

# BODILY PARTS VYING FOR POWER: HIERARCHIES AND BODIES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*In this essay I argue that a rhetoric of the body exposes the all-pervasiveness of the hierarchical principle as it manifested itself in the Graeco-Roman world. The parts of the ancient body were constructed with the fabrics of the social body. Implications for an engendered interpretation of Biblical writings are indicated and demonstrated via an analysis of selected passages from the Pauline letters.*

## Introduction: Body hierarchies as a relationship of synecdoche

In a rather confusing manner, Galen commences his book on the usefulness of the parts with an observation on “partness” and he describes a part as something that must have some kind of heterogeneity; it must be able to be distinct, to have “a circumscription of its own”. At the same time, in order for something to be a part, homogeneity has to hover in the background, because if something were only distinct, on its own, it cannot be defined as a part and so he defines partness in the negative: “Therefore, all bodies that do not have their own circumscription at every point and are not everywhere joined to others, are called parts. And if this is true, animals will have many parts, some large, some small, and some also not divisible into another form” (Galen, *De usu partium* 1.1).

Parts by its very nature of being a part, issues the notion of connectiveness, association, linkage, but there seems to be more to it; parts can also be pervasive. May (1968:67) comments on this passage with: “parts may be not only heterogeneous, like the eye, which can be divided into many different elements, but also homogeneous, like blood, bone, or flesh, which cannot”. In the manner in which interaction takes place between parts and the whole varying degrees of intensity can be discerned and these degrees of intensity may correlate with historical contingencies. The focus may in some contexts be on the part, for the sake of the part whereas in other contexts again, the relationship and re-integration of the part into the whole may receive attention. For example: Hillman and Mazzio (1997:xiv) claim that an aesthetics of the part emerged within the early modern era and with the focus on the part to such an extent that a re-integration into a predetermined whole was deemed unnecessary. The varying relative status of bodily parts can be assigned to the process of symbolisation, putting the bodily part into discourse. But by putting the bodily part into discourse it acquires rhetorical significance - it may function as a social mechanism to persuade, to maintain and entrench, to modify and change, to exhort, to allocate praise or blame or vilify, to demarcate and solidify.

When the body is put into discourse, this relationship of body and bodily parts opens the possibility of synecdochic relationship, where a part of the body may function as a substitute for either another bodily part or the body itself. Language enables us to make one part

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1. To dedicate this essay to Professor Bernard Combrinck is both an honour and a privilege. As someone who has intimately experienced the operations and mechanisms of social hierarchies, Bernard Combrinck can be celebrated as a scholar who has consistently resisted the hierarchical principle's desire to universalise and to naturalise knowledge. Always the inquisitive critical enquirer he contributed to open new avenues for the interpretation of Biblical writings and with courage also ventured on some of these roads. I am thankful for the time we could work together in the sphere of Rhetoric and I hope this collaboration will continue for many projects to come.

represents/ resembles another part or the body itself. But the relationship is not one of pure representation, but carries a new configuration of meaning. For example: Garber (1997:27) indicates how the knee often functioned metonymically as substitution for the female genital area in early modern Europe (15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> century). She writes: “Defloration and impregnation are often figured in this period as a breaking of joints - most often knees, but occasionally elbows: “She has broken her leg above the knee (broken her elbow)” ...means “she has lost her virginity”, or “she has become pregnant” (:28). Although proximity to the genital area may be an explanation why the knee is used in this substitutive relationship, such “physical” logic does not apply, because the metonymical relationship, knee for genitals, seems only to apply in the case of women in the early modern era.<sup>2</sup>

When the body is put into discourse, the synecdochic relationship can be extended to include, not only the interaction of bodily parts with the body, but also to include the interaction between bodily parts and the social body. Bodily parts are constructed according to what Kenneth Burke (1966) has called the “context of situation” or Pierre Bourdieu, the *habitus* or Michel Foucault’s (1985) moral code. Context of situation refers to that configuration of symbolic meanings, which has acquired the status of what can be regarded as “natural”, or “universal”, or “factual”, the non-negotiables of a society; it is that context in which a word is no longer regarded as a sign for things, but a thing as a sign for words. Bourdieu’s (1990:53) *habitus* refers to that process of socialisation that generates a “system of durable, transposable, dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations”. It is a “practical sense that inclines individuals to act and react in specific situations in a way that is seldomly calculated and is by no means merely a question of simple obedience to a set of social rules” (Stewart 1997:9). Foucault’s moral code refers to a prescriptive ensemble, that is rules and values that may be transmitted via coherent doctrine, but may also be conveyed in a “diffuse manner”, forming a “complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another” (1985:25). Bodily parts do not only function in interchangeable fashion with other body parts, but they also stand in synecdochic relationship with the body itself, and with the social body. But just as the act of substitution via symbolisation on the level of the body itself carries within itself the conveyance of a new configuration of meaning, a bodily part may function to signify a society, or a level of society or a specific group in society.

It is by virtue of this synecdochic relationship that the context of situation provides the mechanisms by which the body and its parts can be constructed. Where the body and its parts are concerned, synecdoche seems to function as a generating force behind the context of situation; it enforces the dictates of the moral code; it actualises the predispositions of the *habitus*. Synecdoche is therefore not unique to a specific period in history. And as such it would be possible to point to all constructions of bodies throughout history as a relationship of macrocosm to microcosm where the microcosm is inscribed into the dictates of the macrocosm. But this relationship between the “whole” and the “part” is not one of equality, but it is an exercise of power. Even where this relationship is claimed to be essential and substantial, it should rather be seen as strategic and political. The body becomes a place of political power upon which the tensions between “whole” and “part” are continuously negotiated and enforced. Foucault (1977:25-27) tells us that “the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs (:25). For the “whole”, the social or

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2. In the same essay reference is made to the manner in which the nose again features in a metonymical relationship for penis from the days of Ovid and she quotes Partridge who indicates how Shakespeare often uses nose for penis.

political body, the “part”, the individual body “becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (:26). To enforce it in its subjected mode it need not necessarily be subjected to violence, but it can be done in a “calculated” and “organized” manner (:26), it can be done in a very scientific manner, using the knowledge of fields such as medicine, psychology, sociology and, lo’ behold, theology! As a matter of fact, Foucault refers us to a “political technology of the body” which enables power relations to operate a “micro-physics of power” (:26).

Not only the totality of the body as microcosm, but also its parts have to conform to the dictates of the macrocosm. Partitioning, the division in parts carries within itself the possibility of conflict, of strife, competition and contention. It could be argued that partitioning does not necessarily implicitly carries a conflictual relationship because the division into parts may be seen in terms of their use, their utility, or they may function on different levels for the greater good. However, it is unlikely that all parts of an organism will be accorded equal value and even though there may be relative value assigned according to usefulness or appropriateness, according to *kairos*, divisioning or partitioning introduces the principle of grading. And where grading has been introduced, the principle of hierarchy is activated. Burke (1969:137-142) introduces us to a few important aspects concerning the principle of hierarchy.

Firstly, the principle of hierarchy assumes that the principle of grading (Burke calls it “gradation” :138) has been accepted by all levels of the hierarchy. This should be carefully understood. Accepting the principle of grading does not mean accepting the specific hierarchy as such, but it opens the possibility for the hierarchical principle to come into actualisation. As such, it also opens the possibility for a reversal of roles or ranks within a hierarchy, but without disturbing the principle of hierarchy itself. Secondly, when each rank accepts the principle of hierarchy it “universalises” hierarchy and it is this universalising of the principle of hierarchy that creates the disposition to regard it as natural. Those who are in power will construct various mechanisms constructed to entrench this image of naturalness in order to remain in power. One of these will be to moralise the various positions of status. By nature, certain parts are ordained to perform these actions and not others and transgressing the taboo means to pose a threat to the other parts. Scapegoating and vilification of the other parts are instances by means of which the “other” is kept in subjection. Thirdly, in every hierarchy there is an entelechial tendency. The “top” is seen as ideal and serves to “normalise”, to provide the norms and regulations to the body. Fourthly, to keep the “top” in power, the various levels of the hierarchy have to be “mystified” - it “cloaks the state of division” (:141). The focus is therefore always on the top.

*To summarise the following should be kept in mind:*

- The synecdochic relationship is not an innocent exchange of parts, but it is a dynamic, political interaction. Although the image of representation is created what is at stake is the enforcing of the dominant, the powerful.
- In the interaction between the body as microcosm and the social body as macrocosm, what is regarded, as macrocosm is the universalising of a particular hierarchical order. When this is applied to the individual body, a “healthy” body will be a body that subjects itself to what is regarded as its natural position and inclination.
- Various mechanisms will be employed to moralise the body and its parts in order to entrench and enforce what is regarded as the ideal, normative and natural body. Besides institutional mechanisms, such as schools, religious institutions, the field of science, the parts of the body are also moralised (that is inhibited by the negative) to strive firstly toward the ideal body, but secondly to occupy a mystified position if it falls short in some respect.

### **The construction of bodily parts in Graeco-Roman society**

The objective of this section is not to provide with a hierarchy of bodily parts, which would take far beyond the scope of this paper, but which is probably also impossible because of the diversity encountered in the ancient world. The objective is rather to consider a few of the conditions that generated attitudes towards the body and its parts. In this section I want to indicate how the four fundamental elements of the macrocosm functioned to construct a hierarchy of bodily parts. Deriving bodily qualities from the macrocosmic elements universalised and naturalised a hierarchy of bodily parts that legitimated and justified social hierarchies. However, it is exactly also these bodily qualities that prevent and abuse of power because the parts have to be kept into what was considered a balance or equilibrium. Retaining equilibrium by means of a hierarchy makes it possible to speak of an oxymoronic imbalanced balance, to which the relationship between macrocosm and the body as microcosm in Antiquity responded.

In this section attention will first be paid to the hierarchy of the bodily qualities derived from what were regarded as the fundamental elements. These qualities will then be related to two bodily parts, namely the heart and the reproductive organs and processes connected with these.

### **The free Graeco-Roman male and a hierarchy of bodily qualities**

In the relationship of the body as microcosm to a macrocosm, Martin (1995:15-16) has argued that the Graeco-Roman body should not be seen as a microcosm resembling a macrocosm, that is, the body is not *like* a microcosm, it *is* a microcosm. With that Martin emphasises that the body in the ancient Mediterranean world was not seen as something separate from its environment, but essentially part of it. Although I suspect that the history of the body will always display a synecdochic relationship by virtue of its context of situation, the relationship between whole and part was indeed seen in an essential sense. What makes it different from other periods is the clear delineation of what he has termed a “hierarchy of essence”.

This hierarchy of essence can clearly be seen in the Graeco-Roman medical tradition and specifically in the doctrines that relate to the correct mixtures that pervade the body and every part of the body. According to this doctrine the four elements constituting the substance of the universe, namely fire, earth, air and water also pervade every body. The bodily qualities that these elements assume are heat, coldness, dryness and moisture and corresponding to these the body fluids or humours blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm can be depicted (May 1968:45; Lloyd 1978:21-37; Singer 1997:x).<sup>3</sup> However, these body qualities and humours derived from substantial elements do neither exist nor function on their own, but appear in different quantities in a variety of mixtures on which the existence and maintenance of the body depend. In each bodily part, just as in the body as a whole each of these qualities and humours has to be blended in the correct quantity, just as the universe is made up in its parts of the correct mixtures of fire, earth, air and water.<sup>4</sup> Where an equilibrium of these qualities and

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3. The original philosophical point of departure seems to be derived from Empedocles and already from the late fifth and early fourth centuries further physical theories concerned with the body were built upon these Empedoclean elements (cf Lloyd 1978:24) This theory was not without criticism either, but it appears to have won the order of the day (1978:27). While Galen (129-ca 200 CE) also assigned portions of this four element theory to Plato and Aristotle, he gave special recognition to Hippocrates, based on the Hippocratic writing *The nature of man*. Lloyd (1978:54) refers to the to Galen's treatise *On the natural faculties* (1.2): ‘Of all the doctors and philosophers we know, he [Hippocrates] was the first who undertook to demonstrate that there are, in all, four mutually interacting qualities, through the agency of which everything comes to be and passes away’.
  4. In one of the Hippocratic writings the author challenges those that suggest a specific time in which blood is

humours in terms of the necessary constitution and function of the bodily part and body exists, health is present, but where a disproportion in terms of what is regarded as the necessary mixture occurs, sickness, disease and even death enter.<sup>5</sup> Since this equilibrium has to be maintained at all costs for the sake of the individual's health, the power distribution between the parts is kept in constant, durable tension. We can call this necessity to maintain equilibrium, the principle of order. This principle of order corresponds to what can be called the *kairos*, that is the appropriateness for the moment. There is therefore no universal balanced order, but balance in mixture has to be established according to what was regarded as appropriate for the moment. The conditions of rhetoric also pervade the insides of the body!

For example: The correspondence between the substances of the body and the substance of the cosmos can for example also be seen in seasonal changes. When winter sets in, the quantity of phlegm increases in the body, "because it is that bodily substance most in keeping with winter, seeing that it is the coldest", but during spring, "the quantity of blood increases", although "the phlegm remains strong in the body" (:7), whereas the quantity of blood increases again in summer, "because it is hot and wet", while in autumn "bile increases", although the "blood is still strong".

It is also on the basis of this essential correspondence that the art of physiognomics should be understood, that is, the ability to know and understand a person on the basis of her/his appearance. For example, in the Hippocratic writing *Airs, waters, places* the influences of various aspects of the climate, such as seasons and their changes, the winds, different types of waters and their origins and geographic location are seen as controlling factors explaining the different physical qualities among people.<sup>6</sup> Galen in his treatise *On the soul's dependence on the body* very explicitly reflects on the correspondence between a homogeneous universe and human body and the manner in which physical characteristics are derived from a mixture of the four elements (cf 785.5, on Aristotle 7.791-798; on Hippocrates 8.798-805; in Singer 1997:158,161-169).

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seen to be the 'sole constituent of the body'. He argues as follows: 'In the first place, generation cannot arise from a single substance. For how could one thing generate another unless it copulated with some other? Secondly, unless the things which copulated were of the same species and had the same generative capabilities, we should not get the same results. Again, generation would be impossible unless the hot stood in a fair and reasonable proportion to the cold, and likewise the dry to the wet...It follows, then, such being the nature of the human body and of everything else, that man is not a unity but each of the elements contributing to his formation preserves in the body the power which it contributed. It also follows that each of the elements must return to its original nature when the body dies; the wet to the wet, the dry to the dry, the hot to the hot and the cold to the cold.' (Hippocrates, *Nat. hom.* 3; in Lloyd 1978:260).

5. Perhaps the best example of this interplay of substantial elements, bodily qualities and parts can be seen in the following from Galen. In determining the best constitution of the body the mixture of the body should be correctly understood and the following should be taken into account: 'First that our bodies are a mixture of hot, cold, dry, and wet...Secondly, that one must distinguish between the mixtures of different parts-as discussed in our work on *Mixtures*. The next point is that each of the organic parts of the body has a single cause of activity of the parts contained within it; and everything else that goes to make up that organ as a whole comes into being in accordance with that purpose....It would thus seem plausible that the best constitution of the body is that in which all the homogeneous parts (this, of course, is the name given to those which appear single in nature to the senses) retain their proper mixture. The composition of the organic parts from these homogeneous ones is then a matter of the best-balanced constitution of them with regard to size, amount, construction, and relationship between each other' (*The best constitution of our bodies* 2, in Singer 1997:291).
6. For example people exposed to the cold winds of the north will be 'sturdy and lean', they will have 'sound and hard heads' and their characters 'are fierce rather than tame', but they will suffer from 'constipation' because of their water supply that is cold and hard and owing to their dryness abscesses will be at the order of the day (:4; in Lloyd 1978:150). See also how the correct blending of heat and cold owing to the correct positioning causes the character of those centrally located in Asia to be 'milder and less passionate' (Lloyd 1978:159).

Since it is possible to find traces of this doctrine already in Plato and Aristotle there seems to be ample evidence that for the elite Graeco-Roman even before the Hellenistic period but extending to well into Hellenism, a fundamental, essential relationship existed between the macrocosm and the body as microcosm, even to the extent that bodily features betrayed geographic environment and made bodily behaviour predictable. However, the embodied qualities of these elements did not manifest themselves in an equal manner. Preference was given to heat. Although heat also has to conform to the criterion of appropriateness since excessive heat, such as fever, could cause death, it acquired priority among the embodied qualities of the elements. As a matter of fact, bodily heat was seen to be innate because it was associated with life, reproduction and nutrition, while coldness was linked with chilly death. May (1967:50) indicates that for Hippocrates, heat was endowed with intelligence and as such the most important element in the body. It seems as if heat functioned as a kind of catalyst that had to activate the physiological processes of the body and played an important role in the way digestion, respiration and reproduction were described. It stands to reason that those bodily parts associated with heat will also be given priority. But to these we will return in due course.

The four bodily qualities in their variety of mixtures are also responsible for the formation of another substance, namely the soul. Although it is common knowledge that various doctrines existed concerning the soul, Galen's views on the dependence of the soul on the body and the soul's relationship with *pneuma* are worth taking notice of in understanding a hierarchy of essence. Galen did not pretend any certainty on the substance of the soul (*The soul's dependence on the body* 3; in Singer 1997:153), but he was at least certain of the fact that the substance of the soul consists of a mixture of the four bodily qualities. Assuming the Platonic division of the soul into three parts, namely a rational,<sup>7</sup> spirited and desiderative (appetitive), the power or faculties of these parts are only activated by the correct mixtures of the bodily qualities. Only when the correct mixture is assumed will there be a desire on the rational part of the soul for truth, knowledge, learning, understanding and recollection; a desire on the part of the spirited part for freedom, victory, power, authority, reputation and honour and a desire on the part of the desiderative for sexual pleasure, food and drink.

The mixtures of bodily qualities, derived from essential elements, the hierarchy that has been established in these mixtures, as well as their integration into a doctrine of the soul provided with the possibility to create, entrench and maintain several other social hierarchies. Bodily parts formed by a fusion of essential elements and accorded their status in terms of a hierarchy among these fundamental elements functioned symbolically to naturalise and universalise a particular "body", namely that of the male body. The male bodily quality *par excellence* was heat, followed by the quality of dryness, whereas females were associated with coldness and moisture, thereby giving the appearance of naturalness to an engendered hierarchy. Further dichotomies are easily related to this. Thus heat implies greater activity, whereas cold inclines to passivity, constructing man active and woman passive. Dryness associates hardness and moisture softness.

### **Body parts: the heart and reproductive organs**

The body part given prominence by the ancient doctors was the heart and the primary reasons for this was its location as the body's site for heat and the production of vital spirit. Owing to the ancient doctors the anatomy and the physiology of the heart betray its position of status and centrality accorded by Nature. And though the heart does not occupy a dead centre position within the thorax it was shifted to be dead centre and the density of its muscle was provided

7. Galen disputes the Platonic immortality of the rational soul by arguing that an incorrect mixture simulate a diminishing of the rational soul (*The soul's dependence on the body*, 3; in Singer 1997:152-153).

with the power to house the intense heat necessary for the creation of vital spirit.

On the powerful position occupied by the heart, Galen commented as follows:

“Indeed, you would not find in the heart any part at all, even its lower end, that does not surpass in importance all the parts found, for example, in the arms or legs. You would, however, find that although all parts are important, we must think of some as being more and others less so when we compare them with one another.” He then indicates what he deems to be the criteria in terms of usefulness and these he specifies as follows: “for a part is useful either for maintaining life itself, or for making life better, or for preserving the race. Hence those that conduce to life should be regarded as absolutely essential, and of the two other less important kinds of parts, those readily affected along with the essential parts should be considered less trivial than those which are not”. Within this context, the importance of the heart is noted. Accordingly, since the heart is, as it were, the hearthstone and source of the innate heat by which the animal is governed, every part of it is *ipso facto* important, but those are more so whose usefulness is to preserve the life of the whole animal. These are the mouths of the two vessels attached to the left ventricle, which physicians are wont to call the pneumatic ventricle. For through these orifices the heart is connected with the arteries, the smaller one connecting it with the arteries of the lung, and the larger with those of the whole animal. The orifices of the other ventricle of the heart, called the sanguineous ventricle, are less important. Nevertheless, these too are more important than other parts of the heart, for one is the entrance admitting the blood, and the other is the exit for the blood going to the lung. Since these vessels and opening are all of remarkable size, it is reasonable that this part of the heart should also be very large and should occupy the middle of the whole thorax as the place that is safest because it is farthest removed from the blows of exterior objects striking against it (*De usu partium* 1.318-319; in May 1968:292).

It is also however, in the heart that the vital spirit originates where blood and incomplete *pneuma* (spirit), prepared by the lungs, is transformed owing to the intense heat provided by the heart. It is this vital spirit that nourishes the spirited part of the soul which is also directly associated with the heart. The three parts of the soul are linked to three bodily parts. The rational soul to the brain, the spirited part to the heart and the desiderative part to the liver. As such the heart becomes the symbol for that with which the spirited part is associated with and these are all virtues, associated with the ideal of Graeco-Roman masculinity. They are: “freedom, victory, power, authority, reputation, and honour” (Galen, *The soul’s dependence on the body* 2; in Singer 1997:151). At the risk of overstating the case, even Galen’s discussion of the anatomy of the heart can be associated with the male world in which he functioned. For that reason, the centrality of the heart is seen as a protection against acts that can “crush, cut, heat or chill” the heart (*De usu partium* 1.319; in May 1968:293).<sup>8</sup> The heart formed by Galen has to function in a rather violent world! So the heart constructed within the Graeco-Roman world is a heart which functioned as a locus for the embodied quality associated with maleness, namely the “heat” and simultaneously it functions as locus where the vital spirit is formed which serves to nourish the spirited part of the soul creating the desire to establish male values. Earlier versions of the heart made it also the locus for intelligence and rationality owing to huge amount of vital spirit produced. Linking the heart with established and cherished male values functioned to establish a hierarchy of gender. The male heart was the part to be strived for, the

8. Not only was Galen appointed as doctor to the gladiators in Pergamum in 157 CE, but he also accompanied Marcus Aurelius on his campaigns to Germany in 168 CE. It seems that the first book on *The usefulness of the parts of the body* was written in Rome during 162-166 CE which meant that the violence of the arena could well have prompted locating the heart in a very protected environment.

ideal. Since a female was by nature associated with coldness and wetness, she is in constant need to shape and adapt to the values dictated by males. Since she is not in possession of the same amount of vital spirit she will by nature be more emotional, less rational.

A hierarchy of gender was not the only possibility that the heart as seat of heat and vital spirit could render. A hierarchy of geography can be established depending on where the body is situated, because the geographical environment may prove to be an obstacle in the production of the correct mixture of heat and vital spirit. The same may apply to a hierarchy of age. Too old could mean too cold and something would be needed to cultivate heat in order to empower. Too young may mean an excessive production of heat which could likewise be seen as unnatural.

The manner in which bodily parts functioned to entrench and maintain power via hierarchy in embodied qualities can also be seen in the way in which the reproductive organs were valorized. The reproductive organs belong to the part of the soul that is concerned with what can be called natural desires, such as sexual desire and the desire for all kinds of food. It has no desire for the good, as is the case for the spirited part. As such it must have some connection with the liver which is not only of the primary organs (according to Galen) but is also linked to the natural *pneuma* and which is seen as the organ where blood is produced and functions as a pacificator organ for blood.<sup>9</sup> Heat again functions as the fundamental bodily quality bringing about the formation of the reproductive organs and it is here that its role in establishing and maintaining a hierarchic, gendered differentiation is clearly seen. The reproductive system of the female is seen as an inferior to the male's because its development has been halted at an earlier stage. The main reason for this is insufficient heat. To put it differently: intense heat has caused the inverted sexual organs of the female to be "turned inside out" (May 1967:56), something like filling an inverted rubber glove with hot air! There is therefore an exact parallel: the uterus develops into the scrotum; the ovaries into the testes; the cervix into the penis and the vagina into the foreskin. Male anatomy is universalised by the transformation of female anatomy and this transformation is further effected by putting female sexual organs into male terminology. The ovaries of the female are seen as her "testes". By making the female reproductive organs "underdeveloped", the penis is empowered - it becomes the ideal, that which is normal, whereas woman is depicted as naturally or essentially defective, essentially in a state of want. As a matter of fact, the influential Aristotle earlier very explicitly characterised woman as a "castrated male" (cf Rouselle 1988:30).

This is also confirmed by the manner in which the gender of the fetes is determined. And again heat plays a constitutive role. The spermatic and ovarian arteries going to the right testis and ovary were seen to carry blood, which has already been rid of serous residues, whereas the corresponding vessels on the left hand side still have to be relieved. Purified blood meant lighter, warmer and also superior blood, whereas impurified blood meant heavier, colder and inferior blood. Obviously vital spirit is represented in stronger measure in the former. This purified blood runs along the right hand side of the human being, thereby warming both the right testis and the right hand side of the uterus. Semen originating from the testis on the right hand side will therefore be warmer and will consequently culminate in the production of males (May 1967:57; cf also Galen's quote of Aristotle in *The soul's dependence on the body* 7; in Singer 1997:162). The partitioning of the male testicles are invested with a hierarchical differentiation into superior versus inferior and woman is transformed into the inferior quality

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9. I have as yet not been able to establish why the liver is associated with sexuality except for its link with the natural *pneuma*. It occupies an important position with Galen because it is the first organ that seems to develop in the embryo and functions to nourish the embryo; this is according to a later Galen, the earlier allocating this position to the heart (May 1967:58).



of masculinity and as such doomed to a state of essential deficiency.

Phallic power universalised, transforms woman into a perpetual state of want. Formed by the wrong side of the male and with an apparatus that is underdeveloped, she has to wait upon the vibrating penetrator, fuelled by his essential fires. As such another hierarchy is constructed as woman is relegated to the role of the passive; man is constructed as penetrator, woman as penetrated. Her reproductive system is metaphorically transformed into the language of the land, waiting to be ploughed, waiting to receive potent blobs of power, capable of causing life, but needing the passive receptivity required for the process of germination, growth and nurturing. In order to ensure that the land is there, it had to be “cultivated”,<sup>10</sup> prepared, but also constantly reminded of her receptive role, even to the extent of the furrowed clothing she wears (Stewart 1997:128).

The spear is another metaphor transferred from the worlds of hunting and war and it is therefore perhaps more blatantly violent (although a plough in whatever form always seems to be a quite hurtful experience!). The spear functions as phallic symbol *par excellence*. There is a strange inconsistency here for a spear is usually used to kill either animals or human beings, but instead of causing death (as is the function of a spear) it is seen to cause life. However, the spear may function to symbolise, not only recipience, but also subjection. It seems that a Roman marital custom existed by which the hair of brides was parted with the point of a spear and although no exclusive answer is given, Plutarch seems to suggest either outright male domination or incorporation into the lifestyle of the Roman male.

The heat deficient “wanting woman”, may also by virtue of its lack become a “dangerous woman” posing a threat to the life-giving male. Despite woman’s association with the field, she was closer aligned to the realm of death. Coldness suggests the departure of heat and this happens in death. For that reason also woman is increasingly also associated with the display of grief in funerary rituals (cf Van Wees) and is also for a period sculpted on funerary stones (Stewart 1997:125). It is against this background also that the debate on woman’s role in the production of a child and the question of female sperm should be understood. Whereas Galen acknowledged woman’s role and also grant her the privilege of sperm production (albeit of an inferior quality), Aristotle denied that women produced either the vital spirit or sperm. Their blood also changes into white, but this turns out to be milk needed for the nourishment of the male-given child. Soranus was of the opinion that the spermatic duct of women extends into the neck of the bladder with the result that it is eliminated with the urine (Rouselle 1988:31). Woman’s role in the process of birth is therefore restricted to that of a container. However, there is still more to come and illustrates even better what is meant by the mystification caused by the hierarchic principle. Owing to this consistent “want” of women they are seen to be intemperate having the potential to steal away the vital spirit from men. Their danger lies in the possibility to be semen extractors.

This must be further elaborated. Linked to the phallus is the value attached to semen. Foucault (1985:132) makes this point interpreting Aristotle. Not only does semen pervades all parts of the body, but it also functions to symbolise the complementarity between the power to create and the capacity to develop or continue existing. If Aristotle is taken to be representative in this respect of the ancients, the body is seen to be a container and as far as semen is concerned, contains just the sufficient amount necessary for a life. At the moment when the phallus best manifests its upward power, that is during the period of an awakening, youthful virility, semen is abundantly provided by the body. The timing for its use should be correct; it occurs only when the growth of the body is in equilibrium, that is when it only has to renew

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10. Cf in this respect Soranus’ *Gynaecology* 1.36 who emphasises how a poor land may destroy the seed and why it is therefore necessary to take the best time for sowing the seed into consideration.

itself. If the production of semen takes place too early it depletes the body of the nutriment it needs for growth and since the body needs more resources to sustain itself when it grows older it does not produce in the same abundance - however, it is still needed to continue existence. So, from birth to death it forms part of the body and it pervades the body, but it manifests its power at the height of the individual male's power.

The power of semen becomes clearer when we understand it as life-giving constituent of blood. Since breathing is conditional to life, and since semen was somehow seen to cause life, air (oxygen), was seen to be the vital spirit contained by semen. As blood proceeds through the body via veins, it increases in purity as it approximates the testicles which can clearly be seen in its white colour. And it is again intense heat that changes red blood into white semen. The power of semen lies in its extreme purity, which provides it with the capacity to provide life. But semen, and its life-giving spirit can be depleted. As semen departs from the individual male's body, seminal fluid, containing the vital spirit, is drawn from the veins immediately above them and this happens in staggered form throughout the body, which explains the tiredness and fatigue felt after sexual intercourse. If this draining process happens continuously or excessively, a depletion of life force is taking place. Semen must therefore be treated with respect - it cannot and must not be wasted, because its loss implies a loss of male power and specifically that power which was seen to continue the species (cf Rouselle 1988:13-16). In order to safely ensconce and enhance this power, various dietary regimens were prescribed, various debates were conducted on the harmfulness or not which sexual activity may have for the body and it is also this respect for sperm which may have led to instances of asceticism (Shaw 1998). Retaining sperm, means to retain that vital spirit which can in the end be changed into psychic pneuma with as product a superior male being. The objective is therefore to limit the loss of vital spirit (cf also Brown 1988:19)

In the construction of the body in Antiquity it seems that two principles were consistently kept in tension. On the one hand there was the hierarchical principle which was unashamedly biased towards masculinity. Various dichotomies served to entrench this hierarchy and it would be possible to identify a hierarchical arrangement developing a masculinity scale with the following elements: active versus passive, hard versus soft, hot versus cold, strong versus weak, dry versus moist and dense (less porous) versus porous, public versus private, speaking versus silent. The engendered hierarchy in which masculinity was the norm and which was naturalised by linking it to the fundamental elements, did not exist on its own; a reciprocal relationship of support existed between this hierarchy and for example the hierarchy based on the dichotomy of civilised versus barbarian or the hierarchy established between human beings and animals, but whichever hierarchy was in operation, in the centre was the free, Graeco-Roman male and his centrality was expressed in literature, in the institutional, in sculpture, art, household articles, the design of houses. Wherever this hierarchy was threatened various strategies were developed to respond to any threat it may occur.

However, there was another principle at work, namely that of balance and equilibrium. Martin speaks of an ideology of *concordia* (1995:36, 39-47). Despite the fact that the moral code privileged men in almost every instance and to such an extent that Graeco-Roman culture is often referred to as phallocratic, there was the more urgent need of finding the correct mixture for the correct time. Yes, although the means to this objective was not only regulated by a gendered hierarchy but also often served to re-entrench itself, the absolute power of the phallus was retained by the principle of balance and equilibrium. There was a necessity to discover and establish balance and order and to ignore this necessity was to threaten life itself. And just as nature was evoked to substantiate the masculine oriented hierarchy, nature also served as realm for the construction of a desire for order and balance. Brown (1988:17) expresses the intercalation of these two principles as follows: "Here were little fiery universes,

through whose heart, brain, and veins there pulsed the same heat and vital spirit as glowed in the stars. To make love was to bring one's blood to the boil, as the fiery vital spirit swept through the veins, turning the blood into the whitened foam of semen. It was a process in which the body as a whole—the brain cavity, the marrow of the backbone, the kidneys, and the lower bowel region — was brought into play, “as in a mighty choir”. The genital regions were mere points of passage. They were the outlets of a human Espresso machine. It was the body as a whole and not merely the genitals, that made orgasm possible”. An unrestrained sexual appetite, not subjected to the principle of balance, would be a disruption of cosmic order, just as unrestrained anger or violence could lead to the destruction of the fragile microcosm.

For that reason, the ethical goal in the formation of the subject could be said to find its culmination and expression in the notion of *sôphrosunê*. (cf Foucault 1985:37). Moderation, the art to discover those principles and techniques of existence that establish a harmony and equilibrium characterised the person of the citizen. The objective was indeed to establish a “school of orderly behaviour” (Brown 1988:17). The world, and therefore also the self, had to be controlled. *Sôphrosunê* was the manner in which an appropriate response to the dictates of nature was made and again, although these dictates were formulated in terms privileging masculinity, it functioned to establish some kind control. To find the correct mixture appropriate to time and place was essential to life itself and the way in which the body retained its health. However, this *sôphrosunê* should never be seen in an idealised, abstracted sense. Moderation meant moderation according to what *men* regarded as the dictates of nature; moderation for women, for example, meant to submit to male supremacy and accept that men better understand the interaction between macrocosm and microcosm. In no way did *sôphrosunê* function to transcend the principle of hierarchy but it functioned in consistent tension with it.

### **Hierarchy and body parts in Pauline letters**

In this section only a few examples from Paul's letters will be scrutinised and the objective is specifically to determine to what extent a rhetoric of the body may help us in making explicit what has structured not only social relations but also theological constructions. As such, the endeavour is highly experimental and does not lay claim to comprehensiveness. On the other hand, the assumption that the hierarchic principle manifested itself in a variety of ways in the Graeco-Roman world is not invalid since the patriarchal nature of this environment has quite consistently been demonstrated.

#### *Conceptualising the problem*

The claim is often made that hierarchies between men and women were to a certain extent relieved during the period of the Roman Empire (cf Sawyer 1996:17-31; Hallett 1999:20<sup>11</sup>). An extension of this argument is to point to early Christianity as a contributing factor in the relativising of hierarchy and sometimes even to speak of an equality between the sexes. The role asceticism played, as if asceticism pertained to a denial of the body, and especially where women were concerned are offered as evidence of this tendency.

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11. Hallett (1999:19) argues for a recognition of the rich diversity the ancient world had and problematises its accepted homogeneity expressed by an unproblematic *Graeco-Roman* entitlement and she refers to various instances where male and female traits are exchanged. However, the question is not only whether evidence of similarity between male and female can be detected; it would undoubtedly be possible to refer to various examples where females functioned as active agents. The question is more complex than availability of evidence; the problem is one of *rhetoricity*. It is concerned with a level of values (symbolically produced) underlying ancient society and generating principles of hierarchy, constantly inducing to their prescriptiveness, often without being explicitly expressed.

The engendered historiographical process always incorporates the possibility of re-inscribing exactly those hierarchical social values and structures one desires to expose. It is surely not the intention to again silence the few female voices we hear from Antiquity. However, simply to point to scant textual evidence in order to find a gradual inclination towards the “agentship” of women during the Roman period is to deny the total onslaught that women in Antiquity had to face. It would obviously be quite possible to point to counter voices, cautiously protesting against the hierarchies of patriarchal culture, and the emergence of these voices should be encouraged. However, that should not detract from facing the problem of a hierarchical principle, fully operating in the cultures of Antiquity. Both the Romans and early Christians complied with the principle of hierarchy. In both cases it functioned in interaction with the principle of balance; as a matter of fact, the principle of balance was thoroughly pervaded by the hierarchic principle. What was seen as “balance”, as moderation or moderate behaviour was the enactment of hierarchy. There might have been a variety of its implementation, but in a collective sense, this was one of the major constituent principles structuring ancient society.

In this section I want to argue that the hierarchic principle in early Christianity was maintained not by a denial of bodily qualities, but by its affirmation. I submit that the hierarchic principle is not only retained; in early Christianity the hierarchic principle is radicalised; the ideal body that is aspired to, is that of the male in complete and absolute control. In many cases the motivation prompting the enacting of the hierarchical principle within the Graeco-Roman tradition was the maintenance of bodily health. But in early Christianity the hierarchic principle assumed such an absolute form in the person of an all-male God, that its transgression was regarded as an evil, as sin, punishable with eternal damnation. Enacting the same social principles from which their world derived, early Christians proposed a superior, unique, but male body as the ultimate and ideal to be aspired to. To a certain extent (and this may be seen as a flagrant generalisation, but in order to make the point, it is worth an attempt!), early Christianity verbalised one of the most powerful ancient social generative principles, making the normative, freeborn, male body into “God”, thereby giving absolute status to underlying social conditions. It is this radicalisation which also translated non-adherence, into transgression, into what became known as “sin”. Transgressing the hierarchic principle became sin. To put it a bit differently: to sin meant to resist God who was seen to be the culmination of hierarchy.

#### *The ‘absence’ of bodily qualities in the Romans letter*

We have seen that the bodily qualities deriving from what was regarded as the fundamental elements functioned to construct a hierarchy which privileged the male to the extent of absolute status. However, these bodily qualities and their correct mixture, reflected upon by the Graeco-Roman elite apparently do not play a significant role in the structure of the Pauline body. And yet, although not systematically, coherently or even explicitly verbalised, the discursive network concerned with the body was there, re-enacting the hierarchic principle.

In the ever controversial Romans 1:18-32 engendered terms abound, functioning to enforce a hierarchy of bodies and bodily behaviours. The main question prompting at least the first four chapters concerns the identity of the “true” Jew. In this section strange symbolic alliances, quite confusing to the audience, are brought together. If the concern is indeed with the identity of the “true” Jew, why not simply indicate what the constituents of this type would be? It has now been conceded that Paul wrote this letter to a non-Jewish audience, and yet Romans 1:18-32 exhibits all the genre features of Jewish propaganda against the non-Jews. In this case, anti-non-Jewish propaganda is turned upon its creators in order to identify and establish solidarity.

It is to be expected that “God” would in some way or the other feature within such a context; undoubtedly he would be the actualisation of the hierarchic principle, giving expression to what constitutes the culmination of this particular hierarchy. And it would probably not be completely impossible then also to introduce, the “anti-forces” in the form of the idols. But why would same-sex relations be so prominent as to assist in the definition of “true Jewish identity”? And why is there some connection between same-sex relations and idolatry?

According to contemporary scholarly wisdom Paul used “standard Hellenistic Jewish polemic against idolatry” (Dunn 1988:53) and reference is made to especially *Wisdom of Solomon*. There are undoubtedly several themes that occur, but that still does not explain why “true” identity needs to be related to “God”, idolatry and same-sex relations. Why is lustful behaviour seen as product of God’s wrath; why is the effect of wrath seen as surrendering human beings to pleasurable actions? How can a certain type of sexual behaviour be typified as a darkening of the mind, as foolish (1:21)?

The strategy of vilification, however, often forms a constituent element when the hierarchic principle is in operation, because not only is “gradation” an essential element of hierarchy’s operation, but to vilify simultaneously empowers the “top” while it identifies the lower levels and subjects these. What is at the “top” is seen to be the “norm(al)”, the natural, that which everyone should aspire to. “Top” and “bottom” are therefore in fact quite suitable elements of making identity.

In the case of Romans 1:18-32 “God” functions as the culmination of the specific hierarchy. As the enactment of the hierarchic principle, the term “God” accounts for what was regarded as absolute normative. That the concern here is with that type of shared knowledge that can be regarded as absolute normative, can be seen in the claims made that knowledge about God was known, was revealed, could be clearly perceived (1:18-21). However, the hierarchic principle reveals itself also in the explicit manner in which the other levels of this specific form of hierarchy has here been indicated, and it is this “gradation” into the levels of bodily hierarchy that links the variety of themes together.

“True” Jewish identity means identification with what is taken to be “God”. But what is taken to be “God” is also defined by hierarchic levels further removed and these are represented in bodily terminologies, but then bodily terminologies that were seen to be “contrary to nature” (1:26). The section is pervaded by a repeated reversal of roles. Animals, regarded by the Graeco-Roman to be on the lowest level of the hierarchical scale, are according to anti-Gentile propaganda moved to the highest, occupied by gods (Rm 1:23).<sup>12</sup> Whether it is animals, birds, reptiles or human beings, these are all “images” and they are as such passive. Not only do they act outside their range of prescribed role-behaviour by being assigned a status way beyond what they are, “images” of these beings are by definition passive. But constructing something as passive is not an innocent labelling process in Antiquity - it is political. As such, these images incline to the feminine. Engendered vilification kicks into action in defining what is not regarded as the identity of the “true” Jew. This is then made explicit by using same-sex relations as typical of excessive non-“true Jew” behaviour. Honouring or worshipping those “objects” that were seen to be passive implies not recognising the “top” of the hierarchy, who can be seen as the culmination of what is active. Via the “active versus passive” dichotomy pervading gender relations in Antiquity and structuring hierarchy, “God”, his wrath, same-sex relations and “real” Jewish identity are brought into relationship with each other. The determinism, known in Jewish wisdom literature, functions to allow those that have opted for passivity, to fall into a preference for passivity, which was seen to be manifested in same-sex relations. Females who are supposed to be passive were transformed into what was regarded as

12. Examples of the manner in which the ancient Mediterranean world and Paul ranked, or mapped not only people but the cosmos are extensively provided in Neyrey (1990).

unnatural (against nature) and the same happened to males.<sup>13</sup> Outside the control of the ideal body, the regulatory body, their bodies are not in control, not in balance, but incline to excessiveness, to inordinate desire and passions (cf Martin 1995:342; Vorster 200:118-120).

The role, the bodily quality of “heat” played should not be underestimated. It is here explicitly formulated as excessive (1:27), and it is this excessive heat that is “contrary to nature”. The active versus passive dichotomy is reinforced, because the belief was that it was exactly the inherent passivity of the female body that rendered it essentially incapable of control and making it as such prone to excessive behaviour. Immoderation, inordinate desire is therefore linked to an inability to control, thereby surrendering to excessive bodily heat, and this in turn, is associated with balance, order, the disruption of order, the disruption of a hierarchical order. The implication is clear: The “real” Jew is the Jew who identified with the normalising body, the absolute body, the epitome of order, “God”. The identity of the “true” Jew is composed via a specific idealisation of masculinity; it functioned in a competitive framework; the “true” Jew is the man with the acknowledged superior masculine ideal of control and balance.<sup>14</sup>

There are also other bodily terminologies, specifically related to gender, which function to re-enforce a particular instantiation of the hierarchical principle. I have already referred to the symbolic status of the heart as masculine organ and its function as seat of consciousness in many traditions of Antiquity. This was the habitat of the vital spirit responsible for providing with rationality and stability. “To know”, and to know accurately and precisely is therefore a function of the heart and typical of the male body. But when things go wrong with the organs of the body interior, they go black (Padel 1992:24) and this transformation into darkness was seen to be the product of an imbalance of bodily fluids. Blood, encircling and pervading the heart, manufacturing intelligence, is pushed aside and threatened by an overabundance of black bile (Padel 1995:52). Blackness or darkness was associated with madness, depression, irrationality and uncontrolled emotionality. To put it a bit differently: a black consciousness was seen to be a disturbed mentality. In Paul’s defaming of the “them”, they are therefore related to a physical condition of madness, because the heart, as *locus* of spirit and intelligence production, has been invaded and has lost its power, its ability to control. Padel (1995:120) indicates that the condition of madness quite often coincides with the use of either the preposition *para* or *ek*, designating “out of”.<sup>15</sup> Forms of irrationality were seen to be out of place, a disturbance and threat of social order.

There is an engendered quality. Irrationality, loss of rationality, madness, melancholia, depression and hysteria are all conditions that were assigned to the feminine. Where less heat infuses the heart, its power is diminished, thereby rendering it more vulnerable to invasions, such as passions. Associated with darkness (cf also Padel 1992:102), interiority, softness and openness, the female body became a symbol of instability, of formlessness and without boundaries (Carson 1990:138). Typical examples of this female instability were seen to be tearfulness, pity, jealousy, depression, fear, impulsivity, gluttony, extravagance, mood swings,

13. Paul’s arrangement is noteworthy. Females, who as a group, were supposed to be the passive partner in Antiquity, are used first, setting the scene for an even worse, climactic scenario where *even* some men were willing to subject themselves to act against nature, which was for Paul, to be the passive partner. The reversal of roles is concerned with the exchange of active for passive. It would not be out of the question to substantiate this interpretation with reference to the suggestive wording of Paul which could be seen as a form of irony...and ‘receiving in their own persons the compensation they deserved’ (1:27).

14. The use in 1 Corinthians 13:3 is uncertain but the possibility of ‘consumed by bodily heat’ should not be disregarded, especially when taken into account that 1 Corinthians 13 occurs in the midst of Paul’s attempt to secure social order and control in the Corinthian community.

15. Padel (1992:121-123) specifically relates the use of these prepositions in compound verbs and nouns. However, Paul’s use of *para phusin* in close vicinity can hardly be incidental (1:26).

insatiable sexual desires, promiscuity (cf Carson's references to Greek authors: 138-139). The symbolised female body became a reservoir providing terminologies with which the "other" can be vilified.

The symbolised female body, constructed as an imperfect version of the male body, functioning on a low level of social hierarchy, is brought into operation, also when Paul refers to the darkening of the "other's" heart, their futile thoughts (1990:21), their deception (1990:22-23), the possibility that they can so easily be changed (1990:21). Terminologies associated with the female body therefore function to vilify the "other". At the same time this engendered terminological register functions to construct the identity of the "true Jew". If this is the case, the identity of the "true Jew" is one of *male* stability, *masculine* rationality and wisdom. In 2:29 the audience will even be told that only he, who is in possession of a "circumcised heart", can be a "real Jew".

There is therefore no departure from the values of the Graeco-Roman world; as a matter of fact, they have been radicalised, because they have been drawn into a theological model; they have acquired the status of absoluteness. To be a "true Jew" is to be like "God", but both the "true Jew" and "God" have been fashioned with engendered terminologies, in this case specifically with terminologies emerging from a vilified female body.

#### *The role of the spirit in the parts of the body*

The role of the spirit should not be underestimated in establishing and maintaining social control via bodily control. It is true that the range of meaning of the word "*pneuma*" is extremely wide, but it is also very strange that the possibility of understanding "*pneuma*" from the perspective of the body has almost never been considered. And yet it seems that the association between body and spirit must have been just as obvious to the ancients as the link between "lawn" and "green", which means that it was probably part of their moral code. If it is possible, just for a moment, to discard our trinitarian thinking, our desire for separateness and relocate ourselves in the enlanguaged world of Antiquity various associations between Paul's use of "*pneuma*" and what was known as the bodily "vital spirit" are evoked. Let us just for a moment recall that the vital spirit was formed from the combination of air, blood and heat in the left ventricle of the heart, from where it was carried through all the parts of the body, forming and maintaining a body that conformed with the hierarchical *telos*, the perfect, ideal male. Perhaps it would not be too far off the mark to label Paul's spirit as a regulating, ethnical testosterone booster and if that may trouble some it could also be called a strategy of engendered, social demarcation.

Firstly, that the "*pneuma*" is constructed as a bodily substance in the letter to the Romans, can readily be seen in its use of the body as its home, and quite appropriately it inhabits the heart (Rm 2:29; 5:5; 8:9-10). But it also seems to pervade the conquered members of the body with life (Rm 7:6). Secondly, just as the "vital spirit" has been associated with power, Paul's "*pneuma*" is consistently and radically associated with power - it is a bodily, substantial booster! Besides a very explicit articulation of its power (1:4; 15:13, 19) it is also depicted as a medium through which life can be given and maintained - it is a generative capacity (8:1, 6, 10, 11, 13), but it is also an enabling capacity which can render resistance against the weakness of the body, and as such it enables the body to maintain an equilibrium, order, a balanced moral lifestyle and it shields from what was regarded as effeminate, namely a succumbing to the passions of the body. Thirdly, just as intelligence was associated with the left ventricle of the heart, that is, the domain of the vital spirit and just as the vital spirit, through a process of purification brought about by heat moves to the brain to form psychic spirit, Paul's "*pneuma*" is also associated with thought (8:6, 23).

Against this background, Paul's "*pneuma*" can be seen as a mechanism by means of which an "idealised" male body, a dazzling body is constructed, a body that responds to Paul's notion of "*sôphrosune*". The bodily construction of "*pneuma*" functions as a strategy of power by means of which non-Jewish, male followers can be elevated and catapulted into a position of status and power, cherished by Jewish males. Just as circumcision functioned as social identity marker to privilege the Jewish male, "*pneuma*" functions to generate a radicalised version, namely the "sons of god". No longer is Jewishness determined by the circumcision of the penis, but now by the circumcision of the heart (2:29). Moving from the realm of the phallic to the realm of the cardiac the potential for a dazzling body, which can be controlled, which carries in it the spark of divinity is created. But this new entelechial body is still that of a male - as a matter of fact, both the use of "*pneuma*" and the use of "heart" re-enforce and radicalise patriarchal culture. Using bodily parts, a new hierarchy is naturalised and the body pervaded by the spirit is moralised as the true "son of god". Via the spirit located in the heart the fiery microcosm that is the male's body can be what it ought to be. The spirit functions to demarcate what a free, truly Jewish male are.

#### *Establishing hierarchy by scapegoating women*

In Paul's correspondence to the Corinthian communities, the scapegoating of women again evokes the hierarchical principle. And bodily parts again function to establish the hierarchy he wanted to attain. Far from proceeding from an "impartial consultation" or providing "diplomatic instructions" (Wire 1994:169), Paul's advice on marriage and his instructions concerning the conduct within the meetings of the Corinthian communities, is a fine example of how the hierarchic principle can be established by scapegoating and how it mystifies or cloaks the divisions. Once rhetoric of the body becomes a possibility for interpretation, the scapegoating and vilifying of women appear to form a constituent of the letter, an aspect that has not received adequate attention from the scholarly guild.

Statements such as "the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body but the wife does" (7:4) should not detract from the fact that the passage (7:1-7) has been introduced by addressing males as the custodians over the conduct between the sexes, and by warning them through depicting "woman" as a threat (7:1). She is seen as a possible source for inflaming *his* passions beyond control. Order must be maintained, but specified in male terminology. And it sounds so fair when he advises that there should be a sharing of what is translated "conjugal rights" (7:3), but seems to demand a more compelling, yet wider translation equivalent, such as "that which one should do". If "*he opheile*" is thus translated, their mutual moral obligations are at stake, but in a patriarchal culture with a tendency toward phallocratism this type of fairness swings the balance completely in favour of men, despite the beautiful parallelism in which it has been enlanguaged. It borders on outright abuse when the threat posed by woman is personified as temptation from the ultimate of evil, namely Satan. Therefore, in Paul's so-called impartial consultation on marriage woman is scapegoated to be a disruptive power, not only for the body, but also for the moral order as such.

Woman, vilified as threat, also occurs in Paul's advice on community regulations, and in this case the bodily part is quite explicitly mentioned, namely the "head", but more specifically their hair and their mouths. In 11:1-16 they are admonished for attending the meetings without covering their heads and in 14:34-36 some, presumable women prophets, are without much ado told to keep their mouths shut, quite ironically not taking into account the numerous references from chapter 12 concerning the usefulness of members/bodily parts of the body of Christ. Referring to the cultural customs of the Greeks, Romans and Jews, Levine (1995) has indicated how the engendered



differences specified for the covering of the head, that is, by making hair visible or not evoked the principle of hierarchy. She indicates that the covering of hair, even within the presence of a divinity, was a voluntary act, “either symbolic or purely utilitarian”. However, for women, the covering of the hair coincided with the development of the body and its enculturation via various rituals. Almost universally the covering of hair signifies the transformation of virgin to wife (:102). In itself the act of covering is to submit to a lower end on the hierarchical scale and to delegate the right to uncover to the husband. The covered head suggests that evil is kept under control and suggests as such moral inferiority (:106). Eilberg-Schwartz (1995), after distancing himself from Freud’s psychoanalytical link between female mouth and vagina, argues, from the perspective of rabbinic Judaism, that the female mouth is symbolically eroticised to present the vagina. The speaking female mouth presents a dilemma for the phallogocentric culture in which penis possession reserves the right to speak and in which the relationship between teacher and student is seen in reproductive analogy (1995:166; Vorster 2000:118). Visible female hair is transformed into a celebration of “looseness” and the publicly speaking female mouth, is transformed into a vaginalogico claim. In both cases female bodily parts are enlanguaged as threats, disruptive for order.

And it is as threats that Paul treated these parts. The woman with visible hair is simply decapitated and her head is exchanged for her husband’s, “the head of a woman is her husband” and the naturalness of a male’s visible hair is emphasised (cf 11:7, 14) and given universal substantiation by embedding within a hierarchical version of the creation (11:8,9). The shortness of the male’s hair is also naturalised (11:14) because it suggests his capacity to be in control, just as in a quite contradictory sense the long hair of women is naturalised to suggest her uncontrollable, intemperate and untamed nature (:15). That speaking female mouths are indeed sexualised and objectified by Paul can be seen in the way language of shame is evoked (14:35) and the threat posed to the male teacher of tradition can be seen in the way he relegates their instruction to the duties of their husbands (14:35). In both cases, Paul depicts the women as posing threats to the honour of their husbands. Social order has to be maintained by censoring visible female hair and publicly speaking female mouths.

## Conclusion

- Bodies and bodily parts functioned in a relationship of synecdoche with the macrocosm of which it was the microcosm. Bodily parts were constructed from the terminological “fibre” of ancient society. The principle of hierarchy structured ancient society as the macrocosm, defining its roles, functions, institutions, but also manufacturing its bodies and “anti-bodies”. Within the synecdochic relationship within which the ancient body functioned as part, *male* body functioned as representative of bodiliness, of what a body ought to be.
- Paul has undoubtedly availed himself of the hierarchical principle operating within the Graeco-Roman world. Not only is his point of departure a principle of gradation, but unequal value was assigned to the different levels. Since the unequal distribution of power was for such a long time part and parcel of Graeco-Roman society, all levels have accepted this with the result that it was seen to be natural, universal. Owing to the particular manner in which gender was constructed, with the male body occupying the “top” of the hierarchy, the natural was assumed to centre on a particular construction of masculinity. Not acting in conformity with the normative body, displaced the body, assigning to it, outsider status. One constituent of the construction of the body was the dichotomy between active, which was seen as expression of masculinity, and passive, which was assigned to females. Owing to his active constructed nature, the male body was empowered to maintain balance, to be in control, to function moderately, whereas the female body was prone to imbalance, out of

control and inclined to immoderate behaviour. These aspects could all be seen as part and parcel of a value system that has been to such an extent inscribed upon the bodies that social behaviour would have ensued without conscious recognition of these values.

Paul fully functioned within this system of values. But there was a significant difference. Unlike some claims that the hierarchy between body parts is relieved, the hierarchical principle is radicalised. Whereas hierarchy among parts function in the Graeco-Roman world to justify its relationship to the cosmos and is concerned with the health of the body, Paul's version seems to operate within a "good versus evil" scheme. Those that are deemed to be outside are not only "dirt", but also evil, wicked and condemned into eternity. The disruption which a transgression of the hierarchic principle causes in the relationship between macro- and microcosm is interpreted in terms of the "Fall" - it celebrates the human being, not as a potential for good, but with a natural inclination for evil, a being, essentially defect and evil.

- In our attempts as Biblical scholars, striving in our processes of interpretation for the rhetorical ideals of appropriateness and suitability, aspiring to political correctness (which could these days include quite a vast number of stakeholders!), we are often inclined to overlook the deep-seated patriarchy whence the writings of the Bible derived. A major problem in our interpretational processes is that we are surrendered to contemporary terminologies. Not only are they value-laden, but although they sometimes may appear to look and sound similar to the terminologies of the ancient world, they are not. A rhetoric of the body requires that their persuasive value within their own contexts be taken seriously. But it also requires that the effect of overlooking the patriarchy that constituted these writings be taken into account. Not to recognise the principle of hierarchy that functioned in early Christianity may contribute to re-inscribing hierarchy in contemporary society.

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