Health, Well-being, and Old Age in Early Christianity

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An Economic Analysis of the Perception of ‘Grief’ in the Letter to Philippians in the Light of New Institutional Economics (NIE)

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Abstract

Beginning with Paul Holloway’s view that the letter to Philippians is a letter of consolation aimed at comforting the “grief” of the grieving among the Philippi community, this paper argues one step further that the grief in the community is a problem of perception, with the help of new institutional economics (NIE). The primary reason for the divergence in perception is due to living in the Roman colony, the believing community was greatly affected by the values embedded in both formal and informal rules of the economy. In order to justify this view, this paper will, first, demonstrate the textual evidence showing that Paul’s major concern is the perception of believing community. Then, with the help of NIE, I will show how the formal and informal economic institutions of the Roman colony might constitute a perception that is very different from what Paul would expect.

Keywords

Letter to Philippians – new institutional economics – perception – Romanization – Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation

1 Introduction

There has long been a discussion concerning the category of epistle that the letter to Philippians belongs to. There seems to have been an assumption that the literary form of the letter can inform us about the purpose or intension of Paul in writing it. However, this paper argues that the purpose of the letter does not merely depend on the type but also on other factors such as identifying the problem Paul is addressing and Paul's own theological thought. As proposed by Stephen Fowl, it is essential to take into consideration Paul's theological concerns in the letter.¹ Also, the question cannot be clarified merely by looking into the literary form of the letter, since the three major proposals are all well-grounded. The three main suggestions include the letter of friendship (Gordon Fee, John Reumann, and Ben Witherington III), letter of consolation (Paul Holloway), and the family letter (Loveday Alexander).² Each of them provide substantial reasons as support and, therefore, it is hard to make a definite decision, merely based on the literary form of the letter. Considering this, the literary form of the letter does not determine its theme but only helps to deliver the message.

Recent scholarship on the letter to Philippians also suggest a new dimension to understand it. Hans Dieter Betz in his recent monograph suggests that Paul's major concern in the letter is answering the Philippians' request for his situation to keep their partnership (κοινωνία) intact. Paul's report focused on the status of his trial and mission efforts.³ This implies that the community in Philippi was worried about Paul's situation. This view supports Holloway's consolation hypothesis. Peter Oakes' contribution does help us see that economic factors significantly matter in interpreting the letter. He suggests that the economic situation of the Philippians contributed substantially to understanding their situation as suffering.⁴ He further suggests that the economic location of the Philippians contributes significantly to understanding their experiences of life.⁵ Although Oakes, based on a rather basic understanding of economics, states economics as merely a "resource allocation of scarce resources," his analysis did lead us to asking a new question concerning the extent to which the economic situation of a colony may affect one's life and perception. With this perspective, new institutional economics (NIE) can help

1 S. Fowl, *Philippians: The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary*, Grand Rapids, 2005, pp. 4-5.

2 P. Holloway, *Philippians A Commentary* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis, 2017, pp. 31-32.

3 H.D. Betz, *Studies in Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 2015, p. 12.

4 P.S. Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110), 2001, pp. 89-91.

5 P.S. Oakes, "The Economic Situation of the Philippian Christians,"

bridge the gap as NIE could lead us to see a deeper perspective of economics on people's life.⁶

The key uniqueness of NIE theory is that it starts with recognizing the imperfectness of the world and study how different form of institutions, both formal and informal, come out to help to smooth the friction of world. Imperfectness includes imperfect information and human opportunist behaviour, in which transaction and interaction cannot take place without the help of norms and legal rules. Economic institutions, in forms of formal and informal rules of games, will therefore emerge to help to reduce the frictions caused by the imperfectness.⁷ The reason why institutions, rules of games, can help to reduce the friction is because the existence of it will reduce the possibility of cheating and increase the predictability and trust of human interaction.⁸ In this direction, since people have to follow these rules to live their life, these rules will in turn affect, if not determined, their values and perception. The emphasis on both formal and informal institutions to work together is that they work in a complementary way to help to sustain each other for the society. For formal institutions, will be further elaborated in section 3.1.2, it refers to those externally enforced rules usually in form of legal rules and political system. Whereas, informal institutions, will be elaborated in 3.1.3, refers to those internalized rules usually in form of believe and values that a society accepted in general.⁹ Therefore, the application of NIE in this paper focuses on looking into the how these institutions emerge and function in affecting people's values and perception.¹⁰

In this paper, I understand the letter to be one of consolation at the beginning of the argument and then it questions the values constituting the "perception" of grief, as suggested by Holloway, that is to be consoled through the letter and its relationships with the major economic institutions in a Roman colony.¹¹ There is hope that the insights from this paper will help strengthen

6 The difference between tradition economics and New Institutional Economics (NIE) is that NIE focuses on the "institution" which is the rule of the resources allocation based on a set of new assumptions including the existence of transaction cost and imperfect information. See A. Ip, *A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of the Letter to Philemon in Light of the New Institutional Economics: An Exhortation to Transform a Master-Slave Economic Relationship into a Brotherly Loving Relationship* (WUNT 2 444), Tübingen, 2017, pp. 116-120.

7 Wolfgang Kasper, Manfred E. Streit and Peter J. Boettke, *Institutional Economics: Property, Competition and Policies* (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2018), 32-33.

8 Wolfgang, *Institutional Economics*, 102-103.

9 Wolfgang, *Institutional Economics*, 111-114.

10 A. Ip, "The Structural Problems of Hong Kong underlying the social movement in Light of New Institutional Economics: From Crony to Authoritarian Capitalism" in *Hong Kong Protests and Political Theory*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, forthcoming).

11 Holloway, *Philippians*, pp. 33-35.

the argument put forth by Holloway which states that the letter to Philippians is more likely a letter of consolation. Following the basic methodology of socio-rhetorical interpretation, I will analyse the two major layers of the text, namely the inner text and the economic textual. First, I will demonstrate the evidences in the inner text showing a possible relationship between the contemporary values in Paul's time and the perception of grief. Second, I will introduce how the NIE framework, analysing both the formal and informal institutions, can help us understand how the values of the Roman colony may affect the Philippians' perceptions. At the end of the paper, I will conclude by integrating the two layers and see how the NIE analysis can help to understand the perception of grief of the Philippians.

2 Inner Texture: Textual Evidence of Addressing the Roman Values

There are three main arguments behind Holloway's proposal of the letter to Philippians as a letter of consolation. He quoted early Church fathers' views, including John Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Jerome, who saw Philippians as a letter of consolation.¹² Their main argument is that Paul is concerned about consoling the Philippians with respect to Paul's chains and sufferings. The second argument is established from his view on the Philippians' rhetorical situation. He suggests that it is essential to reconstruct Paul's perceived problem in the eyes of the Philippians. It cannot be reconstructed by the traditional understanding of a historical occasion, as most of the non-elite voices are not represented by Paul's letter nor other literatures. On these grounds, Holloway argues that Paul's perceived problem originated from the Philippians' perception of their predicaments as "grief."¹³ The key text he quoted is Phil 2:19: "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, in order that I too (καὶ γώ) might be comforted when I know how things are with you." He explained that the use of "I too (καὶ γώ)" implies that Paul would like to hear their situation so that he could be comforted and, at the same time, they would be comforted when reading his letter.¹⁴ Furthermore, he points out that Paul's response to the Philippians' grief may be "Stoic lines as a failure to focus on the things that matter so as not to be grieved by the things that do not." Holloway's argument depends greatly on his idea of "perception," both Paul's and the Philippians'.¹⁵ This is a very important concept to understand the situation of the Philippians. However, we cannot analyse people's perceptions directly but can

¹² Holloway, *Philippians*, p. 34.

¹³ Holloway, *Philippians*, p. 29.

¹⁴ Holloway, *Philippians*, p. 29.

¹⁵ Holloway, *Philippians*, pp. 29-30.

only examine the context and see if there is strong evidence to support the existence of a perception consistent with the values addressed in the letter. This section will focus on looking into the text and see if there are evidence in supporting the hypothesis that Paul is trying to console the Philippians' grief originated from their Roman value rooted perception. The next section will explain how the Roman value rooted perception is formed by the NIE framework.

2.1 *Perception in the Philippians*

What is perception? Although perception is a modern concept in philosophy and psychology, it can help us gain a deeper understanding of the problem addressed by Paul. The concept of perception allows us to see the issue from a new viewpoint. Joseph Hellerman's monograph also looks at the "perception and belief of man" behind the social system of honour and how it could help read the letter to Philippians.¹⁶ Although it is not the scope of this paper to provide a detailed elaboration of this, I will give a brief explanation of the concept that the subsequent paper is based on. Philosophers and psychologists have varying views and emphases on the definition of perception. However, they do agree that perception generally refers to man's recognition of the world or the lens to interpret that world. It is different from the other basic senses of man because it is the interpretation of information gathered from our senses. Furthermore, many psychologists and philosophers agree that perception is affected by several complicated factors including the one's daily routine. This paper will focus on this less controversial idea of perception and question the ways in which economic institutions contribute to the perception of the Philippians.

2.1.1 Key Words Related to Perception: Phil 1:9: αἰσθήσει

Daniel Harrington points out that αἰσθήσει "originally refers to sense perception, but it later denoted aspects of the inner world, moral and spiritual perception as it related to 'practice'."¹⁷ Harrington's point is consistent with Phil's use of the term as well as the usage in the LXX. Philo regarded it as the cause of passions and could be deceived or polluted. Whereas, in the LXX, it does not only indicates "reception of knowledge" but also involve moral, religious and other kinds of judgement.¹⁸ Although it is not wrong to translate it as insights as in NRSV, it will be better to translate it as perception here because, as will be

16 J. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi*, Cambridge, 2005, p. 5.

17 B. Thurston, J. Ryan, & D. Harrington, *Philippians and Philemon* (Sacra Pagina 10). Collegeville, Minn., 2005, p. 53.

18 Delling, "αἰσθήσει," *TDNT* 1:187-188.

argued later in this paper, Paul's emphasis is put more on the impact from daily living. Hawthorne also points out that perception is gift from God and "can only be the result of determined and strenuous moral exercise on the part of each individual Christian."¹⁹

αἰσθῆσαι appears only once in Pauline epistle and once as verb form αἰσθάνομαι in Luke 9:45 but it is frequently used in the LXX especially in the Book of Proverbs (Prov. 1:4; 7,22; 3:20; 5:2).²⁰ However, I will argue that it is not only an intentional moral exercise that will positively affect one's perception but also one's unintentional participation in one's daily routine. Paul put αἰσθῆσαι in his opening prayer and relates it with knowledge as essential for one to have abundant love implies that, on the one hand, both knowledge and perception could be transformed and, on the other hand, they may also be polluted by the prevailing system and value in the Roman colony. One's routine-driven life determined by the economic institutions or the rules of games, with Roman values embedded in them also affect perception. I think Paul's use of αἰσθῆσαι provides us with a very important hint to initiate the investigation of the ways in which perceptions may affect one's love. For Paul, love refers to the core values, identity, and spirituality of a Christian.²¹ However, merely one word cannot fully justify our stance that Paul is addressing the perception of Philippians which is affected by the economic institutions.

2.2 Prevailing Roman Values

This section does not aim at prove the existence of Roman values but to show more textual evidences which support the direction of investigation. The justification of the relationship between economic institutions with the Philippians' perception will be shown in section 3. The second textual evidence that the Philippians were affected by economic institutions is in Phil 1:15-17. Paul identifies that there are two types of people proclaiming the Gospel. Contrary to love, they differ, not in what they do, but in their intentions and motives. Paul describes them as proclaiming Christ out of envy (φθόνος) and rivalry (ἔρις). Bruce Malina points out that envy was the core evilness in Israel's tradition by quoting, "Through the devil's envy, death entered the world" from Wisd. Sol. 2:24.²² These differences in motives imply that there are factors that will affect people's motivation as well as their values. Although we cannot conclude

19 G. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43), p. 32.

20 G. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, p. 31.

21 Ip, *A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*, pp. 81-82.

22 B. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Kentucky, 2001, p. 108.

anything now, we can reasonably infer that envy and rivalry were the prevailing values during the Roman era in Philippi.

The second set of evidence of the prevailing values that could have affected the perception of the Philippians comes from 2:3–4, where Paul asks the Philippians to do nothing due to selfish ambition (ἐριθείαν) or self-conceit (κενοδοξία). Paul once again criticises some of the Philippians in the same chapter. In Phil 2:21 he says that “all of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” These values do not create tension itself but cause the diverging perceptions of Paul’s condition. This divergence in interpreting Paul’s condition surely threatens the unity of the community. There is not much debate over the tension brought about by these values. However, this paper tries to push the discussion further to argue that economic institutions are the most important contributing factor to these values.

In 3:19, Paul describes the enemy as “their end is destruction; their god is belly; their glory is their shame and their minds are set on earthly thing.” This verse does not address their actions but their inner motives and values. Scholars have different suggestions for what exactly are these words refer to. Instead of interpreting κοιλία as food law, it could also refer to human desire or immoral practices.²³ The pair of glory δόξα and shame αἰσχύνῃ is more likely to be related to the prevailing roman values of honour and shame which will be elaborated in next section. This view is strengthened by the last part of this verse; “their minds are set on earthly thing.” We are not going to discuss this verse in its entirety here. However, I would like to point out that the keywords pointed to in this section support the view that there are earthly values that threaten the community in the Letter to Philippians.

2.3 *Counter Examples to Prevailing Values*

The third set of evidence comes from how did Paul paint the portrait of the four examples, including Timothy, Christ, Epaphroditus, and Paul himself. They all demonstrate a counter example to people usually do under the prevailing values. He praises Timothy, asks the Philippians to welcome and honour Epaphroditus, and provides the most frequently discussed example of the Christ hymn. It is not accidental that there are four examples in one letter. These examples are important because they not only counter some prevailing negative values but show that it is possible to live with Christian values in similar situations. What is the function of quoting four examples in one letter? What are the similarities among these four examples? In what ways do they provide hints for us to understand Paul’s possible intention in addressing the

²³ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, p. 224.

prevailing values that affects their perceptions? I suggest that if we examine the values reflected in these examples, we will see that they counter the prevailing values that Paul attacks elsewhere in the letter. Additionally, the use of examples to counter the prevailing values gives us another argument that supports the thesis of this paper, examples are successful models that can help people live with alternative values.

We can construct a short summary here, though not yet a conclusion. Paul seems to be aware that there were certain values prevailing in Philippi that might affect their way of living and their perceptions of their situation. The polluted perceptions will surely deteriorate their love and joy which drive Paul to write a letter to console them. This paper argues that these values are not merely social values but the outcome of the economic institutions which will, ultimately, affect people's perceptions.

3 Economic Texture: Economic Institutions and Perception

This section is not going to deal with the basic methodological issues related to the relevance of NIE with ancient economies as that has been elaborated in my recent monograph and article titled "A Christian Response to the Conflicting Relationship Between Slave and Master in A Christian Household".²⁴ However, I would like to add a few words to the general contribution of NIE in understanding of ancient economy and in what ways it could influence people's perception. The specific contribution of NIE, for understanding the community of Philippi, lies in its explanatory power towards formal and informal institutions.²⁵ Scholars started to realise that documents usually cannot reflect the

24 A. Ip, "A Christian Response to the Conflicting Relationship Between Slave and Master in A Christian Household," *Scrit*, 14 (2018); A. Ip, *A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of the Letter to Philemon in Light of the New Institutional Economics: An Exhortation to Transform a Master-Slave Economic Relationship into a Brotherly Loving Relationship* (WUNT 2.444), Tübingen, 2017.

25 As the heart of NIE's investigation, "institution" is the bridging concept for the NIE and the New Testament studies. As an institution is different from an organisation, where organisation refers to players of the economy and institution refers to the rules of the game. Institutions are rules that facilitate, and to some extent, determines transactions or, broadly speaking, human interactions. Institutions include both formal and informal rules. The basic belief of the NIE is that players will try to find an institution that can help them to minimise their transaction cost and cost in facing uncertainty. Both formal and informal rules are embedded in our daily lives that defines our human interactions. The key focus of NIE is to study the relationship among informal institution, formal institutions and the final economic outcomes. See A. Ip, "Foundations of Sociorhetorical

people's majority. Instead, due to "economic exclusion" the 99% were not represented in the main storyline due to their relatively lower social and economic status. Due to the recent growing interest of "people's history", NIE can help us understand the lives of unrepresented people through inferences, gathered from known, formal, and informal rules, to unknown, behaviours of the general people using the NIE behavioural framework.²⁶

This section aims at preparing the reader to focus on economic institutions and how they affect people's perceptions through their participation in formal and informal rules. I will try to illustrate that economic institutions are not independent of people's lives. Furthermore, by participating in daily activities, which are driven by different economic institutions, the values of various institutions will be "transplanted", unintentionally, to them. These values will become the determining factors of people's perceptions. Betz also points out that the use of *φρονην* in Philippians 2:1-4 suggests that Paul emphasises on the Christian's ethics as "practical thinking."²⁷ There is a close relationship between practical life one's thinking and even ethics.

The simplest way to define economic institutions comes from the Nobel laureate, Ronald Coase, who defined it as the "rules of game" that govern people's behaviours in an economy. For the concept of the game, he refers to the process of distribution of resources, usually through different forms of competition. Therefore, the rules of the game determine who will win and who will lose. NIE economists identify different types of institutions – formal and informal – that work together to help the economy functions smoothly to achieve the ultimate economic goal of that economy or a particular section of that economy.²⁸

The influence of economic institutions on perception comes from the view that people's perceptions can be unintentionally learnt or trained by actively participating in their daily routines, in which the Roman values are embedded. Economy decides who is going to be awarded and punished, generating a carrot-and-stick effect on people – though not necessarily all – living under these institutions.

Interpretation from New Institutional Economics" in: *International Voices in Biblical Studies*, Atlanta, to be published.

26 J.A. Marchal, "Introduction," in: *The People beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below*, ed. J.A. Marchal (Early Christianity and Its Literature), Atlanta, 2015, pp. 2-6.

27 Betz, *Studies in Paul's Letter*, p. 15.

28 Ip, *A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*, pp. 121-122.

3.1 *Colonial Economy and Perceptions of the Philippians*

This section will use the NIE framework to elucidate the colonial economy so as to illuminate the resulting economic values and relationships that contribute to the interpretation of “grief” of the Philippians. The NIE framework refers to identifying the relevant economic institutions and their functions in achieving the economic goal of the empire, based on the economic assumptions set in it. The key is to explain how both the formal and informal institutions, in a way of daily practice with the rules of the game and values embedded, affect people’s perception.

3.1.1 Economic Objectives of Establishing Philipian Colony

The economic objectives of a colony were complicated because there were different economic groups in a colony and their economic interests or objectives were conflicting. So, when we say economic objectives in this paper, we refer specifically to the economic objective of the Roman empire which has the power to determine the formal and informal institutions. What is the economic objective of the empire that was established in the colony? What were the economic reasons for them to manage the colony in the way it was? How did both formal and informal economic institutions function to achieve these economic goals? What were the results? The reasons behind Roman colonisation were varied; however, the main economic purpose was relatively obvious: Romanisation. However, the economic function served by Romanisation still requires an elaboration. It has been noticed that most of the colonies founded by Augustus were mainly for the settlement of veterans. The founding of a colony marked the end of military occupation and the beginning of Roman peace.²⁹ Also, Romanisation has long-term economic effects as it helped reduce the transaction costs of managing the provincial areas by using the colony as showcases of Roman culture, the privileges of be Roman citizens, and therefore, reduced the cost of management of the areas away from the centre of the empire. Although there is debate over whether the effect of Romanisation on different provinces were the same or not, the effect on the Philippi seems to be rather stable and strong, which was reflected in the strong Roman-style town centre.³⁰

Romanisation seems to have been the most essential economic objectives for colonisation in the time of Augustus. One of the economic reasons

29 T. H. Watkins, “Coloniae and Ius Italicum in the Early Empire,” *The Classical Journal*, 78 (1983), p. 322.

30 P. Oakes, “The Economic Situation of the Philipian Christian,” in: *The People beside Paul: The Philipian Assembly and History from Below*, ed. J.A. Marchal (Early Christianity and Its Literature), Atlanta, 2015, p. 70.

may have been the high cost of maintaining a professionally paid army. In that sense, Romanisation was the best economic alternative to maintaining peace and control over such a grand empire. There had been a long tradition of Romans extending their citizenship and culture during Republic through building colonies. This purpose seems to have been more dominant during Augustus' reign. The colony was named first under Anthony and then after Augustus through the reconstitution of Philippi as *Colonia Julia Augusta Philippensis* in 27 BCE.³¹ Philippi was made one of the 18 colonies that *Ius Italicum* was granted.³² The coins minted in Philippi had the image of Goddess Victoria on it. These showed preliminarily that Romanisation, with Augustus as the main representative, was one of the major concerns for building the colony in Philippi. The natural resources around Philippi and its location as one of the main trade routes via Egnatia surely adds to its economic value as a colony. However, it cannot explain its existence and economic role in the Roman empire. In the view of the NIE, the major economic function of Romanisation was to reduce the transaction cost in managing the settlement and its accessible territory. The assumption here is that, first, it was costly to manage the empire merely using military force. Second, the distance from Rome contributed to a high cost for demonstrating the greatness of Rome, attracting non-Romans to follow their culture and share the administration. This would allow to reduce the resistance and high information cost to understand the real situation in the colonies and to make every decision in Rome. Salmon is right to point out that the extension of Romanness induced the surrounding area to adopt the Roman way.³³ The following section will show how the empire made use of both the formal and informal institutions to help the Romanisation of the city of Philippi.

3.1.2 Formal Institution

Formal institution refers to the legal perspective that sets the foundation for the rules of the game for resource distribution. The colony was established formally by *deduction*, which signified the formal creation of a new settlement for Roman citizens. Philippi was not merely a normal colony but a colony with a special status, a colony with *Ius Italicum*. Colonies with *Ius Italicum* were of the same right as those in Italy and were superior in rank than the other two types of colonies, occupied by "immune" and "titular". A colony with this right had the highest honour and full civic law and property rights, including ownership

31 J.H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi*, Cambridge, 2005, p. 65.

32 Watkins, *Coloniae*, p. 320.

33 E.T. Salmon, 149

and transfer of property. Philippi was also a veteran colony in which 500 veterans were settled by the order of Augustus.³⁴ Large proportions of land were allotted to the veterans in the colony. Privileges were also given to them to balance their disadvantages of settling away from their homeland.³⁵ The result was that there was a significant divergence in resources, including land and rights, in the colony. That makes Suetonius's comment right that "suffering of local people at the hands of veteran soldiers was standard fare for Roman colonization."³⁶ These types of privileges and special benefits are similar to one of the NIE concepts called asset specificity.³⁷ The economic explanation for creating asset specificity is that instead of using brute force to suppress the opposing force in the empire, which may be costly to do so, they created an artificial asset so as to stimulate people to accept these values by participating in the process of climbing up the social ladder.

In the light of NIE, in what sense can this formal institutional nature help foster Romanisation? According to the property rights theory, one of the branching theories of NIE, property rights are the rules of the game in an economy and, therefore, determine the winner and loser of the resource allocation. The outcome of the abovementioned formal institution concerning Romanization was that Philippi became a highly stratified city. The stratification between Romans and non-Romans, elite and non-elites, was great and visible.³⁸ The resulting social and economic stratification became part of the basic structure of the colonial economy to help stimulate people's competitive nature and foster other implanted Roman values. Stratification implies the existence of a set of rules which determine who can climb up the artificial social ladder and how far. The social stratification did not merely exist but was visible in several ways. It could be seen in people's dressing, inscriptions, seating at public events, seating at private banquets, and material provisions in their daily lives.³⁹ It was also reflected in their legal power. This does not mean that Romans did not consider evidences. However, they did so in an unequal manner. Peter Garnsey articulated this well by saying, "The principal criterion of legal privilege in the eyes of the Romans was dignitas, or honour derived from

34 B.B. Thurston & J.M. Ryan, *Philippians & Philemon* (Sacra Pagina), 2009, p. 8.

35 Watkins, *Coloniae*, p. 321.

36 Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, p. 70.

37 M. Sykuta, "New Institutional Econometrics: The Case of Research on Contracting and Organization," in: *New Institutional Economics: A Guidebook*, ed. É. Brousseau and J. Glachant, Cambridge, 2008, p. 138.

38 Hellerman shows inscriptions that support the existence of stratification in Philippi. See Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, pp. 101-108.

39 Hellerman, *Philippians*, pp. 11-19.

power, style of life and wealth.”⁴⁰ The formal institution, therefore, does not only determine the outcome but also the basic incentive for behaviours in the colony.

However, it is not enough to achieve the goal merely by a formal institution. One is justified in asking how the Romans could guarantee that people in the colony will act in the Roman way, given the formal rules, instead of resisting them. As mentioned above, Romanisation was a cost-balancing act and the best alternative to military action. In order to achieve this goal, formal institutions alone cannot work but depends on the informal institution to sustain the whole colonial economy. There are at least two ways that the formal institution is dependent on informal institution. First, formal institution requires the value system to justify the outcome. Second, it requires the informal institutions to help guarantee that people will live in the Roman way given the formal rules.

3.1.3 Informal Institution

This section will focus on how the colonial economy borrows one of the profound informal institutions, honour and shame, and elaborate its economic function in cooperating with the formal institution to Romanisation.⁴¹ The focus of the following section is to explain how the institution of honour and shame helped stabilise or justify the formal institution and maintain the Roman way of living in a colony. The focus on honour and shame is because it was the profound institution which was subsumed all other values which will be elaborated later.

Every economy requires informal institutions, in the form of one or a set of prevailing values, to justify the outcome of its resource allocation. Capitalism requires the myth of freedom in the free market to justify its uneven distribution of resources or disparity of rich and poor. The argument reads like this: since the market is free and “fair”, so the outcome of it is also fair.⁴² Therefore, it is justified. The values of free market then penetrate into people’s lives in the capitalist society, such as competition is good and necessary for development and prosperity. Poverty, then, is understood as a natural consequence of free competition and scarcity but not capitalism itself. Similar to a colonial economy, like Philippi, where, on the one hand they needed to create a privileged group so as to attract people to trace the Roman values or Roman citizenship.

⁴⁰ P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1970, p. 279.

⁴¹ There are other informal institutions that may also include the patron-client relationships, the prevailing philosophical thoughts and others which may not be elaborated in this paper.

⁴² The freedom in free market refer to negative freedom and freedom of opportunity. It does not really guarantee everyone is free in the market.

On the other hand, however, they needed to give a “reason” to justify the divergence in rights and resources allocated in order to maintain peace. In the Roman economy, the institution of honour and shame played the same role as the “free market” in the capitalist society. Honour and shame provided the “reason” for resource allocation and was itself an informal rule for it.

3.2 *Honour and Shame as an Informal Institution*

What justifies the resulting social and economic stratification from formal institution? The institution of honour and shame was not a product of the colony but was of major institution of the whole Roman empire. Bruce Malina defines honour as “the value of a person in his or her own eyes plus that person’s value in the eyes of his or her social group.”⁴³ Resources, including government projects and public offices, were allocated according to one’s honour.⁴⁴ Therefore, honour has power or is the power itself. Unlike a capitalist society where capital is power, so people will compete for capital in a capitalist way. Lendon quotes K. Singer to describe the nature of honour as an informal institution: “The unwritten norm of a civilization resembles a melody more than what modern physicists and Jurists call a law.”⁴⁵ The question is what kind of informal institution was it and how did it perform a function similar to a free market to help justify the colonial formal institution? Unlike the modern world, we have various forms of mass media to convey information. We have public information concerning different markets, general price levels and stock prices concerning every listed company. There is also easily accessible information concerning an individual’s background, such as one’s work experience, criminal record or past experiences, etc. Also, the market price itself is another source of information in modern market economy. However, how could the resources have been distributed in the ancient world, with very limited information conveying channels? In terms of the NIE, the transaction cost of knowing one’s genuine ability and values was very high in the ancient world. So, why would the resources be allocated in such a way, as set by formal institutions, be kept? The institution of honour and shame did not only perform as the basic reason to explain the resource allocation outcome, given the limited information about the public in the ancient world, but also an institution to spread the information itself. In order to achieve this goal, there were two basic values associated with the honour and shame institution. Therefore, this institution

43 B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 2001, p. 30.

44 J. Lendon, *Empire of Honour*, Oxford, 2001, p. 39.

45 Lendon, *Empire*, p. 39.

was transplanted to a colony to provide the justification for the highly uneven resources allocation, with Roman preference, in Philippi.⁴⁶

The first Roman value associated with honour competition is “visualised”. Carlin Barton has well-articulated that “for the Romans, being was being seen.”⁴⁷ That makes perfect economic sense; if honour and shame is an informal institution, it reduces the transaction cost of deciding who can get the resources and who cannot, it cannot be a private product or private virtue. Hellerman describes honour as a public commodity that must be recognised in the others’ eyes.⁴⁸

Lendon articulated this situation quite well:

Honour was mediated through the perceptions of others, and even a superfluity of worthy qualities was of no use unless these qualities were publicly known and approved by other aristocrats.

In order to make one’s honour be visualised by others, Romans would seek every opportunity to be honoured, such as through morning salutations, seating at public events, and praise given by other honoured people.⁴⁹ Then, competition for honour became a part of the daily encounter or routine of the Philippians. Also, honour or shame existed in the others eyes. If others did not consider it as honour, it simply did not exist according to Roman culture.⁵⁰ The result was that being honoured in front of the public would be perceived as “honourable” and being locked would be perceived as “shameful” and create the grief that the Philippians were suffering.⁵¹

The second value associated with the institution of honour and shame was competition or self-interest. As mentioned before, the genuine benefit, power and privilege carried by honour was the economic incentive for the competition of it. Not only did it bring power and benefits but also was the most profound rule to determine resource allocation. Competition for honour might have penetrated into all other kinds of competition since it was the most important informal rule.⁵² Lendon is right in articulating that honour was certainly not the only way to compete with others but it clearly was the first value

46 Hellerman, p. 71.

47 C. Barton, *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones*, 2001, p. 58.

48 Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, p. 41.

49 Honour was considered as a real existence that could be owned. More importantly, honour was considered as powerful for those who owned it. Lendon, *Empire*, 55.

50 B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 110.

51 Lendon, *Empire*, p. 39.

52 Lendon, *Empire* p. 34.

that Romans would think of and the most profound value in comparison.⁵³ The competition and self-interest was exaggerated by the basic value of the “limited good”. The concept of limited good was a belief stating that “all goods exist in limited amounts that cannot be increased or expanded; it therefore follows that individuals, alone or with their families, can improve their social position only at the expense of others.”⁵⁴ Honourable people will not give honour to others as they believe that giving credit to others may imply that they borrow from others. The nature of profound economic interest associated with honour and the basic value of limited goods were the foundations for the value of competition and self-interest, associated with the informal institution of honour and shame.

4 Perception of “Grief” in the Light of the NIE

Having explained the major formal and informal institutions of the colonial economy, we have to answer the original question posted in section 2: Why would the community in Philippi perceive Paul’s situation as a grievous one? What was the lens they wear in viewing Paul’s situation? In what sense did this perception relate to our NIE analysis of the colonial economy? Perception is not formed within a short period of time nor can it only be learned through formal training. People’s unintentional participation in their daily routine will constitute the major part of perception formation. We discussed in section 2 that Paul intentionally addressed the prevailing values affecting the Philippians. These values can be summarized as a self-centred and self-glorifying value, including envy (φθόνος) and rivalry (ἔρις), selfish ambition (ἐπιθελαν) or self-conceit (κενοδοξία), glory (δόξα), and shame (αἰσχύνη). Section 3 provides a concrete explanation on how these values entered people’s values systems or perception through their participation in the routine governed by both formal and informal institutions. In a world where the basic formal rule drove people to compete, and the informal institution drove people to compete for honour, in a limited good and visualised matter, people were “trained” every day and nearly in every occasion concerning these rules and their associated values. Therefore, through participating in the daily life, formed by both formal and informal institutions, the Roman values were planted into the community unintentionally. With this self-glorifying and self-centred perception, a self-sacrificing and self-humbling act of suffering and being chained will be viewed as

53 Lendon, *Empire* p. 34.

54 Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 89.

grief. Paul's consolations, using different metaphors for Jesus's slavery and other examples, also confirm that his is not addressing his suffering situation itself but how to understand the situation.

5 Conclusion

I hope this paper can help us to see the possible relevance between the economic institutions and the values influencing the community's perception in Philippi. Economic institutions, on the one hand, were very important in building a structure to help facilitate the running of the colony and the spread of Romanisation. On the other hand, those values embedded in the colonial economy significantly affect people's values through their daily participation in games and routines, determined by these institutions. In turn, these values might have significantly affected the Philippians community's perception, making them perceive Paul's situation, in jail for Christ, as "insult" but not honour. This perception of Paul or their own situation, creates the feeling of grief and, therefore, requires Paul's consolation as suggested by Holloway.