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PHILOSOPHICAL VOCABULARY OF ARIUS DIDYMUS
AND THE NEW TESTAMENT*

Arius Didymus (Ἀρειὸς Διδύμοϛ) lived in Alexandria in the first century BC. He was known as a teacher of philosophy and a friend of Caesar August. He is mentioned in about a dozen ancient sources, but no major work is preserved under his name. However, modern scholars assume that an important chapter 2.7 from the anthology of John Stobaeus¹ contains *Epitome*, a textbook of ethics written by this Alexandrian philosopher².

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¹ Critical editions: C. W a c h s m u t h, *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii libri duo priores*, Berlin 1894, reprinted 1974: vol. II, 37-152; A. J. P o m e r o y, *Arius Didymus. Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, Texts and Translations 44, Atlanta 1999 (Greek-English *Epitome* 2.7.5-12 with a concordance). My full translation of *Epitome* appeared as: A r e j o s D i d y m o s, *Podręcznik etyki*, Kraków 2005; it is accompanied by the Greek text of Wachsmuth and many comments.

² Main works about Arius Didymus: H. F. v o n A r n i m, *Arius Didymus' Abriss der peripatetischen Ethik*, Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Phil.-Hist. Klasse 204, Abh. 3, Wien–Leipzig 1926; M. G i u s t a, *I dossografi di etica*, Università di Torino, Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia 15/3-4, Torino 1964-1967; M. G i u s t a, *Ario Didymo e la diaresis dell'etica di Eudoro di Alessandria*, Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino. Classe di scienze morale, storiche e filologiche 120, Torino 1986, pp. 97-132; P. M o r a u x, *Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias*, t. I, Berlin 1973, pp. 259-443. W. W. F o r t e n b a u g h (ed.), *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Work of Arius Didymus*, Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities 1, New Brunswick N. J. 1983; D. E. H a h m, *The Ethical Doxography of Arius Didymus*, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 36/4, Berlin 1990, pp. 2935-3055.

It is proven by a quotation from “*Epitome* of Didymus” found in another place of this anthology (4.28). The same quotation appears in 2.7.17 as a part of a long chapter presenting a unified description of ethical doctrines, most probably identical with *Epitome*, even if shortened and corrupted by later copyists. Chapter 2.7 reflects Hellenistic ethics and contains no hints about persons and opinions from the years later than the first century BC. It is used as an important source for this period, quoted most often as “Stobaeus” or through the collection *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. Therefore the name of Arius Didymus is not sufficiently known.

Epitome of Didymus contains an introduction to ethics, influenced with Platonism (1-4), and two detailed sections, respectively on Stoic (5-12) and Peripatetic ethics (13-26); the author tends towards a synthetic vision of ethics. Perhaps Stobaeus preserved some other anonymous quotations from his works (so Diels). As for dispersed signed quotations, they have been preserved in the works of Eusebius (*Praeparatio* 1.12.2; 15.15.1-9; 15.20.1-7), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 1.61.1-2; 1.80.1) and Stobaeus (2.1.17). Because of the date of composition and the contents, *Epitome* is an important specimen of philosophical thinking and vocabulary from the New Testament period. It is less than a century earlier. It concentrates on ethics, without logics and cosmology, which makes it potentially closer to these texts of the New Testament which could be expected to relate to the Hellenistic background. It reflects a popular perception of philosophy between the Hellenistic and Roman era in the Eastern Mediterranean. It covers the main currents of moral philosophy, containing a fairly complete set of its vocabulary.

Epitome illustrates the background of the New Testament, a way of thinking on ethics typical for the educated people from this period. These two sources and two approaches could be compared and contrasted. On the other hand, *Epitome* can be helpful for the study of the Hellenistic influence on the New Testament. How much do they have in common? This issue is still debated. Early Christian tradition was hesitating between rejecting of Greek culture and considering it to be the second “Old Testament”, to quote Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 6.41.4).

In this short paper I shall limit myself to the basic comparison of both works, confronting their vocabularies³. Philosophical terms and ideas re-

³ Much more could be said about other aspects. Conceptual frameworks and agendas set by the Hellenistic thought and taken over by NT authors remain outside the scope of this study. Cf. T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, Louisville 2000; J. P. Sampley (ed.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World*, Harrisburg 2003; Ph. R. Esler, *Paul*

flected in the New Testament are of course well identified. However, it is interesting to see how far a set, a specimen of philosophical, and mostly ethical, vocabulary represented by *Epitome* can find parallels in the New Testament. The results of such comparison can be expressed in figures. The selected set contains about 200 words and seems fairly complete: a philosophical term present in the Bible but absent in *Epitome* remains an exception (συνειδησις, “conscience”, 30 occurrences in the New Testament).

Arius Didymus is most often overlooked in biblical studies. (A recent article by Ch. Heil in “Novum Testamentum” is the only direct attempt to study this problem⁴). It is not represented in the Leiden project (Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti). It is not quoted for comparison in the dictionaries, although it defines carefully many notions – this omission is probably due to the fact that *Epitome* is preserved inside Stobaeus, a later author. However, the examples of use of such vocabulary in *Epitome* can explain better its New Testament meaning.

I. VOCABULARY WITHOUT ANY NOTABLE RELATION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Many vocabulary items from *Epitome* are not found at all in the New Testament: about forty of them are general ethical terms, some of them very important (e.g. αδιαφορα, αιρετα, ασκησις, επιστημη, ερωσ, ευδαιμονια, ηθικη, ηθος, οικειωσις, ποιον/ποιοτης)⁵, and about forty names of particular virtues and vices.

Further philosophical words appear rarely, seemingly by accident: αισθησις, “perception” (Phil 1.9); αλογος, “without reason” (Acts 25.27; 2 Pet 2.12; Jude 10); αλυπος, “without grief” (Phil 2.28); αρετη, “virtue” (Phil 4.8; 2 Pet 1.5ab); εξις, “skill” (Heb 5,14); καθηκοντα, “proper things” (Rom 1.28); κατορθωμα, “just act” (Acts 24.2var); λογικος, “rational” (Rom 12.1); μανια, “madness” (Acts 26.24; 1 Pet 2.2); οικειος as “akin” (Gal

and Stoicism. *Romans 12 as a Test Case*, NTS 50(2004)1, p. 106ff quotes Arius Didymus commenting on Engberg-Pedersen’s opinions.

⁴ Ch. Heil, *Arius Didymus and Luke-Acts*, NT 42(2000)4, pp. 358-393: the author comments on *Epitome*; he compares it with Luke-Acts, discussing the matter of genre and some examples of similar expressions.

⁵ I quote unaccented Greek text, as in the first century A. D. the present system of accentuation had not been yet in use. This solution is preferred by some authors.

6.10; Eph 2.19); ορεξις, “desire” (Rom 1.27); ορμη, “impulse” (Acts 14.5; Jas 3.4); παθος, “passion” (Rom 1.26; Col 3.5; 1 Thess 4.5); συμφερον, “profitable” (Acts 20.20; 1 Cor 12.7; Heb 12.10; ωφελεια, “advantage” (Rom 3.1; Jude 16). There are no names of philosophers; philosophical schools are mentioned only once (Acts 17.18). Further words of this kind will be listed below among virtues and vices.

Some of these terms are very important in philosophy, but quite secondary in the New Testament, which suggests only a weak influence of the philosophical vocabulary. It is also clear that such vocabulary in the New Testament concentrates in the Epistles and Acts. (Further words appear in the Septuagint, and in Apostolic Fathers, occasionally more often [παθος, ηθος], but such a key term as ευδαιμονια, “happiness” never occurs in these writings!)

Next group are frequent words, occurring also in a philosophical meaning (about forty). Some current words adapted by philosophers and used technically by them are found in the New Testament, but only in their ordinary meaning, e.g. τελος means usually “end”, not “aim” (αδικια, αρρωστος, βιος, διδαχη, δογμα, δοξα, δυναμις, εθος, ειδος, εκλογη, το ζην – New Testament prefers ζωη, ευ, θεωρια, ισχυς, λογος outside John 1, λυπη, μεσοτης, μεσος, νομος, οικος, ορθος, πιστις, πλουτος, πολις, πολιτεια, πονος, πραγμα, σκοπος, σπουδαιος, τεχνη, χυγεια, ρεια, χρησις, ιευδος).

The New Testament meaning of some words contrasts with the philosophical usage represented by *Epitome* (αμαρτια as “sin”, not “mistake”, δαιμων as “demon”, not “divine spirit”, χαρις as “grace”, not “gratitude”; μεγαλοπρεπης “magnificent” refers to God, not humans; φιλοσοφια, mentioned only once, is presented negatively, Col 1.8).

II. GENERAL VOCABULARY OF ETHICS ADAPTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Nevertheless some moral and anthropological notions found in *Epitome* are represented in the New Testament in a significant manner (23 items follow):

αγαθα, “goods” (Mt 7.11b; 12.34,35; Lk 1.53; 12.18,19; 16.25; Jn 5.29; Rom 3.8; 10.15; Gal 6.6; Heb 9.11; 10.1). This word is used in moral and spiritual sense, as in the philosophy, whereas in the Septuagint a material meaning is preferred.

αιρεσις for a philosophical school, applied in Acts to Jewish sects and to Christians (5.17; 15.5; 24.5,14; 26.5; 28.22).

αμαρτημα, applied to evil deeds with a possible philosophical meaning “mistake involving responsibility”. This term is infrequent, because the Bible prefers αμαρτια (only Mk 3.28,29; Rom 3.25; 6.16var; 1 Cor 6.18; 2 Pet 1.9var).

αφορμη, “occasion, initial impulse” according to one of the Stoic meanings (Rom 7.8,11; 2 Cor 5.12; 11.12ab; Gal 5.13; 1 Tim 5.14). Considering that this term occurs only three times in the Septuagint, it could be introduced by Paul under the Stoic influence.

εθος, “custom”, is used by Luke in the context of apology of Christian life (Lk 1.9; 2.42; 22.39; Acts 6.14; 15.1; 16.21; 21.21; 25.16; 26.3; 28.17; moreover Jn 19.40; Heb 10.25). Six occurrences in the Septuagint reflect a Greek cultural influence. An indirect influence of the philosophical language is possible.

ελευθερια, “freedom” as an accepted value surfaces in the Epistles, although they discuss its conflict with other values (Rom 8.21; 1 Cor 10.29; 2 Cor 3.7; Gal 2.4; 5.1,13ab; Jas 1.25; 2.12; 1 Pet 2.16; 2 Pet 2.19). Similar use is found in the later books of the Septuagint. A Greek influence is obvious, but not necessarily a philosophical one.

ενεργεια, “activity”, a term occurring in the Pauline Epistles, but not always in a narrower philosophical sense (1 Cor 12.10var; Eph 1.19; 3.7; 4.16; Phil 3.21; Col 1.29; 2.12; 2 Thess 2.9,11; also Acts 4.24var).

επιθυμια, “appetite, desire”: 38 occurrences in the New Testament, but only 5 with a positive or neutral meaning. This term is equally popular in the Septuagint, but there it often refers to ordinary desires. Its New Testament usage reflects the attitude of moral philosophy teaching discipline (cf. especially the Stoic teaching in *Epitome* 2.7.10).

ηδονη, “pleasure”, its critical evaluation in the New Testament corresponds to the similar philosophical attitude (Lk 8,14; Tt 3,3; Jk 4,1.3; 2P 2,13).

κακια, “vice” as opposed to virtue: five occurrences in the New Testament (Acts 8.22; 1 Cor 5.8; 14.20; Jas 1.21; 1 Pet 2.16); six others represent a general meaning.

κακον, “evil”, a popular term (42 times, adjective κακος only 8). Plural form, closer to the philosophical usage, is less frequent (Lk 16.25; Acts 9.13; Rom 3.8; 1 Tim 6.10; 2 Tim 4.14; 1 Pet 3.12), only twice κακα are contrasted with αγαθα (Lk 16.25; Rom 3.8).

καλος, “beautiful, good”, 101 times in the New Testament. In about 75 places this word describes moral beauty, and not beautiful things. It accords

with the philosophical usage, but it can also result from the subject matter of biblical books.

κοινωνία, “community” (19 times in the New Testament, next 19 in related forms). It describes community of believers and community with God. This meaning is unknown in the Septuagint, but seems close to the understanding of human community in the moral philosophy (cf. *Epitome* 2.7.5b2; 2.7.26; Eusebius, *Praeparatio* 15.15.5). This concept seems to be inspired by the Hellenistic philosophical thought.

μετοχος, “participant”, usually in the metaphorical sense, as in the philosophy (Heb 1.9; 3.1,14; 6.4; 12.8; but Lk 5.7).

νοους, “mind”, instead of biblical “heart”. It occurs 24 times in the New Testament, sometimes in accordance with the technical philosophical understanding (Lk 24.45; Rom 7.23,25; 1 Cor 14.14,15ab,19; Phil 4,7; 2 Thess 2. 2), but more often it is a general term, as in the later books of the Septuagint.

παιδεια, “education, culture”, appears in the later Epistles (Eph 6.4; 2 Tim 3.16; Heb 12.5,7; 8.11). This general Greek term is very frequent in the Septuagint (110 times).

πλησιον, “neighbour”, 17 in the New Testament, Septuagint 238. This notion does not correspond strictly to the Hebrew counterpart and we can assume that in the Bible it is coloured by the Hellenistic idea of a natural proximity between human beings (cf. *Epitome* 2.7: p. 2, 5b2, 11bc, 13, 16; in p. 13 – principle of friendship and goodwill towards all people).

πραξις, “action” in a general sense (Mt 16.27; Lk 23.51; title of Acts; Acts 19.18; Rom 8.13; 12.4; Col 3.9).

τελειος, “perfect”, with related words (48 times in the New Testament, 67 in the Septuagint). It may have a cultic connotation, but in the New Testament it often describes moral and ontological perfection what implies a philosophical inspiration (e.g. Mt 5.48; 19.21).

τελος usually means “end”. Only in some exceptional cases it refers to the goal of life, as in the philosophical language (Rom 6.22; 1 Tim 1.5; 1 Pet 1.9).

φαυλος, “worthless”, has a moral meaning, although it does not refer to people, as in the Stoic opposition σπουδαίος – φαυλος, but to their deeds (Jn 3.20; 5.29; Rom 9.11; Tit 2.8; Jas 3.16).

φυσις, “nature”, is a Greek philosophical term, unknown to Hebrew thought. It occurs in the later books of the Septuagint (12 times), more often in the New Testament (14 times). Let us note living according to the nature (Rom 1.26; 2.14; 1 Cor 11.14) and the nature of God (2 Pet 1.4).

ψυχη/πνευμα/σωμα, if these terms are opposed we can suggest a Greek influence, because in the Bible they refer to some aspects of human beings

and not to their separate parts. Such a Greek influence need not to be philosophical.

III. NAMES OF VIRTUES AND VICES

This group can be separated inside the general philosophical vocabulary and constitutes a test set in itself. On the presented list we shall find both secondary coincidences with the New Testament and some important loans from the philosophical vocabulary.

The classic list of four cardinal virtues is not represented in the New Testament (only in the Wisdom of Solomon 8.7). Bravery, ἀνδρεία, is not found at all, although the New Testaments present sometimes Christian life as a fight, which constitutes an analogy with the Greek thought. “Justice”, δικαιοσύνη, is very frequent (92 times), but in its Old Testament meanings: justice of God or moral behaviour in general. Only exceptionally it is listed with other virtues (1 Tim 6.11; perhaps Acts 24.25). “Self-restraint”, σωφροσύνη (Acts 26.25; 1 Tim 2.9,15), and “intelligence”, φρονησις (Lk 1.17; Eph 1.8), remain rare. A philosophical influence is virtually absent.

Another general virtue, “wisdom” σοφία, appears often, but also in the Old Testament meaning: wisdom of God and from God. “Wise”, σοφός, is a popular adjective, but never refers to the ideal sage. Purely Greek καλοκαγαθία, occurs only once in a secondary text form (Jas 5.10).

Let us list other nouns and adjectives describing virtues (19) and vices (16), attested in *Epitome*. Most of them belong to a general Greek vocabulary and moreover are not very frequent in the New Testament. A direct influence of moral philosophy can be traced in some cases only.

αστειος, “civilised” (Acts 7.20; Heb 11.23).

αυταρκεια, “self-sufficiency” (2 Cor 9.8; 1 Tim 6.6; cf. Phil 4.11).

αφελότης, “guileless” (Acts 2.46).

εγκρατεια, “self-control” (Acts 24.25; Gal 5.23; 2 Pet 1.6ab; cf. Tit 1.8; 1 Cor 7.9; 9.25). Clearly a loan from the moral philosophy, attested already in the Septuagint.

ελεος, “pity” (27 occurrences, related terms 44 times) is seen positively, as in the Old Testament, and not negatively as in the philosophy (cf. *Epitome* 2.7.10b-d)

επιεικεια, “tolerance” (Acts 24.4; 2 Cor 10.1; cf. Phil 4.5; 1 Tim 3.3; Tit 3.2; Jas 3.17; 1 Pet 2.18) was also negatively understood by philosophers.

ευεργεσια, “benevolence” (Acts 4.9; 1 Tim 6.2).

ευγενης, “well-born” (Lk 19.12; Acts 17.11; 1 Cor 1.26).

ευσεβεια, “piety” (15 times) is understood in accordance with the biblical tradition (whereas Stoic piety is the knowledge of God, and its Peripatetic notion is situated between impiety and superstition).

ευνοια, “good will” (1 Cor 7.3var; Eph 6.7).

ησυχια, “rest” (Acts 22.2; 2 Thess 3.12; 1 Tim 2.11; cf. 1 Tim 2.2; 1 Pet 3.4).

οσιοτης, “holiness” (Lk 1.75; Eph 4.24; 8 times adjective); as Hebrew *hasid*.

πραοτης/πραυτης, “gentleness”, often mentioned (11 times, adjective 4 times).

σεμνοτης, “dignity” (1 Tim 2.2; 3.4; Tit 2.7; cf. Phil 4.8; 1 Tim 3.8,11; Tit 2.2).

συγγνωμη, “forgiveness”, only 1 Cor 7.6.

υπομονη, “endurance” (32 times in the New Testament, 25 times in the Septuagint). An important loanword from the philosophical vocabulary; cf. εγκρατεια.

φιλανθρωπια, “humanity” (Acts 28.2; Tit 3.4; cf. Acts 27.3).

φιλια, “friendship”, only Jas 4.4: in the New Testament friends are important, not the virtue of friendship.

χρηστοτης, “kindness” (human: 2 Cor 6.6; Gal 5.22; Col 3.12).

Now vices:

αγνοια, “ignorance” in the moral and religious sphere, not far from the philosophical understanding (Acts 3.17; 17.30; Eph 4.18; 1 Pet 1.14 and in the Septuagint).

ανοσιος, “unholy” (1 Tim 1.9; 2 Tim 3.2).

απειθεια, “disobedience” (7 times, related terms 20 times), stressed more in the Bible than in the Greek morality.

ασεβεια, “impiety” (6 times).

αφροσυνη, “stupidity” (Mk 7.22; 2 Cor 11.1,17,21; adjective 11 times).

δειλια, “cowardice”, only 2 Tim 1,7 (related terms 5 times).

δεισιδαμονια “superstition” or “piety” in Acts 25.19.

εχθρα, “enmity” (Lk 23.12; Rom 8.7; Gal 5.20; Eph 2.14,16; Jas 4.4).

ζηλος, as “envy” in Acts 5.17; 13.45; Rom 13.13; 1 Cor 3.3; 2 Cor 12.20; Gal 5.20; Jas 3.14,16 (verb 11 times).

θυμος, “anger” (18 times, often of God).

μανια, “madness” (Acts 26.24).

μοιχεια, “adultery” (Mt 15.19; Mk 7.22; Jn 8.3; Gal 5.19var; related words 29 times).

πικρία, as “ire” in Rom 3.14; Eph 4.31.
 υβρις, “outrage” (Acts 27.10.21; 2 Cor 12.10; verb 5 times).
 φθονος/φθονερια, “distress, envy” (9 times).
 φιλαργυρια, “fondness for money” (1 Tim 6,10; cf. Lk 16.14; 2 Tim 3.2).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the above comparison, the language of the Hellenistic moral philosophy had no deeper influence on the language of the New Testament. Many key notions are simply lacking. Most further terms occur in the different meaning or only occasionally. Only a fraction of the philosophical vocabulary is used. I have considered about 200 items from *Epitome*. About 80 are absent in the New Testament, about 90 are used only occasionally or with a non-philosophical meaning and only less than 30 seem to reflect the philosophical usage. It deserves attention, but it is not much.

Differences in the language do not exclude similarities of thought. However, if similar moral ideas are put into different words, a dependence cannot be proven too easily. However, let us note two analogies of this kind: (a) imitation of God in the Bible (e.g. Lev 19.2; Mt 5.48; 11.29) and in the Platonic thought (*Epitome* 2,7,3f); and (b) the commandment of love compared to the law of friendship and kindness towards all the people (cf. *Epitome* 2.7.3-4 and 2.7.13). More often we can suppose that some Greek ideas form a framework, a background of New Testament concepts without influencing them directly. It seems that the New Testament authors picked from the Greek culture what they liked, avoiding the remainder.

We could find also a number of philosophically coloured words which were used by first Christians: namely some general moral notions and names of virtues and vices. Most of these words are either frequent in Greek, or already assimilated in the Hellenized Judaism. The influence of philosophy appears only indirect. Their choice is selective and they are usually built into biblical message. They are virtually absent in the Gospels and in the Revelation. In some cases, however, the philosophical background seems important (e.g. αγαθα, εγκρατεια, ελευθερια, επιθυμια, κοινωνια, πλησιον, τελειος, υπομονη, φυσικς). If a philosophical term is used, Bible translations, exegesis and definitions in dictionaries should take this background better into account.

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SŁOWNICTWO FILOZOFICZNE AREJOSA DIDYMOSA
A NOWY TESTAMENT

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Arejos Didymos był filozofem aleksandryjskim z I w. przed Chr. Pozostała po nim praca *Epitome*, podręcznik etyki przechowany ze skrótami jako rozdział 2, 7 antologii Stobajosa. Słownictwo tego utworu jest dobrą próbką języka filozofii czasów bliskich Nowemu Testamentowi. Porównanie ich słownictwa pozwoliło stwierdzić ilościowo, że na około 200 terminów z *Epitome* Nowy Testament pomija 80. Sporadycznie użytych jest 90 terminów i nie w znaczeniu filozoficznym. W przypadku 30 terminów można stwierdzić wpływ użycia filozoficznego, przynajmniej pośredni. Najistotniejsze z nich to: αγαθα, εγκρατεια, ελευθερια, επιθυμια, κοινωνια, πλησιον, τελειος, υπομονη, φυσικς. Nie jest to wiele, ale egzegeza i słowniki powinny lepiej uwzględniać tego rodzaju tło języka Nowego Testamentu.

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Key words: Arius Didymus, Hellenistic philosophy, New Testament background.

Słowa kluczowe: Arejos Didymos, Ariusz Didymus, filozofia hellenistyczna, tło Nowego Testamentu.