on piety: “the folly of traditional attitudes of piety toward the dead” (226).

⁶⁹ I owe these two formulations to Katherine Dunbabin (personal communication).

PAUL

It is fair to wonder what the value for Pauline exegesis is of the lexical and iconographical research outlined above. Paul is clearly not a Cynic or Epicurean philosopher as depicted by the cups. However, he undoubtedly was aware of the philosophy of human existence exemplified in the cups' iconography, and he expressly articulates and rejects such a philosophy in 1 Cor 15:32.⁷⁰ The Euthalian apparatus identified 15:32 as a Laconic proverb (Λακωνική παροιμία) in the Greek and Armenian versions, and in the Syriac version it also referred to Isaiah (22:13 LXX).⁷¹ Laconic proverbs were known for their mordant wit.⁷² If the scholars who produced the apparatus are correct, then the saying in 15:32 was fairly widespread and not limited to the LXX. 1 Cor 15:32 expresses the *carpe diem* that one finds in the Boscoreale cups. Certainly such an attitude was widespread in the ancient world—including in grave inscriptions.⁷³ Paul recognized this attitude as a logical consequence of the rejection of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12, 32, “if the dead are not raised,” εἰ νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται).

The lexicographical analysis is important for a clarification of the two major interpretive choices faced by the interpreter of Phil 3:8: either

⁷⁰ See Michael Benjamin Cover, “The Divine Comedy at Corinth: Paul, Menander and the Rhetoric of Resurrection,” *NTS* 64 (2018): 532–550, esp. 546–547, for the suggestive possibility that “Menander [15:33] is seen following Epicurus [15:32].” In John Granger Cook, “1 Cor 15:33: The *status quaestionis*,” *NovT* 62 (2020): 375–391, I argue that the saying was first from Euripides, then Menander, and might have also been a popular maxim.

⁷¹ For details, cf. Cook, “1 Cor 15:33,” 380–387. On the apparatus, see Vemund Blomkvist, *Euthalian Traditions: Text, Translation and Commentary*, TU 170 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

⁷² Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.226.1–2 (an apophthegm of Dienekes); Plutarch, *Apophthegmata Laconica*, 208b–242d.

⁷³ Cf. Walter Ameling, “ΦΑΓΩΜΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΩΜΕΝ: Griechische Parallelen zu zwei Stellen aus dem Neuen Testament,” *ZPE* 60 (1985): 35–43, Dunbabin, “Skeleton,” 185–255.

Paul means “refuse” or “excrement.” There is no need for a commentator to list all the possible referential meanings of σκύβαλον. Despite the provocative nature of the second sense, Paul’s forceful rhetoric in Phil 3:2–11 probably implies that it was his intention. The inscription from Tomis (third century CE) is closest to Paul’s usage in Phil 3:8, since in the inscription σκύβαλον refers to the utter decay (“filth”) of a once famous person “who lived reverently the life of the blessed” ([ζήσαντα σεμνῶς τὸν μακάρω[ν] | βίστον). Likewise the verbal derivatives in Sir 26:28 and in the tomb inscriptions that express a contemptuous rejection (as dung) of human beings or of human remains illuminate Paul’s text. It is clear that none of the usages of σκύβαλον before Paul’s time resemble his use of the word in Phil 3:8. However, his view of his ethnic identity and valued accomplishments is similar in certain ways to Crates’ decision to throw away his property as if it were a load of dung according to Apuleius. Far closer to Paul’s text is the usage of σκύβαλα on the Boscoreale cup.

The Boscoreale cups are highly skeptical of the cultural treasures of Greece and Rome, and the legend εὐσεβοῦ σκύβαλα (piously reverence the dung) constitutes an attack on the entire structure of Roman pietas toward the dead and with it the achievements of the dead by mocking the ritual performance of funeral duties. All of the scenes on the paired cups question the finest of human accomplishments—because all the figures are depicted as skeletons whose ultimate value finally is to make the most of life, such as it is. Bertschmann encapsulates Paul’s similar attitude:

There is a destructive element in Paul’s discarding as rubbish his former treasures ... The encounter with Christ is a foundational datum for Paul ... Paul describes a radical and quite disturbing religious reorientation.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Bertschmann, “Kenosis,” 248, who also says “the issue is not obedient kenosis but the earth-shattering encounter with Christ, who deconstructs and reconstructs Paul’s identity” (253) and “a dramatic, if not disturbing, reevaluation of things once held precious” (247).

In Philippians, Paul is not throwing away his possessions like Crates, but he devalues the identity he had spent his entire life building—up to his self-described encounter with the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:15–16). Although Paul’s letter is not a *memento mori* in the Roman sense, he is contemplating the possibility of his own death at the hands of an unnamed magistrate (Phil 1:19–26).⁷⁵ In that light, his extreme reevaluation of his own identity and achievements in Phil 3:8 can be interpreted as a transformed *memento mori*, and Ernst Lohmeyer read the entire letter using a structure based on the concept of martyrdom.⁷⁶

The label of the disordered bones as σκύβαλα, “dung,” or less probably “refuse/remains,” is an inversion of cultural values as is much of the cups’ iconography. The identification of the skeleton as “dung” comports better with the derisive humor of the cups. Paul also fundamentally and harshly inverts cultural values with his shocking use of σκύβαλα. It is so provocative that one could accuse him of supersessionism—which would contradict Rom 9–11. Although he cannot change his identity ἐν σαρκί (Phil 3:4–6), he reevaluates it to be loss for the sake of Christ. Neither does he state that he is no longer a Pharisee, nor does he deny the existence of his law observant righteousness. These are the elemental realities of his past life. But for the sake of gaining Christ he reckons everything to be dung.

Gerald Downing writes that “Paul’s coarseness at times would have sounded typically Cynic (in particular, the reference to gelding [Gal 5.12] and to shit [Phil 3.8]).”⁷⁷ Downing’s translation is incorrect, and

⁷⁵ Assuming that one can read the letter as a unity (even if Phil 3:1–21 is based on a *Vorlage*); cf. Hans Dieter Betz, *Studies in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, WUNT 343 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 47–67, that Phil 3:1b–21 is an “autobiographical memorandum [ὑπόμνημα]” that Paul added later, and “3:2–21 does not by itself exhibit any epistolary traits” (50). See also Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter*, SNTSMS 110 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 77–78, and Bertschmann, “Kenosis,” 236–238 (she emphasizes the strong evidence for shared vocabulary).

⁷⁶ Lohmeyer, *Philippianer*, 5–6.

according to Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé no extant Cynic philosopher uses *σχύβαλον*.⁷⁸ Consequently, Paul's statement in Phil 3:8 cannot be identified as Cynic. Its shock value is nevertheless quite high. Friedrich Lang, commenting on Paul's substitution of *ζημία* with *σχύβαλα*, insists on the "element of resolute turning aside from something worthless and abhorrent with which one will have nothing more to do. The choice of the vulgar term stresses the force and totality of the renunciation."⁷⁹ Gerald Hawthorne, in agreement with Lang, argues that "It is quite improper to weaken its meaning in any way by translation or by interpretation" and notes that some patristic writers "embarrassed by this passage, attempted to modify the meaning of *σχύβαλα*."⁸⁰ Lang and Hawthorne are probably incorrect in their belief that the word is "vulgar." Nevertheless, the use of an acceptable term for "dung" does express a violent renunciation, and in fairness to the patristic writers in question the word could mean "refuse."

Paul's words for value, *κέρδη* ("gains") and *ζημίαν* ("loss"), in Phil 3:7–8 are important for evaluating the rhetorical force and sense of *σχύβαλα*. Reumann notes that the two terms (*κέρδη* and *ζημίαν*) were "a common contrast, esp. in finance."⁸¹ In the *Hipparchus*, attributed to Plato, Socrates contrasts the two: "the opposite of loss is gain" (*Ἐναντίον δὲ τῆς ζημίας τὸ κέρδος*).⁸² Likewise, Socrates in the same dialogue con-

⁷⁷ Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches* (London: Routledge, 1988), 41, 270. Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog," *BibInt* 17 (2009): 448–482, esp. 477, also suggests Paul might have been imitating Cynic language in Phil 3:8 ("crap").

⁷⁸ Personal communication. Although Philo and Plutarch use the word in conventional ways, the only philosophical usage I found is from *Orac. chald.* 158 (CUFr 104 des Places), which is related to uses in Julian's Oration to the Mother of the Gods: *Or.* 8.11, 170d; 8.16, 175c; 8.19, 179d (CUFr 2.1, 119, 124, 130 Rochefort).

⁷⁹ Lang, "σχύβαλον," 446.

⁸⁰ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 139; cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 3:8 (PG 62.265), who has *σχύβαλον* as "chaff."

⁸¹ Reumann, *Philippians*, 517.

trasts the two verbs Paul uses.⁸³ Reckoning (ἡγεῖσθαι) something to be a loss (ζημία) such as the death of a slave or friend was an expression that appeared occasionally in ancient Greek.⁸⁴ Epictetus, for example, compares the evaluation of a useful object and the devaluation of the unphilosophical individual who fears poverty above all: “But anyone who finds an undamaged and useful object that has been thrown out picks it up and reckons it to be gain, but nobody will pick you up, and everyone reckons you to be a loss” (ἀλλὰ σκευὸς μὲν ὀλόκληρον καὶ χρήσιμον ἔξω ἐρριμμένον πᾶς τις εὐρῶν ἀναιρήσεται καὶ κέρδος ἡγήσεται, σὲ δ’ οὐδεὶς, ἀλλὰ πᾶς ζημίαν).⁸⁵ Mark D. Nanos attempts to ameliorate Paul’s severe language in Phil 3:7–8 by arguing that

Paul communicates the relative devaluation of his own advantages specific to Jewish group identity because, although they [the addressees of Phil 3] are probably not Jews and thus cannot do so, Paul could boast as a natural born and accomplished Jew ...

This is inconsistent with Paul’s disturbing judgement in Phil 3:8 which is not a “relative devaluation.”⁸⁶ ἡγημαὶ and ἡγοῦμαι in Phil 3:7–8 are not “relative,” but starkly conclusive as the usages of ἡγεῖσθαι ζημίαν

⁸² Plato, *Hipparch.* 227a (and 226e, 228a). On the *Hipparchus* as a Platonic dialogue, see Michael David, *The Soul of the Greeks: An Inquiry* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 174–191 (225a–226d, 226d–228a, 232a–c are sections on the φιλοκερδής); cf. Gorgias 82 B11a.19 Diels/Kranz; Democritus 68 B220 Diels/Kranz, *Lysias*, Aeropagitica 12; Philo, *Spec.* 2.87.

⁸³ Plato, *Hipparch.* 229e (ζημιουῖσθαι and κερδαίνειν). The two verbs are also used in opposition in other texts (often with reference to finance): Isaeus, *De Cleon.* 23; Isocrates, *Demon.* 39; Plato, *Leg.* 846a; Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 5.2, 1130a.24–5; cf. Mark 8:36 par.

⁸⁴ Xenophon, *Mem.* both 2.3.2 and 2.4.2 (the death of a slave); *Ages.* 11.5 (loss of friends); Dio Chrysostom, *Regn.* 4.91 (expenditure for sacred festivals); and *Conc. Apam.* 26 (loss due to cessation of hostilities).

⁸⁵ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.26.25.

⁸⁶ Nanos, “Paul’s Reversal,” 481. Cf. Bertschmann, “Kenosis,” 235–254, for arguments against positions such as that of Nanos.

above demonstrate. In addition, the most likely hypothesis is that Paul's opponents are a "Jewish Christian missionary group," although there are certainly alternative views.⁸⁷ Michael Cook comments that "Paul depreciates his Jewish background only in the context of his polemic against the 'dogs' [Phil 3:2] who seek to discredit him" and notes that "dog" was an insulting term in the ancient world. Cook cautions that one should "contrast this invective with Rom 9.4–5."⁸⁸ With regard to what such a group would regard as gain, Paul's comments are particularly incisive and undoubtedly objectionable. The Boscoreale cups also express a reckoning of cultural treasures (philosophers, poets, and dramatists) as loss and presumably would be quite objectionable to such elite philosophers and dramatists—with the possible exception of the Cynics.

Paul's use of *σκύβαλα* is patently an example of vituperative rhetoric.⁸⁹ He moves from an evaluation of his Jewish (or "Judaean")

⁸⁷ Reumann, *Philippians*, 469–470, mentions ten different hypotheses and assumes as a "working view" that the group was Jewish-Christian. For a similar view, see Bertschmann, "Kenosis," 240, 242, 248, and Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, (ed.), *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 359. Nanos, "Paul's Reversal," 449, 457, 479–481, argues that Paul is warning against pagan "alternatives" and way "of being in the world." The use of *περιτομή* in Phil 3:3, however, renders such a hypothesis improbable (cf. Reumann, *Philippians*, 474). Paul's harsh rhetoric in Phil 3 is inescapable, whatever hypothesis one adopts about the opponents, and Nanos' point that modern Christians should not repeat Paul's invective is well-taken (481–482).

⁸⁸ Cook, in Levine and Brettler, *New Testament*, 359. See Nanos, "Paul's Reversal," 448–482. Derisive uses include Homer, *Il.* 6.344 (Helen), 13.623 (Trojans), Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 1402 (a drunken baker's wife), Josephus, *Ant.* 7.209 (Shimei). This sense explains the word's appropriateness as a Cynic designation (e.g., Plutarch, *Exil.* 602a, *Quaest. conv.* 717c). The only non-derisive references to a "dog" in the LXX are Tob 5:17; 11:4 (MSS A, B). I thank Jerker Blomqvist for his comments.

⁸⁹ Cf. Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990), § 62.3, 240, 1129 on vituperation. For vituperation in 1 Cor, see Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, HUT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 219–221, 276–277.

identity and meritorious actions as an ability to “trust in the flesh” (πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, Phil 3:4)—what he calls his “gains” (κέρδη, Phil 3:7)—to reckoning them to be “loss” (ζημίαν) for the sake of Christ, to an extreme devaluation of them as σκύβαλα. The rhetorical force of the vituperation inclines the reader to believe that Paul meant “dung” and not merely “rubbish.” “Rubbish” might be of some value, but “dung” is of no value whatsoever. Anaximenes analyzes this form of rhetoric: “in vituperations also it is necessary to use irony and laugh scornfully at one’s opponent for the things of which (s)he is proud” (χρῆ δὲ <καί> ἐν ταῖς κακολογίαις εἰρωνεύεσθαι καὶ καταγελαῖν τοῦ ἐναντίου, ἐφ’ οἷς σεμνύνεται).⁹⁰ The Boscoreale cups employ irony and ridicule, and so one can describe their imagery and inscriptions as a form of vituperative rhetoric. In Phil 3:8 Paul’s use of ζημία and σκύβαλα for his past identity and accomplishments are intensely derisive, a form of κακολογία—vituperation that certainly is out of place in modern Christianity.

For the sake of knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection (τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ, Phil 3:10), Paul violently devalues what he had formerly had such confidence in (πεποίθησιν). He abandons the security of his treasured past: “Faith as the surrender of self-security as well as the overcoming of the despair that arises from striving for such security is at once the demand and the gift of the proclamation,”⁹¹ or, as John Calvin comments on Phil 3:9: “faith offers a naked human to God” (fides offert nudum hominem Deo).⁹²

⁹⁰ Anaximenes, *Ars rhet.* 35.19, 1441b, 21–22 (BSGRT 79 Fuhrmann).

⁹¹ Rudolf Bultmann, “On the Problem of Demythologizing (1952),” in *The New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, translated by Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 95–130, esp. 102. Cf. the comments by Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hopes for: A Theology of Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 237.

⁹² *Calvini opera*, 49.