

Michael B. Cover / Lutz Doering (eds.)

Philo of Alexandria and Philosophical Discourse



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Preface

The present volume originated in a two-day workshop, “Philo of Alexandria and Philosophical Discourse”, organized by the two editors, which took place at the University of Münster, 12–13 May 2019. The idea for this workshop took shape during Michael Cover’s tenure as Humboldt research fellow at the Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum at Münster, headed by Lutz Doering, from mid-2018 to mid-2019. As the Introduction to the volume will outline, we thought the time ripe for another attempt at sit-



*The Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum in 2019
(Photo: M.B. Cover)*

uating Philo of Alexandria in the philosophical discourse of his day. At this workshop, papers were presented by Mauro Bonazzi, Michael Cover, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, Carlos Lévy, Maren Niehoff, and Gregory Sterling. David Runia generously commented on the papers at the end of each of the two days. After the workshop we asked the contributors to turn their papers into book chapters, and we approached further scholars for additional aspects of the topic.

We wish to thank the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for their support of the workshop, of a visit by Lutz Doering to Marquette University for common work on the volume, and of the Open Access publication, for which we also gratefully note support by the Open Access Publication Fund at the University of Münster. We thank the International Office of the University of Münster for supplementary funding of the workshop. We give our special thanks to Dr. Jeanne Hossenlopp, Vice President for Research and Innovation at Marquette University, and her office for their generous support of this project at several stages, and we express our gratitude to the Franz-Delitzsch-Gesellschaft for facilitating the production of the volume.

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The Editors

Introduction:

Philo of Alexandria and Philosophical Discourse

Michael B. Cover and Lutz Doering

In one of his earlier commentaries on the book of Genesis, Philo of Alexandria writes: “All philosophy comes into our lives like the healing of the soul ... and it belongs to a virtuous person to be a philosopher.”¹ This statement, which Philo aspired to realize in his own intellectual life, and others like it, have given rise to his portrait as a “Jewish philosopher”. One finds this description unqualified in a number of introductory sources, including the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* agrees, although it also hedges its bets, calling him a “philosopher, writer and political leader”.² Philo’s 2022 entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, by contrast, begins in a more circumspect manner: “Philo of Alexandria is a Jewish thinker Whether he really was a philosopher is a question still debated at length.”³ *Der neue Pauly* is even more guarded, speaking of Philo as “der bedeutendste Repräsentant des griech.-sprachigen Judentums von Alexandria”.⁴

¹ Philo, QG 3.43, PLCLSup, modified (ἄνθρωπος as “virtuous person”). – Throughout this volume, the abbreviations PLCL and PLCLSup, respectively, are used for F.H. Colson/G.H. Whitaker/R. Marcus (ed.), *Philo* (10 vols. with 2 supplements; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962). Some chapters also use PCW for L. Cohn/P. Wendland/S. Reiter (ed.), *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt* (6 vols.; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1896–1915). Otherwise, abbreviations follow *The SBL Handbook of Style, Second Edition* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014).

² T. Rajak, “Philon (4)”, in S. Hornblower/A. Spawforth (ed.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 1134.

³ C. Lévy, “Philo of Alexandria”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/philo/> (accessed on 6 March 2024).

⁴ D.T. Runia, “Philon von Alexandria (12)”, in H. Cancik/H. Schneider (ed.), *Der neue Pauly* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996) 9:850–6, at 850; cf. M. Landfester, who describes Philo as “griech.-jüd. Philosoph, der das Judentum in den Kategorien griech. Philosophie interpretierte“, in “Philon [12] aus Alexandria (Philo Iudaeus)”, in M. Landfester (ed.), *Der neue Pauly Supplemente I, Vol. 2: Geschichte der antiken Texte: Autoren- und Werklexikon* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007) 456–59, at 456; ET: *Brill’s New Pauly Supplements I – Volume 2: Dictionary of Greek and Latin Authors and Texts* (trans. T. Jerke/V. Dallman; Leiden: Brill, 2009) 479–83, at 479 (“Greek-Jewish philosopher, who interpreted Judaism in the categories of Greek philosophy”).

Whatever is at stake in the distinction between a “philosopher”, a “thinker”, and a “representative of Judaism”, it is clear that philosophical discourse influenced Philo’s life and thought. Thus, the core questions animating the present volume: How and when did Philo encounter philosophical thoughts and ideas? What works did he read or teach, and how often; and how deeply did they affect him? How does Philo negotiate the complex and competing networks of the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophical schools, rank its systems and contributors, adopt and adapt its vocabularies, and relate its logical, therapeutic, and ontological insights to the sacred writings and traditions of his native Alexandrian Judaism – from which they might not be wholly separable?

In addressing these and related problems, we have deliberately not entitled this collection “Philo the philosopher” or “Philo and philosophy”, but “Philo and philosophical discourse”. Perhaps our approach would be even better labeled, “Philo and the discourse *according to philosophy*” (ὁ κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν λόγος).⁵ This phrase, which Philo uses verbatim at least three times in his oeuvre,⁶ emphasizes that while the Alexandrian was trained in and engaged various philosophical doctrines, he also often adopted an instrumental view of it. It neither defines his identity or exhaustively describes his project. And yet, the title, “Philo and philosophical discourse”, also suggests that the present volume attempts to probe where and how Philo is to be situated within the philosophical debate of his time.

Although many histories of Philo and philosophical discourse begin in the twentieth century with Harry Austryn Wolfson,⁷ the classic “Philonic problem” of the Alexandrian’s relationship to Greek thought is already discernable in the words of his earliest recipients. Although Philo has usually be ranked nearest to Platonism of some stripe, it is good to recall that his earliest explicit Christian recipient, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215 CE), calls Philo a “Pythagorean”.⁸ While his writings might be understood (or misunderstood) as philosophical rather than theological or exegetical, the question of what *kind* of philosophy Philo expounded and practiced was not self-evident, even to the ancients.

Jerome (342–420 CE), a few centuries later, expresses the more common Platonic portrait of Philo – succinctly presented as “Philo the Jew, a native of Alexandria, of

⁵ Cf. C. Lévy’s “le langage de la philosophie”, *infra*, rendering λόγος as “language” rather than “discourse.”

⁶ Philo, *Agr.* 14; *Mut.* 74; *Decal.* 150; cf. *QG* 2.41 “The good person <makes use of> words and dogmas according to philosophy” (ὁ σπουδαῖος λόγοις κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν καὶ δόγμασιν). The phrase appears in all three of Philo’s scriptural commentary series, and thus suggests his stable relationship to “the discourse according to philosophy”, even as Philo’s use of such a discourse is uneven.

⁷ H.A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (2 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948).

⁸ D.T. Runia, “Why Does Clement of Alexandria Call Philo ‘The Pythagorean?’”, *VC* 49 (1995) 1–22.

priestly stock”⁹ – which seems to reflect his reputation in both Greek and Latin circles:

Apud Graecos dicitur: ἢ Πλάτων φιλωνίζει ἢ Φίλων πλατωνίζει, id est aut Plato Philonem sequitur aut Platonem Philo; tanta est similitudo sensuum et eloquii.¹⁰

By asserting the near but non-identical nature of Philo’s thoughts and expressions with those of Plato, Jerome situates Philo maximally on the side of Plato and squarely within the tents of the Platonists. Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335–395 CE), in roughly the same timeframe, echoes Jerome’s dictum, in sense if not in letter, accusing Philo of introducing concepts too Platonic for Christian theology.¹¹

Later generations, while quoting Jerome’s famous *bon mot*, would not be so confident that the similarity between Plato and Philo amounted to the identity of their systems. One may turn, for example, to Philo’s first modern editor, the renowned Gallican humanist, Adrien Turnèbe (1512–1565), who in the learned Greek preface to his *editio princeps* (1552),¹² articulates a more variegated portrait of Philo’s relationship to Judaism and the various philosophical schools.

With regard to the former – Philo’s relationship to Judaism vis-à-vis philosophy – Turnèbe remarks that Philo was “at the same time Hellenizing and Judaizing, both doing philosophy and doing theology” (ἑλληνίζων ἅμα καὶ ἰουδαϊζων, φιλοσοφῶν τε καὶ θεολογῶν). In this remarkable turn of phrase, which effortlessly transforms “Judaizing” from a Pauline invective into a laudatory synonym for a noble religious labor,¹³ Turnèbe ranks Philo’s “Hellenizing” philosophical activity as preliminary to his ultimate theological end.

Regarding Philo and the various philosophical schools, Turnèbe’s comments bear citation at length, as he sets the stage, in a certain sense, for the twenty-first century conversation:

(Philo) takes the Platonic muse as a servant of theology and admits her into the innermost sanctuary, but he restrains what is profane in the other philosophers and drives it outside the sacred precincts, since (he deems) it unworthy of such initiatory rites –

⁹ Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 11: “Philo Judaeus, natione Alexandrinus, de genere sacerdotum.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See M.B. Cover, “Philo of Alexandria, Eunomius, and Gregory of Nyssa on Divine Names and Power(s)”, in A. Briggman/E. Scully (ed.), *New Narratives for Old: Reading Early Christian Theology Using the Historical Method* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022) 103–22.

¹² A. Turnèbe, ΦΙΛΩΝΟΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΥ ΕΙΣ ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΜΩΣΕΩΣ ΚΟΣΜΟΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΑ, ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΑ, ΝΟΜΟΘΕΤΙΚΑ; ΤΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΜΟΝΟΒΙΒΛΙΑ, *sive Philonis Iudaei in libros Mosi: de mundi opificio, historicos, de legibus; eiusdem libri singulares* (Paris: Regius, 1552).

¹³ David Nirenberg points out in a private communication that this is one of the most positive uses of ἰουδαϊζων that he has ever seen. For his work on the subject, see *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2013).

except when occasionally for the sake of taste and seasoning he sprinkles in some little bits from the other philosophical traditions, like salt. He makes use of the Platonic intellectual frameworks in such a straightforward and perceptive way that it has become a proverb that either Plato philonizes or Philo platonizes.¹⁴

Turnèbe's assessment represents a studied advance on Jerome's proverb. While Plato was Philo's primary philosophical "muse" (μοῦσα) and "Platonic intellectual frameworks" (αἱ πλατωνικαὶ διάνοιαι) permeate his writings, "the other philosophers" (οἱ ἄλλοι φιλόσοφοι) do warrant reference, as coming to bear on his thought. What was unsuitable from these "other sects" (αἱ ἄλλαι αἱρέσεις) is driven out, while certain choice turns of phrase are selected for the purpose of "seasoning" (ἄρτυμα) only, rather than philosophical substance.

Turnèbe's blithe dismissal of Philo's borrowing in earnest from other philosophical schools would certainly fall afoul of many today, not least a number of the contributors to the present volume. For such scholars, Philo's debts to Stoicism or Pyrrhonism are far from superficial, but penetrate his exegesis, physics, anthropology, historiography, and theology in a more substantive way. Nevertheless, even if such philosophical influences on Philo's works amount to more than mere flavorings from the Alexandrian rhetorical spice cabinet, Turnèbe's assessment has held in the main. Philo's reputation as a Platonist or Platonizing Jew continues, though not without noteworthy and important challenges and refinements.

This early modern prolegomenon sets the stage for the conversation about Philo and philosophical discourse, which would blossom in the twentieth century. Here we may make mention of two contrasting giants of the field, Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough and Harry Austryn Wolfson. Goodenough follows Turnèbe's basic characterization of Philo, with a few additional modifications:

Philo's philosophy, which is eclectic, is by no means sporadically eclectic: it is the philosophy of an eclectic Neo-Pythagorean-Platonist, one with many Stoic and Cynic details, especially in ethics, but quite consistently antipathetic to Stoic, Cynic, or Skeptic fundamental points of view.¹⁵

¹⁴ οἷα γὰρ πρόσπολον θεολογίας παραλαβὼν τὴν πλατωνικὴν μοῦσαν, αὐτὴν μὲν εἰσω τῶν ἀδύτων εἰσδέχεται, τῶν ἄλλων δὲ φιλοσόφων τὸ βέβηλον ὡς τῶν τοιούτων ἀνοργίαστον τελετῶν ἀπελαύνει ἔξω περιρραντηρίων ἀνείρξας, πλὴν εἰ μὴ που γεύματος χάριν καὶ ἀρτύματος ὥσπερ ἄλλας παρεμπάσσει καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἱρέσεων ὀλίγα ἄττα· οὕτω δὲ εὐθυβόλως καὶ εὐσκόπως ταῖς πλατωνικαῖς χρῆται διανοίαις, ὥστε παροιμασθῆναι ἢ Πλάτωνα φιλωνίζειν ἢ Φίλωνα πλατωνίζειν. Transcription by M.B. Cover. Translation by G.E. Sterling and M.B. Cover, in F. Gabriel/S. Marculescu/J. Weinberg (ed.), *Philon d'Alexandrie dans l'Europe moderne: réceptions d'un corpus judéo-hellénistique (XVIe-XVIIIe s.)* (Études augustiniennes; Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

¹⁵ E.R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935) 235.

Goodenough's "details", like Turnèbe's *ὀλίγα ἄττα* of the "other philosophers", continue Clement's and Jerome's cumulative portrait of Philo the Platonizer.

Wolfson, by contrast, presents a Philo who, while by no means a Stoic or a Cynic, is consistently portrayed as holding a view which, although it sounds like Plato, is not purely Platonic or is Platonic in a revisionist way. A good example of Wolfson's position may be seen in his treatment of Philo's view of God and the ideas. He begins with Philo's recognition of the insufficiency of Plato's view on the relationship of the ideas and God. The possibility or even likelihood of the co-eternity of the ideas with God in Plato's system is simply untenable, in Wolfson's view, for Philo Judaeus:

In accordance with this fundamental belief, (Philo) sets out to give his own version of the philosophy of Plato, and he does so partly as an interpretation of Plato and partly as a departure from him.¹⁶

Whether it is "interpretation" or "departure" that ultimately characterizes Philo's engagement with Plato remains open-ended for Wolfson, but one gathers the sense, from this and other problematizations of Platonic thought, that Wolfson inclines toward departure. "Philonic philosophy" is a scripturalist pattern distinct from Plato and Platonism – not an epilogue to Hellenistic philosophy, alongside Plutarch – but the advent of a new kind of philosophy altogether, which has more in common with Byzantine and Medieval thought than it does with its Homeric predecessors.¹⁷ "Philonic philosophy" adumbrates "synthetic medieval philosophy" and heralds not the closing of the curtain but the opening scene of a new act. With such a view, Wolfson – although chary of attributing Philonic novelty to anything other than Jewish Scripture – left the door open for other influences as well, even the Cynics and Stoics that he meant to leave outside. As we shall see, many continue to find that opening a welcome one, in the attempt fully to understand the confluence of philosophical streams in the fertile delta of Philo's Jewish thought.

The debate between Goodenough and Wolfson on the nature of Philo's philosophy was critically reframed in the 1977 monograph of Valentin Nikiprowetzky.¹⁸ In this book, Nikiprowetzky argued that attempts to locate Philo's philosophical commitments had been frustrated by a key scholarly oversight: that Philo was not primarily a philosopher, but a scriptural exegete. His intervention set off a tectonic shift

¹⁶ Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:201.

¹⁷ Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:457. Cf. H. de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (trans. L.C. Sheppard/E. Englund; San Francisco: Ignatius, 1950 [1947]) 166–7, who gives just the opposite picture of Philo as on the side of the philosophical (Homeric) allegorists, as opposed to the patristic, Byzantine, and Medieval Christian authors.

¹⁸ V. Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: Son caractère et sa portée. Observations philologiques* (ALGHJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1977).

in Philonic studies, providing a new orientation which has been carried forward by the Philo Institute as well as *The Studia Philonica Annual*. But it did not solve the philosophical problem; it only reframed it.¹⁹

I. Four Recent Collections

Recent decades have witnessed a revival of interest in Philo from a philosophical vantage point. Of the many significant precursors to this collection, we wish to mention four edited volumes.²⁰ The first is the 1998 collection, *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie*, edited by Carlos Lévy. This volume includes papers from a conference at the University of Paris in October of 1995. Although the volume begins with Jean Riaud's "hommage" to Nikiprowetzky, lauding his monograph, Lévy notes in his foreword that the blossoming of studies of ancient philosophy, and especially Middle Platonism and Philo, in the intervening decade and a half had made it urgent to "pose again the essential question of the relationship of Philo to philosophy".²¹ The volume edited by Lévy is divided into three parts: (1) Philosophical Language in Philo;²² (2) Hermeneutical Problems;²³ and (3) Philo and the Philosophical Schools.²⁴ Part one is made up of twelve essays, treating topics as far ranging as the language of the virtues, the soul, incorporeality, and the problem of *oikeiosis* in Philo. It also includes a first French translation of *De Deo*. Part two, which focuses

¹⁹ For characteristically appreciative remarks on the contribution of Nikiprowetzky in a volume such as this one, see, e.g., J. Riaud, "Hommage à V. Nikiprowetzky: 'Présentation des Études Philoniennes'", in C. Lévy (ed.), *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie: Actes du colloque international organisé par le Centre d'études sur la philosophie hellénistique et romaine de l'Université de Paris XII-Val de Marne (Créteil, Fontenay, Paris, 26-28 octobre 1995)* (Monothéismes et philosophie; Turnhout: Brepols, 1998) 11-13.

²⁰ Other relevant volumes on Philo and philosophy include: A.M. Mazzanti/F. Calabi, (ed.), *La Rivelazione in Filone di Alessandria: Natura, Legge, Storia. Atti del VII Convegno di Studi del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina (Bologna 29-30 settembre 2003)* (Biblioteca di Adamantius 2; Verucchio: P. G. Pazzini, 2004); B. Decharneux/S. Inowlocki (ed.), *Philon d'Alexandrie: Un penseur à l'intersection des cultures gréco-romaine, orientale, juive et chrétienne* (Monothéismes et Philosophie 12; Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); and F. Calabi/O. Munnich/G. Reydam-Schils/E. Vimercati (ed.), *Pouvoir et puissances chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Monothéismes et Philosophie 22; Turnhout: Brepols, 2015).

²¹ C. Lévy, "Avant-propos", in idem (ed.), *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie: Actes du colloque international organisé par le Centre d'Etudes sur la Philosophie Hellénistique et Romaine de l'Université de Paris XII - Val de Marne (Créteil, Fontenay, Paris, 26-28 octobre 1995)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998) 7-10, at 7.

²² "Première Partie: La langue philosophique de Philon", in Lévy, *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie*, 17-253.

²³ "Deuxième Partie: Les problèmes d'herméneutique", in Lévy, *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie*, 254-373.

²⁴ "Troisième Partie: Philon et les écoles philosophiques", in Lévy, *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie*, 374-502.

especially on Philonic reception history, consists of six essays, covering an even wider spectrum of topics, including rabbinic parallels to Philonic exegesis, the significance of Philo's exegesis for the Church Fathers and New Testament studies, and on the allegorical deep structures of Philo's commentary. Part three – which is comprised of seven essays and is most similar to the present volume – looks at Philo's relationship to the philosophical schools, including the Middle Platonists, the pre-Socratics, and the Stoics. Although consideration is given to all the Hellenistic schools, the Philo who has the last word is “Philo *Academicus*” – a Philo who breathes “the spirit of the Academy”, even as he strikes an uneasy balance between the scepticism of Carneades and the dogmatism of Antiochus of Ascalon.²⁵

Ten years after the appearance of Lévy's volume, Francesca Alesse published a slimmer, albeit equally impressive, collection entitled *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*.²⁶ The ten essays contained therein are introduced by a piece on Philo and doxography by David Runia.²⁷ The volume then proceeds with studies engaging Philo and the Peripatetics, the Epicureans, and Scepticism (one study each), as well as Stoicism and Platonism (three chapters each). According to the introduction, these essays are arranged “following the chronological sequence of the schools” and “with particular attention to new historiographical perspectives on Hellenistic philosophy and lexical problems”.²⁸ The lion's share of the essays, however, are devoted to the tug-of-war between Stoic and Platonist vocabularies in Philo's exegesis, with Gretchen Reydams-Schils and Mauro Bonazzi highlighting the “balance” of one with the other or the “subordination” of Stoicism to Platonism, respectively.²⁹

The Alesse volume posed a number of unanswered questions and thematized tensions that would catalyze a wave of new theories about how to assess the patchwork of philosophical vocabularies in Philo's writings. Again, leaping forward a decade, the year 2017 saw the publication of another volume, edited by Troels Engberg-Pedersen, with the admittedly wider remit of assessing the development of popular

²⁵ A. Michel, “Philon d'Alexandrie et l'Académie”, in Lévy (ed.), *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie*, 493–502, at 493, 501.

²⁶ F. Alesse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (SPhA 5; Leiden: Brill, 2008).

²⁷ See now J. Mansfeld and D.T. Runia, *Aëtiana V: An Edition of the Reconstructed Text of the Placita with a Commentary and a Collection of Related Texts* (4 vols.; PhA 153; Leiden: Brill, 2020), for a new diplomatic edition of this critical doxographical work.

²⁸ F. Alesse, “Introduction”, in eadem (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*, 1–12, at 6.

²⁹ See G. Reydams-Schils, “Philo of Alexandria on Stoic and Platonist Psycho-Physiology: The Socratic Higher Ground”, in Alesse, *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*, 169–95, at 170; M. Bonazzi, “Toward Transcendence: Philo and the Renewal of Platonism in the Early Imperial Age”, in Alesse, *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*, 233–51, at 251.

philosophical trends *From Stoicism to Platonism*.³⁰ The seventeen essays collected in this volume look at a wider chronological sweep from 100 BCE to 100 CE. Although not about Philo *per se*, the Alexandrian serves as a key figure in several of the hinge essays at the book's center.³¹ As Troels Engberg-Pedersen summarizes the overarching thesis of the volume (quoting Anthony Long): “‘Stoic Platonism and Platonic Stoicism – we don’t want these.’ But the question then is: what *do* we want?”³² The answer, for Engberg-Pedersen is two-fold: the partial recovery of the terms “eclecticism” and “syncretism”,³³ on the one hand; and the hypothesis of a historical trajectory, on the other. That trajectory, which gives the volume and its originating 2014 conference in Copenhagen their titles, is the “asymmetrical” journey in Hellenistic and Roman philosophy “from Stoicism to Platonism”.³⁴ This shift in the dominant philosophical model exhibits a clear vector “toward Platonism”, although Aristotle was also on the rise. It is “asymmetrical” insofar as Stoicism exhibited an “eirenic appropriation” of Platonic and Peripatetic thought, whereas the ascendent Platonism began to “subordinate” Stoic vocabularies to its discourse.³⁵

A tangential subject broached in the Engberg-Pedersen volume is the relationship of philosophical “development” with revealed religion – particularly Judaism and Christianity – in the Imperial period.³⁶ Here, taking a line from David Sedley,³⁷ Engberg-Pedersen agrees that it is impossible to trace the shifting philosophical currents of this era without simultaneously attending to developments in the contemporary religious movements; and simultaneously, that neither Christianity nor Hellenistic Judaism is comprehensible apart from the language of philosophy. The intertwining of both modes of discourse is here thematized more forcefully than in the past. For reasons of scope, however, only a handful of essays in the volume address Jewish or Christian thinkers.³⁸ Further work remains to be done in this field.

³⁰ T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

³¹ See especially D.T. Runia, “From Stoicism to Platonism: The Difficult Case of Philo of Alexandria’s *De Providentia* I”, in Engberg-Pedersen, *From Stoicism to Platonism*, 159–78; C. Lévy, “From Cicero to Philo of Alexandria: Ascending and Descending Axes in the Interpretation of Platonism and Stoicism”, in Engberg-Pedersen, *From Stoicism to Platonism*, 179–97.

³² T. Engberg-Pedersen, “Introduction: A Historical Essay”, in idem (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism*, 1–26, at 3.

³³ Engberg-Pedersen, “Introduction: A Historical Essay”, 3–10.

³⁴ Engberg-Pedersen, “Introduction: A Historical Essay”, 11–13

³⁵ Engberg-Pedersen, “Introduction: A Historical Essay”, 15.

³⁶ Engberg-Pedersen, “Introduction: A Historical Essay”, 13–15.

³⁷ D. Sedley, “Introduction”, to idem (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 1–19, at 8.

³⁸ See esp. the discussion of Philo by Lévy and Runia (chapters nine and ten); on Wisdom of Solomon by Gregory Sterling (chapter eleven); on Paul by Stanley Stowers (chapter thirteen); and on Philo, the Fourth Gospel, and the Nag Hammadi writings by Harold Attridge (chapter fifteen).

The final volume we wish to highlight is one that only appeared in 2021, but had its roots in a 2012 conference at the Sorbonne on the subject of *Religion et rationalité*.³⁹ As the co-editors of this collection, Jérôme Moreau and Olivier Munnich, note in their introduction, their aim was to take a wide and general approach to the subject by framing the study in terms of two words (“religion”, “rationality”), neither of which finds a direct parallel in Philo.⁴⁰ The contributors of the volume think both about Philo and “with” Philo on some of the perennial questions raised by the Alexandrian’s corpus, not least the role of philosophy in religious discourse.⁴¹ The interpenetration of these discourses features under a number of guises in every section of the collection;⁴² and all the essays in the third and fourth parts, which put Philo in dialogue with Stoics, early Christians (Justin and Irenaeus), Neoplatonists (especially Iamblichus), as well as the philosophers of the middle ages (including Maimonides).

II. The Present Volume – Origins, Scope, Contents

The present collection of thirteen essays by an international group of scholars (Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Israel, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States) had its origins in a day-long conference held at the Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum, University of Münster, in 2019. In addition to the papers delivered at the conference, contributions were solicited from a number of scholars with expertise in the various philosophical schools and currents that shaped Philo’s thought. In its structure, it is most similar to the Lévy (1998) and Alesse (2008) volumes. The planning of the conference took shape, however, shortly *after* the Engberg-Pedersen (2017) volume appeared, and in a certain sense provides a continuation to, or engagement with, that study. The current collection also arose as Maren R. Niehoff’s *Intellectual Biography* (2018) of Philo was in the initial phases of reception.⁴³ Against the grain of the wider trajectory charted in the Engberg-Pedersen volume, “from Stoicism to Platonism”, Philo, according to Niehoff, swims upstream and charts a reverse development: from the Platonism of his youth to (Roman)

³⁹ J. Moreau/O. Munnich (ed.), *Religion et rationalité: Philon d’Alexandrie et sa postérité* (SPhA 11; Leiden: Brill, 2021).

⁴⁰ Moreau and Munnich, “Introduction: Religion et rationalité chez Philon d’Alexandrie”, in eidem, *Religion et rationalité*, 1–5, at 1.

⁴¹ Moreau and Munnich, “Introduction”, 5.

⁴² See esp. Munnich’s study of the exegetical theme of darkness (Exod 20:21) and its philosophical implications for epistemology and theology and Moreau’s study of the figure of the sage in Alexandrian Judaism.

⁴³ M.R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (AYBRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

Stoicism in his later writings. The present volume brings Engberg-Pedersen and Niehoff together in dialogue around Philo's philosophical work, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* – a treatise for which Niehoff is currently preparing a commentary in the PACS series – and continues the conversation.

In addition to this dialogue between Engberg-Pedersen and Niehoff on *Probus*, readers will find essays on Philo's dialogues with a variety of philosophical thinkers and schools: Socrates and Aristotle, Stoicism, Epicureanism, the Sceptical Academy, Pythagoreanism, and Middle Platonism. Contributors to this volume were presented with no thesis – in fact, they diverge in their assessments of the dominant philosophical mode animating Philo's works (if there is one), as well as Philo's relationship to particular philosophical schools. Instead, the volume offers a rich and varied fare of studies, which reveal the state of the field and offer an invitation to future scholars to continue the conversation about Philo's relationship to “the discourse on philosophy” and its Christian and Jewish reception.

This diverse collection of essays is introduced by *Gregory E. Sterling's* novel reconstruction of Philo's personal library (“Philo's Library and the Libraries of Philosophical Schools”). The chapter reflects on the probable and potential contents of Philo's library and compares it with libraries in private philosophical schools. In a careful review of citations of and references to literary works in the writings of Philo, Sterling suggests that the Alexandrian author's library *probably* encompassed, apart from his own works, the Pentateuch (LXX), Jewish works such as the Torah commentary of Aristobulus and the Letter of Aristeas, as well as core works by Plato (*Laws, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Republic, Theaetetus*, and *Timaeus*), Zeno of Citium, Posidonius, one or more (Neo-)Pythagorean arithmologies, Heraclitus of Ephesus, Empedocles, Aenesidemus (*Ten Tropes*), Homer, Hesiod (*Works and Days, Theogony*), and Euripides (*Chrysippus, Stylaeus*). More tentative is Sterling's list of *possible* authors and works in Philo's library: the Psalter, Proverbs, 1 Samuel, and Jeremiah (Old Greek); Ezekiel's *Exagoge*; further Jewish commentaries; and additional works by Plato (*Cratylus, Gorgias*, and *Symposium*), Ps.-Aristotle (*De mundo*) and Ps.-Ocellus (*On the Nature of the Universe*). Among the philosophers, Plato would have played a major role in this library, but authors from other philosophical schools would also have been represented.

Following this reconstruction of Philo's private library, *Sharon Weisser* (“The Socratic Background of Philo's Ethics: The Case of Piety”) considers his relationship to a figure held in high regard by several of the Hellenistic schools: Socrates. Weisser challenges the strong bifurcation of Philo's religious and philosophical identities – in particular, the tendency in some Philonic scholarship to imagine Philo as a Jew first, and only secondarily as a philosopher. To support this view, Weisser offers a Socratic perspective on Philo's understanding of piety – a virtue often ascribed to

the “Jewish” side of his identity. For Weisser, Philo’s understanding of piety is anything but religious in a particularist, Jewish sense. Rather, it is “intellectualist”, owing a debt to the Socratic tradition and its denial of *akrasia*, and is ultimately best described as a kind of knowledge. Putting the *Euthyphro*, which Philo may have known from a doxographical source, in dialogue with *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, Weisser demonstrates how the Alexandrian provides his own answers to questions raised in Socrates’s aporetic work. Piety emerges as a *technē* and virtue binding the other virtues together. This last aspect of piety, Weisser suggests, may have come from Aristotle’s *Ethica nichomachea*.

Carlos Lévy (“Was Philo’s Moses a Pyrrhonian Hero?”) takes up Philo’s relationship to another sceptical figure – this time, not the Socrates of Plato’s early dialogues, but Pyrrho of Elis. Lévy begins with the intentionally provocative question: was Philo’s Moses a “Pyrrhonian hero”? Continuing a long-held interest in the non-dogmatic edge of Philo’s thought, Lévy begins with the presence of sceptical tropes of the Neo-Pyrrhonian thinker, Aenesidemus, in *De ebrietate* and *De somniis*. He then turns to the doxographical sources for Pyrrho himself and speculates whether certain key terms – “to put off”, “suspension of judgment”, and others – may reflect the influence of Pyrrhonism in Philo’s philosophy. In the scepticism of both Pyrrho and Philo, Lévy discovers a common aim: to resist the pretention of existing by oneself. This motif surfaces particularly in Philo’s understanding of human “nothingness” – especially on display in the Allegorical Commentary. In the final section of the essay, Lévy traces the theme of human nothingness in the other part of Philo’s corpus where that notion appears: *De vita Mosis*. Is Moses, too, a Pyrrhonian hero? The weight of Lévy’s argument, *a maiore ad minus*, is difficult to miss: if Moses is “nothing”, how much more ought the average human being estimate his own self-sufficiency as an hubristic delusion?

In “Crawling on the Belly and Eating Earth: How Relevant was Epicurus for Philo?”, *Geert Roskam* pursues Philo’s relationship to Epicurean tradition with due attention to the Alexandrian’s own authorial agenda, not by picking out individual resemblances. Philo, Roskam asserts, deals with pleasure mainly as determined by the Pentateuch, which he creatively interpreted via philosophical allegory. This is shown with respect to Philo’s interpretation of the serpent in creation and the “fall” in Genesis, but also regarding Philo’s other treatments of pleasure. Roskam reviews numerous passages that have been seen by scholars as reflecting Epicurus’s teaching, and in virtually all cases views the resemblances as conditioned by exegetical motivations. Only in *Fug.* 148, mentioning both “the doctrine that pleasure is the prime and greatest good” and “the doctrine that atoms are the elementary principles of the universe” as having “the same author”, is Roskam prepared to see a reflection of

Epicureanism, but even here Philo shows not much interest in it. It is thus no coincidence that he nowhere mentions Epicurus by name.

Turning from the emotions to their healing, *Jason M. Zurawski* begins his chapter, “Philo’s Therapy of Desire: Law, *Askēsis*, and the Rod of *Paideia*”, by discussing the ways in which the philosophical traditions dealt with the passions. While the Peripatetics sought to temper the emotions, the Stoics rejected them completely. In contrast, the Platonist Plutarch argued that because the nature of humanity is mixed, the passions cannot be eradicated but must be limited and controlled. Zurawski points out that Jewish ethical teaching was also concerned with the control of the passions. He views Philo’s stance in this debate as a compromise between Stoicism and Platonism; while Philo deemed total *apatheia* the ultimate goal, as embodied by Moses, this is unachievable by most human beings, as represented by Aaron, who trained for *metriopatheia*, moderating the passions. In the course of the essay, Zurawski reviews three major components of Jewish *paideia* in Philo: preliminary studies (“encyclical *paideia*”), the study of philosophy, and the study of the law of Moses. In an innovative way, Philo allegorically interprets the “rod” of Jacob and of Moses, respectively, as *paideia*; rather than corporeal discipline and suffering, Philo invokes training, Mosaic law, the internal *orthos logos*, and conscience in the fight against the passions.

Troels Engberg-Pedersen’s chapter, “Philosophy and the *Sitz im Leben* of Philo’s *Quod omnis probus liber sit*”, is one of two essays devoted to Philo’s philosophical treatise, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* (hereafter, *Probus*). Engberg-Pedersen considers the place of the treatise in Philo’s oeuvre, its genre, its social context, and its relation to Stoicism, Platonism, and Judaism. After providing a detailed structural analysis of the treatise, Engberg-Pedersen emphasizes the importance of *paideia* and suggests that Philo’s intended readership were a group of well-educated people who, Philo hoped, would understand his Stoic thesis “that every good man is free”, which the uneducated “many” deem paradoxical. Engberg-Pedersen then analyses in great detail the epistemological and philosophical arguments of the treatise and shows that Philo presents the Essenes as proponents of his own kind of philosophy. He further reviews the explicit authorities Philo cites in this treatise, suggesting that Philo, in his argumentation, moves from Stoicism via Platonism to Moses, that is, to Judaism. Engberg-Pedersen concludes that *Probus* does not specifically address Jews but is possibly directed at Greeks or, due to the reference to Brutus and the killing of Caesar (*Prob.* 118–119), more specifically at Romans – a context Engberg-Pedersen hesitates to take for granted but at least deems more plausible than other options.

The Roman context is defended more strongly by *Maren R. Niehoff* in her chapter, “First Century Rome as a Philosophical Context for Philo of Alexandria: The Introduction to Philo’s Treatise *Every Good Man is Free (Probus 1–15)*”. Niehoff suggests

that the introduction to Philo's treatise *Probus* points to a Roman audience and thus to the period of his life that began with his embassy to Caligula. She argues that Philo now no longer composes a running scriptural commentary for Alexandrian Jews but a text belonging to the genre of *logos*, that is, a treatise supporting a specific philosophical proposition. It is directed to a Roman circle of non-Jewish addressees, with "Theodotus", the only named addressee of a Philonic treatise (outside Philo's dialogues), being a supportive individual in Rome's "salon culture", as also described by Plutarch and Josephus. According to Niehoff, the topic of the treatise, freedom, is no longer introduced in primarily transcendental Platonic terms, as in the Allegorical Commentary, but carries certain Stoic and particularly Cynic tones, as is shown in comparison with Cicero and Seneca. Philo, in the introduction to *Probus*, also picks up a saying about new vessels absorbing the fragrance of the liquids that were first poured into them (*Prob.* 15), which, Niehoff suggests, may go back to the Roman poet Horace.

Gretchen Reydams-Schils ("Natural Philosophy and Stoicism in Philo's Works") begins her investigation by picking up on the Stoic edge of Niehoff's Roman thesis. If it is true, as Niehoff claims, that Philo moves from Platonism to Stoicism in the transition from the Allegorical Commentary to the Exposition of the Law, the Philonic scholar ought to look for what Reydams-Schils calls "bridge concepts" between the two series. In tune with her earlier work, Reydams-Schils suggests Plato's *Timaeus* as a storehouse of such concepts – given the text's authority in both Platonist and Stoic circles, schools, and reading communities. To tighten her focus, Reydams-Schils centers her remarks around two topics: Philo's representations of the Chaldeans (as astronomers) and his statements about natural philosophy and the order of the universe. With regard to the former theme, Reydams-Schils argues that the Chaldeans in the Allegorical Commentary are not ciphers for the Stoics, but that the latter (like Epictetus and Seneca) shared Philo's critique of astral observation, if it did not lead to ethical fruit. Even so, Chaldean stargazing can be put a good end, even in the Allegorical Commentary, if (as in Stoic and Middle-Platonist thought) it points to the governance of providence. Turning to the treatises of the Exposition of the Law, particularly *De opificio mundi* and *De Abrahamo*, Reydams-Schils notes that both Stoic and Platonist themes appear interwoven. Although the higher valuation of natural philosophy in the Exposition bears forward Niehoff's thesis of a "shift" in Philo's emphasis, natural philosophy remains an important bridge between the two exegetical series.

In his chapter, "Holy and Philosophical': Two Religious Platonists in their Endeavour to be Both Theologically and Philosophically Orthodox", Rainer Hirsch-Luipold notes that questions regarding Philo's relation to, and involvement with, philosophy can also be asked with regard to Plutarch. According to Hirsch-Luipold,

both authors, who belong to different generations within the first century CE and took Plato as their ultimate philosophical authority, think of themselves as philosophers and were exegetes of their respective religious traditions, thereby interpreting these as the key to a philosophical understanding of God. Hirsch-Luipold argues that both Plutarch and Philo are monotheists, and both pursue different forms of Platonic dogmatism or “orthodoxy”. Whereas Plutarch constantly relates religious traditions drawn from various provenances with Plato’s views, Philo claims that Plato was in fact a student of Moses, which enables Philo to accept all of Plato’s teachings as essentially “Mosaic”.

Mauro Bonazzi (“Philo of Alexandria on the Practical and Contemplative Life: Some Remarks”) argues that, while Philo’s Jewish background gives a certain twist to his relationship with the Greek philosophical tradition, he shared not only common ground with Greek philosophers but also contributed some specific ideas to the debates of his time. Bonazzi argues that Philo disagrees with both Stoics and Platonists regarding the relationship of the practical and the contemplative lives, deeming both clearly alternating. However, Philo equally differed from Peripatetic views on the topic, by claiming that action precedes contemplation. Therefore, Philo’s unique view can be described as a defence of the contemplative life. Moreover, Philo proposes a solution to the conundrum, shared by Platonists in the Imperial period, that God is not comprehensible, and does so by way of distinguishing between limited philosophical knowledge and higher knowledge that God has revealed through Moses in Scripture. Thus, the contemplative life, according to Philo, deals primarily with the exegesis of texts that encompass divine truth, and Philo emphasizes the value of studying them over presenting a perfect philosophical system.

Michael B. Cover (“What’s in A Name Change? Neo-Pythagorean Arithmology and Middle-Platonic Namewrights in Philo’s Orchard of Philosophy”) continues the discussion of Philo’s philosophical exegesis of Scripture – particularly the way Philo’s philosophical interpretations of the same verse (Gen 17:5) shift in light of his historical context and commentary series. Philo interprets Abram’s change of name to Abraham in both *QG* 3.43 and *Mut.* 60–71. Intriguingly, both passages make reference to a certain “quarrelsome” contemporary, who mocks the writing of Moses for presenting a God who “gives” letters to the patriarch and his wife, as though this were significant. What is striking is that Philo’s two apologies for Moses’s God against the quarrelsome exegete in two series differ in mutually exclusive ways. In *QG* 3.43 – given a fresh English translation from the Armenian by the author – Philo defends God’s gift of the letter “alpha” to Abram and “rho” to Sara. There is power in the letter. This literalist position is supported by a Greek arithmological exegesis of the names *Abram* and *Abraam*, in which the value of the latter may be reckoned at 10, a number of perfection. In *De mutatione nominum*, by contrast, Philo joins

the quarrelsome exegete in agreeing that God would not stoop so low as to give mere letters. The name is a just symbol; God gives a new power to the soul. Here, as is often the case in the Allegorical Commentary, Pythagorean arithmology is suppressed in favor of the Platonizing allegory of the soul. Using biographical clues about the scoffer in the two texts – he is still alive in QG 3.43, 53, but dead in *Mut.* 62 – Cover establishes a relative chronology between the passages (QG → Allegorical Commentary) and suggests that Philo's more nuanced reflection on the philosophy of language caused him to change his defence in the Allegorical Commentary.

In his contribution, "Philo on the Hebdomad: Neo-Pythagorean Arithmology and Jewish Tradition", *Lutz Doering* continues the discussion on the role of Neo-Pythagorean arithmology, focusing on the number seven. After reviewing Pythagorean traditions as well as references to Pythagoras and Pythagoreans in Philo's writings in general, and engagement with (Neo-)Pythagorean arithmology in particular, Doering focuses on Philo's discussion of the hebdomad. As to Philo's discussion in *Legum allegoriae* 1 and *De opificio mundi*, it is puzzling that, in the former, he states that the Pythagoreans liken the hebdomad to the "Ever-virgin and Motherless" (that is, Athena), whereas, in the latter, this view is ascribed to "other philosophers", and the Pythagoreans are credited with likening the hebdomad to the "Director of the universe". Considering also QG 2.12 and comparing the sections on the hebdomad in *Leg.* 1.8–15 and *Opif.* 92–127, Doering suggests that Philo's treatment in *Legum allegoriae* is earlier. He further argues that Philo's reason for deploying (Neo-Pythagorean) arithmology, and for the emphases he makes, are rooted in his exegesis of the Pentateuch. In this, Philo continues, and yet significantly advances, earlier attempts by Jewish writers, such as the Torah interpreter Aristobulus.

Ilaria Ramelli ("The Double Creation of the Human Being and Philosophical Soteriology") concludes the volume with an essay that ties many of the foregoing threads together. She begins by exploring how Philo interpreted the creation of the human being according to both Scripture (the Septuagint) and Platonism, and in what sense one may describe his anthropological theory as involving a "double creation". According to Ramelli, Philo's doctrine of creation is closely linked with his soteriology. Her chapter thus turns next to the question of what salvation means for Philo, how it depends upon the Middle-Platonic metaphysics and the philosophical virtue of piety, how it seems to concern only the soul and not the body (with the apparent exclusion of bodily resurrection), and how Philo's concept of *apokatastasis* relates to his soteriology and doctrine of creation. Attention is thirdly paid to Philo's stance on the doctrine of *metensōmatōsis* (defined as the "transmigration of souls into different bodies") – a topic of great interest in recent years. After each of the main sections on Philo's thought, Ramelli turns to Philo's reception among the

Alexandrian and Cappadocian fathers, as well as in the Syriac East, to discover how the early Christian authors both followed and modified Philo's positions.

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Philo's Library and the Libraries of Philosophical Schools*

Gregory E. Sterling

In his description of the origins of the famous library in Alexandria, Strabo wrote: “Aristotle was the first of those whom we know who collected books and taught the kings in Egypt how to create a library.”¹ While there are some obvious chronological difficulties with Strabo’s claim that Aristotle (384–322 BCE) taught Ptolemy II Philadelphus (308–246 BCE) how to build a library, the recognition that Aristotle built a library is accurate.² He was not alone: other philosophers who offered instruction in schools in Athens also built private libraries for use in their schools. This certainly appears to have been true of Epicurus and must have been the case for others as well, although we lack concrete evidence.³ The practice developed in private philosophical schools in the later Greco-Roman world. The most famous examples in the centuries immediately preceding and succeeding Philo of Alexandria are the *Villa dei Papiri* at Herculaneum that contained the library of Philodemus and the library of Plotinus at Rome.⁴ I propose to ask whether the libraries of philosophers, especially the libraries of Aristotle and the Villa of Papyri, can inform us about the library of Philo and whether his library as we reconstruct it fits the same basic pattern as the libraries in private philosophical schools.⁵

* I am grateful to Michael Cover and Lutz Doering for the invitation to participate in the *Tagung* held in the Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum at Münster on Philo of Alexandria and Philosophical Discourse (May 12–13, 2019) and to the feedback from those present.

¹ Strabo, *Geogr.* 13.1.54. On Strabo’s description of Alexandria more generally see G.E. Sterling, “‘The Largest and Most Important Part’ of Egypt: Alexandria according to Strabo”, in B. Schliesser/J. Rügge-meier/T.J. Kraus/J. Frey (ed.), *Alexandria: Hub of the Hellenistic World* (WUNT 460; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021) 3–28.

² On Aristotle’s library see T. Hendrickson, “The Invention of the Greek Library”, *TAPA* 144 (2014) 371–413, esp. 373–4, 377–9.

³ On Epicurus’s library see Diogenes Laertius 10.21. Plato and Zeno must have had libraries, but we lack any *testimonia* to substantiate this assumption.

⁴ On the library of Plotinus see my comments in “The School of Moses in Alexandria: An Attempt to Reconstruct the School of Philo”, in G. Boccaccini/J. Zurawski (ed.), *Education in the Ancient World* (BZNV 228; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017) 141–66, esp. 148–51.

⁵ For a similar approach to Origen see A. Grafton/M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006) 22–85, esp. 56–69. Cf. also A. Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (VCSup 67; Leiden:

This is my fourth effort to understand the social locale for Philo of Alexandria's *œuvre* by exploring its parallels to private philosophical schools. I began by examining the transmission of his library.⁶ Since the Alexandrian Jewish community was destroyed by the Romans in 115–117 CE,⁷ Philo's works must have moved into another setting beyond the Jewish community prior to this destruction. While there are different options, the most probable explanation is that they passed into Christian hands since Clement⁸ and Origen⁹ both knew them. Origen took them to Caesarea where Eusebius eventually catalogued them in the Episcopal Library.¹⁰ Given the size of Philo's corpus and the fact that other Jewish works such as Aristobulus also made their way along the same path, it appears that Philo's library passed into Christian circles prior to the destruction of the Jewish community in 115–117 CE. The best explanation is that the library was attached to a private school that became Christian. The second essay explored the social location of commentaries. Schools were the settings in which commentaries were written and used in the ancient world. This is true for the Homeric commentaries of Aristarchus, the *Anonymous Theaetetus Commentary*, and the *pesharim* at Qumran.¹¹ Philosophical schools made routine use of commentaries in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, a setting that explains the Philonic corpus nicely.¹² Finally, I attempted to reconstruct the curriculum in Philo's school by analyzing the curricula of philosophical schools where we know something about the patterns of instruction. For this I explored the curricula in Epictetus, Plotinus, and Proclus.¹³ The point was that the pattern of instruction in these schools provides an appropriate setting for the various units of the *corpus*

Brill, 2003) 2–12, esp. 8–9, for a reconstruction of Origen's library. For a more general treatment see G.H. Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews, and Christians* (Religion in the First Christian Centuries; London: Routledge, 2000).

⁶ G.E. Sterling, "The School of Sacred Laws': The Social Setting of Philo's Treatises", *VC* 53 (1999) 148–64.

⁷ On this war see W. Horbury, *Jewish War under Trajan and Hadrian* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁸ On Clement's use of Philo see A. van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model* (VCSup 3; Leiden: Brill, 1988) and D.T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (CRINT 3/3; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993) 132–56.

⁹ On Origen's use of Philo see Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 157–83 and A. van den Hoek, "Philo and Origen: A Descriptive Catalogue of Their Relationship", *SPhiloA* 12 (2000) 44–121. Michael Cover has a forthcoming essay on Origen's use of Philo in C. Friesen/D. Lincium/D.T. Runia (ed.), *The Reception of Philo of Alexandria* (New York: Oxford University Press).

¹⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.1–8.

¹¹ G.E. Sterling, "Philo's School: The Social Setting of Ancient Commentaries", in B. Wyss/R. Hirsch-Luipold/S.-J. Hirschi (ed.), *Sophisten in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit: Orte, Methoden und Personen der Bildungsvermittlung* (STAC 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 123–42.

¹² This is widely recognized. It became true for the Platonists with the rise of Middle Platonism. It was common in the Peripatetic and Stoic traditions as well. It became a hallmark of the Neoplatonic tradition.

¹³ Sterling, "The School of Moses in Alexandria: An Attempt to Reconstruct the School of Philo", 141–66.

Philonicum.¹⁴ In this essay, I would like to ask what we can learn about Philo's library by comparing it to the libraries in private philosophical schools.¹⁵

It is important to be candid at the outset that I cannot prove that Philo operated a school. I am arguing that a private school is the most likely setting for the bulk of Philo's writings, at least that this hypothesis explains the data better than any other hypothesis. It is, however, a hypothesis. I will begin with methodological concerns since we must offer a reconstruction (or construction) of Philo's library. I will then attempt to (re)construct the contents of Philo's library and raise some questions about its production based on known practices in the philosophical schools.

Before we begin with the analysis let me suggest how I think that we should imagine the school. Philo belonged to one of the wealthiest families among the large Jewish community of Alexandria. While we know more about the wealth of his brother, Alexander,¹⁶ the learning of Philo and the leisure that was required to produce the corpus he has bequeathed us suggests that he was exceptionally well situated. It is a relatively safe assumption to believe that he had his own villa or a large house, similar to villas or large houses in other major cities in the Roman empire. I suggest that he devoted a room of his villa or house for space to meet with five to fifteen students.¹⁷ The library might have been kept in bookcases in another room¹⁸ where it would have been possible to sit and read.¹⁹ Cicero called bookcases

¹⁴ There is now a study of Origen's practices that is worth noting. See David Satran, *In the Image of Origen: Eros, Virtue, and Constraint in the Early Christian Academy* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 58; Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

¹⁵ For a summary of Philo's comments in an effort to locate his teaching activities see Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World*, 136, who argues that while Philo may have operated within a school, "Philo's writing is generated first and foremost from the inner springs of his own intellectual and spiritual life: his treatises are not mere by-products of school sessions" – a judgment with which I concur.

¹⁶ On Alexander see A. Appelbaum, "A Fresh Look at Philo's Family", *SPhiloA* 30 (2018) 93–113, esp. 96–106; and G.E. Sterling, "Pre-eminent in Family and Wealth: Gaius Julius Alexander and the Alexandrian Jewish Community", in A. Salvesen/S. Pearce/M. Frenkel (ed.), *Israel in Egypt: The Land of Egypt as Concept and Reality for Jews in Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period*, (AJEC 110; Leiden: Brill, 2020) 259–79.

¹⁶ On Philo's wealth, see G.E. Sterling, "Philo on the Obligations of Wealth", *JSNT* 44 (2021) 199–217, esp. 201–5.

¹⁷ Compare the House of Menander in Pompeii. A colonnade surrounds a garden (*viridarium*). There are alternating rectangular and semi-circular indentations around the colonnade. Some (rooms 22–25) could be places where reading and discussion took place while another has been identified as a *bibliotheca* on the basis of the remains of bookshelves (room 21). See A. Maiuri, *La casa del Meanandro e il suo Tesoro di argenteria* (2 vols.; Rome: La Libreria della Stato, 1933) 1:87–9 and Hendrickson, "The Invention of the Greek Library", 375. This is similar to the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum which also had rooms off of a colonnade with a room dedicated to the library (see below).

¹⁸ The library would have simply been a room in a large peristyle home. Hendrickson, "The Invention of the Greek Library", 383, wrote about the Villa of the Papyri: "Absent the books, the library of the Villa of the Papyri would resemble more or less closely any other room in any other luxury villa."

¹⁹ E.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 3.7; *Div.* 2.8.

*pegmata*²⁰ while Suetonius labelled them *foruli*.²¹ The latter may be bookcases proper or the pigeon holes for books. If Philo's practice was like Cicero's, he may have composed his works in the library.²² The point is that as a person of wealth, Philo would have been able not only to purchase works, but to devote a room in his house as a place to store them in cases where they would be accessible for his use as well as for his students.

I. Methodological Concerns

We need to lay out the methodological issues that govern our work. How do we (re)construct an ancient library? If we turn to Aristotle's library, we immediately recognize that there are a large number of unanswered questions.²³ What did it contain? The basic evidence that we have is the body of Aristotle's works and his references to other works within them; however, in both cases, the task is not straightforward. Like most major bodies of literature from antiquity, we do not have the entire body of Aristotle's writings. In fact, we are certain that a number of authentic works have been lost and that other works attributed to him in the fragments are pseudonymous.²⁴ It is even more difficult to determine the works of others that he collected. While we have his references to various works, it would be a mistake to think that Aristotle owned a copy of every work that he mentioned.²⁵ We are also unsure where he kept the library. He might have kept it in the Lyceum since there are later reports of libraries in gymnasia,²⁶ but this was public space and he was not the only teacher in the Lyceum. It seems more likely that he would have kept his books in a nearby house or structure. Finally, we are also unsure how the library, especially his own works, came down to us. Although it is commonly asserted that Aristotle left his

²⁰ Cicero, *Att.* 4.8.2; *Top.* 1.1; Vitruvius, *Arch.* 6.4.1.

²¹ Suetonius, *Aug.* 31.1.

²² Cicero, *Fam.* 7.28.2.

²³ On the school of Aristotle see J.P. Lynch, *Aristotle's School: A Study of a Greek Educational Institution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). Lynch does not address Aristotle's library.

²⁴ E.g., *Aud.*, *Col.*, *Gorg.*, *Lin. ins.*, *Mag. mor.*, *Mech.*, *Mir. ausc.*, *Mund.*, *Oec.*, *Physiogn.*, *Plant.*, *Probl.*, *Rhet. Alex.*, *Spir.*, *Vent.*, *Virt. vit.* Other works are also disputed, e.g., *Metaph.* α and κ. On the *corpus Aristotelicum* see J. Barnes, "Life and Work", in idem (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 6–15.

²⁵ J. Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) 2467–70, provides a list of the works Aristotle mentioned.

²⁶ The Ptolemaeum in Athens and the inscriptions in Rhodes and Pergamum. See K. Vössing, "Library B. Greece, Rome, Christian Libraries", *Brill's New Pauly*, 7:506.

library to Theophrastus,²⁷ Aristotle's will does not mention any books.²⁸ Some later traditions claimed that it came into the hands of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and was incorporated into the great Alexandrian library,²⁹ while other traditions relate that it became the property of Sulla who took it to Rome.³⁰ These are some of the issues that make a reconstruction of the Aristotelian library challenging.

The case of the library preserved in Herculaneum is more secure but not without complications. We have around 1,000 carbonized scrolls (estimates vary), although the contents of many are still unknown.³¹ While we can debate whether the library was built by Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, Julius Caesar's father-in-law and likely owner of the villa,³² or by Philodemus, or by both Piso and Philodemus,³³ or was a later collection that incorporated Philodemus's library,³⁴ the contents of the library make it probable that the collection served Philodemus and his students. From the scrolls whose contents we know, we can sketch the heart of the Epicurean library. It contained not only Epicurus's *On Nature* in 37 scrolls, but a large number of Philodemus's works including his major works on *Syntaxis* or *Index of Philosophers* that ran through the successors of the most important leaders of philosophical

²⁷ E.g., Strabo, *Geogr.* 13.1.54.

²⁸ Diogenes Laertius 5.11–16.

²⁹ Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 1.3a–b. Perhaps this tradition is the basis for Strabo's suggestion that Aristotle taught the Ptolemies how to build a library (although he has a different tradition for the transmission of the Stagirite's library).

³⁰ Strabo, *Geogr.* 13.1.54; Plutarch, *Sull.* 26.1–2.

³¹ For studies of the library, see M. Gigante, *Philodemus in Italy* (trans. D. Obbink; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995) 15–48, and D. Sider, "The Books of the Villa of the Papyri", in M. Zarmakoupi; Sozomena (ed.), *The Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum* (Studies in the Recovery of Ancient Texts 1; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010) 115–27. On the problems of knowing the number of scrolls in the Villa of the Papyri, see the summary statement of D. Sider, *The Library of the Villa dei Papyri at Herculaneum* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005) 64.

³² The suggestion that Piso owned this villa is based on a bust, known as "Pseudo-Seneca", found in the *tablinum* that most scholars identify with Piso and the statue of Panathenaic Athena found in the courtyard, with whom Piso was known to be associated. On these see C. Mattusch, *The Villa dei Papyri at Herculaneum: Life and Afterlife of a Sculpture Collection* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005) 20–3, 147–51 (the Panathenaic Athena), 249–53 (the Pseudo-Seneca), 357–9.

³³ Philodemus named Piso twice in the extant works. He dedicated *On the Good King according to Homer* (*P. Herc.* 1507) to him. On the relationship see Cicero, *Pis.* 68–72, 74. Cicero does not name Philodemus, but the identification seems relatively certain. See D. Sider, *The Epigrams of Philodemus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 228–30, esp. the commentary in T 3 to T 2.

³⁴ See D. Blank, "Philodemus", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 edition), online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/philodemus/> (accessed on 6 March 2024), who questions whether the standard narrative that Piso owned the house where he allowed Philodemus to live and teach is accurate. Blank is not alone in raising these questions. For a helpful and sober discussion of the owner of the villa see Sider, *The Library of the Villa dei Papyri at Herculaneum*, 5–8.

thought in 10 scrolls,³⁵ several philosophical biographies,³⁶ his ethical works including *On Vices and Virtues* in 10 scrolls,³⁷ his work *On Rhetoric* in 9 scrolls,³⁸ *On Poems* in 5 scrolls,³⁹ *On Music* in 4 vols.,⁴⁰ among a significant number of other works. Other philosophers were also represented including Chrysippus⁴¹ and Demetrius of Laconia.⁴² It was a large library of both Greek and Latin works.⁴³ One of the most important contributions of this library for our purposes is that it indicates that a private library used by a philosopher could contain a range of works, although it had an unmistakable core of philosophical writings.

The challenges of reconstructing Philo's library are more aligned with the challenges of reconstructing Aristotle's library than they are the library in the Villa of the Papyri. We assume that his own writings were part of it – at least the bulk of them,⁴⁴ but must reconstruct the presence of other works. As is true for the libraries of philosophers apart from the Villa of the Papyri, the only criterion that we have is Philo's use of a known work. His knowledge can be determined on the basis of an explicit reference, a citation, an allusion, or a parallel that suggests Philo knew the work. But, as was true for Aristotle, Philo's use of a work does not necessarily mean that the scroll was in his library: he presumably read and heard content from other authors than those represented in his personal library. Access to a scroll does not prove ownership. Philo was well educated and had clearly read a great deal through

³⁵ *P. Herc.* 1327, Eleatic and Abderite schools; *P. Herc.* 1508, Pythagorean; *P. Herc.* 1780, Epicurean; *P. Herc.* 495 and 558, Successors of Socrates; *P. Herc.* 1021 and 164, Academy; and *P. Herc.* 1018, Stoics. Cf. also Diogenes Laertius 10.3. For *P. Herc.* 1018 see T. Dorandi, *Filodemo, stoira dei filosofi: la stoà da Zenone a Panezio (PHerc. 1018): Edizione, traduzione e commento* (PhA 60; Leiden: Brill, 2016).

³⁶ A biography of Epicurus in 2 vols. (*P. Herc.* 1289 and 1232) and the anonymous life of Dionysius of Lamptrae (*P. Herc.* 1044).

³⁷ Book 9, on household management (*P. Herc.* 1424); and book 10, on pride (*P. Herc.* 1008). Books 7–8, on wealth are only partially preserved.

³⁸ Book 1 (*P. Herc.* 1427), 2 (*P. Herc.* 1674 and 1672), 3 (*P. Herc.* 1506 and 1426), 4 (*P. Herc.* 1423 and 1007/1673), 5 (*P. Herc.* 832/1015), 6 (*P. Herc.* 1004), and 7 or 9 (*P. Herc.* 1669).

³⁹ See R. Janko, *Philodemus On Poems. Book One: Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and idem, *Philodemus On Poems. Books Three and Four with the Fragments of Aristotle On Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁰ See D. Delattre, *Philodème de Gadara Sur la Musique: Livre IV* (2 vols.; Collection des universités de France, Série grecque 457; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007).

⁴¹ Some of Chrysippus's works on logic were found (*P. Herc.* 307, 1038, 1421).

⁴² Demetrius of Laconia, *Poems* (*P. Herc.* 188 and 1014).

⁴³ Others segregated libraries by language, e.g., Trimalchio (Petronius, *Sat.* 48). Julius Caesar intended to establish two libraries in Rome, one for Greek and one for Latin (Suetonius, *Jul.* 44). There are modern examples. The University of Tübingen has a room dedicated to Greek authors and a room dedicated to Latin authors in its library.

⁴⁴ We should remember that just as some of Aristotle's works have been lost, so some of Philo's works have been lost.

his education.⁴⁵ He would also have had access to some works through the libraries in Alexandria. We should remember that there was not only the famous royal library,⁴⁶ but a library in the Serapeum,⁴⁷ several libraries in the Caesareum,⁴⁸ and libraries in various temples.⁴⁹ Further, we should remember that a number of other factors may account for his awareness of works. He may have memorized works and cited them from memory rather than reading from a scroll – especially when this involves a memorable line. Or, he may have been aware of literary works by attending performances or recitations and have remembered what he heard – just as we remember lines from films that we watch. Or, he may have known authors through handbooks or doxographic works that preserved the views of notable thinkers. There are some instances in which we are relatively certain that Philo had access to a doxographic work.⁵⁰ These factors require that we couch our conclusions with a degree of humility and realize that we can only offer an approximation.

With these caveats in mind, we will use the following criteria to guide us in moving from access to ownership of a scroll. (1) The frequency of use. The presumption is the higher number of times that Philo cites or alludes to a work, the more important it is to him and the greater access he had to it, increasing the likelihood that he owned a copy. (2) The breadth of the citations or allusions. Does Philo only cite or allude to one passage or line or to a variety of texts and lines from different parts of a work? The greater his awareness of a full work or different parts of a work, the greater the likelihood that he is drawing directly from the work rather than from a memorable line that is widely quoted or a citation in a handbook or doxography. Conversely, the more limited his citations or allusions and the more frequently that the same quotation or allusion is repeated in other authors, the greater the likelihood is that Philo is only repeating a well-known saying or drawing from a doxography.

⁴⁵ On Philo's education, see A. Mendelson, *Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria* (HUCM 7; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982); E. Koskeniemi, "Philo and Classical Education", in T. Seland (ed.), *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 102–28; and idem, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus: A Study of their Secular Education and Educational Ideals* (SPhA 9; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 21–151.

⁴⁶ For a recent treatment see H.-G. Nesselrath, "Das Museion und die Große Bibliothek von Alexandria", in T. Georges/F. Albrecht/R. Feldmeier (ed.), *Alexandria* (Civitatium Orbis Mediterranei Studia 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 65–88.

⁴⁷ Epiphanius, *Weights and Measures* 12.

⁴⁸ Philo, *Legat.* 151.

⁴⁹ Orosius 6.15.31.

⁵⁰ E.g., Philo, *Somm.* 1.30–33. See J. Mansfeld, "Doxography and Dialectic: The *Sitz im Leben* of the *Placita*", ANRW 2.36.4, 3056–3216, esp. 3117–21; and idem, "Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Others in a Middle Platonist Cento in Philo of Alexandria", VC 39 (1985) 131–56. For the work of doxography see J. Mansfeld and D.T. Runia, *Aëtiana: The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer* (5 vols.; PhA 73, 114, 118, 148, 153.1–4; Leiden: Brill, 1997–2020).

(3) The length of the citation. An extensive citation suggests that Philo had the work in front of him. It is certainly possible that he may have memorized a work or text. This would be more likely in the case of famous texts rather than relatively uncommon texts, although we do not know his habits other than to assume that they were similar to others in antiquity. Further, a long citation does not require that it be in front of him in his own library; he could have consulted the work in another library. Still, we can only work with probabilities and a longer citation makes his use of a written work more likely. (4) The distribution of use in *corpus Philonicum*. Does Philo only cite the work in one of his treatises or across different treatises? Does he cite it in one subunit of his writings or across different parts of his corpus? We should remember that there is a pronounced difference between Philo's use of Greek authors in his apologetic and philosophical treatises over against the three commentary series: the biblical text dominates the latter and non-biblical material the former. If Philo cites a work in both a philosophical treatise and in the commentary series or in several commentary series, there is a greater likelihood that he knows the work since he drew from it on different occasions. Conversely, if he only sites the work in one subunit of his corpus the likelihood that he had the work in his library is less, although this is by no means conclusive.

The strongest case can be made when several criteria are met rather than only one. Even so, we should not view these criteria as air-tight measures, but as controls to make judgments. Just as is true in text-critical decisions, a final judgment involves both science and art. In this case, science determines citations and probable allusions, but art is inescapable in making a final judgment.

II. The Contents of Philo's Library

With these caveats and criteria in mind, we are ready to ask what was on the shelves of Philo's library. It is safe to assume that the bulk of Philo's own writings were in his library. His full corpus would have included more than seventy treatises of which almost two-thirds have come down to us. We have six of the original twelve books of the *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim et Exodum*,⁵¹ nineteen and a fragment of

⁵¹ The work is preserved in an Armenian translation (see below), Greek fragments, and in a Latin translation (see below). It is likely that *QG* consisted of six books (Codex Vindobonensis Theologicus Graecus 29). The fourth book of our current Armenian book 4 probably contains sections from books 4, 5, and 6 of the original. See E. Lucchesi, "La division en six livres des *Quaestiones in Genesim* de Philon d'Alexandrie", *Muséon* 89 (1976) 383–95; J.R. Royle, "The Original Structure of Philo's *Quaestiones*", *SPhilo* 4 (1976–1977) 41–78; and idem, "Philo's Division of His Works into Books", *SPhiloA* 13 (2001) 76–85. The Armenian has two books for Exodus, but Eusebius knew five (*Hist. eccl.* 2.18.5). Ralph Marcus thought that the *QGE* followed the *parashiyot* or weekly reading cycles of the Babylonian lectionary (F.H. Colson/G.H. Whitaker/

another treatise from at least thirty-two treatises in the Allegorical Commentary,⁵² twelve of the original fifteen treatises in the Exposition of the Law,⁵³ half of the apologetic works (three treatises and two fragments of a fourth out of a total of eight),⁵⁴ and a little more than half of the philosophical treatises (five and a fragment of a sixth out of eight).⁵⁵ It is one of the largest corpuses of Greek writings from the early Roman period that has come down to us.⁵⁶

The other relatively secure conclusion is that Philo must have owned scrolls from the Pentateuch. Philo cited or alluded to the LXX a total of 8,462 times.⁵⁷ Of these 8,215 or 97% are citations and allusions to the Pentateuch (criteria 1, 2, and 3). If we break this down further, we find that he cited or alluded to Genesis 4,303 times,⁵⁸ Exodus 1,755 times,⁵⁹ Leviticus 737 times, Numbers 586 times, and Deuteronomy 834 times. The frequency of his use of Genesis and Exodus, in particular, suggests to me that he had personal copies of these texts. This is also supported by his systematic

R. Marcus [ed.], *Philo* [10 vols. with 2 supplements; PLCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962], Sup 1:xiii–xv). If he is correct, there may have been six original books. See Royse, “The Original Structure of Philo’s *Quaestiones*”, 42–3, 52–3.

⁵² We have *Leg.* 1–3 (although *Leg.* 1–2=original *Leg.* 1); *Cher., Sacr., Det., Post., Gig.-Deus* (probably originally one treatise), *Agr., Plant., Ebr.* 1, *Sobr., Conf., Migr., Her., Congr., Fug., Mut., Deo* (fragment), and *Somn.* 2, 3. The following are lost: a hexameron (*Leg.* 1.1–2?), *Leg.* 2 (Gen 3:1b–8) and 4 (Gen 3:20–23); treatment of Gen 4:5–7; treatment of Gen 5:32 (cf. *Sobr.* 52); *Test.* 1–2 (*Mut.* 53 and Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.3); *Ebr.* 2 (*Sobr.* 1 and Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.2); treatment of Gen 15:1 (*Her.* 1); and *Somn.* 1, 4, 5 (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.4).

⁵³ We have *Mos.* 1–2, an introduction to the Exposition; *Opif., Abr., Ios., Decal., Spec.* 1–4, *Virt.*, and *Praem.* We are missing the lives of Isaac and Jacob (*Ios.* 1) and the work on the passions (*Leg.* 3.139). We may also be missing a work *On Piety*, but this could have been a part of *Virt.* On this, see G.E. Sterling, “The Queen of the Virtues: Piety in Philo of Alexandria”, *SPhiloA* 18 (2006) 103–23, esp. 105–12.

⁵⁴ We have *Contempl., Hypoth.* (in two fragments), *Flacc.*, and *Legat.* We are missing the treatment of the Essenes (*Contempl.* 1) and three volumes of the five-volume work *On Virtues*, of which *Flacc.* and *Legat.* are part (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.5.1; 2.6.3; cf. also *Legat.* 373).

⁵⁵ We have *Prob., Prov.* 1–2; *Anim., Num.* (a fragment), and *Aet.* 1. We are missing the counterpart to *Prob.* (*Prob.* 1) and *Aet.* 2 (*Aet.* 150).

⁵⁶ On the history of its transmission, see Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*; and G.E. Sterling, “Philo of Alexandria”, in A. Kulik et al. (ed.), *A Guide to Early Jewish Texts and Traditions in Christian Transmission*, (Oxford Handbooks; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) 299–316.

⁵⁷ These are my counts based on the references in J. Allenbach et al. (ed.), *Biblia patristica, Supplément: Philon d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982). For a complete list of the counts see G.E. Sterling, “When the Beginning is the End: The Place of Genesis in the Commentaries of Philo of Alexandria”, in C.A. Evans/J.N. Lohr/D.L. Petersen (ed.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (FIOTL; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 427–46, esp. 437. S.A. Adams/Z. Domoney-Lyttle, *The Philo of Alexandria Scripture Index* (SPhiloM 9; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023), have produced a more reliable index that will revise these numbers down, but the basic patterns will remain.

⁵⁸ On Philo’s use of Genesis, see Sterling, “When the Beginning is the End”, 427–46.

⁵⁹ On Philo’s use of Exodus, see G.E. Sterling, “The People of the Covenant or the People of God: Exodus in Philo of Alexandria”, in T.B. Dozeman/C.A. Evans/J.N. Lohr (ed.), *The Book of Exodus: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (FIOTL; Leiden: Brill, 2014) 404–39.

exposition of these two works in the Allegorical Commentary and *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin et Exodum* (criterion 4). The citation of the primary lemmata in the Allegorical Commentary and the running citations of Genesis and Exodus in the *QGE* are most easily explained by his use of scrolls. The use falls off noticeably for the remaining books of the Pentateuch – although it is still high – and then drops precipitously for the remainder of the LXX. Philo cited or alluded to the Psalter 50 times,⁶⁰ Proverbs 30 times, 1 Samuel 24 times, Isaiah 24 times, Jeremiah 18 times,⁶¹ and all other books 10 times or less. Clearly the Pentateuch had pride of place, probably both for theological reasons as well as what he might have had on his shelves, although one could argue that if he had thought that a different work was important he would have made a point to have a copy. The Pentateuch satisfies all four of our criteria – Genesis and Exodus most powerfully, but Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy quite satisfactorily, while the remaining texts have less security.⁶²

The reconstruction of the remainder of his library is more challenging. Philo's knowledge of Jewish exegetical predecessors is not easy to determine because he did not cite them by name. He frequently refers to fellow exegetes, but always anonymously. He considered one group to be literalists and another group to be allegorists. The Alexandrian referred to the former in all three commentary series⁶³ and the latter 74 times in four of the five parts of his corpus (criteria 1 and 3).⁶⁴ We know that Alexandria was home to a lively scene of biblical interpretation, but it has proven difficult to identify any of these or even to identify the layers of exegesis, although noble attempts have been made to do so.⁶⁵ While it is safe to conclude that Philo

⁶⁰ On Philo's use of the Psalter, see D.T. Runia, "Philo's Reading of the Psalms", *SPhiloA* 13 (2001) 102–20.

⁶¹ On Philo's use of Jeremiah, see G.E. Sterling, "Jeremiah as Mystagogue: Jeremiah in Philo of Alexandria", in K. Schmidt/H. Najman (ed.), *Jeremiah's Scriptures* (JSJSup 173; Leiden: Brill, 2017) 417–30.

⁶² Josephus also probably had copies of sacred books (*Vita* 417–421).

⁶³ On the references to this group, see M.J. Shroyer, "Alexandrian Jewish Literalists", *JBL* 55 (1936) 261–84.

⁶⁴ D.M. Hay, "Philo's References to Other Allegorists", *SPhilo* 6 (1979–1980) 41–75; and idem, "References to Other Exegetes", in idem (ed.), *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria's Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* (BJS 233; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 81–97.

⁶⁵ The most notable of these are R. Hamerton-Kelly, "Sources and Traditions in Philo Judaeus: Prolegomena to an Analysis of His Writings", *SPhilo* 1 (1972) 3–26; D.M. Hay, "Philo's Treatise on the Logos-Cutter", *SPhilo* 2 (1973) 9–22; B.L. Mack, "Exegetical Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism: A Program for the Analysis of the Philonic Corpus", *SPhilo* 3 (1974–1975) 71–112; idem, "Weisheit und Allegorie bei Philo von Alexandrien", *SPhilo* 5 (1978) 57–105; R.D. Hecht, "Preliminary Issues in the Analysis of Philo's *De Specialibus Legibus*", *SPhilo* 5 (1978) 1–56; idem, "Patterns of Exegesis in Philo's Interpretation of Leviticus", *SPhilo* 6 (1979–1980) 77–155; B.L. Mack, "Philo Judaeus and Exegetical Traditions in Alexandria", *ANRW* 2.21.1, 227–71; T.H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* (CBQMS 14; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983); and R. Goulet, *La philosophie de Moïse: Essai de reconstitution d'un commentaire philosophique préphilonien du Pentateuque* (Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique 11; Paris: J. Vrin, 1987).

represented the views of others extensively at times, it is difficult to trace the contours of his predecessors' works. It is reasonable to believe that Philo had the works of other Jewish commentators in his library (criteria 1 and 3), but without any of their works and without attributions we cannot be more specific.

The case is different for Jewish literary works in Greek that were written prior to Philo. I have worked through these texts in an effort to determine whether the Alexandrian betrays any dependence on them.⁶⁶ I identified eleven works from Alexandria (or perhaps Egypt)⁶⁷ and six from beyond Alexandria from the third century BCE to the first century BCE.⁶⁸ While the dating and location of some of these texts are debatable, the question I posed was whether there were parallels between these works and Philo. In this case, the location is irrelevant for our purposes. The date is only relevant if the work in question postdates Philo. Fortunately, dating is not an issue in the works that share the greatest parallels. In the case of these works we cannot look for citations since Philo did not cite Jewish authors by name or explicitly, but must depend on the scale of the parallels between Philo and his predecessors.

Of these seventeen works, I found significant parallels between Philo and three of the texts: Aristobulus, the Letter of Aristeas, and Ezekiel the Tragedian. It seems likely to me that Philo had a copy of Aristobulus in his library. Philo knew the thought and hermeneutical strategies of Aristobulus (criteria 1 and 2).⁶⁹ Further, as we noted above, Aristobulus's work made its way to the Episcopal Library in Caesarea apart from Alexander Polyhistor. This suggests that Origen may have taken it

⁶⁶ G.E. Sterling, "Magister or Maverick? Philo of Alexandria and Egyptian Judaism" (paper in the Philo of Alexandria Seminar, International Meeting of *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, Edinburgh, 1993); and idem, "Recluse or Representative? Philo and Greek-Speaking Judaism Beyond Alexandria", in E.H. Lovering, Jr. (ed.), *The Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 595–616. See also J. Doehorn, "Jüdisch-alexandrinische Literatur? Eine Problemanzeige und ein Überblick über diejenige Literatur, die potentiell dem antiken Judentum entstammt", in T. Georges/F. Albrecht/R. Feldmeier, *Alexandria*, 285–312.

⁶⁷ Third century BCE: Demetrius; 2nd century BCE: Artapanus, Aristeas the Exegete, the Pseudo-Orphic Fragments (cited in Aristobulus), Aristobulus, the Gnomologion of Pseudo-Epic Greek Poets (cited in Aristobulus), the Letter of Aristeas, Philo the Epic Poet, Ezekiel the Tragedian; first century BCE: Joseph and Aseneth, and the Testament of Job.

⁶⁸ Second century BCE: Cleodemus Malchus (Africa), Jason of Cyrene (Cyrene), the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and Sib. Or. 3.97ff. (Egypt), and Eupolemus (Palestine); first century BCE: Caecilius of Calacte (Rome).

⁶⁹ The most detailed comparison between Aristobulus and Philo remains N. Walter, *Der Thoraausleger Aristobulus: Untersuchungen zu seinen Fragmenten und zu pseudepigraphischen Resten der jüdisch-hellenistischen Literatur* (TU 86; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1964) 58–86. For a general overview of Aristobulus and Philo in the tradition see G.E. Sterling, "Philosophy as the Handmaid of Wisdom: Philosophy in the Exegetical Traditions of Alexandrian Jews", in R. Hirsch-Luipold/H. Görgemanns/M. von Albrecht (ed.), *Religiöse Philosophie und philosophische Religion der frühen Kaiserzeit: Literaturgeschichtliche Perspektiven* (Ratio Religionis Studien 1; STAC 51; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) 67–98.

along with Philo's works when he left Alexandria for Caesarea. It may also be that Philo had a copy of the Letter of Aristeas in his library since the parallels are not only to the legend of the origins of the LXX, but to exegetical traditions (criteria 1, 2, and 3).⁷⁰ Finally, it is likely in my opinion that Philo was familiar with the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel, a case that is clear in Philo's *De vita Mosis*. Philo has fifteen verbal parallels with Ezekiel's *Exagoge*, thirteen exegetical parallels, and one major thematic parallel (criteria 1 and 2).⁷¹ Since Hellenistic plays were typically performed rather than privately read, it is likely that Philo had seen performances of the play. However, the number of verbal parallels is striking enough to argue that Philo knew the text directly.

If we look at literature from the larger Greco-Roman world, we have some advantages over the Jewish material. Like Flavius Josephus, Philo omitted the names of his Jewish sources; however, he was not as reticent in referring to non-Jewish authors, especially although not exclusively in his philosophical treatises. This means that we have explicit references as well as citations and allusions. In the following, we will consider those that have the greatest probability of having a place in Philo's library without attempting an exhaustive consideration of each and every reference.⁷²

We begin with the philosophical material.⁷³ Philo referred to Plato by name 11 times when introducing a statement of the Athenian.⁷⁴ In other texts, he cited him without attribution for a total of 27 citations from eight Platonic texts: the *Euryxias*,⁷⁵

⁷⁰ For a recent treatment see L.M. White/G.A. Keddie, *Jewish Fictional Letters from Hellenistic Egypt: The Epistle of Aristeas and Related Literature* (WGRW 37; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018) 173–80.

⁷¹ G.E. Sterling, "From the Thick Marshes of the Nile to the Throne of God: Moses in Ezekiel the Tragedian and Philo of Alexandria", *SPhiloA* 26 (2014) 115–33. Cf. also his use of the name of Ezekiel's play for the second book of the Bible in *Migr.* 14; *Her.* 14, 251; *Somn.* 1.117. Cf. also Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.1.

⁷² For a complete list see D. Lincicum, "A Preliminary Index to Philo's Non-Biblical Citations and Allusions", *SPhiloA* 25 (2013) 139–67; idem, "Philo's Library", *SPhiloA* 26 (2014) 99–14; and Koskenniemi, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus*, 21–151. Koskenniemi differs from Lincicum in dealing only with those passages in which Philo names the author or cites the text.

⁷³ See G.E. Sterling, "'The Jewish Philosophy': Reading Moses via Hellenistic Philosophy according to Philo", in Seland, *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria*, 129–54, esp. 137–48. I have drawn on this essay for the presentation of the philosophical material. Cf. also Koskenniemi, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus*, 68–127, who treats all the citations. I have only treated those with enough material to warrant consideration in Philo's library.

⁷⁴ Philo, *Opif.* 119, 133; *Prob.* 13; *Contempl.* 57; *Aet.* 13, 14, 16, 27, 38, 52, 141.

⁷⁵ Plato, *Erx.* 397 in Philo, *Plant.* 171.

the *Menexenus*,⁷⁶ the *Phaedrus*,⁷⁷ the *Republic*,⁷⁸ the *Sophist*,⁷⁹ the *Theaetetus*⁸⁰, and the *Timaeus*.⁸¹ These explicit citations do not tell the full story. Philo alluded to a number of Platonic treatises more than ten times: the *Timaeus* 120 times, the *Phaedrus* 61 times, the *Republic* 25 times, the *Laws* 22 times, the *Theaetetus* 16 times, the *Phaedo* 16 times, the *Gorgias* 12 times, and the *Cratylus* 11 times (criteria 1, 2, and 4). Even these numbers do not do justice to the extent of the influence of the *Timaeus*,⁸² the *Phaedrus*,⁸³ and the *Phaedo*⁸⁴ on Philo's thought. While his use of these texts does not require that he owned a copy of them in all cases, the extent of his use of the *Laws*, the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Republic*, the *Theaetetus*, and the *Timaeus* suggests that he had a selection of the Platonic corpus in his library.

The same case cannot be made for Philo's use of Plato's most famous student – the *Nous*, as Plato nicknamed him. Philo openly referred to Aristotle and the Peripatetic tradition in *De aeternitate mundi*: he explicitly mentioned Aristotle four times,⁸⁵ Theophrastus once,⁸⁶ and Critolaus three times.⁸⁷ While he knew some of the Stagirite's and his successors' positions and possibly their works,⁸⁸ it is not clear that

⁷⁶ Plato, *Menex.* 238a in Philo, *Opif.* 133.

⁷⁷ Plato, *Phaedr.* 245a in Philo, *Prov.* 2.43; Plato, *Phaedr.* 246e in Philo, *QG* 3.3; Plato, *Phaedr.* 247a in Philo, *Spec.* 2.249; *Prob.* 13; cf. also *Leg.* 1.61; 3.7; *Fug.* 62, 74; Plato, *Phaedr.* 259c in Philo, *Prob.* 8 and *Contempl.* 35.

⁷⁸ Plato, *Resp.* 473c–d in Philo, *Mos.* 2.2.

⁷⁹ Plato, *Soph.* 226e in Philo, *Migr.* 220.

⁸⁰ Plato, *Theaet.* 176a–b in Philo, *Fug.* 63; Plato, *Theaet.* 176b–c in Philo, *Fug.* 82; Plato, *Theaet.* 191c–d in Philo, *Her.* 181.

⁸¹ Plato, *Tim.* 22b–23c in Philo, *Aet.* 146–149; Plato, *Tim.* 24e, 25c–d in Philo, *Aet.* 141; Plato, *Tim.* 28b–c in Philo, *Prov.* 1.21; Plato, *Tim.* 28c in Philo, *Opif.* 21; Plato, *Tim.* 29a in Philo, *Plant.* 131; Plato, *Tim.* 29b in Philo, *Opif.* 21 and *QG* 1.6; Plato, *Tim.* 32c–33b in Philo, *Aet.* 25–26; Plato, *Tim.* 33c–d in Philo, *Aet.* 38; Plato, *Tim.* 35b in Philo, *Numb.* (frag.); Plato, *Tim.* 37e, 39c in Philo, *Aet.* 52; cf. also *Spec.* 1.90; Plato, *Tim.* 38b in Philo, *Prov.* 1.20; Plato, *Tim.* 41a–b in Philo, *Aet.* 13; Plato, *Tim.* 75d–e in Philo, *Opif.* 119 and *QE* 2.118; Plato, *Tim.* 90a in Philo, *Plant.* 17.

⁸² On Philo's use of the *Timaeus*, see D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (PhA 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986).

⁸³ On Philo's use of the *Phaedrus*, see A. Méasson, *Du char ailé de Zeus à l'Arche d'Alliance: Images et mythes platoniciens chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes 1986).

⁸⁴ On Philo's use of the *Phaedo*, see D.T. Runia, "La recepción del *Fedón* de Platón en Filón de Alejandría", *Circe de clásicos y modernos* 20 (2016) 91–112 (trans. M. Alesso); and S. Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria* (SPhiloM 7; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015). See, e.g., Plato, *Phaed.* 60b–c in Philo, *Ebr.* 8; *QG* 4.159.

⁸⁵ Philo, *Aet.* 10, 12, 16, 18.

⁸⁶ Philo, *Aet.* 117–119.

⁸⁷ Philo, *Aet.* 55–75, esp. 55, 70, 74.

⁸⁸ On the influence of Aristotle on Philo, the most significant recent analyses include A.P. Bos, "Philo of Alexandria: A Platonist in the Image and Likeness of Aristotle", *SPhiloA* 10 (1998) 66–86; J.P. Martín, "La configuración semántica ἀρχή–νοῦς–θεός en Filón: una temprana combinación de Platón y Aristóteles", in C. Lévy (ed.), *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie* (Monothéisme et Philosophie; Turnhout: Brepols, 1998) 165–82; and C. Lévy, "L'aristotélisme, parent pauvre de la pensée philonienne?", in T. Bénatouil/E. Maffi/F. Trabatttoni (ed.), *Plato, Aristotle, or Both? Dialogues between Platonism and Aristote-*

he had a copy of a specific treatise in his library – at least our criteria do not support this conclusion.⁸⁹ A case might be made for the pseudo-Aristotelian work *De mundo*, but Philo might have known the central views of this work via Aristobulus.⁹⁰

What about the Stoa? Philo knew and used the Stoic tradition and made open references both to the tradition as a whole and to specific figures. In his doxographical work, *De aeternitate mundi*, he referred to Cleanthes,⁹¹ Chrysippus,⁹² Diogenes of Babylon,⁹³ Boethus of Sidon,⁹⁴ and Panaetius⁹⁵ by name. He named Zeno in *Prob.*⁹⁶ More impressively, Philo cited or alluded to the works of Zeno (two citations and five allusions)⁹⁷ and Posidonius (five citations and one allusion)⁹⁸ in three of the five parts of his corpus (criterion 3). Philo's knowledge and use of the Stoic tradition led Hans von Arnim to use Philo as the fourth most frequent source for his collection of Stoic fragments, citing him 198 times!⁹⁹ Anthony Long and David Sedley curtailed this use in their collection to only ten citations!¹⁰⁰ While von Arnim may have been overly optimistic about the value of Philo as a source for Stoic authors, Long and

lianism in Antiquity (Hildesheim: Olms, 2011) 17–33, who provides the most sober evaluation in my judgment. There are a large number of studies treating individual concepts.

⁸⁹ Cf. Lincicum, "Philo's Library", 100: "It is also striking that, for example, he often seems to allude to positions taken by Aristotle, and mentions him by name four times (all in a single context in *Aet.* 10, 12, 16, 18) but does not seem to offer clear verbatim quotations from his writings. This gives the impression that Philo knows his positions on matters philosophical without an easy recourse to his actual words, perhaps through the commentary tradition."

⁹⁰ For the relationship between Aristobulus and the Orphica with *De mundo*, see C. Riedweg, *Jüdisch-hellenistische Imitation eines orphischen Hieros Logos: Beobachtungen zu OF 245 und 247 (sog. Testament des Orpheus)* (Classica Monacensia 7; Tübingen: G. Narr, 1993) and R. Radice, *La filosofia di Aristobulo e i suoi nessi con il De Mundo attribuito ad Aristotele* (Pubblicazioni del Centro di ricerche di metafisica: Collana Temi metafisici e problem del pensiero antico; Studi e Testi 33; Milan: Via e pensiero, 1994). More could be done on the relationship with Philo.

⁹¹ Philo, *Aet.* 90.

⁹² Philo, *Aet.* 48, 90, 94.

⁹³ Philo, *Aet.* 77.

⁹⁴ Philo, *Aet.* 76, 78.

⁹⁵ Philo, *Aet.* 76.

⁹⁶ Philo, *Prob.* 53, 57, 97, 160.

⁹⁷ Philo cited Zeno in *Prob.* 53 and 97 and alluded to him in *Opif.* 73; *Somn.* 1.30 (via Cicero, *Scip.* 1.14.19); *Prob.* 14; and *Aet.* 18.

⁹⁸ Philo cited Posidonius five times: Posidonius, frag. 272 in Philo, *Aet.* 79; frag. 308b in *Opif.* 38; frag. 308c in *Opif.* 131; frag. 310 in *Aet.* 117–150; and frag. 373b in *Somn.* 2.1–2. He alluded to frag. 373b in *Somn.* 1.1–2. D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (PACS 1; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2001) 182, is not convinced that *Opif.* 38 cites Posidonius.

⁹⁹ H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* (4 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1924). This is now available electronically via De Gruyter. The only authors whom von Arnim used more frequently are Cicero, Galen, and Plutarch.

¹⁰⁰ A.A. Long/D. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Sedley appear to be excessively conservative.¹⁰¹ Maren Niehoff has recently argued that Philo went through a significant intellectual shift when he traveled to Rome. She suggests that his intellectual framework moved from the Platonism in Alexandria to Stoicism in Rome.¹⁰² While I do not agree with this intellectual shift or her reconstruction of Roman Stoicism, she is quite correct to point to the importance of Stoic elements in Philo's works. *In nuce*, there is no doubt that Philo read Stoic works, but it is not possible to identify specific works that might have been in his library. The most that we can say is that he likely knew and had access to works from Zeno and Poseidonius based on the number of times that he cited or alluded to them for different concerns across a range of his works (criteria 1, 2, and 3).

The evidence is only minimally better for the Neopythagorean tradition. Philo knew this tradition and tells us that he had read a treatise of Ocellus entitled *On the Nature of the Universe*.¹⁰³ While this is probably a pseudonymous treatise from the second century BCE, it points out Philo's awareness of the tradition (criterion 3). He referred to the Pythagoreans eight times in his corpus¹⁰⁴ and cited Philolaus once.¹⁰⁵ His use of Neopythagorean arithmologies is the one of the strongest pieces of evidence (criteria 2 and 3): they served as a basis for his now lost work *De numeris* (Περὶ ἀριθμῶν)¹⁰⁶ and appear in all three of his commentary series, especially in the Allegorical Commentary and Exposition of the Law.¹⁰⁷ While we cannot make a specific identification, it is clear that he had access to and used Neopythagorean arithmologies.

¹⁰¹ Long explained the shift in the evaluation of Philo in "Philo on Stoic Physics", in F. Alesse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (SPhA 5; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 121–40. For a more positive assessment of the value of Philo's reliability in representing Stoic views see R. Radice, "A proposito del rapporto fra Filone e gli stoici", *Fortunatae* 17 (2006) 127–49.

¹⁰² M.R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (AYBRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

¹⁰³ Philo, *Aet.* 12. On this text see R. Harder, *Ocellus Lucanus, Περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντοῦ φύσεως: Text und Kommentar* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1926).

¹⁰⁴ Philo, *Opif.* 100; *Leg.* 1.14; *Prob.* 2; *Aet.* 12; QG 1.17b, 2.12a, 4.8b; cf. also QG 3.49a.

¹⁰⁵ Philo, *Opif.* 100.

¹⁰⁶ See Philo's references to this work in *Mos.* 2.115; QG 4.110; QE 2.87. Cf. also *Spec.* 2.200.

¹⁰⁷ On Philo's arithmologies see K. Staehle, *Die Zahlenmystik bei Philon von Alexandria* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1931), who offered a reconstruction of Philo's lost work *De numeris*, providing a valuable collection of the evidence even if the reconstruction is not fully convincing; H. Moehring, "Arithmology as an Exegetical Tool in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria", in J.P. Kenny (ed.), *The School of Moses: Studies in Philo and Hellenistic Religion in Memory of Horst R. Moehring*, (BJS 304; SPhiloM 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) 141–76, who helped Philonists understand the function of arithmologies; D.T. Runia, "Philo's Longest Arithmological Passage: *De opificio mundi* 89–128", in L.J. Bord/D. Hamidovic (ed.), *De Jérusalem à Rome: Mélanges offerts à Jean Riaud* (Paris: Guethner, 2000) 155–74; and idem, *Philo of Alexandria On the Creation of the Cosmos, 25–9 and 264–5, 298–305*, who pointed out the similarities of Philo's treatment of the hebdomad and the list in Anatolius and John Lydus. Runia suggested that Philo knew a work similar to the work used by Anatolius and that Lydus knew Philo's treatment.

There are three other cases where we can be slightly more certain. On twenty-seven occasions, Philo quoted from fourteen different fragments of Heraclitus the famous pre-Socratic philosopher (criteria 1, 2, and 3). His citations and allusions occur across all three commentary series and his philosophical works.¹⁰⁸ This is enough that I think it likely that Philo had a copy of Heraclitus's *On Nature* in his library. He also cited Empedocles three times¹⁰⁹ and alluded to him three times,¹¹⁰ although five of the six are in *De providentia* (criteria 1–2).¹¹¹ The third example is also strong. Philo has an extensive quotation from the *Tropes for the Suspension of Judgment* by Aenesidemus in *De ebrietate* (criterion 3).¹¹² It seems likely that he had the manuscript at hand.¹¹³

If we turn to the literary evidence, we find similar patterns. Philo knew the Homeric epics and cited them in all five parts of his corpus (criterion 4). The Alexandrian ignored Plato's reservations about Homer¹¹⁴ by drawing from Aristotelian

¹⁰⁸ Heraclitus, frag. 8 in Philo, *Fug.* 179; *Mut.* 60; *Somn.* 1.6; *Spec.* 4.51; QG 4.1; Heraclitus, frag. 26 in Philo, *Leg.* 3.7; *Spec.* 1.208; Heraclitus, frag. 33 in Philo, *Somn.* 1.53–56; *Mos.* 1.31; *Aet.* 109–110; Heraclitus, frag. 35 in Philo, *Her.* 208–214; cf. also QG 3.5; Heraclitus, frag. 36 in Philo, *Spec.* 1.148; Heraclitus, frag. 47 in Philo, *Leg.* 1.107–108; *Fug.* 55; QG 4.152; Heraclitus, frag. 54 in Philo, *Leg.* 3.7; *Aet.* 109; Heraclitus, frag. 55 in Philo, *Leg.* 3.7; *Spec.* 1.208; Heraclitus, frag. 66 in Philo, *Aet.* 109–111; Heraclitus, frag. 68 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.66–67; Heraclitus, frag. 76 in Philo, *Fug.* 61; Heraclitus, frag. 93 in Philo, *Mos.* 1.31; *Aet.* 42; Heraclitus, frag. 108 in Philo, QG 2.5; Heraclitus, frag. 110 in Philo, *Spec.* 1.10. I have used the edition of M. Marcovich, *Heraclitus: Greek Text with a Short Commentary* (Mérida: Los Andes University Press, 1967). Cf. also H. Diels/W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, griechisch und Deutsch* (6th ed., 3 vol; Berlin: Weidmann, 1951–1952) 1:139–90 and now A. Laks/G.W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy* (9 vols.; LCL 524–532; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017) 3:114–337.

¹⁰⁹ Empedocles, frag. B12 in Philo, *Aet.* 5; Empedocles, frag. B43 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.70; Empedocles, frag. B121 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.24. I have used the edition of Diels/Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1:276–376. See also Laks/Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 5:317–733.

¹¹⁰ Empedocles, frag. A49 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.60; Empedocles, frag. A66 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.61; Empedocles, frag. B55 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.66.

¹¹¹ On Philo's use of Heraclitus and Empedocles see Mansfeld, "Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Others in a Middle Platonist Cento in Philo of Alexandria", 131–56. On Heraclitus in particular, see J.R. Roysse, "Heraclitus B 118 in Philo of Alexandria", *SPhiloA* 9 (1997) 211–16; P. Graffigna, "La presenza di Eraclito nel trattato *De vita Mosis* di Filone d'Alessandria", in *Philon d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie*, 449–58; L. Saudelli, "Les fragments d'Héraclite et leur signification dans le *corpus philonicum*: le cas du fr. 60 DK", in S. Inowlocki/B. Decharneux (ed.), *Philon d'Alexandrie: un penseur à l'intersection des cultures gréco-romaine, orientale, juive et chrétienne* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011) 265–80; and eadem, *Eraclito ad Alessandria: Studi e ricerche intorno alla testimonianza di Filone* (Monothéismes et Philosophie 16; Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

¹¹² Philo, *Ebr.* 166–205.

¹¹³ On Philo's use of Aenesidemus see C. Lévy, "La conversion du scepticisme chez Philon d'Alexandrie", in F. Alessse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (SPhA 5; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 103–20.

¹¹⁴ E.g., Plato, *Resp.* book 10, which is Plato's most famous critique of poetry (not simply Homer); for specific statements see *Resp.* 606e, 607b.

literary criticism in Alexandria to cultivate an appreciation for “the poet”.¹¹⁵ Philo cites or refers to the epics a total of 62 times, most interestingly 23 of these are in the Allegorical Commentary, while the others are in other parts of his corpus (criteria 1, 2, and 3).¹¹⁶ Unlike many ancient authors who cite select Homeric books or only the beginning scenes in books, Philo appears to draw from the complete epics rather than select books or select parts of books (criterion 2). While he may well have memorized Homeric lines in his preliminary studies as a student, he draws from a broad enough range that it is likely that he had copies of the Homeric epics in his library.¹¹⁷ He also appears to have enjoyed Hesiod: he cited *Works and Days* twice in one text¹¹⁸ and alluded to it three other times¹¹⁹ (criterion 2); and cited the *Theogony* three times¹²⁰ and alluded to it another three times (criterion 2).¹²¹ He may also have had copies of both in his library, although again this could be a matter of memory and is much less impressive than his use of Homer.

On two occasions Philo tells us that he frequented the theater.¹²² He had clear favorites. There can be little doubt that he enjoyed Euripides:¹²³ he cited seven of his plays fifteen times¹²⁴ and cited him another three times when we cannot identify the play (criteria 1 and 2). These are scattered across the Allegorical Commentary, the

¹¹⁵ For an analysis, see M.R. Niehoff, “Philo and Plutarch on Homer”, in eadem (ed.), *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters* (Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 16; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 127–53, esp. 130–6.

¹¹⁶ The numbers are taken from G. Roskam, “Nutritious Milk from Hagar’s School: Philo’s Reception of Homer”, *SPhiloA* 29 (2017) 1–32, esp. 10, who corrected the numbers in Lincicum. On Philo’s use of Homer, see also P. Nieto Hernández, “Philo and Greek Poetry”, *SPhiloA* 26 (2014) 135–49; and Koskenniemi, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus*, 25–35.

¹¹⁷ So Lincicum, “Philo’s Library”, 114; and Roskam, “Nutritious Milk from Hagar’s School”, 9–10.

¹¹⁸ Hesiod, *Op.* 287 in Philo, *Ebr.* 150; Hesiod, *Op.* 289–292 in Philo, *Ebr.* 150.

¹¹⁹ Hesiod, *Op.* 40 in Philo, *Det.* 64; *Her.* 116; Hesiod, *Op.* 218 in Philo, *Decal.* 69 (although see Plato, *Symp.* 222b).

¹²⁰ Hesiod, *Theog.* 23 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.36; Hesiod, *Theog.* 116–117 in Philo, *Aet.* 17; Hesiod, *Theog.* 599 in Philo, *Anim.* 61.

¹²¹ Hesiod, *Theog.* 50–61 in Philo, *Plant.* 129; Hesiod, *Theog.* 154–210 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.35; Hesiod, *Theog.* 459–506 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.35.

¹²² Philo, *Ebr.* 177 and *Prob.* 141.

¹²³ References to the fragments are to B. Snell et al. (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* (5 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981–2004). Hereafter abbreviated TrGF.

¹²⁴ Philo quoted from Euripides, *Antiope* (TrGF 5:200.3–4) in Philo, *Spec.* 4.47; Euripides, *Auge* (TrGF 5:275.3–4) in Philo, *Prob.* 141; Euripides, *Chrysippus* (TrGF 5:839.8–14) in Philo, *Aet.* 30 and Euripides, *Chrysippus* (TrGF 5:839.12–14) in Philo, *Leg.* 1.5; *Aet.* 5, 144; Euripides, *Hec.* 548–551 in Philo, *Prob.* 116; Euripides, *Ino* (TrGF 5:240) in Philo, *Somn.* 1.154 and *Mos.* 1.31; Euripides, *Phoen.* 521 in Philo, *Ios.* 78; and Euripides, *Syleus* (TrGF 5:687) in Philo, *Leg.* 3.202; *Ios.* 78; *Prob.* 25, 99 and Euripides, *Syleus* (TrGF 5:687–91) in Philo, *Prob.* 100–104.

Exposition of the Law, and in Philo's philosophical treatises.¹²⁵ There are some other possible allusions, but these are too vague to consider reliable.¹²⁶ The extent of his citations from *Sylaeus*¹²⁷ and the frequency of his citations from *Chrysippus*¹²⁸ across a range of his works suggest to me that he had copies of these plays available (criteria 3 and 4). The evidence for the other two major tragedians is much less: Philo alluded to two known Aeschylean plays (once each)¹²⁹ and two unidentified plays (once each).¹³⁰ The possible allusions, as they were for the Euripidean material, are so vague that we cannot be confident in them.¹³¹ Philo certainly knew some of Aeschylus's plays, but it is not clear that he had direct access to any. Philo cited Sophocles only once¹³² and may have alluded to him seven times.¹³³ As was true in the case of Ezekiel's *Exagoge*, we are not sure if he simply remembered lines that he enjoyed or had the works in front of him. Our criteria do not permit us to conclude the latter with any confidence.

It is time to summarize. I will group the works that have a reasonable chance of being on Philo's shelves based on our four criteria into two categories: those that were probably in his library and those that were possibly in his library (Table 1).

¹²⁵ Euripides, TrGF 5:893.1 in Philo, *Prob.* 145; Euripides, TrGF 5:954 in Philo, *QG* 4.202; and Euripides, TrGF 5:958 in Philo, *Prob.* 22 (cf. also Plutarch, *Adol. poet. aud.* 13). For a broad analysis see Koskenniemi, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus*, 52–60.

¹²⁶ Lincicum, "A Preliminary Index to Philo's Non-Biblical Citations and Allusions", 154, includes the following: Euripides, TrGF 5:484 in Philo, *Somm.* 1.172; Euripides, TrGF 5:484.1 in Philo, *Mut.* 152; and Euripides, TrGF 5:911 in Philo, *Cher.* 26 (which PCW also include). See also Euripides, *Hipp.* in Philo, *Ios.* 48 (not included in Lincicum). Here I agree with Koskenniemi, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus*, 18 n. 94 and 24, that the allusions are not always compelling.

¹²⁷ Euripides, *Syleus* (TrGF 5:687) in Philo, *Leg.* 3.202; *Ios.* 78; *Prob.* 25, 99 and Euripides, *Syleus* (TrGF 5:687–91) in Philo, *Prob.* 100–104.

¹²⁸ Euripides, *Chrysippus* (TrGF 5:839.8–14) in Philo, *Aet.* 30 and Euripides, *Chrysippus* (TrGF 5:839.12–14) in Philo, *Leg.* 1.5; *Aet.* 5, 144.

¹²⁹ Aeschylus, *Myrmidons* (TrGF 3:139) in Philo, *Aet.* 49; and Aeschylus, *Niobe* (TrGF 3:162) in Philo, *Anim.* 47.

¹³⁰ Aeschylus, TrGF 3:20 in Philo, *Prob.* 143; and Aeschylus TrGF 3:159 in Philo, *Anim.* 47. On the citation in *Anim.* 47 see D. Lincicum, "Aeschylus in Philo, *Anim.* 47 and *QE* 2.6", *SPhiloA* 25 (2013) 65–8. For a broad analysis, see Koskenniemi, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus*, 49–51.

¹³¹ Aeschylus, *Eum.* 107 in Philo, *Ebr.* 126 (?); Aeschylus, *Niobe* (TrGF 3:162) in Philo, *Opif.* 144; *Mos.* 1.279; *Spec.* 4.14, 236; *Virt.* 80 (also cited by Plato, *Resp.* 391e; on these references see Lincicum, "Aeschylus in Philo", 66–67); Aeschylus, *Prom.* 90 in Philo, *Opif.* 132 (?); Aeschylus, TrGF 3:344 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.8 (? Cf. PAPM *in loco*); Aeschylus, TrGF 3:345 in Philo, *Prov.* 2.90 (? Cf. PAPM *in loco*); Aeschylus, TrGF 3:394 in Philo, *Sacr.* 93 (?); Aeschylus, TrGF 3:402 in Philo, *Aet.* 139 (cf. also Strabo 6.6).

¹³² Sophocles, TrGF 4:755 in Philo, *Prob.* 19 (cf. also Aristotle, *Eth. eud.* 1242a). For an analysis see Koskenniemi, *Greek Writers and Philosophers in Philo and Josephus*, 51–2.

¹³³ Sophocles, *Hipp.* in Philo, *Ios.* 48 (?); Sophocles, *Oed. Col.* 1293 in Philo, *Prob.* 42 (?); Sophocles, TrGF 4:910 in Philo, *Gig.* 56; *Ebr.* 8; *QG* 4.159 (which could also be an allusion to Plato, *Phaed.* 60b; cf. Plutarch, *Cons. ux.* 609b); Sophocles, TrGF 4:945 in Philo, *Spec.* 1.74; 3.50 (or Homer, *Il.* 18.104; *Od.* 20.379; cf. also Plato, *Theaet.* 176d).

Probable Authors and Works	Possible Authors and Works
<p><i>Corpus Philonicum</i> QGE Allegorical Commentary Exposition of the Law Philosophical Works Apologetic Works</p> <p>LXX</p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p> <p>Unknown Jewish commentaries Aristobulus Letter of Aristeas Ezekiel, <i>Exagoge</i></p> <p>Plato</p> <p><i>Laws</i> <i>Phaedo</i> <i>Phaedrus</i> <i>Republic</i> <i>Theaetetus</i> <i>Timaeus</i></p> <p>Zeno Poseidonius Pythagorean Arithmology/ies Heraclitus <i>On Nature</i></p> <p>Empedocles Aenesidemus <i>Tropes for the Suspension of Judgment</i></p> <p>Homer</p> <p><i>Iliad</i> <i>Odyssey</i></p> <p>Hesiod</p> <p><i>Works and Days</i> <i>Theogony</i></p> <p>Euripides</p> <p><i>Chrysippus</i> <i>Sylaeus</i></p>	<p>LXX</p> <p>Psalter Proverbs 1 Samuel Jeremiah</p> <p>Unknown Jewish commentaries</p> <p>Plato</p> <p><i>Cratylus</i> <i>Gorgias</i> <i>Symposium</i></p> <p>Pseudo-Aristotle <i>De mundo</i></p> <p>Pseudo-Ocellus <i>On the Nature of the Universe</i></p> <p>Aeschylus? Sophocles?</p>

Table 1: Philo's Library

There are several observations that we should make. First, the size of the library as we have (re)constructed it is relatively modest; at least in comparison to the Villa of the Papyri it is modest. The same point is true if we compare it with the library of 40,000 volumes that burned in Alexandria. Seneca condemned a library for show rather than serious use – decorations for the dining room rather than tools of study.¹³⁴ Philo did not have a library for show but for specific use. Second, it was a specialized library: it concentrated on the interpretation of the Pentateuch and philosophy. While Philo's library, like other libraries, had works other than exegetical and philosophical treatises, this was the library of a scholar. In this way his library resembled the libraries of philosophers that were focused on their work.¹³⁵ Third, the bulk of Philo's own writings were likely intended for his students, especially the *Quaestiones et solutiones*, the Allegorical Commentary, and the philosophical works. Several scholars have suggested that Philodemus intended for his works to be only for his students.¹³⁶ This also appears to have been the case for Plotinus who was reticent to write and finally entrusted his works to Aemilius and then Porphyry (see below). Philo does not appear to have written the bulk of his works for a wide readership, but primarily for his school.¹³⁷ However, the Exposition of the Law and the apologetic works may well have been intended for broader audiences.

III. The Formation of the Library

This leads us to ask about the role of students in the formation of the library. The evidence from the philosophical schools attests to the role of students in the production of the master's works. This took place in multiple ways. First, students sometimes took notes and produced the works of their teachers. Philodemus used his

¹³⁴ Seneca, *Tranq.* 9.4–5.

¹³⁵ Grafton/Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, 53: “But philosophers also used and wrote books in ways that differentiated them from other learned men of their day. Philosophical libraries were often large, and remarkably specialized.”

¹³⁶ So D. Sedley, “Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World”, in M. Griffin/J. Barnes (ed.), *Philosophia Togata 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 97–119, esp. 104 and D. Obbink, “Craft, Cult, and Canon in the Books from Herculaneum”, in J. Fitzgerald/D. Obbink/G. Holland (ed.), *Philodemus and the New Testament* (NovTSup 111; Leiden: Brill, 2004) 73–84, esp. 79–80. The two scholars disagree fundamentally about the nature of the community around Philodemus: Sedley argues that it was like a religious cult in the sense of maintaining allegiance to a founder; Obbink challenges this. Yet they agree in the nature and audience of Philodemus's works.

¹³⁷ See J.R. Royle, “Did Philo Publish his Works?”, *SPhiloA* 25 (2013) 75–100, who concludes that they were for use in his school. Royle concentrated on *QGE* and the Allegorical Commentary.

notes from Zeno as a basis for *On Frank Criticism* and *On Signs*.¹³⁸ An even more famous case of this practice is Arrian who attempted to write down the lectures of Epictetus. Arrian opened his account with these words: "I have not composed the sayings of Epictetus in the manner that one might think someone would compose such works nor have I on my own published them for the world, I who did not compose them." He explained: "Whatever I heard him saying I attempted to write word for word as best as I was able so that I could preserve them for my future use as reminders of his mindset and frankness of speech."¹³⁹ Arrian was not singular in doing this. Aemilius did the same for a decade when he studied with Plotinus and compiled 100 books of the lectures of the founder of Neoplatonism.¹⁴⁰ This was apparently a common practice.

Second, on occasions students became involved in the writing of a major work. One of the great works of Philodemus was his *History of Philosophy*. The paleographical analysis of Guglielmo Cavallo suggests that "the History was achieved not as a lifelong endeavor of the philosopher alone but as a project of the entire circles of his followers and collaborators".¹⁴¹

Third, students often edited the works of their teachers. As we noted above, for a decade Plotinus apparently did not write and depended on Aemilius to produce his comments. Eventually Plotinus took reed to hand and began his authorial career. According to Porphyry, Plotinus composed 21 treatises before he joined him¹⁴² and went on to write another 33. Plotinus eventually asked Porphyry to edit his written treatises.¹⁴³ Although Porphyry appears to have worked from copies of the autographs that were in the hands of Aemilius, he edited the works rather extensively.¹⁴⁴ Porphyry gave titles to the treatises¹⁴⁵ and arranged them in six *Enneads*¹⁴⁶ organized in three books:¹⁴⁷ the first book contained the ethical, physical, cosmological treatises (*Enneads* 1, 2, and 3 respectively);¹⁴⁸ the second had the treatises that addressed the

¹³⁸ D. Konstan/D. Clay/C.E. Glad/J.C. Thom/J. Ware (ed.), *Philodemus, On Frank Criticism: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (SBLTT 43; Graeco-Roman Series 13; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998) 1–2.

¹³⁹ Arrian in Epictetus, *Diatr. Pref.*, 1–2.

¹⁴⁰ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 3.

¹⁴¹ Gigante, *Philodemus in Italy*, 18. See G. Cavallo, *Libri scritte scribi a Ercolano: Introduzione allo studio dei materiali greci* (Primo supplementa a Cronache ercolanesi 13; Italy: Gaetano Macchiaroli, 1983) 61–62.

¹⁴² Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 4.

¹⁴³ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 4–6, 19, 24–26.

¹⁴⁴ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 20.

¹⁴⁵ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 26.

¹⁴⁶ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 24. He says that he imitated Apollodorus the Athenian who edited the works of Epicharmus, the fifth century Sicilian dramatist who was thought to be a source of thought for Plato (Diogenes Laertius 8.3.73), and Andronicus the Peripatetic who edited the works of Aristotle and Theophrastus.

¹⁴⁷ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 26.

¹⁴⁸ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 24 and 25.

soul and the intellect (*Enneads* 4 and 5 respectively);¹⁴⁹ and the third included the treatises that dealt with the One (*Ennead* 6).¹⁵⁰ The student thus took the rather sporadic collection that Plotinus had composed over a period of years and gave them an order that led the reader psychagogically from the initial stages of philosophy until they contemplated the One. The editing of a teacher's work is not unusual. Diogenes Laertius tells us that the *corpus Platonicum* was arranged into triologies by Aristophanes of Byzantium¹⁵¹ and then into tetralogies by Thrasyllus.¹⁵² We also know that the *corpus Aristotelicum* was arranged by Andronicus of Rhodes. Students thus shaped the legacy of their teachers.

There is a fourth way that students directly participated. They often wrote works in the name of their teacher. This appears to be the case for a number of works in the *corpus Aristotelicum*, perhaps most famously represented by the *Magna moralia*. It was also true of the Neopythagoreans. Iamblichus tells us that the students of Pythagoras "referred everything to Pythagoras and called it by his name". He says that "they did not attribute to themselves the glory of their own creations, except very rarely. For there are very few whose works are acknowledged to be their own."¹⁵³

Did any of these four practices shape the *corpus Philonicum*? I must confess that I had not felt the force of this question until I worked through the formation of the libraries in the philosophical schools. I think that we should take this seriously. Let us take each of the four practices that we have identified and consider possibilities in the *corpus Philonicum*.

It does not appear to be likely that students produced works that have come down to us as part of the *corpus Philonicum* based on their notes (practice one). Since we cannot perform a paleographical analysis as Cavallo could for the library in Herculaneum, we are left to stylistic and conceptual analyses. There is a uniform style throughout the Allegorical Commentary and again throughout the Exposition of the Law that suggests to me that they are the work of a single hand. The *Quaestiones et solutiones* are largely preserved in a rather literal Armenian translation which makes a stylistic analysis difficult. There are some treatises, particularly among the philosophical and apologetic works, whose style is different, but there are often genre and audience considerations that shape the works. While it is worth asking whether some of these works might have been produced by students of Philo who listened to him lecture or who wrote them within the context of his school, I am not prepared to argue a case although I am not willing to dismiss the possibility.

¹⁴⁹ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 25 and 26.

¹⁵⁰ Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 26.

¹⁵¹ Diogenes Laertius 3.61.

¹⁵² Diogenes Laertius 3.56.

¹⁵³ Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 31.

Similarly, I am dubious about the possibility that students were involved in the production of one of Philo's major works: the *Quaestiones et solutiones*, the Allegorical Commentary, or the Exposition of the Law (practice two). I would probably look more closely at the *Quaestiones et solutiones* than the other commentary series, but – as we noted above – the preservation of QGE in a later Armenian translation makes a stylistic analysis difficult.

It is, however, quite possible that students were involved in editing and preserving Philo's works (practice three). Sometime early in the tradition the basic unity of the Allegorical Commentary and the Exposition of the Law was lost; at least it was lost by the time of Eusebius.¹⁵⁴ The same is true for specific works in the corpus, e.g., *De specialibus legibus*, *De virtutibus*, and *De praemiis et poeniis*. The best explanation is that the works were transmitted by his students who did not fully appreciate the unities of the works. It appears that Philo's works suffered the reverse fate from the works of Plotinus, whose disparate writings were brought into an organic whole. This is simply due to the fact that Philo lacked a Porphyry who knew him and his work the same way that Porphyry knew Plotinus's works.

Finally, there are examples of works that began to circulate under Philo's name that were pseudonymous (practice four). The best examples are the homilies *De Sampson* and *De Jona*.¹⁵⁵ While the dating of the homilies and their setting are debatable, they are likely from Alexandria in the first century BCE to the early second century CE.¹⁵⁶ Their attributions to Philo suggest that they may have come from students in the school.¹⁵⁷ If we alter the question and ask whether there were works that might have come from someone in the school, but were not attributed to Philo, there is at least one possibility.¹⁵⁸ It is worth asking whether the author of the Wisdom of Solomon might have been a student in Philo's school. The evidence is not uniform: the Book of History in Wisdom is markedly different than what we encounter in Philo and is an argument against this suggestion; on the other hand, the

¹⁵⁴ On their unity see G.E. Sterling, "The Structure of Philo's Allegorical Commentary", *TZ* 143 (2018) 1225–38.

¹⁵⁵ See F. Siegert, *Drei hellenistisch-jüdische Predigten* (2 vols.; WUNT 20, 61; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980–1992) and M. Cover, *Lifting the Veil: 2 Corinthians 3:7–18 in Light of Jewish Homiletic and Commentary Traditions* (BZNW 210; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015) 195–212.

¹⁵⁶ See Siegert, *Drei hellenistisch-jüdische Predigten*, 2:39–52.

¹⁵⁷ *De Jona* is attributed to Philo. See J.R. Royse, *The Spurious Texts of Philo of Alexandria: A Study of Textual Transmission and Corruption with Indexes to the Major Collections of Greek Fragments* (ALGHJ 22; Leiden: Brill, 1991) 89–92.

¹⁵⁸ Some have argued that the Letter of Aristeas was produced by a member of Philo's circle or school. See the discussion in White/Keddie, *Jewish Fictional Letters from Hellenistic Egypt*, 173–80, esp. 180, who conclude that the letter cannot confidently be dated as late as Philo, but recognize its influence on Philo and members of his school.

incorporation of Stoic and Platonic philosophy in Wisdom has Philonic echoes.¹⁵⁹ If the author did not know Philo, the author was exposed to some of the same sources.

IV. Conclusion

The point of this exercise was to reconstruct Philo's library and to ask whether the libraries in private philosophical schools illuminate our reconstruction. It appears to me that they do. Philo's library had at its core scrolls from the LXX and his commentaries in much the same way that Philodemus's library had an Epicurean core that consisted of the work of Epicurus and Philodemus's own treatises. The same may be said for Aristotle's library as well as the library of Plotinus: they each had a core body of texts that students could use to develop their understanding of the particular tradition. In the case of Philo, this was the need to read Moses via a philosophical lens through allegory. The special nature of Philo's library matches what we know of other philosophical libraries. This does not mean that Philo was only a scholar and not an intellectual in the broader sense. Just as the Stagirite, Philodemus, and the founder of Neoplatonism all had wide interests that were reflected in their libraries, e.g., Plotinus had works of Numenius in his collection, so Philo had broader cultural interests reflected in his appreciation for Greek poetry and drama. The breadth of his interests may not have been as great as Aristotle's or Philodemus's, but he – like they – built a library that promoted breadth as well as depth.

Perhaps most importantly, it is hard to understand Philo's library apart from a connection with a group of students. It was not a library for show, but a library that he used and, in all probability, built in part for his students. We need to consider their role as well as his in what has come down to us. After all, we would likely not have the *corpus Philonicum* without them.

¹⁵⁹ On Wisdom's use of philosophy see G.E. Sterling, "The Love of Wisdom: Middle Platonism and Stoicism in the Wisdom of Solomon", in T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 198–213.

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The Socratic Background of Philo's Ethics: The Case of Piety

Sharon Weisser

We are certainly not used to thinking about Philo as an intellectualist. Decades of scholarship have portrayed Philo as a thinker driven by religious aspirations. Guided by the assumption that a religious thinker must certainly hold “religious feelings”, and that these are prone to be irrational, Philonic scholarship tends to present Philo as a thinker naturally inclined to acknowledge the non-rational aspects of human existence. What precisely is implied by irrational remains elusive and seems, in fact, to be rarely the object of meticulous scrutiny. Not only is Philo usually given the puzzling title of religious thinker, he is furthermore thought to be combining two strands of thought: Greek philosophy on the one hand, and Jewish faith on the other.¹ The central problem with this presentation is not only that it assumes the mixing of two presumably fixed entities – which is historically incorrect – but also, and especially, that it presumes that Philo is grafting Greek categories of thought onto an inviolable Jewish core – a Jewish core so often used to explain away some discrepancies between him and his philosophical peers. There is a very fine line, which is actually often crossed in scholarship, between adopting the combination of the two traditions’ model to characterize Philo’s thought and endorsing the view not only that such crystalized traditions existed, but also that they provided him with respectively rationalist tools and with a predilection for extra-rational encounters with the divine.

The portrait I propose differs radically from these commonly held assumptions. My purpose is to shed light on the strong intellectualist aspect of Philo’s ethics. This intellectualism, I shall claim, is not something that Philo accidentally came across in his Greek sources and then artificially, and partially, mapped onto his “core-Judaism”, losing, in the process, some essential aspects of it. In this paper I shall suggest

¹ These underlying assumptions, whether explicitly stated or subtly implied, remain central to numerous scholarly works on Philo. A comprehensive list would be impractical, tedious, and unnecessary as later in the discussion, I will address specific works and provide more targeted references. My focus here is to highlight a readily identifiable trend.

that Philonic scholarship would greatly benefit from refraining from using ethnic allegiances as an interpretative tool in coming to terms with complex arguments. To put it otherwise, it proves intellectually sterile, I believe, to assume, almost a priori, that it is because Philo is Jewish that he endorses one premise or another, all the more so in light of the fact that what his specific Judaism is about remains so hard to pin down. I shall rather suggest a more charitable way of approaching his thought, one that makes every effort to solve any major interpretative difficulty by making the most sense of the argument, before pulling out the “argument from Judaism”.

My main interest lies in Philo’s intellectualist view of piety. In the field of ancient philosophy, intellectualism is associated with the figure of Socrates, as it emerges in Plato’s earlier dialogues. Most fundamentally, intellectualism refers to the thesis that virtue is a kind of knowledge.² Crucially connected to Socratic intellectualism is the principle that “no one errs willingly”, the so-called “denial of ἀκρασία” that follows from it, and the issue of the unity of the virtues.³ The first thesis, sometimes called the “prudential paradox”,⁴ suggests that the misconception concerning the nature of the good accounts for our misconduct; the second one states that each of our actions reflects what we genuinely believe to be the best option; and the third one argues that if one knows one virtue, one knows them all.⁵ I will not be treating these related issues here. In other words, I shall not address Philo’s view on our sources of motivations or the possibility of acting contrarily to what we believe to be the best, nor will I raise the question of whether the virtues are all the same or, minimally, inseparable. In this paper, I take intellectualism to refer to a thesis that connects virtue with knowledge in a very central way. More specifically, it assumes that knowledge of a virtue is sufficient to entail the corresponding virtuous disposition or behavior.

In order to make the case for Philo’s intellectualism, there is no need to plunge into a detailed analysis of all the virtues mustered in his many texts – a task greatly exceeding the confines of this paper – as he makes it clear that he actually considers

² There is abundant literature on this subject; let it suffice to mention here T. Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge”, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 79 (1997) 117–49; T.C. Brickhouse/N.D. Smith, *Plato’s Socrates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 157–73, with further references in these papers; see also T. Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 38–44.

³ Against this designation see Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge”.

⁴ G. Santas, *Socrates: Philosophy in Plato’s Early Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 1999) 133–6. The prudential paradox and the denial of ἀκρασία are sometimes combined under the heading of “motivational intellectualism”, as opposed to “virtue intellectualism”, which refers to the thesis that virtue is a kind of knowledge; see Brickhouse/Smith, “Socratic Moral Psychology”.

⁵ These issues have raised abundant scholarly discussions and debates that cannot be sufficiently approached nor discussed here. To limit myself to a few references: Brickhouse/Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology*; D.T. Devereux, “The Unity of the Virtues”, in H.H. Benson (ed.), *Companion to Plato* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006) 325–40; H. Segvic, “No One Errs Willingly: the Meaning of Socratic Intellectualism”, *OSAP* 19 (2000) 2–45.

one virtue to be the source of all others, namely “piety” (εὐσέβεια or ὁσιότης).⁶ My main claim is that Philo conceives of piety as a kind of knowledge, and holds that possessing such knowledge is sufficient for one to be pious.

Recent scholarly works on Philo's piety have addressed the pride of place that it occupies in his ethics, and have attempted to situate it in relation to the Greek philosophical tradition. Thus, for instance, Cordova attempts to situate Philo's εὐσέβεια vis à vis Hellenistic Judaism on the one hand and Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, on the other.⁷ Hoklotubbe sees in Philo's reflection on piety an apologetic maneuver intending to show that Judaism does not fall short of Greek civic ideals.⁸ In an important paper, Sterling spells out the singular place piety occupies in Philo's thought as compared to Hellenistic philosophy – while simultaneously taking this virtue to illustrate Philo's thinking “of Judaism in philosophical terms”, or even his use of “categories that were foreign to Judaism”.⁹ Sterling's contribution hinges on the emphasis he places on what he refers to as the “intellectual quality” of piety. Such a quality is especially conspicuous in how its opposing vice, impiety, is associated with the “misapprehension of the Deity” or various forms of atheisms. On Sterling's account, the reason for piety's centrality

appears to lie in the theocentric nature of his thought: The aspiration of Philo was to encounter God directly. Even though a human cannot experience the being of God, it is possible to experience God's presence directly. This experience, even the desire for the experience, affected the moral life. It is not that we imitate God to experience God, but that our understanding and experience of God shape our virtue or impiety.¹⁰

Although Sterling is undoubtedly correct in highlighting piety's intellectual quality, this qualification remains nevertheless vague. Moreover, and mainly, the intellectual aspect of this virtue does little to distinguish Philo from any of his philosophical peers who have approached the subject of the divine. Indeed, a quick glimpse at the

⁶ Most often, Philo takes these terms to be interchangeable (as does Socrates in the *Euthyphro*, see below), as seen, for example, in *Spec.* 2.224; 4.135; *Decal.* 37. Note that he very frequently combines them. *Contra* (while not addressing Philo directly but the philosophical tradition in general) J.D. Mikalson, *Greek Popular Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010) 140–86.

⁷ N.N. Cordova, *Philo of Alexandria's Ethical Discourse: Living in the Power of Piety* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018). There is no room to address Cordova's analysis in detail; the main and fundamental difference between our analysis stems from a different understanding of the Greek philosophical material.

⁸ C. Hoklotubbe, “Great is the Mystery of Piety: Contested Claims to Piety in Plutarch, Philo, and 1 Timothy”, in N.P. DesRosiers/L.C. Vuong (ed.), *Religious Competition in the Greco-Roman World* (WGRWSup 10; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016) 155–66.

⁹ G.E. Sterling, “The Queen of the Virtues: Piety in Philo of Alexandria”, *SPhiloA* 18 (2006) 103–23, at 104; and see also H.A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (2 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947) 2:208–18.

¹⁰ Sterling, “The Queen of the Virtues”, 123.

philosophical conceptions of piety, from the first Greek philosophers (like Xenophanes) and up to the time of Philo, including Plato's *Laws*, the Stoics, and even Epicurus, shows that the proper relationship to gods was constantly worked out to imply the idea of a correct apprehension of the divine.¹¹ Furthermore, Sterling's swift transition from theocentrism to the claim that it is the desire for a *direct experience* of God that shapes our moral life, and, even more so, his analysis of piety in terms of a transposition of foreign categories onto a core Judaism, seem to stem from the prevailing scholarly assumptions mentioned at the start of this paper.¹²

On these grounds, it appears that the analysis of piety can play an interesting double function: not only does it provide an excellent study case for Philo's intellectualism, but it also enables one to show that even with the case of piety, the virtue that most naturally lends itself to an analysis in terms of a combination of Greek reason and Jewish faith, it is possible to avoid the bias of "the argument from Judaism" while still making full sense of Philo's line of thought.

My contention is that Philo considers piety to be *knowledge* of the divine. This knowledge, it is important to underscore, does not pertain to what God is, but rather to His causal role in the creation and preservation of the world. This intellectualist viewpoint, I will suggest, explains why Philo considers piety to be the source of all the virtues. When Philo argues that piety is the basis of the virtuous life, he is indeed making a cogent philosophical point, one that follows directly from his intellectual view of piety. Piety is a metaphysical and cosmological understanding that provides the basis for correctly perceiving the ontological organization of reality. As such, it proves foundational to our ethical life: not only is this knowledge necessary for correctly assessing the value of the sensible realm and all it contains, but it also enables us to strive toward aligning our desires and pursuits towards genuinely good ends.

Since I am arguing for an intellectualist view of piety, and since there is a text of Philo that bears quite an exceptional similarity to a passage from a Socratic dialogue devoted to piety, I will first raise the question of the relationship between Philo's and Socrates's notions of piety. The first part of the paper will thus be devoted to a comparative analysis between a few paragraphs from Philo's *Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat* and the end of the *Euthyphro*. I will show that despite the textual similarities, Philo does not endorse Socrates's conception of piety as the practice of philosophy aiming at producing moral goodness. The second part of this paper will show that Philo's account of piety remains nevertheless "Socratic", insofar as it is

¹¹ E. Mogyoródi, "Xenophanes as a Philosopher: Theology and Theodicy", in A. Laks/C. Louget (ed.), *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie présocratique?* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2002) 253–86; Plato, *Leg.* 888b; Epicurus, *Men.* 123–124 and see also P.Oxy. 215.

¹² It is true that Sterling does not argue that Philo's specific view on piety emerges from his Judaism but rather from his theocentrism. This is however the underlying assumption of Cordova, *Philo of Alexandria's Ethical Discourse*, 85.

thoroughly intellectualist, and that this is precisely on that ground that Philo makes of piety the “queen of the virtues”.

I. Philo and the *Euthyphro*

1. Socrates and Philo on piety as *θεραπεία*

The *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat* is devoted to the biblical verses dealing with Cain's murder of Abel and his subsequent punishment (Gen 4:8–10, 11–15). To help make the textual similarities between Philo and Plato's *Euthyphro* more apparent, I shall present the passage in detail. In *Det.* 47–56, Philo discusses the unhappiness of the non-virtuous person. The main thrust of his discussion is the idea that the one who is harming others is in fact harming oneself, and, conversely, he who is benefiting others is in fact benefiting himself. Any student of Socrates will pick up here on the echo of a claim made by Socrates to the effect that suffering an injustice is better than committing one – a claim that is, it should be noted, centrally connected to his intellectualism (*Gorg.* 469b8–c3).¹³ What motivates Philo to take up this thesis at this juncture is easy to understand: he has to make sense of the disturbing injustice that the murder of Abel by Cain puts on display. Whereas it might seem as if Cain has harmed Abel, on a more accurate examination, says Philo, the biblical text is shown to indicate that by removing from his soul “the conviction that loves virtue and God” (τὸ φιλάρετον καὶ φιλόθεον δόγμα)¹⁴, which Abel symbolizes, Cain in fact dies “to the life of virtue”, and is thereby deprived of happiness (*Det.* 48–49).¹⁵ The Socratic principle, according to which harming the other is harming oneself, is thus enlisted by Philo to resolve the thorny implications of the literal meaning of the biblical text.

Unlike Socrates, however, whose claim rests on the premise that doing an injustice is the greatest evil (*Gorg.* 470e10), Philo makes the “harming the other is harming oneself” principle rest on the idea that, in unified beings like the soul, the agent

¹³ Note that the claim follows from Polos's remark that the one who is unjustly killed is more wretched than the one killing, whether justly or unjustly (469b5–6). This is part of a larger argument to the effect that the agent acting badly is in fact not doing what he *wants*, since what everyone wants is to be happy, and this is coextensive with being virtuous. See Segvic, “No one Errs Willingly”. Note that the reflexive outcome of wrongdoing is also germane to Chrysippus's theorizing on justice (see Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1041C–E; with S. Weisser, “The Art of Quotation: Plutarch and Galen against Chrysippus”, in eadem/N. Thaler (ed.), *Strategies of Polemics in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 205–48, esp. 213–16).

¹⁴ For δόγμα as “conviction” and on its use and meaning in Philo, see D.T. Runia, “*Dogma* and *Doxa* in the Allegorical Writings of Philo of Alexandria”, *Etudes Platoniciennes* 7 (2010) 113–31.

¹⁵ See also Philo, *Leg.* 1.52.

of the action and the subject at which the action is directed are in fact one and the same.¹⁶ In other words, if one removes the principle of a virtue or its practice from one's own soul, one necessarily gains the corresponding vice (*Det.* 49–51). Philo discerns a proof of the second part of the thesis – namely, that benefiting others amounts to benefiting oneself – in the commandment referring to the honor due to one's parents: “Honor your father and your mother, so that it might be well with you” (Exod 20:12). As the term “honor” (τιμή) has *θεραπεία*, meaning “tending” or “care”, as one of its natural implications,¹⁷ Philo interprets the verse as conveying the idea that the mind (the father) is tended to by means of what is useful to it, that is, by virtues only (*Det.* 53). Sensation (the mother), on the other hand, is tended to by being reined in by the intellect. Consequently, argues Philo, one who tends to one's mind and sensations in this way is in fact benefiting oneself.

Following a similar line of interpretation, but this time considering the “father” to refer to the creator of the universe and the “mother” to be wisdom or perfect knowledge, Philo goes on to argue that honoring them benefits oneself (*Det.* 54). The reason for the reflexive benefit in tending to them is that “they lack nothing” (*Det.* 54). Contrarily to horse or dog training, which is the “knowledge of tending” (ἐπιστήμη θεραπείας [*Det.* 55]) to horses or dogs, and consists in providing them benefits that they are lacking, “it is forbidden” (οὐ θέμις), insists Philo, “to say that piety, being tending to God (θεοῦ θεραπείαν), provides the Divinity with what will benefit it”. Philo then specifies the sense in which one should understand piety, that is, tending to God: *θεραπεία* is to be understood as a kind of “service” (ὑπηρεσία), similar to the service provided by slaves to their masters. However, here again, Philo is keen to underscore the difference between the service of obedient slaves to human masters and the service to God. As nothing can be bettered in God, He cannot be provided with anything, with the exception of the “disposition loving its master” (φιλοδεσπότης γνώμη [*Det.* 56]).¹⁸ In doing so, adds Philo, that is, “in striving to making oneself known to God”, one will greatly benefit oneself.

Philo's standpoint here is relatively straightforward. Although he endorses the traditional definition of piety as *θεραπεία* of God,¹⁹ it is of utmost importance to him

¹⁶ For a discussion on the origin of this argument, see J. Glucker, “Piety, Dogs and a Platonic Reminiscence: Philo, *Quod Deterius* 54–56 and Plato, *Euthyphro* 12e–15a”, *Illinois Classical Studies* 18 (1993) 131–8, esp. 135–6.

¹⁷ Mikalson, *Greek Popular Religion*, 160–5; L. Zaidman, *Le commerce des dieux: Eusebeia, essai sur la piété, en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001) 105–12.

¹⁸ See also Philo, *Spec.* 1.248, 271, and 300.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Isocrates 1.282; Plato, *Leg.* 716d7; Aristotle *Eth. eud.* 1249b20; ps.-Plato, *Def.* 412e14–413a2 and 415a9; Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 3.218 and L.-A. Dorion, *Platon: Lachès, Euthyphron* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1997) 313, n. 31. The Stoic definition of piety as “the knowledge of tending to the gods” is well attested (Diogenes Laertius 7.119; Stobaeus 2.7.5b2) and is used by Philo in *Spec.* 4.147. Piety as *θεραπεία* of God appears frequently in Philo, see for instance *Cher.* 94; *Sacr.* 37; *Praem.* 81.

to make it clear that in this specific case of tending, He who is being tended to cannot be benefited. The same issue applies to the idea of “service” (ὕπηρεσία), as Philo immediately clarifies that any idea of benefit or improvement to the object of the service should be excluded. He concedes that taking *θεραπεία* as “service” (ὕπηρεσία) nevertheless helps to emphasize the nature of the relationship that the pious person has towards God, which is that of φιλοδέσποτος γνώμη.

A good example of this kind of piety is given later on, when Philo turns to the Levites, who are the “most holy in their dispositions” (τοῖς τὰς γνώμας ἱερωτάτοις). They are those who, instead of valuing physical reality, only esteem the creator, and, through their continuous “service” (ὕπηρεσία), attest to their “love for the master” (τὸ φιλοδέσποτον [*Det.* 62]).²⁰

This passage in *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, as has been noticed, shares numerous similarities with Plato's *Euthyphr.* 12e6–14b1.²¹ This Socratic dialogue stages the dialogue between Socrates and the prophet Euthyphro, in search of the definition of piety. After some typically unsuccessful attempts on the part of Socrates's interlocutor to provide a satisfactory answer to the question of what piety is, Socrates directs the discussion towards the relationship between the just and the pious. As Euthyphro agrees that piety is part of justice (*Euthyphr.* 12d3), Socrates feigns some puzzlement concerning the fact that the pious or the holy are “the part of justice concerned with attending to the gods (ἡ τῶν θεῶν θεραπεία)” (*Euthyphr.* 12e5–7). What is at issue for Socrates is that, whereas other cases of tending, such as horse- or dog-training, provide that which is tended to with some good and benefit, this cannot be true of tending to the gods, who cannot be benefited and made better by us (*Euthyphr.* 13a2–c10).²² Forced to recognize the inadequateness of his definition, Euthyphro proposes to refine *θεραπεία* as the “tending that slaves provide their masters” or, in other words, as “a certain kind of service” (ὕπηρετική τις) of the gods (*Euthyphr.* 13d6).

Socrates secures Euthyphro's agreement that the “task” (ἔργον) of the one giving the service is identical to that of the one who is served (for example, health is the ἔργον of doctors as well as of those who serve them, or ship in the case of shipbuilding). Plainly, then, the question that needs to be answered is what the gods' ἔργον is, to which we contribute when we serve them. With the exception of Euthyphro's

²⁰ Philo, *Sacr.* 120.

²¹ Glucker, “Piety, Dogs and a Platonic Reminiscence”; and J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977) 150.

²² More formally, the argument can be written as follows when T represents any tending-expertise:

- a) if T tends to X, X is benefited or made better by T.
- b) Piety is the part of justice concerned with tending to the gods.
- c) Therefore if A is pious, A makes the gods better.

However, in Euthyphro's view c) is unacceptable.

elusive and wholly unsatisfactory answer “many fine ones”, Socrates’s question remains unanswered. Instead, Euthyphro goes on to propose a new definition of piety as being the knowledge of what to do and say to the gods in prayer and sacrifices (*Euthyphr.* 14b2–4). There is no need to address Socrates’s refutation of this new definition; let it suffice to point out that it involves the rejection of the premise that the gods “need something from us” (*Euthyphr.* 14e2) or are benefited by us (*Euthyphr.* 15a5).

As this presentation of these texts makes the similitude manifest, there is no need to delve into a detailed comparative textual analysis. Both of these passages draw on similar vocabulary, premises and analogies. In both texts, *θεραπεία* is deemed problematic on the grounds that it involves, maximally, some imperfection in the divinity or, minimally, the idea that the pious agent is, in some respect, more powerful than the gods.²³ As we have seen, although Euthyphro solves this issue by noting that *θεραπεία* implies “a slave-like” tending, that is a “service” (*ὕπηρετική*) (*Euthyphr.* 13d6), this solution proves unsatisfactory for Philo, for whom “service” still entails betterment and benefit to the recipient of the service (*Det.* 56).²⁴

On the basis of the textual proximity and the scarcity of evidence concerning the diffusion of the *Euthyphro* in antiquity, in his bullets-comparison and analysis of these texts, Glucker suggests that Philo might have used some notes previously taken from the last pages of the *Euthyphro*.²⁵ While Philo could have been familiar with the dialogue,²⁶ it is equally conceivable that he used some intermediary materials. At all events, any assertion about the nature of Philo’s connection to this dialogue is bound to remain speculative.²⁷

²³ M.L. McPherran, “Socratic Piety in the *Euthyphro*”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985) 283–309, esp. 288, 292–3.

²⁴ Note that according to Mikalson (*Greek Popular Religion in Greek Philosophy*, 33), the analogy of slaves to master to express the service to gods is rare in the philosophical and literary tradition; it is however common in Philo, as in *Her.* 6–9; *Plant.* 53; *Spec.* 1.57; *Cher.* 107.

²⁵ Glucker, “Piety, Dogs and a Platonic Reminiscence”.

²⁶ On the edition and philological commentary on the Platonic corpus in Alexandria see F. Schironi, “Plato at Alexandria: Aristophanes, Aristarchus, and the ‘Philological Tradition’ of a Philosopher”, *CQ* 55 (2005) 423–34; on Philo’s place in the context of Alexandrian Platonism, see M.R. Niehoff, “Philo’s Role as a Platonist in Alexandria”, *Etudes platoniciennes* 7 (2010) 35–62; and for Philo’s reception of Plato see S. Yli-Karjanmaa, “Philo of Alexandria”, in H. Tarrant/F. Renaud/D. Baltzly/D. Layne (ed.), *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) 115–29.

²⁷ I might boldly suggest that it is possible that Philo had access to some doxographical compendium of *morceaux choisis* from Plato, and even, if we start down the speculative route, to one related to Socrates’s intellectualism (bear in mind that this passage is part of a larger development aimed at demonstrating a thesis that notably belongs to the arsenal of Socrates’s intellectualism, namely that the evildoer harms himself). The similarity of these texts notwithstanding, a direct and methodic confrontation with the *Euthyphro* cannot be established.

2. Reconstructing Socrates's View on Piety

A more interesting question, which we can pursue, relates to the connection between Socrates's and Philo's understandings of piety. On the face of it, attributing something as definite as a conception of a virtue to Plato's Socrates, who is famously known for not committing himself to any ethical definition, might seem puzzling. Plainly, Socrates does not explicitly endorse any of the definitions of piety nor articulate his own one. As with the other early dialogues, the *Euthyphro* ends in aporia: Euthyphro rushes to prosecute his own father – a prosecution that, since no proper account of piety has been provided, still lingers, unjustified – as an ironical Socrates expresses his disappointment for not having been instructed on the nature of piety, so as to “escape Meletus's indictment” for impiety (*Euthyphr.* 15e7 and 12e1–2).

Although none of the definitional attempts met the required standards, one is nevertheless left unrefuted by Socrates, precisely the one characterizing piety as *θεραπεία* of the gods. Indeed, when Euthyphro suggests that piety is the part of justice concerned with tending to the gods, in the sense of a service, Socrates does not elenctically bring him to admit that this initial statement is inconsistent with another set of granted premises.²⁸ On these grounds, a distinguished line of scholars, including Vlastos, McPherran, and others, have proceeded to take this as a cue regarding Socrates's position on piety.²⁹ Indeed, the definition of piety as “service to the gods” is not refuted but only left uncompleted, as Euthyphro repetitively eludes Socrates's pressing questions regarding the gods' “all beautiful *ἔργον*” (*Euthyphr.* 13e11), to which we contribute when serving them. According to this constructivist approach, what needs to be done, therefore, is to determine what the gods' *ἔργον* is. Socrates actually provides a hint on that score when he says that “we don't have any good that they don't give us” (*Euthyphr.* 15a1–2). Since we have quite a decent grasp of what Socrates considers to be good – the moral status and care of the soul, the cultivation of virtue – we can infer that being pious consists in helping the gods producing moral goodness or, to put it otherwise, that virtue is knowledge of producing goodness.

²⁸ This is Socrates's standard method, which usually brings his interlocutor to withdraw his initial statement; see G. Vlastos, “The Socratic Elenchus”, *OSAP* 1 (1983) 27–58.

²⁹ H. Bonitz, “Zur Erklärung des Dialogs Euthyphron”, in idem, *Platonische Studien* (Berlin: Franz Vahlen, 1875) 215–27, esp. 218–19; Vlastos, “Socratic Piety”; McPherran “Socratic Piety in the *Euthyphro*”; Brickhouse/Smith, *Plato's Socrates*, 64–8; C.C.W. Taylor, “The End of the *Euthyphro*”, *Phronesis* 27 (1982) 109–18; Dorion, *Platon: Lachès, Euthyphron*, 223–31; and, for fuller references to the constructivist and anti-constructivist literature, M.L. McPherran, “Socratic Religion”, in D. Morrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 111–37, at 118, n. 14. For a constructivist view of piety involving ignorant obedience to the gods, see R. Weiss, “Virtue without Knowledge: Socrates' Conception of Holiness in Plato's *Euthyphro*”, *Ancient Philosophy* 14 (1994) 263–82.

On these grounds, the constructivist commentators have identified in his approach an ethicalization of the religious domain. In his influential paper, “Socratic Piety”, Vlastos, one of the most prominent proponents of this approach, observes the use of a parallel strategy in relation to the divine in the works of the Ionian philosophers and in Socrates, insofar as both sought to rationalize the gods. On account of their scientific outlook, the Ionians rationalized the gods by subjecting them to the all-encompassing order of nature, whereas Socrates, whose primary interest lays in ethics, did so by subjecting them to unbreachable universal moral standards. In other words, whereas the *φυσιολόγοι* made the gods natural, Socrates made them moral. Hence, Socrates’s revolutionary ethical theology holds the gods to be moral agents who, due to their superior wisdom, are capable of causing only good.³⁰ In such a picture of the gods’ benevolence, the role of philosophy, as practiced by Socrates, “a deeply religious man”,³¹ is to provide the necessary set of right beliefs needed for understanding the intimations arriving to us through supernatural channels. In other words, if we want to understand the divine messages, we need to be elenctically engaged in the quest for moral truths and thereby in the examination of our own way of life.

In support of their thesis, the partisans of Socrates’s ethicalization of religion have the fact that Socrates repeatedly anchors his project of improving his fellow citizens as inspired, and imposed upon him, by the god. Even more significantly, Socrates presents his philosophical investigations, his cross-examination of those who have some pretense to knowledge and his request to the care of the soul and to cultivate virtue as a “service” (*ὑπηρεσία*) to the god.³² Socrates’s connecting the origin and pursuit of his philosophical mission to a divine prompting seems to systematic and entrenched to be merely an apologetic maneuver devised to rebut the accusations of impiety.

³⁰ This rests on the assumption that wisdom entails moral goodness.

³¹ Vlastos, “Socratic Piety”, 174–5 and 158 for the quotation.

³² *διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ λατρείαν* in Plato, *Apol.* 23c1; and *τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν* in *Apol.* 30a7. The following passage from the *Apology*, in Reeve’s translation, provides an excellent illustration of this point: “If, when the god stationed me here ... to live practicing philosophy, examining myself and others, I had – for fear of death or anything else – abandoned my station, that would have been scandalous, and someone might have rightly and justly brought me to court for not acknowledging that gods exist, by disobeying the oracle, fearing death, and thinking I was wise when I wasn’t.” (*Apol.* 28e4–29a4). It is as a result of the oracle’s reply to Chaerephon that Socrates started his investigation of those having a reputation and pretense of knowledge (*Apol.* 20e8–23c1). Socrates presents his philosophical pursuit as “a matter of the god” (*τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ* [*Apol.* 22a4–5]) to which he must attach great importance (*Apol.* 21e4–5); it is an investigation and an examination “according to the god” (*κατὰ τὸν θεόν* [*Apol.* 22a4 and 23b5]); see also *Apol.* 28d10–29b10.

II. Philo's Intellectualist View of εὐσέβεια

1. The Case of Filial Piety

Does Philo's understanding of piety align with that of Socrates as portrayed in the *Euthyphro*? First of all, the Socratic passage of *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat* (§§47–56) in itself does not enable us to draw any precise conclusion regarding Philo's understanding of piety, except that it emerges as a service to God that does not modify Him in any respect whatsoever, but benefits the pious person alone. We also learn that it is carried out through love and acknowledgement of the creator over the created. Would Philo claim, though, that the gist of the pious activity is in fact philosophical? That piety is a service that implies the fostering of moral excellence?

Interestingly enough, the answer is positive but with some important qualifications. Philo is in fact ready to consider piety as a slave-like type of service, carried out by striving for moral perfection, but only as regards one specific kind of piety: filial piety. Of course, Philo does not express this idea by cross-examining a conceited interlocutor, nor does he leave the question open for the reader to complete – and, it goes without saying, Philo expresses himself in many more words than Socrates. Yet, the idea is similar enough to deserve mention. It emerges in the context of his discussion of the fifth commandment, concerning the “honor” due to parents (*Spec.* 2.223).³³ There, Philo suggests that εὐσέβεια towards our parents consists in fact in honoring them by striving to be good and by pursuing virtue.³⁴ Conversely, the moral goodness of their children is, for parents, the summit of happiness (*Spec.* 2.236). Thus on the specific kind of piety that concerns the relationship to one's parents, Philo echoes the Socratic idea that piety is brought about through striving for moral perfection.

2. Piety towards God

The question remains as to whether Philo's notion of piety towards the divine bears similarities to that of Socrates. Does the emphasis placed on the inner disposition of the soul indicate that Philo and Socrates share some important insight on piety? The many times that Philo makes a sharp distinction between the outer appearance of piety and the genuine inner one clearly indicates that he is wholeheartedly

³³ Note that this passage includes a non-explicit reference to Deut 21:18–21, a biblical passage that Philo regularly associates with the treatment of piety (see below).

³⁴ Philo, *Spec.* 2.234–237.

committed to the view that piety is first and foremost an internal disposition of the soul, one to which worship and ritual should cohere.³⁵ Nonetheless, this common feature between Philo and Socrates certainly does not prove specific enough, as such a characterization of virtue arguably applies to every agent-centered moral theory.

The most significant difference between Socrates and Philo is that, whereas Socrates anchors his philosophical mission in the divine, he is not interested in defining the divine, or rather, he does not seem to hold that it is possible to know what the divine is.³⁶ Philo would certainly subscribe to some aspects of Socrates's moderate agnosticism on this score, as he firmly believes that the essence of God is out of the reach of human understanding.³⁷ Nevertheless, as I will show, he makes *εὐσέβεια* hinge on a physical and metaphysical *knowledge*.³⁸ This knowledge, I argue, chiefly concerns God's primary causality and relationship to His creation. Before dealing with what this knowledge implies and why it is considered fundamental to the attainment of the good and happy life, it is first important to show that Philo sees piety as a kind of knowledge of the divine.

3. Piety as Craft-Expertise

The first text to be examined appears in the *De ebrietate*, a treatise devoted to the theme of Noah's drunkenness (Gen 9:21), in a passage that, to the best of my knowledge, has never received the attention of scholars interested in Philonic piety. The point of departure of the exegesis is the "lack of education" (*ἀπαιδευσία*) that Philo singles out as the cause of the foolish conduct associated with wine consumption (*Ebr.* 6, 11). This uneducated attitude is then immediately connected to the rebellious son of Deut 21:18–20, disobedient to the voice of both his father and mother. According to Philo, "father" can mean the creator of the universe while "mother" the science of the creator (*Ebr.* 30–32), or alternatively, "father" can refer to "right reason" and "mother" to the encyclical studies (*Ebr.* 33). While right reason steers

³⁵ Neither Philo nor Socrates call to abolish traditional religious practices. See M.L. McPherran, "Socratic Theology and Piety", in J. Bussanich/N.D. Smith (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 257–75, at 265–6; and idem, "Does Piety Pay? Socrates and Plato on Prayer and Sacrifice", in N. Smith/P. Woodruff (ed.), *Reason and Religion in Socrates Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 89–114, for a more complex picture. For Philo, see *Spec.* 2.259; *Mos.* 2.108.

³⁶ Plato, *Apol.* 19c2–d6 and 20d4–e3.

³⁷ See, for instance, Philo, *Mut.* 7–15; *Post.* 168–169; *Somn.* 1.63, 66–67, 230; *Deo* 4; *Deus* 62; *Fug.* 161–165; *Leg.* 1.20; and S. Weisser, "Knowing God by Analogy: Philo of Alexandria Against the Stoic God", *SPhiloA* 29 (2017) 33–60; D.T. Runia, "Naming and Knowing: Themes in Philonic Theology with Special Reference to the *De mutatione nominum*", in R.B. Van den Broek (ed.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 1988) 69–91.

³⁸ Philo, *Spec.* 1.49.

us toward following nature and pursuing the “naked truth”, middle education encourages us to abide by the laws of conventional justice (*Ebr.* 34, 81). Such parents, says Philo, have four types of children, the last of which is of relevance to us. This type of child “honors” (τιμᾶν) both his father and mother (*Ebr.* 80–83). Philo connects honoring the father and the mother to respectively “honoring the Father of the universe” and to abiding by the principles of conventional justice (*Ebr.* 80). Philo then explains that the possession of the good is achieved once one abides to human norms and the “decrees of the Uncreated” out “love and zeal for piety” (*Ebr.* 84). Up to this point, Philo's exegesis is informed by the classic distinction between the two realms of justice: towards the divine (piety) and towards human beings (justice).³⁹

In what follows, however, unraveling the thread of the theme of virtue's double aspect, Philo goes on to identify, in the objects of the tabernacle and in the rituals described in the book of Exodus, teachings concerning the two realms of virtue (*Ebr.* 85–87). The wise man possesses them both, as he displays φρόνησις in human affairs (visible and invisible alike), and puts on the “non-variegated robe of truth” (*Ebr.* 86) when “tending to the Only Being” (τὸ ὄν θεραπεύων μόνον).⁴⁰ Probably worried that one might take wisdom to refer to two different qualities altogether, Philo insists that, despite its modification according to different subject matters, “wisdom” (σοφία), “being the craft of crafts” (τέχνη τεχνῶν οὔσα)⁴¹, possesses in fact an unchangeable “real form” (ἀληθὲς εἶδος).⁴² The same holds true regarding “the power in the wise man” (ἡ ἐν τῷ σοφῷ δύναμις):

When it concerns itself with what relates to the One Who Is (τὰ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος), it is called piety and holiness (εὐσέβεια καὶ ὁσιότης); when it concerns what is in and under the heavens it is called physiology (φυσιολογία); meteorology (μετεωρολογικὴ <sc. δύναμις>) when it deals with what is in the air ... ethics (ἠθικὴ <δύναμις>) when it relates to the amelioration of human character; its forms are called politics (πολιτικὴ <δύναμις>) when concerned with the state; economics (οἰκονομικὴ <δύναμις>) when concerned with the care of the household; sympotics (συμποτικὴ <δύναμις>) when dealing with banquets and feasts; the power of ruling (βασιλικὴ <δύναμις>) when concerned with the government of men; and legislative (νομοθετικὴ <δύναμις>) when concerned with command and prohibition. The wise man, who truly is many-voiced and many-named, contains all these things: piety (εὐσέβεια), holiness (ὁσιότης), physiology, meteorology, formation of character (ἡθοποιία), politics, economy, royal [power], legislative

³⁹ See also Philo, *Abr.* 208.

⁴⁰ See also Philo, *Praem.* 81.

⁴¹ This is another distinct Socratic theme, see Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, 68–70. Philo refers to it as the “perfect craft” and the “copy and representation of nature” (μίμημα καὶ ἀπεικόνισμα φύσεως [*Ebr.* 90]). Cf. *Spec.* 4.156.

⁴² Although Philo does assume that there exists a generic form of virtue (*Leg.* 1.63), it is not what he has in mind here.

[power], and countless other powers, and in all these, he will look as if he had one and the same power. (*Ebr.* 91–92)⁴³

The purpose of this text is clear: the list of the different domains of expertise starting with the study of the One Who Is, moving downwards to the heavens, the atmosphere, and the domain of human affairs – shows that each field is an application of the power of expert-wisdom. It is worth noting that piety is the only virtue mentioned in this passage and that it is aligned with other bodies of knowledge such as meteorology, physiology, or politics. Philo could have opted for a more conventional designation than “piety” to refer to the expertise that concerns God, such as “discourse on God”, for instance.⁴⁴ It is important to remember that during Philo’s period of activity, the philosophical theological debates of the Hellenistic period underwent a process of systematization and standardization, attesting to their popularity and wide diffusion. As I have shown elsewhere, Philo is not only an important witness of the Hellenistic theological disputes, but an active participant in them.⁴⁵ If we take into account the vivid polemical context in which he wrote, we can come to appreciate why Philo relates to the part of the philosophical inquiry addressing the

⁴³ Von Arnim considers this to be a Chrysippean fragment (*SVF* 3.560). Although the division conveyed in this passage is probably of non-Philonic origin, there are no precise grounds for attributing this text to Chrysippus. The Stoics did attribute the sympotic virtue to the wise person (Stobaeus 2.7.5.9b), and, still according to the *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, the wise is “happy most of all, and fortunate and blessed and prosperous and “pious” (εὐσεβής) and “god-loving” (θεοφιλής) and worthy, like a “king” (βασιλικός) and a general, a “politician” (πολιτικός) and a household economist and a moneymaker” (Stobaeus, 2.7.11g, trans. Inwood). Furthermore, the legislative activity is also considered germane to the virtuous agent (Stobaeus, 2.7.11b). This Philonic passage, however, does not reflect the Stoic thesis of the unity of the virtues that characterizes the Stoic wise man, as he is not requested to possess an expertise in physiology and meteorology (which are not considered to be virtues; see Seneca, *Ep.* 88.24–28); see also G. Bethge, “Cosmological Ethics in the Timaeus and Early Stoicism”, *OSAP* 24 (2003) 273–302, esp. 288–99. Despite the thematic similarity, the division seems to be organized according to a non-Stoic top-down principle.

⁴⁴ Of course, “theology” appears to be a more fitting choice than εὐσέβεια or οσιότης. Even though one cannot discern a wide profusion of the term “theology” in Philo’s time, from the first use of θεολογία, in the sense of a cogent philosophical discourse on the gods in Plato (*Resp.* 379a6), this term and its cognates (such as the adjective θεολογική) are commonly found in philosophical sources to refer to a field of inquiry having as its subject matter the gods, the divine things, or the first principles (as noted by D. Frede/A. Laks, “Introduction”, in eidem, *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, its Background and Aftermath* [Leiden: Brill, 2002] vii–xiv, at viii). In the Hellenistic period, the study of the gods was an integral part of the philosophical curriculum, and in Stoicism for example, it became so definite a domain that it was considered to constitute the last chapter of the study of physics (see Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1035A, referred to as ὁ περὶ τῶν θεῶν λόγος or as τελευτή in 1035E; Diogenes Laertius 7.41). Philo knows that the discourse on god belongs to physics (*Prob.* 80) but mention θεολογεῖν or its cognates only five times (none of them are θεολογία or θεολογική). In *Opif.* 12, the verb θεολογεῖν refers to Moses’s correct account of the genesis of the sensible cosmos by opposition to that of those who mistake the world for God (*Opif.* 7–12). θεολόγος qualifies or stands for Moses in *Praem.* 53; *Mos.* 2.153; *QG* 2.59; 3.21.

⁴⁵ Weisser, “Knowing God by Analogy”.

divine as piety. What he has to say on God is not just another discourse that can be situated alongside others. Philo is thoroughly confident that what articulates through Biblical exegesis is the only true discourse on god, and, being such, it qualifies as knowledge. This kind of expert-knowledge regarding the divine realm is, in his eyes, exactly what piety is.

This explains why we so often find “truth” associated with piety in his writings. An illuminating example is that of proselytes. Thus Tamar, forsaking the darkness of her “house of many gods”, starts perceiving “the beams of truth”, whereby she could join the side of piety. She represents, says Philo, the women who are capable of “unlearning their natural ignorance as regards the honor due to fabricated objects and were educated in the knowledge of the monarchy that governs the cosmos”, Tamar chose the “beautiful life” over “life”, which, in her eyes, meant “nothing but the tending (θεραπεία) and supplication of the one Cause” (*Virt.* 220–221). Likewise, proselytes are depicted in *Spec.* 1.309 as those who have abandoned their false ancestral fictions and vanity and, as they became “genuine lovers of the truth, joined the party of piety”.⁴⁶

4. Piety as Knowledge

Another significant text appears in a treatise already discussed above, *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, in a passage in which Philo interprets Joseph's wandering in the plain (Gen 17:15) as a teaching to the effect that “toil” (πόνος) must always be accompanied by craft. He goes on to generalize as follow:

As it is inappropriate to practice music unmusically, grammar ungrammatically or, to say it in general, any craft without the craft (ἀτέχνως) or with a bad craft (κακοτέχνως), but [one should rather practice the craft] according to the craft (τεχνικῶς), in the same way it is inappropriate to [pursue] prudence in a knavish way, temperance in a miserly way or with meanness, courage boldly, piety (εὐσέβειαν) with superstition (δεισιδαιμόνως), or any other knowledge that is in accordance with virtue without knowledge. (*Det.* 18, italics SW)

Philo's view here is relatively straightforward: the pursuit of the end of a craft or of a virtue needs to be accompanied by the corresponding craft or virtue. In what follows, Philo lambastes the pretense of virtue of those who focus on external actions. Thus, depriving oneself of food or drink is no sign of self-control, just as financing the construction of temples or the offering of hecatombs is no sign of piety (*Det.* 19–

⁴⁶ See also Philo, *Spec.* 1.63, 313; *Decal.* 5–9; *Cher.* 94.

20). This attitude, says Philo, mistakes the “ritual” (θρησκεία) “for holiness” (ἀντὶ ὁσιότητος [*Det.* 21]), and ensues from the idea that God can be bribed by presents. God, however, loves “genuine tending”, that is, “tending of a soul that brings truth as the bare and unique sacrifice” (*Det.* 21).⁴⁷ This passage not only shows that piety is first and foremost a state of the soul, but also explicitly characterizes it as knowledge.

Many additional passages, taken either from the Allegorical Commentary or the Exposition of the Law,⁴⁸ show that Philo consistently characterizes piety in terms of belief, reasoning, point of view, conviction, teaching, or knowledge. Thus, for instance, the plagues of Egypt provide the Hebrews with “the most beautiful and most useful of lessons (μαθημάτων), namely piety”⁴⁹ and the science of the God, who truly is, is described as the “the most beautiful science (μάθημα)”.⁵⁰ The soul can be trained in the “conviction (δόγμα) concerning the fact that God is the only one standing”⁵¹ and in the “reasoning (λόγους) on virtue and piety” (*Somn.* 1.250–251). The wise man is pious in view of his “notion (ὑπόληψις) of God” (*Mut.* 153). In *Plant.* 77, Philo explains that “those who say that God is the beginning and the end of all things” possess a “conviction that brings about piety” (δόγμα κατασκευαστικὸν εὐσεβείας).

This becomes even more conspicuous when we turn to the corresponding vice, namely impiety. Impiety is in fact any misconception concerning the divine, which covers a large spectrum of possible errors: from those regarding God’s existence, attributes, and role in the creation of the world to those regarding His relationship with and care for what He has created. Philo’s treatises are steeped in references to the false beliefs concerning God that the Biblical text illustrates through various figures such as Cain, Pharaoh, Laban, or the Chaldeans.⁵² Although this is not the place to discuss to which of the philosophical doctrines each impiety might refer, it is important to notice that they are all expressed in term of cognitive failure. Thus, Cain represents “every reasoning” (πᾶς λογισμός) whereby one commits the error of “thinking” (ἡγούμενος) that all things belong to oneself, and ends up honoring oneself instead of God (*Sacr.* 71). This is the same impiety described in *Leg.* 1.49 as being

⁴⁷ A similar caution against seeing piety as an external attitude can be found, for example, in Lucretius, *Rer. nat.* 5.1198–1203.

⁴⁸ Thanks to the significant contribution of M.R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (AYBRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), there is a growing acknowledgment of the necessity to pay attention to the differences existing between the various corpora that constitute Philo’s oeuvre. Therefore, it is noteworthy that piety appear as a form of knowledge across his writings.

⁴⁹ Philo, *Mos.* 1.146.

⁵⁰ Philo, *Spec.* 1.332; See also *Mut.* 76, with more details below; *Plant.* 77, 127–130; *Conf.* 131–132; *Decal.* 67.

⁵¹ On the use and meaning of δόγμα in Philo, see Runia, “Dogma and Doxa”; see also *Opif.* 172.

⁵² Sometimes Philo even offers a classificatory scheme of such mistaken views. See *Spec.* 1.327–345; *Praem.* 39–40; and Sterling, “The Queen of the Virtues”, 114–15.

“self-loving” (φίλαυτος), and is characteristic of the atheistic intellect that “thinks” (οιόμενος) that it is equal to God.⁵³ Other impieties are characterized by their failure to conceive of a non-material causality, such as the “assumption” (ὕπολαμβάνειν) that the stars are gods and endowed with causal power.⁵⁴ Even the worship of other gods is presented as something that one should “unlearn” (ἀπομανθάνειν [*Spec.* 1.56]). In *Praem.* 40–41, Philo contrasts those who are able to “form a representation through knowledge” of the creator of the universe with those who have gained their “notions” (ἐννοίας) concerning the existence of God “by custom rather than by reasoning”, mistaking their superstition for piety.

The list of examples is long and varied, but the heart of the matter is clear. Philo distinguishes piety across his corpus by means of a series of cognitive phenomena that are all characterized by the truth of their content, and, as such, constitute a very high form of human cognitive achievement.⁵⁵ Impiety, on the other hand, always falls short of such a cognitive status, and is systematically described in terms of erroneous conceptions and cognitive errors concerning the divine. It therefore comes as no surprise that, in addition to ψευδές,⁵⁶ what Philo usually singles out as the opposite state to truth is τῦφος, usually translated as “vanity” or “arrogance”, but better rendered as “delusion” so as to highlight the cognitive aspect of this term. Philo indeed identifies τῦφος as the source of “veneration for empty beliefs” and induces contempt for the divine (*Decal.* 5–7).⁵⁷ It is associated with the ignorance of the real existing God, and with the deification of countless so-called gods (*Decal.* 8). In other words, whereas ἀληθές is the province of piety, τῦφος and ψευδές are that of impiety.

III. The Foundational Role of Piety

1. Piety as the Source of the Virtues

As Philo's commitment to the claim that piety is knowledge of the divine has been established, it remains to explore his reasons for giving piety such prominent a place.

⁵³ Philo, *Cher.* 65; *Spec.* 1.344; *Sacr.* 40; and *Leg.* 1.49. See also G. Reydams-Schils, “Philautia, Self-knowledge and Oikeiosis in Philo of Alexandria”, in P. Galand/E. Malaspina (ed.), *Vérité et apparence: Mélanges en l'honneur de Carlos Lévy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016) 333–42.

⁵⁴ See also, for instance, Philo, *Spec.* 1.13–20; *Migr.* 179; *Virt.* 213; *Ebr.* 108–110; *Decal.* 52–53.

⁵⁵ The question of whether there exists a systematic distinction between true belief and knowledge in Philo cannot be addressed within the confines of this paper (see for example *Congr.* 140–142, where he endorses the Stoic definition of knowledge).

⁵⁶ See, for instance, Philo, *Spec.* 1.52, 309.

⁵⁷ As noted by Nikiprowetzky in his translation of the treatise, *Philon d'Alexandrie: De Decalogo* (PAPM 23; Paris: Cerf, 1965) 40, n. 1; see also Philo, *Cher.* 91; *Virt.* 178; *Somn.* 2.47, 61, 97; and *Praem.* 24–25. In connection to the figure of Jethro, see *Ebr.* 36–45; *Mut.* 103; *Agr.* 43; *Gig.* 50.

The idea that piety is the “principle of all the virtues” is, all things considered, perplexing.⁵⁸ Indeed, what does the true and genuine service of God relate to virtues like courage or temperance? What is more, singling out one specific virtue as the origin of all the others is, to the best of my knowledge, very uncommon in the philosophical corpus.⁵⁹ Philo’s scholars have overlooked the originality of this idea because they assume it to be already present in Aristotle or in Stoicism.⁶⁰ However, employing one virtue as a placeholder for virtuous behavior in general or holding all virtues to be the same under different names, is not equivalent to asserting that all virtues derive from another one. The first option corresponds to one of the senses of the term “justice” that Aristotle addresses in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1229b11–1130a13⁶¹), while the second is the well-known Socratic and later Stoic thesis of the unity of the virtues. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to identify a similar idea to that of Philo in philosophical sources holding one specific virtue as a representative of all the virtues, or presenting all the virtues as facets of one and the same thing, such as knowledge or wisdom or φρόνησις. There are good reasons for why the comparison between the different lists of primary and secondary virtues in the philosophical corpus has not yielded conclusive results. It does not really matter if, for instance, εὐσέβεια happens to be mentioned first or last in the *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*’ list of the virtues subordinated to justice, since, for the Stoics, they are all instances of “knowledge of the distribution of proper value”.⁶²

Should we then be tempted to allot the exceptional role and standing of piety to some religious overkill of sorts, or to an attempt at cloaking a “religious strategy” in some kind of philosophical garb? Or should it rather be attributed to a biblical influence?⁶³ My contention is that when Philo makes piety the source of the other

⁵⁸ See, for instance: Philo, *Decal.* 52; *Abr.* 60; *Spec.* 4.135, 147; *Praem.* 53; *Virt.* 95; *QE* 2.38; *Opif.* 154; Cordova (*Philo of Alexandria’s Ethical Discourse*, 91) rightly notes that sometimes other virtues are attributed a prominent place.

⁵⁹ We can find a similar idea in Epicurus’ *Letter to Menoecus*, where “prudence” (φρόνησις) is singled out as the virtue “from which (ἐξ ἧς) all the other virtues naturally arise” (*Ep. Men.* 132). I would like to thank David Konstan for pointing out to me that in the *Pro Plancio*, Cicero qualifies piety (to be understood as filial piety), as the foundation (“fundamentum”) of all virtues and that later on (*Planc.* 80), he calls gratitude the “mother” of all virtues. This indeed reflects the idea that one virtue is the source of the others ones, but this is not a philosophical argument nor a consistent viewpoint.

⁶⁰ Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:215; and G.E. Sterling, “The First Theologian: The Originality of Philo of Alexandria”, in M.W. Hamilton/T.H. Olbricht/J. Peterson (ed.), *Renewing Tradition: Studies in Texts and Contexts in Honor of James W. Thompson* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007) 145–62, at 155.

⁶¹ See the useful discussion of M. Pakaluk, *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005) 181–9, as well as J. Annas’s introductory remarks on the meaning of justice in *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) 10–13.

⁶² Stobaeus 2.7.5b2 according to Inwood’s translation. In that specific case, piety is defined as “knowledge of service to the gods” (*ibid.* and 5b12).

⁶³ Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:215.

virtues, it is not merely a way of speaking resulting from a biblical or religious outlook; rather, it directly stems from his intellectual view on piety. The first task in establishing that Philo is articulating a genuine and original philosophical insight is to show that the connection between piety and the virtues is constant and systematic enough to constitute a robust tenet. Once this is established, the question of why living virtuously rests upon a proper understanding of the divine realm can be raised.

The natural starting point is to examine the textual evidences supporting the connection between piety and the other virtues. But this is not all we should look for. Philo's thought is eudaimonist, as is almost all ancient ethical theorizing.⁶⁴ This signifies that virtue plays a major role in attaining happiness, which is considered as the central aim and ultimate reference of our actions and pursuits. We should therefore also be interested in passages tracing an explicit linkage between the proper understanding of the divine and happiness.

A good illustration of the close association between piety and moral advancement is found in *Virt.* 181, where Philo asserts, "just as the shadow necessarily immediately follows the body in the sun, in the same manner the whole partnership of the other virtues follows the honor of the existing God" (*Virt.* 181). The mention of "the other virtues" makes it clear that the "honor of the existing God" refers to the virtue of piety. Philo depicts thus piety as necessary for the attainment of other virtues.

Another good illustration is found in *Mut.* 63–76, a passage familiar to Philo's students for displaying a typical case of allegorical reading. The change of name from Abram to Abraham in Gen 17:5 indicates a transition from busying oneself with meteorological investigations to being a "lover of wisdom" (φιλόσοφος), or rather, as Philo adds, a "wise man" (σοφός [*Mut.* 70]). This change occurs, it should be noticed, only after the patriarch is summoned by God to participate in virtue. Philo does not reject the study of nature in itself, but insists that it cannot constitute the end of one's investigations. Studying the size of the sun, its revolution, the phases of the moon – all that Abram's time spent in Chaldea symbolizes – remains useless if it does not lead to the acquisition of virtue, that is, if it does not help destroy the four main emotions (*Mut.* 73). Philo goes on to employ the Stoic analogy between the parts of philosophy and that of a field – logic being likened to the fence, physics to the plants and ethics to the fruits⁶⁵ – in order to show that the other disciplines should be brought to bear on ethics. While it might appear that Philo is depicting a shift from

⁶⁴ J. Annas, *Virtue and Law in Plato and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 195.

⁶⁵ A.A. Long/D. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 26B (Diogenes Laertius 7.39–41) and 26D (Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.19). See also Philo, *Agr.* 14; *Ebr.* 202. For a detailed analysis of this passage and the various (Stoic) arrangements of the field analogy see the contribution of Michael B. Cover to the present volume: "What's in A Name Change? Neo-Pythagorean Arithmology and Middle-Platonic Namewrights in Philo's Orchard of Philosophy".

the study of nature (physiology) to that of human excellence, seemingly subordinating other parts of the philosophical curriculum to ethics, this is not how the text should be understood. As all of Philo's discussions of Abraham's journey make abundantly clear, Abraham's inquiry into the sky resulted in the recognition that God is the creator of the universe. In other words, Abraham's journey represents the gradual discarding of an erroneous understanding of the divine workings (the astronomical occupations symbolizing a doctrine that grants causality to sensible beings only), and the attainment of knowledge of the true God.⁶⁶ Hence it is not the case that Abraham forsakes the study of the sky for that of human conduct, but rather that becoming virtuous is grounded in gaining the appropriate insight concerning God's causal efficacy and care for His creation. The association between understanding the role of God and leading a happy life becomes even more apparent in Philo's concluding remarks: Abraham is called *wise* once he abandons the study of nature for "ethical philosophy", that is "when he migrated from the contemplation of the world to the *knowledge of his creator*, from which he gained the most beautiful possession, namely piety" (*Mut.* 76, emphasis added). Knowledge of the creator necessarily leads to, or is tantamount to, the virtue of piety, which itself is explicitly connected to the acquisition of the virtues and to the possibility of leading a life free from the troubles of pleasure, desire, distress and fear.

There are many examples, both in the Allegorical Commentary and in the Exposition of the Law, that illustrate the close relationship between piety – understood as the recognition of God as the creator of the universe – and happiness. For instance, the "notion of the creator" is described as "the limit of happiness and blessedness".⁶⁷ The "knowledge" (*ἐπιστήμη*) of the God, who truly is, is the "summit of happiness and of long life" (*Spec.* 1.345). For Philo, he who lovingly attends to the most ancient cause has a "thrice-happy" and a "thrice-blessed" life (*Spec.* 1.31). This sufficiently indicates that, in Philo's view, the happy and successful life requires some fundamental grasp concerning God.⁶⁸

It is impossible to do justice to the wealth of details Philo provides across his many writings concerning what knowledge of God involves. I have already mentioned that Philo repeats that the essence of God is out of human reach. The proper

⁶⁶ S. Weisser, "Do We Have to Study the Torah? Philo of Alexandria and the Proofs for the Existence of God", in M. Bliedstein/S. Ruzer/D. Stökl Ben Ezra (ed.), *Scriptures, Sacred Traditions, and Strategies of Religious Subversion: Studies in Discourse with the Work of Guy G. Stroumsa* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018) 65–89. See also M.B. Cover's new translation and commentary of *De mutatione nominum: Philo of Alexandria: On the Change of Names. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (PACS 8; Leiden: Brill, 2024), esp. 239–69.

⁶⁷ Philo, *Det.* 86: *εὐδαιμονίας γὰρ καὶ μαχαριότητος ὄρος οὗτος*. See also *Cher.* 86; *Sobr.* 56.

⁶⁸ As Sterling rightly notices, "everything, including ethics, begins with a proper belief in the existent God" ("The Queen of the Virtues", 121).

understanding of God's creative causality and His care for what He has created, however, seems to be the gist of the achievable knowledge necessary for securing the possibility of living a good life. To put it more pithily, piety's central insight touches upon God's relation to His creation. From God's causal efficacy and care for the world, for instance, one reaches the understanding that God is one, immutable and unchangeable,⁶⁹ and that He is the true source of all good things in this world.⁷⁰ To recall an enlightening passage, it is highly significant that Philo concludes his treatise on the creation of the world and of humankind, noting that:

He who has gradually learned ... that God is and exists, and that He, who truly is, is one, and that He has created the cosmos, and that He created it one and, as it has been said, made it similar to himself through singleness, and always exerts his providence for what has come into existence, this one, having been stamped with the doctrines of piety and holiness, will live a blessed and happy life. (*Opif.* 172)⁷¹

2. The Impact of Piety on Our Moral Life

It now remains to address the more vexed question of why this piece of knowledge has such a bearing on the other virtues? Why courage, self-control, temperance and the other virtues that Philo extolls along his writings must ultimately proceed from a sound understanding of the divine? The most radical and impactful consequence of acknowledging God's causal primacy is for Philo, that it radically impacts the way sensible reality is perceived. This revised outlook is, I contend, what mainly accounts for Philo's commitment that appropriate knowledge of God constitutes the basis of the good life. Once God's causality has been recognized, the sensible realm becomes of little or no value compared to the intelligible one. In other words, when one realizes that the only immutable, always self-identical, stable, truly happy being is the immaterial God, he comes to look at the sensible realm as secondary, transient, unstable, and always changing. Moreover, in line with Platonic epistemology, this change of perspective leads one to understand that sensible reality cannot be the bearer of truth but only of opinion, as truth only belongs to the unchanging, eternal

⁶⁹ For example, Philo, *Abr.* 54; *Cher.* 86, 90.

⁷⁰ Philo, *Mut.* 153; 221; *Conf.* 196; *Agr.* 19; *Sacr.* 40.

⁷¹ Note that In *Her.* 90–95, Philo describes Abraham's *πίστις* in terms that closely echo his understanding of piety: it is a firm conviction that puts its trust in God alone and nothing besides him, understood in terms of justice towards God. It moreover corresponds to a disdain for external and bodily goods. Interestingly, in this passage *πίστις* is described as the "more perfect virtue" (91). I am thankful to Maren Niehoff for turning my attention to the relevance of *πίστις* in this context.

intelligible realm.⁷² All this does not imply a rejection of sensible reality and all it encompasses, but rather a better sense of its proper place.⁷³

The one who acknowledges God's creative role cannot hold the created realm in higher regard than the creator. Acknowledging God necessarily entails holding Him in the highest honor. Consequently, the pious person cannot value money, honor, and the like as the ultimate good. Philo's interpretation of Gen 31:5 illustrates the mutual exclusivity between knowing God and valuing sensible reality. Laban symbolizes the soul in which "the external sensible realm is honored as the greatest good". By contrast, a soul in which "God walks", says Philo, will never assume that the "external perceptible" is good (*Det.* 4).

In a like manner, misapprehending the sensible realm has a tremendous impact on our conduct. Indeed, Philo sees this to be a major source of vices. To give but one example among many, let it suffice to return to Cain, who represents the soul-type that thinks of itself as he the origin of everything. As Philo says in the opening of the *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, Cain and Abel represent two diametrically opposite beliefs: "one attributes everything to the intellect ... the other follows God since it takes itself to be His creation" (*Sacr.* 2). Through Cain, we can see clearly how the failure to acknowledge God's causality is closely associated with leading a miserable, unsuccessful, and wicked life. Because he could not rightly conceive of the Cause, the "atheist and impious" Cain is swept into a life deprived of the enjoyment of true and real goods, a life confined to the physical domain, characterized moreover by a lack of control over it.⁷⁴ Since he has no understanding of the place and value of the physical world, Cain is lured by what he perceives through sense perception and is led to tumble down the road of passions and vices (*Det.* 109, 119). It is a truly miserable existence, dominated by the bodily, the terrestrial, the impious, and the erroneous.

By contrast, because he has learned the place and rank of sensible reality, which includes ourselves, the pious person knows that he is of a moving, mortal and unstable nature.⁷⁵ At the same time, however, he can also come to acknowledge the kinship human beings have with God through their intellect, the only part capable of having a "conception" (*ἐννοια* [*Det.* 91]) of Him. With such a correct representation of what we are, and of what is truly worthwhile to pursue or avoid, we would be in a position to understand that honors, wealth, bodily or external goods are always secondary to the goods of the soul.⁷⁶

⁷² See, for example, Philo, *Cher.* 97–98; *Spec.* 1.45–48.

⁷³ Here is not the place to address the thorny question of Philo's intellectualism in relation to the other virtues, yet there is no doubt that on his account, how we think and value different objects directly bears on our choices and pursuits.

⁷⁴ Philo, *Det.* 103, 136; see also *Det.* 15–16.

⁷⁵ Philo, *Det.* 148; *Abr.* 54; *Somm.* 1.245.

⁷⁶ For instance, Philo, *Sacr.* 136–137; cf. *Det.* 9; *Praem.* 98–124; *Plant.* 66; *Sobr.* 56.

Many more examples could be added to this list, but at this juncture Philo's point of view is clear enough. Piety is indeed the queen and source of virtues because it consists of a piece of metaphysical and physical knowledge, upon which one can build a correct picture of the organization of the universe, and such a grasping is the basis upon which one can strive to acquire the other virtues. This metaphysical and cosmological piece of understanding has profound implications on the way we value the sensible realm, and as such offers us a revised understanding of what is worthy of pursuit or avoidance. In other words, piety stands at the source of the other virtues because it is necessary for correctly capturing what is truly good and evil in the different domains of our life.

I will conclude by quoting a passage that highlights the stark contrast between appreciating the real value of the sensible realm, which is the province of justice (that is of attribution according to proper value),⁷⁷ and the polytheistic opinion, which is so entrenched in sensible reality that it is unable to grasp its correct ontological place.

He who sees the One Who Is and has knowledge of the Cause, honors those things of which He is the cause as second to Him. He admits, without flattery, what belongs to them and this admission is most just (*δικαιοσύνη*) ... He who lacks discernment, however, and is blind in his mind, through which alone the One Who Is can be grasped, has never seen Him anywhere. He has only seen, through his senses, the bodies in this world and he thinks that they are the cause of all that comes into being. Wherefore, he starts fashioning gods and fills the inhabited earth with statues and images, and countless other reproductions made of various materials ... and he accomplishes the opposite of what was expected: instead of piety, impiety. For polytheism creates atheism in the soul of the senseless person, and those who sanctify mortal things pay no regard to the honor of God. (*Ebr.* 107–110)

IV. Conclusion

Metaphysics and physics have taken us away from Socrates's piety, yet the foundational place of piety for leading a moral life brings us back closer to it. Of course, Philo would not define piety as assisting in the production of the God's *ἔργον*, as did Socrates in the *Euthyphro*, given that he viewed the *ἔργον* of God as the creation of the cosmos and that of human beings as the practice of virtue.⁷⁸ Yet the connection

⁷⁷ Philo works out here a Stoic concept of justice.

⁷⁸ *ἔργον* is used here (as above) in the sense of a characteristic activity. See, for example: Philo, *Deus* 78; *Det.* 115; *Opif.* 9; *Migr.* 185; *Her.* 97; *Abr.* 75; *Congr.* 49; and the interesting *Sacr.* 65–68. Note nevertheless that it is precisely through the activity of creation that God's goodness emerges (*Cher.* 127; *Migr.* 182–183; *Leg.* 3.73; *Mut.* 28–29). For virtue as the "most appropriate *ἔργον*" for human beings, see *Leg.* 1.47.

between the divine realm and the moral life appears as crucial for Philo as it is for Socrates.

We have seen that Philo posits that there is a piece of knowledge deemed fundamental for enabling the pursuit of the good and happy life, whose content relates to God's relationship with what He has created. This cognitive basis is, furthermore, what piety is about, in the sense that possessing this kind of knowledge is sufficient for being pious.

Undoubtedly, Philo's piety does not fully correspond to the view of piety held by the Vlastosian Socrates. However, when he holds piety to be knowledge, that is when he articulates an intellectualist view of piety, Philo is undeniably making a Socratic move. This does not mean, of course, that this strategy is consciously Socratic, nor even that Philo is aware of any distinction between Plato's Socrates and Plato. This last point brings me to a challenging question that emerges from this analysis, and that relates to the identification of what is Socratic and what is Stoic in Philo's thought, and more particularly in Philo's ethics. As is well known, in ethics, the Stoics are certainly the most Socratic of the Hellenistic philosophers: they take virtue to be knowledge, endorse the unity of the virtues as well as the sufficiency of virtue for happiness theses, and presumably deny the possibility of ἀκρασία. Although I am certainly not denying the important presence of Stoic elements in Philo's thought (especially conspicuous in his physics), I believe nevertheless that it is worth questioning whether what we usually identify as Stoic in his ethics is not in fact a Socratic inheritance, that is, in his eyes, a genuine Platonic heritage. The advantage of this approach is that, instead of putting him hastily in the unsatisfactory category of Middle-Platonism, on account of the curious combinations between Stoicism and Platonism, we could get a more homogenous and organic picture of his thought: as one that develops naturally from Plato, that is, from *all of Plato*. Philo's predilection for Socratic psychology has in fact already been shown by Reydamas-Schils,⁷⁹ many of the ethical issues that Philo discusses are not only at home in Socrates's philosophy, but found there their first attested expression, such as the question of whether virtue can be taught (*Protagoras*), or the issue of the kinds of good and of their uses (*Euthydemus*). Philo might have identified in Stoic ethical discussions this familiar Socratic/Platonic heritage.

Furthermore, we should pay heed to the fact that, in the history of ancient philosophy, Socrates's legacy is as complex as it is poorly documented. The historical Socrates had many students, and Plato was, evidently, only one of them. Some of Socrates's first generation of followers commended themselves to posterity as founders

⁷⁹ G. Reydamas-Schils, "Philo of Alexandria on Stoic and Platonist Psycho-Physiology: The Socratic Higher Ground", in F. Alesse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (SPhA 5; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 169–96.

or progenitors of the important schools and movements (e.g., Aristippus for the Cynics, Antisthenes for the Cynics, Euclides for the Megaric school), many of them wrote *Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι*. Most of the philosophers of the Hellenistic schools, from the Stoics to the Dialectical School and the Sceptics, saw Socrates as their founding figure.⁸⁰ This complex history renders it plausible that different aspects of Socrates' thought could have reached Philo through numerous channels.

Another topic worthy of fuller investigation that commends itself at the end of this paper is the question of to what extent Philo's theorizing on piety is exceptional? In other words, in making theology the basis of the moral life, is Philo making a revolutionary step, one that could qualify as a *philosophia ancilla theologiae* move? Although Philo is exceptional in making piety the source of the other virtues, it seems in fact that when he grounds the moral life in theology, he fully aligns himself with the philosophical tradition. Despite the longstanding debate among scholars of ancient philosophy on whether ethics is grounded in physics, it seems that there are convincing grounds for taking that to be the case with Stoicism: understanding the divine working of the cosmos seems indeed to be the epistemological basis of the rational and moral disposition.⁸¹ Still, before Stoicism, the grounding of ethics in theology can already be identified in Plato's *Laws*. This transpires in the Athenian Stranger's statements to the effect that "holding the correct conceptions about the gods"⁸² is the most important matter for living a good life, or in Clinias's presentation of the discourses that aim at showing that the gods exist and that they are good as presumably the "finest and best preamble" to the whole law.⁸³ The grounding of ethics in theology also emerges in the firm condemnation of the impiety of the intellectual atheists (who held the gods to be the products of human political decisions), for being at the origin of their dangerous and harmful ethical relativism.⁸⁴ Strikingly, these intellectuals' erroneous moral theory and attitude are said to derive

⁸⁰ For the *Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι*, see Aristotle, *Poet.* 1447a–1447b; *Rhet.* 1417a. For the fragments of the Socratics, see G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* (4 vols.; Naples: Bibliopolis, 1990) and G. Boys-Stones/C. Rowe (ed.), *The Circle of Socrates: Readings in the First-Generation Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2013). For Socrates's role in Hellenistic philosophy, see A.A. Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy", *CQ* 38 (1988) 150–71, and the contributions of Striker, DeFilippo and Mitsis, Vander Waerdt, Annas, Shields and Tsouna in P.A. Vander Waerdt (ed.), *The Socratic Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). Note that Yli-Karjanne has observed that although Philo sometimes discusses Socrates independently of Plato, he does not possess a distinctly recognizable voice in his writings ("Philo of Alexandria", 119).

⁸¹ For a good summary of the debate between Inwood, Cooper, and Annas, as well as an important contribution on this topic, see Betheg, "Cosmological Ethics in the *Timaeus*"; see also Stobaeus, 2.7.11k.

⁸² ὀρθῶς διανοηθέντα (Plato, *Leg.* 888b3–4).

⁸³ Plato, *Leg.* 887b5–c2; see also *Leg.* 716ca–717a1.

⁸⁴ Plato, *Leg.* 889e3–890a2. On these intellectuals, see the illuminating paper of D. Sedley, "The Atheist Underground", in V. Harte/M. Lane (ed.), *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 329–48.

from their mistaken attribution of *primary causality* to nature and chance, instead of to craft, god or intelligence.⁸⁵

Considering all this together, a different picture of Philo begins to take shape: one that firmly places him on the map of ancient philosophical discussions; one of a thinker who is not only aware of the crucial role theology came to play in the philosophical controversies of the early Roman period, but also an active participant in these debates; one that makes of Philo an intellectualist regarding the virtue of piety, and an heir of Plato, in the “grand manner”.⁸⁶

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⁸⁵ Plato, *Leg.* 888e1–890a9. For the deep connections between Plato’s *Laws* and Philo’s Exposition of the Law, see the important study of Annas, *Virtue and Law*, 188–213. She argues that Philo was deeply influenced by Plato’s *Laws* and that both authors viewed the laws as engaging with “whole individuals’ lives” (*Virtue and Law*, 193), and as crucially aiming at developing virtue and hence happiness. She also notes the analogy between Plato’s emphasis on the necessity of holding a set of correct beliefs about the gods in book 10 and Philo’s view of piety. Nevertheless, she holds that Plato and Philo have “a very different accounts of what piety is; Plato takes it to require a rational appreciation of the workings of the cosmos, whereas for Philo piety involves a more personal relation to the one God of a given tradition” (*Virtue and Law*, 194). My intellectualist presentation of Philo’s piety brings him even closer to Plato’s *Laws*.

⁸⁶ I have greatly benefited from my discussions with Ron Naiweld, Naly Thaler and René Bloch in the elaboration of this paper. I would like to thank Maren Niehoff, Gretchen Reydams-Schils and Gabriel Danzig for their insightful comments on the draft of this paper. I presented this paper in Gabriel Danzig’s Workshop: “Triangulating Towards Socrates” and express my thanks to all the participants. I wish to thank David Konstan and Julia Annas for providing me important references. Finally, I wish to thank the editors of this volume, Michael Cover and Lutz Doering, for their careful reading and numerous insightful suggestions. This research was supported by a grant from the ISF, Israel Science Foundation, Grant 913/1.

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Was Philo's Moses a Pyrrhonian Hero?

Carlos Lévy

The title of this paper may seem extremely strange, since there is no visible common point between Moses, the prophet of revelation, and Pyrrho, generally considered as the founder of scepticism. Pyrrho, moreover, as most philosophers – if we except those evoked in the controverted *De aeternitate mundi* – is never mentioned by Philo. Here, however, we will try to demonstrate that the comparison between Philo and Pyrrho, if unexpected, is not a nonsense. The postulate of our research will be that we must not neglect, under the pretext of clarity and certainty, that thought, as well as life, is made of a multitude of complex and sometimes contradictory relationships, not always easy to highlight, especially when a diachronic perspective is taken into account. A strict methodical obsession can be an obstacle to a real understanding of writings, often incomplete, that are over two millennia old.

It is generally admitted that there are some sceptical passages in Philo, mainly the Aenesidemean tropes of the *De ebrietate* and the doxography of the *De somniis*; not much more is said.¹ But why was Philo, a Jewish Alexandrian, notably the first in the history of philosophy (at least as we know it) to mention this neo-Pyrrhonian doctrine, which appeared just some decades before? Nothing necessarily predisposed him to such originality. Cicero, who was himself a contemporary of Aenesidemus, ignored him or pretended to ignore him.² Why did Philo adopt at least some aspects of the doctrine of a philosopher who pretended to resurrect the otherwise forgotten Pyrrho?³ The even more important question in our opinion is this: what exactly was

¹ On these texts, see C. Lévy, “La conversion du scepticisme chez Philon d’Alexandrie”, in F. Alesse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (SPhA 5; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 103–20. On Philo’s role in the transmission of the tropes, see J.P. Dumont, *Le scepticisme et le phénomène: Essai sur la signification et les origines du pyrrhonisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1985), and it would be unfair not to mention H. von Arnim, *Quellenstudien zu Philo von Alexandria* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1888), especially 53–100.

² I have discussed the problem of the Ciceronian silence about Aenesidemus in “À propos des silences de Cicéron: Cicéron, Énésidème, Philon de Larissa”, in A. Heller/C. Müller/A. Suspène (ed.), *Philorhōmaios kai philhellèn: Hommage à Jean-Louis Ferrary* (Genève: Droz, 2019) 541–65.

³ Cicero, *Fin.* 2.35: “nam Pyrrho, Aristo, Erillus iam diu abiecti”; *Fin.* 5.23: “iam explosae eiectaeque sententiae Pyrrhonis”; *Tusc.* 5.85: “nam Aristonis Pyrrhonis Erilli non nullorumque aliorum evanuerunt.” See C. Lévy, “Un problème doxographique chez Cicéron: les indifférentistes”, *Revue des Études Latines* 58 (1980) 238–51.

the conceptual link in Philo's work between scepticism, or better Pyrrhonism, and the world of revelation? In a recent brilliant paper, Pura Nieto Hernández demonstrates how Pyrrho was fascinated by the heroes of mythology and tried to elaborate a synthesis between them and the angels of the Bible⁴. She adds in her conclusion: "What is perhaps striking is how rarely, over the course of his works, he makes reference to the Greek tradition. He clearly knows it well, and cites the major authors freely, but seems nevertheless to have kept a distance from the heroes of mythology."⁵ What we'll try to do here is to scrutinize the kind of relation he could have with an anti-hero named Pyrrho.⁶

I. Pyrrho, an Unusual Hero; and Some Terminological Similarities with Philo

We must first address the concept of the Pyrrhonian hero. The image of the glorious hero, generally a warrior or an athlete, and the proximity of heroism to the divine nature – all this was present in Greek culture and education from the archaic epoch. The specific use of this image in the case of Pyrrho was a radical innovation. We know that he participated in the expedition of Alexander, but it was not for this reason that his disciples, in any case the main one, Timon, considered him as a hero. It is true that the epic of Alexander, the man-god, himself disciple of Aristotle, had deep repercussions in the world of philosophy. The Hellenistic period saw the appearance of Stoicism and Epicureanism and of the evolution of the Platonic school to the radical suspension of assent (i.e., *ἐποχή*, a concept that became the motto of the New Academy). But Pyrrho was an unprecedented hero, less because of what he did than because of what he did not do – not for his decisions but for not deciding anything; not for his eloquence but for the rejection of any eloquence; not even for his humanity but for trying to strip himself of all his humanity. If we compare Pyrrho to another philosopher-hero of the Hellenistic period, Epicurus, the differences are clear. Lucretius in his magnificent verses exalts Epicurus's victory on false opinions and his ability to bring human beings to *ἀταραξία* through the revelation of a few fundamental truths:⁷ the universe is nothing else than a combination of atoms and void; gods do not take care for the world; pleasure is the alpha and omega of the ethic

⁴ P. Nieto Hernández, "Philo of Alexandria on Greek Heroes", in F. Alesse/L. de Luca (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Greek Myth*, (SPhA 10; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 153–75.

⁵ Nieto Hernández, "Philo of Alexandria on Greek Heroes", 173.

⁶ For philosophers donning the mantle of archaic heroes for their own profession, see Z. Petraki, "Hero Cult in Plato's *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *the Laws*", *Synthesis* 28.2 (2021) e106, online: <https://doi.org/10.24215/1851779xe106> (accessed on 6 March 2024).

⁷ On Lucretius's praise of Epicurus, see D. Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 29–30, 57–9.

life; and so forth. Almost nothing similar can be found in Pyrrho's teaching. Let us see what are the elements of his surprising kind of heroism.

We begin with the *pars destruens*. Timon presents Pyrrho as the one who escaped from the lies, the vain and deceitful opinions, of the sophists:

ὦ γέρον, ὦ Πύρρων, πῶς ἢ πόθεν ἔκδυσιν εὖρες
λατρείης δοξῶν [τε] κενεοφροσύνης τε σοφιστῶν,
καὶ πάσης ἀπάτης πειθοῦς τ' ἀπελύσαιο δεσμά;

O Aged man, O Pyrrho, how and whence have you found <strength> to strip off the servitude of opinions and empty thought of the sophists?
How did you loose the bond of every deceit and trickery?⁸

Some interesting points of coincidence with Philo can be stressed in this passage. The hatred of sophists was too general a theme to be defined as characteristic of a philosophical school, though in Philo it was most probably from a Platonic origin. Much more interesting is the word *ἔκδυσις*. It was a key concept of Pyrrho, while it was quite rare in Plato – we find occurrences of this word (and its cognates) only in the *Phaedo* (“to raise [*ἔκδύς*] the head out of the sea”)⁹ and in the *Cratylus* (“evasions on [*ἔκδύσεις*] the part of those who refuse a rational theory of names”).¹⁰ They lack of any special philosophical relevance. The word *ἔκδυσις* is also present in Aristotle, but always in the scientific context of the biology.¹¹ Its use here to describe Pyrrho therefore has no philosophical precedent.

Following the use of this term in the doxographies about Pyrrho, we also find the following *chreia* (moral anecdote):

καὶ κυνὸς ποτ' ἐπενεχθέντος διασοβηθέντα εἰπεῖν πρὸς τὸν αἰτιασάμενον, ὡς χαλεπὸν εἶη ὀλοσχερῶς ἐκδῦναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

⁸ Diogenes Laertius 9.65. See F. Declava Caizzi, *Pirrone: Testimonianze* (Naples, Italy: Bibliopolis, 1981), frag. 60.

⁹ Plato, *Phaed.* 109c–d, of the person about to raise his head out of the sea: ἄλλα ἄστρα τὴν θάλατταν ἡγοῖτο οὐρανὸν εἶναι, διὰ δὲ βραδυνότητά τε καὶ ἀσθένειαν μηδεπώποτε ἐπὶ τὰ ἄκρα τῆς θαλάττης ἀφιγμένος μηδὲ ἔωρακώς εἶη, ἔκδύς καὶ ἀνακύνψας ἐκ τῆς θαλάττης εἰς τὸν ἐνθάδε τόπον, ὅσω καθαρώτερος καὶ καλλίων τυγχάνει ὢν τοῦ παρὰ σφίσι, μηδὲ ἄλλου ἀκηκῶς εἶη τοῦ ἔωρακός.

¹⁰ Plato, *Crat.* 426a: ἐπισκέψασθαι, ὡσπερ καὶ τὰ βαρβαρικά; αὐταὶ γὰρ ἂν πᾶσαι ἔκδύσεις εἶεν καὶ μάλα κομψαὶ τῷ μὴ ἐθέλοντι λόγον διδόναι περὶ τῶν πρώτων ὀνομάτων ὡς ὀρθῶς κείται. καίτοι ὅτω τις τρόπῳ τῶν πρώτων ὀνομάτων τὴν ὀρθότητα μὴ οἶδεν.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Hist. anim.* 601a, 603a.

When a dog rushed at him and terrified him, he answered his critic that it was *difficult to strip off* the human being *entirely*.¹²

The source of this tale, which we find both in Diogenes Laertius and in Eusebius, is Antigonus of Carystus. He is generally recognized as a reliable witness. We find an interesting parallel to this passage in Philo, *Cher.*66:

τὰς γὰρ φυσικὰς κῆρας καὶ τὸν ἀκούσιον πλάνον εἰσάπαν ἐκδῦναι χαλεπὸν.

For it is *difficult to strip off entirely* natural sources of decay and involuntary delusion is difficult.¹³

Philo uses the same *iunctura* that Pyrrho does (χαλεπὸν ... ἐκδῦναι / ἐκδῦναι χαλεπὸν), the only difference is that whereas Pyrrho is said to have used ὀλοσχερῶς, Philo says εἰσάπαν. Both adverbs express a radical attitude but Philo is a frequent user of εἰσάπαν, while ὀλοσχερῶς is wholly absent from his work.

There are other occurrences of ἐκδῦω in Philo, for example, in *Leg.* 2.55 (“the soul ... disrobes [ἐκδύσα] itself of the body and the objects dear to the body”) and *Spec.* 4.95 (“the most holy Moses observed and discarded [ἐκδύσασθαι] passion in general and detesting it as most vile in itself and in its effects”).

It would be however somewhat hasty to conclude that the presence in the Philonic corpus of the words ἐκδύω, ἐκδῦναι, and ἐκδύσις had an exclusively Pyrrhonian origin. There is at least one case in the Septuagint (Prov 11:8) where the alternative form ἐκδύνω is used to say that the righteous “is rescued” from evil. But it seems impossible to ignore that in Philo as in Pyrrho one of the main representations of moral life is to strip off something: body in the former, humanity in the later, opinion and passions in both cases. These are most difficult tasks, which Pyrrho was said by his disciples to have performed alone, while for Philo they could not be performed without the help of God. Conversely, in *Agr.* 159, when Philo affirms that “it befits all these, the beginners, those making progress, and those who have reached perfection, to live without contention, refusing to engage (ἐπαποδύεσθαι) in the war waged by the sophists, with their unceasing practice of quarrelsomeness and disturbance to the adulteration of the truth”, he uses ἐπαποδύεσθαι, the exact contrary of ἐκδῦναι, in order to express idea of taking on something that is foreign to our nature. Truth is one, but the quarrels of the sophists are unceasing; they cannot be anything but an unnecessary and harmful weight.

¹² Antigonus of Carystus *apud* Diogenes Laertius 9.66 and Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* = Declava Caizzi, *Pirrone*, frag. 15a and 15bDC. As it is remarked by Declava Caizzi, *Pirrone*, 167, the verb ἐκδῦναι is used by Homer in *Il.* 16.99, where ἐκδύμεν ὄλεθρον means to escape death.

¹³ All English translations of Philo are adapted from Colson, PLCL, unless otherwise noted.

We turn now the *pars construens*. What are the positive qualities that allow Timon to say that no mortal would be able to challenge his master,¹⁴ an expression he has adapted from the *Iliad* where Homer applies it Odysseus?¹⁵ It can be understood in two different senses, as it has been stressed by Decleva Caizzi.¹⁶ On the first interpretation, it would mean that Pyrrho was a better debater than any other philosopher. Much more convincing however is the second interpretation, which she prefers herself: Pyrrho was the strongest not because he defeated the sophists with their own weapons, but because he opposed a perfect indifference to the aggressiveness. For his disciple Timon, he was the man of *ἡσυχία* and *γαλήνη*,¹⁷ a conjunction of terms rather rare before, used by Plato only once in the *Laws*.¹⁸ Intriguingly, the words are also used by Philo in the *De vita Mosis*¹⁹ in a context that has some additional Pyrrhonian echoes.

But Pyrrho's indifference is far from being presented as that of a poor lonely man. He is the only true chief (*ἡγεμών*) among the human beings, he guides them as if he were a god. The idea of *ἡγεμονία* and identification with a god are elements that we will find in Philo about Moses. The fact that he applies the word *θεός* to a man – an exceptional one, but one who never stopped being a man – has caused a lot of discussion.²⁰ Pyrrho, for his part, is compared by Timon to Apollo:

μοῦνος δ' ἀνθρώποισι θεοῦ τρόπον ἡγεμονεύεις,
ὅς περι πᾶσαν ἑλῶν γαῖαν ἀναστρέφεται,
δεικνὺς εὐτόρνου σφαίρας πυρικαύτορα κύκλον.

You alone are a guide to human beings, in the manner of <the> god,
Who driving <his chariot> revolves about the whole earth,
Showing the all-fieri circle of his well-turned globe.²¹

Still more, Pyrrho himself is given a prophetic tonality, in some verses of Timon that represent a tantalizing problem for specialists of scepticism:²²

¹⁴ Timon apud Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 14.18.16–17 (= Decleva Caizzi, *Pirrone*, frag. 57): οὐκ ἂν δὴ Πύρρωνί γ' ἐρίσ<σ>ειεν βροτὸς ἄλλος.

¹⁵ Homer, *Il.* 3.223: οὐκ ἂν ἐπειτ' Ὀδυσῆϊ γ' ἐρισσειε βροτὸς ἄλλος.

¹⁶ See Decleva Caizzi, *Pirrone*, 242–3, where she adopts the interpretation of G. Cortassa, “Due giudizi di Timone di Fliunte”, *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica* 104 (1976) 312–26.

¹⁷ See Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 11.141 (= Decleva Caizzi, *Pirrone*, frag. 59). Sextus quotes Timon who said that who lives in a state of “quietness” (*ἡσυχία*) and “calm” (*γαλήνη*) is happy.

¹⁸ Plato *Leg.* 791a. This *iunctura* becomes frequent in Plutarch: see, e.g., *Def. orac.* 437e; *Gen. Socr.* 588d; and *Quaest. conv.* 657d.

¹⁹ Philo, *Mos.* 1.41.

²⁰ On this subject, see the stimulating paper by M.D. Litwa, “The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria”, *SPhiloA* 26 (2014) 1–27.

²¹ Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 1.305 (= Decleva Caizzi, *Pirrone*, frag. 61d).

²² Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 11.20 (= Decleva Caizzi, *Pirrone*, frag. 62).

ἢ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω, ὡς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι,
 μῦθον ἀληθείης ὀρθὸν ἔχων κανόνα,
 ὡς ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ τε φύσις καὶ τἀγαθοῦ αἰεὶ,
 ἐξ ὧν ἰσότατος γίνεται ἀνδρὶ βίος.

Indeed, I will relate <each fact> as it appears to me,
 having an exact standard of truth in this <my> speech,
 How the nature of God and of Goodness always <is>,
 Whence proceeds for man life that is equal and just.

The verb ἐρέω has Homeric and Parmenidean precedents, it is also that used by Philo for introducing Moses words.²³ But how can a philosopher presented by the sceptical tradition as the founder of scepticism pretend to reveal the nature of God and the Good? Among many interpretations, one deserves to be especially recalled in this context: that of Marcel Conche, who saw in Pyrrhonism the subversion of the Aristotelian philosophy, by the destruction of the concept of being itself.

It would take too long to tackle this problem in detail,²⁴ however there is a kind of agreement among the scholars on these points: (1) for Pyrrho, the world is indifferent, since it is held to be made of perfectly contradictory items, along with the principle of ἰσοσθένεια; (2) the subject must be a reflection of this indifference, being himself one of those “without opinion and unswerving and unshaken” (ἀδόξαστος καὶ ἀκλινῆς καὶ ἀκράδαντος).²⁵ The ideal is not the fixity of a rock, but that created by the identic power of contraries.²⁶

The adjective ἀκράδαντος is absent from all the texts of classic and Hellenistic periods. The only occurrences, before its frequent presence in liturgical and patristic texts, are this Pyrrhonian one and those that we find in Philo. Let us see in what context Philo uses it. There are seven occurrences of this adjective in Philo’s work,²⁷ but only in one case it is specifically applied to a character, i.e., Moses. He is the one

²³ See for example Philo, *Her.* 189 and *Cong.* 170.

²⁴ M. Conche, *Pyrrhon ou l'apparence* (Perspectives critiques; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994). For a careful analysis of these verses, see M. Burnyeat, “Tranquillity Without a Stop: Timon, frag. 68”, *CQ* 30 (1980) 36–93; R. Bett, “Pyrrho”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 edition), online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pyrrho/> (accessed on 6 March 2024); idem, “Timon of Phlius”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 edition), online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/timon-phlius/> (accessed on 6 March 2024).

²⁵ Aristocles apud Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 14.18.1–4: τὰ μὲν οὖν πράγματα φησιν αὐτὸν ἀποφαίνειν ἐπ’ ἴσης ἀδιάφορα καὶ ἀστάθμητα καὶ ἀνεπίκριτα, διὰ τοῦτο μήτε τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἡμῶν μήτε τὰς δόξας ἀληθεύειν ψεύδεσθαι. διὰ τοῦτο οὖν μηδὲ πιστεῦειν αὐταῖς δεῖν, ἀλλ’ ἀδόξαστους καὶ ἀκλινεῖς καὶ ἀκράδαντους εἶναι ...

²⁶ The idea that fixity and stillness are the expression of innocence and represent a way of salvation is strongly expressed in Philo, *Sobr.* 49, in a passage about the allegorical interpretation of leprosy. On this idea, see G.A. Ferrari, “L’immagine dell’ equilibrio”, in G. Giannantoni (ed.), *Lo scetticismo antico* (Naples: Bibliopolis: 1981) 339–70.

²⁷ Philo, *Post.* 25, 122; *Conf.* 87; *Mut.* 135; *Abr.* 269; *Mos.* 2.14.

about whom it is said that all the enactments coming from him are “firm, not shaken by commotions, not liable to alteration (*ἀκράδαντα*)”.²⁸ Why did Philo use a word that was unknown in literary and philosophical texts, excepting Timon? As the Alexandrian himself, many writers, among whom Flavius Josephus, used the verb *κραδαίνω*, but no one the adjective. Of course, it is not impossible to imagine that *ἀκράδαντος* had its origin in Philo's own creativity, but nothing prevents us from considering it an echo of his reading of Pyrrhonian texts. About *ἀκλινης* things are less speculative. This adjective is one of Philo's favourites for describing the impassibility of a virtuous soul. It is extremely rare in Plato – just an occurrence in the *Phaedo*,²⁹ not in a psychological context but in a physical one, in a passage where he explains why earth does not fall. There is no mention of it in Aristotle, Epicurus, or Chrysippus. It becomes frequent in Neo-Platonism and Patristic and Byzantine literature. It is worth remarking that in Plutarch, whose vocabulary is not without similarities with that of Philo, *ἀκλινης* is used only twice, in contexts that have nothing to do with that of the passions of the soul.

II. A Common Scope: Not to Pretend to Exist by Oneself

These terminological similarities could seem perhaps too thin to be interpreted as the result of a direct influence of Pyrrhonism on Philo. But two elements must be added. The first one is the permanent effort of Pyrrho not to exist, an effort based on the idea of the perfect equivalence between life and death. There are many episodes of his life that illustrate his way of not being. One of the most striking is narrated by Diogenes Laertius: “And once, when Anaxarchus fell into a slough, <Pyrrho> passed by without giving him any help; and while others blamed him, Anaxarchus himself praised his indifference and *sang-froid* (*τὸ ἀδιάφορον καὶ ἄστοργον αὐτοῦ*).”³⁰ Even if the word is never used in fragments of Pyrrho, there was in him a real doctrine of “nothingness” (*οὐδένεια*). Stobaeus narrates that for him there was no difference between to life and death. And when somebody asked him, “Why don't you die?” he answered, “Because there is no difference”.

The second additional element of Pyrrhonism is related: that precisely this consciousness of the ontological nothingness of the world and of the subject allows Timon to give Pyrrho the dignity of a prophet, who knows the difference between *ἀλήθεια* (“truth”) and being. *ἀλήθεια* is bound to appearance since everything is

²⁸ Philo, *Mos.* 2.14: βέβαια, ἀσάλευτα, ἀκράδαντα.

²⁹ Plato, *Phaed.* 109a.

³⁰ Diogenes Laertius 9.63 (= Declava Caizzi, *Pirrone*, frag. 10): καὶ ποτ' Ἀναξάρχου εἰς τέλημα ἐμπεσόντος, παρήλθεν οὐ βοήθησας· τινῶν δὲ αἰτιωμένων, αὐτὸς Ἀνάξαρχος ἐπήνη τὸ ἀδιάφορον καὶ ἄστοργον αὐτοῦ.

appearance, or more exactly the convergence of contradictory appearances. As Timon say it in his *Indalmoi* (*Conceits*): “But the apparent is omnipotent wherever it goes.”³¹ Being is only a deceitful illusion. It is possible to say that honey seems sweet but not to affirm that it is sweet.

I will not enter the complex history of Pyrrhonism between Pyrrho and Aenesidemus.³² If we believe Cicero, at his time Pyrrhonism had faded away, since he includes it among the *explosae sententiae*, the disappeared doctrines. Moreover he never speaks about him as a philosopher of what we use to call “scepticism”, but as a moralist of an absolute and absurd radicalism.³³ While all the other Hellenistic philosophers built their system on the idea of a primitive tendency, the *ὀρμή* of the Stoics, articulated with the process of “adaptation to nature” (*οἰκείωσις*),³⁴ Pyrrho is said by Cicero to have gone beyond *ἀταραξία*, to *ἀπάθεια*, i.e., absolute insensibility: “*Pyrrho autem ea ne sentire quidem sapientem, quae ἀπάθεια nominatur.*”³⁵ In contrast to Aristo, the heterodox Stoic, for whom the telos was *ἀδιαφορία* – perfect indifference to the *πρῶτα κατὰ φύσιν*, the first objects offered by nature, which are the stimuli of our first impulse – Pyrrho appears to have tried to eradicate sensation, that is life, from the *scala naturae*.

Why did Aenesidemus, after his quite probable rupture with his Academic background, choose such a strange model as the figurehead of his own doctrine?³⁶ Many reasons can be proposed, including the accusation of plagiarism directed by the stoic Aristo against Arcesilaus, whom he accused of having expounded a mixture of the doctrines of Pyrrho, the Megarics, and Platonism. From this point of view, Pyrrho would appear as the first to have denied any possibility of knowledge. However possible, in our opinion the main purpose was to liberate the systematic scepticism he projected through a link with a non-sceptical doctrine. He thought, and he was

³¹ Diogenes Laertius 9.105 (= Decleva Caizzi, *Pirrone*, frag. 63a): ἀλλὰ τὸ φαινόμενον πάντη σθένει οὔπερ ἄν ἔλθῃ.

³² See on this point see W. Görler, “Weitere Schüler Pyrrhons: Fortbestand der Schule”, in H. Flashar (ed.), *Die Philosophie der Antike. Band 4: Die hellenistische Philosophie* (2 vols.; Basel: Schwabe, 1994) 768–74.

³³ To the best of my knowledge, V. Brochard, *Les Sceptiques grecs* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1922 [1887]) 82, was the first to express in the clearest way that Pyrrho was not a sceptic in the same way than Sextus: “Bref, Pyrrhon fut une sorte de saint, sous l’invocation duquel le scepticisme se plaça. Mais le père du pyrrhonisme paraît avoir été fort peu pyrrhonien. C’est plus tard que la formule du scepticisme fut: Que sais-je? Le dernier mot du scepticisme primitif était: Tout m’est égal.”

³⁴ On this concept see R. Radice, *Oikeiōsis* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2000).

³⁵ Cicero, *Acad. pr.* 130.

³⁶ On the relation of Aenesidemus with the New Academy and his break up with it, see J. Mansfeld, “Aenesidemus and the Academics”, in L. Ayres (ed.), *The Passionate Intellect: Essays on the Transformation of Classical Traditions Presented to Professor I. G. Kidd* (Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities 7; New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1996) 235–48; C. Lévy, “Philon et Antiochus dans le *Catulus*: Note à propos d’un article récent”, *Archives de philosophie* 12 (1999) 117–26. The thesis that Aenesidemus never studied in the Academy was defended by F. Decleva Caizzi, “Aenesidemus and the Academy”, *CQ* 42 (1992) 176–89.

probably right, that the sceptical interpretation of Plato elaborated by the New Academy was not strong enough to resist dogmatic interpretation, once the struggle against the Stoics had lost the greater part of its intensity. Thanks to Aenesidemus, scepticism finally became auto-referential – an attitude that we can see also in Sextus's *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposeis*, where he strives to demonstrate that Pyrrhonism was different from all the other doctrines which pretended to be sceptical, while in fact they were dogmatic.³⁷ To do this, he had first to make the character of Pyrrho less extravagant, more acceptable, and to renew his doctrine by expressing it with the concepts that had been forged in the controversy between the Stoa and the New Academy.

We can see this in Diogenes Laertius: “But Aenesidemus says that it was only his philosophy that was based upon suspension of judgement (*ἐποχή*), and he did not lack foresight in his everyday acts.”³⁸ This sentence deserves a special attention. Aenesidemus tried to attenuate the image of Pyrrho as a man perfectly indifferent to the surrounding world, by saying that he did not act *ἀπροοράτως* (“without foresight”). It was an implicit answer to those who were put off by anecdotes like that of his indifference to Anaxarchos, as it was described by Timon. At the same time, this adverb is extremely interesting from a lexical point of view. In our testimonies we do not find it before Aenesidemus and Philo; they seem to have been the very first to introduce it in the philosophical vocabulary. Philo uses it eight times, especially in *Spec.* 4.26, where the *iunctura ἀπερισκέπτως και ἀπροοράτως* appears.³⁹ It is worth noting that after Philo this word was never used by any Middle or Neo-Platonic philosopher. Plutarch, who in his anti-Stoic treatises frequently uses the vocabulary of the New Academy seems to have wholly ignored *ἀπροοράτως*.

Diogenes's mention of the concept of *ἐποχή* is problematic. In the long and probably reliable abstract of Aenesidemus's *Πυρρώνειοι λόγοι*, redacted by the patriarch Photius (ninth century CE), we never find the term *ἐποχή*, even about the tropes,⁴⁰ while in Sextus it is omnipresent. From this point of view, there is an agreement between Pyrrho – at least the Pyrrho of our fragments – Philo, and Aenesidemus in the refusal to oppose *ἐποχή* to *κατάληψις*. If you say *ἐπέχω* (“I suspend my assent”), it means you admit to be an individual who deliberates and decides or who chooses not to decide. As *ἐποχή* was the motto of the New Academy, it is probable that Aenesidemus, in his search to appear as the only authentic sceptic, was at least at the beginning a little bit reluctant to give it a privileged place in his own doctrine. For

³⁷ See R. Bett, “Why Care Whether Scepticism is Different from Other Philosophies?”, *Philosophie antique* 15 (2015) 27–52.

³⁸ Diogenes Laertius 9.62: Αἰνεσίδημος δέ φησι φιλοσοφεῖν μὲν αὐτὸν κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἐποχῆς λόγον, μὴ μέντοι γ' ἀπροοράτως ἕκαστα πράττειν.

³⁹ Philo, *Deus* 128; *Somn.* 2.214; *Opif.* 128; *Spec.* 3.79; 4.26; *Praem.* 20; *Legat.* 2, 109.

⁴⁰ Photius, *Bibl.* cod. 212.

those who speak of the *ἰσοσθένεια* of contradictory items and speeches, the self is dissolved in the principle of the equipollence of contraries. The rejection of *κατάληψις* did not necessarily imply by itself that a subject had the capacity of defining himself/herself by a fixed position, though empty of any firm belief, as it was the case in the New Academy. The Stoic apparatus of assent as a capacity of autonomous decision⁴¹ seems to have been absent as well from Photius's abstract, as from Philo.

Philo uses only once *ἐποχή*, when he refers to one of the most famous episodes in Genesis, the sacrifice of Isaac.⁴² When Isaac asks his father where the lamb for the holocaust is, Abraham answers that God himself will give the lamb for the burnt offering. In his Allegorical Commentary, Philo explains that best victim is the suspension of our judgement on points where it is wholly impossible to find evidence.⁴³ God accepts the *ἐποχή* as the sacrificial offering, in place of Isaac. In this passage, *ἐποχή* is not only the recognition of the limits of the human mind, but also the expression of the patriarch's faith in the infinite capacities of God Almighty. One of the main methodological problems about Philo is that, in the current Sextus-mania, his Pyrrhonian passages are often read as if he were posterior to Sextus, while it would be wiser to forget Sextus, at least at first.

III. From Pyrrho and Aenesidemus to Philo

Despite the affinities outlined above, it seems rather difficult to prove conclusively that Philo had read Aenesidemus and ignored what Timon said about his master's doctrine. That does not mean that Philo tried himself to practise a kind of Pyrrhonism without Pyrrho. In our opinion his attitude was much subtler. This can be argued along two lines: (1) there are in many places Philo's work where we could define as echoes of Pyrrhonism; and (2) there are more fundamental agreements between Pyrrho and Philo about key philosophical ideas.

We turn first to the echoes. In *Mos.* 1.24, Philo describes Moses as an individual gathering all the forms of science, regardless of ethnic identities: "And when he had mastered the lore of both nations, both where they agree and where they differ, he

⁴¹ Since at least P. Couissin, "Le stoïcisme de la Nouvelle Académie", *Revue d'Histoire de la Philosophie* 3 (1929) 241–76, we know that this school used the Stoic concepts in a dialectical way. On the refusal by Philo of the subject as it was conceived by the Stoics and much later by Descartes, see C. Lévy, "Philo of Alexandria vs. Descartes: An Ignored Jewish Premonitory Critic of the *Cogito*", in G. Veltri/R. Haliva/S. Schmid/E. Spinelli (ed.), *Sceptical Paths* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019) 5–22. On Philo's attitude towards Stoic neologisms, see C. Lévy, "Breaking the Stoic Language: Philo's Attitude towards Assent (*sunkatathesis*) and Comprehension (*katalêpsis*)", *Henoch* 32 (2010) 33–44.

⁴² Philo, *Fug.* 136.

⁴³ Philo, *Fug.* 136: ἄριστον γὰρ ἱερεῖον ἡσυχία καὶ | ἐποχή περὶ ὧν πάντως οὐκ εἰσι πίστεις.

eschewed all strife and contention and sought only for truth.”⁴⁴ About the “search of this truth” (τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐζήτει), he uses also the adverb ἀφιλονείκως, contrasted with the ἔριδας, the “quarrels” of those whom Philo, a little later in this same passage, calls αἰρεσιομάχοι – a word that we can find only in his work and in Didymus the Blind, an Alexandrian Christian theologian of the fourth century CE. The term ἀφιλονείκως seems to have been never used by philosophers before Philo. The adverb is connected semantically with the concept of ἔρις, which is frequent in our Pyrrhonian fragments. And even if Timon does not use the term αἰρεσιομάχοι, the idea that dogmatic philosophers were engaged in a merciless battle was central to Pyrrhonism from the origin. In their reconstitution of Timon's *Silloi* through some fragments, Di Marco and after him Clayman demonstrated that “the battling philosophers” occupied a huge place in this satiric work.⁴⁵

We find another echo of Pyrrhonism in *Mos* 1.83, where Philo comments one of the most famous passages of Exodus (Exod 4:10). Moses tries to avoid the mission that God entrusts to him. The text of the Septuagint says that the future prophet argued that he was “weak in speech, and slow-tongued” (ἰσχνόφωνος καὶ βραδύγλωσσος), two adjectives that are quoted by Philo, who adds however that he was not εὐλογος. To further explain Moses's attitude, Philo elaborates the arguments given by him to God, at least as he imagines them: “For he considered that human eloquence, compared with God's was dumbness (ἄφωνία), and also, cautious as he was by nature, he shrank from things sublime and judged that things of this magnitude were not for him.”⁴⁶ ἄφασία is one of the characteristics of the wise and happy man in Pyrrhonism; it represented the stage just before the *telos* itself, i.e., ἀταραξία or ἀπάθεια. But ἄφασία, as it has been stressed by Jacques Brunschwig was an ambiguous term since it could mean both “to be unable to speak” and “to refuse to assert”.⁴⁷ With ἄφωνία the ambiguity disappears. This word only means the inability to produce any kind of language. At the same time in this passage it is inserted in an interesting context: the ἄφωνία of which Moses is conscious is connected to his εὐλάβεια (“cautiousness”), a concept present many times in the work of Philo, who could not ignore that it was one of the three “good passions” (εὐπάθειαι) of the Stoic sage. But above all, while the Pyrrhonian ἄφασία was an aspect of the virtuous

⁴⁴ Philo, *Mos*. 1.24: καὶ τὰ παρ' ἀμφοτέροις ἀκριβῶς ἐν οἷς τε συμφωνοῦσι καὶ διαφέρονται καταμαθῶν, ἀφιλονείκως τὰς ἔριδας ὑπερβιάς, τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐζήτει.

⁴⁵ M. Di Marco, *Timone di Fliunte: Silli. Introduzione, Edizione Critica, Traduzione, e Commento* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1989); D.L. Clayman, *Timon of Phlius: Pyrrhonism into Poetry* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

⁴⁶ Philo, *Mos*. 1.83: νομίσας γὰρ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην λογιότητα κατὰ σύγκρισιν τῆς θείας ἀφωνίαν εἶναι καὶ ἅμα τὴν φύσιν εὐλαβῆς ὧν ὑπεστέλλετο τοῖς ὑπερόγκοις, τὰ λίαν μεγάλα κρίνων οὐ καθ' αὐτόν.

⁴⁷ J. Brunschwig, “L'aphasie pyrrhonnienne”, in C. Lévy/L. Pernot (ed.), *Dire l'évidence* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997) 297–321.

attitude of an individual, Moses's ἀφωνία had no sense if it was not related to God's eloquence. Pyrrho considered ἀφασία as an element of wisdom, because he thought that to speak was commonly linked to the desire of giving a sense to a world that for him lacked of sense. Moses tries not to speak, convinced of the οὐδένεια of his language, once he had found that God could speak directly to a human being. At the same time he is showing a form of *hybris* by seeming to know better than God what he had to do. He asks God to find someone other, better gifted for eloquence, and God's response defines what could be called a transcendental ἀφωνία that aims to conciliate both Moses's idea of ἀφωνία and the acceptance of the mission. Αὐτός εἰμι ἐγώ:⁴⁸ it is because God gave human beings all that is necessary to speak and because He is the real cause, the "pure source" (καθαρά πηγῆ),⁴⁹ of what Moses will say to Pharaoh that the mission becomes not only possible but imperative.

The same incapacity of Moses to be someone who speaks and decides by himself appears in *Mos.* 2.228, where we see the prophet and ruler of Israel dealing with the Pyrrhonian concept of ἰσοσθένεια. He is in a state of great perplexity about the exact date of Passover. The date was set at the fourteenth day of the first month, but people who were plunged into mourning by the death of some relatives were disappointed because they could not attend the ceremonies of Passover. They asked him to change the date. Moses was unable to decide if he would accept or refuse their protests. Philo compares him to the scales of a balance, a metaphor which alludes the Pyrrhonian principle of ἰσοσθένεια ("the equal force of the opposites"):

Moses, hearing this, recognized the reasonableness of their claim, and also the cogency of their excuse for absenting themselves from the sacrifice; and with these was mingled a feeling of sympathy. Yet he wavered in his judgement, and oscillated as on a balance: one scale was weighed down by pity and justice, while in the other lay as a counterpoise the law of the Paschal sacrifices in which both the first month and the fourteenth day were clearly appointed for the rite.⁵⁰

As he vacillated between refusal and assent, he besought God to act as judge and to give an oracle declaring his decision. It was God who broke the ἰσοσθένεια of the arguments by deciding that these people will celebrate Passover in the same way, but on the same day of the following month. In this tale, the Pyrrhonian description of the situation prepares an end that has little to do with Pyrrhonism.

⁴⁸ Philo, *Mos.* 1.84. God answers his own rhetorical question.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Philo, *Mos.* 2.228. Philo's description that most closely approximates the navigation of ἰσοσθένεια is as follows: ἐπαμφοτερίζων δὲ τὴν γνώμην καὶ ὡσπερ ἐπὶ πλασטיγγοῦ ἀντιρρέπων – τῇ μὲν γὰρ ἐταλάντευεν ὁ ἔλεος καὶ τὰ δίκαια, τῇ δ' ἀντέβριθεν ὁ νόμος τῆς τῶν διαβατηρίων θυσίας.

One other example, a little bit different, that demonstrates Philo's freedom in using the forms of scepticism of his time comes at the beginning of the *De decalogo*. The question Philo deals with is: why has the desert been chosen to be the place of revelation?⁵¹ Many explanations are presented by him, that we here summarize: (1) cities are the place of evil; (2) the desert is the only place where the soul can be purified from the cities; (3) the rules of life had to be formulated before the constitution of cities; (4) it was the best way to show the power of the transcendence of the God to Israel. But after having proposed these different explanations, Philo says that God is the only one who knows the true reason. Here, there is no real *ἰσοσθένεια* of opposite reasons, but, in a neo-academic way, a connection of likely hypotheses that remain however asymptotic to the truth. The last sentence of this presentation, "These are the reasons suggested to answer the question under discussion: they are but probable surmises; the true reasons are known to God alone",⁵² recalls the one we find at the end of the doxography – quite probably neo-academic – in the first *Tusculan*:⁵³ "*Harum sententiarum quae uera sit, deus aliqui uiderit; quae ueri simillima, magna quaestio est.*" There is no kind of philosophical dogmatism in Philo. Pyrrhonism and neo-academic probabilism are both used by him, depending on the circumstances, i.e. on texts, in order to ruin the philosophy of the subject that Stoicism had elaborated.

Let us mention a last conceptual similarity with Pyrrhonism. In *Mos.* 1.41–42, Philo describes the attitude of Moses addressing the situation of the Jews in Egypt. He tries to alleviate their sufferings by three different ways. He urges guards to be moderate, he tells the Jewish workers to be brave, and he gives them a kind of lesson of relativist philosophy:

"All things in the world", he told them, "change to their opposites: clouds to open sky, violent winds to tranquil weather, stormy seas to calm and peaceful, and human affairs still more so, even as they are more unstable." With such soothing words, like a good physician, he thought to relieve the sickness or their plight, terrible as it was. But when it abated, it did but turn and make a fresh attack and gather from the breathing-space some new misery more powerful than its predecessors.

In her interesting book devoted to Heraclitus in Alexandria, Lucia Saudelli has convincingly demonstrated the Heraclitean inspiration of this passage.⁵⁴ It is all the more

⁵¹ Philo, *Decal.* 2–18.

⁵² Philo, *Decal.* 18: αἶδ' εἰσὶν ἐν στοχασμοῖς εἰκόσιν αἰτίαι λεγόμεναι περὶ τοῦ διαπορηθέντος· τὰς γὰρ ἀληθεῖς οἶδεν ὁ θεὸς μόνος.

⁵³ Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.23.

⁵⁴ L. Saudelli, *Heraclito in Alessandria: Studi e ricerche intorno alla testimonianza di Filone* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

true that the Heraclitean motto is present in *Mos.* 1.31: “For nothing is more unstable than Fortune, who moves human affairs up and down (ἄνω καὶ κάτω) on the draughtboard of life.” There is however still a question: is this text exclusively Heraclitean? We find in both *Mos.* 1.31 and 1.41 a word that, to the best of our knowledge, is not Heraclitean: the adjective ἀσταθμητος in the comparative form.⁵⁵ The word exists in Greek literature, in Aristophanes, Euripides, Demosthenes, but the only philosophical reference before Pyrrho is in the *Lysis* of Plato, in the context of a reflection on individual friendship.⁵⁶ In his *Silloi*, Timon was not friendly at all towards Heraclitus, about whom he says: “And among them the crower leapt up, crowd-reviling Heraclitus the riddler.”⁵⁷ But through the use of ἀσταθμητος, Philo transforms Heraclitism into a kind of dynamic Pyrrhonism. Not only contradiction is everywhere strong and gives to the world its instability, but there is a permanent upheaval of contradictory appearances, ruled by Fortune – a vision at the opposite pole from the Stoic doctrine of a rational φύσις.

It is time to sketch a conclusion. From a certainty – i.e., that Philo had read Aenesidemus and adopted some aspects of his work – we have tried to propose a fresh vision of his relation to Pyrrhonism. We suggested that what is called his “scepticism” must be interpreted in the light of the fragments of Pyrrho more than through our knowledge of Sextus’s work. To summarize briefly: Sextus essentially deals with the problem of knowledge, while Pyrrho’s main purpose, as it was brilliantly demonstrated by Conche, was not to question our common or technical certitudes, but to ruin the ontological basis of knowledge. The many terminological echoes of the original Pyrrhonism that we have found confirmed this opinion. It is well known that Philo’s work is a nightmare for those who would like to specify his sources with some precision. At the same time, it is not difficult to find in his work traces or echoes of those who inspired him. To ignore these more subtle intertexts and echoes in favour of lengthier and more obvious direct citations is in our opinion a methodological error. Philo was certainly not a Pyrrhonian, but, if our hypothesis is correct, he learnt very much from the original Pyrrhonism.

Until Pyrrho, to be a hero needed exceptional in action or/and speech. Even Socrates, despite his legendary modesty, had performed acts of heroism, as a soldier at Potidaea and as a citizen when he spoke in front of his judge or when he refused to escape his jail. Pyrrho did not share this kind of heroism. For him, to be a hero meant to get rid of the temptation of making sense of the world and of establishing oneself

⁵⁵ Philo, *Mos.* 1.31: τύχης γὰρ ἀσταθμητότερον οὐδὲν ἄνω καὶ κάτω τὰ ἀνθρώπεια πεπτεουσῆς, ἢ μῆ πολλὰκις ἡμέρα τὸν μὲν ὑψηλὸν καθαιρεῖ, τὸν δὲ ταπεινὸν μετέωρον ἐξάγει. Cf. *Mos.* 1.41: τὰ δ’ ἀνθρώπεια καὶ μᾶλλον, ὅσω καὶ ἀσταθμητότερα.

⁵⁶ Plato, *Lys.* 214c.

⁵⁷ Heraclitus, in Timon frag. 817: τοῖς δ’ ἔνι κοκκυστῆς, ὄχλολοῖδος Ἡράκλειτος, αἰνικτῆς ἀνόρουσε.

as an autonomous subject of knowledge and action. Pyrrhonism in Philo appears to have been a kind of propaedeutic of faith, an efficient school of *οὐδένεια*. The main difference is that in Pyrrhonism this nothingness is auto-referential, while in Philo it is only a necessary stage. Pyrrho's heroism was linked to a radical deconstruction of the so-called sense of the world. Despite having been adopted by the Egyptian royal family, despite his brilliant and multi-cultural education, despite his bravery, Moses is reluctant to speak and hesitant to act, at least when he perceives how little he is in comparison to the almighty God. He was a human hero when he killed the Egyptian who persecuted Jews, but this kind of heroism was not enough to make him the prophet and liberator of his people.

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Crawling on the Belly and Eating Earth: How Relevant was Epicurus for Philo?

Geert Roskam

At the outset of book 5 of *De rerum natura*, Lucretius makes a remarkable claim: “deus ille fuit, deus” (5.8: “a god he was, a god”). This “ille” was not Zeus or Apollo but Epicurus, the man who first discovered the path of wisdom and showed it to all of us. Epicurus indeed found out that pleasure is the final end of human life. He discovered that we should spit on virtue and on all that is honourable if it does not contribute to our pleasure (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12, 547a = fr. 512 Us.). He realized that we should bid farewell to all education (Diogenes Laertius 10.6 = fr. 163 Us.). He understood that we should not bother about the gods since they do not care about us (*RS* 1 = *SV* 1). “Deus ille fuit” – at least in the eyes of his enthusiastic followers. But the message of this human god was radically opposed to everything Philo stood for. In a certain sense, Epicurus was Philo’s most obvious polemical target.¹ Nevertheless, Philo mentions Epicurus only three times by name in his extant *œuvre*. This implies that he as a rule simply ignores his most important opponent, and that observation has naturally caused surprise: why does Philo not refer to him more frequently? Several explanations have been proposed. For Fischel, it is “caused by the hyperbole of Philo’s style”.² Ranocchia ingeniously suggests that Epicurus’s name sounded “as the name of shame” in Philo’s ears.³ Lévy, focusing on the absence of the term *ἀταραξία* in Philo’s works, argues that Philo generally refrains from using such technical terms and disagrees with the typically Epicurean view of pleasure.⁴

¹ Thus G. Ranocchia, “Moses against the Egyptian: The Anti-Epicurean Polemic in Philo”, in F. Alesse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (SPhA 5; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 75–102, esp. 75: “We know that for Philo Epicureanism was his polemical target *par excellence* and its philosophical system was more than any other the polar opposite of his own vision of the world in every respect.” Cf. also C. Lévy, “Philo’s Ethics”, in A. Kamesar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 146–71, esp. 154 (the Epicureans as Philo’s “main philosophical opponents”).

² H.A. Fischel, *Rabbinic Literature and Greco-Roman Philosophy: A Study of Epicurea and Rhetorica in Early Midrashic Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 1973) 102 n. 20.

³ Ranocchia, “Moses against the Egyptian”, 75 (on the basis of *Conf.* 115).

⁴ C. Lévy, “Continuity and Dissimilarities in Middle Platonism: Philo and Plutarch about the Epicurean *ataraxia*”, *SPhiloA* 28 (2016) 121–36, esp. 131–2.

All of these explanations throw some light on the striking absence of Epicurus and a combination of them helps a lot in clarifying Philo's general attitude towards Epicureanism. At the same time, however, they risk obscuring another aspect of this problem: are we sure that Epicurus *was* relevant for Philo?

A safe starting point are the three passages where Philo mentions Epicurus by name. The first comes from the Allegorical Commentary. At the beginning of *De posteritate Caini*, Philo quotes Gen 4:16 ("And Cain went out from the face of God") and observes that this statement requires an allegorical interpretation (*Post.* 2):

For if the Existent Being has a face, and he that wishes to quit its sight can with perfect ease remove elsewhere, what ground have we for rejecting the impious doctrines of Epicurus, or the atheism of the Egyptians, or the mythical plots of play and poem of which the world is full?⁵

The second two references to Epicurus come from Philo's philosophical treatises. Near the outset of *De aeternitate mundi*, Philo distinguishes between three philosophical views of the world: some regard the world as eternal, uncreated and imperishable, others as created and destructible, and yet others as created and indestructible. The first view is that of Democritus, Epicurus and most Stoics (*Aet.* 8):

Democritus with Epicurus and the great mass of Stoic philosophers maintain the creation and destruction of the world but in different ways. The two first named postulate many worlds, the origin of which they ascribe to the mutual impacts and interlacings of atoms and its destruction to the counterblows and collisions sustained by the bodies so formed.

In the first book of *De providentia*, finally, Philo inserts a short argument *ad hominem* against Epicurus:

Epicurus should tell me whether he wrote all the writings which he published with providence and wisdom or without wisdom. For if he wrote them without providence and wisdom, would he then boast that his writings are like this, viz. that they seem to be devoid of wisdom and method? But if he wrote them with wisdom and providence, how will that what does not come from wisdom be wise, or that what does not come from providence be provident? For there is no wisdom without providence, nor providence without wisdom.⁶

Several conclusions can already be drawn from these three passages. Three times, we are dealing with short and fairly general references. Specific details are omitted.

⁵ All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are borrowed from Philo (PLCL).

⁶ Philo, *Prov.* 1.50 (my own translation).

Twice, Epicurus's view is only used as a starting point and abandoned as soon as it is mentioned. Only once (in *Prov.* 1.50), Philo puts forward an argument against Epicurus's position, yet in this case too, he is rather brief. Epicurus's denial of divine providence is directly relevant for the subject matter of this work and we could have expected that Philo dealt with it in more detail in *De providentia*, yet this is not the case.⁷ Furthermore, two passages come from Philo's philosophical works (which have their own profile), one from his Allegorical Commentary. This predominance of the philosophical works is not surprising, of course, nor is it exceptional: Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus are only mentioned by name in the philosophical works, while Plato's name occurs only twice in the Exposition of the Law against eleven occurrences in the philosophical works.⁸ Yet there can be no doubt about the paramount importance of Plato and the Stoics for Philo's exegesis of the Pentateuch. The fact that Epicurus is mentioned so rarely, then, need not imply a priori that his importance was very limited. Finally, the three passages quoted above concern various aspects of Epicurus's philosophy of nature.⁹ Epicurus is seen as a materialist and an atheist. Such a view is in line with widespread, if biased, convictions¹⁰ and also has interesting parallels in ancient Jewish literature.¹¹

If these three passages, with their focus on Epicurean physics, tell us at least something about Philo's general view of Epicurus, they also raise an obvious question: what was Philo's position regarding the topic of pleasure, the final goal of Epicurus's philosophy? Epicurus states that every single decision should be based upon the criterion of pleasure (*RS* 25; *Ep. Men.* 129) and makes it clear that his philosophy of nature, including his view of the gods, should be understood against that

⁷ Cf. C. Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", in M. Erler (ed.), *Epikureismus in der späten Republik und der Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000) 122–36, at 126. On the non-engagement with Epicureanism in post-Hellenistic philosophy, see also M. Frede, "Epilogue", in K. Algra et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 771–97, at 786; T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Introduction: A Historical Essay", in idem (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism. The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 1–26, esp. 12–13. On the general argument of Philo's *De providentia* I (and its transmissional difficulties), see esp. David T. Runia, "From Stoicism to Platonism: The Difficult Case of Philo of Alexandria's *De providentia* I", in Engberg-Pedersen, *From Stoicism to Platonism*, 159–78.

⁸ Zeno: *Prob.* 53, 57; cf. 97 and 160; Cleanthes: *Aet.* 91; Chrysippus: *Aet.* 48, 91 and 94; Plato: *Opif.* 119 and 133; *Contempl.* 57 and 59; *Aet.* 13, 14, 16, 17, 27, 38, 52 and 141; *Prob.* 13. Aristotle is mentioned in *Aet.* 10, 12, 16 and 18.

⁹ Cf. Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 126, and against his statement on p. 127 that "L'autre domaine privilégié des attaques de Philon contre l'épicurisme est évidemment la morale du plaisir".

¹⁰ See D. Obbink, "The Atheism of Epicurus", *GRBS* 30 (1989) 187–223; T. Whitmarsh, *Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World* (London: Faber and Faber, 2016) 173–85.

¹¹ See, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 10.277 on Epicurus's wrong rejection of providence. See also J.R. Labendz, "Know What to Answer the Epicurean": A Diachronic Study of the 'Apiqoros in Rabbinic Literature", *HUCA* 74 (2003) 177–89 on Tannaitic literature.

background too. For *φυσιολογία* is in Epicurus's eyes only necessary in order to do away with our anxieties and establish the correct attitude towards desires and pains (RS 11). "Pleasure" (*ἡδονή*), then, is absolutely central to Epicurus's thinking and on this essential point, he is never explicitly attacked by Philo. That would be very odd if Epicurus were really Philo's principal opponent.

One could object, of course, that there can be found several passages in Philo's writings – particularly in the Allegorical Commentary – where he clearly refers to Epicurus's doctrine without explicitly naming him. These passages, which have repeatedly been discussed in secondary literature, will be analysed again in this chapter,¹² and several others that have been overlooked so far may even be added. I here confine myself to a few examples of striking correspondences between a view mentioned by Philo and a doctrine of Epicurus:¹³

- Post.* 179: Philo refers to people who "in their folly pursue nothing whatever but their own pleasure, regarding all else as matter for loud laughter and ridicule". Such people obviously include the Epicureans, who often made use of polemical laughter in their attacks on other schools.¹⁴
- Ebr.* 215–216: Philo distinguishes between ordinary people who are no specialists in pleasure (*οἱ ἡδονῆς ἰδιῶται*) and those who hold that pleasant living is sovereignty and kingship, and judge all things great and small by this standard. The latter obviously include the Epicureans (cf. RS 25).
- Conf.* 85: The wicked man, so Philo argues, seeks to obtain "that experienced use and enjoyment which is calculated to multiply our pleasure and delight". This recalls the Epicurean calculus of pleasure and pain (*Epist. ad Men.* 129–130).

To make my position immediately clear, in my view none of these parallels tells us anything about Philo's view of Epicurus. The similarities between the two views

¹² The most important are Philo, *Opif.* 161–163; *Leg.* 3.61–62; 3.141, 143, 160; *Det.* 156–157; *Deus* 17–18; *Fug.* 148; *Somm.* 2.207–208.

¹³ See also H. Jacobson, "Philo, Lucretius, and *anima*", *CQ* 54 (2004) 635–6 (on a striking correspondence between Lucretius, *Rer. nat.* 3.275 and Philo, *Opif.* 66); D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (PACS 1; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 340 (on *Opif.* 142 as "perhaps an implicit reference to the preoccupation of philosophers such as Epicurus with the problem of security"), and G. Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 100 (on the parallel between *Somm.* 2.48–49 and Epicurus, *Epist. ad Men.* 130–131).

¹⁴ On the importance of (polemical) laughter for Epicurus, see esp. J. Salem, *Tel un dieu parmi les hommes: l'éthique d'Épicure* (Paris: Vrin, 1989) 167–74 and G. Roskam, "Philosophy is Great Fun! Laughter in Epicureanism", in F. Trivigno/P. Destrée (ed.), *Laughter, Humor, and Comedy in Ancient Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) 227–44.

mentioned are clear enough, yet at the same time, they are quite superficial.¹⁵ Nonetheless they deserve mentioning here because they illustrate an important problem. As a matter of fact, such kind of parallels are often adduced in comparative studies about Philo and Epicurus (or other philosophical schools). They usually rest on a careful comparison between Philo's position and the philosophical views of his predecessors, with particular attention to striking similarities. In a way, this is the obvious method to assess the influence of a certain source on a later author, yet it raises an important methodological problem. The comparanda are usually specific doctrines that are isolated from their context, as in the short list of parallels presented above. Illustrative in this respect is a passing remark of Lévy:

Nous laisserons de côté ici l'explication biblique qui est que la sensation, étant un don divin, ne peut être mauvaise en soi, pour mettre en évidence la manière dont Philon rejette l'implication philosophique d'une telle position.¹⁶

This is an elegant *praeteritio* that rightly reminds the reader of the broader context and implicitly suggests that the Biblical explanation is relevant as well. At the same time, however, it is not without problems, for how can this explanation be left out the picture without risking to neglect the core of Philo's message? In other words, such a method easily entails a misrepresentation of Philo's authorial goals.¹⁷ In another excellent contribution, Lévy states:

Incidentally it was probably satisfying for him [= Philo] to demonstrate on the basis of biblical exegesis that two principles of Epicureanism, pleasure and sensation, interfered with one another.¹⁸

This, however, is by no means certain. A confrontation of isolated passages taken from Philo's works with several doctrines of Epicurus can create the impression that Philo engaged in a quite systematic polemic against Epicurus. Yet Philo did not write a Ciceronian *De finibus* nor a Plutarchan *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*. His interest was in biblical exegesis. Moreover, if one accepts the (problematic) hypothesis that Philo indeed carries on an anti-Epicurean polemic, one cannot but

¹⁵ Cf. Lévy, "Continuity and Dissimilarities", 129, on the "paradoxical consensus" between Philo (*Opif.* 85) and Epicurus (SV 11): "Of course these similarities are superficial since everything else in the two thinkers is different."

¹⁶ Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 134.

¹⁷ Cf. D.T. Runia, "The Rehabilitation of the Jackdaw: Philo of Alexandria and Ancient Philosophy", in R. Sorabji/R.W. Sharples (ed.), *Greek and Roman Philosophy: 100 BC – 200 AD* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2007) 483–500, at 495.

¹⁸ Lévy, "Continuity and Dissimilarities", 125; cf. also 126 for the claim that Philo's purpose was precisely to show the contradictory nature of *ataraxia* and therefore its inexistence.

conclude that his attacks are for the greatest part misguided. Along these interpretative lines, Philo would not sufficiently take Epicurus's specific position into account but would be influenced by polemical misrepresentations disseminated by Epicurus's opponents.¹⁹

In my view, we need another approach. Epicurus's influence on Philo should not be judged by selecting, juxtaposing and confronting isolated passages, just as an expert cherry-picker selects and presents the finest and most delicious cherries. Cherry picking is seldom a sound method for comparative studies. Instead, we should examine Philo's overall position towards pleasure and analyse it on its own terms. In other words, we should pay due attention to Philo's own authorial agenda and to his interpretative framework. The starting point of this framework is never Epicurean hedonism. Usually, it is a particular passage from the Pentateuch. In short, when Philo thinks about pleasure, he does not immediately think of Epicurus but of the serpent of Genesis.

This brief claim, however, though probably correct, still oversimplifies things. In fact, Philo's thinking about pleasure is not merely dependent on the Pentateuch. The Old Testament hardly contains direct references to pleasure²⁰ and the connection between the serpent and pleasure is by no means evident as such. And thus, Philo's thinking about pleasure also involves an important philosophical component. The topic actually illustrates the well-known complex interaction between the Jewish and the Greek philosophical tradition in Philo's thought, and ignoring one of the two components usually means seriously misrepresenting Philo's position.

In this chapter, then, I prefer to abandon the cherry-picking method and replace isolated passages with a more general picture. This will show that Philo's view of pleasure is strongly determined and conditioned by the Pentateuch, but also that the material of the Pentateuch is creatively reinterpreted in light of a philosophically based allegorical interpretation. It is only from this perspective that we can assess Epicurus's precise relevance for Philo.

I. The Serpent

Reflections about pleasure occur everywhere in Philo's works, in the most different contexts and regarding various passages from the Pentateuch, but the theme most

¹⁹ This is the view of A.P. Booth, "The Voice of the Serpent: Philo's Epicureanism", in W.E. Helleman (ed.), *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994) 159–72.

²⁰ The term ἡδονή only occurs in Num 11:8; Prov 17:1; Sap 7:2, 16:20; 4 Macc 1:20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 33; 5:23; 6:35; 9:31. Cf. C. Motta Rios, "Uma Torah anti-hedonista em Filon de Alexandria", *Horizonte* 13 (2015) 1630–57, esp. 1631–34.

prominently appears in Philo's exegesis of the Genesis account of the creation and "the fall".²¹ The main outlines of Philo's allegorical interpretation are well-known: Adam is the "mind" (νοῦς), Eve symbolizes "sense perception" (αἴσθησις), and the serpent stands for pleasure that deceives the senses and thus also destroys the mind. Philo defends his interpretation of the serpent in several works. A good place to start is *Opif.* 157–158:

Following a "probable conjecture" (εἰκότι στοχασμῶ) one would say that the serpent spoken of is a fit symbol of pleasure, because in the first place he is an animal without feet sunk prone upon his belly; secondly because he takes clods of earth as food; thirdly because he carries in his teeth the venom with which it is his nature to destroy those whom he has bitten. The lover of pleasure is exempt from none of these traits.

The basis of Philo's interpretation is his conviction that the story about Adam, Eve and the serpent contains no "mythical fictions" (μύθου πλάσματα)²² but requires an allegorical interpretation that gives attention to the "deeper meanings" (ὑπόνοιαι) of the text (*Opif.* 157). Such allegorical interpretations can rarely claim certainty and as a rule remain mere hypotheses. Philo, interestingly enough, realized this himself, as appears from his recourse to plausible conjecture.²³ This also holds true for the allegorical interpretation of the serpent as pleasure, for Philo knew well enough that the story of Genesis nowhere contains any explicit indication that justifies such a reading. His hermeneutic key, then, is adopted from the philosophical tradition. The plausibility of his interpretation, however, is supported by several correspondences between the serpent and pleasure. Philo here lists three such similarities.

Firstly, the serpent has no feet but crawls on its belly. For Philo, the belly is the place of pleasures (*Leg.* 3.138–139; *Congr.* 60; cf. *Post.* 27) and thus the pleasure-lover is devoted to his belly (*Leg.* 3.114; 3.159; *Migr.* 65; *QG* 1.48; 2.59). This conviction recalls Epicurus's notorious statement that the pleasure of the belly is the principle and root of all good.²⁴ Yet we should avoid the cherry-picking method and refrain from establishing overhasty connections. Philo nowhere refers to this

²¹ To be clear, Philo does not regard the fall as "a 'fall from grace,' i.e. a single event which might not have happened, but rather as a structural feature of the world of becoming" (thus Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation*, 356).

²² On Philo's view of myth, see A. Méasson, "Un aspect de la critique du polythéisme chez Philon d'Alexandrie: les acceptions du mot μῦθος dans son œuvre", *Centre Jean Palerne Mémoires* 2 (1980) 74–107; F. Alesse/L. De Luca (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Greek Myth: Narratives, Allegories, and Arguments* (SPhA 10; Leiden: Brill, 2019).

²³ This phrase, which repeatedly occurs in Philo's works (see *Opif.* 72 and 157; *Ios.* 7, 104, 143; *Mos.* 2.122; *Decal.* 18; *Spec.* 1.334–335; cf. *Aet.* 2), suggests that Philo was aware of the limitations of his allegorical method. To a certain extent, they are the result of mere guess work (though plausible one).

²⁴ Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 7, 280a and 12, 546f = frag. 409 Us.; see T. Gargiulo, "Epicuro e 'il piacere del ventre' (fr. 409 Us. = [227] Arr.)", *Elenchos* 3 (1982) 153–58.

conviction of Epicurus, and this is no coincidence, for he is not concerned with Epicurus in such contexts but with the exegesis of the Pentateuch. Two biblical texts are especially relevant here. The first one concerns the punishment of the serpent in Gen 3:14 (“You will go on your breast and your belly”). In *Leg.* 3.114–116, Philo further specifies, on the basis of a Platonic tripartition of the soul,²⁵ that the belly refers to a situation where pleasure has everything it needs, whereas the breast recalls the wrath we feel when pleasure lacks its necessary material. For Philo, the curse of the serpent after “the fall” thus reveals a typical aspect both of its character and of the nature of pleasure. This interpretation gains further support from a second biblical passage, now taken from Leviticus (11:42, where any creature that goes on its belly is considered unclean), which is also applied to the situation of the pleasure-lover. This exegesis results in a quite reductive view of pleasure. Philo, for instance, nowhere mentions intellectual pleasures in this context. Pleasure is absent from the head, where reason resides: “when reason prevails pleasure is gone, and when pleasure conquers, reason is an exile” (*Leg.* 3.116). Moreover, for Philo – unlike for Epicurus – the connection of pleasure with the belly has strongly negative overtones. Nothing, in Philo’s view, is more uncultured than to give oneself wholly to the belly (*QG* 2.7). Then, we are no longer able to lift our eyes and contemplate heaven (*Opif.* 158; *Migr.* 64–66; *QG* 4.234; cf. *Ebr.* 70; *Abr.* 164–165). The path of pleasure leads downwards until it reaches the level ground (*Spec.* 4.112).

And thus, the pleasure-lover, like the serpent, eats dust (cf. *Leg.* 3.161), that is, he feeds on earthly nourishment that produces drunkenness, daintiness and greediness (*Opif.* 158). This fits in very well with Philo’s first argument (the connection of pleasure with the belly) and illustrates one of the most essential characteristics of Philo’s conception of pleasure: it is always of the gross, bodily kind. This also holds true in other contexts that have nothing to do with the serpent of Genesis. Passages like *Agr.* 36–37 or *Ebr.* 217–219 give a good idea of Philo’s general view of pleasure: it usually has to do with gorging oneself, with exquisite delicacies and excessive drinking, with the life of Sardanapalus (*Spec.* 4.122). The pleasure-lover is enslaved to caterers, cooks and cupbearers,²⁶ and combines his gastronomic excesses with sexual debauchery.²⁷ Pleasure-lovers, in short, lick the earth (*QG* 2.59) and are even earth-

²⁵ This view of the soul here seems to be adopted for the sake of the argument; elsewhere, he also uses the Stoic view; see the survey of relevant material in G. Reydam-Schils, “Philo of Alexandria on Stoic and Platonist Psycho-Physiology: The Socratic Higher Ground”, *Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002) 125–47. Cf. also S.L. Mattila, “Wisdom, Sense Perception, Nature, and Philo’s Gender Gradient”, *HTR* 89 (1996) 118–20.

²⁶ Philo, *Leg.* 3.221; *Det.* 26; *Ebr.* 217–219; *Somn.* 2.16, 157, 182; *Ios.* 61, 64, 152–154. The pair *σιτόπωνος* and *ὄψαρτυτής*, used in *Opif.* 158, often occurs in Philo’s works; see *Leg.* 3.144 and 221; *Agr.* 66; *Plant.* 159; *Spec.* 1.174; 4.113; *Prob.* 156; *Contempl.* 53.

²⁷ The belly is often connected with the organs below it; see A. Le Boulluec, “La place des concepts philosophiques dans la réflexion de Philon sur le plaisir”, in C. Lévy (ed.), *Philon d’Alexandrie et le langage de*

born (*Gig.* 60; *Her.* 57). Needless to say, such a negative view of pleasure cannot be found in Epicurus. It is rather a continuous refrain in anti-Epicurean polemics. Epicurus's opponents were usually at a loss for words to express their indignation over the base Epicurean ideal. The Epicurean life, so their argument goes, is that of the beasts, if not worse.²⁸ Philo would probably agree, yet he nowhere explicitly says so. Again, his focus is on the message of Moses, rather than on that of the "deus" of the Athenian Garden.

Finally, the serpent destroys its victims with the poison in its teeth. In *De opificio mundi*, the application of this motif to the pleasure-lover is quite straightforward: his teeth are the instruments for his immoderate eating and they are poisonous because they always supply new food and thus leave no time for digestion (*Opif.* 159–160; cf. *Leg.* 2.105). Pleasure, then, has many harmful consequences, and this is another idea that frequently recurs in Philo's works. It entails immoral behaviour,²⁹ harms the senses (*Leg.* 3.109 and 3.182; *Det.* 98; *QG* 1.48) and is interwoven with pain.³⁰ The pleasure-lover, then, leads a miserable life and is continuously being hammered on an anvil, beaten by the blows of his desires (*Post.* 116, with reference to Gen 4:22). Briefly, "pleasure is the source of all evils" (*Post.* 181–182: ἀρχὴ κακῶν πάντων ἡδονή).

Several conclusions can already be derived from this survey. To begin with the obvious, Philo's conception of pleasure is predominantly negative. This is the result of a combination of two basic elements that are perfectly fashioned after one another: on the one hand the serpent of Genesis, which clearly plays a negative part and is punished for that, on the other hand Philo's general conception of ἡδονή as base corporeal pleasure. Philo selects different elements which the serpent and corporeal pleasure have in common in support of his exegesis. In other words, the cherry-picking method that we have to avoid, was practised by Philo himself. And

la philosophie (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998) 129–52, 140 (with nn. 45 and 46). To the passages mentioned there can be added *Sacr.* 49; *Deus* 15; *Fug.* 35; *Mos.* 2.23; *Spec.* 2.163, 195; 3.43; *QG* 1.12; 2.59; *QE* 2.100.

²⁸ See, e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 92.6 and 123.16; Epictetus, 1.20.17; 2.20.10; Plutarch, *Suav. viv.* 1091CD; 1092AD; *Adv. Colot.* 1125AB; Maximus of Tyre, 31.5c.

²⁹ Pleasure is often connected with vices; see esp. the endless list of vices in Philo, *Sacr.* 32; cf. also, e.g., *Leg.* 2.106; *Cher.* 71 and 92; *Sacr.* 22 and 32; *Post.* 52–53; *Agr.* 17 and 83; *Praem.* 159; *QG* 2.18; 4.245. Pleasure is the cause of war (*Post.* 119; *Ios.* 56; *Decal.* 151–153) and the pleasure-lover is the slave of his passions (*Leg.* 3.220; *Prob.* 159). Pleasure yields no good (*Ebr.* 212) and leads to the death of the soul (*Leg.* 2.76 and 78; *Agr.* 98 and 100; *QG* 1.51; 2.56–57); on the latter motif, see D. Zeller, "The Life and Death of the Soul in Philo of Alexandria: The Use and Origin of a Metaphor", *SPhiloA* 7 (1995) 19–55 and J.T. Conroy, "Philo's 'Death of the Soul': Is this Only a Metaphor?", *SPhiloA* 23 (2011) 23–40; cf. also E. Wasserman, "The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Revisiting Paul's Anthropology in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology", *JBL* 126 (2007) 793–816; eadem, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* (WUNT 2.256; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

³⁰ Philo, *Opif.* 152; *Leg.* 2.77–78; 3.22; 3.251–252; *Sacr.* 32; *QG* 2.8; 3.51; cf. *QE* 2.12. The idea is symbolised by the leaves of the fig-tree in Gen 3:7 (*QG* 1.41).

thus he fell into the trap that we try to avoid, for he failed to do justice to all aspects of pleasure and to all characteristics of the serpent. As a matter of fact, he did not even gather all beautiful cherries. A quick look at the *Legum allegoriae* indeed yields several more.

The movement of pleasure, like that of the serpent, is “variable” (ποικίλη), as it is connected with the five senses and brings variegated pleasures to each of them (*Leg.* 2.74–77; cf. *Gig.* 18 and *Ebr.* 176). Furthermore, pleasure, like the serpent, is deceptive, in that it cheats the senses and the mind by presenting harmful things as useful (*Leg.* 3.61–64; cf. 3.109). Finally, the serpent is called φρονιμώτατος in Gen 3:1. This seems to be a positive characteristic, even more so since φρόνησις is an important virtue for Philo. As such, the serpent can be connected with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which signifies μέση φρόνησις.³¹ In the context of Philo’s allegorical interpretation of the serpent as corporeal pleasure, however, such a positive understanding is problematic of course. Therefore Philo reinterprets it in a negative sense: pleasure is πανουργότατον, using all kinds of cunning tricks in order to reach its base goals.³²

It is clear by now that Philo could bring forward many arguments that justify his allegory of the serpent as an εικῶς στοχασμός. The multifaceted view of pleasure that results from this allegory is obviously *ad hoc*. It is inextricably bound up with the story of Genesis, but is no less deeply rooted in his philosophical thinking. It thus illustrates the complicated dynamics behind Philo’s seemingly straightforward and simple view of pleasure. It seems to be based directly on Moses’s writings but is no less dependent on philosophical conceptions. These philosophical conceptions are to a certain extent adapted to the Pentateuch, which is in turn understood in light of philosophical doctrines. We end up with a very intricate connection: both poles in a certain sense simply coincide with one another, and yet again they do not. Furthermore, Philo’s views of pleasure as elaborated in *De opificio mundi* and the *Legum allegoriae* are obviously context-related, yet they also reappear in many other places and contexts. The shadow of the serpent thus frequently appears whenever pleasure is discussed. Finally, Philo’s view of pleasure is biased and unduly reductive. Not everybody who enjoys pleasures is a new Sardanapalus. Again, the exegetical context helps to explain this bias – elsewhere, Philo is more nuanced about pleasure (cf. *infra* section 3) – but the importance of the context does not explain everything. In fact, Philo always remains deeply suspicious of pleasure, in spite of occasional qualifications.

³¹ Philo, *Opif.* 154–155; L. De Luca, “Il serpente di bronzo secondo Filone Alessandrino in *Leg.* 2,79–81”, *Adamantius* 21 (2015) 173–84, at 178.

³² Philo, *Leg.* 2.106–107; QG 1.31; it is striking that the first element of the long list of vices in *Sacr.* 32 is precisely πανουργος.

Against this background, we may now finally address the question of Epicurus's role in this discussion. The answer seems quite clear: Epicurus simply does not play any role at all. The fact that he is nowhere mentioned by Philo in this context is no coincidence: Epicurus was simply irrelevant. On the one hand, his conception of pleasure was far more complicated than what Philo needs for his exegesis of the Genesis account. Epicurus, as we have seen, underlined the importance of the belly, but he also elaborated an idiosyncratic understanding of pleasure as absence of pain, *ἀπονία* and *ἀταραξία*. Such sophistications are useless for Philo and he had no reason to grossly oversimplify Epicurus's view by identifying it with Moses's alleged position. On the other hand, several parallels can be drawn between Philo's own negative conception of pleasure and ancient polemical attacks against Epicureanism. We already mentioned the sharp criticism of the bestial character of the Epicurean *τέλος*. The close connection between pleasure and pain is another theme that repeatedly occurs in such anti-Epicurean polemics.³³ Yet Philo is not interested in such polemics. It was not his intention to lay bare the weakness of Epicurus's philosophical thinking but to elaborate an allegorical interpretation of the Genesis account. And in such a context, Epicurus was simply irrelevant.

II. Epicurus, Another Serpent?

Up to this point, we have not found any references to Epicurus. Philo's pleasure serpent was dwelling in the Garden of Eden, not in that of Athens. Yet there are three passages which deserve more attention, since many specialists have regarded them as clear references to Epicurus's position.

(a) The first is to be found in *Opif.* 161–163:

It is through pleasure that begetting and the coming of life is brought about, and the offspring is naturally at home (*οἰκειοῦσθαι*) with nothing sooner than pleasure, delighting in it and feeling distress at pain its contrary. This is why the infant when born actually weeps aloud, chilled most likely by the cold all round it; for when, leaving a place of fiery warmth in the womb, which for a long time it has tenanted, it suddenly issues into the air, a cold and unaccustomed place, it is taken aback and utters cries, a most clear sign of its pain and its annoyance at suffering. And they tell us (*φασί*) that every living creature hastens after pleasure as its most necessary and essential end, and man above all.

³³ See, e.g., Plutarch, *Suav. viv.* 1087F–1088B; 1090AB; Maximus of Tyre, 30.4c–5g; cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 3.195.

Many scholars have here detected an unmistakable influence of the Epicurean theory of *οἰκείωσις*.³⁴ Their view rests on a striking parallel from Sextus Empiricus (*Math.* 11.96):

But some of those who belong to the sect of Epicurus, in answer to these objections, are wont to argue that the animal avoids pain and pursues pleasure naturally and without teaching; thus when it is born, and is not as yet a slave to opinions, it cries and screams as soon as it is smitten by the air's unwonted chill. But if it naturally has an inclination for pleasure and a disinclination for toil, toil is a thing naturally avoided by it and pleasure a thing desirable.

The similarities between both passages are obvious indeed and additional support can be derived from a few general passages from Cicero's *De finibus* (1.30 and 2.31). The conclusion seems obvious: this passage provides our most detailed source for Epicurus's *οἰκείωσις* doctrine and has unduly been overlooked by Usener.

I am not so sure, however, that this is correct. It is a new example of scholarly cherry-picking. Granted: the striking parallel yields a delicious cherry, yet I am not sure whether I would eat it. Firstly, scholars seldom point to the specific context and purpose of Philo's argument. Philo here wants to explain why the serpent speaks with a human voice (*Opif.* 163). This, in Philo's view, is because the serpent says what we, human beings, all say. What Philo needs, then, is an argument that expresses widespread convictions, not a specific doctrine of one specific school. Philo's point, in other words, is that *most people* talk like the serpent. Secondly, this observation has implications for the subject of the verb *φασί*. For Lévy, this verb stresses the doxographic nature of the passage,³⁵ and many scholars would readily identify the subject as the Epicureans, but the subject is clearly expressed by Philo. They are the "ten thousand champions and defenders" (*μυριοὶ ὑπέρμαχοι καὶ προαγωνισταί*) mentioned in paragraph 160, in other terms, everybody who defends pleasure. The scope of Philo's argument is thus much broader than one particular school and there is nothing that explicitly suggests that Philo is here thinking of a specific Epicurean doctrine. Epicurus would agree with this argument, no doubt, but many other pleasure-lovers would do so as well. Thirdly, the fact that this point of view is attributed to the great majority of people explains why Philo here uses the argument of our

³⁴ See, e.g., E. Schweizer, "Die hellenistische Komponente im neutestamentlichen *σάρξ*-Begriff", *ZNW* 48 (1957) 237–53, at 250; Booth, "The Voice of the Serpent", 162; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation*, 373 and 375; idem, "Rehabilitation of the Jackdaw", 486–7; Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 92 ("so close to the Epicurean theory of *οἰκείωσις* ... that one cannot fail to notice a precise and detailed reference to this philosophical doctrine"); Motta Rios, "Uma *Torah* anti-hedonista", 1649; Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 128–30; idem, "Continuity and Dissimilarities", 124–5; cf. F. Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (SPhA 4; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 138 n. 56.

³⁵ Lévy, "Continuity and Dissimilarities", 124.

natural affinity with pleasure and pain. He cannot ascribe elaborate philosophical theories to the unreasoning, uncultivated multitude and thus has recourse to inconsiderate, natural impulses.

Even if all of this is true, one can still insist that Philo here at least draws inspiration from Epicurus's doctrine without mentioning him and creatively adapts the latter's theory to his own purposes. That is possible indeed, though the onus of proof lies with the believers of Epicurean influence and I am not sure that the parallel with Sextus Empiricus is compelling on its own. For there is still another important observation to be made. All aspects of Philo's argument can be found elsewhere in his works too and nowhere else can be detected even the faintest shadow of Epicurus. Philo repeatedly refers to the great multitude of defenders of pleasure.³⁶ From their birth until their old age, human beings continuously strive for pleasure (*Agr.* 103; *Sobr.* 23) and in their infancy, such pursuit has nothing rational, as reason is still slumbering (*Congr.* 81).³⁷ Their enthusiasm for pleasure rests on hearsay and on the senses, not on rational reflection (*Congr.* 27).³⁸ All of these passages show that Philo's argument in *Opif.* 161–163 is firmly embedded in his exegesis of the Pentateuch and his general view of pleasure. Here as elsewhere, his concern is with the pleasure of the serpent rather than with Epicurus.

(b) The second passage is *Leg.* 3.61–62. Philo there tries to explain why Adam said that Eve gave (*Gen* 3:12), whereas Eve said that the serpent deceived (*Gen* 3:13). This difference makes perfect sense in his allegorical interpretation of course: the senses pass reliable information on to the mind, whereas pleasure distorts this information.

To give is characteristic of sense-perception but to cheat and beguile of pleasure with its serpent-like subtlety. For instance, sense-perception gives to the mind that which is by its nature white and that which is black, that which is hot and that which is cold, quite truthfully and with no deceptions. For, in the opinion of most people who do not overdo precision in their natural philosophy (*μη φυσικώτερον φυσιολογούντων*), objects are such as the appearance of them which meets the eye. But pleasure does not report the object to the mind such as it is, but artfully falsifies it, representing as something advantageous that which is of no benefit at all.

Philo's explanation rests on the conviction that the senses are reliable and this perfectly corresponds to Epicurus's epistemology. Thus we find another striking parallel

³⁶ Philo, *Agr.* 23 (ὁ πολὺς ὄμιλος ἀνθρώπων); cf. also 24 (ἡ πλείστη μοῖρα ἀνθρώπων) and 35 (ἀμυθήτων μυριάδων); *Sobr.* 23 (ὁ πολὺς ὄμιλος ἀνθρώπων); *Congr.* 27 (ὁ πολὺς καὶ ἀγελαῖος ἀνθρώπων ὄχλος); *Spec.* 4.180 (ὁ πολὺς ὄμιλος ἀνθρώπων); cf. *Spec.* 3.8.

³⁷ See Lévy, "Philo's Ethics", 158–9 on the tension between *Congr.* 81 and *Leg.* 2.6.

³⁸ See also QG 4.245 (pleasure is congenial to every living creature).

that is regarded by several scholars as a clear reference to Epicureanism.³⁹ Here too, I hesitate to join this harmonious choir. To begin with, Epicurus has not yet been mentioned earlier in the *Legum allegoriae* and, as was argued above, is irrelevant for Philo's exegetical agenda. Secondly, the doctrine of the reliability of the senses is not typical of Epicurus alone, for the Stoics likewise endorse this conviction, and the passage contains no compelling reason to prefer the former school to the latter. It may, however, contain an argument to remain sceptical regarding any reference to a specific philosophical school. In my view, Philo here refers to the view of the great majority of ordinary people, of those who think about sense perception without reference to any epistemological theory. The ordinary man does not ponder over the possibility that his senses may be deceptive. For him, white is white and black is black. If that is true, Philo here does not refer to any philosophical doctrine at all, but to the non-philosophical position of the uncultivated ordinary φαῦλος. He again has in mind the "great mass of mankind" (πολὺς ὄμιλος ἀνθρώπων) that is so often connected with the pursuit of pleasure. And this is precisely what is expressed by the phrase μὴ φυσικώτερον φυσιολογούντων.⁴⁰ Those who believe that Philo here refers to Epicurus, detect an extra touch of ironic polemics in this phrase.⁴¹ In my view, the phrase should be understood literally and at face value. It expresses exactly what Philo means: the multitude of ordinary people who are not familiar with the subtleties of epistemology. Philo knew of course that such a perspective is not without problems from a philosophical point of view and that the sceptics raised numerous objections against it. That is the reason why he adds this negative characterization. It is a caveat of the erudite exegete, who suggests in passing that the matter is more complicated. It can also be seen as an additional argument for his exegesis (the simple, somewhat naïve words of Eve are indeed what an ordinary man or woman would say). But Philo does here not take part in epistemological debates and certainly does not suggest that he endorses an Epicurean (or Stoic) position.

(c) The last passage is *Leg.* 3.160, where Philo explains Gen 3:14 ("you shall go [πορεύσῃ] upon your breast and your belly", with particular attention to the term

³⁹ Le Boulluec, "La place des concepts philosophiques", 135; Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 133; Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 100.

⁴⁰ On Philo's general use of the terms φυσικῶς and φυσιολογία, see S. Di Mattei, "Quelques précisions sur la φυσιολογία et l'emploi de φυσικῶς dans le méthode exégétique de Philon d'Alexandrie", *REJ* 166 (2007) 411–39.

⁴¹ Thus Le Boulluec, "La place des concepts philosophiques", 135 ("probablement ironique") and Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 100 ("The Epicurean inspiration for the whole passage is so evident that, to allay suspicions of 'fellow-travelling', Philo feels the need to distance himself from those philosophers of nature who, in his view, have developed 'too physical' or *physicalist* a doctrine ... , that is, once again, the disciples of Epicurus").

πορεύση). This statement shows, according to Philo, that pleasure belongs to moving things:

Thus the prophet does not agree (οὐ συμφέρεται) with those who say (τοῖς λέγουσι) that pleasure is tranquil (καταστηματικὴν εἶναι τὴν ἡδονήν). For stillness pertains to a stone and a log and to everything without life, but it is alien to pleasure. For pleasure hankers after an excitement (γαργαλισμοῦ) that is actually convulsive, and in some people so far from its being an experience of tranquillity, it is an indulgence in intense and violent movement.

Again, this has often been regarded as a clear reference to Epicurus's doctrine.⁴² Philo, in this reading, would reject Epicurus's understanding of pleasure on the basis of a biblical argument and makes his point by using one of Epicurus's own concepts (viz. γαργαλισμός) against Epicurus himself.

Do we here, at last, have a clear encounter with Epicurus? Perhaps we have indeed, yet even here, Epicurus's presence may be more elusive than is often thought. To begin with, the term γαργαλισμός indeed occurs both in Epicurus's own writings and in anti-Epicurean literature,⁴³ but Epicurus has no monopoly on the concept. Plato and Aristotle also used the term,⁴⁴ and Lévy even regards Philo's use of the term here as a clear indication of the Platonic inspiration of his argumentation.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Philo uses the word elsewhere too (*Sacr.* 26; *Det.* 110; *Spec.* 3.11; 4.100), where nothing suggests that he has Epicurus in mind. Secondly, we should, once again, take the context and purpose of Philo's argument into account. Philo here wants to explain the relevance of the word πορεύση in Gen 3:14. This term suggests movement and this has implications for Philo's understanding of pleasure (cf. QG 2.22). Exegesis of the text and reflection about the nature of pleasure are closely connected here. The emphasis on movement entails the rejection of the view of the advocates of katastematic pleasure. The phrase οὐ συμφέρεται obviously implies polemics, yet the question is: against whom is this attack directed?

Epicurus is the obvious target, no doubt, yet if he is indeed attacked, Philo's criticism is mistaken. For even beginning students of Epicureanism probably know that Epicurus distinguished between kinetic and katastematic pleasure, and using kinetic

⁴² Philo (PLCL) 1:483; Booth, "The Voice of the Serpent", 164; Le Boulluec, "La place des concepts philosophiques", 141–2; Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 96–8; Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting*, 131 n. 16; Motta Rios, "Uma *Torah* anti-hedonista", 1650–1; Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 131; idem, "Continuity and Dissimilarities", 125–26.

⁴³ For Epicurus, see frag. 412 Us. (= Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12, 546e); for anti-Epicurean literature, see, e.g., Plutarch, *Suav. viv.* 1088A; *Lat. viv.* 1129B; Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.113; Seneca, *Ep.* 92.6.

⁴⁴ See Plato, *Phileb.* 46d and 47a; *Symp.* 189a; *Phaedr.* 251c and 253e; Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1150b22; *Part. an.* 673a3–9.

⁴⁵ Lévy, "Continuity and Dissimilarities", 126.

γαργαλισμοί to refute Epicurus's view of pleasure is hardly accurate. Several scholars have concluded that Philo's polemics is biased,⁴⁶ whereas Ranocchia pertinently points to the paramount importance of katastematic pleasure in Epicurus's ethics and argues that there is no evidence that Philo was being deliberately misleading.⁴⁷ Yet the question remains whether Philo is here really attacking Epicurus. *If* he does, he would have done better to mention him by name and deal with the peculiarities of his position. That would have entailed a lengthy digression, to be sure, but Philo was not afraid of such digressions, provided he deemed them opportune. In this case, he probably did not regard it expedient, and rightly so. As we have seen before, Epicurus's philosophy is generally irrelevant for Philo's exegesis of the Genesis account. An attack against a technical aspect of Epicurean ethics is not relevant either. Moreover, Philo probably saw that the Genesis text did not provide a sound basis for such anti-Epicurean polemics. In that sense, his silence about Epicurus may well reflect a deeper philosophical insight.

If that is true, we may venture to take this one step further. Since the doxographic sources exclusively connect the doctrine of katastematic pleasure with Epicurean philosophy,⁴⁸ it makes sense indeed to identify the λέγοντες of our passage with the Epicureans, yet even then, Philo apparently preferred not to refer explicitly to them but rather more generally to *all those who endorse such a view*. This is what the text literally says and this, in my view, is also how it should be understood. *To the extent that* Epicurus defends the doctrine of katastematic pleasure (which he certainly does), he belongs to the class of λέγοντες and his view is considered problematic, yet Philo's attack is not directed against Epicurus's general thinking of pleasure but only concerns the notion of katastematic pleasure. In this respect, his polemics is philosophically more accurate than is often assumed.

III. Complicating the Philonic Picture

(a) So far, the previous analysis has yielded a fairly uncomplicated picture of Philo's thinking about pleasure. Pleasure is symbolised by the serpent and is radically bad. Yet the overall picture is more complex.

To begin with, Philo deals with more than one serpent in his works. Next to the serpent of Eve, he also discusses the serpent of Dan (Gen 49:17), Moses's staff that

⁴⁶ Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 131; cf. Le Boulluec, "La place des concepts philosophiques", 141 and the general hypothesis of Booth, "The Voice of the Serpent".

⁴⁷ Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 98.

⁴⁸ See Diogenes Laertius 2.87; 10.136; cf. Plutarch, *Suav. viv.* 1089D and 1090A; Damascius, *In Phaed.* 162; *In Phileb.* 190.

changes into a serpent and back again into a staff (Exod 4:2–4), the pernicious serpents that plagued the Jews in the desert (Num 21:6–7) and Moses’s bronze serpent (Num 21:8–9). This snake pit need not detain us here, since it has already received much scholarly attention.⁴⁹ I confine myself to a short discussion of one passage. In *Agr.* 94–123, Philo reflects on the serpent of Dan and opposes it to that of Eve. In this context, the serpent is characterized in a completely different way (*Agr.* 95):

This is a creature tortuous in its movements (τὴν κίνησιν ποικίλον), of great intelligence (συνετὸν ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα), ready to shew fight, and most capable of defending itself against wrongful aggression.

This serpent is clearly not of the same calibre as that of Eve’s. Several characteristics, like its defensive strength, interfere with Philo’s exegesis of Eve’s serpent as pleasure, but perfectly fit in with Dan’s serpent, which in Philo’s interpretation stands for endurance and self-control. The serpent’s “intelligence” (σύνεσις) is now also acknowledged, whereas in the case of Eve’s serpent – called φρονιμώτατος in Gen 3:1 – it is explained away by Philo (there φρονιμώτατος equates πανουργότατος). Finally, ποικιλία is a characteristic that both serpents have in common, as pleasure, a ποικίλον πάθος, has self-control, a ποικίλη ἀρετή, as its counterpart (*Leg.* 2.79; cf. 2.81). The serpent, then, is clearly an ambivalent creature.⁵⁰

These different context-specific interpretations of the different serpents illustrate the versatility and plasticity of Philo’s thinking. They also raise the question as to whether his position towards pleasure is equally versatile and context-specific. The answer is not evident.

Many passages suggest that Philo adopted an uncompromising attitude towards pleasure and always categorically rejected it. In *Leg.* 3.68, he apodictically states that pleasure is “always and everywhere” (αἰεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ) censurable and repulsive (cf. *Leg.* 3.75 and 3.246). This is strong language, but as usual, it should be understood in light of its context. Philo has raised the tricky question of why the serpent is condemned without even receiving the opportunity to defend itself (*Leg.* 3.65) and has given an additional dimension to the problem by pointing to the law that “the two parties involved in the dispute should stand forth” (Deut 19:17). Does God transgress the law He has established Himself? This pressing question asks for a clear answer and that is what Philo indeed gives us. His forceful conclusion (cf. αἰεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ) is necessary as a defense of God Himself. It lacks nuance, indeed, but rightly so, for in this case, there is no room for nuance.

⁴⁹ Good discussions include M. Alesso, “La alegoría de la serpiente en Filón de Alejandría: *Legum Allegoriae*, II, §§71–105”, *Nova Tellus* 22 (2004) 97–119; Calabi, *God’s Acting, Man’s Acting*, 127–52; De Luca, “Il serpente di bronzo”.

⁵⁰ Cf. Calabi, *God’s Acting, Man’s Acting*, 151.

Yet this radical and complete rejection of pleasure is not merely for the sake of the argument. Pleasure is very often criticised in Philo's works. In *Leg.* 3.107–108, it is seen as the passion par excellence (ἡδονή, τὸ πάθος) and characterized as “utterly godless” (ἀθεωπάτη). A few paragraphs further down, it is regarded as the starting-point and foundation of all other passions (*Leg.* 3.113). These passages from *Leg.* are, of course, conditioned by Philo's exegesis of the serpent, yet there are others too. In *Post.* 181–182, pleasure is considered to be the source of all evil, elsewhere it is called most harmful (*Spec.* 2.196), treacherous (*Spec.* 4.100) and the basest of passions (*Spec.* 2.135). Moreover, it is often diametrically opposed to virtue,⁵¹ an opposition that is symbolized by the opposition between two women, the beloved one (pleasure) and the hated one (virtue) (*Sobr.* 23; *Her.* 47–49). This motif is elaborated at length in the first section of *Sacr.*, where we find Philo's version of Heracles's dilemma. For Philo, the fundamental choice is not between virtue and vice but between virtue and pleasure. The diametrical opposition between both poles implies that pleasure should be completely rejected. After all, no two things can be more hostile to each other than virtue is to pleasure.⁵²

It is clear, then, that Philo's view of pleasure is much less versatile than his view of the serpent. Yet there are several passages that suggest a more differentiating picture. A first one concerns the part played by pleasure at the encounter of Adam and Eve. Initially, mind and sense perception were naked, so that there is need of a third, mediating factor (*Leg.* 2.71):

Since then it was necessary that both of these (viz. mind and sense perception) should come together for the apprehension of the objects about them, who was it that brought them together save a third, a bond of love and desire (δεσμός τρίτος ἔρωτος καὶ ἐπιθυμίας), under the rule and dominion of pleasure (ἀρχούσης καὶ δυναστευούσης ἡδονῆς), to which the prophet gave the figurative name of a serpent?

This is a difficult passage that raises more than one problem. Firstly, it is not clear what kind of pleasure Philo has in mind. The serpent clearly stands for corporeal pleasure, but here, Philo seems to think of the pleasures that the mind feels when being filled through sense perception, and of the pleasures sense perception enjoys when it achieves the act of perceiving.⁵³ This suggests at least partly intellectual pleasures, yet it is by no means clear how these should be linked with the earthy character

⁵¹ Cf., e.g., Philo, *Det.* 9; 95; 156; *Post.* 82 (μισάρετον καὶ φιλήδονον); *Gig.* 44; *Deus* 111 and 137; *Agr.* 25; *Somn.* 2.9; cf. *Deus* 168; *Gig.* 40–41; *Conf.* 145; *Spec.* 2.208–209.

⁵² Philo, *Ios.* 153: οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτως ἐχθρὸν ἄλλο ἄλλω, ὡς ἀρετῇ ἡδονῆ; contrast *Deus* 143–144 (pleasure opposed to knowledge).

⁵³ Philo, *Leg.* 2.71: περιποιῆσαι τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι, a vague phrase that is further clarified in *Leg.* 3.108: sense perception is a blind thing by nature and it is the reasoning faculty that “opens the eyes”.

of the crawling serpent. Secondly, pleasure here fulfils a remarkable task. Usually, it is compared to a harlot (*Leg.* 3.61–64 and 3.182; *Sacr.* 21), looking for a pander (viz. sense perception) in order to seduce the mind (*Opif.* 166). In this passage, however, it rather works as a pander itself, bringing together mind and sense perception. Thirdly, pleasure here obviously plays a positive role and is apparently even part and parcel of God's plan.⁵⁴ Yet its precise working is not entirely clear. In *Opif.* 152, Philo's argument is much easier to follow: when Adam and Eve meet, love supervenes and creates a desire for fellowship and procreation. From this desire comes bodily pleasure, which entails all kind of wickedness. This is the Philo whom we know meanwhile. Against this background, the passage from the *Legum allegoriae* quoted above sounds awkward: what is going on there?

I am not sure that it is possible to give a satisfactory explanation of all the meanings of Philo's exegesis, but a few points may at least be clarified. Firstly, Philo here suggests (as in *Opif.* 152) that it is strictly speaking not pleasure, but love and desire that connect mind and sense perception.⁵⁵ This is indeed what he needs in order to explain the strong bond between the two.⁵⁶ He adds, however, that this bond of love is governed by pleasure. Why this addition? Probably, he also needs the element of pleasure in order to explain the introduction of the serpent in Gen 3:1. Philo indeed wants to connect the very end of Gen 2 (about the nakedness of Adam and Eve) with the beginning of Gen 3 (about the serpent). For his argument, he needs love, but the serpent stands for pleasure, and the easiest solution is a simple connection of the two through the addition of the phrase ἀρχούσης καὶ δυναστεύουσας ἡδονῆς. This, of course, is an argumentative artifice by means of a *callida iunctura*, yet there is much that it leaves unexplained and the brevity and obscurity of Philo's argument suggests that he does not ignore its limits. It is no coincidence that there are no parallels for this interpretation in the rest of Philo's works. Strikingly enough, the connective role of the serpent is elsewhere attributed to God Himself (*Cher.* 60). In my view, *Opif.* 152 and *Cher.* 60 provide a more reliable guide to Philo's thinking about pleasure. The argument in *Leg.* 2.71 is clearly developed *pour le besoin de la cause*. There, Philo did not even make the best of a bad job.

(b) To a certain extent, then, the positive appreciation of pleasure in *Leg.* 2.71 can be explained away as an isolated comment motivated by exegetical needs. However, there are also other passages which contain more positive views about ἡδονή that are nevertheless in line with Philo's general understanding of pleasure. As we have seen, pleasure is usually understood as base pleasure of the belly. Yet such a conception

⁵⁴ Cf. Le Boulluec, "La place des concepts philosophiques", 146. In *Leg.* 2.8, Philo also ascribes a positive role to pleasure, but there he is clearly thinking of corporeal pleasure.

⁵⁵ Calabi (*God's Acting, Man's Acting*, 130) here detects an influence of Plato's *Symposium*.

⁵⁶ On this strong bond, see also Philo, *Leg.* 3.60.

obviously makes it very difficult to reject it completely. As human beings, we simply need food and drink (*Leg.* 1.86). Several passages illustrate how Philo struggles with this problem. In *Leg.* 3.140–159, he deals with the issue at length and he neatly summarizes his position in 3.159:

We get this result. The lover of pleasure moves on the belly; the perfect man washes out the entire belly; the man who is making gradual progress washes out the contents of the belly, the man who is just beginning his training will go forth without, when he intends to curb passion by bringing reason (figuratively called a shovel) to bear upon the demands of the belly.

At first sight, this is a well-balanced position, resulting from the exegesis of several passages from the Pentateuch. The intricate connection of the pleasure-lover and the belly recalls Philo's interpretation of the serpent with which we are familiar by now. The ideal consists of "washing out the entire belly" (*Lev* 8:21; 9:14), that is, a complete rejection of pleasure, and indeed, many passages can be found where Philo repudiates the striving for pleasure in absolute terms.⁵⁷ Moreover, Philo mentions numerous paradigmatic figures who indeed succeeded in doing away with all pleasures.⁵⁸ A few others, like Jacob and Joseph, are not yet strong enough to overcome an attack of pleasure and should flee.⁵⁹ This is a *δευτερος πλοῦς* that nevertheless has complete rejection of pleasure as the final goal. At the levels of the beginner and the person who makes progress, pleasure should not be entirely dismissed, although moderation is of paramount importance at this stage. Only necessary pleasures are allowed, as such pleasures are unavoidable. Even Moses had to eat (*Leg.* 3.147) and did not ignore necessary pleasures (*Mos.* 1.28). Consequently, we can indulge in similar pleasures as well,⁶⁰ provided that we keep them simple. "Refined delicacies" (*ἐπεντρώσεις* [*Leg.* 3.141] or *ἐπεντρώματα* [*Leg.* 3.143]) are not allowed, though. Here, scholars have again detected an allusion to Epicurus.⁶¹ We have lost sight of

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Philo, *Leg.* 2.108; 3.68; 3.188–189; *Gig.* 33–34; *Agr.* 17; *Ebr.* 71; *Migr.* 9 and 67; *Spec.* 3.8–9; *QE* 1.19. Several aspects of the Law are also explained against this backdrop; *Opif.* 163–164; *Congr.* 169; *Spec.* 1.176, 193; 2.30, 46, 163, 195–196. See also one of the explanations for circumcision: *Migr.* 92 and *Spec.* 1.9.

⁵⁸ E.g., Moses (*Leg.* 2.87; 3.140; *Mos.* 1.154); Phineas (*Leg.* 3.242 and *Post.* 182–183; on Philo's view of Phineas, see also *Mos.* 1.301–302 and M. DelCogliano, "Phineas the Zealot and the Cappadocians: Philo, Origen, and a Family Legacy of Anti-Eunomian Rhetoric", *ASE* 34 [2017] 107–23); Tamar (*Deus* 137); the proselytes (*Virt.* 182); Enoch (*Praem.* 17); the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (*Praem.* 24); the Therapeutae (*Contempl.* 70) and Therapeutrides (*Contempl.* 68).

⁵⁹ Jacob: *Leg.* 3.15; *Fug.* 39; *QG* 4.243; Joseph: *Leg.* 3.237–242; *Somn.* 2.106; cf. *Migr.* 19; *Ios.* 40–53.

⁶⁰ Philo, *Leg.* 2.8, 17; *Agr.* 39; *Ebr.* 214–215; *Sobr.* 59–61 (on Japheth); *Somn.* 1.125; 2.48–50, 60–61; *Decal.* 45; *Spec.* 2.161, 175; *QG* 2.68; 4.35, 81, 185; *QE* 2.14, 18.

⁶¹ Le Boulluec, "La place des concepts philosophiques", 142; Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 99–100 ("clearly Epicurean in character"); Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 135 ("de claire connotation épicurienne"); idem, "Continuity and Dissimilarities", 130.

Epicurus for a while, and this is no coincidence. It once again shows that he is largely irrelevant in a discussion that does justice to the peculiar perspective of Philo. In this case too, it is far from certain whether Philo is thinking of Epicurus. The term *ἐπεντρώματα* is very rare and occurs apart from Philo only in Athenaeus, who, interestingly enough, explicitly connects it with Epicurus.⁶² Yet it is not so clear whether Athenaeus connects the *term* *ἐπεντρώματα* with Epicurus, or rather the delicacies to which the term refers. The concept in any case better fits in with Athenaeus's interests than with those of Epicurus, and when Philo uses the related verb *ἐπεντρώγω* in *Contempl.* 55, there is no hint to be detected of any Epicurean perspective at all. It is surely not impossible to hear a far echo from Epicureanism in *Leg.* 3.141 and 143, but this is less certain than is often assumed.

However that may be, Philo seems willing to accept at least simple, necessary pleasures. This makes his general position quite ambivalent. It may be described as a straddle between rigid idealism and pragmatic realism. The opposition between pleasure and virtue is certainly predominant in Philo's writings, but he sometimes goes beyond this clear-cut dichotomy in order to advocate a more realistic point of view, motivated by both biblical material and our human condition. Yet in my view, this pragmatic realism does not go very far. In *Migr.* 219, Philo mentions two healing methods to counteract pleasure: escaping or not being captured. This, needless to say, implies a fully negative attitude towards pleasure and that is what we find time and again in Philo. He knew that pleasure continues to chase us, insisting like Potiphar's wife, so that we always risk falling prey to it (*Post.* 155–156). The dichotomy between pleasure and virtue is not static, as if we only had to make our choice once, like Heracles at the crossroads. It is rather an uninterrupted struggle (*Leg.* 1.86) and if we sometimes cannot but give in to pleasure, this should never be done voluntarily (*Gig.* 33–34). Such a pleasure, then, should be bitter-sweet (*γλυκύπιικρος*) (*Somn.* 2.150) and we should, as it were, get soberly drunken (*Fug.* 32). Such passages suggest that Philo only yields to acceptable pleasures with mixed feelings and half-heartedly. Moreover, if we should, at best, only enjoy unavoidable, necessary pleasures, we may wonder what, in the end, is still the difference between our imperfect condition and that of Moses.

Did Philo feel inhibited when it came to pleasure? I leave (over)bold psychoanalytical hypotheses to others and prefer to explain Philo's general position by his overall negative conception of *ἡδονή* as base corporeal pleasure,⁶³ combined with the scorn

⁶² Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12, 546e (τὰ ἐπεντρώματα, ἃ πολλάκις προφέρεται ὁ Ἐπίκουρος).

⁶³ Philo highly appreciated the intellectual, heavenly pleasures that far surpass the earthly ones (QG 2.46; cf. 1.56). For such pleasures, however, Philo usually (though not systematically) avoids the word *ἡδονή* and rather turns to terms like *τέριψις* (*Abr.* 164), *χαρά* (*Cher.* 12–13) or *εὐφροσύνη* (cf. the striking pair *ἡδονὰς καὶ εὐφροσύνας* in *Spec.* 1.37). See further Le Boulluec, "La place des concepts philosophiques", 147–51.

for such vulgar pleasures that is characteristic of the aristocratic intellectual. But there may be yet another factor at play. Philo knew very well how seductive pleasure can be and he was familiar with the weakness of the human heart and its fallacies and manipulations. Some people claim to despise pleasure but are really hypocrites (*Fug.* 33), other rationalise their irrational conduct, arguing that nature has created pleasures and that we should thus not hesitate to enjoy them. This is the argument of Potiphar's wife (*Leg.* 3.237–240; cf. *Migr.* 19), of Cain (*Det.* 33) and of all those contemporary sophists who call their rascality wisdom (*Post.* 101). Such attitudes perhaps also help explain Philo's caution and reserve regarding pleasure. He knew that the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak and that people all too eagerly yielded to the Siren song of pleasure. Therefore he took care not to provide them with additional arguments, realizing that they would not hesitate to use his words as a justification of their wickedness (*Deus* 170–171).

IV. Not Only the Serpent

We have seen so far that Philo's thinking about pleasure is to a great extent determined by his exegesis of the serpent in Genesis 3. This serpent, however, is not the only symbol of pleasure in the Pentateuch. Many other figures are also connected with pleasure,⁶⁴ just like certain episodes⁶⁵ and several stipulations of the Law.⁶⁶ Pleasure, then, occurs in quite different contexts and this casts additional light on Philo's exegesis of the serpent and his position towards ἡδονή. Pleasure is a topic that is not merely relevant for the exegesis of one particular passage from Genesis but is one of the fundamental concepts that buttress Philo's overall interpretation of the Pentateuch. Moreover, in all of these various contexts, Philo adopts basically the same negative view of pleasure as corporeal, contemptible and harmful. In this respect, Philo's view is remarkably consistent.

There are a few passages, finally, that deserve a bit more attention here because they have repeatedly been connected with Epicurean doctrine. The first one is *Deus* 17–18, where Philo deals with the wickedness of Onan:

⁶⁴ E.g., Amalek (*Migr.* 143; cf. *Leg.* 3.182); one of the nine kings (*Abr.* 237–239); the Sodomites (*Abr.* 133–134; *QG* 4.36–42) Laban (*Leg.* 3.22); Esau (*Virt.* 208; *QG* 4.168, 170, 173, 224, 245) and his third wife Mahalath (*QG* 4.245), Joseph (*Mut.* 90; cf. *Somm.* 2.65); the Pharaoh (*Leg.* 3.14, 212; Egypt is connected with bodily pleasure in *Migr.* 29–30) and the Philistines (*QG* 4.191).

⁶⁵ Like the Golden Calf; *Post.* 159 and 164. Philo's general view of this episode is discussed in L.H. Feldman, "Philo's Account of the Golden Calf Incident", *JJS* 56 (2005) 245–64.

⁶⁶ Concerning cattle and cattle-rearers (*Post.* 98; *Agr.* 39 on Gen 4:20); horse-rearers (*Agr.* 84 on Deut 17:16), and honey (*Spec.* 1.292 on Lev 2:11; cf. Plato, *Phileb.* 61c).

For if there shall be any whose every deed is self-seeking, who have no regard for the honouring of their parents, for the ordering of their children aright, for the safety of their country, for the maintenance of the laws, for the security of good customs, for the better conduct of things private and public, for the sanctity of temples, for piety towards God, miserable shall be their fate. To sacrifice life itself for any single one of these that I have named is honour and glory. But these self-lovers – they say that if these blessings, desirable as they are, were all put together, they would utterly despise them, if they should not procure them some future pleasure.

Several scholars have here found an implicit reference to Epicurus, notably to his notorious claim that he rejects the noble if it does not bring him pleasure (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12, 547a = fr. 512 Us.).⁶⁷ This is indeed a promising parallel within the framework of the cherry-picking method. Moreover, we can easily establish further parallels between Onan's behaviour as described by Philo and the disrespectful position that was attributed to Epicurus by his opponents.⁶⁸ At the same time, one could point to significant differences between Philo's presentation of Onan's conduct and Epicurus's position.⁶⁹ Such analyses, however, entirely ignore the core of Philo's point. For what Philo mainly wants to offer in this section of *Deus* is an interpretation of Gen 6:4 ("they begat for themselves" [ἐγέννων αὐτοῖς], quoted at *Deus* 1). Philo connects this text with two other passages from the Old Testament, viz. Hannah's psalm (1 Sam 2:5; *Deus* 10–15) and the story of Onan (Gen 38:9). The latter connection is not evident as such, for in fact Onan does not beget. The link between both passages, then, does not rest on the term ἐγέννων but on αὐτοῖς. For Philo, Onan is the paradigm par excellence of the self-lover and lover of pleasure (see also *Post.* 179–180) and Onan's contempt of anything else is the direct consequence of this self-centred attitude.

⁶⁷ Philo (PLCL) 3:483; Booth, "The Voice of the Serpent", 165–66; Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 95; Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 132–33.

⁶⁸ Epicurus also did everything for his own interest (Lactantius, *Inst.* 3.17.42 = frag. 523 Us.; Cic. *Fam.* 7.12.2), showed but little respect for his mother (cf. Plutarch, *Suav. viv.* 1098B), did not love children by nature but "for pay" (Plutarch, *Am. prol.* 495A) and was not interested at all in the safety of his country (see esp. Metrodorus's statement that we should not save the Greeks but gratify the belly; Plutarch, *Suav. viv.* 1098CD; 1100D; *Adv. Colot.* 1125D = fr. 41 K.) nor in the laws (Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1127D).

⁶⁹ The basic problem, of course, is the question as to whether Epicurus could really be regarded as an egoistic self-lover. That has to do with the *quaestio vexata* of Epicurean friendship. See, e.g., P. Mitsis, "Epicurus on Friendship and Altruism", *OSAP* 5 (1987) 127–53; idem, *Epicurus' Ethical Theory: The Pleasures of Invulnerability* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); D.K. O'Connor, "The Invulnerable Pleasures of Epicurean Friendship", *GRBS* 30 (1989) 165–86; T. O'Keefe, "Is Epicurean Friendship Altruistic?" *Apeiron* 34 (2001) 269–305; E. Brown, "Epicurus on the Value of Friendship (*Sententia Vaticana* 23)", *CP* 97 (2002) 68–80; M. Evans, "Can Epicureans be Friends?" *Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2004) 407–24. An excellent critical survey can be found in P. Mitsis, "Friendship", in idem (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Epicurus and Epicureanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 250–83.

All this shows, then, that Philo's interpretative framework is thoroughly biblical. Philo, moreover, points out that this kind of behaviour "is called Onan" (*ἐπίκλησιν Αὐνάν* [*Deus* 19]). Onan, and not Epicurus! I see no compelling reason to brush aside the plain meaning of Philo's words in order to read between the lines and look for the presence of Epicurus. Nothing suggests that Philo was interested here in the similarities between Onan's stance and the philosophical position of Epicurus.

A similar conclusion holds true for the second passage. In *Det.* 156–157, Philo focuses on the deeper meaning of Cain's words "if you cast me out this day from the face of the earth, I shall also be hidden from your face" (Gen 4:14). Philo interprets this as: if you forbid me to enjoy the earthly pleasures, I give up virtue too, for corporeal pleasure is really important, whereas virtues require great efforts and should not be pursued as perfect goods but as productive of the good. Again, this bears some resemblance to Epicurus's view, for Epicurus likewise does not appreciate virtue as an end in itself but only as an (indispensable) means for pleasure.⁷⁰ On closer inspection, however, this is a rather superficial parallel. Cain's pleasure is mainly corporeal, "kinetic" pleasure. This reflects Philo's general view of pleasure, of course, but is also at odds with Epicurus's more sophisticated position. Even more, Cain's hedonism also includes un-Epicurean characteristics, viz. his enthusiasm for honour and offices (*Det.* 157).⁷¹ Cain, in short, has in mind the pleasures of the serpent. Furthermore, we have seen that the opposition between pleasure and virtue, and the connection of the latter with efforts, is typical of Philo. The whole passage, then, is perfectly in line with Philo's general thinking about pleasure. If we detect an anti-Epicurean attack here, we cannot but conclude that this attack is misguided and based on unjustified presuppositions. I prefer the more charitable view that Philo cleverly used general philosophical ideas for his own exegetical agenda, while leaving the Greek philosophers in their school. This passage, then, is not about Epicurus but about Cain and about all those who adopt a Cain-like outlook on life.

More interesting is *Somn.* 2.207–209, which contains Philo's interpretation of the chief baker's dream in Gen 40:16–17. He dreamed that he lifted three baskets of wheaten loaves on his head. These baskets, for Philo, symbolize the three divisions of time:

He is not ashamed, poor fool, to be burdened with a triple load of baskets, that is with the three divisions of time. For pleasure is said by her votaries (*οἱ θιασῶται*) to consist

⁷⁰ See, e.g., Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12, 546f–547a = frag. 70 Us.; Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1117AB = fr. 116 Us.; *RS* 5; *Ep. Men.* 132. On the basis of this parallel, several scholars argue for an Epicurean influence on Philo in this passage; see Fischel, *Rabbinic Literature*, 38; Booth, "The Voice of the Serpent", 165–66; Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 95; Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 130.

⁷¹ For Epicurus's negative evaluation of such political ideals, see G. Roskam, *Live Unnoticed (Ἀθήε βιώσας): On the Vicissitudes of an Epicurean Doctrine* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

of the memory of past, the enjoyment of present and the hope of future delights. Thus the three baskets are likened to the three divisions of time, and the baked meats in the baskets to the concomitants of each of these divisions, memories of the past, participations of the present, expectations of the future.

The term *θιασῶται* suggests that Philo refers to a specific group of people and several scholars have found in Epicurus the obvious candidate.⁷² Again, I am not sure whether Philo is here especially thinking of Epicurus. To begin with, we should, once again, not ignore the context of Philo's argument. The central figure of this passage is the chief baker, who, of course, focuses on the pleasure of the belly (*Somn.* 2.205). This observation already makes it clear that the generalising *θιασῶται* refers to everybody who, like the chief baker, is devoted to corporeal pleasure. And these *θιασῶται*, in fact, as we have seen, include the majority of people, the *πολὺς ὄμιλος ἀνθρώπων* (cf. *supra*).

Secondly, one may insist that the view alluded to still includes a minimal amount of theoretical reflection. That is true indeed, although it is not more difficult than the reflections about natural *οἰκείωσις* that, as we have argued above, are ascribed to the great multitude in *Opif.* 161–163. Moreover, the passage does not contain anything that is peculiar to the Epicurean perspective alone. The Cyrenaics were of course familiar with the same division (Diogenes Laertius 2.87), as was Plato before them (*Phileb.* 21c and 39de). It is a motif, then, that recurs in different philosophical reflections on pleasure. Philo knew this motif and used it for his exegesis, but he had no intention here of discussing Epicurus's view of pleasure. Once again, this passage rather illustrates Philo's general erudition than his interest in anti-Epicurean polemics.

The last passage is probably the most interesting one. In *Fug.* 148, Philo deals with the story of Moses's killing of the Egyptian (Exod 2:12). According to Philo, Moses's deed is an attack

against the Egyptian character, which was assailing the soul from the vantage-ground of pleasure; for "after smiting him he covered him with sand", a drifting, disconnected substance. He evidently regarded both doctrines as having the same author, the doctrine that pleasure is the prime and greatest good, and the doctrine that atoms are the elementary principles of the universe.

This appears to be a clear reference to Epicurus' philosophy. It is followed by a reference to the Peripatetic position and although neither philosophical school is explicitly mentioned, their views can easily be recognized and the juxtaposition of the

⁷² Philo (PLCL) 5:609; Le Boulluec, "La place des concepts philosophiques", 142; Ranocchia, "Moses against the Egyptian", 96; Lévy, "Philon d'Alexandrie et l'épicurisme", 130.

two schools adds to the plausibility that Philo here indeed has Epicurus in mind. In this case, then, I am inclined to agree with the many scholars who regard this passage as an unmistakable reference to Epicureanism.⁷³ The question, then, is how this reference should be understood.

Firstly, in a parallel passage (*Leg.* 3.38), Philo deals with the same Exodus story from a different perspective. There, the Egyptian is also understood as the pleasure-lover, but the sand does not refer to atomism but is rather interpreted as an element of confusion. The mind appears as a congeries of disconnected grains, which is hidden in itself and has no “union” (ἔνωσις) with what is honourable. This bold allegorical interpretation, which lacks any reference to Epicureanism, shows that Philo did not need Epicurean philosophy in order to make sense of this passage from Exodus and thus that the interpretation proposed in *Fug.* 148 is developed *ad hoc*.

Secondly, we here again find the same kind of general phrasing that is typical of Philo. He does not explicitly refer to Epicureanism but rather to “the Egyptian character” (ὁ Αἰγύπτιος τρόπος). We should not overlook that Philo’s argumentative framework here as well remains biblical. This observation does not alter the fact that the link between atomism and hedonism is characteristic of Epicureanism of course, but it still shows that an exclusive focus on one philosophical system risks distorting Philo’s message. Philo prefers to allude to the kind of thinking that can both be associated with Epicurean philosophy and with the Αἰγύπτιος τρόπος.

Thirdly, Philo’s comments in *Fug.* 148 are frustratingly brief. He touches upon an interesting point, that is, the relation between hedonistic ethics and atomist physics.⁷⁴ A full appreciation of this aspect of Epicurus’s thinking would have required much more explanation – far more indeed than Philo is willing to provide. In this respect, the passage resembles Philo’s short discussion of katastematic pleasures in *Leg.* 3.160. Twice indeed, Philo argues that the text of the Pentateuch tells us something about a philosophical view of pleasure that can be connected with Epicurus. In both cases, Philo’s observations are more than a mere erudite *flosculum*, yet they do not deserve a lengthy digression. Philo’s interest was simply not in Epicureanism.

⁷³ Philo (PLCL) 5:89 n. a; H.A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962) 1:314; D.T. Runia, “Philo and Hellenistic Doxography”, in F. Alesse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 13–54, at 48; Ranocchia, “Moses against the Egyptian”, 88–89; F. Alesse, “La sabbia e la materia: una polemica filosofica di Filone”, *Adamantius* 14 (2008) 24–30, esp. 26–30; Lévy, “Philon d’Alexandrie et l’épicurisme”, 132.

⁷⁴ Cf. Lévy, “Philon d’Alexandrie et l’épicurisme”, 136; Ranocchia, “Moses against the Egyptian”, 88–89.

V. Conclusion

It is no exaggeration to say that Philo was preoccupied with pleasure in his allegorical exegesis of the Pentateuch. “Pleasure” (ἡδονή) is largely understood as base corporeal, sensual pleasure. Philo regarded it as a danger that continuously lurks around the corner and should always again be conquered. He knew how difficult it was to overcome its deceptive temptations and he even grudgingly had to recognize that some pleasures are simply unavoidable. He appreciated the joys of a contemplative and virtuous life, to be sure, but he probably derived few intellectual pleasures from recognizing the necessity of simple corporeal pleasure. For Philo, pleasure was an existential problem.

Say pleasure, think Epicurus? That connection seems rather problematic in Philo’s case. Philo’s thinking about pleasure rests on a complex interplay between general philosophical ideas and material taken from the Pentateuch. Say pleasure, think the serpent, or Esau, or the chief baker, and so on. This has important methodological implications, as was argued in this chapter. Epicurus’s relevance for Philo should not be judged on the basis of a selection of passages that show superficial correspondences between a view mentioned by Philo, on the one hand, and Epicurean philosophy, on the other hand. We should rather examine the dynamics of Philo’s exegesis and the overall coherence of recurrent patterns in his thinking about pleasure, and then assess Epicurus’s influence in light of this general picture.

In *Post.* 35, Philo calls Protagoras an offspring of Cain’s madness. Such a characterization tells us much about the perspective from which he views Greek philosophy. Analogously, we may call Epicurus, in his capacity of pleasure-lover, the son of the harlot (cf. *Conf.* 144). Such sons have no place in the congregation of the Lord (Deut 23:2). They do not even deserve to be mentioned by name – not even once.

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Philo's Therapy of Desire: Law, Askēsis, and the Rod of *Paideia*

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Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy has been variously described as a “therapy of desire” by Martha Nussbaum,¹ an “ascèse des désirs” by Pierre Hadot,² or as a “technology of the self” by Michel Foucault.³ All of these descriptors highlight a ubiquitous, all-consuming concern which the study and, importantly, the practice of philosophy were so often meant to address: how can the individual prepare oneself – or, better, one’s self – to control or conquer those destructive emotions and appetites which plague the soul and the mind and which prevent one from living a moral, ethical, and successful existence? Philosophy itself was viewed as an, if not the, ideal means of training the self for this constant struggle.

The desire to control problematic emotions crossed party lines, not belonging to one philosophical school alone. However, the question was particularly fundamental in Stoic philosophical ethics.⁴ The predominant Stoic position seems to have been that the passions must be completely rooted out and destroyed, for the sage to truly possess *apatheia*. Cicero, opposing the Academic position of Crantor that the experience of grief is actually appealing to the sage, urges caution, as such views likely derive from “those who choose to indulge the weak and womanish parts of us”.

¹ M.C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Cf. eadem, “The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions”, *Apeiron* 20 (1987) 129–77.

² P. Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995) 183; ET: *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (trans. M. Chase; Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002). Cf. idem, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (ed. A.I. Davidson; trans. M. Chase; Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

³ M. Foucault, “Technologies of the Self”, in idem, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (ed. L.H. Martin/H. Gutman/P.H. Hutton; Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988) 16–49. Cf. idem, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality* (trans. R. Hurley; New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); and idem, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (ed. F. Gros; trans. G. Burchell; New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

⁴ See now S. Weisser, *Éradication ou modération des passions. Histoire de la controverse chez Cicéron, Sénèque et Philon d'Alexandrie* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).

Cicero, instead, argues, “Let us be bold enough not only to prune away the branches of unhappiness (‘ramos amputare miseriarum’), but to yank out its very roots down to the last fiber (‘sed omnis radicum fibras evellere’),” though he was cognizant that this task might ultimately be impossible: “Yet so deep are the roots of folly that there will perhaps be something left over. But we will leave no more than is necessary. Of this one thing you must be assured: unless the mind is healed – which cannot happen without philosophy – there will be no end to our unhappiness” (*Tusc.* 3.13).⁵ Nonetheless, this is the philosopher’s aim: “These are the root-fibers (‘fibrae stirpium’) I mentioned at the start, the ones which must all be found and pulled out, so that none of them can ever arise again. No one would deny that this is a heavy and difficult task. Every great work is arduous, is it not? Yes, philosophy promises that she will accomplish it, if only we take her for our physician” (*Tusc.* 3.84). Philosophy, for Cicero, is the doctor and the cure for the disease of the passions.

According to Seneca, while the Peripatetics only sought to temper the emotions, the Stoics completely drove them out: “The question has often been raised whether it is better to have moderate emotions or none at all. Philosophers of our school ‘reject’ (‘expellunt’) the emotions; the Peripatetics ‘keep them in check’ (‘temperant’). I, however, do not understand how any half-way disease can be either wholesome or helpful” (*Ep.* 116.1).⁶ The reason the Stoics take this extreme position is because the passions are contrary to nature’s wishes, who exclaims, “I brought you into the world without desires or fears, free from superstition, treachery and the other curses. Go forth as you were when you entered!” (*Ep.* 22.15).

The Platonist Plutarch, however, argues against the Stoic opinion:

Therefore, also, ethical, or moral, virtue (ἠθικός) is well named, for ethical virtue is, to but sketch the subject, a quality of the irrational, and it is so named because the irrational, being formed by reason, acquires this quality and differentiation by habit (ἔθος), since reason does not wish to eradicate passion completely (τοῦ λόγου ... οὐ βουλομένου τὸ πάθος ἐξαιρεῖν παντάπασι) (for that would be neither possible nor expedient), but puts upon it some limitation and order and implants the ethical virtues, which are not the absence of passion (οὐκ ἀπαθείας) but a due proportion and measure therein (συμμετρίας παθῶν καὶ μεσότητος); and reason implants them by using prudence (τῆ φρονήσει) to develop the capacity for passion into a good acquired disposition. (*Virt. mor.* 443c–d)⁷

⁵ M. Graver (trans.), *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁶ Gummere (trans.), LCL.

⁷ Helmbold (trans.), LCL.

Because of the necessarily mixed nature of humanity – body and soul, irrational and rational – the passions cannot be eradicated completely as the Stoics contend but must, instead, be limited and controlled. Interestingly, the outlier Stoic Posidonius – and followed by Galen – appears to have fallen more in line with Plutarch than with Cicero or Seneca.⁸

The perceived problem of the passions and the goal of living free of the influence of unbridled emotion was not unique to Greek or Roman philosophical speculation. This is a concern which underlies much Jewish ethical thought during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. We find it across linguistic, geographical, chronological, and ideological boundaries, from early Aramaic apocalyptic literature written in Judea to later Greek philosophical texts written in Alexandria and Antioch. As it was to their Greek and Roman neighbors, this was a perennial concern, the varied and unique solutions to which were worked out in and by the literature of the period, both within texts later understood as “canonical” and without, both in the literature of the elite ruling classes and that of marginalized communities. The problem of the passions plagued everyone alike.

Philo's position in this debate might be viewed as a compromise between the Stoic and Platonic sides. Philo envisioned complete eradication of the passions, total *apatheia*, as the ultimate goal but one impossible for most people. Moses is an example of one of the few morally perfect individuals able to achieve this goal, while his brother Aaron represents one on the path to perfection but not yet there:

But [Aaron], as I have said, having this passion attempts to cure it by the aforementioned saving remedies, but Moses thinks it is necessary to excise and cut out anger from the soul, desiring not the moderation of the passions (*μετριοπάθειαν*) but complete freedom from the passions (*ἀπάθειαν*) ... For God has endowed the wise person with the best lot, that is the ability to excise the passions. You see how the perfect individual is always attending to perfect freedom from the passions. But the one proceeding second, Aaron, trains (*ἀσχεῖ*), as I have said, to moderation of the passions, for he is unable yet to excise the breast and the *thumos*. (*Leg.* 3.128–132)⁹

⁸ See R. Renehan, “The Greek Philosophic Background of Fourth Maccabees”, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, nf. 115 (1972) 223–38, at 227; D.A. deSilva, “The Human Ideal, the Problem of Evil, and Moral Responsibility in 4 Maccabees”, *BBR* 23 (2013) 57–77, at 59. Others have argued that Posidonius did not depart that drastically from the standard Stoic position. See, e.g., J.M. Cooper, “Posidonius on Emotions”, in J. Sihvola/T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1998) 71–112; followed by H. Moscicke, “The Concept of Evil in 4 Maccabees: Stoic Absorption and Adaptation”, *JJTP* 25 (2017) 163–95, at 175–6.

⁹ Cf. Philo, *Leg.* 3:215–216; *Migr.* 67. See D.E. Aune, “Mastery of the Passions: Philo, 4 Maccabees and Earliest Christianity”, in W.E. Helleman (ed.), *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994) 125–58, at 126–34.

Aaron could be seen as following the position of Plutarch or Posidonius, while Moses follows the preferable path advocated by Cicero and Seneca. This does not mean that Aaron has failed, only that he is not yet and may never be able to attain the perfection illustrated by Moses, the “greatest physician of the passions and diseases of the soul” (τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς παθῶν καὶ νοσημάτων ἄριστος ἰατρός) (*Deus* 67).

The concern with controlling or conquering the passions is strongly felt throughout Philo’s body of work, which is so often focused squarely on the soul’s path from ignorance and darkness and impiety to wisdom and light and virtue. Throughout his writings, Philo discusses several, intimately connected means of overcoming the pull of desire and the passions. Like his Stoic neighbors, Philo saw philosophy as the *θεραπεία* for that pernicious disease of the soul, in particular the philosophy of Moses, set down within his law code, and as an *ἄσκησις* which would prepare one for this battle. For Philo, Moses was at once the doctor of the human soul, one whose laws were the cure for the psychic illness of desire, and the trainer, one whose laws exercised the soul to prepare it for the fight. But, Moses was also the teacher, whose laws were the best possible *paideia* to instruct the individual how to live according to nature and free from the damaging effects of the passions. Education was, for Philo, one of the surest ways to overcome the pull and devastating effects of desire and the passions. And no image or metaphor or symbol Philo used for education better exemplifies this role than his depiction of *paideia* as the rod or *ῥάβδος*, which beats back the passions from within the soul. As with his understanding of *paideia* generally, Philo’s discussions of the passions and their counter is deeply influenced by and embedded within contemporary philosophical discussions, where the Jewish people face the same problems as all of humankind but who happen to have a great advantage in the Mosaic law. This advantage is highlighted by Philo not to disparage other peoples or other philosophies but rather to offer both a point of commonality and to demonstrate the responsibility the Jewish people have to the rest of humanity thanks to this benefit they have been given.

I. Philo on *Paideia*

Before looking closely at how Philo envisions education as the essential component to the formation and training of the self against the onslaught of the passions, it will be helpful to have a better understanding of *paideia* and its import generally in Philo’s thought. Philo discusses various aspects of education extensively and quite consistently throughout his corpus. In fact, no other ancient Jewish writer discussed education more than the Alexandrian philosopher. While he never lays out a systematic theory of education – of course, this was not Philo’s wont with any aspect of

his philosophy – we can piece together his overall view on the topic and the role education plays in the life of humanity generally and of the Jewish people in particular. The primary curricula that Philo discusses are (1) the encyclical studies, (2) philosophy in general, and (3) Mosaic philosophy – i.e., that via the laws of Moses – in particular. It must be noted from the outset that the purpose of education and the benefits that come from education were the same for all humankind, Jew and non-Jew both. The Jewish people have an immense benefit in their education due to their possession of the Mosaic law, the greatest of all textbooks, but the goal of education, whether from the Jewish law or the liberal arts, was the same: to learn to live according to nature's intent. The Law of Moses was simply a far preferable means to that same end. This uniqueness led Philo to embrace a feeling not of superiority over or derision of others, but rather one of responsibility to all other peoples, to have the Jewish people serve as exempla to the rest of the world.¹⁰

Education begins from the preliminary studies,¹¹ or “encyclical *paideia*”, which included the subjects of grammar, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music, dialectic, and, unique to Philo, rhetoric.¹² Like his contemporaries, Philo understood the encyclicalia as decidedly propaedeutic, the steps necessary to prepare oneself before moving on to loftier forms of knowledge like philosophy.¹³ To remain focused on the study of the encyclicalia without moving on is deeply problematic.¹⁴ Philo uses a number of different metaphors to explain the nature of the encyclicalia as preliminary

¹⁰ Philo, *Prob.* 71; *Spec.* 2.163.

¹¹ See P. Wendland, *Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur in ihren Beziehungen zu Judentum und Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1907) 114–20; F.H. Colson, “Philo on Education”, *JTS* 18 (1917) 151–62; M. Alexandre, *De congressu eruditionis gratia* (PAPM 16; Paris: Cerf, 1967); T. Conley, “General Education” in Philo of Alexandria”, in *Protocol of the Fifteenth Colloquy: 9 March 1975* (Berkeley: The Center for the Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975) 1–11; A. Mendelson, *Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria* (HUCM 7; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982); E. Früchtel, “Philon und die Vorbereitung der christlichen Paideia und Seelenleitung”, in F.R. Prostmeier (ed.), *Frühchristentum und Kultur* (Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten, Ergänzungsband 2; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007) 19–33.

¹² Philo, *Congr.* 11, 15–18, 74–76; *Mos.* 1.23; *Cher.* 105; *Agr.* 18; *Somn.* 1.205; *QG* 3.21. For the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman curricula, see H.I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1948); ET: *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956) 150–216, 274–91; F.A.G. Beck, *Greek Education 450-350 B.C.* (London: Methuen, 1964) 111–44, 201–27; S.F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) 163–276; T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 81–9; R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 160–244; and W.M. Bloomer, *The School of Rome: Latin Studies and the Origins of Liberal Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) 111–38.

¹³ The nature of the encyclicalia as preliminary to the study of philosophy was common. See, e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 88; Pseudo-Plutarch, *Lib. ed.* 7c-d. Philo is unique in including rhetoric within the encyclicalia, as many saw it, like philosophy, as subsequent to the preliminary studies. See Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.10.1; Cicero, *Orat.* 1.73–77.

¹⁴ Philo, *Sacr.* 44; *Cher.* 9–10; *Mut.* 260; *Det.* 64–66.

to philosophy, wisdom, and/or virtue: the gate before a house (*Fug.* 183), the road leading to a city (*Congr.* 10), a baby's milk prior to the solid food of philosophy.¹⁵ But, the most common image Philo used for vividly describing the relationship between encyclical *paideia* and wisdom or philosophy was the story of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah.¹⁶

Taking his cue from the popular adage concerning Penelope, her maid servants, and her suitors,¹⁷ Philo's allegorical reading of the Genesis narrative describes the proper path one must take from preliminary instruction to loftier philosophy, wisdom, and virtue. In the allegory, Abraham serves as the model student, fitting as he is elsewhere Philo's symbol for the soul which gains wisdom through learning.¹⁸ In order to ready himself for his wife, Sarah – the symbol of wisdom – Abraham first required the intimate relationship with Sarah's handmaid, Hagar – the symbol for the preliminary studies. Once he reached his goal of Sarah/virtue,¹⁹ however, he had to abandon Hagar/encyclia, even though he was still very fond of her, as the lure of the beautiful maidservant was as dangerous as the desire for the preliminary studies.

¹⁵ Philo, *Agr.* 9; *Congr.* 19; *Prob.* 160. The metaphor was common. See Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.16.39; 3.24.9; and the related usage in 1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12–13; and 1 Pet 2:2. On the metaphor, see G. Roskam, "Nutritious Milk from Hagar's School: Philo's Reception of Homer", *SPhiloA* 29 (2017) 1–32. Another popular metaphor used by Philo is the encyclia as seedlings implanted in immature souls. See Philo, *Agr.* 18; Pseudo-Plutarch, *Lib. ed.* 2b–c; 5c–e; Lucian, *Anach.* 20–21.

¹⁶ See Philo, *Cher.* 3–10; *Leg.* 3.244–245; *Sacr.* 43; *Post.* 130–132, 137; *Agr.* 9–19; *Her.* 274; *Mut.* 255; *Somn.* 1.240; *QG* 3.18ff.; and most of *Congr.* On the allegory, see J.M. Zurawski, "Mosaic Torah as Encyclical *Paideia*: Reading Paul's Allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Light of Philo of Alexandria's", in K.M. Hogan/M. Goff/E. Wasserman (ed.), *Pedagogy in Early Judaism and Christianity* (EJL 41; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017) 283–307.

¹⁷ The Stoic Ariston of Chios argued that "those who labor with the preliminary studies but neglect philosophy are like the suitors of Penelope, who, when they failed to win her over, took up with her maid servants instead" (*SVF* 1.350). Stobaeus preserves the fragment. Elsewhere the comment is credited to Gorgias (*Gnomol. Vatic.* 166). According to Pseudo-Plutarch, the statement is the philosopher Bion's (*Lib. Educ.* 7d). See A. Henrichs, "Philosophy, the Handmaiden of Theology", *GRBS* 9 (1968) 437–50, at 444; K. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957) 139; Y. Amir, "The Transference of Greek Allegories to Biblical Motifs in Philo", in E. Hilgert/B.L. Mack (ed.), *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984) 15–25.

¹⁸ See Philo, *Migr.* 88; *Praem.* 24–51; *Jos.* 1. Abraham is the exemplar of one who acquires virtue through "instruction" (διδασκαλία), Jacob through "practice" (ἀσκητική), while Isaac is a rare member of the "self-taught race" (αὐτομαθὲς γένος). This threefold typology of learners – through instruction, nature, or practice – is common and goes back at least to Aristotle (*Eth. nic.* 1099b, 1179b), though Billings has shown that Philo's depictions of the triad are also deeply influenced by Plato. See T.H. Billings, *The Platonism of Philo Judaeus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919) 82–7. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Lib. educ.* 2a–c, understands the triad as "nature, reason/learning, and custom/training" (φύσις, λόγος/μάθησις, ἔθος/ἄσκησις), perfection coming from a combination of all three. His models are Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato.

¹⁹ Philo often distinguishes the name change of Sarai to Sarah as that from particular, perishable virtue to generic, imperishable virtue. See *Cher.* 4–8.

The true wife and the maidservant cannot coexist.²⁰ Despite the dangers, however, Philo saw the study of the encyclical as absolutely essential for the vast majority of people in the goal of attaining virtue and wisdom and moving on to more advanced studies in philosophy. Encyclical *paideia* was necessary and necessarily temporary.

The encyclical are prerequisites to the study of philosophy,²¹ as they prepare the student to properly speculate on nature,²² and philosophy is, at its core, *paideia* in the workings of the universe and the true ὁρθὸς λόγος of nature.²³ Unlike the preliminary studies, philosophy is not temporary and should never be abandoned. It is a lifelong education. Yet it is still preparatory. Education in philosophy leads to the acquisition of virtue and wisdom (*Congr.* 79), the ascent of the mind (*Spec.* 2:230), and the immortality of the soul (*Opif.* 77). What Philo often terms “ancestral philosophy” (πατρία φιλοσοφία), is also devoted to the contemplation of nature, yet it is unique from all other forms of philosophy in that the Jews utilize the laws of Moses in support of their philosophical education.

The third major component of Jewish *paideia* we find in Philo's system is just that, education via the laws of Moses.²⁴ The Mosaic law is the ideal educational resource for three reasons: (1) the close connection to the unwritten law of nature; (2) the unique intellectual talents of the lawgiver, who transferred the natural law stamped upon his mind to his written law code; and (3) the ability of the law to educate at all levels of instruction or intelligence, from the most basic to extremely sophisticated. It would be incorrect to assume a progression from non-Jewish forms of education to “Jewish” education, that education in the law holds a hierarchically superior position to other forms which are simply preliminary. While Philo did see a natural progression from the encyclical studies to higher forms of education in philosophy, as was common in the educational system, he never views either as preliminary to studies in or by the Mosaic law. In fact, it would be improper to view these along a dichotomy of “non-Jewish” versus “Jewish” education, as Philo himself does not make this distinction. He actually goes out of his way to avoid such a simplistic dichotomy. For Philo, it is all Jewish education, in that, all of it, from the *propaideumata* to studies in Platonic and Stoic philosophy to the many ways Moses

²⁰ While the connection between the soul and wisdom is noetic, that to encyclical *paideia* is more somatic and aesthetic (Philo, *Congr.* 20). The desires for the handmaid can lead to neglect of the true mistress (Philo, *Congr.* 77).

²¹ Philo, *Congr.* 145; *Ebr.* 49, 51.

²² Philo, *Her.* 274; *Spec.* 3.187–194; *Congr.* 146; *Opif.* 53–54. See V. Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: Son caractère et sa portée. Observations philologiques* (ALGHJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1977) 98–9.

²³ Philo, *Congr.* 144; *Prob.* 160.

²⁴ On the aspect of Mosaic education in Philo, see J.M. Zurawski, “Mosaic *Paideia*: The Law of Moses within Philo of Alexandria's Model of Jewish Education”, *JSJ* 48 (2017) 480–505.

educates through his laws, is necessary for the Jewish people. The benefits that come from education via the law are those that come from *paideia* generally: eradication or control of the passions, a life of balance, and the immortality of the soul.

II. Training for the Passions: *Paideia* as the Rod

The prevalent image that philosophical activity played as the *θεραπεία* of desire pointed out most fully by Nussbaum with regards to Stoic philosophy in particular is found too in Philo's writings. Philo was clearly aware of this image²⁵ and often applied it to what he understood as the Jews' *πατρία φιλοσοφία*. Moses, who was not only the ideal student, but also completely tamed the passions and exhibited the doctrines of philosophy in all of his everyday actions, living for the soul alone, not for the body (*Mos.* 1.25–29),²⁶ Philo would describe as the “good doctor” (*ἀγαθὸς ἰατρός* [*Mos.* 1.42]) who used his laws as the *θεραπεία* for the passions:

Therefore the lawgiver, being a most admirable physician of the passions and diseases of the soul (*γενόμενος οὖν τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς παθῶν καὶ νοσημάτων ἄριστος ἰατρός ὁ νομοθέτης*), has proposed to himself one task and one end, namely, to eradicate the diseases of the mind by the roots²⁷ (*αὐταῖς ῥίζαις τὰς τῆς διανοίας νόσους ἐκτεμεῖν*), so that there may not be a single one left behind to put forth any shoot of incurable distemper. (*Deus* 67)

The immediate context of this passage is Philo explaining why Moses used anthropomorphic images of God, which for Philo were completely nonsensical and not representative of the true transcendent deity. Moses used anthropomorphism, however, in order to instruct and correct the foolish who could not be educated or cured in any other way (*Deus* 63, 68).

But the view of Moses as the doctor and the law as the therapy extends beyond such particular circumstances. For example, in *Spec.* 4.83–97, Philo gives an

²⁵ See, e.g., *Her.* 293–300, where Philo describes the four generations of the soul. In the first, from infancy to seven years old, the soul is of a pure, unmixed nature, not yet stamped with indelible impressions. The second generation is when the soul begins to live among evils, being taught evil deeds by nurses, tutors, parents, or the written and unwritten laws of different states. In this youthful stage, the soul is puffed up and the passions which were previously hidden are now fanned into a flame. In the third age of the soul, “the diseased generation or age” (*τὴν ἐπίνοσον γενεάν ἢ ἡλικίαν*) must be “remedied” (*νοσηλευθῆναι*) by “medical philosophy” (*ιατρικῆς φιλοσοφίας*), charmed by salutary and salvific words and ideas, through which it will receive an emptying out of sins and fullness of good deeds. After this *θεραπεία* comes the fourth generation which power and strength according to insight grows up in the soul. This is the acquisition of perfect health, when the soul rejects what is bad and applies the good.

²⁶ On Moses's education, see Zurawski, “Mosaic *Paideia*”, 488–9.

²⁷ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.13, 84, and the discussion above.

extensive discussion of how the daily practice of the dietary requirements in the law are the cure for the “desire” (ἐπιθυμία) of the soul. Or, in *Virt.* 163, Philo shows how the laws and their practice were designed by Moses to continually remind people which things kindle the passions, whose only “cure” (θεραπεία) is preventing them from forgetting God.²⁸ An example of philosophical people who live lives devoted to this Mosaic philosophy as the cure for the passions are, of course, the *Therapeutae*:

for with strict regard to etymology, they are called *therapeutae* and *therapeutrides*, either because they profess an art of medicine (ιατρικήν) more excellent than that in general use in cities – for that only heals (θεραπεύει) bodies, but the other heals souls which are under the mastery of terrible and almost incurable diseases, which pleasures and appetites, fears and griefs, and covetousness, and follies, and injustice, and all the rest of the innumerable multitude of other passions (παθῶν) and vices – have inflicted upon them, or else because they have been instructed by nature and the sacred laws to serve the living God (ἢ παρόσον ἐκ φύσεως καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν νόμων ἐπαιδεύθησαν θεραπεύειν τὸ ζῶν), who is superior to the good, and more simple than the one, and more ancient than the unit. (*Contempl.* 2)

Besides this view of Moses's textbook as the *θεραπεία* of desire, Philo uses several symbols for *paideia* to express the different aspects and gifts of education. For example, Philo saw the ultimate goal for the individual and the greatest gift of *paideia* as the earned immortality of the soul after corporeal death (*Opif.* 77; *Ebr.* 140), and, in order to illustrate the value of *paideia* in this particular respect, Philo depicts the grave consequences of the opposite, the soul drunk on the unmixed wine of ἀπαιδευσία, (“ignorance”: *Ebr.* 11–12, 15, 27). Rejection of *paideia* leads to a multitude of sins and the destruction of virtue from the soul, the result of which is the suffocation of the soul and its death, trapped forever in the tomb of the body and the earth, never able to escape and return home.²⁹

However, when Philo wants his reader's focus fully on the role *paideia* plays in the taming or eradication of the passions, his most powerful image is that of *paideia* as the rod. Whether its depiction on ancient vase paintings or descriptions in childhood recollections, the ῥάβδος or “rod” was intimately and unfortunately connected to education and the source, no doubt, of not a little trauma for even the most mature and far-removed alum. Most commonly associated with the cane a pedagogue or parent would use to beat the tardy or misbehaving student, the rod was a symbol

²⁸ Cf. Philo, *Sacr.* 48, where διδασκαλία is the *θεραπεία* for “ignorance” (ἀμαθία).

²⁹ On psychic death, see Philo, *Fug.* 53–64, 80–81, 198–201; *Det.* 47–49, 70; *Leg.* 1.105–107; 3.72; *Post.* 39, 69; *Abr.* 33; *Congr.* 57; *QG* 1.16, 50–51, 70, 73, 76. See J.M. Zurawski, “Hell on Earth: Corporeal Existence as the Ultimate Punishment of the Wicked in Philo of Alexandria and the Wisdom of Solomon”, in J.H. Ellens (ed.), *Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife: Eternity in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (3 vols.; New York: Praeger, 2013) 1:193–226.

of the use of corporal punishment in childhood education. Disciplinary, chastising forms of *paideia*, whether the agent was human or divine, were so often tied to that rod. For example, in Proverbs LXX we find “Folly clings to the heart of a child, but the rod and *paideia* are far from him” (Prov 22:15),³⁰ and “Do not refrain from educating (*παιδεύειν*) a child; if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. If you beat him with a rod, you will rescue his soul from death” (Prov 23:13–14). The term *paideia* may have not traditionally meant violent discipline, but there is little doubt that beatings were a regular part of the instruction of children in ancient Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman education.³¹

Surely aware of this association both from Jewish and Greek literary accounts and from his own experience as a student, Philo also makes the connection between *paideia* and the rod, though in a manner quite unexpected, allegorically reading the rod of Jacob and the rod of Moses as *paideia*, the weapon necessary for combating the passions, desires, and appetites within the soul. Instead of beating children, the rod of *paideia* would beat the passions into submission. The rod became for Philo a potent symbol but not of corporal punishment. With the connection to the rod, Philo is not suggesting the necessity of divine disciplinary violence,³² as we find, for example, in the Wisdom of Solomon, the Psalms of Solomon, or 2 Maccabees. The training of the soul via the rod does not require physical abuse, but rather the application of *paideia* and ὁρθὸς λόγος to combat those things detrimental to the life of the soul and the individual. In linking *paideia* with the rods of Jacob and Moses, Philo internalizes the idiosyncratic understanding of *paideia* as מוסר and reevaluates and restructures it in the development of, what was to him, a more acceptable image of *paideia*. At the same time, Philo might also be subtly undermining the connection between corporal punishment and the instruction of children inherent in contemporary childhood education, and, in so doing, be participating in a philosophical debate current among several of Philo’s near contemporaries, such as Quintilian and Pseudo-Plutarch.³³

³⁰ Note that the Greek translation of Prov 22:15b diverges slightly from the Hebrew, which has שבט מוסר ירחיקנה ממנו.

³¹ See Marrou, *History of Education*, 158–9; Beck, *Greek Education*, 104–9, 215–18; Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 115–45; Criore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 65–73.

³² T.W. Kang, “Wisdom Mythology and Hellenistic *Paideia* in Philo: A Case Study of *De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia*” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1999) 260, argues that Philo’s expanded notion of *paideia*, which included all teachings, Hebrew and Greek, could also signify the Hebrew concept of מוסר as punishment or chastisement. I do not find any evidence of this view in Philo’s writings.

³³ See Marrou, *History of Education*, 272–3; Morgan, *Literate Education*, 132.

1. The Allegory of the Rods of Moses and Jacob

The fullest allegorical exegesis which will serve as foundational for Philo's understanding of *paideia* as the rod that helps to supplant the irrational passions of the soul is found in book two of *Legum allegoriae*. Philo begins from an allegorical reading of Exod 4:1–5, which he then links, through a sort of pre-rabbinic *gezerah shevah*,³⁴ to Gen 32:10, from Moses to Jacob and back, connected together via each man's respective *ράβδος*. Having just established the serpent as the symbol of pleasure (*Leg.* 2.84), Philo sets out a secondary lemma for establishing the role of *paideia* in combating the passions:

And serpentine pleasure (*ἡ ὀφιδώδης ἡδονή*) does not even abstain from attacking that most God-loving Moses, for we read as follows: “If, therefore, they will not obey me, nor listen to my voice – for they will say, “God has not been seen by you” – what shall I say to them?” And the Lord said to Moses, ‘What is that which is in your hand?’ And he said, ‘A rod (*ράβδος*).’ And God said, ‘Cast it onto the ground.’ And he cast it onto the ground, and it became a serpent (*ὄφις*), and Moses fled from it. And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand, and take hold of it by the tail.’ And having stretched out his hand, he took hold of it by the tail, and it became a rod (*ράβδος*) in his hand.” (*Leg.* 2.88)

We next learn that the story is not actually about God inquiring about Moses's walking stick. The question “What is that which is in your hand?” is to be understood as “What is in the practical life of the soul (*τῷ πρακτικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ βίῳ*)? For the hand is a symbol of action (*πράξεως*)” (*Leg.* 2.89). Moses's reply of “a rod”, should actually be read as *paideia*: “And he answers, ‘*paideia*’, which he calls a rod” (*Leg.* 2.89), *paideia* being foundational to the practical – or active – life.³⁵

Before completing his allegorical exegesis of the Exodus passage, Philo then takes the mention of the *ράβδος* as an opportunity to connect this account to the Genesis passage and to Jacob, the symbol of the soul which ascends to virtue through “training” (*ἀσκησις*):

On which account, Jacob, the supplanter of the passions, says, “For with my rod (*ράβδῳ*), I passed over this Jordan”. But, Jordan is to be interpreted as “descent”. And those things of a lower and earthly and perishable nature exist in wickedness and

³⁴ On this type of connection between textual lemmata, see D.T. Runia's discussion of verbal and thematic “Modes of Transition”, in “The Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises”, *VC* 38 (1984) 209–56; and idem, “Further Observations on the Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatise”, *VC* 41 (1987) 105–38.

³⁵ On the role of *paideia* in the active life, see especially Philo's discussion of mother *paideia*, father *ὀρθὸς λόγος*, and their four classes of children in Philo, *Ebr.* 33ff. Cf. *Decal.* 99–101 for how Philo saw the balance between the active and contemplative lives built into the structure of the creation narrative.

passion; but the athlete³⁶ mind (ὁ ἀσκητῆς νοῦς) passes over these things with *paideia*. (*Leg.* 2.89)³⁷

Using his allegorical interpretation of the encounter between God and Moses, Philo takes the “lowly” notion of a man crossing over a river with a “cane” (βακτηρία) and observes a lofty, universal truth: that *paideia* is necessary to overcome the corruptible passions.

With the link to Jacob, the athlete mind, established and at the fore, Philo then returns to complete his exegesis of the Exodus passage:

Well, therefore, does the God-loving Moses answer. For truly the actions of the virtuous man are supported by *paideia* as by a rod, quelling the agitation and restlessness of the soul. This rod, when cast away, becomes a serpent. And very appropriately. For if the soul casts away *paideia*, it becomes fond of pleasure instead of being fond of virtue. On which account Moses fled from it, for one who is fond of virtue does flee from passion and from pleasure. (*Leg.* 2.90)

A soul without *paideia* becomes susceptible to the influence of the irrational passions. And the first instinct of Moses, being the God-loving, virtue-loving man he is, is to flee from such passions, to avoid them and keep them at bay. However, Moses’s instinct here is wrong. Escape from the passions is the action fit for a mind not yet made perfect, but Moses, who represents the mind already perfected, must instead endure in his war with the passions and fight against them in order to keep them from wholly taking over and despoiling the soul (*Leg.* 2.91).³⁸ The rod of *paideia* is both necessary to supplant the passions and the result of successfully conquering them:

³⁶ My translation of the Greek ἀσκητῆς as “athlete”, I feel best represents Philo’s imagery of Jacob as the model of the one who achieves virtue through training (ἀσκησις). “Trainer” is acceptable, though ambiguous, having both an objective and subjective meaning. “Ascetic”, though obviously matching the Greek closely, should be avoided as the term conjures too easily notions of Christian monasticism and hermeticism, which are not suitable here. H. Dressler, *The Usage of Ἀσκέω and its Cognates in Greek Documents to 100 A.D.* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947) 73, argues that Philo, by both using traditional meanings of the term ἀσκέω and its cognates in passages that have moral and religious significance and giving new meanings to the terms related to spiritual exercise or religious life, is “the most significant witness of all extant authors to the semantic development of ἀσκέω and its cognates from the view-point of ascetical terminology. In his works later Christian writers found ἀσκέω and its cognates in meanings and contexts which they could easily adapt to the needs of Christian asceticism”. However, this does not mean that we already find in Philo those views of early Christian ascetic practice.

³⁷ Cf. Philo, *Leg.* 3.18, where Jacob subdues forcefully low-hanging, less powerful passions, but flees from the loftier passions on his way to perfect virtue.

³⁸ Aaron is the paradigm of one on the path towards perfection and, thus, one who flees the passions instead of fighting them directly. See Philo, *Leg.* 3.128, 140, 159.

On which account God commanded Moses “to take hold of it by the tail”, that is to say, “let not the hostile and untamable spirit of pleasure terrify you, but with all your power take hold of it, and seize it firmly, and master it. For it will again become a rod instead of a serpent, that is to say, instead of pleasure it will become *paideia* in your hand.” (*Leg.* 2.92)³⁹

Several other occurrences of a *ῥάβδος* in the books of Moses Philo likewise interprets as referring to *paideia*: *Mut.* 135 on Gen 38:25 and Judah's rod; *Congr.* 94 on Lev 27:32 and the tenth portion of cattle “under the rod” holy to the Lord;⁴⁰ and *Sacr.* 63 on Exod 12:11 and the Passover meal understood as the passing over from the created to the uncreated through the help of *paideia*. While the imagery of being “under the rod” could easily, in the literal sense, suggest physical chastisement and discipline, and indeed this is how scholars have often viewed these passages in Philo,⁴¹ Philo makes perfectly clear that the rod is but a symbol of the working of *paideia* within the soul or mind, mental discipline not actual corporal punishment. We see this explicitly in part of Philo's allegorical reading of the Hagar/Sarah narrative, in his explanation of Gen 16:6 and the idea that Sarah “afflicted (*ἐκάκωσεν*)” Hagar (*Congr.* 180).

Philo's understanding of the passage centers on the notion of affliction, and he begins from the comment in Deut 8:2 that God “afflicted” (*κακώσῃ*) and “tested” (*ἐκπειράσῃ*), the people in the wilderness through, among other things, starvation (*Congr.* 170). While such passages would provide the author of the Wisdom of Solomon the basis for his understanding of *paideia* as necessary, divine discipline and testing, the idea that God was doing something so vulgar as starving people to death (*Congr.* 171) gives Philo the ammunition he needs in order to argue that Moses had intended a different, truer meaning. The words “he afflicted”, in reality, “are equivalent to ‘he educated and admonished and corrected’” (*ἐπαίδευσεν καὶ ἐνουθέτησεν καὶ ἐσωφρόνισεν*), and this starvation is not about a deficiency of food, but rather of “pleasures, desires, fears, pain, injustices, and all things which are the works of wickedness or of the passions” (*Congr.* 172). Applying this idea to his reading of the Hagar/Sarah passage, Philo finally argues: “When, then, you hear that Hagar was afflicted by Sarah, you must not imagine any of those things which customarily arise out of feminine jealousy; for the passage is not about women but about minds (οὐ

³⁹ Cf. *Leg.* 2.12, 17.

⁴⁰ Philo often associates the number ten with *paideia*. See *Post.* 97; *Sacr.* 122; *Congr.* 88, 111; *Mut.* 228.

⁴¹ See C.G. Montefiore, “Florilegium Philonis”, *JQR* 7.3 (Apr. 1895) 481–545, at 489–90; Billings, *The Platonism of Philo*, 86–7; R. Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) 302–4; and Conley, “‘General Education’ in Philo of Alexandria”, 4–6. Such a literal reading misses Philo's point and the purpose of his allegorical reading entirely. It is not that *paideia* requires the rod in order to physically chastise and correct problematic behavior and thereby quell the irrational passions. It is that *paideia* is that rod, education and learning being the tools necessary to correct behavior and control the passions.

γὰρ περὶ γυναικῶν ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διανοιῶν), the one being trained in the preliminary studies, the other struggling through the contests of virtue” (*Congr.* 180). This type of allegorical reworking is indicative of Philo’s overall view of *paideia* as the rod and any seemingly disciplinary aspects associated with it.

2. Aids in the Fight against the Passions: Model Athletes, Mosaic Law, Ὁρθὸς Λόγος, Conscience

The connection between the rod of *paideia* and Jacob is not a coincidence. For Jacob, the symbol of the mind which improves to virtue through training or ἀσκησις, the rod of *paideia* was the natural ally against the irrational and earthly impulses. Jacob is often the “athlete of knowledge (ὁ ἀσκητῆς ἐπιστήμης) warring against the opposite disposition, ignorance, in a way shepherding the irrational powers in the soul by admonishing and tempering (νουθετῶν καὶ σωφρονίζων) them” (*Det.* 3). In fact, this is the reason Jacob is portrayed by Moses as a shepherd in Gen 30:36 (*Agr.* 42). Moses gives the title of “shepherd” only to the wise, the true kings, as they rule over irrational impulses like a flock (*Agr.* 41). Moses himself is often portrayed as such (Exod 3:1), as he is “the shepherd of that mind which embraces delusion over truth and welcomes appearance over reality” (*Agr.* 43). The shepherd is able to corral that which has gone astray.

The shepherd of the unruly passions and those guided by them, the athlete of virtue should serve as a model for others: “For we look upon the athlete of insight (φρονήσεως ἀσκητῆν) as the sun, since the one gives light to our bodies, and the other to the things of the soul, and the *paideia* which such a person makes use of, we look upon as the moon at night, for the use of each is the purest and most useful” (*Somn.* 2.134). We have seen that Moses was such a model student and the very paradigm of the already perfected individual because he had mastered all three paths to wisdom and virtue, including the training of the passions (*Mos.* 1.25–26, 28–29), and, as a help for those not so gifted, he left behind “trainer laws” (τοὺς ἀλείπτας νόμους) to help keep those passions in check (*Praem.* 5).⁴² For example, the dietary laws could allegorically symbolize the extinction of appetite and the destruction of the passions and the literal practice of this Mosaic philosophy helped to forcefully instill this *paideia*. As in 4 Maccabees, the law of Moses, for Philo, becomes both an

⁴² The Essenes, who utilized such “trainer laws” (Philo, *Prob.* 80), were also known as “athletes of virtue” (ἀθληταὶ ἀρετῆς) (*Prob.* 88).

educational resource and, at the same time, a way of living designed to model the lessons contained therein and to combat all irrational desire, passion, and emotion.⁴³

The laws of Moses, as *paideia*, then, could provide help and guidance in chastening the irrationality of the soul, and models like Jacob or Moses served as paradigms for the use of the rod of *paideia*. But humankind also has internal helpers, most notably ὁρθὸς λόγος and conscience, which work in concert with the various forms of *paideia* to control the passions within the soul.⁴⁴ Philo envisioned special individuals throughout history – Jews and Gentiles both – who were able to completely adhere to the unwritten law of the universe, the ὁρθὸς λόγος of nature, without any external help, solely by following the copy of the universal law which was imprinted on their minds.⁴⁵ While this perfect correspondence is rare, the way in which God created the sense-perceptible world and the composite nature of humanity mean that every individual has a stamp of the divine law within their soul or mind,⁴⁶ and this image aids in the fight against the irrational.

Philo often describes this internal ὁρθὸς λόγος⁴⁷ as that which, together with *paideia*, helps to subdue the passions and properly guide the mind. In this way, ὁρθὸς λόγος can be portrayed, like Jacob or Moses above, as the shepherd of our internal flock, which, without ὁρθὸς λόγος to “correct and educate it (νουθετήσοντός τε καὶ παιδεύσοντος), strays a great distance from the rational and immortal life” (*Post.* 68).

⁴³ See the comment of T. Novick, “Perspective, Paideia, and Accommodation in Philo”, *SPhiloA* 21 (2009) 49–62, at 58: “On the model of paedeutical myth, Scripture serves (*qua* text) as a *tool* in the educative process, while on the model of perspectival accommodation, it *illustrates* this process.”

⁴⁴ In *Mut.* 83–87 Philo distinguishes between Abraham, as the type which attains virtue through learning, and Jacob, as the type which does so through training. The former, through the necessity of memory in the learning process, has an internal “reminder (ὑποβολεύς)”, which aids in the acquisition of virtue. The latter, however, does not have this internal helper due to his need to continually practice and train himself to fight against the passions on his own without the assistance of a teacher.

⁴⁵ Philo, *Prob.* 62; *Spec.* 2.43–47.

⁴⁶ God thought about the plans for his great cosmic city, from which was ordered the intelligible world (Philo, *Opif.* 19). The intelligible cosmos “is nothing else than the Logos of God as he is actually engaged in creating the cosmos” (Philo, *Opif.* 24). The human νοῦς was then modeled on the divine λόγος or νοῦς (Philo, *Opif.* 69, 146; *Spec.* 3.207; *QG* 2.62). Because of this, the human νοῦς contains, in essence, the outlines of the noetic cosmos, the entire world of ideas. It is this νοῦς which God breathes into man’s face via πνεῦμα (Philo, *Opif.* 135). God “inspired (ἐνέπνει) that crafted thing from above with something of his own divinity. And this invisible divine nature stamped upon (ἐνεσφραγίζετο) the invisible soul its own impressions, in order that even the ground of the earth might have a share in the image of God” (Philo, *Det.* 86). Commenting on Gen 2:8, Philo says, “It was proper, after the creation of the world, to establish a contemplative system of life, in order that man, by the sight of the world and of the things which are contained in it, might be able to attain to a correct notion of the praise due to the Father. And since it was not possible for him to behold nature herself, nor properly to praise the Creator of the universe without wisdom, therefore the Creator planted the outline of it in the rational soul of the principal guide of man, namely the mind” (Philo, *QG* 1.6).

⁴⁷ There may be some reflection here on the Socratic δαίμων. On Philo’s Socratic self-fashioning, see M.B. Cover, “Philo’s ‘Confessions’: An Alexandrian Jew between Nothing and Something”, *SPhiloA* 23 (2020) 113–36, at 123–4.

Philo also envisions this function of ὀρθὸς λόγος as the charioteer, holding the reins of the passions (*Leg.* 3.118, 222), or the pilot, steering rightly the mind or soul (*Sacr.* 51). Yet, ὀρθὸς λόγος is not able to guide on its own; it must work together with the mind.⁴⁸ While a tyrannical νοῦς can cause suffering in both the body and soul and an indulging in passions and pleasure, the kingly νοῦς insures that the composite individual “will, like a ship, enjoy a fair voyage through life, being guided on its course by the good and skillful pilot, that is ὀρθὸς λόγος” (*Leg.* 3.80). Philo sets Aaron apart as one who attended to ὀρθὸς λόγος and bridled the soul with ὀρθὸς λόγος as its charioteer instead of allowing the passions to become too wild and to trample the whole soul (*Leg.* 3.128). Instead, Adam is the example of a mind moved contrary to ὀρθὸς λόγος, swayed by Eve, that is sense perception, letting the horses get the better of the charioteer, the ship get tossed upon the waves despite the pilot’s efforts (*Leg.* 3.222–223).

“Conscience” (τὸ συνειδός) is another internal aid in the individual’s fight against the passions, using ἔλεγχος to correct and subdue those unruly psychic components.⁴⁹ Like the rod of *paideia* and ὀρθὸς λόγος, conscience rebukes and chastens from within, though the purview of conscience often appears aimed at sins committed intentionally. Thus, conscience is not imagined as a shepherd or charioteer or pilot, but as the judge within the soul: “unintentional misdeeds, even if they are extremely extensive, are not worthy of blame and are pure, in that they do not have conscience, that burdensome accuser; but intentional offenses, even if they don’t extend a great deal, being convicted before the judge within the soul, are considered unholy, polluted, and impure” (*Deus* 128). Conscience effectively restrains the

⁴⁸ Note that νοῦς too is also described as the charioteer or pilot of the soul. See Philo, *Sacr.* 45; *Leg.* 3.224. Philo seems to shift these roles back and forth with no hesitation or contradiction.

⁴⁹ Philo is the first author writing in Greek to use the term “conscience”, whether τὸ συνειδός or συνειδήσις, extensively, though the Latin equivalent, *conscientia*, is regularly found from the first century BCE, in Cicero for example. Several scholars have understood that Philo essentially identified *suneidos* with *elenchos*, that both were effectively “conscience.” See V. Nikiprowetzky, “La doctrine de l’*elenchos* chez Philon, ses résonances philosophiques et sa portée religieuse”, in *Philon d’Alexandrie: Lyon 11–15 Septembre 1966: colloques nationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1967) 255–73; and R.T. Wallis, *The Idea of Conscience in Philo of Alexandria* (CHSHMC 13; Berkeley, 1975). Bosman, however, tried to distinguish between the two, suggesting that τὸ συνειδός typically had a negative role, while ἔλεγχος was more positive. See P. Bosman, *Conscience in Philo and Paul: A Conceptual History of the Synoida Word Group* (WUNT 2.166; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); and idem, “Conscience and Free Speech in Philo”, *SPhiloA* 18 (2006) 33–47. Klauck acknowledges that Philo, at times, had a more negative view of conscience, but he adds that Philo would distinguish between a bad conscience and a good or pure conscience. See H.-J. Klauck, “Accuser, Judge and Paraclete: on Conscience in Philo of Alexandria”, *Skriften Kerk* 20 (1999) 107–118, at 112–13; translated and abridged from H.-J. Klauck, “Ein Richter im eigenen Innern: Das Gewissen bei Philo von Alexandrien”, in idem (ed.), *Alte Welt und neuer Glaube: Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte, Forschungsgeschichte und Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (NTOA 29; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994) 33–58.

voluntary impulse of the offender until the soul is set right (*Deus* 100). This means putting it back under the reigns of ὀρθὸς λόγος (*Deus* 126).

Much like he did in his conceptualization of the rod of *paideia*, Philo, in his understanding of conscience, takes an idea most commonly associated with corporal punishment and internalizes the violence. In the Septuagint translations of *tōk̄ahath* (תוכחת) with ἔλεγχος, along the same lines as the transition from מוֹסֵר to *paideia*, several texts maintain the classical usage of the Greek ἔλεγχος, while others transfer the idea of *tōk̄ahath* (תוכחת) as violent correction onto the Greek term.⁵⁰ The result of this is that the notion of ἔλεγχος, which is so closely connected to *paideia* in the Septuagint texts, would come to be understood as a natural component of pedagogical discipline, whether human or divine. The rod and ἔλεγχος would pair well. We see this explicitly in the Wisdom of Solomon, where ἔλεγχος is a fundamental aspect of the text's insistence on the necessity of divine, violent testing for all of humankind in the overall goal of earning the immortal life of the soul after corporeal death.⁵¹ However, just as with the rod, Philo does not accept this easy connection, and, instead, transfers the chastening aspect of ἔλεγχος to the soul.⁵² The author of the Wisdom of Solomon will view the sense perceptible world and corporeal life as an ἀγών (4:2), a contest to be overcome and won in pursuit of the true life of the soul. Philo thrusts the ἀγών into the soul, an internal struggle for the life of the soul, contested by the individual with the help of *paideia*, νοῦς, ὀρθὸς λόγος, the laws of Moses, and conscience.⁵³

III. Conclusions

Like his Stoic neighbors, Philo envisioned philosophy as a therapy of desire, as the physician best suited to curing that pernicious disease of the soul. His unique and

⁵⁰ The terms do have much in common, both referring to that which will set something to right (proof, refutation, judgment, rebuke, correction, etc.), though the Hebrew term would often take on the role of divine disciplinary violence and punishment (e.g., Ezek 5:15; 2 Sam 7:14; Prov 19:25; Ps 141:5). ἔλεγχος is distanced from the notions of physical punishment particularly in LXX Proverbs (e.g., 6:23; 10:17; 13:18; 15:10), while the Greek term takes on those notions from the Hebrew *tōk̄ahath* (תוכחת) and its root in the Psalms (6:2; 37:2; 38:12; 72:14; 149:7), in Job (5:17–18), the Deuteronomistic History (2 Kgdms 7:14; 4 Kgdms 19:3), and in the Chronicler (2 Chr 26:20). On the translation, see Jason M. Zurawski, *Jewish Paideia: Education and Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023) 51–56.

⁵¹ Wis 1:3, 8–9; 2:14; 4:20; 11:6–10; 12:2.

⁵² W.H. Wagner, "Philo and Paideia", *Cithara* 10 (1971) 53–64, at 60: "The Logos-sent teacher, Elengchos, was in reality both the soul's reason (*logos*) on the throne of justice and an angelic advisor. Elengchos was not the product of encyclical paideia, but was God's revelatory and disciplinary emissary who exposed irrational thoughts and acts, then served as a friendly helper of the repentant."

⁵³ See Philo, *Det.* 23–24; *Praem.* 52 for the internal ἀγών of the soul.

vivid image of *paideia* as the rod is the perfect counterpart to the more common image of philosophy as *θεραπεία*, and it highlights Philo's constant insistence on the necessity of a proper education in the total development of the self. All of the various concepts examined here – *ράβδος*, *ἄσκησις*, *ὀρθὸς λόγος*, *τὸ συνειδὸς*, *ἔλεγχος*– find commonality in the internalized struggle of the soul, in the fight against the irrational impulses which can lead it astray. Philo's concept of the rod of *paideia*, then, is not so much a unique type of *paideia* or a pedagogical method as it is a symbol of how *paideia* works to bring about necessary change and correction. It symbolizes one of the many essential benefits of *paideia* in the life of the individual. And through this symbol we find Philo taking a stance within contemporary debates on the value of physical punishment in education, whether at the hands of parents or of God.

Though Philo does at times seem to approve of the corporal punishment of wicked or misbehaving children,⁵⁴ by symbolizing *paideia* as the rod, education itself as the instrument which beats back the passions, Philo may be questioning the value of actual physical violence within the realm of childhood education, as were other philosophers at the time.⁵⁵ In addition, while some would come to view all human suffering and pain as divinely ordained disciplinary *paideia*, Philo would seem to side more with the author of 4 Maccabees than those of 2 Maccabees, the Psalms of Solomon, or the Wisdom of Solomon. While God does indeed discipline and educate, it is now through things like *ὀρθὸς λόγος* and conscience and the laws of Moses, not through physical pain and torment. Through his symbol of *paideia* as the rod, Philo argues that education, philosophical training, and the laws of Moses are far more effective tools in the fight against irrationality and bodily desire than a simple stick and a beating.

⁵⁴ See especially Philo, *Spec.* 2.232–241 and *Det.* 143–147. On Philo's approval of beating children, see A. Reinhartz, "Parents and Children: A Philonic Perspective", in S.J.D. Cohen (ed.), *The Jewish Family in Antiquity* (BJS 289; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) 61–88, at 74–7, particularly in light of the Roman laws relating to *patria potestas*. Cf. M.R. Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (TSAJ 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 176.

⁵⁵ See Quintilian 1.3.14–17; Pseudo-Plutarch, *Lib. educ.* 9a.

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Philosophy and the *Sitz im Leben* of Philo's *Quod omnis probus liber sit*

Troels Engberg-Pedersen

Philo's treatise *Quod omnis probus liber sit* constitutes something of an enigma. (1) Where does it belong in Philo's philosophical oeuvre? Is it early or late? Or are we unable to place it chronologically? (2) What kind of treatise is it in terms of genre? What is its writerly aim? (3) What is its social context? To whom is it addressed? (4) How should it be situated in relation to Stoicism (to which it owes its theme), Platonism (which Philo normally favours), and Judaism (which constitutes the core of Philo's thinking)? It is unlikely that we shall ever be able to answer all these questions with anything like certainty. For that, we are too heavily left with one piece of evidence only: the text itself. Thus the enigma will probably remain in place.

In this essay, I aim to present the result of a rereading of *Probus* that focuses on the notion of philosophy in relation to this text. In what ways is it distinctly philosophical? And what kind of philosophical knowledge does it presuppose in its addressees? By this focus, I believe we will be able to throw at least some light on the questions just raised. After looking at the structure of the treatise (section 1), we will consider the relationship in *Probus* between philosophy and *paideia* ("education" or "culture") (section 2). Then we will study an issue of philosophical epistemology in the treatise, which concerns the relationship between philosophical knowledge and ordinary knowledge as evidenced in a broad range of ordinary social practices to which Philo appeals (section 3). Next, we will seek to identify Philo's own philosophical position in the text (section 4). This will lead us to investigate the role of philosophy in Philo's account of the Essenes in *Probus* in comparison with the account he gives in the *Hypothetica* (section 5). Finally, we will ask about the respective overall roles in the treatise of Stoicism, Platonism, and Judaism as indicated by the manner in which Philo invokes his various authorities (section 6). At the end, we shall come back to some of the questions raised above and suggest a possible *Sitz im Leben* for the treatise (section 7). Two results of the investigation will go directly against what

is normally said of *Probus* in the relevant scholarship: a) that it is not much concerned with Judaism and b) that it is probably an early piece by Philo.¹

As part of the investigation, I will be in close contact with a recently published small edition of *Probus* by Reinhard von Bendemann.² This volume provides an excellent introduction to the text, which repays careful reading. However, by attempting to synthesize the answers to be given to the philosophical topics identified above (sections 2–6), I hope to be able to add to von Bendemann’s fine analysis and to move further in the direction of grasping the overall shape and character of the treatise. I do not apologize for spending in what follows the reader’s time on a number of specific texts in *Probus*. In spite of von Bendemann’s (relatively slim) volume and until we have the planned commentary by Maren Niehoff, *Probus* has not received the careful investigation by scholarship that it richly deserves. I wish, at least, to direct the reader’s attention to some of the many important issues raised by this fascinating text.

Since I aim to show that *Probus* is a very carefully organized treatise, we must begin from considering its structure.³

I. Structure

§§1–15	Introduction ⁴
§§1–3	The thesis: “every good man is free” (1), which “all genuine votaries of philosophy” accept (2–3).
§§4–10	By contrast, those who have never tasted <i>paideia</i> reject it (4–5), finding it “absurd and odd” (6–7, quote: 6) and “paradoxical” (8–10, quote: 8).
§§11–15	However, they are “slaves to opinion” (11). Instead, they should seek the advice of “wise men” (12–13, quote: 12), which would lead them to self-

¹ For the former point see both P. Wendland, “Philo’s Schrift *Περὶ τοῦ πάντα σπουδαῖον εἶναι ἐλεύθερον*” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 1 (1888) 509–17 (“das jüdische Element ... tritt in ihr ... auffallend zurück”, 516) and J.R. Roysse (with A. Kamesar) in “The Works of Philo”, in A. Kamesar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 32–64, speaking of both *Probus*, *De providentia*, and *De animalibus*: “These texts demonstrate that Philo was fully at home discussing Greek philosophy, with little or no reference to the Bible and Judaism” (at 34) and “In these works Philo refers rarely, if at all, to biblical and Jewish teachings, although his characteristic views do emerge” (at 55). For the latter point see Wendland, “Philo’s Schrift”, 516: “vielleicht eine der ersten [Schriften] Philo’s, augenscheinlich für weitere, auch ausserjüdische Kreise bestimmt”.

² R. von Bendemann, *Philo von Alexandria: Über die Freiheit des Rechtschaffenen* (Kleine Bibliothek der antiken jüdischen und christlichen Literatur; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

³ Translations are throughout mainly taken from Colson (PLCL), though with many changes where required (for emphasis and the like).

⁴ Von Bendemann: §§1–16a: “Vorrede – Thema und erkenntnistheoretische Grundlagen”.

reproach (14). Similarly, young men should receive *paideia*, “wherein it is good for both young and old age to dwell” (15).

Part One: Philosophical arguments

§§16–40 More careful identification of the topic⁵

§§16–19 Slavery and freedom are of bodies and of souls (17). The theme is “characters” (*τρόποι* [18]), the person who is by nature “truly free” and “who alone possesses independence (*τὸ ἀυτοκρατές*)” as opposed to people who are called slaves by “convention” (*δόξα*), like “homebred”, “purchased”, or “captured in war” (19).

§§19–31 Description of the person who is truly free. He has God alone for his leader (19–20), is characterized by independence of action (*ἀυτοπραγία* [21]), to obey no order and work no will but his own (*τὸ ἀυτοκέλευστον καὶ ἐθελουργόν* [22]) since he stands triumphant over the passions (21). He is unconcerned not only with death (22), but with all other things which *οἱ πολλοί* consider evil (*κακία* [23]), including blows of fortune (24) with which he may be menaced (25). Against all such things “his soul is strongly fortified” (27) like a true athlete in a contest of pancratiasts (26) and “by the law of nature has all fools in subjection” (30). Indeed, he is the real king (30–31).

§§32–40 On the fundamental contrast between conventional understandings of slavery (and freedom) and real freedom. Services rendered are no proof of enslavement of people who are free, neither in war (32–33) nor in peace (34). Conversely, conventional slaves (either as being born so, 35, or being sold as slaves, 37) may be free (35–37), indeed, the latter (those sold into slavery) may become the masters of their masters (38–39). It is the wise man who is genuinely free (40).

§§41–57 Further arguments for the freedom of the good man⁶

§§41 (1) The wise man is happy, and hence free.

§§42–44 (2) The friend of God is free (42–43), indeed the only free one (44).

⁵ Von Bendemann: §§16b–31: “Klärung des Untersuchungsgegenstandes – Annäherung an Begriff und Wesen der wahrhaften Freiheit”; §§32–40: “Zwischenschritt: Äußerliche Sklavendienste bedeuten nicht Unfreiheit”.

⁶ Von Bendemann: §§41–44: “Freiheit und die Frage nach dem Glück der Menschen”; §§45–47: “Freiheit und Gesetz”; §§48–55a: “Die Freiheit der Rede als Prüfstein”; §§55b–58: “Rückkehr zur erkenntnistheoretischen Frage – Abschluss des ersten Teils der Untersuchung”. Von Bendemann for some reason takes §58 to conclude the first part of the treatise. I prefer to see it as an introduction to §§59–61, which I take to belong to Part One, too. To my mind, Part Two – on examples – begins at §62. Colson is right on this point (PLCL, 9:7): “Here [at §62] till towards the end of the treatise the argument proper is dropped and we have several stories of persons who exemplify the picture of the wise man given above.”

- §§45–47 (3) Those who live by the law (*νόμος* [45]) of right reason (*ὀρθὸς λόγος* [46, 47]) are free.
- §§48–57 (4) Those who have freedom of speech (*ἰσηγορία* [48]) towards one are other are free (48). And such are all (and only) the good (48–52). In particular, there is no freedom of speech for the bad person in relation to the good one (53–54). The many (*οἱ πολλοί*) do not understand what is good and bad (55–56). For them “the best possible boon” is slavery (57).
- §§58–61 Specific (Stoic) arguments (*πίστεις*) and demonstrations (*ἀποδείξεις*) for the supposedly “paradoxical” claim (58)⁷
- §59 The one who acts well has the power (*ἐξουσία*) to do everything, and to live as he wishes (*ὡς βούλεται*) and so is free.
- §§60–61 The wise man cannot be compelled (*μὴτ’ ἀναγκάσαι*) or prevented (*μὴτε κωλύσαι* [60]). So the good man is free (61).

Part Two: Examples

- §§62–91 Move towards giving examples both past and present of groups of the wise and free⁸
- §§62–72 Answer to the relatively uneducated people, who incredulously ask for examples, both past and present (62). In the past, some people “took God for their sole guide and lived according to the law of nature’s right reason” (62). In the present, too, there are men “formed in the likeness of the original picture of the nobility-and-goodness of the wise man” of yore (62). They flee from the cities, however (63), and we should track them down and entreat them to “humanize our bestial life” (64). We, however, ransack every corner of the earth for riches (65–66), while virtue is wholly near us (68). But of course it needs “the cultivator’s skill” (68–70, quote: 68). With such potentialities in us, why do we denounce the human race as lacking in wisdom and destroy the germs of nobility-and-goodness (71), with the consequence that “land and sea are full of the rich, the distinguished and the men of pleasure, but of the wise and just and virtuous, the number is small” (72)? Yet, they are there ...
- §§73–91 Examples of groups of wise people, both past and present, in Greece (*ἡ Ἑλλάς*) and the outside world (*ἡ βάρβαρος*).

⁷ Von Bendemann: §§59–61: “Freiheit als ungezwungenes und ungehindertes Handeln – These und logischer Beweis”.

⁸ Von Bendemann: §§62–72: “Widerlegung von Einwänden – Die Zahl der Weisen und Tugendhaften ist gering und verborgen”; §§73–91: “Beispiele für Gruppen von wahrhaft Freien – Die Gemeinschaft der Essener”.

Greece: the Seven wise man (73).

The outside world: the Magi (Persia) and the Gymnosophists (India [74]).

The outside world: the Essenes (Palestinian Syria [75–91]).

§§92–135 Examples mainly from the past of individuals who were wise and free⁹

§§93–97 Calanos.

§98 The usefulness of poets and prose writers.

§§99–104 Herakles.

§105 Not just heroes, but also men.

§§106–109 Anaxarchos and Zeno the Eleatic.

§§110–113 Like athletes.

§114 The Laconian boy.

§115 The Dardanian women.

§116 Polyxena.

§117 If women and boys, then also grown-up men.

§§118–119 The Xanthians.

§120 Transition from §§114–119.

§§121–124 Diogenes.

§§125–126 Chaereas.

§§127–130 Theodoros the Atheist.

§131–135 Wild animals, including cocks.

§§136–157 Nobility and genuine slavery¹⁰

§§136–146 Nobility (*καλλος*) as something sought for by all – and its true form.

§§148–157 Places of bodily security (asylums [148]) show that what matters is virtue (150) in the soul (149) as “an impregnable fortress” (151), which gives freedom of speech (*παρρησία* [152–153]) and the true nobility of a character that is “straight, simple and ingenuous” (155). Conversely, slaves who have been set free will remain slaves (156) as long as they lack reason and discernment (157).

⁹ Von Bendemann: §§92–97: “Beispiele für herausragende Einzelne, die als wahrhaft frei gelten können”; §§98–109: “Der Sonderfall der Heroen und die wahre Kraft der menschlichen Seele”; §§110–119: “Sterben für die Freiheit – Der Tod als letzter Ausweg, um frei zu sein”; §§120–130: “Freiheit als Wagemut und Unbeugsamkeit der Seele”; §§131–135: “Der Hahnenkampf als Beispiel aus der Tierwelt”.

¹⁰ Von Bendemann: §§136–143: “Die Freiheit als schönstes Gut und das hässliche Gegenbild der Sklaverei”; §§144–147: “Abwehr von Kritik durch die Rechtschaffenen”; §§148–157: “Asyl und Freilassung – Die Tugend als wahrer Schutzort und einziger Weg zur Freiheit”.

§§158–160 Conclusion¹¹

- §158 “Let us then do away with” the empty belief (κενή δόξα), “to which the great mass of men feebly cling” (cf. §§6–10) and “study the nature of the soul”.
- §159 If the soul is driven by desire, pleasure, fear, or pain, it enslaves itself and makes him whose soul it is a slave.
- §160 Souls who so far possess neither the passions nor the opposed virtues must be nurtured, first, with “the soft food of instruction given in the school subjects (τὰ ἐγκύκλια)” and later with “the harder, stronger meat, which philosophy produces”. Then they will “reach the happy consummation (τέλος αἰσίων) which Zeno, or rather an oracle higher than Zeno, bids us seek, a life led agreeably to nature”.

Understood in this way, *Probus* exhibits a clear structure.¹² After the introduction (§§1–15), the first half (§§16–61) sets out the basic, philosophical arguments for the thesis. The second half (§§62–135) then provides examples of actual wise men who have been free, either as groups (§§62–91) or as individuals (§§92–135). §§136–157 stands out in two ways. It broadens the display of examples of wise and free men by focusing on nobility (κάλλος) as something sought by *all* (as is shown by “the keenest in intelligence among the Greeks, the Athenians” [140]) – and then arguing that *true* nobility is found only in virtue. In so doing it also leads on to the conclusion in §§158–160, which returns to the faulty beliefs of the many already rehearsed in the introduction (§§6–10) and argues that true freedom is found only in the soul: in virtue. We may also note that the structure of the treatise points to three passages in which Philo makes claims that are particularly illuminating for his wider understanding of his theme: §§19–31, 62–72, and 136–157.

II. The Many, *Paideia*, and Philosophy

In order to identify Philo’s addressees in *Probus*, we need to attend to what he says of “the many” (οἱ πολλοί, and the like), of *paideia* (“education”, “culture”), and of philosophy. The topic is important in the introduction (§§1–15) and conclusion (§§158–160), but it also comes up at salient points throughout the treatise. Is *Probus*

¹¹ Von Bendemann: §§158–160: “Schluss – Freiheit in der Überwindung der Leidenschaften und die Notwendigkeit der philosophischen Erziehung”.

¹² Von Bendemann (25) is less happy: “Mit Abschnitt 58 ist ein vorläufiger Abschluss eines ersten Spannungsbogens der Abhandlung erreicht. Philo setzt hier selbst eine deutliche Zäsur [for this see above n. 6]. Die Gliederung der weiteren Schrift fällt dagegen schwerer”

addressed to “the many”, to people who have at least some degree of *paideia*, or merely to those who already know what philosophy is?

Before confronting this topic, we need to clarify the exact status of the theme of the treatise itself: “quod omnis probus liber sit”. Is this in fact the fully Stoic thesis that the person who is free is the morally good and wise man, and he alone? Or should it be understood in some other way? This question has become acute through a recent proposal by von Bendemann concerning the readership of Philo's treatise. On the one hand, von Bendemann recognizes that the theme of the thesis is in fact the fully Stoic one. Commenting on Philo's claim that “[t]he freedom of the good man (τὴν ἐλευθερίαν, ἣ περὶ τὸν σπουδαῖόν ἐστι) may also be learnt in other ways” (§41), von Bendemann says this:

In Abschnitt 41 fällt erstmals derjenige griechische Begriff [namely, *σπουδαῖος/probus*], der auch im Titel der Schrift verwendet wird: Es geht nun [NB] um die Freiheit des “Rechtschaffenen” bzw. “Tüchtigen” oder “Tugendhaften”.¹³

On the other hand, von Bendemann argues that this concept has precisely not been introduced until here in §41. He continues directly (my italics):

Dass Philo die Schrift nicht mit diesem Begriff begonnen, sondern zunächst den Begriff des “Gebildeten” gewählt hat [namely, *ὁ ἀστέῖος* in §1: *πᾶς ὁ ἀστέῖος ἐλεύθερος*], hängt mit *der erzieherisch-anleitenden Absicht des Textes* zusammen. Die Freiheitsschrift [that is, *Probus*] belässt es im Unterschied zu stoischen Schulpositionen nicht bei der plakativen Gegenüberstellung von Weisen und Unverständigen. Sie zielt vielmehr auf den allmählichen Fortschritt von der Unmündigkeit hin zu Klugheit, Bildung und Weisheit.

This understanding connects directly with von Bendemann's view of the intended readership of the treatise and Philo's authorial aim in relation to that readership (again my italics):

Die Schrift will es der Leserschaft ermöglichen, von der Grunderziehung und Grundbildung ausgehend zur wahren Philosophie voranzuschreiten. Zu einer solchen Erkenntnisbemühung und Wahrheitssuche will sie motivieren, diese anleiten, fördern und unterstützen. Darin wird *eine erzieherische Absicht* erkennbar. Man könnte sich den Text im griechischen Schulbetrieb Alexandrias vorstellen, in *der Ausbildung von Jugendlichen (Epheben)*, die gemahnt, hingeführt und »gebildet« werden sollen (vgl. Abschnitt 15). Philo zeigt in der Schrift, wie auch sonst, ein besonderes Interesse und Verständnis für *das jugendliche Lebensalter*.¹⁴

¹³ Von Bendemann, *Über die Freiheit des Rechtschaffenen*, 24.

¹⁴ Von Bendemann, *Über die Freiheit des Rechtschaffenen*, 16.

It has been necessary to quote extensively from von Bendemann's account in order, as it were, to "divide the issue". Von Bendemann is certainly right, as we shall see in more detail, that there is an important connection in *Probus* between *paideia* and philosophy. But the connection is this: that possession of a certain degree of *paideia* is a necessary condition for understanding Philo's philosophical thesis and perhaps even coming to accept it. That is, such a degree of *paideia* must *already* be present in the readers. That is why, as von Bendemann rightly notes in the above quotation, Philo emphasizes the need for the proper education of the young: they must in advance have been brought to possess that degree of *paideia*. Then – and this means: in connection with adults who have already been well educated – one may well speak of an "erzieherische Absicht" ("educational aim"). By contrast, Philo is not *addressing* the young (von Bendemann's Alexandrian ephebes). And in that sense there is no "erzieherische Absicht" in the treatise. Seen from this perspective, there is a certain misfit in the fact that in the quotation von Bendemann speaks both of "von der Grunderziehung und Grundbildung ausgehend" and of "gebildet werden sollen".

To a large extent, the choice between these two readings, which as we shall see is more important than it may initially appear, hangs on von Bendemann's claim that there is a kind of development in the treatise from the initial identification of its theme up to the clearly Stoic idea articulated in §41 that it is the morally good man (the *σπουδαῖος*) who is free. Initially, Philo has defined as the theme of the treatise "that every *ἀστέιος* is free" (§1), and this – so von Bendemann – does not restrict the person in question to being only the fully morally good person, the (Stoic) *σπουδαῖος*. Instead, it covers the person who is in a wider sense "educated" or "cultured" (German: "gebildet"), that is, the one who has (a sufficient degree of) *paideia*.¹⁵

I have serious doubts about this reading. First, a look at the Stoic texts quoted in the index of *SVF* (*SVF* IV) under *ἀστέιος* makes it immediately clear that within Stoicism, at least, *ἀστέιος* and *σπουδαῖος* are synonyms. In *SVF* 3.614 (from Stobaeus), *ἀστέιος* is connected directly with *σπουδαῖος* and even *σοφός*. Similarly, in *SVF* 3.614 (also Stobaeus) it is connected directly with *σπουδαῖος*. *SVF* 3.601 (also Stobaeus) is another case in point. Also, in all these texts the *ἀστέιος* is constantly contrasted with the one who is *φᾶῦλος* ("bad"), just as is the *σπουδαῖος*. Secondly, in *Probus* itself, Philo, on his side, follows the Stoic practice completely, for instance when he says in §59 that "the *ἀστέιος* [rightly translated here by Colson as 'the good man'] always acts with (moral) insight (*φρονίμως*), and, therefore [by the argument Philo has just given about acting *φρονίμως*], he alone is free". Thirdly, when Philo introduces his theme in §1 of the treatise, the contrast to his thesis that "every *ἀστέιος* is free" is that

¹⁵ See von Bendemann's note (*Über die Freiheit des Rechtschaffenen*, 44) to the translation ("jeder gebildete Mensch"): "Philo geht im ersten Teil seiner Schrift nicht von dem 'Weisen' aus; auch setzt er nicht mit dem Begriff ein, den er im Titel verwendet"

“every φαῦλος is a slave”. Once again, ἀστέϊος comes out in Philo's own text as being fully synonymous with σπουδαῖος. Finally, when Philo explicitly introduces the concept of the σπουδαῖος in §41, what he says is that the freedom of the σπουδαῖος may be seen “in other ways, too” (καὶ ἐξ ἑτέρων). Clearly, there is no change of *subject* here, only of arguments.

I conclude: Von Bendemann has rightly drawn attention to the role of *paideia* in Philo's conception of his audience, but he is not specifically *addressing* the *young*. Instead, his theme is throughout the full, Stoic idea that only the morally good man – the ἀστέϊος, the σπουδαῖος, the philosophically σοφός (“wise”) – is free. To whom, then, is Philo addressing this thesis? To the many, to those with a sufficient amount of *paideia*, or to those who have advanced fully to philosophy?

Officially, of course, the treatise is addressed to one Theodotus (Θεόδοτος), of whom we know nothing (§1).¹⁶ The name is Greek and this may be important, but apart from that Theodotus must stand for the group of people who are so well educated that there is a likelihood that they will be persuaded by Philo's arguments and convinced of his thesis. It is true that Philo begins in the introduction from identifying his readership as “genuine votaries of philosophy” (§3), which he immediately contrasts (§3) with another fixed group consisting of those who subscribe to the “opinions of the common herd” (δόξας ἀγελαίους), people who are “unskilled” (ιδιῶται) in “arguments” (λόγοι) and “(philosophical) tenets” (δόγματα). These are the people later identified as “the many” (οἱ πολλοί). He goes on (§§3–4) to describe the former group as “clean” (καθαροί) and the latter group as “unclean” (μὴ καθαροί). Is the contrast, then, only between “the common herd” (the many) and those who are *already* philosophers? No, for in spelling out the difference between “clean” and “unclean”, Philo brings in the notion of *paideia* (§4). The “unclean” are “those who have lived all their lives (διετέλεσαν) without *ever* tasting *paideia* at all (εἰς ἅπαν), or those who have received it *in a crooked and distorted form* (πλαγιῶς and μὴ ἐπ' εὐθείας)”. Are those who have received *paideia* in the proper way then the same as the genuine votaries of philosophy? Again no, for Philo goes on at the end of the introduction to urge that “the young, all of them and everywhere should dedicate the first fruits of the flower of their prime” to *paideia* (§15). This can hardly be a call that they should become philosophers right from the start. Instead, Philo seems to be operating with three categories: the young, who must become well educated at an early stage; more mature people, who have been well educated but have not yet become philosophers; and philosophers. In relation to these three categories, Philo's intended readership consists of the two latter groups, in particular the middle one consisting of those who have been brought up to have the necessary preconditions

¹⁶ Is it worth recalling that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament are similarly addressed to one “Theophilus” (Θεόφιλος), of whom we know nothing?

for understanding and accepting Philo's fully Stoic, philosophical thesis (and arguments) – but are not yet philosophers. These people are all “clean”, as, of course, are the genuine votaries of philosophy. And they are to be contrasted with those mature people who are “unclean” since they have not received the proper *paideia*. But the well-educated are not themselves already philosophers.

The same kind of gradation is found at the end of the treatise when Philo says this (§160):

Souls still naked like those of mere infants must be tended and nursed by instilling first (τὸ μὲν πρῶτον), in place of milk, the soft food of instruction given in the school subjects (τὰς διὰ τῶν ἐγκυκλίων ὑφηγήσεις), later (εἴτ' αὖθις), the harder, stronger meat, which philosophy produces.

Since the *ἐγκύκλια* constitute a broader category that falls under *paideia*, we must maintain a distinction in Philo's mind between *paideia* and philosophy.¹⁷ And it is the well-educated that constitute his primary audience.

This fits what one finds elsewhere in the treatise. At §62, Philo introduces his turn to examples by referring to some people among “those who have kept little company with the Muses” (τῶν ἥκιστα κεχρησκότων Μούσαις) who for that reason “have no understanding of the methods of logical deduction” (λόγοι ἀποδεικτικοί) like those Philo has been giving up to this point in the treatise. Since they have little *paideia*, they cannot understand the philosophical method of providing logical arguments and so ask, incredulously, for examples: “who have there been in the past, and who are there living now of the kind that you imagine?” (§62). It is not implied here that *paideia* equals philosophy, rather that in order to follow the logical arguments of philosophy, one needs at least some amount of *paideia*. Correspondingly, those who do have the sufficient amount of *paideia* will not already be the “genuine votaries of philosophy” from whom Philo began (§3). Therefore, when Philo, as it were, obliges his addressees by giving a long list of examples of his philosophical thesis (from §62 onwards), he is indicating that those addressees are precisely people who have *some paideia*, but not necessarily much.

Similarly, at §98 Philo claims this:

The freedom of the virtuous (the σπουδαῖοι) is also vouched for by the poets and prose writers, in whose thoughts Greeks and barbarians alike are reared almost from the cradle, and so gain improvement of character and restamp into sterling coin every bit of metal in their souls which has been debased by a faulty upbringing (τροφή) and mode of life (δίαιτα).

¹⁷ This is so both here and in the *De congressu eruditionis gratia*. Compare, e.g., *Congr.* 9–10, 73–80.

The “poets and prose writers” clearly belong under *paideia*. And so, those who have been brought up well in this kind of *paideia* will be able to appreciate what the poets and prose writers affirm, namely, that the virtuous are free. But poets and prose writers are not – necessarily, at least – philosophers. What is needed to appreciate Philo's philosophical claim about the freedom of the virtuous is not already philosophy, but something broader: the proper degree and character of *paideia*. Building on that, people who have received that kind of education may then also be brought to appreciate Philo's claim in its fully philosophical form.

We should conclude that Philo operates with three different social groups, only the latter two of which constitute his addressees:¹⁸

- (1) There are the “unclean”, who have lived their lives without ever tasting *paideia* at all or else have received it “in a crooked and distorted form” (§4). They are those who have “the opinions of the common herd” and are “unskilled in arguments and philosophical tenets” (§3). We shall meet them elsewhere in the treatise as “the many” (οἱ πολλοί).
- (2) Then there are those “clean” ones who have in fact received a sufficient amount of *paideia* to make them able to appreciate the claims made in philosophy even though they are not yet themselves philosophers. Let us call them “the well-educated”.
- (3) Finally, there are the genuine votaries of philosophy (§3).

Before either of these groups we may place

- (0) the young, whose souls have “as yet got nothing of either kind, neither that which enslaves, nor that which establishes freedom, souls still naked like those of mere infants” (§160).

They, as Philo is keen to insist, should receive the proper *paideia* as a prerequisite for being able to follow what he says in his treatise. They do not themselves constitute his addressees.

With this identification of Philo's readership, we have agreed with von Bendorff's focus on the role of the notion of *paideia* in capturing his intended readers, but disagreed with finding these among the young. Instead, Philo aims to address a group of more mature people whom he may contrast with the οἱ πολλοί who have either received no *paideia* at all or else in a false form. The well-educated people will be able, so he thinks, to understand his fully Stoic, philosophical thesis, which the many consider paradoxical and odd in the extreme (see §§6–10). By understanding

¹⁸ I exclude from this list the young who have not yet received any *paideia*. We saw, against von Bendorff, that they do not constitute the addressees of the text.

it, they will hopefully also come to accept it in its full significance and so *become* philosophers.

So much right now for Philo's intended readership. We will return to the issue in connection with the question whether Philo's intended readers in *Probus* are Jews or non-Jews. First, however, we must consider what may be gleaned about Philo's fully Stoic, philosophical thesis from the fact that it may hopefully be understood and accepted by the well-educated who are not yet philosophers. What does this underlying idea tell us about the status of the philosophical thesis itself in relation to what we may call ordinary knowledge? What we are after here is the special character of philosophy in *Probus* and its relationship with knowledge that is more broadly shared.

III. Epistemology: Paradoxical Claims, Ordinary Knowledge, and Philosophical Knowledge

We noted that the many, who are uneducated or wrongly educated, consider Philo's philosophical thesis paradoxical and absurd. At §§6–10 he puts this view into their mouth: “Surely, it is strange (*ἐκτόπια*) and astonishing (*θαύματα*) to claim, etc.” (§6). And again: “Surely, it is unreasonable (*παράλογα*) and full of shamelessness and madness and I know not what to claim, etc.” (§8). What Philo is here celebrating are the famous Stoic so-called paradoxes concerning who is genuinely a king, rich, handsome etc.¹⁹ In the first case (§§6–7), the question is who is truly an exile and a citizen, in the second case (§§8–9), who is truly rich and poor, and thirdly (§10), who is truly a slave and free. Philo is happy to spell out how the many react to the Stoic claims (§10):

It is part of the same fantastic dream (*ἀπὸ ... τῆς αὐτῆς ὀνειρώξεως*) when you dare to ascribe slavery to the highly connected, the indisputably nobly born etc.

But he immediately goes on to brand what they say as “the shallow talk of men with minds bedimmed, slaves to opinion, basing themselves on the senses” (§11). Similarly, at the end of the treatise he feels confident that he may now dismiss completely the views of the many (§158):

Let us then do away with the idle fancy (*τὴν κενὴν δόξαν*), to which the great mass of men (*ὁ πολὺς ὄμιλος ἀνθρώπων*) feebly cling, and fixing our affections on that holiest of

¹⁹ Cf., e.g., *SVF* 3.599 (Cicero) in cap. IX §5 (§§589–603) of *SVF* 3: “Sapiens est dives, formosus, liber”.

possessions, truth, refuse to ascribe citizenship or freedom to possessors of so-called civic rights, or slavery to servants, etc.

In short, the Stoic thesis for which Philo argues in the treatise is one that expresses “the holiest of possessions, truth”. And it is wholly opposed to the ordinary ways of using language, to which “the great mass of men feebly cling”. All of this is closely in line with the original Stoic thinking about their “paradoxes”.

Against this background, it is all the more striking that Philo insists throughout the treatise that ordinary thinking about the values points strongly in the direction of the Stoic (and his own) thesis. That is, this thesis is only initially or superficially paradoxical. It actually expresses the truth. Moreover, this is something that can be seen not only by philosophers (or even only by those philosophers who themselves subscribe to this particular philosophy), but also by – and precisely so – the well-educated, those to whom Philo's own treatise is primarily directed. There is a recurrent theme here: that the ordinary thinking about values that is expressed in the many examples given by poets and prose writers of excellent practice by individuals and groups itself points towards the paradoxical thesis. And that is something that can be seen and understood by the well-educated, too.

In arguing like this, Philo is not in the least parting company with Stoicism. The Stoics, too, thought that there was no unbridgeable gap between ordinary thinking about values and their own understanding of the good. In fact, they were keen to show that the gap between the two can precisely be bridged. When rightly understood, the lore of moral thinking to be found in traditional stories of moral exemplars past or present points toward the Stoic thesis itself.

The same distinctly philosophical idea lies behind a number of Philo's moves in *Probus*. One example (§21) is his claim that in order to see the close kinship of “independence of action” (*αὐτοπραγία*) and “freedom” (*ἐλευθερία*), one must “look with a penetrating eye into the facts” (*εἶσω πορευθῶν τῶν πραγμάτων ... διακύψαι*).²⁰ Clearly, there is something to be seen in the *πράγματα* themselves that confirms the philosophical thesis. Another example is Philo's claim that the “unenslaved character” of the good man (§§23–25) may also be seen from a game of pancratiasts, where one of the combatants will stand firm against all attacks by the other: “I have observed in a contest of pancratiasts how, etc.” (§26). Once again, there is a social practice that confirms the philosophical thesis.

Consider as a third example how he continues in §§27–28. He first transfers his observation from the pancratiast to “the virtuous man” (Colson's correct translation of *ὁ ἀστέϊος* [§27]) – like this: “he (the virtuous man) compels the employer of

²⁰ LSJ translates *διακύπτω* as “stoop so as to peep in”. In Philo's highly metaphorical language it is almost a technical term. See Mayer's *Index Philoneus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974) s.v.

violence to give up in exhaustion, sooner than himself submit to do anything contrary to his judgement.” Then he adds (§27):

This statement may perhaps seem incredible to those who have had no experience of virtue (so would the other just mentioned to those who do not know the pancratiast), but nonetheless it is an actual fact.

That is, even though the many may not agree, nevertheless, if one has had merely the least experience of virtue, one will concur. A fourth example is the way Philo immediately continues (§28): “It is this which Antisthenes had in view when he said, etc.” In other words, there is evidence for the point in the lore of traditional thinking on the matter.

A much more extensive example of the same idea is the whole of §§32–40, of which Colson wrote that these sections “do not seem to bear upon the argument that the good man alone is free”.²¹ I think they definitely do this by pointing towards features of ordinary life that show that the connection between slavery and “services rendered” that the many normally draw does not in fact hold true. Some people who are free (like soldiers in war) render many “services” (§§32–33), and the same goes for poor people in peacetime, who are also free (§34). Conversely, “[t]here are others born in slavery, who by a happy dispensation of fortune pursue the occupations of the free. They receive the stewardship of houses and landed estates and great properties, etc.” (§35). All these facts about ordinary life show what Philo has earlier stated in the best Stoic manner – thus (§23):

But we must reflect that exemption from slavery belongs to him who takes no thought not only of death but also of poverty, disrepute and pain and all the other things which the mass of men (*οἱ πολλοί*) count as evil, though the evil lies in themselves and in their judgement, which makes them test the slave by the tasks he performs and fix their eyes on the services he renders instead of on his unenslaved character (*τὸ ἀδούλωτον ἦθος*).

Once again – that is the overall message of §§32–40 – we see that there are features of ordinary life on which everybody will agree that point in the direction of the philosophical claim about the unenslaved character.

As we know, in §41 Philo then turns to show the freedom of the good man (*ὁ σπουδαῖος*) “in other ways, too”. What follows is a fascinating mixture of different types of arguments: §41 on the wise man’s “power over everything” because he alone is happy; §§42–44 on the freedom (*ἐλευθερία*) and authority (*ἀρχή*) of those who are friends of God just as those who are “friends” of earthly kings; §§45–47 on the freedom of those who are “regulated by law” just as one finds in cities like Athens and

²¹ Colson, PLCL 9:28 n. a.

Sparta; §§48–53 on the freedom of those who by having knowledge have “equality of speech” (*ισηγορία*). In all these arguments, Philo is clearly trying to show how his philosophical thesis may be elicited from a number of ordinary practices that will be recognized by all.

Note, then, how Philo concludes this whole section in §§54–57. He begins like this (§54):

I am aware that many people (*πολλοί*) will pour abuse on such words and hold that Zeno's question (“Shall not the bad rue it if they gainsay the good?” [§53]) shows presumption rather than good sense.²² But when they have had their jeering and stopped laughing, if they are willing to look closely (*διακύψαι*) and seek for a clear understanding of the saying, they will to their utter confusion recognize its absolute truth and that nothing will a man rue more than refusal to listen to the wise.

Here again, there is a strong initial contrast to the views of the many. But here again there is the idea that by “looking closely” and seeking a “clear understanding”, even they would see the truth. That is, there is enough material in ordinary practices and habits that point in the direction of the philosophical truth. In the present case, however, their “looking closely” is only counterfactually imagined by Philo. After all, they will not be prepared to do that. He goes on to explain why that is (§55):

But the majority (*οἱ πολλοί*), who through the maiming (or blindness: *πήρωσις*) of their reasoning (*λογισμός*) do not discern the damages (*βλάβαι*) which the soul has sustained, only feel the pain of external (damages), because the faculty of judgement (*τὸ κριτήριον*), which alone can enable them to apprehend the loss (*ζημία*) to their mind (*διάνοια*), has been taken from them.

All through this, there is a keen interest on Philo's part in the epistemological condition for being able to see the philosophical truth. But the point right here is that this truth can in fact be seen in the valuations which underlie ordinary practices and habits.

Philo's epistemological concern about who will be able to understand his philosophical thesis comes out clearly also in §58, which introduces a section (§§59–61) of the most explicitly philosophical syllogisms that concludes Part One of the treatise. Here is the text (§58):

²² This repeats the content of §§6–10 in the introduction.

I have now said all that appeared to me necessary to prove the proposition,²³ but just as physicians regularly use a greater multiformity of treatment to cure multiform diseases, so when statements regarded as paradoxical (τὰ παράδοξα νομιζόμενα) are put forward, their unfamiliarity renders it necessary to apply a succession of proofs (πίστεις) to bear upon the subject. For some can only just (μόλις) be brought to understand (αἰσθάνεσθαι) under the impact of a continued series of demonstrations (ἀποδείξεις).²⁴

Here we at last meet the *mot propre* for Philo's philosophical thesis: τὰ παράδοξα νομιζόμενα. We also hear that it is a thesis for which proper philosophical "proofs" and "demonstrations" must be given. Finally, we are told that "some can only just" be brought to understand those proofs. Who are these people? Since there is at least a chance that they will be able to understand, it is unlikely that they are just the many (the wholly uneducated or those wrongly educated), those whose reaction to the Stoic paradoxes Philo has rehearsed in §§6–10. Instead, they will – once again – be people with some correct *paideia*, who have been listening to Philo's arguments in part one of the treatise that have been based on the valuations of ordinary practice. These people may – hopefully – be convinced by the further proofs that Philo now goes on to give. Seen in that light, it is perhaps a little strange that the proofs that Philo does give in §§59–61 are the most rigorously philosophical in the whole treatise. In fact, he here provides two arguments in syllogistic form that are so philosophical (and, indeed, distinctly Stoic) that von Arnim included them in *SVF*!²⁵ Perhaps Philo's idea is that these arguments, which are as it were *the* proper philosophical arguments for his thesis, constitute both a high point and an end point of the various arguments based on the valuations of ordinary practice that he has given up to this point. For there, as we remember, the idea was that in spite of initial appearances the philosophical thesis was somehow implied in those valuations. The two arguments therefore appropriately conclude that whole part of the treatise.²⁶

Consider then how Philo's epistemological concern is once again articulated at the beginning of part two of the treatise, in which he turns to examples. Here is the text, which we already partly know (§62):

²³ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ζητουμένου διαύστασιν. Von Bendemann translates: "... als gründliche Zusammenstellung des Untersuchungsgegenstandes." διαύστασις is a rare word. Colson's translation may be too explicit, but appears to go in the proper direction. Is "establish what we are after" more adequate?

²⁴ In the last sentence, does ἀποδείξεων in the Greek go with συνεχία (series) or with αἰσθάνονται? I have followed Colson here. Von Bendemann takes the other road: "Denn manche werden nur mit Mühe und durch Beharrlichkeit getroffen, so dass sie die Beweise wahrnehmen."

²⁵ *SVF* 3.361–363.

²⁶ The place of §§59–61 in relation to what precedes is comparable to that of §§75–91 in relation to the examples of groups of people who are both good and free given in §§73–74 (as introduced in §§62–72). In both cases, Philo provides his most striking text at the end.

But among those who have kept little company with the Muses, there are some who have no understanding of the methods of logical deduction (λόγοι ἀποδεικτικοί), but make general statements based on appearances (τάς καθόλου τῶν πραγμάτων ἐμφάσεις παριστάσιν).²⁷ These people often ask, “Who have there been in the past, and who are there living now of the kind that you imagine (or ‘invent’ [ἀναπλάττετε])?”

If one has had only a small amount of *paideia*, one will only have a general understanding of things as they present themselves to the senses. This is characteristic of the many, who lack the ability that Philo has repeatedly appealed to of “looking closely” (διακύψαι) into things. And so, they will challenge their opponents by incredulously asking whoever has been like that, past or present: a good man who is thereby also free (see the end of §61). Such a person, they will say, is only a figment of the imagination, something wholly invented. This introduction to Philo's giving of examples in the whole of part two of the treatise is itself a good example of his constant epistemological concern about the necessary requirement in people for coming to see the truth.

In the rest of the treatise, as we know, Philo goes on to give a host of examples – first (§§73–91) of groups of people and next (§§92–135) of individuals – to show, as he introduces this approach (§62), that “both in the past there have been those who surpassed their contemporaries in virtue” and “also in our own time there are still men formed as it were in the likeness of the original picture supplied by the high excellence of sages”. This, too, is a sign of Philo's epistemological concern, but now directed towards the world itself. There are specimens of the high excellence (καλοκἀγαθία) of wise men, both then and now. Thus, the notion of a good and free man is not just a figment of the imagination. It is real.

The same epistemological concern permeates the whole of §§63–72, in which Philo further introduces his examples. The fact that the souls of Philo's gainsayers (who are the many) have been bereft of freedom and are held in bondage to folly (ἀφροσύνη) and all the other vices, does not imply that the same is true of the human race (τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος [§63]) as such. Philo then spells out the difference between the way of life of “the great crowd of the more thoughtless” (§63), who ransack every corner of the earth (§65) and the sea (§66) for riches, and the few, who “keep themselves at leisure for the contemplation of what nature has to show” (§63) and who for the same reason “flee right away” from the cities (§63). These latter “we, if we had any zeal for betterment, should track to their hiding places, and sitting as suppliants before them, exhort them to join us and *humanize our bestial life*, in place of war and slavery and a host of ills proclaiming peace, liberty and the overflowing

²⁷ Colson's note (PLCL 9:46, n. a) is right on target here: “Lit. ‘set forth the general appearances of things’, meaning I suppose the impressions they produce as a whole when we do not examine them in detail.”

abundance of all other blessings” (§64).²⁸ All of this serves as a denunciation of the way of life of the many and is a call to follow the few and to “rear the virtues into stems rising up to heaven” (§69). In terms of Philo’s argument from §62 onwards, it is an insistence that what the gainsayers have to say about the lack of examples of good and free men is not, in fact, true of the human race as such (§63). He therefore concludes (§71):

Having then in us such potentialities (*ἀφορμαί* – later in the same section called *τὰ καλοκάγαθίας σπέρματα* [“the germs of excellence”]), should we not blush to denounce the human race (*ἀνθρώπων γένος*) as lacking in wisdom, wisdom which the bellows could kindle into a blaze like the spark which smoulders in the firewood?

Seen in this light, the examples Philo is about to give are all to be understood as evidence in the real world for the thoroughly Stoic claim that human beings as such do have in them potentialities for wisdom and germs of moral excellence. This claim is at the core of Philo’s philosophical thesis about the good and the free. It is true, as he admits (§72), that “land and sea are full of the rich, the distinguished and the men of pleasure”, whereas “of the wise and just and virtuous, the number is small But this small body, though scanty, is not absolutely non-existent.”

In this way, Philo has carefully justified the extended treatment he gives in §§73–135 of groups of people and individuals who have shown themselves to be free through their goodness. It is worth considering in this light the section that follows on the direct examples (§§136–157). How are the statements about freedom in this section connected with the overall philosophical theme of the freedom of the wise and good person? In particular, is Philo not here speaking of freedom in accordance with “the common conception of freedom and slavery” as opposed to “freedom in the philosophical sense”?²⁹

We should take careful notice of the way in which Philo introduces this whole section. Here is §136:

This too is a truth well known to everyone who has taken even a slight hold of culture (*τῶν ἐπὶ βραχὺ παιδείας ἀψαμένων*), that freedom is an honourable thing (*καλὸν ... πρᾶγμα*), and slavery a disgraceful thing (*αἰσχρὸν*, sc. *πρᾶγμα*), and that honourable things (*τὰ καλὰ*) are associated with (or “belong to” [*πρόσσειτι*]) good men (*τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς*) and disgraceful things (*τὰ αἰσχρά*) with (or to) bad men (*τοῖς φαύλοις*). Hence, it clearly follows that no person of true worth (*σπουδαῖος*) is a slave, though threatened by a host

²⁸ I have italicized the translation of *τεθριωμένων τὸν βίον ... ἐξημερώσωσιν* because of its striking character. It evidently refers back to “the human race” of §63. But it also captures Philo’s own (in this case, basically Stoic) conception of “the human being”.

²⁹ This is Colson’s view (PLCL 9:88 n. a) about §§137–143: “The real argument is resumed in §144.”

of claimants who produce contracts to prove ownership, nor is a fool (*ἄφρων*) a free man, even though he be a Croesus or a Midas or the (Persian) Great King himself.

We may initially note that the terms *ἀγαθός* and *σπουδαῖος* are to be taken as synonyms here as they should be in such a Stoically inspired argument, and the same goes for *φαῦλος* and *ἄφρων*. Otherwise, Philo's argument will not go through. More important is the fact that Philo claims his two premises as something that will be immediately recognized by the well-educated: freedom is something *καλόν*, that is, "fine" and socially recognized as that; and what is "fine" belongs to people who are morally good. (And of course conversely for slavery and what is "disgraceful".) Here the first premise states a fact (so Philo claims) about social values. But the same also holds of the second premise. This latter idea constitutes the core of ancient ethics, not just within Stoicism, but already in Aristotle and Plato. What it means is this: what is socially recognized as being "fine", "admirable", "noble" (that is, *καλόν*) is – the morally good. Or conversely: the morally good is what is socially recognized as being "fine", etc. In making this claim, the ancient philosophers connected directly what we may call social value with what we might call moral value. These two kinds of value in fact (so the philosophers claimed) came together. Moreover, as Philo here states, if one has the least degree of *paideia* – through being acquainted, for instance, with what "poets and prose writers" are constantly saying – one will immediately recognize this. And so, through seeing that freedom is socially valued, one will *eo ipso* see that it belongs to the morally good.

With this introduction to the whole section of §§136–157, Philo has laid the ground for arguing that freedom is in fact socially recognized as being something *καλόν*. And that is how he immediately continues in the whole of §§137–143. He begins like this (§137):

This doctrine that freedom is glorious and honourable, slavery execrable and disgraceful, is attested by cities and nations, etc.

And he ends by appealing to the evidence given by poets (§143):

If we are justified in listening to the poets – and why should we not, since they are our educators (*παιδεύται*) through all our days, and as parents in private life teach wisdom to their children, so do they in public life to their cities

In short, from §136 onwards Philo is not inexplicably falling back on "the common conception of freedom and slavery" and forgetting about "the philosophical sense". Instead, he is arguing that freedom is in fact recognized *socially* as something highly *καλόν*. Thus, there is universal confirmation of the high value of freedom which makes it the case that it also in fact belongs to those who are morally good.

From §144 onwards Philo takes up another aspect of the freedom of the morally good that was already mentioned in §136: that the “menacing gestures and speeches with which some people threaten the wise” should be treated as being of no avail. We now know why: the morally good man of §136 is actually in possession of the socially recognized “glorious honour of freedom” (τὸ ... ἐλευθερίας ... αἰόδιμον κάλλος [§137]) which nobody can restrict by menacing gestures and speeches. Philo first gives two examples of the freedom of speech with which the wise man will respond to somebody who threatens to buy him (§§144–146). Next (§§148–157),³⁰ he focuses particularly on the kind of “freedom of speech” (παρηρησία [§§150, 152]) which has its base in the wise man’s virtuous soul. Here too he moves from a socially recognized fact to the point about virtue. Just as sanctuaries may provide “security” (ἄδεια) and “license of speech” (ἐκεχειρία) to bond servants who take refuge in them (§§148–149), so it is with virtue in the case of the wise (§150). Nay, even more. For those who take refuge in sacrosanct localities and owe their security only to those localities turn out to be in bondage to numberless other considerations (§151). “But those who take refuge in virtue, as an indestructible and impregnable fortress, disregard the darts and arrows aimed at them by the passions which stalk them” (§151). On the one hand, then, there is a social practice that points directly towards the freedom of the wise. On the other hand, as Philo concludes the whole section in §§156–157, there also is a difference. If slaves in the social system are released from the ownership of their masters, they do not thereby become genuinely free. They are admittedly no longer “servants” (οἰκέται). But if they lack wisdom, they will remain slaves of the vilest kind to all the considerations that are set aside by virtue.

We should conclude that throughout the treatise Philo is deeply concerned with two issues of epistemology that are intrinsically connected. First, there is the question of who will be able to see the truth for which Philo is arguing: is it the many, is it people with an adequate degree of *paideia*, or is it only people who are already philosophers? Connected with this question is the question of what kinds of argument (logical proofs, examples?) a writer should employ in relation to the three groups. Secondly, there is the issue of how the philosophical thesis itself, with its exclusive claim to express the truth of the matter, is connected with the valuations to be found in ordinary, social practices and habits. Here we have seen that Philo is keen to show (as were his Stoic predecessors in this matter) that the two fields of valuation are closely connected, *against* the usual understanding of the many. In spite of initial appearances, the valuations that go into ordinary, social practices and habits point directly forward to the philosophical thesis.

³⁰ Of §147, von Bendemann rightly says this (*Über die Freiheit des Rechtschaffenen*, 82 n. 52): “Die Stellung von Abschnitt 147 im gegebenen Zusammenhang ist ein altes Rätsel der Forschung.”

IV. Philo's Own Philosophy in *Probus*

In addition to Philo's argument in *Probus* – which is itself a philosophical argument – that ordinary, social practices and habits point in the direction of his philosophical thesis, there are other arguments for Philo's thesis in the treatise that are of a more distinctly philosophical kind. These too we need to consider as one more piece in the puzzle in order to grasp Philo's authorial intention with this text.

We may gather the more distinctly philosophical arguments in a number of groups.

(1) The basic argument is that slavery and freedom are matters of the soul as opposed to the body. This is how Philo starts out in §§17–19 and how he concludes in §158: “Let us then ... study the nature of the soul.”

(2) Very closely connected with this is the equally basic argument that freedom is freedom from the passions. This is argued in §§21–27 and again at the end of the treatise in §159.

(3) In some passages, the idea of freedom (of the soul and from the passions) is further connected with the notion of happiness. This is seen, for instance, in §41 and again at the end of the treatise in §160. We will see below that this is also how Philo ends his account of the Essenes in §91.

(4) In the special section of §§59–61, whose position we considered above, Philo produces a string of distinctly Stoic arguments that focus on the role of living in accordance with moral virtue for bringing it about that a person will live “as he wishes” (ὡς βούλεται [§59]) and that he is “neither compelled (ἀναγκάζεται) nor hindered (κωλύεται)” (§§60–61). In this section, Philo even employs the specifically Stoic distinction between “good acts” (κατορθώματα), “bad acts” (ἀμαρτήματα) and acts that are “neutral” (μέσα) and “indifferent” (ἀδιάφορα).

(5) Another type of distinctly philosophical argument is one that refers to taking “God alone for one's leader” (§20) – as opposed to letting oneself be governed by “terms which have no basis in nature (φύσις) but depend on convention (δόξα), such as “homebred [slaves] (οἰκοτρίβαι)”, “purchased” [slaves] (ἀργυρώνητοι), or [slaves] “captured in war (αἰχμάλωτοι)” (§19). This idea is introduced through a quotation from Sophocles, whose words “are as true as any (Delphic) oracle” (πυθόχρηστον [§19]). The idea of following God alone is taken up in the introduction (§62) to part two of the treatise. When the many ask for examples, Philo comments: “An excellent answer is that in the past there have been those who surpassed their contemporaries in virtue, who took God for their sole guide.” The contrast between God and nature, on the one hand, and convention, on the other, is a distinctly philosophical one.

(6) Closely related to this is the rest of the text in §62: “... who took God for their sole guide and lived according to law (κατὰ νόμον), <namely,> the right reason of

nature (τὸν ὀρθὸν φύσεως λόγον).” The connection between God, “law” (νόμος), “right reason” (ὀρθὸς λόγος), and “nature” (φύσις) has been carefully prepared for in §§45–47, which – not at all coincidentally – follow on an argument about having “God for a friend” (§§42–44). In the case of cities, says Philo, “those which have laws to care for and protect them are free” (§45). And “so, too, with human beings”: “Those in whom anger or desire or any other passion, or again any insidious vice, holds sway are entirely enslaved, while all whose life is regulated by law are free” (§45). This is then explained:

The infallible law (νόμος ἀψευδῆς) is right reason (ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος), (it is) engraved not by this mortal or that and, therefore, perishable as he, nor on parchment or slabs, and therefore, soulless as they, but by immortal nature (ὑφ’ ἀθανάτου φύσεως) on the immortal mind (ἐν ἀθανάτῳ διανοίᾳ), never to perish (ἄφθαρτος).³¹

This is a nice mixture of Stoicism and Philo’s own substantial degree of Platonism. The notion of ὀρθὸς λόγος is fundamentally Stoic as is its combination with νόμος, cf., e.g., Chrysippus in *SVF* 3.308 (from Diogenes Laertius 7.128), where the two notions are placed side by side. Relevant here is also Philo himself in *Opif.* 143, where he speaks of the “constitution” (πολιτεία) of the whole κόσμος:

And this constitution is the right reason of nature (ὁ τῆς φύσεως ὀρθὸς λόγος), which [the λόγος] is more properly called an ordinance (θεσμός) since it is a divine law (νόμος θεῖος ὤν) in accordance with which there was duly apportioned to all existences that which rightly falls to them severally.³²

By contrast, the idea of immortal nature (presumably = God), the immortal mind, and imperishability is Platonic. It points in the direction of Philo’s own, distinctive epistemology and ontology.

In these passages of *Probus*, Philo takes a huge step towards articulating the overall philosophical standpoint (itself a combination of more philosophies than one) that he himself sees as underlying the thesis about the freedom of the good.

³¹ This translation is basically that of Colson, but I disagree with his rendering of the first part of the text: “And right reason is an infallible law.” I take νόμος ἀψευδῆς as the grammatical subject and ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος as the predicate (in spite of ὁ). Von Bendemann appears to agree with this: “Untrügliches Gesetz aber ist die aufrechte Vernunft. Nicht stammt es ...”

³² For the notion of cosmic law, see “Excursus One” in D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses* (PACS 1; Brill: Leiden, 2001) 106–7. Runia also cites Diogenes Laertius 7.88 for the Stoic combination of nature, the κόσμος, the common law, and right reason.

V. The Essenes in *Probus* and *Hypothetica*³³

There is one more way in which Philo brings out the philosophical standpoint that he himself takes to lie behind his thesis. Interestingly, this occurs within his account of the best example of a group of people who have collectively practised the freedom that is his theme: the Essenes. Since this account in *Probus* (§§75–91) is highly distinctive in comparison with Philo's own account of them in the *Hypothetica* in the way it connects the Essenes with philosophy, we should take note of some of the differences. Here too we will see how Philo intended to back up his thesis in philosophical terms.

The structure of the account of the Essenes in the *Hypothetica* may be outlined as follows:

11.1	Who? Where?
11.2–3	Based on virtue, of mature age.
11.4–5	Nothing is private, not even meals.
11.6–7 + 8–9	Their work morals; their different types of work.
11.10–11	They share their income and have common meals (back to 11.4–5).
11.12–13	They share their clothing and caring for the sick and elderly.
11.14–17	They do not marry (back to 11.2–3).
11.18	They are universally recognized (back to 11.4–5).

Much of the information given here is also found in *Probus* with the one sharp difference that Philo does not in *Probus* comment at all on the Essenes' attitude to women and marriage.³⁴ Why? Could it be that that attitude (as described in *Hypoth.* 11.14–17) would not fit well with Philo's aims in *Probus*: to set up the Jewish Essenes as the ideal for all others to try to emulate (more on this below)?

However this may be, let us also take note of one other difference that will turn out to be wholly characteristic of Philo's treatment in *Probus*. It can be seen, in the first place, in his account of the name of the Essenes: the Ἐσσαῖοι. In *Probus*, he connects this with their "holiness" (ὁσιότης) "because they have shown themselves to be θεραπευταὶ θεοῦ (worshippers of God) more than anybody else", by resolving to "sanctify their minds" (ιεροπρεπεῖς τὰς ἑαυτῶν διανοίας κατασκευάζειν) instead of offering sacrifices of animals (§75). In the *Hypothetica*, holiness is mentioned (11.1),

³³ I wish to emphasize the restricted character of this comparison as I produce it here for the purposes of this essay. I aim to show – as nobody has apparently previously done – how in *Probus* Philo has "philosophized" his account of the Essenes in comparison with his treatment of them in the *Hypothetica*. For a similar analysis of Philo's handling of the "therapeutai", see my essay "Philo's *De vita contemplativa* as a Philosopher's Dream", *JSJ* 30 (1999) 40–64.

³⁴ By contrast, this is the one feature (apart from their location) on which Pliny the Elder focuses at *Nat.* 5.73.

but not with this emphasis, which of course fits exceedingly well into the overall theological conception of *Probus*, of which we have already seen some examples.

In *Prob.* 76, we next get the information that the Essenes live in villages. This is also found in the *Hypothetica* (again 11.1, although here Philo also speaks of “cities” [πόλεις]), but once again not in the way it is developed in *Prob.* 77. Since the Essenes, says Philo here, “have become moneyless and landless by deliberate action ... they are esteemed exceedingly rich, because they judge frugality with contentment to be, as indeed it is, an abundance of wealth”. This, of course, is the Stoic paradox of true wealth. Thus, in *Probus* Philo describes the Essenes in distinctly philosophical terms.

The same is true of §78 (on the production of weapons and engagement in commerce), but even more of §79, where Philo describes their attitude to slavery. “Not a single slave is to be found among them” in accordance with “the statute (θεσμός) of nature (φύσις), who mother-like has born and reared all men alike, and created them genuine brothers (ἀδελφοί), not in mere name, but in very reality”. This, it seems, is pure Stoicism (though always also reinterpretable in wider theological terms). Once again, then, Philo describes the Essenes in *Probus* in philosophical terms, as he does not do in the *Hypothetica*.

Indeed, in the immediately following paragraph (§80), he goes out of his way to describe their “philosophy”:

As for philosophy they abandon the logical part (τὸ λογικόν) to quibbling verbalists (λογοθήραι) as unnecessary for the acquisition of virtue, and the physical (τὸ φυσικόν) to visionary praters (μετεωρολέσχαι) as beyond the grasp of human nature, only retaining the part [of physics] which treats philosophically of the existence (ὑπαρξίς) of God and the creation (γένεσις) of the universe. But the ethical part (τὸ ἠθικόν) they study very industriously, taking for their trainers the laws of their fathers, which could not possibly have been conceived by the human soul without divine inspiration (κατοκωχή ἔνθεος).

It seems clear that the kind of philosophy Philo is here ascribing to the Essenes is in fact his own. In any case, he is clearly describing the Essenes in philosophical terms. Nothing comparable can be found in the *Hypothetica*. Nor is it at all clear that the Essenes (whoever they were) did have a “philosophy” of the kind described in *Probus* by Philo. He himself sees them in that light – here.

In §§81–83 Philo turns to the manner in which the Essenes celebrate the Sabbath. Here the *comparandum* is not to be found in the account of the Essenes in the *Hypothetica*, but in the account of the Jewish Sabbath given earlier in the same work: in *Hypoth.* 7.10–20. Once again, the difference is clear. In *Prob.* 82, we hear that “most of their philosophical study (τὰ πλείστα ... φιλοσοφεῖται) [namely, on the Sabbath] takes the form of allegory (διὰ συμβόλων)”. Again, of course, this is very close to

Philo's own practice of philosophy. In §§83–84, we next hear of the content of the teaching that the Essenes receive on the Sabbath. First there is some specifically Stoic material (§83 on “knowledge of what is truly good, or evil, or indifferent”, etc.) and next a nice philosophical account (which is not specifically Stoic) of three “criteria” (κανόνες) for goodness (end of §83): “love of God” (τὸ φιλόθεον), “love of virtue” (τὸ φιλάρετον), and “love of mankind” (τὸ φιλάνθρωπον). These three categories are then employed in §84 to produce a kind of philosophical summary of the Essenes' overall way of life. Once again, in *Probos* the Essenes are clothed in philosophy in a manner that differs completely from what one finds in the *Hypothetica*.

It goes with this that when in *Prob.* 85–87 Philo goes on to inform his readers about various specific features of the Essenes' practical way of life, he explicitly describes these as an *explication* of the (philosophical concept of the) φιλάνθρωπον of the Essenes that he has just mentioned (end of §84). Their “philanthropy”, so he has said, shows itself in their εὐνοία (“benevolence”), their ἰσότης (“sense of equality”), and a κοινωνία (“spirit of fellowship”), “which defies description – though a few words on it will not be out of place” (§84). And so we hear of their housing, their finances, clothing, public meals, and their tending the sick and the elderly (§§85–87). In all this, Philo has again philosophized his account of the Essenes' way of life.

Philo next comments (§88):

Such are the athletes of virtue produced by a philosophy free from the pedantry of Greek wordiness,³⁵ a philosophy which sets its pupils to practise themselves in laudable actions, by which the freedom which can never be enslaved (ἡ ἀδούλωτος ἐλευθερία) is firmly established.

In short, the Essenes (in Philo's description) are the ideal representatives of Philo's own philosophy, which is the only one that yields an ἀδούλωτος ἐλευθερία! No wonder that when he concludes his account in *Probos* of the Essenes (§§89–91) by taking up and developing a point regarding the universal recognition of the Essenes that is only very briefly made in the *Hypothetica* (11.18), he summarizes (§91) his account in those philosophical terms that permeate the whole treatise. These people, he says, are “holy” (ὅσιοι), they are “self-governing” (αὐτονόμοι) and “free by nature” (ἐλεύθεροι ... ἐκ φύσεως [§91]) – and are treated as such by even the worst of “potentates” (δυνάσται) who have risen to power over their country (§89). And their “ineffable sense of fellowship” (ἡ παντὸς λόγου κρείττων κοινωνία) is “the clearest evidence (δειγμα [“proof”]) of a perfect (τέλειος) and supremely happy (εὐδαίμων) life” (end of §91). In this way, the (Jewish) Essenes directly anticipate Philo's account in §160

³⁵ At the conference in Münster, Maren Niehoff (rightly to my mind) suggested that Philo is here adopting a position to “Greek pedantry” (περιεργία) that has Roman overtones.

of those who will arrive at the “happy end” (τέλος αἴσιον) of “living in accordance with nature”.

To sum up, a comparison of the two accounts of the Essenes given in the *Hypothetica* and in *Probus* shows that the latter account, whose central position within the treatise we have already noted, articulates the basic philosophy that Philo aims to present in support of his thesis about the freedom of the good. Moreover, this philosophy is very close to Philo’s own. In this way, the Essenes come to stand out as an ideal towards whose way of life everybody should be striving.

VI. Explicit Authorities

In order to get hold of Philo’s authorial intention in *Probus*, we must take note of one more piece in the puzzle that is a continuous feature of the text. We have already seen that Philo makes use of ideas from both Stoicism and Platonism to provide support for his thesis, which, of course, is itself a fundamentally Stoic one. We have also seen that the Jewish group of the Essenes – when properly philosophized – comes out as a prime example of the truth of that thesis. What, then, is the relationship in *Probus* between these three “-isms”: Stoicism, Platonism, and Judaism?

Throughout the treatise, Philo is keen to mention a large number of authorities for his views. This practice evidently helps us greatly to situate the treatise in its cultural context. We must take note of the most important of these references. In contrast to the way we have proceeded thus far, we must now attend to the chronological sequence in which the references are made through the whole treatise. In that way, we will come to see that they are not just haphazardly placed. On the contrary, it appears that Philo aims to lead his reader towards a certain goal. We have already received a hint of this by noting the position given in the treatise to the account of the Essenes. Now, however, we shall see that Philo follows a careful rhetorical strategy throughout the treatise. Seeing this will also help us to get to grips with the question for whom Philo wrote.

§2 mentions the first authority, the Pythagoreans, as a “most holy company” that has given us the precept of “not walking on the highways”. With the adjective “most holy”, Philo immediately sets the scene for the rest of the treatise, where the theological dimension will be strongly in focus. Similarly, the idea of not walking on the highways permeates the whole treatise in the form of a constant contrast between the normal values of the many and those for which Philo argues. Both themes (theology and the contrast with the many) are spelt out particularly strongly in §3: “All genuine votaries of philosophy have obeyed the injunction [of Pythagoras], divining

in it a law (*νόμος*), or rather a divine super-law (*θεσμός*), equivalent to an oracle (*χρησμός*), etc.”

Next (§5), Philo brings in Plato – though only implicitly so far – in his description of the insights that the “unclean” (§4, on these, see above) are unable to achieve.³⁶ In the account which follows (§§6–10) of the reactions of the “unclean” to Philo’s basic thesis, there is, as we know, an implicit play on Stoicism (they find his claims *ἐκτόπια* and *θαύματα* [§6] and *παράλογα* [§8]), but the next philosophy to be referred to explicitly by name is that of the (once again:) “most holy” Plato (§13).³⁷ On his authority, Philo, as an advocate for the “lecture-room” (*φροντιστήριον*) of wisdom, is prepared to open the doors to “those who thirst for the sweet water of discourse”, “pouring on them an unstinted stream of undiluted doctrine”, thereby persuading them “to be drunken with the drunkenness that is soberness itself”.³⁸ Here the reader is presented with Philo’s own philosophical position, which is spelled out in a characteristic mixture of (Platonic) philosophy and rhetorical flourish.

The next authority mentioned by name is – Sophocles, who is cited for a verse we already know, which is “as true as any (Delphic) oracle (*πυθόχρηστον*)”: “God and no mortal is my Sovereign” (§19). Philo himself (and NB: in the first person) immediately concurs (§20):

For in very truth he who has God alone for his leader, he alone is free, though to my thinking (*κατ’ ἐμὴν ... διάνοιαν*) he is also the leader of all others, having received the charge of earthly things from the great, the immortal King, whom he, the mortal, serves as viceroy (*διάδοχος*).

This statement captures Philo’s own basic position in the treatise. It is introduced here with the help of Sophocles who has uttered something as true as a Delphic oracle, but it will become clear very soon that Philo’s own God is an altogether different one from Sophocles’.

The same ambiguity with respect to traditions is displayed in §24. Describing a man with “an unenslaved character” (§23), Philo partly draws on Stoic ideas (he “adjusts himself and his to fit the present occasion”) and partly on Platonic vocabulary (“all mortal things are carried about in the tossing surge of circumstance”, etc.). But he also once more introduces God (“what is God’s has the honour of possessing eternal order and happiness”) in a manner that might fit many different theological traditions.

³⁶ Colson (PLCL 9:12, n. b) rightly gives a number of references here to Plato’s *Resp.* 7. “514ff.”.

³⁷ Thus we have *ἱερώτατον* in both §2 (the Pythagoreans) and §13 (Plato).

³⁸ For the “sweet water of discourse”, Colson rightly refers to Plato’s *Phaedr.* 243d.

§§28–29, then, are intriguing. First (§28), Antisthenes is mentioned by name in support of a claim about φρόνησις in opposition to ἀφροσύνη – a claim (viz. that φρόνησις “is firmly based, never swerves and has a weight that cannot be shaken”) that in itself reflects Stoicism. Then (§29), “the law-giver of the Jews” is explicitly mentioned as making the same point.³⁹ One might say that this comes in almost parenthetically. However, it is much better, I believe, to see Philo as at long last bringing in his own tradition, which he has had in mind all through.

For the moment, however, we stay with the Greek tradition. In §31 Homer is quoted as describing kings as “shepherds of the people”, but – says Philo – “nature more accurately applies the title [of king] to the good, etc.” So, Homer is all right, but “nature” is better. Indeed, “nature” is one of the concepts that Philo handles throughout the treatise in the same developing manner as the authorities we are considering at present.

The kind of “developing ambiguity” that we noted in §§28–29 is also to be found in §§42–44. We begin with a point about “the friends of God” that explicitly refers to “the Olympian Gods” (§42). But then the same point is made (§§43–44) in relation to “the lawgiver of the Jews” (§43). Here Philo goes out of his way to comment on that lawgiver. He “went to a further extreme” (προσυπερβάλλων) “in a bolder spirit” (νεανικώτερον) and he did so as a “practitioner (ἀσκητής) of a naked philosophy (γυμνή ... φιλοσοφία), as the saying goes (ὡς λόγος)”. This is extremely noteworthy, not least within the progression of the treatise. We now hear about a general claim (ὡς λόγος) concerning the lawgiver of the Jews, one that is not just Philo’s own. So perhaps it is even true? And the claim fits with a broader understanding, which is definitely also Philo’s own, of the best philosophy: one that is concerned with “practice” (cf. ἀσκητής) and that focuses on what is truly “essential” and “elemental” (cf. γυμνή).⁴⁰ Exactly what this type of philosophy is will become clear later in the treatise, not least in the account of the Essenes. But here it is already implicitly identified as “even better” (cf. νεανικώτερον and προσυπερβάλλων) than any other (relevant) philosophy and explicitly than the sayings of the poets, according to whom those who are God-lovers are also “rulers of all and kings of kings” (§42). What the naked philosophy of the Jewish lawgiver says (§43) is that the God-lovers have “passed from a man into a god” – in a manner, however, that Philo goes immediately on to qualify: “a god to men, (but) not to the different parts of nature, thus leaving to the Father of all (τῷ πάντων ... πατρί – who?) the place of King and God of Gods

³⁹ Note here the particle: ὁ δὲ δὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων νομοθέτης. Is Philo saying this: you probably did not know about this, but here it comes: the lawgiver of the Jews ...? (I am not sure I understand von Bendemann’s translation, which seems to presuppose an ἤδη: “Bereits der Gesetzgeber der Juden ...”).

⁴⁰ For an indication of how Philo understands the idea of a “naked philosophy”, cf. the descriptions in §80 and §88 that we have already considered of the “philosophy” of the Essenes. The idea seems to be that all paraphernalia have been removed and so we stand with sheer truth.

(τὸ θεῶν εἶναι βασιλεῖ καὶ θεῶν)". This is one place where Philo's underlying philosophy *cum* theology raises its head very clearly.

The next philosophical argument (§§45–47) is also interesting in terms of Philo's explicit or implicit references to his authorities. Here the basic idea is that of "lawfulness" in the sense that "all who live by law (μετὰ νόμου) are free" (§45). We have already seen that the kind of law that Philo has in mind (the infallible law of right reason, etc. [§46]) is implicitly presented in colours that are both Stoic and Platonic. This "immortal" law is then contrasted with the laws of Solon and Lycurgus. It is "right reason" (ὀρθὸς λόγος) itself, "which is the fountain head (πηγή) of all other law" (§47). In this way, Philo sneaks in his philosophical authorities (here both Stoicism and Platonism) without mentioning them by name – only to go on to do so a little later.

That happens in §53, where – in connection with the next philosophical argument of §§46–57 – Philo first (§53) mentions Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, and next (§57) "the law-book of the Jews". Zeno is literally quoted and in addition described as "having lived under the direction of virtue to an unsurpassed degree (εἰ καὶ τις ἄλλος)". He is furthermore given the epithet of having stated something "more boldly" (again νεανικώτερον) on the point that the bad do not have "equal right of speech" (ἰσηγορία) in relation to the good. Here, then, the fundamentally Stoic shape of much of Philo's argumentation in the treatise is made wholly explicit and recognized. But then he goes on after a short while as follows (§57): "We may well suppose that the fountain (again πηγή) from which Zeno drew this thought was the law-book of the Jews, in which"

What we find here is the same move as one that will be taken at the very end of the treatise (§160). Here, as we know, Philo speaks of the souls who have first received the "soft food of instruction in the school subjects" and later "the harder, stronger meat which philosophy produces". He then adds (and this ends the whole treatise):

Reared by these to manhood and robustness, they will reach the auspicious end (τέλος αἰσίων) which is that of Zeno (Ζηνώνειον) or rather of a (Delphic) oracle (πυθόχρηστον): to live in accordance with nature.

Everybody knew that living in accordance with nature was a central idea in Stoic ethics. Here this notion is appropriated to serve within Philo's own philosophy of the law-book of the Jews.⁴¹ At the same time, however, it is also given a somewhat

⁴¹ In spite of the original meaning of the term *πυθόχρηστον* as pointing to Delphi, I am presupposing here that by Philo's time this reference had become so weak that the term just meant "an oracle", no matter from which god it came.

different meaning than within Stoicism. For we have already seen that Philo's "nature" is not just identical with Stoic "nature". It belongs under an umbrella that is Platonic and theological in Philo's own sense.

The overall point is this: While Philo starts out in his introduction by explicitly bringing in the "most holy" Pythagoras⁴² (§2) and then (after a certain run-up) the "most holy" Plato, he brings in Stoicism more gradually and implicitly; once he has then directly mentioned, and indeed praised, Zeno, he immediately subordinates him to the law-book of the Jews – which he has similarly also previously brought in more gradually and implicitly so that it does not really come as a total surprise. It seems evident that in all this Philo is very carefully situating his philosophical authorities on a single line. Against the background of Philo's own Platonism, there is a move from Stoicism to Judaism. Or put it like this: from Stoicism (that gave the subject-matter of the whole treatise) *via* Platonism to Judaism.

We may note the same kind of development elsewhere in the treatise. In §§59–61, as we saw, Philo draws on Stoic material to such an extent that von Arnim included these paragraphs (to my mind, rightly) among the *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. Then – at the transition to part two of the treatise – everything is ready for Philo's own understanding of the way in which every good man is free (§62):

... in the past there have been those who surpassed their contemporaries in virtue, who took God for their sole guide and lived according to the law of nature's right reason Also in our own time there are still men formed as it were in the likeness of the original picture (*ὡσπερ εἰκόνες ἀπὸ ἀρχετύπου γραφῆς*) supplied by the high excellence of sages.

We have already seen that whereas the point of taking God as one's sole guide may fit all three types of thought with which we are working, the idea of a "law of nature's right reason" has strongly Stoic connotations. By contrast, the notion of being formed "in the likeness of an original picture" is much more distinctly Platonic. However, in the following section (§§63–72), which is highly revelatory of Philo's aims and which, as we have also seen, leads up to his account of various groups of people who exemplify his thesis (from §73 onwards), Philo again brings in "the wise law-giver of the Jews" (§68), from whom he even quotes and whom he a little later now mentions by name ("Moses" [§69]). Here, too, it seems that there is a very clear direction to the whole argument: from Stoicism (as far as it goes) *via* Platonism to Judaism.

In the same connection it is worth recalling the way Philo proceeds in his account of the various groups of wise men from §73 onwards. The overall strategy is announced as being concerned with "both Greece and the world outside Greece"

⁴² In fact, it is the *θίασος* of the "Pythagoreans" that is "most holy".

(ἡ Ἑλλάς καὶ ἡ βάρβαρος [§73]). So first (§73, but very briefly) we get the Seven (Greek) Sages. Next (in the outside world [§74]), we get the Magi among the Persians and the Gymnosophists in India. This is also very brief, but these two groups are characterized in highly interesting ways which together articulate Philo's own understanding of the relevant parts of philosophy. The Magi "silently" (καθ' ἡσυχίαν, that is, as living a "theoretical" life) "make research into the facts of nature (φύσις) to gain knowledge of the truth (ἀλήθειαν)"; moreover, "through visions clearer (than speech)" they "receive instruction (from above) in mysteries concerning the divine virtues and transmit them (to others)". This is already a Philonic self-description to the extent that their concern with "nature" has the character we previously noted.⁴³ Of the Gymnosophists, on their side, he says this: "In addition to natural philosophy (ἡ φυσική), they study ethical philosophy and have made the whole of their lives an exhibition of virtue." In this way, they live up to Philo's own ideals. We have little idea of how these descriptions fit what the Magi (whoever they were) and Gymnosophists (whoever they were) actually did. It is certain, however, that Philo has depicted them in the light of his own conception of philosophy.

Exactly the same is also true of his account of the Essenes in §§75–91, as we have already amply seen. Here we need only observe the direction of the argument. Having heard about a few groups of wise and free men in Greece, Persia, and India, we are introduced to the Essenes as "a considerable part of the very populous nation of the Jews" living in "Palestinian Syria". Thus – if you do not already know them! – there are three entities: (1) the very populous nation of the Jews (wherever they live), (2) a part of that nation living in Palestinian Syria, and (3) among the latter, the Essenes. Since the latter receive extended treatment as the final example of groups of the wise and free, and since, as we have seen, Philo's account fits them, too, closely into his overall philosophical conception, it is reasonable to conclude that this very full account constitutes the goal towards which everything said in the treatise so far has been directed. In §§62–91 Philo is certainly not just giving examples more or less haphazardly of groups of people who support his thesis. Instead, he is directing his reader towards the one group that exemplifies that thesis κατ' ἐξοχήν: the Jewish Essenes. So, just as Philo elsewhere moves from Stoicism via Platonism to Judaism, so he here moves from Greek sages via non-Greek (Persian and Indian) wise men to the best non-Greek sages: the Jewish Essenes.

In the rest of the treatise (from §92 onwards), Philo gives examples, as we know, of individuals who have been wise and free (§§92–135) and then moves towards his conclusion (§§136–160). It is highly noteworthy that in this whole section Philo's examples are uniformly Greek. That is, there is no whisper of his earlier practice of

⁴³ Cf. above the quotation from §80.

pointing towards Judaism and its law-book – apart, that is, from the very last sentence of the treatise in §160! Why? I suggest this answer: (1) the point has already been sufficiently made; there is no longer any need to make it. Indeed, seen in this context the length, detail, and philosophical character of the account of the Essenes acquire additional importance. This account is meant to carry over into the rest of the treatise until its very end. But also this: (2) *if* Philo’s intended audience consists of non-Jews with a general background in (Greek) *paideia* and (possibly) philosophy, then it is rhetorically even more effective to conclude the treatise with a large amount of traditional, Greek material that supports the general, philosophical thesis. The point about the Jews has already been sufficiently made. We do not yet know that Philo’s intended audience did consist of non-Jews. But the position of the extended treatment of the Jewish Essenes – introduced in the way described above – and the fact that in the rest of the treatise Philo mainly draws on traditional Greek examples together suggest that this is so.

VII. Completing the Jigsaw Puzzle?⁴⁴

So far we have considered Philo’s handling of the many, the well-educated, and the “genuine votaries of philosophy” (§3) in relation to the question of who constitutes his intended audience. Here the well-educated came out as being particularly important (section 2). We have also investigated what kind of knowledge is presupposed throughout the treatise for Philo’s various arguments of a distinctly philosophical kind to appear convincing. Here, too, we saw that Philo presupposes and draws on the kind of ordinary knowledge that will precisely be had by the well-educated (section 3). We have further observed how traces of Stoicism and of Platonism throughout the treatise point in the direction of Philo’s own understanding of the philosophical background to his thesis of the freedom of the good man. This is itself a mixture of Stoicism, Platonism, and the idea of taking God as one’s sole guide in life (section 4). In accordance with this, we have seen how Philo develops, in particular, his picture of the Jewish Essenes in the direction of a “naked philosophy” (see

⁴⁴ In writing this conclusion, I am aware of owing a debt to Maren Niehoff’s recent book on Philo, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), as well as to the discussions at the conference in Münster. While I find the chronology in Niehoff’s reconstruction of Philo’s intellectual development somewhat bold, I believe she has done scholarship an important service by placing the question of the social context for Philo’s writings squarely on the table. The proposal for understanding *Probus* that I am making in this essay should also be compared with Niehoff’s essay in the present volume. In my own field of New Testament scholarship, the question of the *Sitz im Leben* of the early Christian texts has been around for a long time, and I have expressed a degree of scepticism about the confidence with which scholars have answered it. It is with some hesitancy, therefore, that I make a similar proposal here.

§80 and §88), which he has previously (§43) ascribed to “the lawgiver of the Jews” (section 5). Finally, we have seen that Philo apparently follows a careful rhetorical strategy of leading his reader from Stoicism via Platonism to Judaism (section 6). With all these pieces of the jigsaw in place, how should it be completed so as to show us the picture of Philo's intended reader in *Probus*?

There is one more piece that we need to consider. This has to do, not with the cultural derivation of the various ideas employed by Philo, but with that of the examples he provides. Here it is particularly noteworthy that almost all of Philo's examples belong to a cultural context that is both traditional and specifically Greek. We have noted the few places where he refers to examples that come from the Jewish law-book and seen how they both fit in completely with the non-Jewish examples given in their entourage – and also appear to make the shared point even more strongly than the Greek examples. We may now note that there is only one non-Jewish example that is not Greek, but instead refers to the Roman history of Brutus and the killing of Julius Caesar (§§118–119). Here we should first observe that the theme of this text is not in fact so much Brutus and Caesar as it is the inhabitants of the city of Xanthos (in South Western Turkey) and their defence against Brutus. Secondly, it is obviously important that the perspective from which Brutus is seen is both negative of him and positive of the Xanthians – but also specifically negative of Brutus with regard to “his own leader (ἡγεμῶν) and benefactor (εὐεργέτης)”, Caesar, whom he killed, and positive of the latter. Of Caesar Philo even goes out of his way to stress that he was indeed both Brutus' “leader” and his “benefactor”: “for Caesar had been both to him” (§118).

With this final piece of the puzzle in place, what resulting picture do we get? It seems clear to me that *Probus* was not written specifically in order to address Jews. This comes out partly from the way the Jewish material in the treatise is always introduced as if the intended readers did not know it in advance – and partly from the veiled (but still unmistakable) way in which Philo points in the direction of Judaism throughout the treatise. Neither approach makes much sense if Philo was directly writing to Jews. Was *Probus* then written to address specifically Greeks? Had it not been for §§118–119, that would have been a natural conclusion. In that case, one would have to imagine a suitable social context for Philo to make such an address to Greeks in Alexandria. In view of the overall character of the treatise, it appears that such an address would have taken a literary form, as opposed to being a speech. In other words, Philo would have published this treatise in Alexandria as a way of addressing Greeks with the required background: well-educated and thus prepared to attend to a large number of both *paideia*-based and genuinely philosophical arguments for the superficially paradoxical, Stoic thesis that only the good man is genuinely free. In addressing such an audience, Philo would then point them implicitly

towards Judaism and, more explicitly, towards the Jewish Essenes (who were *not* living in Alexandria) as the clearest example of how one should put into practice the “naked philosophy” that he took to underlie his philosophical thesis. Can one imagine such a context and situation?

That is perhaps possible. However, if one insists on finding a fairly specific social context for this Philonic text, then the presence in the text of §§118–119 does point somewhat more persuasively in the direction of Philo’s visit to Rome. First, his way of describing Brutus in that text situates Philo himself quite strongly on the side of Caesar (and his descendants). So, even though he is highly critical of the Roman Brutus, he is also – and by the same token – highly positive of the Roman Caesar. An audience of well-educated Romans might appreciate that. Secondly, the theme itself of the treatise might well suggest itself to Philo as an urgent one as he was engaged in pleading the cause of the Alexandrian Jews to the ἡγεμῶν in Rome. In such a politically charged situation, it would be good to remind oneself that the good man is in any case free. Here belongs a theme that we have hitherto left unmentioned. Throughout the treatise, Philo is mightily interested in the point that the good man who is free is thereby also immune to attacks from political leaders – and the corresponding point that the good, wise, and free man is even himself a leader.⁴⁵ Is he, as it were, comforting himself with this thought in a difficult situation? Perhaps, one might even add as a third point that in such a highly charged political situation it might be worthwhile for Philo to show an audience of well-educated Romans that the well-known thesis of the freedom of the good man, which he expects his audience to come to agree with, was best exemplified by a certain group among the “very populous nation of” the Jews. And so, nobody could justly criticize them.

Is it a counterargument to this proposal that there is only one Roman example in the treatise and that its overall profile is overwhelmingly Greek? No. For well-educated Romans with an interest in philosophy who would be addressed in Greek would precisely have a Greek frame of reference for such an interest.⁴⁶

Should we then conclude this: Philo’s treatise *Quod omnis probus liber sit* was written during his stay in Rome around 40 CE in order to address an audience of

⁴⁵ For the latter point, see §20 (“to my thinking he [namely, the one who has God alone for his leader] is also the leader of all others ...”) and §42 (“rulers of all and kings of kings”). For the former point, see §117 (the wise “bear within them a well-spring of happiness in the virtue which no malignant force has ever yet subdued because sovereignty and kingship is its everlasting heritage”), §154 (“the wise, who hold that nothing is more royal than virtue, the captain whom they serve as soldiers throughout their lives, do not fear the orders of others whom they regard as subordinates”), and §159 (through virtue, the soul “gains not only freedom from slavery but the gift of ruling as well”). Also, recall how at the end of his account of the Essenes (§§89–91), Philo celebrates their autonomy and freedom which was recognized by all evil potentates who ruled their country.

⁴⁶ I owe this point to my friend and colleague, Sten Ebbesen, as we were discussing *Probus* and my ideas about it.

well-educated Romans and show them that there are plenty of philosophical arguments for the thesis of the treatise and also an array of material in ordinary knowledge of the well-educated that points in the same direction – and that the philosophical truth thus established is most clearly exemplified at present by one group among the Jews. I put it as a question: is this what we should conclude? My answer is: hardly just like that. But it is certainly a possibility. Moreover, it appears to me as a result of a reasonably careful investigation of the treatise that this understanding of it is *more* likely to be true than any other that has so far been proposed.⁴⁷

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⁴⁷ I thus end up agreeing on this point with Niehoff’s proposal in *Philo of Alexandria*: see in particular 1–22, 81–90. I am more sceptical about Niehoff’s persistent claim that in the philosophical writings (including *Probus*), Philo is “inscribing” the Jewish tradition into Stoic philosophy, Roman topical discourses, and the like (see, e.g., 7, 85, 89). Seen from the outside, this may be right. But seen from the inside, the direction, as I have argued throughout this essay, is exactly the opposite. It remains, however, to thank Maren Niehoff most warmly for expert help at a certain point in my writing this essay.

First Century Rome as a Philosophical Context for Philo of Alexandria: The Introduction to Philo's Treatise *Every Good Man is Free (Probus 1–15)**

Maren R. Niehoff

While the *Probus* has remained a stepchild in Philonic scholarship, its significance can hardly be overestimated.¹ Its particular contribution emerges in view of the fact that it was written in a Roman context and reflects Philo's intellectual development from Bible exegete in the Jewish community of Alexandria to expositor of Judaism for wider Roman audiences in connection with the Jewish embassy to Gaius Caligula.² Addressing a neuralgic theme of the first century CE, the *Probus* affords the

* Thanks to Michael Cover and Lutz Doering for organizing a stimulating conference at the University of Münster. My original paper treated exemplarity in the *Probus*, but thanks to Gregory Sterling, who invited me after the lecture to write a commentary on the *Probus* for the Brill Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series, I began to work systematically on this treatise and changed my topic. Greg also invited me to give a zoom lecture on the topic of this paper in his Philo seminar at Yale University. I thank him for his careful comments on the manuscript of the lecture and his students for a stimulating discussion. Pura Nieto Hernández invited me to give a Zoom lecture at her Philo seminar at Brown University. Thanks to her for her careful comments on a draft of this article and to her students for a productive discussion. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Gretchen Reydams-Schils and David T. Runia read a version of the article and sent me constructive comments. Francesca Pezza scanned reading materials in the libraries of Tübingen. The research for this article was supported by a generous grant from the *Israel Science Foundation* (grant no. 1720/17).

¹ D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986) 382, even called Philo's philosophical treatises the "pariahs" of Philonic scholarship. Modern research on the *Probus* started with Wendland's refutation of arguments against its authenticity (P. Wendland, "Philo's Schrift Περὶ τοῦ πάντα σπουδαῖον εἶναι ἐλεύθερον", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 1 [1888] 509–17). Wendland showed that the author must have been a Jew, using some of Philo's allegories, and thus was most likely Philo himself. He moreover explained Philo's more general style, which lacks the features of systematic Bible commentary, by assuming a broad, non-Jewish audience.

² For details, see M.R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (AYBRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018) 69–74, 81–4; for different views see L. Cohn, *Einteilung und Chronologie der Schriften Philos* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1899) 389, who assumed the early date of the *Probus* in view of the fact that the philosophical treatises contain "little of the personal views of Philo", a feature which he took as a sign of early composition. While the English translator Colson (PLCL 9:2) accepted Cohn's proposition, A. Terian, "A Critical Introduction to Philo's Dialogues", in *ANRW* 21.1 (1984) 272–94, at 293–4, raised doubts based on a comparison with Philo's *De animalibus*, which is preserved only in an Armenian

opportunity to investigate the presence of Rome in a Jewish-Hellenistic text and to transcend Classicist trends in the study of Hellenistic philosophy. It will be my aim to expose the Roman entanglement of Philo's thought in the *Probus* as an example of the strategies of interaction between imperialist forces and an author from a minority group, who may serve as a compass for other authors in similar situations. Moreover, a detailed analysis of the text will enable us to redraw the traditional map of the Roman Empire to challenge its sharp dichotomy between Rome and the provinces and demonstrate the deep involvements of "provincial" elites in Roman discourses. Vice versa, Roman culture and philosophy can only be properly appreciated when the "provincial" is recognized as an integral part.

The *Probus* is devoted to the subject of authentic freedom, which Philo discussed only marginally in the Allegorical Commentary from his earlier Alexandrian period.³ The new attention he pays in Rome to the notion of freedom is remarkable, especially as it is accompanied by praise of Julius Caesar and criticism of his murderer Brutus, neither of whom has been mentioned before in his work (*Prob.* 118–119). Philo moreover mentions "the most holy Plato" as well as Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, and Diogenes, the founder of the Cynic school, and Heracles, the "saint of the Cynics", thus raising intriguing questions concerning his precise perspective on freedom.⁴

This article offers an analysis of the introduction to the *Probus*, which provides precious insights into its overall orientation, its implied audience and especially its engagement with diverse philosophical discourses. Stoic, Cynic and Platonic motifs are not only mentioned, but amalgamated in innovative ways and resonate with Roman discourses.⁵ Indeed, the combination of motifs in *Prob.* 1–15 is new in Philo's oeuvre and stimulates interesting questions about the development of his thought and the change of his philosophical orientation as a result of his stay in Rome and

translation and is dated by Terian to Philo's later years. J. Morris, "The Jewish Philosopher Philo", in E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. ed. by G. Vermes/F. Millar/M. Goodman; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987) 3:809–89, at 856, and J. Royse, "The Works of Philo", in A. Kamesar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 32–64, refrained from judgement.

³ For details on the Alexandrian context of the Allegorical Commentary, see Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 173–241. Note that Philo in the Allegorical Commentary once briefly mentions Diogenes and "the Cynic school" (ἡ κυνική αἵρεσις [*Plant.* 151]) and refers to Diogenes as "one of the ancients", who lit a candle at midday searching for a true man (*Gig.* 34; cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.41).

⁴ Philo, *Prob.* 13, 53, 57, 97–104, 121–124, 160; see also M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, *Cynisme et christianisme dans l'Antiquité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2014) 107–9; M.R. Niehoff, "L'Idée Filoniana della *Paideia*: Tra Alessandria e Roma, tra stoicismo, platonismo e cinismo", *Adamantius* 28 (2022) 10–22; for the description of Heracles as a "Cynic saint", see R. Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King: Studies in the Cynic Conception of Man* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1948) 33.

⁵ On the co-opting of Cynic elements by Musonius Rufus and other Roman Stoics, see G. Reydams-Schils, "Cynicism in Musonius Rufus and the Roman Stoics", forthcoming.

his role as ambassador to Gaius Caligula. Philo was remarkably open to new intellectual stimulations and eager to update his thought, presenting his readers with his latest insights which were also relevant to his political responsibility in Rome.

Three features of the introduction to the *Probus* are analyzed in this article. Initially, I discuss the significance of the fact that Philo has written an introduction of fifteen paragraphs, marking its conclusion in §16 by the words “enough of these things” (ἄλλας μὲν δὴ τούτων). The genre which Philo has chosen for his treatise, namely a *λόγος*, as well as his appeal to Theodotus deserve attention and confirm the impression that Philo wrote the *Probus* for a broader Roman audience rather than for the members of the Jewish community of Alexandria, the implied readers of the earlier Allegorical Commentary. The second section of the article examines Philo’s notion of freedom in the introduction and points to the complex amalgamation of Cynic and Stoic features, which requires a nuancing of the exclusive attention thus far paid to Stoicism.⁶ Philo emerges as an important participant in philosophical debates in first century CE Rome, who illuminates the positions of Cicero, Demetrius, and Seneca. The final section analyzes Philo’s reference to “the most holy Plato” and discusses the question of his commitment to Platonic philosophy, the backbone of the Allegorical Commentary from his earlier Alexandrian period.

I. An Introduction for a Broad Audience in Rome

The readers of the Allegorical Commentary from Philo’s earlier Alexandrian period hardly required an introduction. While the beginning of the series has probably been lost, the extant treatises form a running commentary on Gen 2:1–18:2, with nothing

⁶ For emphasis on the Stoic features of the *Probus*, see P. Wendland, “Philo’s Schrift Περὶ τοῦ πάντα σπουδαῖον εἶναι ἐλεύθερον”, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 1 (1888) 509–17; Morris, “Jewish Philosopher”, 856; S. Vollenweider, *Freiheit als neue Schöpfung: eine neue Untersuchung zur Eleutheria bei Paulus und seiner Umwelt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 124–33; M. Hadas-Label, *Philon d’Alexandrie: un penseur en Diaspora* (Paris: Fayard, 2003) 271–4; Roysse, “Works of Philo”, 55–6; Y. Furstenberg, “Philo of Alexandria: That Every Good Man is Free”, in M.R. Niehoff (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria: Writings in Hebrew* (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute and the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2015) 4:319–404, at 323–9 [in Hebrew]; Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 81–4. The integration of Stoic motifs in diverse Philonic passages and their amalgamation with ideas from other schools have been studied, esp. by J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977) and G. Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato’s Timaeus* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); eadem, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); eadem, “The Socratic Higher Ground”, in F. Alesse (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 169–95; and eadem, “*Philautia*, Self-Knowledge, and *Oikeiosis* in Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch”, in R. Hirsch-Luipold (ed.), *Plutarch and the New Testament in their Religio-Philosophical Context: Bridging Discourses in the World of the Early Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2022) 125–40.

but very short introductory explanations about the biblical text as well as the philosophical subjects addressed.⁷ In the Allegorical Commentary Philo anticipates expert readers and hardly discusses their expectations. He assumes the practice of biblical commentary to be well-known and regularly starts *in medias res* with a quotation of the biblical text. The first extant treatise of the Allegorical Commentary starts with a quotation of Gen 2:1, the second with a quotation of Gen 2:18, the third with a quotation of Gen 3:18. Some of the allegorical treatises have short introductions which orient the reader in the respective exegetical context. In *Plant.* 1, for example, Philo says:

In the previous book (ἐν μὲν τῷ προτέρῳ βιβλίῳ) we have said everything the circumstances permitted about the general art of cultivating the earth, while in this (book) we will discuss, as much as possible, the art of wine-dressing as a specific genre. For (Moses) introduces the righteous not only as a cultivator, but specifically as a vinedresser, saying “and Noah began to be a cultivator of the land and planted a vineyard” (Gen 9:20).

Philo briefly refers here to the previous treatise, describing his work as a βιβλίον and situating himself within the realm of interpreting the Scriptures. Throughout this and other treatises of the Allegorical Commentary Moses, who is sometimes described as “the holiest of men” (ιερώτατος), is prominent as the author of the Scriptures.⁸ His specific style of writing is submitted to detailed study and explored for underlying meanings. While Philo often introduces distinctly Platonic themes, these usually remain allusions within the overall context of his Bible commentary, but sometimes amount to specific quotations, especially from the *Theaetetus*.⁹

⁷ For details on the question whether parts of the Allegorical Commentary, treating the first chapter of the book of Genesis, have been lost, see L. Cohn, *Einteilung und Chronologie der Schriften Philos* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1899) 392–3; T.H. Tobin, “The Beginning of Philo’s *Legum Allegoriae*”, *SPhiloA* 12 (2000) 29–43; G.E. Sterling, “‘Prolific in Expression and Broad in Thought’: Internal References to Philo’s Allegorical Commentary and Exposition of the Law”, *Euphrosyne* 40 (2012) 55–76; Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 247–50. On the structure of the Allegorical Commentary, see D.T. Runia, “Further Observations on the Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Treatises”, *VC* 41 (1987) 105–38; Sterling, “Prolific in Expression”, who identifies the introductions to the various allegorical treatises as “secondary prefaces”.

⁸ See further references in the first three treatises of the Allegorical Commentary: Philo, *Leg.* 1.74, 80, 108; 2.15, 27, 34, 102, 103; 3.12, 15, 22, 32, 37, 43, 81, 94, 101, 104, 106, 107, 141, 147, 185 (κατὰ τὸν ιερῶτατον Μωυσῆν), 194, 197, 204, 208, 228; for details on Moses as author, see M.R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Hellenistic Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 133–4.

⁹ See, e.g., Philo, *Plant.* 143–148, commented on by A.C. Geljon/D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On Platonic Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (PACS 5; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 262–8; for details on Philo’s quotation from the *Theaetetus* in *Fug.* 63, see Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 193–7. For different views on the question of Philo’s commitment to the Platonic tradition, see D.T. Runia, “Witness or Participant? Philo and the Neoplatonic Tradition”, in A.J. Vanderjagt/D. Pätzold (ed.), *The Neoplatonic Tradition* (Köln: Dinter,

Similarly, in *Ebr.* 1–2 Philo reflects on his achievement in the previous βιβλίον, stressing that “we have mentioned” the views of other philosophers regarding drunkenness. Here, too, he immediately situates himself within biblical exegesis and proposes: “Let us now investigate the things which appear (convincing) to the absolutely great and wise lawgiver on this matter (τῶ πάντα μεγάλῳ καὶ σοφῶ νομοθέτῃ). In many places of his legislation, he has made mention of the wine and the plant whose fruit it is – the vine.” The centrality of biblical interpretation is further highlighted in *Sobr.* 1, where Philo says: “Having previously explained the lawgiver’s sayings about drunkenness and the nakedness resulting from it, let us begin to match the next verse (τὸν ἐξῆς ... λόγον) with the things said.” The term λόγος refers here to the biblical verse rather than to a philosophical treatise or proposition. Finally, in *Her.* 1 Philo says:

In the treatise preceding this one (ἐν μὲν τῇ πρὸ ταύτης συντάξει) we have gone through the sayings about rewards as carefully as possible. Now it is appropriate to inquire who is the heir of the Divine things, for the wise (Abraham) heard the following oracular prediction

Addressing the Jewish community of Alexandria, Philo focuses on the minutiae of the biblical text and assumes his readers’ comprehensive familiarity with the Jewish Scriptures.¹⁰ The principles of commentary work are taken for granted and require no introduction. His implied audience seems to be consistent and requires only a brief reminder of the previous installment of the running commentary.

This picture completely changes upon Philo’s arrival in Rome in late 38 CE, when he shoulders the duties of the head of the Jewish embassy following the pogrom in Alexandria and begins to address broader Greco-Roman audiences in the capital of the Empire.¹¹ As a result, he chooses new literary genres suitable to such audiences and leaves behind systematic Bible commentary, which is no longer relevant in the context of urgent diplomacy among non-Jews. In Philo’s Roman writings, detailed introductions for non-expert readers become the norm. The *Legatio ad Gaium*, which mentions Claudius as Gaius’s successor (*Legat.* 206), opens with general reflections about the instability of fortune and discusses the pressing questions of the

1991) 36–56; idem, “Was Philo a Middle Platonist? A Difficult Question Revisited”, *SPhiloA* 5 (1993) 124–33; G.E. Sterling, “Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism”, *SPhiloA* 5 (1993) 96–111.

¹⁰ For details on the Jewish community of Alexandria implied in Philo’s writings, see G.E. Sterling, “Philo’s School: The Social Setting of Ancient Commentaries”, in B. Wyss et al. (ed.), *Sophisten in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit: Orte, Methoden und Personen der Bildungsvermittlung* (STAC 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 121–42.

¹¹ Regarding the date of Philo’s departure from Alexandria, see A. Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 1–24; Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 4, 252 n. 7.

time. The *In Flaccum*, which describes the pogrom in Alexandria, starts with references to Sejanus's policy of attacking the Jews and provides an outline of the Roman governor's character at the beginning of his service in Alexandria. Finally, the *De vita Mosis* opens with an overview of divergent perspectives on the protagonist which circulated among Jews and "Greek men of letters" (τῶν παρ' Ἑλλησι λογίων).¹²

In line with Philo's later Roman writings, the *Probus* starts with a detailed introduction of fifteen paragraphs, which draws the general reader's attention to the main objectives of the treatise. Philo carefully defines the literary genre, the addressee, and the philosophical topic he will discuss. Parallel to his style in the short introductions in the Allegorical Commentary, he starts by recalling a previous, albeit lost treatise, but then adds a completely new and distinctly Roman dimension:

Our previous treatise (ὁ μὲν πρότερος¹³ λόγος), Theodotus, was about the principle that every bad man is a slave, as we have proven by many plausible and true arguments. This treatise, however, is akin to the previous one, a brother both on the paternal and the maternal side, and in a way its twin. We will show here that every good person is free (ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀστέιος¹⁴ ἐλεύθερος).¹⁵

In this dense opening paragraph Philo defines the literary genre of his treatise as a λόγος, appeals to an otherwise unknown addressee, Theodotus, and declares the philosophical subject of the treatise. These statements relate to literary, sociological, and philosophical dimensions, each of which deserves close attention. I will discuss them in the sequence introduced by Philo.

¹² Philo, *Mos.* 1.2.

¹³ MS Q and T read πρῶτος, first, which ignores the long series of Philo's writings and emphasizes the separate unity of the two treatises on freedom and slavery. The adjective πρότερος seems to be the original version, which reflects Philo's usage throughout his oeuvre (see above for examples in the Allegorical Commentary).

¹⁴ Philo uses the term ἀστέιος, while the title of the *Probus* is preserved in most manuscripts as Περὶ τοῦ πάντα σπουδαῖον ἐλεύθερον εἶναι (the different MSS show slight syntactical variations). MS T, however, reads πᾶς ἀστέιος ἐλεύθερος. While both terms refer to a good person, σπουδαῖος highlights the dimension of an excellent and serious person worthy of attention, and ἀστέιος implies an urban person of refined manners. I translate both terms as "good" or "righteous". The question remains which word Philo chose for his treatise and whether it was subsequently changed by scribes. Even though MS T is generally an inferior manuscript, as shown by Cohn (PCW 6:i), the question deserves serious attention because of Philo's own language in the introduction. To judge it, we must look at the surprisingly uneven distribution of the two terms throughout the treatise: ἀστέιος appears ten times, mostly in the beginning up until §30, while σπουδαῖος is mentioned sixteen times from §41 onwards. It thus seems that Philo started his treatise with the term ἀστέιος in mind and then switched to σπουδαῖος, probably concluding his writing with the resolve to call the treatise Περὶ τοῦ πάντα σπουδαῖον ἐλεύθερον εἶναι. This conclusion is confirmed by Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.6.

¹⁵ *Prob.* 1 (PCW 6:1). The translations in this article are my own. J. Roysce, "The Cohn-Wendland Critical Edition of Philo of Alexandria", *SPhiloA* 33 (2021) 197–207, criticizes the PCW edition, drawing attention to mistakes made by Wendland in the presentation of the different manuscripts in the apparatus. This critique, however, does not apply to the *Probus*, which was edited by Cohn alone.

The genre of the treatise is defined by the term *λόγος*, namely an independent book presenting proofs in support of a specific philosophical proposition. The verbs *πιστόω* and *ἐπιδείκνυμι* highlight Philo's intention to convince the readers by rational arguments, which can be checked and followed by anyone. The treatise abounds with proofs from Greek, Roman and Jewish history which are often introduced by terms related to showing and witnessing.¹⁶ Biblical verses, on the other hand, are cited only three times, with introductory references to “the legislator of the Jews” (ὁ τῶν Ἰουδαίων νομοθέτης), or “the legislation of the Jews” (ἡ Ἰουδαίων νομοθεσία) or the “wise legislator of the Jews” (ὁ σοφὸς τῶν Ἰουδαίων νομοθέτης).¹⁷ The general appeal of the latter terms to an external, non-Jewish audience can be appreciated by considering *Mos.* 1.1, where Philo distinguishes between an internal approach to Moses as the “interpreter of the holy laws” and an external notion of him as the “legislator of the Jews”. To be sure, Philo sometimes uses the latter nomenclature also in the Allegorical Commentary, as we have seen above, but in the later Roman writings it becomes the norm.¹⁸ Moreover, when Philo in the *Probus* zooms in on the Essenes, he introduces them by reference to official Roman nomenclature, namely “Palaestina Syria” (ἡ Παλαιστίνη Συρία), and then presents them as part of the “very populous nation of the Jews”, who provide an example of moral excellence.¹⁹ These literary features, with their implied external perspective, and Philo's specific choice of words suggest that his *λόγος* on freedom addresses a non-Jewish audience, as distinct from the Jewish readers of the Allegorical Commentary from the earlier Alexandrian period.

The opening paragraph of the *Probus* appeals to Theodotus and provides an important clue to the sociological setting of the treatise. The *Probus* is Philo's only extant work, which names an individual addressee. While Theodotus's identity can no longer be ascertained, not even whether he is Jewish or Pagan, the reference itself has important implications for the communicative situation envisaged by Philo. His immediate audience is no longer the unnamed Jewish community of Alexandria, but

¹⁶ Philo, *Prob.* 36 (ἐπιδείξονται), 51 (ἐπιδειχθήσεται), 90 (ἐπιδεικνύμενοι), 92 (μάρτυρας), 132 (ἐπέδειξε), 137 (μαρτυρεῖται), 141 (ἐπιδεικνυμένων). In *Prob.* 94–95 Philo uses the verb *ἐπιδείκνυμι* ironically: while Alexander intends to make a show of Indian philosophy in Greece, a proposal Calanus the gymnosophist rejects, he nevertheless provides him with an opportunity to prove his commitment to freedom which is not threatened by any ruler.

¹⁷ Philo, *Prob.* 43, 57, 68.

¹⁸ An especially illuminating example is *Opif.* 1–2, where Philo compares the Jewish legislator to those of other nations, showing that Moses chose the best way of inculcating the law by preparing his people philosophically and ethically.

¹⁹ Philo, *Prob.* 75; on the Roman nature of this nomenclature, see P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 1:107–10; A. Stein, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Verwaltung Ägyptens unter römischer Herrschaft* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1915) 85–90; H. Bell, “Alexandria ad Aegyptum”, *JRS* 36 (1946) 130–2.

an apparently supportive individual, who may have encouraged him to expound the topic of philosophical freedom. Within the Jewish tradition Josephus provides the closest parallel. Writing in Rome one generation after Philo, Josephus appeals to his patron Epaphroditus in the introduction to the *Antiquitates Judaicae* and the *Contra Apionem*.²⁰ He says of Epaphroditus that he was “fond of every form of education, especially keen on the events of history” (*A.J.* 1.8). He was among those who encouraged Josephus to pursue the writing of history beyond the *Bellum Judaicum*, stimulating him to offer a more comprehensive account of the Jewish tradition. Steve Mason (2003) has shown that Josephus participated in the salon culture of Rome, where works in progress were being discussed in the semi-private setting provided by sympathetic patrons. Three additional Greek-speaking authors with close Roman ties mention personal patrons, namely Paul, Luke, and Plutarch. Paul mentions Phoebe, Prisca and Aquila as benefactors. The former took his Letter to the Romans, while the latter two, a couple who entertained a “community in their house” (ἡ κατ’ οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησία) and previously helped him in Corinth and Ephesus, are his implied readers in the capital of the empire.²¹ Luke mentions the “most excellent Theophilus” (κράτιστε Θεόφιλε) in the introduction to his Gospel as someone eager to learn the truth about Jesus and briefly refers to him again in Acts.²² Plutarch frequently addresses Roman friends at the beginning of his philosophical treatises and even features some of them as actors in his table talks.²³

To understand the context of such references, we need to look at Roman salons and the evidence of thriving Greek culture in Rome. Lucullus’ library and “study room” (σχολαστήριον) provide important insights into the dynamics of intellectual circles in Rome, which became meeting points for Latin speakers and Greeks arriving in the capital (Plutarch, *Luc.* 42.1). Lucullus himself had been trained bilingually,

²⁰ Josephus, *A.J.* 1.8; *C.Ap.* 1.1. The *Bellum Judaicum*, however, Josephus’ first work upon arrival in Rome, lacks such an appeal to a patron and probably reflects the situation immediately following the author’s arrival in Rome, when he had not yet integrated into intellectual networks.

²¹ Rom 16:1–5. P. Lampe, *Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries. From Paul to Valentinus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003 [German original 1989]) 189–93, analyzed Paul’s list of addresses to demonstrate the extremely low status of the earliest Christ believers, in his view close to the level of destitution. Such views, however, cannot be maintained in view of the arguments for the middle-class status of many addressees mentioned in Rom 16, which have been adduced by W.-H. Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter. Untersuchungen zur Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979) 24–7; H.-J. Klauck, *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche im frühen Christentum* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981) 21–6; and A. Malherbe, *Light from the Gentiles: Hellenistic Philosophy and Early Christianity. Collected Essays, 1959-2012* (ed. by C.R. Holladay/J.T. Fitzgerald/G.E. Sterling/J.W. Thompson; NovTSup 150; Leiden: Brill, 2014) 83–106.

²² Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1; see also F. Bovon, *Luke* (3 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 22–3; R.I. Pervo, *Acts* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009) 35.

²³ Plutarch, *Mor.* 452f–453d; 612c; 622c: “collocuntur Sossius Senecio et alii”; 629c: ὁ Σόσσιε Σενεκίων; see also P.A. Stadter, *Plutarch and His Roman Readers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

in both Latin and Greek, and set up the library after his retirement from military service under Sulla in the Greek East.²⁴ Plutarch describes Lucullus's house as a "residence of Muses" (Μουσῶν καταγώγιον [*Luc.* 42.1]). The host himself often spent his leisure time with the Greeks, engaging in lively discussions with their "philologists" and helping their "politicians" to make contacts in Rome (*Luc.* 42.2). Lucullus's house gathered people from the Greek East spending time in Rome and helped them to create intellectual and political networks. Inversely, Latin speakers and bilinguals from Rome participated in the cultural exchange with native Greeks, used the library and, like Lucullus himself, enjoyed discussing philosophy with Greek intellectuals.

Philo, who arrived in Rome between Lucullus and Josephus, seems to have found similar social infrastructures and probably wrote the *Probus* while frequenting intellectual salons in Rome. A particularly likely setting is the circle around Rome's first public library founded by the *novus homo* Asinius Pollio, who became a Roman historian and author of tragedies after completing a successful political and military career under Caesar, Antony and Augustus. He was not only a friend of the Jewish king Herod, hosting his two sons during their educational stay in Rome, but also a philhellene and a patron of the Alexandrian historian Timagenes.²⁵ The Roman historian Varro was closely connected to this library, being the only living author honored with a bust.²⁶ Like Timagenes, whom Josephus quotes as a sympathetic author in contrast to the detractors of Judaism, Varro entertained a positive attitude towards the Jews and their aniconic religion.²⁷ Pollio apparently assembled Greek books on his campaign in Illyria and established public readings of literary works in the library, circulating invitations to relatively wide audiences.²⁸ His son Gallus

²⁴ Plutarch, *Luc.* 1.3 (ὁ δὲ Λούκουλλος ἤσκητο καὶ λέγειν ἱκανῶς ἑκατέραν γλῶτταν).

²⁵ On Pollio's works, see J.T. Cornell et al. (ed.), *The Fragments of the Roman Historians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 1:431–8; 2:856–65; on his friendship with Herod, see Josephus, *A.J.* 15.343; 14.389; on Timagenes lodging in Pollio's house, see Seneca, *Ira* 3.23.5–8.

²⁶ Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 7.115; see also Feldman 1953; Zecchini 1982; Morgan 2000, who points to Pollio's Attic style and orientation toward Thucydides as a model of historiography.

²⁷ On Timagenes's pro-Jewish orientation, see Josephus, *C.Ap.* 2.84; *A.J.* 13.319, 344; see also M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1974) 1:222–7; on Varro's positive attitude towards the Jews, see Stern, *GLAJJ*, 1:207–12; G. van Kooten, "The Aniconic, Monotheistic Beginnings of Rome's Pagan Cult – Romans 1:19–25 in a Roman Context", in A. Hilhorst et al. (ed.), *Flores Florentino: Dead Seas Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino Garcia Martinez* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 633–51, at 641–3.

²⁸ For details, see A. Dalzell, "C. Asinius Pollio and the early History of Public Recitation at Rome", *Hermathena* 86 (1955) 20–8; T.K. Dix, "Ovid Strikes Out: *Tristia* 3.1 and the First Public Libraries at Rome", *The Augustan Age* 7 (1988) 27–35; idem, "Public Libraries in Ancient Rome: Ideology and Reality", *Libraries and Culture* 29 (1994) 282–96.

Pollio continued in many ways in his father's footsteps so that the library may have been a flourishing platform of intellectual exchange during Philo's stay in Rome.²⁹

The picture of diverse semi-private and public platforms of intellectual and cultural exchange in Rome, supported by friendly and well-to-do individuals, contrasts with the far more centralized atmosphere in Alexandria, which depended rather exclusively on the royal patronage system. The Ptolemies built the best library in the ancient world, set up the Museum, a predecessor of modern universities, and closely supervised the scholarly, scientific, and cultural activities performed there.³⁰ As a result, Alexandrian intellectuals were generally oriented towards the center of power. Aristobulus, for example, a Jewish author from second century BCE Alexandria, dedicated his work to the Ptolemaic king.³¹ The Letter of Aristeas provides rare insights into the workings of the library under the Ptolemies and inscribes the Jewish tradition into the royal system.³² Ptolemaic patronage, however, also created tensions, which became the topic of famous anecdotes.³³ Philo is the first extant author, who mentions a confrontation between an Alexandrian intellectual and one of the Ptolemies. According to *Prob.* 125, Chaereas was not intimidated by the king's wrath at him and considered his innate freedom worthier than respect for royalty. Taking considerable risks, he used a Homeric verse to mock the king. Philo expresses admiration for Chaereas's *parrhesia* and implicitly highlights the different and distinctly Roman setting of the *Probus*, which appeals to a friendly, yet otherwise unknown individual.³⁴

The first paragraph of the *Probus* thus indicates that the literary genre and the named addressee Theodotus suit a general, Roman audience. Philo assumes readers

²⁹ Gallus also had an impressive public career and was described as similar in character to his father by Tacitus, *An.* 1.12.4; see also A.B. Bosworth, "Asinius Pollio and Augustus", *Historia* 21 (1972) 441–73, 451–2.

³⁰ For details on the library and the Museum under Ptolemaic patronage, see Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 305–35, esp. his comment at 311: "it is of course an automatic recognition of the dependence of the writers on the ruler that many works carry a formal dedication to him"; see also H.G. Nesselrath, "Das Museion und die Große Bibliothek von Alexandria", in T. Georges/F. Albrecht/R. Feldmeier (ed.), *Alexandria* (Civitas Orbis MEditerranei Studia 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 65–88.

³¹ Aristobulus's dedication of his work to King Ptolemy is mentioned by both Anatolius and Eusebius, the latter assuming that Aristobulus was one of the translators of the LXX (for details, see C.R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors* [3 vols.; Chico: Scholars Press, 1995], 130, 134).

³² Let. Aris. 9–51, L.M. White/G.A. Keddie, *Fictional Letters from Hellenistic Egypt: The Epistle of Aristeas and Related Literature* (WGRW 37; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), with annotations *ad loc.*; see also B.G. Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas* (CEJL; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015) 110–21.

³³ Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 493–494b; Lucian, *Cal.* 16.

³⁴ To be sure, the Roman principate also created tensions and problems of *parrhesia*, as Philo reports in the case of Macro's and Silanus' confrontations with Caligula (Philo, *Legat.* 41, 60–73, discussed by Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 51–7). These figures, however, were part of the emperor's close entourage and not patrons of the arts.

interested in the topic of true freedom, who can judge philosophical propositions and proofs, without having any prior training in the Jewish Scriptures. His appeal to the otherwise unknown Theodotus as an addressee furthermore reflects the atmosphere of intellectual life in Rome, which developed in the context of semi-private salons and diverse public institutions. Given this communicative situation, Philo seems to have integrated remarkably quickly in Roman circles, keenly engaging discussions at the center of the empire.

II. A Cynic-Stoic Introduction to the Theme of Freedom

It now remains for us to analyze the philosophical topic of the *Probus*, which is introduced in the first paragraph by the double proposition that every bad man is a slave, while every good person is free. Scholars have regularly associated this proposition with Cicero's fifth Stoic paradox and consequently identified Philo's treatise as Stoic. Cicero's formulation, both in Greek and Latin, is indeed close to that of Philo, but stresses the cognitive dimension by speaking about the wise and the fool, rather than the good and bad.³⁵ It is moreover noteworthy that already Antisthenes, the forerunner of the Cynic school, dedicated of one his lost treatises to the topic of "freedom and slavery".³⁶ The latter suggests a deep affinity between the Cynic and the Stoic schools regarding the topic of freedom and encourages us to investigate the particular amalgamation of motifs in Philo's introduction to the *Probus*.

The *Probus* is not the first treatise where Philo mentions the ideal of freedom. Already in the Allegorical Commentary from his earlier Alexandrian period he occasionally treats the topic within the context of biblical exegesis and Platonic anthropology. He already mentions the "most rational principle that only the wise is free and a ruler" and interprets Esau's enslavement to Jacob by reference to the principle that "according to Moses, only the wise is king".³⁷ His move from Alexandria to Rome, however, not only prompted Philo to pay more attention to the notion of freedom and dedicate a whole treatise to the topic, but also to introduce some new motifs.

In the Allegorical Commentary, Philo speaks about freedom within a Platonic context, emphasizing the mind's liberation from the bodily elements, especially the passions. He equates the "bad and the irrational element" with slavery, and "the good

³⁵ Cicero, *Parad.* 33: ὅτι μόνος ὁ σοφὸς ἐλεύθερος καὶ πᾶς ἄφρων δούλος.

³⁶ Diogenes Laertius 6.16: Περὶ ἐλευθερίας καὶ δουλείας.

³⁷ τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τὸ δογματικώτατον ὅτι ὁ σοφὸς μόνος ἐλεύθερός τε καὶ ἄρχων (Philo, *Post.* 138); κατὰ Μωυσῆν μόνον τὸν σοφὸν βασιλεύει (Philo, *Mut.* 152); cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.122. See also Philo, *Sobr.* 57; *Migr.* 197; *Somn.* 2.243.

and logical and better element” with sovereignty and freedom”.³⁸ He moreover encourages his readers to liberate themselves from “the hard and unbearable masters within you”, interprets Exod 21:5 as a warning against enslavement to the senses and Gen 3:16 as a reference to the enslaved mind, which is submerged by the passions, in contrast to the wise, who is liberated from them.³⁹ Throughout the Allegorical Commentary, Philo insists that philosophical freedom liberates from sense perception, the body and the “cavities of the body and the senses”.⁴⁰ In *Agr.* 59–63 he explains philosophical freedom in the overtly Platonic terms of shepherding the divided soul and controlling “the rational and irrational parts in the soul”. The Egyptians, who symbolize the body, are called to take the rational parts as their allies “to rule over the illogical parts”.⁴¹ Immediately following these explanations, Philo celebrates the Platonic myth of the soul in *Phaedr.* 246a–248e, describing desire and high spirit as the horses that need to be controlled by the charioteer. He asserts that the “foolish man cannot keep the reins because of his lack of education” (*Agr.* 72–74). Philo moreover engages the *Phaedrus* when stressing that the fool gets rid of “mind, the charioteer and judge”, while the wise follows Moses and washes out the belly and the warlike spirit, cultivating the rational part of the soul and turning its “truly free and noble impulses towards all things beautiful” (*Migr.* 67). Finally, Exod 9:29 is interpreted in view of the Platonic myth of the prisoners in the “subterranean cavern”.⁴² In the Allegorical Commentary Philo assumes the division of the soul and praises the person who attains freedom by controlling the passions and setting his thoughts free, “like the hands and feet of the unbound prisoners”.⁴³

Strikingly, none of these topics is discussed in the introduction of the *Probus*. Platonic notions of the tripartite soul and the accompanying metaphors of the charioteer controlling the horses are conspicuously absent throughout the whole treatise.⁴⁴ Moreover, the term *αἴσθησις*, “sense” or “sense perception”, is used only twice in the *Probus*. Once it refers in a rather banal sense to opponents, who are characterized as “slaves to opinion, basing themselves on the senses”, and once it describes greedy people, who search for a treasure that delights their senses. The term *πάθος*, “passion” or “sensation”, appears only six times in the hundred and sixty paragraphs of

³⁸ φύσει γὰρ δοῦλον παρὰ θεῶ τὸ φαῦλον καὶ ἄλογον, ἡγεμονικὸν δὲ καὶ ἐλεύθερον τὸ ἀστεῖον καὶ λογικὸν καὶ ἄμεινον (Philo, *Leg.* 3.89).

³⁹ Philo, *Leg.* 3.194, 198, 202.

⁴⁰ Philo, *Cher.* 72; *Det.* 17; *Deus* 111–114.

⁴¹ Philo, *Agr.* 59–63; see also *Her.* 186; *Somm.* 2.294.

⁴² Philo, *Ebr.* 101; cf. Plato, *Resp.* 514a–517a.

⁴³ See similarly Philo, *Mut.* 173.

⁴⁴ On Philo’s general tendency to use the metaphors of the Allegorical Commentary in a new mode in his later Roman writings, see M.R. Niehoff, “Figurative Speech in Philo’s *De Opificio Mundi*: from Allegory to Metaphor”, in L. De Luca (ed.), *Similitudini, metafore e allegoria nel De opificio mundi di Filone di Alessandria* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2021) 19–37.

the *Probus*, but not once in the introduction. The essential Stoic terms of “rational assent”, namely *συγκατάθεσις* and *συγκατατίθημι*, are absent in the *Probus*, while appearing twice in the Allegorical Commentary and once in *Mos.* 2.228.⁴⁵ Additional Stoic terms, which Epictetus used to reinterpret Cynic ideas in Stoic terms, namely *προαίρεσις*, *ὀρμή*, *ὄρεξις* and *ἔκκλισις*, are absent in the introduction to the *Probus*. With one exception, none of them appears throughout the *Probus*, even though Philo used them in the Allegorical Commentary.⁴⁶ Finally, the term *ἄφρων*, “foolish”, which Cicero used in his exposition of the fifth Stoic paradox is rare in the *Probus*, none of the four occurrences appearing in the introduction. Given this distribution of philosophical terms, Philo avoids characteristic Platonic and Stoic notions in *Prob.* 1–15.

In view of Philo’s reticence to use specifically Stoic or Platonic terms, we must ask how else he introduces the notion of freedom. He starts with a Pythagorean *bon mot*, which instructs the readers “not to walk on the highways” (*ταῖς λεωφόροις μὴ βαδίζειν ὁδοῖς*).⁴⁷ According to Philo, one should not take this advice literally, but instead appreciate it as a hint to avoid “in words and deeds the popular and beaten tracks” (*Prob.* 2). The reader should rise above the common herd, ignore convention and appreciate new ways of arriving at philosophical truth. This invitation to contemplate the notion of freedom transmits the idea of individuality far away from the crowds and resonates with both Stoic and Cynic ideals. The manner of presentation, however, namely via a funny bon-mot, is especially close to Cynic methods of instruction.⁴⁸

In *Prob.* 6–8 Philo addresses queries that may arise from his radical notion of freedom, which challenges social norms:

⁴⁵ In the Allegorical Commentary, the noun is used in *Post.* 175, the verb in *Leg.* 3.246.

⁴⁶ The noun *προαίρεσις*, which occurs 39 times in the Philonic corpus, is mentioned only once in the *Probus* and that in the general sense of conduct in life, parallel to nature (*Prob.* 89); the noun *ὀρμή* appears 85 times throughout Philo’s oeuvre, none of them in the *Probus*; the term *ὄρεξις* is mentioned 15 times in the Philonic corpus, none of them in the *Probus*, and, finally, *ἔκκλισις* is altogether absent. For details on Epictetus’s use of these terms in his reinterpretation of Cynic notions, see Goulet-Cazé, *Cynisme et christianisme dans l’Antiquité*, 95; on their general use in different Stoic conceptions of action, see M.-O. Goulet-Cazé (ed.), *Etudes sur la théorie stoïcienne de l’action* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2011).

⁴⁷ Philo, *Prob.* 2. This saying is also preserved in Diogenes Laertius 8.17.

⁴⁸ See esp. R.B. Branham, “Defacing the Currency: Diogenes’ Rhetoric and the Invention of Cynicism”, in idem/M.-O. Goulet-Cazé (ed.), *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 81–104.

(§6) πῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἐκτόπια⁴⁹ καὶ θαύματ⁵⁰ ὄντως, φυγάδας μὲν καλεῖν τοὺς μὴ μόνον ἐν μέσῃ τῇ πόλει διατρίβοντας, ἀλλὰ καὶ βουλευόντας καὶ δικάζοντας⁵¹ καὶ ἐκκλησιάζοντας, ἔστι δ' ὅτε καὶ ἀγορανομίας καὶ γυμνασιαρχίας καὶ τὰς ἄλλας λειτουργίας ὑπομένοντας, (§7) πολίτας δὲ τοὺς ἢ μὴ ἐγγραφέντας τὸ παράπαν ἢ ὧν ἀτιμία καὶ φυγὴ κατέγνωσται ... (§8) πῶς δὲ οὐ παράλογα καὶ γέμοντα πολλῆς ἀναισχυντίας ἢ μανίας ἢ οὐκ ἔχω τί λέγω⁵² – διὰ γὰρ ὑπερβολὴν οὐδ' οἰκείων ὀνομάτων εὐπορηῆσαι ῥάδιον – πλουσίους μὲν ὀνομάζειν τοὺς ἀπορωτάτους καὶ τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐνδεεῖς, λυπρῶς καὶ ἀθλίως ἀποζῶντας, μόλις τὸ ἐφήμερον ἐκπορίζοντας, ἐν εὐθηνίᾳ κοινῇ λιμὸν ἐξαιρετον ἔχοντας, ἀρετῆς αὖρα, καθάπερ ἀέρι φασὶ τοὺς τέττιγας, τρεφομένους.

(§6) For how is it not truly strange and phantastic to call refugees those who not only live in the middle of the city, but also serve as members of the city council and judges and members of assemblies, and possibly even take up the offices of market overseer and head of the gymnasium and other civic obligations, (§7) but to call citizens those who are either not at all enfranchised or who have received a judgement of infamy or exile ... (§8) For how is it not absurd and full of much impudence or madness or what word have I to describe this – because of the excessiveness of the phenomenon it is not easy to come up with the right words – to call rich the poorest and most destitute, those who drag their lives miserably and wretchedly, who hardly procure their daily subsistence and suffer great hunger in the midst of a thriving commonwealth, feeding on the breath of virtue, as much as they say the grasshoppers live on air.⁵³ (Philo, *Prob.* 6–8 [ed. PCW 6:2–3])

Philo proposes in this dense passage a paradoxical approach, which he expects his readers to reject as a sign of “impudence or madness” (*ἀναισχυντία ἢ μανία*). Diogenes Laertius, who sympathizes with Stoic propriety, speaks of “Cynic impudence”

⁴⁹ MS F reads *ἔκτοπα* instead of *ἐκτόπια*. In terms of meaning there is little difference between these two forms, yet the former is more common and thus more familiar to the scribe, who seems to have adapted it almost unconsciously.

⁵⁰ MS M reads *αὐτόματα* instead of *θαυματά*, misunderstanding Philo’s intention and ignoring the hermeneutic uses of the latter term in the tradition of Alexandrian scholarship, on which see Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship*, 64–5.

⁵¹ MS A, Q and T drop the participle *δικάζοντας*, probably because it has the same ending as the next participle, *ἐκκλησιάζοντας*, and thus prompted an oversight. The latter will have caught the scribes’ attention, as they probably interpreted it in terms of the later, Christian uses of *ἐκκλησία* as church.

⁵² MS G, A, Q and T read *λέγειν* instead of *λέγω*, thus constructing an easily flowing syntax, which I have adopted in the English translation, while at the same time reducing the personal emphasis of Philo’s style.

⁵³ Philo mentions the maxim of the grasshoppers living on nothing but air in another of his Roman writings, namely in *Contempl.* 35, where it applies to the Therapeutae who distinguish themselves by their modesty and abstention from food during the week (for details, see J.E. Taylor/D.M. Hay, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Contemplative Life. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* [PACS 7; Leiden: Brill, 2021] 207–9). While Philo refers in *Prob.* 8 to what people “say”, perhaps gesturing to the myth reported in *Phaedr.* 159c, he uses the maxim in a more social and this-worldly manner than Plato did. Roman authors, such as Virgil, *Ecl.* 5.77, and Pliny, *Nat.* 11.91, also mention the saying thus testifying to its rather wide distribution by the time Philo evokes it in the *Prob.*

(ἡ Κυνική ἀναίσχυντία), using the same word as Philo (Diogenes Laertius 7.8). He shows that Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, was unable to follow his Cynic teacher Crates in his shameless behavior in public. Plato was the first to call Diogenes “a dog” on account of his insolence (Diogenes Laertius 6.40). Diogenes gladly accepted the epithet and pointed to his *parrhesia*, or free speech, which uncovers the false conventions of society.⁵⁴ In the above quoted passage Philo moreover idealizes extreme situations of poverty and destitution, inverting the social norms of his time. Unlike many Stoics, who insisted on limited asceticism in the service of mental gymnastics, the Cynics lived in the streets and endured extreme conditions of cold and heat.⁵⁵ Diogenes led an exceedingly modest life and became famous for sleeping in public places, eating little and spending hard winters outdoors (Diogenes Laertius 6.22–24, 45). His endurance was still admired by Julian the Apostate in the fourth century CE.⁵⁶ Courage, Diogenes moreover said, should be set up against fortune, nature against law and reason against passion (Diogenes Laertius 6.38, 71–72). He defined philosophy as a preparation to accept “every circumstance” (πᾶσαν τύχην [Diogenes Laertius 6.63]).

During the time of Philo’s embassy, Demetrius expounded Diogenes’s ideals in Rome. Seneca is our main source, even though he already adds a Stoic interpretation.⁵⁷ The most visible elements of Demetrius’s teaching, that transpire in Seneca’s fragments, are frugality, freedom of speech, practical ethics and reliance on authoritative role models instead of bookish learning.⁵⁸ Demetrius delivered his teaching in Greek and gained, thanks to his aimable nature, access to the Roman nobility. According to Tacitus, he addressed the group of Stoic philosophers around Thrasea (*Ann.* 16.34). Seneca calls Demetrius “best of men” (“virorum optimum”) and “our Demetrius” (*Ep.* 62.3, 20c.9). While mocking him for appearing “half-naked” in public, Seneca often engaged in conversations with him and held him in high esteem, because he lacked nothing and despised material goods (*Ep.* 62.3, 20c.9). When Philo arrived in Rome during Gaius’ principate, he could easily converse with Demetrius in their common mother tongue Greek. Demetrius would have been an attractive conversation partner because he, too, confronted Gaius Caligula with bold frankness.⁵⁹

Philo’s introduction to the theme of freedom in *Prob.* 6–8 resonates with these Cynic approaches. His dismissal of exile as a situation of enslavement corresponds

⁵⁴ Diogenes Laertius 6.55, 60, 69; see also Goulet-Cazé, *Cynisme et christianisme dans l’Antiquité*, 29–30.

⁵⁵ See also Goulet-Cazé, *Cynisme et christianisme dans l’Antiquité*, 91–3.

⁵⁶ Julian, *Or.* 6.194d–195c, 203a.

⁵⁷ See M. Billerbeck, *Der Kyniker Demetrius* (Leiden: Brill, 1979) 12–43.

⁵⁸ Seneca, *Ben.* 7.11.1–2; *Ep.* 62.3; 20.9.

⁵⁹ When offered rich gifts by him, Demetrius “expressed surprise at the madness” of the emperor and said: “if he meant to tempt me, he ought to have tested me by offering me his whole kingdom” (Seneca, *Ben.* 7.11.2).

to Diogenes's witty reply to the threat of exile: "but it was through that, miserable fellow, that I became a philosopher" (Diogenes Laertius 6.49). His disdain for figures in high positions resonates with the anecdote about Diogenes's bold attitude to Alexander. When the latter approached him and said: "I am Alexander the great king", the Cynic responded: "and I am Diogenes the dog" (Diogenes Laertius 6.60). Philo concludes his introduction to the topic of freedom by offering another paradox. As he puts it, he dares "to attribute the name slavery" to the noble, while applying the term "freedom" to "those tattooed as slaves, fettered and slaves for generations" (*Prob.* 10). Once more, he idealizes the lowest echelons of society and suggests a radical inversion of social conventions rather than a mostly inner change of attitude vis-à-vis things that should be indifferent. His readers are called by a pun in Cynic style to "unlearn their ignorance" (*ἀπομαθεῖν ἀμαθίαν* [*Prob.* 12]).

Two Roman authors further illuminate Philo's discussion by stressing more distinctly Stoic notions of freedom. Cicero, originally a Platonist like Philo, discusses famous Stoic paradoxes, including the maxim that "only the wise is free and every foolish is a slave".⁶⁰ He quotes this saying in both Greek and Latin, starting his explanations with the quintessentially Stoic remark that true freedom results from control over one's "desires".⁶¹ Cicero's moral advice summarizes this school's teachings: "first let him curb his lusts, despise pleasures, restrain his angry temper, control his avarice, repulse all the other defilements of the mind (*ceteras animi labes repellat* [*Parad.* 33])". The typically Stoic vocabulary pertaining to the rational control of the mind and the emotions is conspicuous in this sentence. Freedom is moreover defined as "the power to live as you will" (*potestas vivendi ut velis*), with emphasis on the Stoic concept of the human will. At the same time, Cicero also dwells on the paradoxical nature of freedom and considers its social as well as legal conditions. A collector of Corinthian works of art, for example, is dismissed as being more slavish than his servants, while Manius Curius is praised for keeping a very modest household (*Parad.* 36, 38). Cicero concludes by warning his readers that legal emancipation may merely imply a "change of masters", but not true freedom (*Parad.* 41). While Cicero rejected Cynicism and criticized Diogenes's "harsh" speech, which in his view "required that he should be flung out unburied",⁶² his examples of freedom in Rome resonate with the practical ethics of the Cynic school. Cicero's treatment of the Stoic paradoxes starts with Stoic theory and then moves to Roman examples in

⁶⁰ Cicero, *Parad.* 33 (ed. Rackham 284).

⁶¹ Cicero, *Parad.* 33: "cupiditatibus suis imperare".

⁶² Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.104; he mentions only one of Diogenes's anecdotes in the *Tusculanae disputationes*, namely his confrontation with Alexander the Great (*Tusc.* 5.92).

a spirit that may reflect the Roman fascination with Cynicism that accompanied the initial shock of its shamelessness.⁶³

Seneca was interested in traditional Stoic themes, such as rational assent to impressions from outside and mechanisms of uprooting the emotions and achieving *apatheia*.⁶⁴ At the same time, however, his friendship with Demetrius shows his fascination with Cynic ideas and suggests that he may have embraced some Cynic features, including aspects of their rhetoric.⁶⁵ His epistle on the simple life is an appropriate test case because it addresses the same themes as Philo's introduction to the *Probus*. Seneca's Stoic orientation is conspicuous already in the first paragraph, where he criticizes man's superfluous possessions: "we can easily decide to do away with things, whose absence we do not perceive, if necessity takes them away" (*Ep.* 87.1). The cognitive terms "iudicio" and "sentio" point to a Stoic framework. Moreover, Seneca is interested in the mind's reaction to a loss of material goods and the proper perception of them as indifferent objects, which must not agitate the wise man. The second paragraph of Seneca's Epistle is also revealing. While Philo idealizes extreme forms of poverty and destitution, Seneca is proud to show his commitment to a simple life by pointing to the limited number of slaves he has taken on a trip with a friend. Merely "a carriage load", he remarks, to make sure that the preparations for dinner take no longer than an hour and that writing tablets are always available (*Ep.* 87.2). Seneca then indulges in a review of his own progress ("profeci"), admitting that "I still care about the opinions of fellow travelers".⁶⁶ Here, too, he uncovers his mental attitude towards external realities in a typically Stoic manner. Identifying his discussion as belonging to "our school", Seneca engages various theoretical approaches to the possession of riches, which are discussed among the Stoics, and concludes that material goods are detrimental in themselves, because they are antecedent causes of evil. They unsettle the mind and prepare the individual to slip along the path of the passions (*Ep.* 87.31). Seneca concludes his Epistle by contemplating the possibility that the Roman people will abandon the riches it has accumulated by building an empire. His position is considerably more conventional

⁶³ For details on reception of Cynicism in Rome, see M.T. Griffin, "Cynicism and the Romans: Attraction and Repulsion", in R.B. Branham/M.-O. Goulet-Cazé (ed.), *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 190–204; Goulet-Cazé, *Cynisme et christianisme dans l'Antiquité*, 86–97.

⁶⁴ For details, see M.T. Griffin, *Seneca. A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976); idem, "Imago Vitae Suae", in J.G. Fitch (ed.), *Seneca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 41–61; M. Graver, "Interiority and Freedom in Seneca's *De Beneficiis*: Acts of Kindness and the Perfected Will", in M.R. Niehoff/J. Levinson (ed.), *Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity* (Culture, Religion, and Politics in the Greco-Roman World 4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019) 71–88.

⁶⁵ Seneca adopted, for example, Cynic rhetoric against encyclical education, even though he accepted the Stoic curriculum including the traditional disciplines; for details, see Niehoff, "L'Idea Filoniana della *Paideia*".

⁶⁶ Seneca, *Ep.* 87.5: "etiamnunc curo opiniones viatorum."

than Philo's: "if we can, let us speak more boldly ('forties'), if not, let us speak more openly ('apertius' [Ep. 87.41])."

Given these differences between Seneca's and Philo's exposition, some similarities between them are nevertheless conspicuous. Seneca turns to a Roman example, namely Cato, the paradigmatic person, who remained modest despite his extraordinary success in politics (Ep. 87.9). He also speaks paradoxically, stressing that "I was shipwrecked before I boarded" (Ep. 87.1). The "Stoic paradoxes" ("Stoica paradoxa") are shown to be "not so surprising as it seems at first sight".⁶⁷ Stressing that the Stoic school considers only virtue to be necessary and sufficient for a happy life, Seneca suggests that the rich man may in fact be poor (Ep. 87.7). These remarks resonate both with Stoic and Cynic philosophy as well as with Philo's introduction to the *Probus*.

Moreover, immediately following the introduction Philo turns to some distinctly Stoic notions, expressing himself like Cicero and Seneca. While the latter two started with Stoic definitions of freedom and then added some Cynic-style examples, Philo begins with Cynic rhetoric and spices it with some Stoic perspectives. In *Prob.* 17 Philo distinguishes bodily slavery from mental slavery, stressing that bodies are subordinated by despots, while souls are mastered by "vices and passions" (κακίαι καὶ πάθη). The mind needs to be liberated from the dominion of the passions and the joke of the emotions, such as desire, fear and grief (*Prob.* 18). The role of reason and judgement is highlighted (λογισμός, γνώμη [*Prob.* 27]). All of these are Stoic perspectives, which enable Philo to offer his specific amalgamation of Cynic and Stoic motifs.

III. The "Most Holy Plato" in Roman Garb

Growing up in Alexandria, where Plato's dialogues were edited and commented upon, Philo knew them extremely well and made pervasive use of them in his early Alexandrian writings where he formulated transcendental ethics within the framework of Scriptural commentary.⁶⁸ In the Allegorical Commentary he frequently alludes to the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus* and quotes whole passages from the *Theaetetus*, saying: "an excellent man, one of those admired for their wisdom, said this

⁶⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 87.5: "nec tam mirabile quam prima facie videtur."

⁶⁸ For details on the edition of Plato's works in Alexandria, see F. Schironi, "Plato at Alexandria", *CQ* 55 (2005) 423–34; for Philo's intensive use of Plato's work in the Allegorical Commentary, with special attention to this quotation of the *Theaetetus*, see Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*; Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 192–224.

magnificently in the *Theaetetus*.⁶⁹ Philo's readers were expected to be familiar with this dialogue, which was commented upon in Alexandria in the spirit of dogmatic Platonism as distinct from Sceptical and Stoicizing interpretations.⁷⁰ Plato was so self-evident for Alexandrian readers that Philo does not mention his name when quoting phrases, keywords or paragraphs from his dialogues. In his later Roman writings, by contrast, when turning to broader Greco-Roman audiences less committed to Plato, Philo identifies him more explicitly. In the *De opificio mundi*, Philo refers twice to key concepts of the *Timaeus*, once with the introductory formula "as someone of the ancients said (ὅπερ καὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων εἶπε τις)", and once with the formula "as Plato said (ὡς ἔφη Πλάτων)".⁷¹ In *Contempl.* 57 Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* are presented as being nowadays a matter of "ridicule" (γέλως). In the *De aeternitate mundi*, a treatise which quotes numerous authors and preserves rare fragments of lost works, Plato is mentioned seven times as the author of the *Timaeus* and as an authority for the created yet indestructible nature of the world.⁷² While Philo relates to interpreters of the *Timaeus*, especially to Aristotle, he does not exert himself to praise Plato. His most lavish comment is that he "says well" (εὖ ... φησὶν [Aet. 38]).

In the introduction to the *Probus*, Plato plays a visible role. Philo initially alludes to the famous simile of the cave in *Resp.* 514a–517a, distinguishing between those "who cannot see the intelligible light because of a weakness of the soul's eye", "as if spending their days in the night", and those who "live in the daylight" and "observe purest things in unmixed rays of sun beams" (*Prob.* 5). This allusion with its distinctly Platonic keywords features between two paragraphs expounding the paradox of freedom in society. The Platonic notion of the ideal forms is not mentioned and in fact nothing specifically Platonic is invoked. The allusion thus turns out to be not much more than a rhetorical embellishment.

In *Prob.* 13, Plato is praised as "most holy" and a line of the *Phaedrus* is quoted, yet his distinct ideas are once more ignored:

⁶⁹ Philo, *Fug.* 63: Τοῦτό τις καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ σοφία θαυμασθέντων ἀνὴρ δόκιμος ἐφώνησε μεγαλειότερον ἐν Θεαιτήτῳ.

⁷⁰ For details, see H. Tarrant, "The Date of the Anon. In *Theaetetus*", *CQ* 33 (1983) 161–87; D. Sedley, "Three Platonist Interpretations of the *Theaetetus*", in C. Gill/M.M. McCabe (ed.), *Form and Argument in Late Plato* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 81–101; M. Bonazzi, "Le Commentaire Anonyme du *Théétète* et l'Invention du Platonisme", in D. El Murr (ed.), *La mesure du savoir* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2013) 309–33.

⁷¹ Philo, *Opif.* 21, 119; see also D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (PACS 1; Leiden: Brill, 2011) 144, 289–90.

⁷² Philo, *Aet.* 13, 14, 16, 27, 38, 52, 141; on the authenticity and nature of the treatise *De aeternitate mundi*, see D.T. Runia, "Philo's *De aeternitate mundi*: The Problem of Interpretation", *VC* 35 (1981) 105–51.

(§13) ἐπειδὴ δὲ κατὰ τὸν ἱερώτατον Πλάτωνα⁷³ «φθόνος ἔξω θείου χοροῦ ἴσταται»⁷⁴, θειώτατον δὲ καὶ κοινωνικώτατον σοφία, συγκλείει μὲν οὐδέποτε τὸ ἑαυτῆς φροντιστήριον, ἀναπεπταμένη δὲ αἰεὶ δέχεται τοὺς ποτίμων διψῶντας λόγων, οἷς⁷⁵ ἀκράτου διδασκαλίας ἄφθονον ἐπαντλοῦσα νᾶμα μεθύειν τὴν νηφάλιον ἀναπεῖθει μέθην. (§14) οἱ δὲ ὡσπερ ἐν ταῖς τελεταῖς ἱεροφαντηθέντες, ὅταν ὀργίῳν γεμισθῶσι,⁷⁶ πολλὰ τῆς πρόσθεν ὀλιγωρίας ἑαυτοὺς κακίζουσι, ὡς οὐ φεισάμενοι χρόνου, βίον δὲ τρίψαντες ἀβίωτον,⁷⁷ ἐν ᾧ φρονήσεως ἐχέρυσαν. (§15) ἄξιον οὖν νεότητα τὴν πανταχοῦ πᾶσαν τὰς ἀπαρχὰς τῆς πρώτης ἀκμῆς μηδενὶ μᾶλλον ἢ παιδείᾳ ἀναθεῖναι, ἣ καὶ ἐνηβῆσαι καὶ ἐγγηράσαι καλόν- ὡσπερ γάρ, φασί, τὰ καινὰ τῶν ἀγγείων ἀναφέρει τὰς τῶν πρώτων⁷⁸ εἰς αὐτὰ ἐγχυθέντων ὁσμάς, οὕτως καὶ αἱ τῶν νέων ψυχαὶ τοὺς πρώτους τῶν φαντασιῶν τύπους ἀνεξαλείπτους ἐναποματτόμεναι, τῇ φορᾷ τῶν αὐθις ἐπεισερόντων ἤκιστα κατακλυζόμεναι, τὸ ἀρχαῖον διαφαίνουσι εἶδος.

(§13) Given that, according to the holiest Plato, “envy is located outside the divine choir” (*Phaedr.* 247a) and wisdom is the most divine and most common property, who never closes her proper lecture hall, but stretches out and always receives those thirsty for sweet words. Wisdom pours on them a generous stream of undiluted teachings and induces them to become drunk with a sober drunkenness. (§14) But those who have been initiated as if in mysteries, whenever they are filled with secrecy, much reproach themselves for their former indifference, because they did not use their time sparingly, but wore themselves out in an unlivable life, in which they lacked prudence. (§15) It is appropriate then that all youth everywhere should devote the first fruits of their juvenile bloom to nothing more than to education, through which it is good to blossom and

⁷³ Only MS M reads “according to the most holy Plato” (κατὰ τὸν ἱερώτατον Πλάτωνα), while all the others read λιγυρώτατον, “most clear or melodious”. Leopold Cohn rightly adopted the minority reading, as the alternative does not fit the context here (*contra* Colson PLCL 9:16) and can be explained rather easily as an emendation by a scribe, who was disturbed by Philo’s extraordinary praise of Plato (for a similar case regarding Euripides, whose name is emended to “hope” (ἐλπίδα), see MSS A and Q on *Prob.* 99). Note that the superlative ἱερώτατος is applied to Moses in *Plant.* 168; for its application to Plato, see Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 15.10.

⁷⁴ Philo drops the particle γάρ, which Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Dem.* 7.47, and Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 5, *Mor.* 679e, preserve.

⁷⁵ MS M reads εἰς instead of οἷς, ignoring the reference of the personal pronoun to those thirsty for drinkable words. Consequently, the scribe turns the feminine participle ἐπαντλοῦσα, “irrigating”, which is dependent on “wisdom” (σοφία), into a masculine plural (ἐπαντλοῦντες), as if it refers to the thirsty “drawing water”.

⁷⁶ MS G reads μεθυσθῶσι, the passive aorist subjunctive of μεθύσκω, to get drunk, instead of γεμισθῶσι. This emendation probably derives from the much later interpretation of ὄργιον (“mystery cult”, “secret”) as “orgy”. Grammatically, however, this emendation does not fit here, because the passive form of μεθύσκω is used with a genitive, as in Plato, *Symp.* 203b. Mangey’s conjecture, μνηθῶσι, the passive aorist subjunctive of μνέω (“to initiate into the mysteries”), is an attempt to adapt the scribe’s emendation to the original sense of ὄργιον. Both, however, are better dismissed.

⁷⁷ Note Philo’s play on the words βίος and ἀβίωτος, which reflects a Cynic proclivity for paradoxical plays on words and suggests a lighter form of ethical instruction.

⁷⁸ Several MSS construe this as an adverb, reading πρώτως or πρώτων. These emendations, however, are unnecessary, if we consider the use of τὰ πρώτα as a substantive neuter, “the first things” (for examples of such use, see F. Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* [Leiden: Brill, 2015], 1851).

grow old. Since as new vessels, they say, absorb the fragrance of the liquids that have first been poured into them, thus also the souls of young people reveal the original image, as they receive the imprint of first visions as indelible impressions and are hardly submerged by the force of things later showering on them (Philo, *Prob.* 13–15 [PCW 6:4]).

This passage opens with a quotation from *Phaedr.* 247, a key text throughout Philo's oeuvre.⁷⁹ His use of it here, however, is strikingly brief and without even a hint at the famous motifs of the horses and the charioteer, which he frequently invoked in the *Allegorical Commentary*.⁸⁰ Philo merely refers to the lack of envy in the divine realm, a motif which had become a *bon mot*, being used by Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Plutarch in mundane contexts.⁸¹ Philo now emphasizes this-worldly wisdom, the "most shared property", which never closes the gates of instruction. This characterization of wisdom contradicts Plato's emphasis in *Phaedr.* 247b that true insight can be found only beyond heaven and necessarily escapes description. No hymn-writer, he insisted, has ever been able to express it and none will do so in the future. Continuous and hard intellectual training is required to liberate the soul from its bodily prison and enable it to recollect the eternal knowledge it possessed before its traumatic entry into a human body. Philo's brief appeal to the famous Platonic passage turns out to be rather unspecific.

As Gretchen Reydams-Schils (2013) has shown, the phenomenon of invoking Plato, while no longer subscribing to his transcendental philosophy, is characteristic of Roman philosophers, especially of Antiochus and Cicero. In our context it is especially well illustrated by Panaetius, a Stoic philosopher from Rhodes, who became part of P. Scipio Aemilianus's circle in the second century BCE. Cicero translated and expanded his work *De officiis*, thus rendering his ideas available in Roman circles. He remarked on his paradoxical attitude towards Plato:

Are we then to believe Panaetius when he disagrees with his Plato? For while he calls him on every occasion divine, wisest, most holy, the Homer of the philosophers, he yet does not approve of this one principle of his, the immortality of the soul.⁸²

⁷⁹ See also Reydams-Schils in this volume.

⁸⁰ See above section one, and Philo, *Leg.* 1.61–76; 3.118, 128, 132, 134, 136, 223–224; *Agr.* 72–75; *Her.* 77; *Somn.* 2.294; *Sacr.* 45, 49; *Det.* 141.

⁸¹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Dem.* 7.47; Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.* 5, *Mor.* 679e; see also Callimachus, *Hymn. Apoll.* 105–110.

⁸² Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.79: "Credamus igitur Panaetio a Platone suo dissentienti? Quem enim omnibus locis divinum, quem sapientissimum, quem sanctissimum, quem Homerum philosophorum appellat, huius hanc unam sententiam de immortalitate animorum non probat" (J.E. King [ed.], 92).

Moreover, the Classical Platonic notion of an ideal “image” (εἶδος) is now used by Philo in the mundane meaning of shape. Not a transcendental form is implied, but the first imprint in a child’s education. Philo uses the well-known Stoic term *φαντασία*, which refers to an external impression upon the soul, which needs to be rationally examined before it can be accepted (Diogenes Laertius 7.45–49). A popular saying illustrates the approach to education by pointing to new vessels absorbing the fragrance of liquids first poured into them. This image conveys a contrary approach to that of Plato because the vessel itself has boundaries and the liquid comes from concrete instruction rather than from the immortal soul’s vision of Ideal Forms.

Philo refers in this context to an existing tradition – “they say” (γάρ φασί) – and thus prompts questions about his sources. To my knowledge, only two authors in Antiquity mention this saying about new vessels, namely the Augustan poet Horace and Quintilian, the Roman rhetor. Most likely trained in Rome during the time of Philo’s embassy, Quintilian subsequently published his main work, the *Institutio oratoria*, under Domitian. Both Roman authors use the image of the vessel in the same educational context as Philo. Horace recommends: “Now imbibe the teachings with a pure heart, boy, as the jar will keep for long the fragrance which it once received when first dipped.”⁸³ Quintilian expresses himself similarly:

And we are by nature most tenacious of those impressions which we acquire with crude minds: just as the flavor, which new vessels absorb, remains, and as the colors of wool cannot be washed away if these were applied by dyes to pure whiteness.⁸⁴

The similarities between Horace, Philo and Quintilian are remarkable. They suggest a common tradition, probably going back to Horace, whom August Otto identified as highly influential in the Roman tradition of gnomic wisdom. Many of the sayings mentioned by him, as the one above, subsequently became canonical.⁸⁵ While Otto mentions Philo as someone familiar with the content of Horace’s maxim, he assumes that he, as a Greek speaker, must have known it through other, evidently Greek channels. This conclusion is based on the traditional scholarly perception of Latin literature as entirely dependent on its Greek model, while Greek philosophers are studied only within the Greek tradition without Roman influences being

⁸³ Horace, *Ep.* 1.2.67–70: “Nunc adhibe puro pectore verba, puer, nunc te melioribus offer, quo semel est inbuta recens servabit odorem testa diu” (Kytzler [ed.] 2008: 526).

⁸⁴ Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.1.5: “Et natura tenacissimi sumus eorum, quae rudibus animis percepimus: ut sapor, quo nova imbuas, durat, nec lanarum colores, quibus simplex ille candor mutatus est, elui possunt” (Butler [ed.] 1963: 21).

⁸⁵ A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Reden der Römer* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1890) 346.

considered.⁸⁶ On this assumption, a Greek author, such as Philo, can hardly have been inspired by a Latin author, even though he spent several years in Rome and mingled its intellectual circles. Plutarch presents a similar case. While the Latin sources of his *Vitae* of Roman heroes have been studied by historians, his philosophy is still analyzed almost exclusively from a Greek perspective, even though he directly quotes Cicero.⁸⁷

It is time, however, to appreciate the complex entanglements of East and West and recognize Philo's unique role in intellectual circles in Rome. Writing the *Probus* in a Roman context just before the mid-first century CE, he is one of the first Greek-speaking authors, who show concrete signs of Romanization in the field of philosophy. Parallel to his Roman interpretation of Ares,⁸⁸ I argue here that the remarkable similarity between Philo, Horace, and Quintilian testifies to his keen engagement with Roman gnomic wisdom and ideas of education. Philo seems to have been inspired in Rome by the winged word mentioned and popularized by Horace. This possibility is further supported by the fact that Philo uses it only in this later Roman treatise. Epictetus, another Greek-speaking philosopher in Rome, also mentions a version of it. According to Gellus, Epictetus said: "pay attention if the vessel is cleansed. If you add these [philosophical principles] to opinion without foundation, they are lost" (*Diatr.* 17.19.3). Horace's saying was thus available to Greek-speaking philosophers active in Rome. Philo is our first witness of its transfer from the Latin to the Greek realm, which is in his case accompanied by a move from transcendental Platonism to Cynic-Stoic ethics in a Roman key.

IV. Conclusion

The introduction of the *Probus* has yielded rich insights into the philosophical objectives, the communicative situation and the Roman context of this treatise, all of which illuminate the development of his thought in connection with the embassy to Rome as well as broader philosophical debates in the first century CE. Philo's unique appeal to Theodotus, an otherwise unknown person, who is obviously sympathetic his work and implied as a reader, points to the context of intellectual life in Rome,

⁸⁶ However, Otto (1890: xviii) cautiously considers the general possibility of Roman influence on Greek authors: "So ist doch nicht ausgeschlossen, daß, obwohl seltener, auch die Griechen in späterer Zeit von den Römern Sprichwörtliches entlehnt haben könnten. Dem ist auch in der Tat so."

⁸⁷ Important exceptions to this scholarly trend, are Stadter, *Plutarch and His Roman Readers*; and R. Langlands, "Plutarch and Roman exemplary Ethics", in idem/A. König/J. Uden (ed.), *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire*, 96-235. *Cross-Cultural Interactions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) 75-94.

⁸⁸ For details, see M.R. Niehoff, "The Power of Ares in Philo's *Legatio*", in F. Calabi et al. (ed.), *Pouvoir et Puissances chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011) 129-39.

which was characterized by diverse salons and platforms of encounters. This reference also highlights the fact that Philo no longer addresses the self-evident Jewish community of Alexandria and has instead oriented himself towards broader networks of the imperial capital. Moreover, Philo defines the literary genre of the *Probus* as a *λόγος*, namely an independent treatise on a philosophical proposition, which replaces the earlier Alexandrian form of a running commentary on the Jewish Scriptures and appeals to a more general, Greco-Roman audience.

Philosophically, the introduction of the *Probus* documents a remarkable engagement with diverse discourses in first century Rome. Philo offers here a new amalgamation of motifs, with emphasis on Cynic and Stoic rather than transcendental Platonic notions, which characterized his earlier Alexandrian work. In comparison to Cicero and Seneca, Philo hardly uses Stoic terminology pertaining to mental perception and rational judgement. He instead stresses individual autonomy and the rejection of all social conventions. Plato, on the other hand, has become rather more marginal in Rome. Anticipating to some degree Josephus, who remarks that Plato was “scoffed at” during his time,⁸⁹ Philo still mentions the philosopher who shaped his approach in the Allegorical Commentary, but no longer uses his transcendental ideas. Cynic rhetoric, by contrast, has become a visible factor already in the introduction and will play a central role in the later parts of the *Probus*.

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⁸⁹ *χλευαζόμενος* (Josephus, *C.Ap.* 2.223).

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Natural Philosophy and Stoicism in Philo's Oeuvre

Gretchen Reydam-Schils

In this paper I reexamine the role of the study of nature in Philo's writings in light of Maren Niehoff's thesis that the works which he wrote after his embassy to Rome show a markedly more Stoic bent than his earlier writings.¹ In a review of that book, I have suggested that it might be helpful now to look for what I called "bridge" concepts or texts, which would allow us to detect connections between these different phases of Philo's intellectual trajectory, that is, before and after his visit to Rome, and advance our understanding of the alleged shift.² One such set of bridge-concepts could be provided by Plato's *Timaeus*, because, as I have argued before,³ by the time Philo came to use the *Timaeus*, Stoic and Platonist elements had already become intertwined in the history of its interpretation.

Here I will not retrace the historical lineage of this cross-fertilization between Platonist and Stoic interpretations of the *Timaeus* – i.e., through which thinkers and accounts it happened. But conceptually it is worth reminding ourselves of the main reason why Plato's *Timaeus* in particular could constitute such a bridge for Philo. Succinctly put, the *Timaeus*, which in antiquity was seen as a discourse on nature, easily lends itself both to a more immanent and a more transcendent worldview. At the end of that work, human beings are urged to harmonize the rational part of their soul with the World Soul (*Tim.* 90a–d).⁴ One can read that injunction either as pointing its audience to the intelligible realm of Being, towards which the World Soul itself is oriented, or as merely integrating humans into the larger order that the cosmos represents, from an immanent perspective. This latter stance is attested by Chrysippus's and Posidonius's co-optation of the *Timaeus*,⁵ and it would be

¹ M.R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (AYBRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), esp. chapters 5 and 12.

² G. Reydam-Schils, review of Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, *BMCR* (2018.05.36).

³ G. Reydam-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato's Timaeus* (MON 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1999) 135–65.

⁴ On this point see especially D. Sedley, "'Becoming like God' in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle", in T. Calvo Martínez/L. Brisson (ed.), *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias* (IPS 9; Sankt Augustin: Akademie, 1997) 327–39. For Philo, see *Det.* 85; *Sacr.* 2, 45.

⁵ For Chrysippus, see Diogenes Laertius 7.87–88; for Posidonius, see F186 and 187 (Edelstein and Kidd).

worthwhile to revisit Seneca's use of the *Timaeus* and compare it to Philo's. Some scholars have argued that the presence and role of the intelligible forms is minimal in the *Timaeus*.⁶

Which view of natural philosophy (or "physics" in the ancient sense) underpins these two lines of interpreting the *Timaeus*? A good example of how Platonist and Stoic elements could be combined in surprising ways in Philo's reading of the *Timaeus* is preserved in an unattributed fragment of his *Quaestiones in Genesisim* (F11 Marcus). Here Philo inserts a Stoic account of sociability, with ever expanding circles of relationships, into the cosmos of Plato's *Timaeus*, because the final relationship that grounds all sociability is between humans and the God who is the Maker and Father of all. To be truly λογικός, one should be community-oriented, a lover of the cosmos and a lover of God. In this context Philo posits no fundamental incompatibility between venerating the order of the universe and one's reverence of an ultimately transcendent God. To gain a better understanding of how Philo arrives at his reconciliation between these two perspectives, I will pursue two lines of inquiry: first, Philo's critique of the kind of study of the universe which he attributes to the "Chaldeans" throughout his works, and second, the value which he himself ends up attributing to this field of study, based on his reading of Plato's *Timaeus*.⁷

I. The Chaldeans and Natural Philosophy in the Allegorical Commentary

The treatise *De mutatione nominum* provides a helpful framework for analyzing Philo's objections to natural philosophy.⁸ When Philo discusses Abraham's change of name from Abram, he concludes as follows:

This is how we have learned to regard the story of Abraham. Literally his name was changed, actually he changed over from nature-study to ethical philosophy and abandoned the study of the world to find a new home in the knowledge of its Maker, and from this he gained piety, the most splendid of possessions (*Mut.* 76, PLCL).⁹

The earlier Abraham was too involved in the study of the heavens (or literally, "uplifted" in the sense of μετέωρος), connected to the Chaldeans earlier in the treatise

⁶ S. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 60–83.

⁷ On this topic, see especially D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (PhA 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986).

⁸ On *De mutatione nominum*, see the essays of Sharon Weisser and Michael Cover in the present volume.

⁹ Philo, *Mut.* 76: τοιαῦτα ἐδιδάχθημεν περὶ τοῦ λόγου μὲν μετονομασθέντος, ἔργω δὲ μεταβαλόντος ἀπὸ φυσιολογίας πρὸς τὴν ἠθικὴν φιλοσοφίαν καὶ μεταναστάντος ἀπὸ τῆς περὶ τὸν κόσμον θεωρίας πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πεποιηκότες ἐπιστήμην, ἐξ ἧς εὐσέβειαν, κτημάτων τὸ κάλλιστον, ἐκτήσατο.

(*Mut.* 16), even though this study itself was not entirely devoid of wisdom either (*Mut.* 67).¹⁰ In a first move to counter this preoccupation, Philo contrasts one who is merely “fond of learning” (ὁ φιλομαθής [*Mut.* 70]) with “the philosopher” or better “the sage” (ὁ φιλόσοφος/σόφος). The learning of the first type amounts to mere idle curiosity or “meddlesomeness” (περιεργία [see also *Mut.* 83]), if it does not yield the “benefit” (ὠφέλεια) and “fruit” (καρπός) of improving the soul and making it more virtuous by eliminating the passions (*Mut.* 72–74). The second move, which in itself is double, occurs in the passage above: ultimately even the study of the heavens needs to point beyond the world itself “to knowledge of its Maker” (πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πεποιηκότος ἐπιστήμην), God, and thus Philo here is not merely concerned with the virtues in general but rather with the one virtue that crowns them all: “piety” (εὐσέβεια) in a human being’s relationship with this Maker.

The passage from *De mutatione nominum* and its context allow us to detect three main problems with the study of nature and the heavens.¹¹ First, this type of inquiry can yield futile learning, a mere gathering of bits of information without any further purpose; second – and this is by far the most serious problem in Philo’s eyes – it can prevent the inquirer from looking beyond the universe itself towards its cause and Maker, God; and finally, in line with Philo’s leanings towards skepticism,¹² the knowledge it can yield is limited, and itself depends on the divine.

The critique of idle curiosity in the pursuit of natural philosophy is also well attested in the strand of Stoicism that is contemporary to Philo. In a fragment, Epicetetus appears to question the value of natural philosophy: what matters, instead, is that we “know ourselves”, know good and evil, desire, aversion, choice, and refusal, and that we apply this knowledge to the proper ordering of our lives (F1). Similarly, the Cynic Demetrius is made to say in Seneca’s *De beneficiis* (7.1.6) that it is better to have a few maxims of philosophy at hand for practical use – precepts that can make us “better and happier” – than to have a vast storehouse of recondite and useless knowledge. But in a Stoic context, this is only one half of a dialectical argument: in his preface to book three of his *Naturales quaestiones*, for instance, Seneca makes it abundantly clear that the proper study of the order of the universe will, in effect, free the mind from getting entangled in the wrong concerns and orient it towards the proper good. That Philo in *De mutatione nominum* is not targeting the Stoics is also clear from his reference to the image, elsewhere attested for Stoicism (Diogenes Laertius 7.40), that if philosophy would be a field, natural philosophy would

¹⁰ See also Philo, *Leg.* 3.83–84; *Cher.* 4, 7; *Gig.* 62–63; *Mos.* 1.23.

¹¹ On this issue, and the broader context and implications, see now C.A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (WUNT 2.309; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), for this theme, especially 88–91.

¹² For skeptical currents in Philo’s thought, see the essays of Mauro Bonazzi and Carlos Lévy in the present volume.

represent the plants, logic the fence, and ethics the fruit (*Mut.* 74; see also *Agr.* 14–16). The primacy of ethics in this image, with the echo of the notion of “fruit” (*καρπός*), clearly meets with Philo’s approval in this context (see also *Cher.* 102). But just as the inquiry into the heavens may well not be devoid of wisdom altogether, yet still is insufficient, so this approach still does not go far enough for Philo either. Hence, he radically orients his readers, in the conclusion to his part of his exposition, to God and the virtue of piety.

By far the greatest objection Philo has to natural philosophy is that it can mire human beings in lower, created reality and turn them away from God. The focus on the perceptible order of the universe presents two related challenges: first, it may lead one to look for God in the wrong place, or rather, to have a mistaken view of the divine, which is strictly speaking not in a place at all (as in *Leg.* 3.6, 51; *Ebr.* 63; *Conf.* 136–139; *Somn.* 1.63–64, 184); second, humans could be using the wrong cognitive function: the best connection humans have with God is through a turn inwards to the mind and not through sense-perception (as in *Migr.* 136–137); even this cognition, however, has its limits (see below). The Allegorical Commentary is governed by a predominantly Platonist binary framework of physical reality vs. the intelligible realm, the rational part/function of the soul vs. the irrational, the mind and soul vs. the body, and so on.¹³ This framework ultimately serves to underscore the primacy of a hyper-transcendent God who, while being the anchor of all reality and the final point of reference for human beings, cannot be known in his essence.

The critique of a certain kind of natural philosophy is the point to which Philo returns time and again in his treatment of the “Chaldeans”. For Philo, the Chaldeans as a group represent a wrong-headed kind of inquiry, and he even coins a verb derived from that name to designate this misguided approach, *Χαλδαίζειν*.¹⁴ In his *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* (96–99), Philo claims that the Chaldeans practice astronomy and astrology, that they consider the world not the “work” (*ἔργον*) of God, but God itself (see also *Congr.* 47–49, 105), and that good and evil depend on the revolutions of the heavens. In this context their skill acquires a negative connotation, as “misleading gullible people into prating” (*τοὺς εὐχερεστέρους ἀνέπεισε τερατεύεσθαι*

¹³ For a recent reassessment of Philo’s Platonism see R. Hirsch-Luipold, “Unterwegs zur Weisheit: Philons Interpretation des Auszugs Abrahams als Zeugnis des religiösen Platonismus der frühen Kaiserzeit”, in M.R. Niehoff/R. Feldmeier (ed.), *Abrahams Aufbruch: Philon von Alexandria, De migratione Abrahami* (SAPERE 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 167–85.

¹⁴ The Chaldeans are not always explicitly mentioned, as for instance in Philo, *Deus* 62; *Sacr.* 120; *Ebr.* 105–110; *Opif.* 43–46 (discussed below); *Decal.* 52–61; *Spec.* 1.13–20; and the mistaken views can be attributed to other figures too, such as Cain (*Sacr.* 2, 72; see also *Somn.* 2.283 on the tower of Babel). For contrasts between a focus on the created order and the turn to God, see also *Leg.* 3.7; *Cher.* 87–90, 97; *Sacr.* 101, 120, 139; *Det.* 62; *Post.* 19–20; *Plant.* 21–22 (with a contrast between bodily eyes and eyes of the soul in the context of a long excursus on the order of the universe, based on the *Timaeus*), 61; *Ebr.* 69–70; *Her.* 93; *Congr.* 133–134; *Somn.* 1.249; 2.69–70, 253.

[*Her.* 97]).¹⁵ So, when Abraham is said to migrate, he moves from cognition attainable through the senses to wisdom attainable through the mind, from astrology to “natural philosophy” (φυσιολογία [note that here, natural philosophy itself is associated with this higher cognition]), from “insecure conjecture to firm apprehension” (with reservations, on which, see below), “from the created to the uncreated” (see also *Ebr.* 94), and “from the world to its Maker and Father” (see also *Her.* 289).

De migratione Abrahami (176–186) develops this picture further. In this context, the Chaldeans, who recognize only one universe (the physical one, presumably, thereby not acknowledging its intelligible counterpart), consider either the world itself or its soul, God; endorse a notion of universal harmony, according to which the things on earth and the things of heaven are attuned to one another; and elevate fate and necessity to the status of gods. Philo appears to have grafted some Stoic tenets on these alleged views of the Chaldeans.¹⁶ As in *De mutatione nominum* (see above), here too the knowledge of the Chaldeans is not entirely dismissed. Moses is said to have accepted their notion of universal harmony (as also in *Cher.* 110–112), but to have transposed it as depending on a transcendent God who holds the world together with invisible powers.¹⁷ In this context, Moses calls for a turn from the heavens to earth; not to natural phenomena, however, but to human beings' self-knowledge (see also *Somn.* 1.52–57).¹⁸ Humans are meant to discover the connection between their mind and “the mind of the universe”, by which Philo does not mean the mind of any Platonic World Soul, but the transcendent divine mind (*Migr.* 192).¹⁹ As David Runia has shown,²⁰ the action of the World Soul from Plato's *Timaeus* is either demoted in Philo's writing or transposed onto a transcendent mind. So, in this context, the distinction between mind and soul is essential.

Despite the Stoic sounding traits of the Chaldean position, Stoicism is not entirely relegated to the bottom of the pile; in other contexts this philosophy appears capable of straddling a divide between the “Chaldeans” and the “philosophers”. In his *Leg.*

¹⁵ See also Philo, *Somn.* 1.161: the negative notion of “sky-prating” (τῶν περὶ ἀστρονομίαν μετεωρολεσχῶν); *Praem.* 26–27, 30, 58, discussed below.

¹⁶ See S. Weisser, “Knowing God by Analogy: Philo of Alexandria against the Stoic God”, *SPhiloA* 29 (2017): 48–52. See also Philo, *Aet.* 47 and 84.

¹⁷ See also the sequence of interpretations of the two Cherubim and the sword in *Cher.* 21–30: Philo moves from two interpretations that align the Cherubim with features of the structure of the universe, one of which echoes Plato's *Timaeus*, to one in terms of divine powers.

¹⁸ See also R. Feldmeier, “Gotteserkenntnis durch Selbsterkenntnis: Philons *Migratio* in ihrem religionsgeschichtlichen Kontext”, in idem/M.R. Niehoff (ed.), *Abrahams Aufbruch: Philon Von Alexandria, De migratione Abrahami* (SAPERE 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 187–202.

¹⁹ See Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views*, 158–62; Weisser, “Knowing God”, 33–60; *Leg.* 1.38; 3.29; on *Opif.* 69, see below.

²⁰ Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 204–8. See also Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence*, 152–4; C.S. O'Brien, *The Demiurge in Ancient Thought: Secondary Gods and Divine Mediators* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 51 and 57.

(3.100–102), Philo elaborates a contrast between, on the one hand, the best philosophers, who arrive at a notion of God as the Cause via the “shadow” of the order in the world, and, on the other, the higher and purer kind of mind, represented by Moses, that derives its knowledge directly from God.²¹ The reasoning of the first group proceeds from a house, over other constructed things, to the universe as a vast house or city. Just as the construction of a house presupposes a maker, so the order of the universe allows one to arrive at its Maker (see also *Cher.* 126–127; *Conf.* 97–100; *Somn.* 2.26). This is an argument of design of the kind which we see attributed to the Stoics by Cicero’s Balbus in the second book of his *De natura deorum*. In Cicero’s account, the Epicurean Velleius vehemently attacks both the Stoic notion of providence and Plato’s Demiurge (*Nat. d.* 1.18). For his part, Philo here pulls Plato’s notion of a divine Demiurge into an account that emphasizes not its transcendent and noetic aspect (as looking at the paradigm of Being) but its craft dimension (see also *Somn.* 1.203–204, 207, with the analogy of weaving). In any case, philosophers who, like the Stoics, accept such an argument from design can at least see beyond the physical universe to a Cause, and in that sense they are doing much better than the “Chaldeans”.

But even this dual way of looking at the Divine as the ultimate cause should not obscure the fact that in the Allegorical Commentary, too, Philo can attribute great value to natural theology, as when he considers the cosmos a gift from God:

For it says in words most agreeable to the truth of things, “what a man found, this he offered as a gift”. Each of us, that is, finds at our birth that great gift of God, the complete universe which He bestowed on itself and on its highest members (*Ebr.* 118, PLCL).²²

When Philo in the Allegorical Commentary, as in this passage, uses the superlative form of the φυσικῶς (“natural”) interpretation of Scripture, φυσικώτατα, he refers to the highest level of meaning available to human beings. It is Moses himself who becomes the best interpreter of nature,²³ just as Israel is the nation that “investigates and contemplates all the things of nature”.²⁴ Thus, natural philosophy too can be co-opted for the right attitude towards God and the world in this series of works. Philo

²¹ Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 95 and 215; see also Philo, *Her.* 111.

²² λέγει γὰρ φυσικώτατα· “ἀνὴρ ὃ εὗρε, τοῦτο προσήνεγκε δῶρον”. ἕκαστος δ’ ἡμῶν γενόμενος εὐθὺς εὐρίσκει τὸ μέγα δῶρον θεοῦ τὸν παντελεῖ κόσμον, <ὄν> αὐτὸν ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοῖς ἀρίστοις μέρεσιν [ἔρεσιν] ἐχαρίσατο. See also Philo, *Agr.* 51; *Plant.* 131, where Philo echoes the *Timaeus* (29a) in claiming that “the world is the most perfect of things produced, and the Maker [κοσμοποιός] the best of causes”; and *Somn.* 1.243, on the universe being an “offering” to God.

²³ As in Philo, *Leg.* 3.12; *Her.* 213: ὁ τῶν τῆς φύσεως ἐρμηνεὺς πραγμάτων.

²⁴ As in Philo, *Her.* 279 (σκεπτικὸν καὶ θεωρητικὸν τῶν τῆς φύσεως πραγμάτων); see also Philo’s description of the wise person as engaging in the study of the heavens (here called φυσιολογία) and meteorology, *Ebr.* 91–92; *Somn.* 2.173.

even rewrites the Stoic notions of “living according to nature” and “walking in the track of right reason” as a form of “following” his God (*Migr.* 128).²⁵ In sum, there are elements of Stoicism in the views of the “Chaldeans”, in those of the “best philosophers”, and ultimately, also in those of Moses himself.

Finally, Philo stresses the limits of human knowledge also in natural philosophy. In *De fuga et inventione*, for instance, he responds as follows to the question what the “third” term would be that makes an act of cognition possible:

To these inquiries the other gives the only right answer, “God will see for Himself”; for the third term is God’s special work. For it is by His taking thought for them that the mind apprehends, and sight sees, and every sense perceives. As for the words “A ram is found held fast”, this is reason keeping quiet and in suspense. For the best offering is quietness and suspense of judgement, in matters that absolutely lack proofs. The only word we may say is this, “God will see”. To Him all things are known; He sees all things distinctly, by clearest light, even by Himself. No other word can be spoken by created beings on whom the darkness has been shed in full measure; and in darkness, safety lies in keeping still (*Fug.* 135–136, PLCL).²⁶

Here God himself becomes the third term that makes cognition possible. Left to their own devices, all humans really can do is “suspend judgment” (ἐποχή, a technical term in ancient skepticism) and remain silent; only through God does it become possible for the mind to “apprehend” and sense-perception to take place.²⁷ The verb for “apprehending” (καταλαμβάνει) echoes the Stoic term for “cognition” (κατάληψις

²⁵ Philo, *Migr.* 128: “This is the aim extolled by the best philosophers, to live agreeably to nature and it is attained whenever the mind, having entered on virtue’s path, walks in the track of right reason and follows God, mindful of His injunctions, and always and in all places recognizing them all as valid both in action and in speech” (τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ παρὰ τοῖς ἄριστα φιλοσοφήσασιν ἀδόμενον τέλος, τὸ ἀκολουθῶν τῇ φύσει ζῆν γίνεται δέ, ὅταν ὁ νοῦς εἰς τὴν ἀρετῆς ἀτραπὸν ἐλθὼν κατ’ ἴχνος ὀρθοῦ λόγου βαίῃ καὶ ἐπηται θεῷ, τῶν προστάξεων αὐτοῦ διαμεμνημένος καὶ πάσας αἰεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ ἔργοις τε καὶ λόγοις βεβαιούμενος). See also Philo, *Leg.* 3.110; *Plant.* 49; and compare *Prob.* 160, there attributed to Zeno. Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 238–40, sees this as an alignment specifically with Cleanthes’s religious view. On this topic see also W.E. Helleman, “Deification and Assimilation to God”, *SPhiloA* 2 (1990): 51–71; and Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria’s Views*, 130–5.

²⁶ Philo, *Fug.* 135–136: ταῦτα πυθνανομένω δεόντως ἀποκρίνεται· “ὁ θεὸς ὄψεται ἑαυτῷ”. θεοῦ γὰρ ἔργον ἴδιον τὸ τρίτον. ἐπιφροσύνη γὰρ αὐτοῦ ὁ μὲν νοῦς καταλαμβάνει, ἡ δ’ ὄρασις ὀρᾷ καὶ πᾶσα αἰσθησις αἰσθάνεται. “κριτὸς δ’ εὐρίσκειται κατεχόμενος”, τουτέστι λόγος ἡσυχάζων καὶ ἐπέχων. ἄριστον γὰρ ἱερεῖον ἡσυχία καὶ ἐποχὴ περὶ ὧν πάντως οὐκ εἰσι πίστεις. ῥητὸν γὰρ μόνον τοῦτο “ὁ θεὸς ὄψεται”, ᾧ γνώριμα τὰ πάντα, ὅς λαμπροτάτῳ φωτὶ, ἑαυτῷ, τὰ ὅλα αὐγάζει· τὰ δ’ ἄλλα οὐ ῥητὰ γενέσει, ἧς πολὺ κατακέρχεται τὸ σκότος· ἡρεμία δ’ ἀσφαλὲς ἐν σκότῳ. See also Philo, *Leg.* 1.25, 29; 2.46, 68–69; 3.8.

²⁷ See also Philo, *Leg.* 3.29–35, 61, 179, 198–199, 228; *Cher.* 58–78, on Cain and Laban; *Det.* 87–90, including natural philosophy and observation of the order of the universe; *Post.* 35–36; on Protagoras, the human mind as the measure of all things; *Plant.* 31, 84; *Sacr.* 97; *Conf.* 123–127; *Somn.* 1.116; 2.193–194. See also his rendering of his own experience in *Migr.* 34–35.

[*Congr.* 141]). Here Philo puts ancient skepticism to use in an implicit critique of the Stoic epistemological aspirations of human reason.²⁸

As the context makes clear, this fundamental restriction also applies to Moses's investigations, which he pursues "by his own love of learning" (ὕπὸ τοῦ φιλομαθοῦς), into "the causes by which the most essential occurrences in the universe are brought about" (τὰς αἰτίας, αἷς τὰναγκαιότατα τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ πραγμάτων ἐπιτελεῖται [*Fug.* 161]). Even Moses received the warning against this futile inquiry into causes and the processes of generation and corruption:

"Enter not on such an inquiry"; for the task argues a busy, restless curiosity too great for human ability: marvel at all that has come into being, but as for the reasons for which they have either come into being or are decaying, cease to busy thyself with them. For "the place on which thou standest is holy ground", it says (Exod 3:5). What kind of place or topic is meant? Evidently that of causation, a subject which He has assigned to Divine natures only, deeming no human being capable of dealing with the study of causation (*Fug.* 162–163, PLCL).²⁹

In this passage, Philo combines the objection that such inquiries would be meddling and futile with the limits of human knowledge:³⁰ "looking into causes" (αἰτιολογία) is reserved for "divine natures". When Moses turns from his "love of learning" to a higher order "desire of knowledge" (πόθος ἐπιστήμης [*Fug.* 164]), he directs his attention to the Maker of the universe, whose essence, however, is ultimately also beyond his understanding (*Fug.* 165), as is full self-knowledge in the sense of knowing one's own mind.³¹

II. A Shift?

Just as positive assessments of natural philosophy and the "natural" allegorical readings of the Scriptures can be found in the series of works that belong to the so-called Allegorical Commentary, so his reservations also carry over into Philo's other works. As such, his views of natural philosophy appear to constitute a very important

²⁸ As in Philo, *Cher.* 57, 66, 127–128; the long excursus in *Ebr.* 162–205, in this context the critique of human knowledge includes natural philosophy (199); *Her.* 73–74; 85; 107–108; *Ios.* 142.

²⁹ Philo, *Fug.* 162–163: "μὴ ἐγγίσης ᾧδε", ἴσον τῷ μὴ πρόσιθι τοιαύτη διασκέψει· περιεργίας γὰρ καὶ φιλοπραγμοσύνης μείζονος ἢ κατὰ ἀνθρωπίνην δύναμιν τὸ ἔργον· ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν γεγονότα θαύμαζε, τὰς δὲ αἰτίας, δι' ἃς ἢ γέγονεν ἢ φθείρεται, μὴ πολυπραγμόνει. "ὁ γὰρ τόπος ἐν ᾧ σὺ ἔστηκας" φησὶ "γῆ ἁγία ἐστὶ". ποῖος τόπος; ἢ δῆλον ὅτι ὁ αἰτιολογικός, ὃν μόνον ταῖς θείαις ἀνῆψε φύσει, ἀνθρώπων οὐδένα νομίσας ἰκανὸν εἶναι αἰτιολογίας ἐψάσθαι.

³⁰ See also Philo, *Somn.* 1.21–24, 52–53, in a critique addressed to Chaldeans.

³¹ Weisser, "Knowing God", 33–60; see also Philo, *Somn.* 1.30–33, 56.

cluster of what I call “bridge concepts”, that is, notions and approaches that connect the different strands in Philo's oeuvre. Here I will focus primarily on the Exposition of the Law. Do these works reflect a more pronounced Stoic perspective, allegedly in the wake of Philo's embassy to Rome, as Maren Niehoff has argued?³²

In his *De praemiis et poenis*, Philo returns to the distinction between two modes of arriving at God, one through the universe, and the other through God himself (*Praem.* 41–45). As in *Leg.* 3.97–102, discussed above, there is a group of people (called merely *τινες* here), who discern that the world is like a well-ordered city, and “based on this order work through “likely reasoning to arrive at the notion of the Maker/Demiurge” (*ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων εἰκότι λογισμῶ στοχασάμενοι τὸν δημιουργόν*). In this context, Philo skips the comparison to man-made constructions and also underscores the providential agency of this Demiurge:

... also that there must be a providence, for it is a law of nature that a maker should take care of what has been made (*Praem.* 42–43, PLCL).³³

As such, these people are doing better than atheists, who are uncertain whether there even is a god or not, or those in the thrall of superstitions;³⁴ indeed, Philo considers them to be “truly admirable persons and superior to the other classes” (*ἀλλ' οὗτοι γε οἱ θεσπέσιοι καὶ τῶν ἄλλων διενηνοχότες*). Here, the Demiurge is lifted above the status of a mere craftsman, which would point to a different reading of the *Timaeus* than we have seen so far (more on this below). But this group still falls short of the achievement of those (*τινες* again) who have their knowledge of God, to the extent possible, directly from God Himself (see also *Praem.* 45).

While those who argue from the universe to God are up for a bit of a promotion in *De praemiis et poenis* – and with them, I would argue, the relevant aspects of Stoicism – the account presents a more negative picture of the Chaldeans and describes Abraham's departure from this group in terms that are similar to the ones I have already discussed (*Her.* 96–99 and *Migr.* 176–186 above).³⁵ The negative image of the Chaldeans is present in *De virtutibus*, too, in which they are not only accused of remaining stuck in the created and perceptible order of the universe, but also of polytheism (*Virt.* 214), because they consider the stars, the heaven, and the universe in its entirety to be gods (*Virt.* 213).

³² Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*.

³³ Philo, *Praem.* 42–43: ... καὶ ὅτι πρόνοιαν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι· νόμος γὰρ φύσεως ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τὸ πεποιητὸς τοῦ γεγονότος.

³⁴ This group is not present in the list of erroneous views in Philo, *Spec.* 1.327–345.

³⁵ See Philo, *Praem.* 26–27, 30. In *Praem.* 58, Philo talks about the first human being “who passed from vanity to truth, who spurned the impostures of Chaldean learning” (*πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἐκ τύφου μεταθέμενος καὶ τῆς ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασι Χαλδαϊκῆς τερβείας ὑπεριδών*). See also *Her.* 97, discussed above, and *Somn.* 1.161.

The depiction of the Chaldeans in Philo's *De Abrahamo* is more neutral, but also leaves out the positive features noted in other accounts (see above *Mut.* and *Migr.*). The Chaldeans (*Abr.* 68–88) are said to focus on astronomy, now presented in its mathematical form of capturing the movements of the heavenly bodies in numbers and proportions (*Abr.* 69); attribute everything that happens to the influence of the stars; consider the phenomena on earth and in heaven to be interconnected; and they consider the world itself to be God, without being able to look beyond visible reality to the intelligible dimension. In order to move beyond this view of the world, Abraham has to turn inwards and discover the connection between his mind and God (*Abr.* 76–77). Philo stresses that the God whom Abraham is meant to discover is not merely rendered here in terms pertaining to the *Timaeus*, such as Father, Maker, and Cause (as in *Abr.* 68, 75–77), but also in terms that echo the *Phaedrus* (as in *Her.* 99). In this context, he uses the latter in order to emphasize God's care for and governance of the world that is his work (as in *Migr.* 186; see also *Virt.* 215; *Spec.* 3.190) – and thus, presumably, the world can reflect that divine care:

[Abraham ... beheld what he had not seen before], a kind of charioteer and helmsman of the cosmos presiding over and directing in a salutary way His own creation, bestowing care and supervision upon all those parts of it which are deserving of divine concern. (*Abr.* 70, Birnbaum and Dillon)³⁶

So, if the stock of those who reason from the order of the universe to God seems to have risen in *De praemiis et poenis*, that of the Chaldeans has declined. It is as if Philo is at pains to create a sharper line of demarcation between the position which he attributes to the “Chaldeans” and the right kind of natural philosophy. What the first group appears to have in common now with an Abraham who has moved on from the Chaldean beliefs is a strong endorsement of the notion of divine providence. This notion (on which see also *Prov.*) could be seen as establishing some important common ground between Stoics and Platonists of Philo's era – even if one factors in the crucial differences between their respective notions of the Divine.

Not all hope is lost even for the Chaldeans, quite literally, because they have Enos, who lived in expectation of good things, in that “he hoped in the Father and Creator of the Universe” (*Abr.* 8–15).³⁷ Nevertheless, it is the context in which Abraham's

³⁶ Philo, *Abr.* 70: ... κατεΐδεν, ὃ μὴ πρότερον ἐθεάσατο, τοῦ κόσμου τινὰ ἡνίοχον καὶ κυβερνήτην ἐφεστῶτα καὶ σωτηρίως εὐθύνοντα τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον, ἐπιμέλειάν τε καὶ προστασίαν καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ μερῶν ὅσα θείας ἐπάξια φροντίδος ποιούμενον. See also *Abr.* 74: God as “king who holds the world together and governs it with justice” (... βασιλέως ἀμοιρεῖ τοῦ συνεχόντος καὶ ἐνδίκως ἐπιτροπεύοντος); *Abr.* 78: “the world ... governed by Maker as Cause” (... πρυτανεύομενον ὑπ' αἰτίου τοῦ πεποιηκότος); *Abr.* 84: “something intelligible and perfect that rules and governs, the master and pilot of all else” (τι τελεώτερον νοήτων ἄρχον τε καὶ ἡγεμονεῦον, ὕφ' οὗ τὰ ἄλλα δεσπόζεται καὶ κυβερνᾶται).

³⁷ See also Philo, *Det.* 138 and *Praem.* 14.

transition is embedded in Philo's biography that is most striking, because of its very strong Stoic tonality.³⁸ In fact, the entire section leading up to his move away from Chaldea could just as well have been written by someone with Stoic leanings. The world is the most perfect and complete of things. Abraham is represented as a living rational law which is also natural law (*Abr.* 6).³⁹ The kinship between God and human beings is initially described as "owing to its commonality with reason/the rational soul" (ἐνεκα τῆς ἐν τῷ λόγῳ κοινωνίας [*Abr.* 41]/ψυχῆ λογικῆ [*Abr.* 54]), not mind and the intelligible realm. Similarly, in his initial comparison of physical sight, which can observe the best of existent things – namely the sun, the moon, heaven and the entire universe – with the higher mode of seeing or cognition, Philo avoids using terms pertaining to mind and the noetic. He talks instead about "the dominant function in the soul" (τοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ἡγεμονικοῦ [*Abr.* 57]), and calls the higher cognition φρόνησις or the "sight of understanding" (ὄψις διανοίας [*Abr.* 58]). The verb for "apprehending" (καταλαμβάνειν [*Abr.* 58]), which carries an echo of the Stoic notion of κατάληψις (see above), is used for both the perception of the physical universe and φρόνησις. Finally, Abraham is described as someone "... who contemplates the order in nature and the constitution enjoyed by the world-city whose excellence no words can describe ..." (... θεώμενος γὰρ τις τὴν ἐν τῇ φύσει τάξιν καὶ τὴν παντὸς λόγου κρείττονα πολιτείαν, ἣ ἰσχύεται ὁ κόσμος [*Abr.* 61]), and we do not get the sense that this is a form of contemplation Abraham eventually has to leave behind.⁴⁰ Abraham is now at home in the universe, and no longer an alien or sojourner.⁴¹

Moreover, as in *De praemiis et poenis* (see above), Philo accords an account such as that found in Plato's *Timaeus* a more positive value, thereby indicating that the features attributed to Abraham in the first part of Philo's work are not meant simply to be surpassed and left behind after the section about his move away from the Chaldean worldview. Here, Philo does not distinguish between a higher and a lower way to arrive at an understanding of God, but groups together "wisdom and philosophy" (σοφία καὶ φιλοσοφία) and continues to use the language of διάνοια and φρόνησις, along with terms pertaining to the noetic aspect of reality and mind. It appears that

³⁸ Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 102–3.

³⁹ See also Philo, *Abr.* 135, on Sodom as transgressing the law of nature, and the final statement on Abraham in *Abr.* 275.

⁴⁰ Similarly, Niehoff (*Intellectual Biography*, 133–8) highlights the Stoic features of the portrayal of Sara, the final episode which Philo narrates in *Abr.* 245–254, before concluding with his high praise of Abraham.

⁴¹ See also Philo, *Opif.* 142, below; *Spec.* 1.13–14; 2.45; 3.188–190. This view is to be contrasted with the notion that only God is truly a citizen and all created beings are aliens and sojourners: *Cher.* 120–121. For the theme of earth (vs. heaven) as a foreign country, see *Agr.* 65; *Conf.* 77–82, 106, where Moses's citizenship in the universe is contrasted with life in the body. In *Gig.* 61, the notion of the universe-city is transposed onto the intelligible realm, for the God-born who rank above the heaven-born, applied to Abraham (see also *Gig.* 31; *Somn.* 1.243). In *Somn.* 1.39 Philo contrasts "those who have a narrow citizenship" (μικροπολίται) with those who inscribe themselves in a "greater country", the universe. See also *Somn.* 1.181, 256.

one can arrive, in effect, at a full understanding of God starting from natural theology, and the physical world can be transparent, so to speak, to its higher order causality:⁴²

(§162) And the mind in turn, on receiving a corresponding experience, does not remain inactive, but, as being a sleepless and ever-moving entity, accepting from the sight stimulations to be able to contemplate intelligible reality, comes to consider whether these visible phenomena are ungenerated or had a beginning of generation, whether they are infinite or finite, whether there is one world or more than one, and whether the four elements make up the whole of reality, or the heaven and its contents have been allotted a special nature and received a more divine substance, which is not the same as the rest; (§163) and indeed if the world did come into being, by whose agency did it do so, and who is its Creator, both in respect of His essence and of His quality; with what purpose in mind did He create; what is He doing now, what is His occupation and way of life; and such other things as an enquiring mind which has wisdom as its companion is accustomed to investigate. (§164) These questions and others like them are the province of philosophy; and this makes it plain that wisdom and the love of wisdom [i.e., philosophy] take their start from no other faculty within us than that leader among the senses, sight, which is accordingly the only one from the land of the body that God preserved when He destroyed the others ... (*Abr.* 162–164, Birnbaum and Dillon).⁴³

The Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* has come a long way from his association with the mere immanent action of a Craftsman (see above, *Leg.* 3.100–102), and his activity is not reduced to his role in the cosmos. It would be a mistake, I believe, to assume that Philo has altogether lost sight of the higher mode of cognition of God, namely, through God himself, but it is the case, rather, that the mode of arriving at God through the order of the universe has been given a much higher status.⁴⁴ In the third book of his *De specialibus legibus* (3.185–194), Philo provides an even more elaborate version of this connection between sight and natural theology (see esp.

⁴² Compare with *Somm.* 1.186–188, on the visible world as a “gate” to the *κόσμος νοητός*, where the emphasis is on surpassing, or leaving behind, one's observation of the physical world through a direct vision of its intelligible counterpart.

⁴³ Philo, *Abr.* 162–164: ... τὴν διάνοιαν. ἡ δὲ τὸ παραπλήσιον ἐνδεξαμένη πάθος οὐκ ἠρεμεῖ, ἀλλ' ἄτε ἀκοίμητος καὶ ἀεικίνητος οὕσα, παρὰ τῆς ὕψεως τοῦ δύνασθαι τὰ νοητὰ θεωρεῖν τὰς ἀφορμὰς λαβοῦσα, εἰς σκέψιν ἦλθε, πότερον τὰ φανέντα ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἀγέννητα ἢ γενέσεως ἔλαβεν ἀρχὴν καὶ πότερον ἄπειρα ἢ πεπερασμένα καὶ πότερον εἰς ἢ πλείονες εἰσι κόσμοι καὶ πότερον τὰ τέτταρα στοιχεῖα τῶν ἀπάντων ἐστὶν ἢ φύσιν ἐξαιρέτων οὐρανοῦ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ κεκλήρωται θειοτέρας καὶ οὐχὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τῆς αὐτῆς οὐσίας ἐπιλαχόντα· εἰ δὲ δὴ καὶ γέγονεν ὁ κόσμος, ὑπὸ τίνος γέγονε καὶ τίς ὁ δημιουργὸς κατ' οὐσίαν ἢ ποιότητα καὶ τί διανοηθεὶς ἐποίησε καὶ τί νῦν πράττει καὶ τίς αὐτῷ διαγωγή καὶ βίος καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα περιττὸς νοῦς φρονήσει συμβιῶν εἴωθε διερευνᾶσθαι. ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀνάγκηται τῷ φιλοσοφεῖν· ἐξ οὗ δὴλόν ἐστιν, ὅτι σοφία καὶ φιλοσοφία τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀπ' οὐδενὸς εἰληφεν ἐτέρου τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἢ τῆς ἡγεμονίδος τῶν αἰσθήσεων ὁράσεως ...

⁴⁴ See Philo, *Spec.* 1.41, discussed in Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 104; this natural philosophy also meets with the approval of the Essenes (*Prob.* 80; *Spec.* 1.269; 3.111). For the praise of sight, see also *QG* 1.6; 2.34.

Spec. 3.188–190, in which the notion of the universe as a city also recurs).⁴⁵ This view is no longer predicated on a sharp opposition between bodily sight and eyes of the soul (as, e.g., in *Plant.* 21–22).

In sum, in *De Abrahamo*, we see a curious feature of Philo's method at work: he uses the same clusters of ideas, images, and verbal associations in different contexts, but it is precisely those contexts, and not only the specific passages from the scriptures, that determine the valence of such clusters. When Philo moves from defining the kinship between humans and God in terms of "reason" (λόγος) to reaffirming the primacy of the noetic aspect of reality (mind and the intelligible realm), he is not flat out contradicting himself but reinscribing what reason can stand for into the key of the noetic. It is thus that his Platonist leanings can become embedded in a markedly more Stoic worldview in his *De Abrahamo*. And this truly is a case of embedding because at the very end of this work, in a ring composition, Philo returns to the Stoicizing motif of Abraham as a living unwritten (or natural) law and as someone who follows "his healthy and uncontaminated impulses" (ὕγαινούσαις καὶ ἀνόσοις ὀρμαῖς ἐπακολουθήσαι [*Abr.* 275–276, Birnbaum and Dillon]).

Plato's *Timaeus*, of course, represents the main frame of analysis in Philo's *De opificio mundi*.⁴⁶ Here Philo describes the purpose of Genesis as follows:

It consists of an account of the creation of the world, implying that the world is in harmony with the Law, and the Law with the world, and that the man who observes the law is constituted thereby a loyal citizen of the world, regulating his doings by the purpose and will of Nature, with which the entire world is also administered (*Opif.* 3, PLCL).⁴⁷

This is Philo's version of the injunction at the end of the *Timaeus* that humans order themselves after the order of the universe, or better, order their souls after the proper order of the World Soul (*Tim.* 90a–d). It is a version that sounds markedly Stoic, with the will of Nature in charge of "the order of the world" (διοίκησις), the notion of the citizen of the world (see also *Opif.* 142), and the centrality of law (*Opif.* 143–144), as a comparison with Chrysippus's definition of "living according to nature" reveals (Diogenes Laertius 7.87–88). Or, to quote David Runia:⁴⁸ "There is a direct relation between legislation for human life and the rational structure of the cosmos. The person who observes the Law of Moses will feel at home in the cosmos as a

⁴⁵ See also Philo, *Spec.* 1.339; 3.202; on *Opif.* 54, see below.

⁴⁶ Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 96–102.

⁴⁷ Philo, *Opif.* 3: ... ἐστὶ θαυμασιωτάτη, κοσμοποιίαν περιέχουσα, ὡς καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τῶ νόμῳ καὶ τοῦ νόμου τῶ κόσμῳ συνᾶδοντος καὶ τοῦ νομίμου ἀνδρὸς εὐθὺς ὄντος κοσμοπολίτου, πρὸς τὸ βούλημα τῆς φύσεως τὰς πράξεις ἀπευθύνοντος, καθ' ἣν καὶ ὁ σύμπας κόσμος διοικεῖται.

⁴⁸ D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (PACS 1; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 99 (see also 106–7).

totality. The guiding thought behind this idea is the concept of the law of nature.” In this context, Philo emphasizes divine providence (*Opif.* 9–10; in *Opif.* 171–172, Philo lists it as one of his key tenets). As I have argued elsewhere,⁴⁹ Philo’s claim that the key factors determining reality are the active cause and its passive counterpart, which does not qualify as a cause, borrows the Stoic theory of two principles, god and matter (see also *Decal.* 69).⁵⁰ So, we are looking at a *Timaeus* onto which Stoic features have been grafted.⁵¹

Yet within this Stoic framework, as in *De Abrahamo*, Philo reinserts the key distinction between intelligible and perceptible reality, by making his active Cause transcendent (*Opif.* 8; see also *Opif.* 69–71) and by positing that the world “first” exists on the level of intelligible reality, as the *κόσμος νοητός* (*Opif.* 15). In this context, Philo again uses the craftsman/architect analogy, which is central to his argument from design as discussed above, but this time he distinguishes between the blueprint in the mind of the architect and its implementation (*Opif.* 10–18). Philo, I submit, can combine Stoic and Platonist strands in the reception history of the *Timaeus* here because now the emphasis is on the order of the world (or nature) as revealing the underlying intelligible order, as Philo’s use of theme of the praise of sight also underscores (*Opif.* 53–55). Thus, Moses is presented, again, as the consummate philosopher versed in the study of nature (*Opif.* 8).

In this work, we also find echoes of Philo’s critique elsewhere of the Chaldeans. Genesis, Philo states, mentions the making of heaven after the making on earth in order to counter the mistaken assumption that not everything ultimately goes back to God’s creative act, or that whatever happens on earth is caused merely by the heavens, a view that does not look beyond the world towards a higher cause (*Opif.* 43–46). Although Philo does not explicitly mention them, this view bears a striking resemblance to what he presents as the position of the “Chaldeans”. But as in *De migratione Abrahami* (see above), Philo holds on to the notion of a basic sympathy between heaven and earth (*Opif.* 117), which here does allow for some form of astrology (*Opif.* 58–60).

When Philo turns his attention to the role of the Divine in the actual making of the world – the Divine in its relational mode, in other words – it is perhaps to be expected that Plato’s *Timaeus* and natural philosophy rise in importance. We have to remember, always, that for Philo the beneficent, creative aspect of God is not God in his radically transcendent essence but as He manifests Himself, primarily through his powers. On the other hand, the “powers” cannot simply be considered secondary

⁴⁹ Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence*, 148–50; pace Runia, *On the Creation*, 115–16.

⁵⁰ Niehoff, *Intellectual Biography*, 103.

⁵¹ See also J. Ryu, *Knowledge of God in Philo of Alexandria* (WUNT 2.405; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) 89–97, with a focus on the role of *πνεῦμα*.

to God himself, or merely instrumental, and do reveal important aspects of the divine. This tension runs through all of Philo's writings.⁵² But even if one takes that tension into account, natural philosophy, of a kind that borrows distinctive features of Stoicism, does appear to have a higher status in the Exposition of the Law than in the Allegorical Commentary, and this finding supports Niehoff's thesis.

The ending of the *De vita contemplativa* captures succinctly all the essential themes of this elevated natural philosophy that matter to Philo. The Therapeutae, even though they "live in the soul alone", are citizens both of heaven and the world and devote themselves to the study of nature:

So much then for the Therapeutae, who have taken to their hearts the contemplation of nature and what it has to teach, and have lived in the soul alone, citizens of Heaven and the world presented to the Father and Maker of all by their faithful sponsor Virtue, who has procured for them God's friendship and added a gift going hand in hand with it, true excellence of life, a boon better than all good fortune and rising to the very summit of felicity (*Contempl.* 90, PLCL).⁵³

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⁵² On this issue, see now also F. Simeoni, *Trascendenza e cambiamento in Filone di Alessandria: La chiave del paradosso* (MON 25; Turnhout: Brepols, 2018).

⁵³ Philo, *Contempl.* 90: θεραπευτῶν μὲν δὴ περὶ τοσαῦτα θεωρίαν ἀσπασαμένων φύσεως καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ψυχῇ μόνῃ βιωσάντων, οὐρανοῦ μὲν καὶ κόσμου πολιτῶν, τῷ δὲ πατρὶ καὶ ποιητῇ τῶν ὅλων γνησίως συσταθέντων ὑπ' ἀρετῆς, ἥτις <θεοῦ> φιλίαν αὐτοῖς προὔξενῃσεν οικειότατον γέρας καλοκάγαθίας προσθεῖσα, πάσης ἄμεινον εὐτυχίας, ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἀκρότητα φθάνον εὐδαιμονίας.

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“Holy and Philosophical”: Two Religious Platonists in their Endeavour to be Both Theologically and Philosophically Orthodox*

Rainer Hirsch-Luipold

Cornelia de Vogel, in the third volume of her *History of Greek Philosophy*, programmatically makes Philo and Plutarch her main witnesses for what she perceives as the main trend in the philosophy of the early Empire: the “religious attitude” of a “theologically interpreted Platonism” into which Aristotelian and Stoic elements are integrated. Under the heading “The Theological and Theosophical Schools”, she gives the following definition for what she calls “Prae-neoplatonism”:

By Prae-neoplatonism – a term used by W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*, Berlin 1930 – we mean the kind of philosophy of synthesis which appears in various forms from the first century BC onward. As far as it synthesizes the three great positive systems – Plato, Aristotle and the Stoa – we found a beginning of it with Antiochus of Ascalon; as far as it is inclined towards a more or less hierarchical conception of the universe, we found a (probable) beginning of it with Posidonius, and further back in the Early Academy. In the first and second century of our era Platonism, explained in a metaphysical-religious sense, prevailed. More or less clearly we find the conception of a hierarchy of being in very different circles, and hence in rather different forms.¹

I quote here more extensively her introductions to Philo and Plutarch, respectively, even though I do not accept without qualifications every single point she is making. What I find intriguing, however, is her focus on what is, in my view, the distinguishing aspect of this form of philosophy. Philo is presented by Harry A. Wolfson, she writes,

as the father of that religious philosophy which, during the Middle Ages, subordinated philosophy to theology and, according to the author, is found not only in Western

* Many thanks to Travis R. Niles for polishing the English text.

¹ C.J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy: A Collection of Texts with Notes and Explanations. Vol. 3: The Hellenistic-Roman Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1973) 340.

scholastic philosophy, but also with the Jewish and Arabic philosophers of that age. He therefore qualifies Philo as one of the greatest thinkers of mankind and attributes to him a perfectly clear and consistent system.

Important objections to this view were raised by I. Heinemann, *Philo als Vater der mittelalterlichen Philosophie?* In: *Theologische Zeitschrift*, (Basel) 1950, p. 99–116 [...]

Philo, in fact, accepted Revelation. His idea of God and creation is ... on essential points determined by it. This is, of course, important; but it does not yet make Philo a great philosopher. Moreover, it cannot be held that he made a clear distinction between natural Reason and Revelation, such as was made later by St. Thomas Aquinas. The climate of Philo's thought is highly syncretistic He read Scripture in the Septuagint version and understood its terms, often in an amazing way, in the sense of Greek philosophy, i.e. of that syncretistic philosophy of his age, in which both Platonism and Stoicism prevailed.²

As an introduction to Plutarch, she writes the following:

Plutarchus of Chaeronea is the greatest representative of Platonism in the first and early second century. Like Philo he may be called a preparer of Neoplatonism, 1. by a marked transcendentalism in his conception of God, 2. by ranking νοῦς higher than ψυχή, 3. in general, by his religious attitude and by making a sort of philosophical synthesis in which certain Aristotelian and Stoic elements are introduced into a theologically interpreted Platonism.

De Vogel's approach to Imperial Platonism on the whole and to Philo in particular differs significantly from the one taken by John Dillon, who in his monumental *Middle Platonists* (a) wanted to use Philo only as a witness for the Platonic tradition, and (b) wanted to understand him as a philosophical thinker without taking the religious and theological aspects of his work into account. There are, however, two aspects where I would go further than de Vogel. I would understand Philo and Plutarch not as "preparers of Neoplatonism", but rather as inaugurating a new form of Platonism, which is – and this is my second point – characterized not only by a specific "conception of God", but also by a new religious hermeneutics that makes the aspects of the traditions of lived religion to be the source of truth and thus the starting point of the philosophical quest. Nevertheless, what can and should be learned from de Vogel is, first, that Philo and Plutarch must be discussed side by side, especially if one intends to draft a map of philosophy in early Imperial times; and second, that this discussion has to include the religious and theological aspects of both authors.

² De Vogel, *Greek Philosophy*, 354.

I. Why Conduct a Parallel Study of Philo and Plutarch?

Rarely, however, are the two brought into dialogue. It is, in fact, surprising that comparative studies of these two authors are not more common. Plutarch does not figure prominently in Philonic studies.³ Nor does Philo figure prominently in Plutarchian studies. This is perhaps not so surprising and simply reflects our still common separation of disciplines and categories: Jewish studies, early Christian studies, history of religions, religion, and philosophy, as well as Jews, Christians, and “Greeks” (often meaning not only non-Jewish and non-Christian, but also non-religious authors). The Greek-speaking Jewish exegete is thought to belong mainly to Jewish studies, while the philosopher-priest from Delphi is discussed mostly by classicists who appreciate him as a versatile writer and an endless fountain of knowledge in all fields of ancient learning. Both are philosophers of sorts, but both of them are regarded as outsiders in the history of philosophy. And the religious orientation, shared by both authors, is not usually recognized as a genuine aspect of philosophical inquiry, as it is in de Vogel. However, there has been a noticeable shift in recent years: more and more studies on specific topics in the history of religion and philosophy, in classics, philosophy, and history include both authors, even bringing them into actual dialogue.⁴

Maren Niehoff points to the following aspects which suggest the importance of a trans-cultural interpretation of these two authors:⁵

(1) Both authors wrote in the first century CE, even though Plutarch (ca. 45–120 CE) lived two generations later than Philo.

(2) “Both spoke reverently of Plato as ‘most sacred’ or ‘divine’ and gave special attention to the *Timaeus*, defending its literal meaning against metaphorical interpretations.”⁶

There is even more to their shared reverence for Plato: Both of them took him as their ultimate philosophical authority and as their main philosophical point of reference, even though they could also make use of other philosophical traditions. And, of course, they are also in accord with one another as well as with late Hellenistic

³ But see, however, e.g., G.E. Sterling, “Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism”, *SPhiloA* 5 (1993) 96–111; W. Schwarz, “A Study in Pre-Christian Symbolism: Philo, *De somniis* I.216–218, and Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 4 and 77”, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 20 (1973) 104–17.

⁴ E.g., M.R. Niehoff, “Philo and Plutarch as Biographers: Parallel Responses to Roman Stoicism”, *GRBS* 52 (2012b) 361–92; eadem, “Philo and Plutarch on Homer”, in eadem (ed.), *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters* (Leiden: Brill, 2012a); D. Creese, “Rhetorical Uses of Mathematical Harmonics in Philo and Plutarch”, *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 43 (2012) 258–69; R. Hirsch-Luipold, “Der eine Gott bei Philon von Alexandrien und Plutarch”, in M. Niehoff (ed.), *Gott und die Götter bei Plutarch. Götterbilder – Gottesbilder – Weltbilder* (RGVV 54; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005) 141–67.

⁵ Niehoff, “Philo and Plutarch on Homer”.

⁶ Niehoff, “Philo and Plutarch on Homer”, 127.

and Early Imperial Platonism on the whole in attributing a special place to Plato's *Timaeus*. Philo's *De opificio mundi* and Plutarch's *De animae procreatione in Timaeo* are surely the most prominent examples for this predilection, but they are by no means isolated instances. Unlike Philo, however, Plutarch devotes some of his writings to the explicit, technical interpretation of aspects of Plato's works (*De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, *Quaestiones platonicae*). These works do not constitute actual commentaries on the *Timaeus*, the *Republic*, or the *Laws*. Rather, they discuss certain philosophical or theological problems arising from some of Plato's works.

(3) Both wrote critical essays against the Stoics, especially Chrysippus. In this context, one may also underline their shared respect for and acceptance of a variety of Stoic teachings,⁷ and more importantly, the observation that for both of them, theology was a central area of disagreement with the philosophical doctrines of the Stoics.⁸

(4) Both acted as ambassadors for their hometown/community and they spent a significant amount of time in Rome.

One might want to add a few points to the list, some of them well-known and accepted, others perhaps less familiar and potentially more controversial:

(5) Both Philo and Plutarch think of themselves as philosophers and of their enterprise as a form of philosophy.

Scholars have had cause to lament, however, that both authors have in the main been relegated to footnotes, albeit for somewhat different reasons. Philo was not seen as an actual philosopher, but as a source for discerning important developments within the history of philosophy.⁹ Plutarch, analogously, in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, was regarded as a *polyhistor* with little claim to originality: Whatever bit of antique learning you want to reference – Plutarch is your man!

(6) Both of them used a method of interpretation, that we may for the moment call “allegorical”, in order to extract religious-philosophical insights from religious and historical traditions.

(7) Both of them wrote biographies or used a biographically grounded mode of presentation.¹⁰

⁷ J. Opsomer, “Plutarch and the Stoics”, in M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World 98; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2014) 88–103.

⁸ Cf. R. Hirsch-Luipold, “The Dividing Line: Theological/Religious Arguments in Plutarch's Anti-Stoic Polemics”, in J. Opsomer et al. (ed.), *A Versatile Gentleman: Consistency in Plutarch's Writings. Essays in Honour of L. Van der Stockt* (Plutarchea Hypomnemata; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016a) 17–36.

⁹ H.A. Wolfson tried to refute this view with his monumental *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947).

¹⁰ Niehoff, “Parallel Responses”; eadem, “Philon als Biograph”, in D. Lanzinger (ed.), *Das Leben des Weisen: Philon von Alexandrien*, De Abrahamo (SAPERE 36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019) 147–68.

So far there is, I suppose, a broad consensus. Let us turn now to what may prove to be more controversial points:

(8) Following from what has been said, *both figures*, Philo and Plutarch, can fairly be called exegetes, or interpreters, of their respective religious traditions.

Both of them interpret religious traditions as the key to a true, philosophical understanding of God. However, Plutarch differs fundamentally from Philo in that he does not exclusively follow his own (Greek) religious tradition, but understands all (in his opinion) truly religious (or philosophical?) traditions as a path to the truth. This is most clearly visible in his discussion of Egyptian religion – and Zoroastrian mythology – in *De Iside et Osiride*.

(9) Both authors, I contend, can justifiably be called monotheists, albeit in very different ways.¹¹

The issue of the existence of a pagan monotheism is, needless to say, a hotly debated topic.¹² The differing views depend to a large extent on conflicting and competing definitions of “monotheism”.¹³ What do I mean when I employ the term to define Plutarch’s religious and philosophical position? Monotheism, I take it, designates first of all a certain belief-system: the belief that there is and can be essentially only one God, as there is only one truth.¹⁴ This belief-system has to be related to a certain worship-system (or worship-systems). In Plutarch’s framework, his monotheistic thought has to be understood against the backdrop of a phenomenology of multiple religious traditions worshipping multiple Gods and divine entities. As far as worship is concerned, Plutarch acknowledges a multiplicity of religious systems, yet he argues that all these systems essentially point back to one divine entity or God. I have called this a position of “polylatric monotheism”¹⁵ (as opposed to Philo’s Jewish monolatric monotheism).

¹¹ Cf. F.E. Brenk, “Plutarch’s Monotheism and the New Testament” in R. Hirsch-Luipold (ed.), *Plutarch and the New Testament in Context* (Brill’s Plutarch Studies 8; Leiden: Brill, 2021); R. Hirsch-Luipold, “Philo and Plutarch on the Nature of God”, *SPhiloA* 26 (2014) 79–92; idem, “Viele Bilder – ein Gott: Plutarchs polylatrischer Monotheismus” in N. Hömke et al. (ed.), *Bilder von dem Einen Gott: Die Rhetorik in monotheistischen Gottesdarstellungen der Spätantike* (PhilSup 6; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016) 43–68; idem, “Der eine Gott”. Niehoff, however, believes that I “over-emphasise monotheism as a common factor” (“Philo and Plutarch on Homer”, 127 n. 4).

¹² P. Athanassiadi/M. Frede (ed.) triggered the discussion in 1999 with their volume, *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); cf. also F.E. Brenk, “Plutarch and Pagan Monotheism”, in L. Roig Lanzillota/I. Muñoz Gallarte (ed.), *Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse of Late Antiquity* (Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition 14; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 73–82; S. Mitchell/P. Van Nuffelen (ed.), *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010).

¹³ Cf., e.g., M.V. Cerutti, “‘Pagan Monotheism’? Towards a Historical Typology”, in S. Mitchell/P. Van Nuffelen (ed.), *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010) 15–32.

¹⁴ Plutarch, *E Delph.* 393A. Cf. Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 377F and Hirsch-Luipold, “Der eine Gott”, 142–3, 152–5.

¹⁵ Cf. Hirsch-Luipold, “Polylatrischer Monotheismus”, *passim*.

(10) If Plato's sphere of ideas is included in a theological concept of God/the divine representing the truth, this implies with some necessity a certain dogmatism or "orthodoxy", a notion that has not always been well-received in scholarship on Imperial Platonism.

This last point of comparison, therefore, may raise even more eyebrows than the previous ones.

II. Trouble with the Notion of "Orthodoxy"

The notion of "orthodoxy" is just as problematic for the history of Platonism¹⁶ as it is for the history of Judaism or early Christianity. Usually, it has been used with the implication of an adherence to or fixation of a set of "school or church/community doctrines". In the case of Platonism, those doctrines would have supposedly been propounded by some form of "*Schulplatonismus*".¹⁷ Dörrie famously expressed this with the metaphor of a building of Platonist doctrine which can be reconstructed by way of disparate building blocks retrieved from the works of different authors.¹⁸ In this sense, therefore, the notion of "orthodoxy" has given rise to all kinds of misunderstandings and was consequently dismissed in the area of the history of philosophy by authors like De Vogel and Dillon because it implied a fixed set of doctrines of "School Platonism", a standard form of Platonism which one could either

¹⁶ Cf. J. Dillon, "Plutarch and Platonist Orthodoxy", *Illinois Classical Studies* 13.2 (1988a) 357–64, who at 357 poses "heresy" or "eclecticism" as the only alternatives to orthodoxy, and maintains: "Plutarch's position in the Platonist tradition cannot be properly evaluated, however, it seems to me, so long as the notion of an 'orthodox' Platonism is maintained, whether propounded by an official Platonic Academy, or not"; idem, "'Orthodoxy' and 'Eclecticism': Middle Platonists and Neo-Pythagoreans", in idem/A.A. Long (ed.), *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988b) 103–25; H. Dörrie, "Die Stellung Plutarchs im Platonismus seiner Zeit", in R. Palmer/R. Hamerton-Kelly (ed.), *Philomathes: Studies and Essays in Memory of Philip Merlan* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971) 36–56. As the groundbreaking studies by Lynch and especially Glucker have shown, the notion of a school doctrine propounded by the Academy as an institution has to be given up because there simply was no Academy in late Hellenistic and early Roman times: Lynch, J. P., *Aristotle's School: A Study of a Greek Educational Institution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Glucker, J., *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Hypomnemata 56; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978).

¹⁷ M. Baltes saw Alcinous's Handbook as the charter of this tradition, calling it "the most important document of middle-Platonic philosophizing" (M. Baltes, "Alcinous", in *Brill's New Pauly*, online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e115520 [accessed on 6 March 2024]).

¹⁸ H. Dörrie, *Der Platonismus in der Antike. Bd. I: Die geschichtlichen Wurzeln des Platonismus. Bausteine 1–35: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog 1987); S. Vollenweider, "Paläste und ihre Baupläne: Auf der Suche nach der Theologie des Neuen Testaments", in R. Hirsch-Luipold/R. M. Calhoun (ed.), *The Origins of New Testament Theology: A Dialogue with Hans Dieter Betz* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020) 179–97, beautifully elaborates on the metaphor of the palace (in terms of a doctrinal building) and the truth it accommodates.

faithfully follow or from which one could depart.¹⁹ Such a school-system, to which all Platonists would have subscribed, however, simply never existed. And similarly, even though there were many commonalities among Jewish groups, there was no standard doctrine of Judaism in the first century CE.²⁰ Judaism was as diverse as early Christianity, which, of course, remained a variety of Judaism until the second half of the first century.

Instead, there were different proponents of Platonism in early Imperial times reading Plato’s writings anew and quarrelling about the right interpretation of his thoughts. There were those, who – like Antiochus – saw in the sceptical tradition a departure from the thought of Plato, and those – like Philo of Larissa and later Plutarch – who claimed that the Platonist school essentially remained one and the same.

III. The Enduring Importance of the Concept of “Being Orthodox” in Religious Platonism

Notwithstanding these difficulties attached to the common understanding of orthodoxy, the notion of “being orthodox” conveys an aspect which, I think, is of fundamental importance in both the Jewish exegete Philo and the philosopher-priest Plutarch.²¹ This aspect is crucial not only for the comparison of these two authors and their stance vis-à-vis their respective authoritative religious traditions, but also for the religious-philosophical approach of Imperial Platonism more generally.

The notion of “being orthodox” may be captured well by a quote from Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride*: the traditions of lived religion, says Plutarch, have to be interpreted *ὁσίως καὶ φιλοσόφως* (“in a holy and philosophical way”; Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 355C).²² They reflect, in other words, a higher truth, yet this truth will only be brought out if interpreted not only philosophically, but also as is befitting of the

¹⁹ Dillon, “Plutarch and Platonist Orthodoxy”; idem, “Plutarch and Second Century Platonism”, in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (New York: Crossroad, 1986) 214–29.

²⁰ The idea of a “common Judaism” (E.P. Sanders) stirred some debate; cf. W.O. McCreehy/A. Reinhartz (ed.), *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

²¹ Carlos Lévy writes in his entry “Philo of Alexandria” for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: “For us it is clear that Philo never had philosophical affiliation. To say that he was a Pythagorean, a Platonist, or a Stoic would have been for him to admit that he sought truth in spaces outside the Bible” (C. Lévy, “Philo of Alexandria”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 edition), online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/philo/> [accessed on 6 March 2024]). However, I am not sure that the term “affiliation” really helps. If it is meant to signal the membership in a school, there was obviously no affiliation, for there was no school qua institution. But if it means the allegiance to a certain school of thought, then in my opinion, this school would clearly have been that of Platonism.

²² Cf. also Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 352A; 353D; 378A.

divine. Philo, I take it, would have agreed with this approach, but he would have drawn the line at the idea that the truth about God is reflected in all different religious traditions, for he obviously maintained that the truth is found exclusively in the Mosaic tradition. The notion of “orthodoxy” in this sense is linked to the idea of an absolute truth which all human insights and statements strive to comprehend and express adequately.²³ If this truth is identified with some divine entity, be it God²⁴ or, in the Christian realm, Jesus Christ,²⁵ and if this divine entity is responsible for human well-being and even life in the fullest sense of the term, then philosophical truth-claims turn into expressions of existential belief.²⁶ Quite literally, being “orthodox”, i.e., being of the right opinion, in this context can only mean that our reasoning, while not necessarily in accord with any traditional doctrine, has to be adequate with respect to God, who because of his unchanging being represents the principle of truth. It is this road to the reality of God that will lead us on the way of truth. As Philo understands it, it is “a path leading towards truth, a way of envisaging ‘God through God’” (*Praem.* 46).²⁷ Theology can therefore be called by Plutarch “the goal of philosophy”²⁸ and Plato a θεολογῶν.²⁹

A certain claim to orthodoxy is also reflected in Plutarch’s aforementioned approach – in which he follows Philo of Larissa and Cicero – to the interpretation of the Platonic tradition: to understand the academic tradition as one and unbroken

²³ This idea which is obvious in Philo is expressed in the beginning of Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride* (351C–E): the knowledge about the gods is a most precious gift of the gods and the desire for the truth about the gods “a longing for being divine” (θειότητος ὄρεξις).

²⁴ I have argued before that in late Hellenistic and Early Imperial Platonism Plato’s sphere of ideas is increasingly replaced by the idea of the divine or God (which is in the second century CE developed into a theory of three gods/demiurges; cf. J. Opsomer, “Demiurges in Early Imperial Platonism”, in Hirsch-Luipold, *Gott und die Götter*, 51–99. Plutarch, it should be noted, in his polylatric monotheism, can use “the gods” (οἱ θεοί), “God” (θεός), or “the divine” (τὸ θεῖον) interchangeably.

²⁵ Cf. John 14:6, but also John 8:32; C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953) 170–178; R. Bultmann, “ἀλήθεια κτλ.,” *ThWNT* 1 (1933) 233–51; idem, “Untersuchungen zum Johannesevangelium A. ἀλήθεια,” *ZNW* 27 (1928) 113–63; R. Hirsch-Luipold, “Klartext in Bildern. ἀληθινός κτλ., παροιμία–παρρησία, σημεῖον als Signalwörter für eine bildhafte Darstellungsform im Johannesevangelium”, in J. Frey/J.G. van der Watt/R. Zimmermann (ed.), *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 61–102.

²⁶ Cf. R. Hirsch-Luipold, “Religiöse Tradition und individueller Glaube: Πίστις und πιστεύειν bei Plutarch als Hintergrund zum neutestamentlichen Glaubensverständnis”, in J. Frey/B. Schliesser/N. Ueberschaer (ed.), *Glaube: Das Verständnis des Glaubens im frühen Christentum und in seiner jüdischen und hellenistisch-römischen Umwelt* (WUNT 373; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 251–73. In Philo, ἀλήθεια is first and foremost a hermeneutical and not an ontological category. Here, Moses stands for the divine truth which God has entrusted to him.

²⁷ F. Calabi, *God’s Acting, Man’s Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (SPhA 4; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 51.

²⁸ Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 410B; cf. also Justin, *Dial.* 2.6.

²⁹ Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 614D.

and thus to accept some form of scepticism as part of the Academic tradition. Interestingly, Plutarch acknowledges in one passage that he departs from the *communis opinio* of previous interpreters of Plato’s *Timaeus* in that he argues that the world was created at a certain point in time (*An. procr.* 1013A). His benchmark for “orthodoxy”, which allows him to go against previous interpreters of Plato, is as telling as it is straightforward (1013B): the decisive moment is the true and correct understanding of the position of Plato, i.e., “if one is to make use of the trustworthy rule of interpretation” (εἰ κανόνι τῷ πιθανῶ χρηστέον).

IV. But Are They Proper Philosophers in the First Place?

When it comes to Philo and Plutarch, it is not only defining their religious standpoint which is controversial, but also – sometimes connected to their religious standpoint – understanding their intellectual position *as* philosophy. The fundamental question is whether we should accept Philo as a philosopher in the first place.³⁰ Carlos Lévy opens his entry on Philo of Alexandria in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* – published not too long ago – with exactly this issue:

At the beginning of the Roman Empire, especially for the Stoics and the Cynics, the fundamental task of a philosopher was the construction of his own self. A man who sought to improve himself had to first regulate his own nature, controlling his passions and emotions and eliminating any gap between theory and practice. He was thus supposed to approach the perfection of a god. To the exact contrary of this attitude, Philo’s purpose was to prove the *oudeneia*, the ontological nothingness of human beings. In his opinion, the only way to have real existence was to admit that one is nothing without the help of God, who is the source of freedom, logos (reason) and consciousness.³¹

The basis of Philo’s philosophy, according to Lévy, can be described as a form of dialectical theology which begins with the starkest possible contrast between human beings – and more generally, the physical world – on the one hand and the eternal God on the other. Can this be regarded as a philosophical position at all? In a *Supplement* to his article (“Meanings of philosophy in Philo of Alexandria”), Lévy claims: “Philo sometimes used *philosophia* in a sense that no Greek thinker would have”,³² and a bit further on, he writes: “Philosophy is for him a systematic examination of the world, a complete set of interrogations, *problēmata*, but these questions

³⁰ With regard to Philo, the issue *SPhiloA* 5 (1993) has gained notoriety for the discussion of the issue by a group of eminent Philo scholars who offered various perspectives on the question.

³¹ Lévy, “Philo of Alexandria”. See n. 2121 above.

³² *Ibid.*

are neither autonomous nor exclusively scientific. In contemplating the world and asking about it, Philo never loses sight of the idea that God created it as precisely narrated in Genesis.” Lévy’s analysis is representative for a whole tradition of scholarship on the philosophy of early Imperial times. The argument is:

- (1) Philo’s understanding of philosophy is unique in Greek thought.
- (2) What makes it unique is its theological starting point (“that God created it [the world]”) and the allegiance to a specific religious tradition (“as precisely narrated in Genesis”).

This claim reveals why a comparison with Plutarch as a pagan Greek philosopher is so enlightening. The example of Plutarch shows, I think, that Lévy’s thesis needs to become somewhat more nuanced in view of the shared importance attributed to traditions of lived religion as a starting point for the philosophical quest also in “pagan” authors of that era. Most of what Lévy says here with regard to Philo could just as well be said about Plutarch.

Lévy notes further aspects that would distinguish Philo’s view from philosophy proper: the “science of the Creator”; his *εὐσέβεια*/faith; the opposition to a doctrine of immanence; revelation as the necessary basis for philosophy; the completion of philosophy by means of oracles, etc. To a stunning degree, Lévy’s list could be used to describe Plutarch’s approach to philosophy.

It is no surprise, then, that similar concerns have been raised with regard to Plutarch as a serious philosopher in view of the literary, dialogical, non-systematic, and non-dogmatic, but also religious-philosophical character of his writings. As we have already seen, it is not only the combination of philosophical thought and religious tradition which is very similar in Plutarch. The philosopher-priest from Delphi, too, equates the philosophical quest for the truth with the quest for God (which will ultimately lead humans to *ὁμοίωσις θεῷ*). This is, in fact, related to the notion of “nothingness” (*οὐδένεια*), which Lévy characterised as one aspect separating Philo from contemporary philosophical authors. In a very similar way as in Philo, this recognition of one’s own nothingness as the antithesis of divine eternity and life, captured in the famous *γνώθι σαυτόν*, which is inscribed in the temple of Apollo at Delphi, is a prerequisite for the quest for philosophical truth. It is found in a similarly religious and theological framework. In an often-quoted passage at the end of Plutarch’s dialogue on the meaning of the mysterious epsilon-sign in front of the temple of Apollo at Delphi,³³ Plutarch’s teacher Ammonius gives his interpretation of this symbol: whenever entering the sanctuary, the devotee is reminded to greet the God with the

³³ This epsilon is depicted on a coin of Empress Faustina I from the second century CE (Münzkabinett Berlin).

word εἶ (“Thou art”)³⁴ – thereby acknowledging one’s own complete nothingness (οὐδένεια)³⁵ and thus the need to assimilate oneself to this God who is true being. According to this statement, one might say, philosophy starts with prayer. As in Philo, therefore, the quest for the truth (and life) begins with the acknowledgement of one’s complete nothingness or sheer non-being.

A second aspect is central regarding this passage and the whole discussion of the E-sign in this dialogue: the starting-point for philosophy, in this work as well as in *De Iside and Osiride* and other works of Plutarch, is the interpretation of a symbol taken from the religious tradition. Is this really philosophy? In the eyes of the respective authors, it is indeed. In fact, if the religious or theological aspect is recognized as an intrinsic part of the Platonic tradition,³⁶ as it was already in de Vogel’s history of philosophy, it becomes clear how the revelatory element within religious tradition becomes an answer to the concern articulated by Academic scepticism with the question what can be regarded as “scientific”, philosophical, or, in other words, knowable. This turn to traditions of lived religion can be interpreted in the context of the turn of the Platonic tradition towards a more dogmatic stance after the phase of Academic scepticism.³⁷ Accepting that humans are not able to reach the sphere of the intelligible (divine) truth does not mean that this sphere does not exist and that no assertions are possible at all. The theological position leads to an epistemological and hermeneutical one – the argument has to go the other way round: if no certain knowledge is possible for systematic reasons, a theistic interpretation can also not be ruled out. But if such a position is granted as a viable possibility, and if one reckons, as both our authors do, with the possibility that the divine gets into contact with the world and humans especially through religious tradition, then it is only reasonable to posit such religious traditions as our most reliable starting point in our quest for the truth and for God.

Therefore, if Jewish-Hellenistic and pagan-religious Greek thinkers alike can claim religious tradition as a basis for philosophy, the question becomes: What is the

³⁴ The letter epsilon was pronounced EI.

³⁵ Plutarch, *E Delph.* 393F–394B: καὶ μοι δοκεῖ μάλιστα πρὸς τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἀντιπαττόμενον τὸ ῥῆμα καὶ μαρτυρούμενον «εἶ» φάναι πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ὡς οὐδέποτε γινομένης περὶ αὐτὸν ἐκστάσεως καὶ μεταβολῆς [...]. And then follows, as the very end of the dialogue: ἀλλὰ γε τῷ εἶ τὸ «γνώθι σαυτὸν» εὐοικέ πως ἀντικεῖσθαι καὶ τρόπον τινὰ πάλιν συνάδειν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐκπλήξει καὶ σεβασμῷ πρὸς τὸν θεόν ὡς ὄντα διὰ παντὸς ἀναπεφώνηται, τὸ δ’ ὑπόμνησις ἐστὶ τῷ θνητῷ τῆς περὶ αὐτὸ φύσεως καὶ ἀσθενείας (394B).

³⁶ Cf. G. Boys-Stones, “Providence and Religion in Middle Platonism”, in E. Eidinow/J. Kindt/R. Osborne (ed.), *Theologies of Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 317–38; G. Van Riel, “Theology and Religiosity in the Greek Pagan Tradition”, in Hirsch-Luipold/Calhoun, *Origins of New Testament Theology*, 93–118.

³⁷ Cf. J. Opsomer, *In Search of the Truth: Academic Tendencies in Middle Platonism* (Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren 60/163; Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1998).

rod by which we are supposed to measure ancient texts when trying to answer the question of whether or not they are philosophical?³⁸ The norm cannot be any one philosophical authority, be it Aristotle or Plotinus. And it is my contention that we gain the most from our efforts if we include in this investigation all those who either present themselves as philosophers or who make use of philosophical traditions and methods. The religious – and not just the theological – aspect of Plutarch’s philosophy still needs to be fully recognized as an integral part of histories of philosophy.

V. Double Allegiance, or: Who is More Orthodox, and In What Way?

David Sedley has pointed out that in the philosophy of Hellenistic and early Imperial times, there is a “virtually religious commitment to the authority of a founder figure”.³⁹ While this can definitely be said for Philo with respect to Moses, it applies just as well to Plutarch with respect to Plato, whose birthday was celebrated in his school/community. But that is not all: both Philo and Plutarch make the traditions of lived religion the basis for their philosophical quest, as we have said. So, we are dealing with a “sapientialization” of the religious tradition (as well as a “sacralisation of traditional wisdom”), as Reinhard Feldmeier has called it.⁴⁰ There are, to be sure, two significant differences. Firstly, while Philo as a monolatric monotheist finds the truth only in the Law of Moses, Plutarch’s allegiance to the authority of tradition is not limited to a specific tradition (even though the Delphic tradition certainly holds a special place). Rather, the truth itself is the focus, but this truth is expressed in different religious traditions.⁴¹ Secondly, and connected to the first point, Plutarch treats the two traditions – the philosophical, mainly Platonic tradition on the one side, and the various religious traditions on the other – as existing on the same level, while Philo, who understands Moses as a religious and philosophical ἀρχηγέτης at the same time, treats Plato as a student of Moses. Typically, therefore, both our authors constantly negotiate two different authoritative traditions: one that can be described primarily as religious (insofar as it refers to ancient traditions of lived

³⁸ Here, the recently published “Neuer Überweg” has, in my view, made a very wise choice: neither our modern definitions can be used to classify texts as philosophical or non-philosophical, nor can Aristotle or the Neoplatonists be used to define what philosophy in the first century was, but only the views expressed by the authors of the first century themselves. And my thesis would be that he not only “accepts” and “endorses”, but genuinely believes that Plato’s philosophy opens up the path to the truth.

³⁹ D. Sedley, “Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World”, in M. Griffin/J. Barnes (ed.), *Philosophia Togata I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 97–119, at 97.

⁴⁰ R. Feldmeier, “‘Göttliche Philosophie’: Die Interaktion von Weisheit und Religion in der späteren Antike”, in idem (ed.), *Der Höchste* (WUNT 330; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014) 31–48.

⁴¹ This is extremely interesting for the exegete of the New Testament: in the Gospel of John, the central religious authority even becomes identified with the truth!

religion which are often understood to convey some form of divine revelation) while the other one can be described as primarily philosophical. They never existed in isolation from one another. As should be clear from what has been said, it is therefore not even correct to speak of two traditions, one philosophical and one religious. In this vein, recent research evinces a call for a more integrative view and thus a return to positions closer to that of de Vogel.⁴²

The issue has been, from the beginnings in Plato to Philo and on to Plutarch, the right relation between traditional cult and myth on the one hand and a true understanding of the divine on the other. Many misunderstandings were produced in the Christian tradition by simply subsuming the aspect of (Jewish or Christian) cult and traditional narrative under the term “monotheism”. To avoid confusion in these matters, it would be decisively helpful to distinguish between *-theism* (belief) on the one hand and *-latreia* (worship) on the other, as suggested above.⁴³ From the perspective of the history of Platonism, G. Van Riel has argued that Plato and his followers always believed in traditional worship of the Gods as a part of philosophical existence, concentrating on the aspect of traditional cult.⁴⁴ In the interaction of the two traditions, the value of the philosophical is primarily hermeneutical: it helps to correctly understand the religious tradition, which is necessarily veiled in riddle,⁴⁵ insofar as it relates to an entity that can never be fully grasped by our human senses and understanding. The “revelatory” role of the religious tradition becomes clearer if viewed against the backdrop of Academic sceptical discussions about the human capacity to arrive at some form of certain knowledge. If human reason is not able to

⁴² One example is A. Klostergaard Petersen/G. van Kooten (ed.), *Religio-Philosophical Discourses in the Mediterranean World: From Plato, through Jesus, to Late Antiquity* (Ancient Philosophy and Religion 1; Leiden: Brill, 2017) as the first volume of a programmatic new series, edited by G. Boys-Stones and G. van Kooten.

⁴³ A volume edited by Christoph Riedweg investigated specifically the role of religious tradition and thought in contemporary philosophy. Riedweg puts it in his concluding remarks in the following terms: “Philosophie ist keine rein theoretische Angelegenheit, sondern besteht wesentlich in einem spezifischen βίος; einer Lebensform bzw., angesichts der Pluralisierung von φιλοσοφία, in einer Vielzahl von Lebensvollzügen. Die so verstandene Philosophie kann zwar von den Zeitgenossen kritisch hinterfragt, ja sogar explizit abgelehnt werden, doch bleibt im Grunde auch rituelles Handeln, wie es z. B. die Gnosis kennzeichnet, letztlich eine auf die abgelehnte Philosophie hin durchsichtige alternative Lebensform, und das gilt nicht anders für das von den Psalmen inspirierte Beten und Meditieren über die menschliche miseria bei Augustin – vom jüdisch-christlichen, pythagoreischen und wohl auch kynischen βίος, in je eigener Vielgestaltigkeit, ganz abgesehen” (C. Riedweg [ed.], *PHILOSOPHIA in der Konkurrenz von Schulen, Wissenschaften und Religionen: Zur Pluralisierung des Philosophiebegriffs in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* [Philosophie der Antike 34; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017], 356).

⁴⁴ G. Van Riel, *Plato’s Gods* (Ashgate Studies in the History of Philosophical Theology; Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

⁴⁵ ἀνιγματοῶδης (Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 354C [of Egyptian theology]; *Def. orac.* 420F [Plato]); Philo, *Her.* 63. Philo, however, also refers in a few places to Num 12:6, 8, where it is said that God spoke to Moses ἐν εἰδει, καὶ οὐ δι’ ἀνιγμάτων.

arrive at some form of certain knowledge, then religious-philosophical authors may reasonably claim that the best starting point for human reasoning are the glimpses of the truth that were given to humans in religious symbols and stories, in the order of the cosmos or in oracles, omens, signs and the like, as handed down in religious traditions and ancestral beliefs – yet with the aforementioned proviso that these cannot be understood without the proper, philosophical interpretation which interprets them “in a holy and philosophical way” (ὁσίως καὶ φιλοσόφως [Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 355C]).

In other words, there are two truth-claims with their respective authority: the truth as it is contained and handed down in the different aspects of religious tradition, and the truth as it is brought out by philosophical interpretation. Together, they form a hermeneutical circle or spiral. Maybe one has to interpret Plutarch’s two adverbs even more literally: religious traditions have to be interpreted in a way that is appropriate both to the nature of the divine (ὁσίως) and to human reason (φιλοσόφως). In any case, they are the two sides of the one coin of truth: a trustworthy expression of the truth, and the correct understanding and interpretation of this expression. Plutarch would claim for himself that everything he is saying is true to Plato’s philosophical framework, even though it may go against what earlier Platonists had believed. The guiding principle (and the dividing line) are for him some theological axioms,⁴⁶ as becomes clear from some of his discussions with the Stoics.⁴⁷

Returning to Philo and Plutarch, there is a difference in how the two authors construe the relationship between Plato and the respective religious tradition. I would suggest the following stemma (Table 1):⁴⁸

<i>Philo</i>	<i>Plutarch</i>
God	God/Truth
Moses	Religious Tradition Plato
Plato	[Stoicism/Chrysippus]
Stoicism/Zeno	

Table 1: The Relationship between Plato and the Religious Tradition in Philo and in Plutarch

⁴⁶ Like those assembled by Philo in the end of his *De opificio mundi* (170–172). Mendelson found in those axiomatic sentences the “keys to Philo’s concept of orthodoxy”, in the sense of a “lowest common denominator” (A. Mendelson, *Philo’s Jewish Identity* [BJS 161; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], 29). For the interpretation of this passage cf. D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (PACS 1; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 391–403.

⁴⁷ Hirsch-Luipold, “Dividing Line”.

⁴⁸ Following our discussions in Münster and particularly the scheme proposed there by Troels Engberg-Pedersen and some subsequent discussions on it with Mauro Bonazzi.

Who of the two is the more “orthodox” mind, and in what way, is a fascinating question for further research. There are cases where Philo, interestingly, seems to be the more “orthodox” Platonist than Plutarch in the sense that he uses thoughts of Plato even where one might suppose that this conflicts with his “Mosaic” philosophy or theology. One case in point is the acceptance of “ideas” in the realm of God. How is the concept of ideas to be reconciled in a Jewish framework with the concept of one personal God who is responsible for the world and everything in it? How are ideas to be related to the one God? Philo famously understands them as the thoughts of God in order to integrate them into his philosophical theology.⁴⁹ Plutarch, on the other hand, has little room for “ideas” in his theological (re)interpretation of Plato’s intelligible realm. They only appear where he interprets Plato directly.⁵⁰

A second point may be the issue of reincarnation, at least if one trusts the interpretation of the Finnish scholar Sami Yli-Karjanmaa, who stirred some discussion on this issue with his monograph entitled, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria*.⁵¹

⁴⁹ J. Dillon/D.J. Tolan, “The Ideas as Thoughts of God”, in A.J.B. Hampton/J.P. Kenney (ed.), *Christian Platonism: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) 34–52; J. Dillon, “The Ideas as Thoughts of God”, *Études Platoniciennes* 8 (2011) 31–42; building on A.N.M. Rich, “Platonic Ideas as the Thoughts of God”, *Mnemosyne* 7 (1954) 123–33. Cf. also R.M. Jones, “The Ideas as the Thoughts of God”, *CP* 4 (1926) 317–26. According to R. Radice (*Platonismo e creazionismo in Filone di Alessandria* [Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1989]), Philo is actually the inventor of this notion, yet wrongly, according to Dillon “Ideas as Thoughts”, who rather believes this concept to go back to Antiochus of Ascalon. Like C. Schoppe (*Plutarchs Interpretation der Ideenlehre Platons* [Münster: Lit, 1994] 139–81), Dillon has tried to argue that the notion of the ideas as the thoughts of God is also present in Plutarch but this position has been refuted by a number of scholars (cf. C.J. De Vogel, “Der sog. Mittelplatonismus, überwiegend eine Philosophie der Diesseitigkeit?”, in H.D. Blume/F. Mann (ed.), *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie* [Münster: Aschen-dorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983] 277–302, at 284). Dillon and Tolan write about Philo the following: “We find in Philo, particularly in such a work as the *De opificio mundi*, a system involving a transcendent supreme God, an intelligible world (*kosmos noetos*), presented as the ‘internal reason’ (*logos endiathetos*) of God, and a Logos that goes forth and creates the physical cosmos (*logos prophorikos*), and thereafter holds it together” (Dillon/Tolan, “Ideas”).

⁵⁰ D. Babut, “Du scepticisme au dépassement de la raison: Philosophie et foi religieuse chez Plutarque”, in idem (ed.), *Parerga: Choix d’articles de Daniel Babut (1974–1994)* (Collection de la Maison de l’Orient méditerranéen 24; Série littéraire et philosophique 6; Lyon: Maison de l’Orient méditerranéen, 1994) 549–81, at 552: “La théorie platonicienne des Formes est pour ainsi dire absente.” F. Ferrari (*Dio, idee e materia: La struttura del cosmo in Plutarco di Cheronea* [Naples: M. d’Auria, 1995]) has argued for the traditionally Middle Platonic scheme of God, the ideas and matter as the three principles in Plutarch but he has refined his position in the Neuer Überweg: F. Ferrari, “Plutarch von Chaironeia”, in C. Riedweg et al. (ed.), *Philosophie der Antike 5/1: Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike* (Basel: Schwabe, 2018) 565–79.

⁵¹ S. Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria* (SPhiloM 7; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015); idem, “Philo of Alexandria”, in H. Tarrant et al. (ed.), *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill 2018) 115–29. Cf. also J. von Ehrenkrook, “The Afterlife in Philo and Josephus” in J.H. Ellens (ed.), *Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife: Eternity in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013) 97–118, at 114, who while not actually discussing the question of reincarnation in Philo, marks it at the end of his essay as the decisive difference from Josephus that Philo envisages an absolute liberation of the immortal soul from the body only in the context of an “immortal communion with the divine”.

There has, however, been some debate on the issue, because, from a Jewish perspective, reincarnation would be a strange position to hold. Years ago, David Winston had already advised caution, noting that “Philo’s sparse references to reincarnation reveal a reluctance on his part to give undue prominence to a Platonic conception that was essentially alien to Jewish tradition”.⁵² As it concerns Plutarch, whose ethics and philosophy is aimed at the individual and his or her well-being and life, the Platonic theory of reincarnation has little purchase. He does not seem interested in the fate of the souls if they are reincarnated, but only in how the individual can escape being reborn and, instead, make the journey to the sun, the *νοῦς*, or the divine place of being.

Both authors, I would claim, have different ways of understanding “orthodoxy” due to the different ways in which they construe the relationship between the philosophical and the religious tradition. Philo claims that Plato has learned from Moses – in the sense that what we find in Plato must come from Moses (who has received the laws in direct revelation from God) and must therefore be right or “orthodox”. The epistemological stemma is different in Plutarch: For Plutarch, Plato and the religious tradition present truth claims of a different kind: they mutually interpret and correct one another. If the stemma shown above in Table 1 has something to it, we might say that in Philo, the idea that Plato is a student of Moses would have the effect of allowing Philo to accept all doctrines of Plato essentially as doctrines of Moses, whereas in Plutarch, because religious tradition and Platonic philosophy mutually interpret one another, their truth-claims constantly have to be weighed against one another.

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⁵² D. Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985) 42. David Runia frames the issue more generally; he puts forward the thesis that Philo often “speaks of God with spirituality quite different in flavour to that found in the works of Greek philosophers”. See D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timeaeus of Plato* (PhA 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986) 128. This already presupposes a specific view of philosophy which I think is open to discussion.

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Philo of Alexandria on the Practical and Contemplative Life: Some Remarks

Mauro Bonazzi

What is the best life – a life that can offer us the most important thing, happiness? As is well known, this was the most cardinal question in antiquity. It was addressed from the very beginnings by several writers, and soon became one of the hottest points of disagreement in philosophical debates. Given its importance, it is therefore surprising that, until recently, not so many scholars have tried carefully to reconstruct these debates. The only systematic overview was published by Robert Joly several decades ago, in 1956.¹ It is a valuable study, which diligently collects all the relevant evidence. But it also suffers, as is easy to predict, from time and from several prejudices, especially in the last part of his book, about the late Hellenistic and Roman philosophers. Many scholars since then have greatly contributed to a better understanding of this period in general and especially as regards the issue under discussion in this paper.² Yet much still remains to be investigated and discussed, as I will try to show with regard to Philo of Alexandria. Contrary to what Joly argued, Philo's views on the best types of life are not the simple repetition of widespread clichés, but offer very valuable insights, which can be paralleled with the current debates of his own time. It is well known that Philo's Jewish background, however we want to consider it, complicates his relationship with the Greek philosophical tradition.³ To be sure, we cannot read Philo as though he were just a philosopher, in dialogue with the other Greek philosophers. And yet, the aim of this paper is to show that he not only shared with the Greek thinkers a common ground of discussions

¹ R. Joly, *Le thème philosophique des genres de vie dans l'Antiquité Classique* (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1956).

² See the articles collected in T. Bénatouil/M. Bonazzi (ed.), *Theoria, Praxis and the Contemplative Life after Plato and Aristotle* (PhA 131; Leiden: Brill, 2012). As for Philo, see D. Winston, "Philo and the Contemplative Life", in A. Green (ed.), *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages* (World Spirituality: An Encyclopaedic History of the Religious Quest 13; New York: Crossroad, 1988) 198–230; and V. Laurand, "La contemplation selon Philon d'Alexandrie", in Bénatouil/Bonazzi, *Theoria, Praxis, and the Contemplative Life*, 121–38.

³ See the seminal article by D.T. Runia, "Was Philo a Middle Platonist? A Difficult Question Revisited", *SPhiloA* 5 (1993) 112–40.

and problems, but also contributed some interesting ideas, which help us better understand the intellectual and philosophical richness of this period.⁴

I. Philo and the “Mixed Life”?

Philon le juif est fort représentatif du syncrétisme hellénistique. Convaincu de l'énorme supériorité de la vie contemplative, il admet cependant la vie mixte: selon lui, la vie contemplative et la vie pratique doivent alterner dans la vie d'un homme. [...] La contemplation est d'essence divine et l'action est proprement humaine. La vie contemplative est tellement supérieure que ce serait folie de s'y consacrer dès la jeunesse; il faut faire un apprentissage dans la sphère inférieure de l'action. La contemplation est la récompense de la perfection apportée à la pratique.⁵

According to Joly, Philo is a typical representative of Hellenistic syncretism in an epoch dominated by the “triumph of the mixed life” (*Le thème philosophique*, 171). The ideal life is now regarded as consisting in an alternation of “action” (πραξις) and “contemplation” (θεωρία), the latter of which is the most important one. According to Joly, this view reflects the Peripatetic model, which was the dominant model during the first centuries of the Imperial age.

In support of his reconstruction, Joly mentions several texts, and many others can be added. *Spec.* 2.64, for instance, seem to provide an indication of Philo's leaning towards the alternation between the two lives (with the acknowledgement that the contemplative life is the most important):

These things show clearly that Moses does not allow any of those who use his sacred instruction to remain inactive at any season. But since we consist of body and soul, he assigned to the body its proper tasks and similarly to the soul what falls to its share, and his earnest desire was, that the two should be waiting to relieve each other. Thus while the body is working, the soul enjoys a respite, but when the body takes its rest, the soul resumes its work, and thus the best form of life, the theoretical and the practical, take their turn in replacing each other. The practical life has six as its number allotted for ministering to the body. The theoretical has seven for knowledge and perfection of the mind (*Spec.* 2.64, PLCL).

⁴ A possible objection to the plan of the present paper is that it does not take into proper account the specificity of Philo's texts in the *corpus*, as David Runia made me kindly aware of. Insofar as Philo's texts are dependent on an exegetical context, they should be studied for their specific goals and not as part of a unified system. Philo is indeed a sophisticated writer and does not seem to be primarily interested in developing a closed system, as I will also show at the end of the paper. And yet, some preliminary attempt of extracting some common features and ideas in his thought is equally important. This is the goal of the present paper.

⁵ Joly, *Le thème philosophique*, 173.

A passage from the *De decalogo* is even more eloquent, with this regard:

(§99) God used “his six days” for the completion of the cosmos all at once – since he had no need of extended time. But a human being, partaking in mortal nature and being in need of a thousand things necessary for life, ought not to shrink from procuring what is needed through the end of their life, resting on the holy seventh days. (§100) Is this not an outstandingly fine exhortation, admirably fit to convert us to every virtue, but especially to piety? “Always follow God”, he [Moses] says: “let the single six-day period in which he created the cosmos be sufficient as a paradigm of the period appointed for you to act; and let the seventh day, in which he is said to view what he made, be a paradigm of the need to do philosophy, when you too should contemplate things of nature, and also whatever of your own affairs is relevant to happiness (παράδειγμα και τοῦ δεῖν φιλοσοφεῖν ἢ ἐβδόμη, καθ’ ἣν ἐπιθεῖν λέγεται ἃ εἰργάσατο, ὅπως και αὐτὸς ἐπιθεωρῆς τὰ φύσεως και τὰ ἴδια ὅσα συντείνει πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν)”. (§101) So let us not ignore this example of the best ways of life, the practical and the theoretical, but always look at it and engrave clear images and representations of it in our own minds, making mortal nature as much as possible like what is immortal, both in saying and doing what is necessary (ἐξομοιοῦντες θνητὴν φύσιν ὡς ἔνεστιν ἀθανάτῳ κατὰ τὸ λέγειν και πράττειν ἃ χρῆ) (Decal. 99–101; trans. Boys-Stones, 474; see also *Spec.* 1.57–58; *Praem.* 10–11; *Mut.* 70–76).

This last text adds some important qualifications to the first text quoted by Joly, insofar as it explains that the contemplative life is a life devoted to the Divine. This is the main reason for its superiority over the practical life.

All in all, it would be difficult to deny that Philo shares ideas that were widespread among his contemporaries. But this does not justify Joly’s conclusion of Philo’s complete lack of originality (not to mention his dismissive evaluation of the philosophy of the early Imperial age as a whole). On the contrary, upon a closer scrutiny it appears that Philo was not passively dependent on the other schools’ doctrines. If we look at the current debates, we can see that the situation was much more complex, so that it makes no sense to talk of a single model of “the mixed life”, which was uniformly adopted by all schools and thinkers.

Over the years, several scholars have rightly underlined Philo’s debt to the Stoics, who in their turn seem to favor the same model when it comes to the choice of the best life.⁶ In this specific case, however, divergences are more significant than

⁶ “Of the three kinds of life, the contemplative, the practical, and the rational, they declare that we ought to choose the last, for that a rational being is expressly produced by nature for contemplation and action (πρὸς θεωρίαν και πράξιν).” *SVF* 3.687 = Diogenes Laertius 7.130; trans. Long; see also *SVF* 3.125; *Nat. d.* 2.17. The importance of the Stoic influence remains in any case important and provides some corrective to Philo’s Platonism (especially with regard to Philo’s social ethics); see the excellent paper by G. Reydam-Schils, “Unsociable Sociability: Philo on the Active and Contemplative Life”, in *Pouvoir et Puissances chez Philon d’Alexandrie* (Monothéismes et Philosophie; Turnhout: Brepols, 2015) 305–18.

affinities. For the Stoics, the two models are somehow interchangeable, but this is not Philo's position, as we have already remarked. In his case, as the last text clearly shows, the practical and the theoretical activities aim at different goals. For the same reason, Philo's position cannot be completely identified with the one adopted by some leading Platonists of the period either. With Platonists, Philo shared the emphasis on the divine and transcendent model, which grounds the contemplative life. But like Stoics, several Platonists (think for instance of Plutarch or Apuleius) appear to insist on the interchangeability of the two lives.⁷ In Apuleius, as in Plutarch, contemplation is the basis for moral and political action. This does not seem to be the case in the texts of Philo that we cited above. For this reason, Joly was pointing in the direction of the Peripatetic model (which he wrongly presented as the only available model). Contemplation and action are two distinct activities. But neither does this option aptly describe Philo's view, as the comparison with Peripatetic doxography attributed to Arius Didymus makes clear:

The good person will choose the way of life that involves virtue, whether he is at some time in a position of leadership, the time inducing him [to this], or if it is not necessary to be the courtier of some king or to engage in politics in some other way. If he is not involved in these, he will turn to the way of life of ordinary people or to that of a teacher. He will choose both to do and to contemplate noble things (*πράττειν και θεωρεῖν τὰ καλά*). If he is prevented by the state of the times, he will follow one of them, giving more honor to the life of contemplation, but involving himself in political actions because of his sense of community. [...] There are three types of lives, the practical, the theoretical and that composed by both. The life of enjoyment is subhuman, and the life of contemplation is preferred to the others. The good person will engage in politics as

⁷ "The end of wisdom is for the wise man to acquire the status of a god, and the subsequent task of taking on the activity of the gods by imitating their life. And indeed he will be able to achieve this if he proves himself to be a perfectly just, pious and intelligent man. So he ought to follow god not only in theoretical contemplation, but also in doing deeds which are approved of by gods and humans: for the supreme god not only attends to all this by rational thought, but works through it all, beginning, middle and end, knows it intimately, and governs it by the universal reach and stability of his providential government" (Apuleius, *Dogm. Plat.* 2.23); "Consider first that God, as Plato says, offers himself to all as a pattern of every excellence, thus rendering human virtue, which is in some sort an assimilation to himself, accessible to all who can 'follow God' (*κατὰ Πλάτωνα πάντων καλῶν ὁ θεὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐν μέσῳ παράδειγμα θέμενος τῆν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀρετὴν, ἕξομοίωσιν ὄσαν ἀμωσγέπως πρὸς αὐτόν, ἐνδίδωσιν τοῖς ἔπεσθαι θεῷ δυναμένοις*)" [cf. Philo, *Decal.* 100]; "Indeed, this was the origin of the change whereby universal nature, disordered before, became a 'cosmos': it came to resemble after a fashion and participate in the form and excellence of God. The same philosopher says further that nature kindled vision in us so that the soul, beholding the heavenly motions and wondering at the sight, should grow to accept and cherish all that moves in stateliness and order, and thus come to hate discordant and errant passions and to shun the aimless and haphazard as source of all vice and jarring error; for man is fitted to derive from God no greater blessing than to become settled in virtue through copying and aspiring to the beauty and goodness that are his (*οὐ γὰρ ὅ τι μεῖζον ἀνθρώπος ἀπολαύειν θεοῦ πέφυκεν ἢ τὸ μιμήσει και διώξει τῶν ἐν ἐκείνῳ καλῶν και ἀγαθῶν εἰς ἀρετὴν καθίσασθαι*)" (Plutarch, *Sera* 550D–550E; see *Dion* 10.1–3).

a primary aim, not just in special circumstances; for the practical life is the same as the political (Arius *apud* Stobaeus, *Flor.* 2.7, 13 [trans. Sharples]).

As this Peripatetic doxography shows, the Aristotelian model implies the alternation of the two lives and the superiority of contemplative life over practical life.⁸ To be sure, this is what we also find in Philo. Philo's view, however, is also characterized by a different remarkable feature. In his case, action precedes contemplation. As many other texts make it abundantly clear, this is not without consequence. Practical life is a preparation for contemplation: practical life is important, but contemplative life is "different and more excellent" (*ἕτερον καὶ ἀμείνω βίον*). Practical life, therefore, is "a sort of prelude" (*πρόαγωνά τινα*), a preparation.⁹ Philo's position can therefore be better and further described as a qualified defense of the contemplative life.¹⁰ "What life is better than a contemplative life, or more appropriate to a rational being?" (*Migr.* 47).¹¹ (Moral) action remains obviously important, but its importance consists especially in its being a necessary precondition for contemplation.¹²

⁸ Other testimonies that can be paralleled with this doxography are Antiochus *apud* Augustine, *Civ.* 19.3 and Cicero, *Fin.* 5.58 (on Antiochus) and some pseudo-Pythagorean authors such as Ps.-Archytas, *Ethic. ed.* 42.5–9 Thesleff and *Sapient.* 44.16–19 Thesleff, or Ps.-Perictione, *Sapient.* 146.3–5 Thesleff.

⁹ Philo, *Fug.* 33, 36–38 (PLCL): (§33) "Truth would therefore rightly find fault with those who without full consideration give up the business and financial side of a citizen's life, and say that they have conceived a contempt for fame and pleasure. For they do not despise these things, they are practicing an imposture. [...] (§36) Begin, then, by getting some exercise and practice in the business of life both private and public; and when by means of the sister virtues, household-management and statesmanship, you have become masters in each domain, enter now, as more than qualified to do so, on your migration to a different and more excellent way of life (*ἕτερον καὶ ἀμείνω βίον*). For the practical comes before the contemplative life; it is a sort of prelude (*πρόαγωνά τινα*); and it is well to have fought it out first. By taking this course you will avoid the imputation of shrinking from it through sheer laziness. (§37) It was on this principle that the Levites were charged to perform their active service until the age of fifty, but, when released from their practical ministry, to make everything an object of observation and contemplation; receiving as a prize for duty well done in the active life a quite different way of life whose delight is in knowledge and studies of principles alone. (§38) And apart from this, it is of vital importance that those who venture to make the claims of God their aim and study should first have fully met those of men; for it is sheer folly to suppose that you will reach the greater while you are incapable of mastering the lesser. Therefore first make yourself familiar with virtue as exercised in our dealings with men, to the end that you may be introduced to that also which has to do with our relation to God." See also QG 4.47.

¹⁰ Winston, "Philo and the Contemplative Life", 222.

¹¹ See also Philo, *Ebr.* 83 (PLCL): "And what among all the blessings which the virtues give can be more perfect than the sight of the Absolutely Existent? He who has the sight of this blessing has his fair fame acknowledged in the eyes of both parents, for he has gained the strength which is in God and the power which avails among men."

¹² See also Philo, *Fug.* 39–52 and D.T. Runia, "The Reward for Goodness: Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 90", *SPhiloA* 9 (1997) 3–18 [FS David Winston], at 12: "because the Therapeutae have the ethos or moral disposition of self-control in relation to bodily desires, this allows them to devote all their time and energy to contemplative activity"; and again, at 13: "the former [moral excellence] is the foundation for the latter [contemplation]."

Remarkably, in the above-quoted text from *De decalogo* (a later work, representing Philo's mature thought on the subject), philosophy was said to consist in the contemplative activity only (*Decal.* 100). Insofar as the emphasis is on this idea of preparation, the consequence is therefore the progressive detachment and devaluation of the political life, which is often presented in a negative light, again unlike the Peripatetic tradition.¹³ This is a trend that will become more and more prominent in the following centuries.¹⁴ Contrary to what Joly argued, therefore, Philo's view turns out to be less banal than expected. The same conclusion will emerge also from a more careful examination of Philo's account of the contemplative life.

II. Philo on Contemplation

When we move to contemplation, Philo's relation with Platonism becomes more visible. This does not come as a surprise, given the common theological assumptions; and a predictable consequence is that Philo will also share some of the same problems Platonists were facing. An interesting confirmation of Plato's importance comes from an autobiographical passage from the third book of *De specialibus legibus*, where Philo emphatically defends his personal penchant for the contemplative life by quoting and alluding to the journey of the soul in the *Phaedrus's* palinode:¹⁵

(§1) There was a time when I had leisure for philosophy and for the contemplation of the universe and its content (φιλοσοφία σχολάζων και θεωρία τοῦ κόσμου και τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ), when I made its spirit my own in all its beauty and loveliness and true blessedness, when my constant companions were divine themes and verities, wherein I rejoiced with a joy that never cloyed or sated. I had no base or abject thoughts nor groveled in search of reputation or of wealth or bodily comforts, but seemed always to be born aloft into the heights with a soul possessed by some God-sent inspiration, a fellow-traveler with the sun and the moon and the whole heaven and universe. (§2) Ah then I gazed down from the upper air, and straining the mind's eye beheld, as from some commanding peak, the multitudinous world-wide spectacles of earthly things, and blessed my lot in that I had escaped by main force from the plagues of mortal life. (§3) But, as

¹³ See for instance Philo, *Ios.* 28–34; *Mut.* 89–90; *Somm.* 2.47; with F. Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (SPhA 4; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 161–2.

¹⁴ See M. Bonazzi/F. Petrucci, "Definition und philosophische Systemstelle der platonischen Ethik", in H. Dörrie/M. Baltes/C. Pietsch (ed.), *Der Platonismus in der Antike. Band 8: Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus: Die Ethik im antiken Platonismus der Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2020) 2–21, 151–78.

¹⁵ See A. Méasson, *Philon d'Alexandrie et le mythe du Phèdre: images de Dieu et de l'homme* (PhD diss., University of Lyon, 1982); and eadem, *Du char ailé de Zeus à l'arche d'alliance: Images et mythes platoniciens chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Collection des études augustiniennes, série antiquité 116; Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1986).

it proved, my steps were dogged by the deadliest of mischief, the hater of the good, envy, which suddenly set upon me and ceased not to pull me down with violence till it had plunged me in the ocean of civil cares, in which I am swept away, uneven to raise my head above the water. [...] (§5) And if unexpectedly I obtain a spell of fine weather, and a calm from civil turmoils, I get me wings and ride the waves and almost tread the lower air ... (*Spec.* 3.1–5, PLCL).

Again, also in this eloquent text, “philosophy” properly spoken amounts to contemplation. This is clearly the best and most desired activity,¹⁶ which also explains why Philo often speaks in praise of solitude and leisure.¹⁷ What remains to be reconstructed, however, is what the object of the contemplative activity is. In *Spec.* 3.1, Philo speaks of “the universe and its contents”. This led some scholars, most notably Émile Bréhier, to argue that Philo was referring to cosmological investigations (“la science du cosmos”), on the footsteps of the Hellenistic tradition.¹⁸ Indeed, Philo repeatedly associates contemplation and φύσις:

The Jews every seventh day occupy themselves with the philosophy of their fathers, dedicating that time to the acquiring of knowledge and the study of the truths of nature (ἐπιστήμη καὶ θεωρία τῶν περὶ φύσιν) (*Mos.* 2.216; see also *Her.* 213–214, 279; *Somn.* 2.186; *Contempl.* 90; *Mut.* 67–68).

But this is a misleading reading, as Valentin Nikiprowetzky has clearly shown. Philo’s interest in φύσις is not the same of the Hellenistic philosophers or the Peripatetics, as the case of Abraham opposing the Chaldeans clearly shows:

The Chaldeans were especially active in the elaboration of astrology and ascribed everything to the movements of the stars. They supposed that the course of the phenomena of the world is guided by influences contained in numbers and numerical proportions. Thus, they glorified visible existence, leaving out of consideration the intelligible and the invisible. [...] They concluded that the world itself was God. [...] In this creed Abraham had been reared, and for a long time remained a Chaldean. Then, opening the soul’s eye as though after a profound sleep, and beginning to see the pure beam instead of the deep darkness, he followed the ray and discerned what he had not beheld before, a charioteer and a pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work. (*Abr.* 68–71; PLCL)¹⁹

¹⁶ Philo, *Somn.* 2.232.

¹⁷ Philo, *Abr.* 22–23; *Prob.* 63; *Spec.* 2.44; *Praem.* 17–19.

¹⁸ É. Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Picard, 1950 [1908]) 294.

¹⁹ Again, it is interesting to note Philo’s references to the *Phaedrus*’ palinode.

The goal of contemplation is not so much knowledge of the secrets of nature as the understanding of metaphysical and theological truths.²⁰ Real nature is a divine nature, not the spectacle of planets and stars; and it is something that only our mind, not our senses, can grasp (“I bid you come and contemplate the universe and its contents, a spectacle apprehended [καταλαμβάνειν] not by the eye of the body but by the unsleeping eyes of the mind”),²¹ because the end of the journey, the goal of the contemplation is divine reality, and not the universe:

It was fitting, after the coming into being of the world, to establish the contemplative life in order that through a vision of the world and the things in it praise of the Father might also be attained. For it is not possible without wisdom to praise the Creator of all things. But as for the three of life in the midst of the garden it is knowledge, not only of things on the earth, but also of the eldest and highest cause of all things. For if anyone is able to obtain a clear impression of this, he will be fortunate and blessed and truly immortal. [...] For just as Plato said, the Creator is the greatest and best of causes, while the world is the most beautiful of created things. (QG 1.6, Marcus PLCL)

The parallels with Plato and Platonism are here evident. Like Plato’s philosophy, Philo’s thought turns out to be the science of the first cause.²² “For Philo, as for Plato in the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, and many other dialogues, philosophy is an escape from the material world, an ascent whose end is the vision of Being and the feeling of its presence (‘une ascension dont le terme est la vision de l’Etre et le sentiment de sa presence’).”²³ The importance of all this – the importance of reaching “knowledge of Him who truly is (ἐπιστήμην τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος)”²⁴ – becomes clear at the end of the journey, with happiness waiting those who have been able to contemplate, as Philo has stated at the end of the above text and will repeat in many other passages:

He to whom it is given not only to obtain knowledge of all the other aspects of nature, but also to see the Father and Maker of the universe,²⁵ will advance to the very peak of felicity (εὐδαιμονία). For nothing is higher than God, and he that has extended the eye of his soul to reach him should pray that he remains and stands firm in him (*Abr.* 58, trans. Runia; see also *Spec.* 1.345; *Decal.* 100, cited above).

²⁰ V. Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l’Écriture chez Philon d’Alexandrie: Son caractère et sa portée. Observations philologiques* (ALGHJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1977) 103.

²¹ Philo, *Spec.* 1.49 (PLCL); see also *Her.* 75–80; *Opif.* 54–61; *Conf.* 95–97.

²² Philo, *Plant.* 22; *Conf.* 97; *Virt.* 65.

²³ Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l’Écriture*, 99.

²⁴ Philo, *Decal.* 81 (PLCL): “He wished to lead the human race, wandering in pathless wilds, to the road from which none can stray, so that following nature they might win the best of goals, knowledge of Him that truly is (ἐπιστήμην τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος), Who is the primal and most perfect good, from Whom as from a fountain is showered the water of each particular good upon the world and them that dwell therein.”

²⁵ A clear reference to Plato (*Tim.* 28c).

It is the same conclusion we read in the treatise about the Therapeutae, those who have embraced a life of contemplation:

Let this account suffice for the Therapeutae, who have embraced the contemplation (*θεωρίαν*) of nature and what it contains, and have lived a life of the soul alone, citizens of heaven and the cosmos, truly commended to the father and maker of the universe by their excellence, which has procured for them his friendship and set it before them as the most fitting reward for their goodness, a gift superior to all prosperity and attaining to the very summit of felicity (*εὐδαιμονία*) (*Contempl.* 90, trans. Runia; see also the above quoted text from *Decal.* 100).

The emphatic position of the references to happiness need not escape us, as Runia rightly remarks.²⁶ Indeed, these texts seem to confirm that Philo was not so much, or at least not only, defending the model of the mixed life. All in all, like Aristotle in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and many later Platonists, Philo seems to support the model of contemplative life as the best kind of life. And like the supporters of this model, he has now to face a problem, which was also distinctive of Platonism. Unlike the Stoics or the Epicureans (and later Plotinus, a remarkable exception), who attribute a divine status and by consequence a perfect happiness, to the sage,²⁷ Philo, as the other Imperial Platonists, must also acknowledge that God is not comprehensible and knowable. Pierluigi Donini has used the label of “metaphysical skepticism” to describe this problem in the Platonist tradition.²⁸ Philosophically, this

²⁶ D.T. Runia, “Eudaimonism in Hellenistic-Jewish Literature”, in J.L. Kugel (ed.), *Shem in the Tents of Japhet: Essays on the Encounter of Judaism and Hellenism* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 131–57, at 139.

²⁷ See for instance Epicurus, *Ep. Men.* 10.135 (trans. Long/Sedley): “Practice these things [viz. Epicurus’s ethical teachings] and all that belongs with them, in relation to yourself by day, and by night in relation to your likeness, and you will never be disquieted, awake or in your dreams, but will live like a god among men. For quite unlike a mortal animal is a man who lives among immortal goods.” Cicero, *Leg.* 1.25 (= *SVF* 3.245, trans. Zetzel): “Virtue is the same in human and god, and it is found in no other species besides; and virtue is nothing than nature perfected and taken to its highest level.” Seneca *Ep.* 76.9–10 (= *SVF* 3.200a, trans. Long/Sedley): “What is best in man? Reason: with this he precedes the animals and follows the gods. Therefore perfect reason is man’s peculiar good, the rest he shares with animal and plants. [...] What is the peculiar characteristic of a man? Reason – which when right and perfect makes the full sum of human happiness. Therefore, if everything, when it has perfected its own good, is praiseworthy and has reached the end of its own nature, and man’s own good is reason, if he has perfected reason, he is praiseworthy and has attained the end of his nature. This perfect nature is called virtue and it is identical to rectitude.” Cf. also Seneca, *Ep.* 92.3: “The wise man’s mind should be such as befits god.” Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.2[19].6.1–3 and 6.9[9].9.59–60 (trans. Armstrong): “There is no sin in anything of this sort for a man, but only right action. Our concern, though, is not to be out of sin, but to be god”; “There one can see both him and oneself as it is right to see: the self-glorified, full of intelligible light – but rather itself pure light – weightless, floating, free, having become – but rather being – a god.”

²⁸ See P. Donini, “Lo scetticismo academico, Aristotele e l’unità della tradizione platonica secondo Plutarco”, in G. Cambiano (ed.), *Storiografia e dossografia nella filosofia antica* (Torino: Tirrenia Stampatori,

is an interesting attempt to steer a middle course between dogmatism and radical skepticism, that both dominated the Hellenistic centuries, in a new context in which transcendence plays a major role. However, the acknowledgment that God and divine reality is beyond our epistemic reach does not go without consequence in the quest for happiness. For by admitting God's incomprehensibility Philo runs into a very delicate problem, which risks questioning the validity of the claim that the contemplative life is the best life. If happiness depends on knowledge and contemplation, but contemplation does not give us the knowledge we are striving for, the conclusion seems to be that the contemplative life is not the life we need in order to live a happy life. Even worse, given that Philo has already assumed that practical and political life are not the solution either, the problem of happiness – and of what a happy life consists in – seems to remain unanswered.²⁹

The extent of Philo's skepticism has been the object of much important research in the last decades. It is indeed difficult to assess how deep was his knowledge of skeptical arguments, as they were developed in the Hellenistic Academy and by the new Pyrrhonian supporters of a more radical version of it.³⁰ Even more complicated is to distinguish between this tradition and the implicit scepticism which can be extracted by Plato's metaphysics and the theological traditions. Be that as it may, what appears is that Philo's sceptical doubts appear to be much wider than usually expected, and they concern both the sensible and the intelligible, divine, realm. The ever-changing, fluid, nature of the sensible world sets clear limits to the scientific claim to obtain an exact knowledge of the universe.³¹ What remains are only conjectures: "The history of philosophy is full of discordance, because truth flees from the credulous mind which deals in conjecture. It is her nature to elude discovery and pursuit, and it is this which in my opinion produces these scientific quarrelings." (*Her.* 246–248, PLCL).

1986) 203–26; F. Ferrari, "Plutarco e lo scetticismo ellenistico", in A. Casanova (ed.), *Plutarco e l'età ellenistica* (Studi e testi 24; Florence: Università degli studi di Firenze, 2005) 369–84.

²⁹ Interestingly, this will be also a major difficulty for Thomas Aquinas, who was on his turn engaged in the attempt of reconciling Greek philosophy and the religious dogma of God's unknowability, see for instance R. Imbach and I. Fouché, *Thomas d'Aquin, Boèce de Dacie. Sur le bonheur: textes introduits, traduits et annotés par R.I. et I.F.* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2005).

³⁰ See C. Lévy, "Le 'scepticisme' de Philon d'Alexandrie: une influence de la Nouvelle Académie?", in A. Caquot/M. Hadas-Lebel/J. Riaud (ed.), *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowtzky* (Paris: Peeters, 1986) 29–41 on the Academy; C. Lévy, "Deux problèmes doxographiques chez Philon d'Alexandrie: Posidonius et Enésidème", in A. Brancacci (ed.), *Philosophy and Doxography in the Imperial Age* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2005) 79–102 on Aenesidemus, with further bibliography. The most important text for Philo's influence by scepticism is, as well known, *Ebr.* 166–205.

³¹ See for instance Philo, *Her.* 224, 246–248; *Somn.* 1.21–24; *Aet.* 1–2; See Nikiprowtzky, *Le commentaire de l'Écriture*, 186–7 and D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (PhA 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986) 122–30.

As with regard to God, the most important problem, it is simply impossible for a finite being and a finite mind to grasp its infinite perfection and power.³² Any attempt to know God is inevitably doomed to fail:

“God is not like a human being” (Num 23:19; cf. *Deus* 53), he is not even the sky, nor the cosmos. These last are forms of a particular kind which present themselves to our senses. But he is not apprehensible even by the mind (οὐδὲ τῷ νῶ καταληπτός), save in the fact that He is. For it is His existence which we apprehend, and of what lies outside that existence nothing. (*Deus* 62, PLCL)

This is a key theme in Philo’s meditation, and the conclusion is always the same.³³ It is not possible for human beings to see God as He really is, because God is “incomprehensible” (ἀκατάληπτος), “unnameable” (ἀκατονόμαστος), and “unspeakable” (ἄρρητος). “The problem is that full knowledge of who God is cannot be received by the powers of human intellect. It would be overwhelmed, as happens to those high-flyers who ascend to the heavens and find their eyesight darkened by the brightness of the celestial light.”³⁴ How to reach the goal of a happy life, then, if knowledge is prevented? As a matter of fact, Philo has a possible solution to the problem, which can help us to better understand his idea of the contemplative life.

Needless to say, the solution, or part of the solution, are Moses and Scripture.³⁵ Man is uncertain, a doubter by nature; one may, in the sceptic way, describe how opinions differ and dash. But sceptical ἐποχή (suspension of judgment) is not acceptable, because a decision is needed. Such a decision is made possible by God through his oracles as taken down by Moses. Indeed, Philo distinguishes between philosophical knowledge, which, as we have seen, has a limited reach, and a higher kind of knowledge, which God revealed to a privileged few, Moses most notably.³⁶ “Moses, through divine assistance attained the highest possible knowledge available

³² Philo also raises doubts about our capacity to know transcendent ideas; see D.T. Runia, “The Beginning of the End: Philo of Alexandria and Hellenistic Theology”, in D. Frede/A. Laks (ed.), *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, its Background and Aftermath* (PhA 89; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 281–316, at 302.

³³ See for instance Philo, *Spec.* 1.32–50; 3.97–100; *Post.* 13, 168; *Praem.* 40; with Runia, “The Beginning of the End”, 299–305.

³⁴ Runia, “The Beginning of the End”, 301, mentioning *Spec.* 1.37, 43–44.

³⁵ See J. Mansfeld, “Philosophy in the Service of Scripture: Philo’s Exegetical Strategies”, in J. Dillon/A.A. Long (ed.), *The Question of ‘Eclecticism’: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 94–102.

³⁶ See for instance Philo, *Opif.* 8. Not even Moses, however, can reach an exhaustive knowledge in any field. In many areas of scientific inquiry absolute knowledge cannot be reached; so *Sacr.* 136; *Fug.* 161. This idea of a superior knowledge divinely revealed might suggest an opposition between a theological and a philosophical approach. But the same idea, and the identification between philosophy and theology (knowledge of God being the goal of the philosophical investigation) was widespread also among pagan philosophers; see for instance Mansfeld, “Philosophy in the Service of Scripture”, 84–9.

to men and he enclosed this knowledge in the Pentateuchal books, where it is then accessible to the initiate reader.”³⁷ This plays a decisive role also for the other human beings, who are not like Moses, but who can follow his lead by studying his texts. The teachings of Scripture are decisive for the clarification of the epistemic conflicts. As it turns out, given the importance of the relation between Moses and Scripture, the contemplative life has now a direct object of investigation, which is not anymore God and the divine reality directly, but God as He appears in these texts. Contemplation is resolved in exegesis. As Francesca Calabi rightly remarks, “*theorein* is exegesis; contemplative life is study”.³⁸ This search, however, it needs be added, cannot exhaust the problem of knowledge, because exegesis has its own limits in decoding the wisdom contained in these books and the infinite richness of the divine truth remains beyond a complete reach.³⁹ The exegetical activity is always provisional. But this unending quest is not, like in the case of skepticism, the search of those who are completely in the dark.⁴⁰ Exegesis, on the contrary, becomes the tool to explore this richness, which explains why the very seeking in itself, “even without finding, is felicity in itself”.⁴¹ Again, this is exemplarily demonstrated by the life of the Therapeutae:

They read the Holy Scriptures and apply themselves to their ancestral philosophy by means of allegory, since they believe that the words of the literal texts are symbols of a hidden nature, revealed through its underlying meanings. They have also writing of men of old, who were the founders of their sect and left behind many tutorials of the type of treatment employed in allegory, and taking these as a sort of archetype they imitate the method of this principle of interpretation. And so they not only apply themselves to contemplation, but also compose chants and hymns to God in all kinds of

³⁷ D.T. Runia, “Redrawing the Map of Platonism: Some Comments on the Philonic Evidence”, in A. Caquot/M. Hadas-Lebel/J. Riaud (ed.), *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky* (Paris: Peeters, 1986) 85–104, at 99.

³⁸ Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting*, 159.

³⁹ See, e.g., Philo, *Opif.* 72; *Cher.* 55; *Decal.* 18; with Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'Écriture*, 190–1.

⁴⁰ C. Lévy, “De l'époque sceptique à l'époque transcendantale: Philon d'Alexandrie fondateur du fidéisme”, in A. I. Bouton-Touboulic/C. Lévy (ed.), *Scepticisme et religion: Constantes et évolutions de la philosophie hellénistique à la philosophie médiévale*, (Monothéismes et Philosophie 21; Turnhout: Brepols 2016) 57–73, at 72.

⁴¹ Philo, *Spec.* 1.36, 39–40 (PLCL): “As for the divine essence, though in fact it is hard to track and hard to apprehend, it still calls for all the inquiry possible. For nothing is better than the search for the true God, even if the discovery of Him eludes human capacity, since the very wish to learn, if earnestly entertained, produces untold joys and pleasures. So then just as, though we do not know and cannot with certainty determine what each of the stars is in the purity of its essence, we eagerly persist in the search because our natural love of learning makes us delight in what seems probable, so too, though the clear vision of God as he really is denied us, we ought not relinquish the quest. For the very seeking, even without finding, is felicity in itself.”

meters and melodies, which they perform indite in rather solemn rhythms” (*Contempl.* 28–29; trans. Winston; see also *Contempl.* 75–78).⁴²

III. Provisional Conclusions

Over the years, some scholars, for instance Walther Völker, have denied that Philo’s idea of happiness, and therefore contemplation, is of Greek origin: “Thus in the end *eudaimonia* flows together with immortality, and it is identical with standing steadfast, with joy, with peace, with repose. These are merely descriptions for the attitude of the pious person, who dedicates himself fully to God. This has nothing to do with the Greek conception of *eudaimonia*.”⁴³ As a matter of fact, in spite of the undeniable importance of the scriptural tradition, Philo’s views are not different from the Hellenistic and Platonist accounts.⁴⁴ They somehow reflect the same exigencies and goals; but they also stand out for the originality of some of the solutions. The importance of the exegetical practice was one of the most distinctive features of almost all the most important philosophical schools of the time. The common and shared assumption was that exegesis was so important because truth was hidden in the words of the past masters. Within this context, Philo could therefore exploit with great success the role of Moses as mediator of the divine truth, much more than Platonists and Peripatetics could do with Plato or Aristotle. There is also a second point which is worth noticing. Unlike the majority of contemporary philosophers, Philo never pretends to be able – or that it was even possible – to organize the results of the exegetical investigation into a perfect system.⁴⁵ This was the philosophers’ ambition and their limit, if one considers their unending debates on what system was

⁴² See Runia, “Reward for Goodness”, 16: “The Therapeutae are called ‘citizens of heaven and the cosmos’. At dawn they greet the rising sun and pray for a day full of light (§89, cf. §27). But this is meant symbolically. What they actually contemplate – during the week in their monastic cells (§25), on the Shabbat in their general assembly (§30–33), and as fixed parts of their Pentecostal feast (§§75–79) – are the text and doctrines of the Jewish Scriptures, together with ancient expository writings which included allegorical interpretation (§29). Contemplation of this kind is a concrete expression of their piety and reinforces the goodness which gains them the friendship of God as reward and prize.” On the Therapeutae, see F. Calabi, *God’s Acting, Man’s Acting*, 171–81 with further bibliography.

⁴³ W. Völker, *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandrien: eine Studie zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit* (TUGAL 49; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1938) 344–5 (I use Runia’s translation).

⁴⁴ Needless to say, this does not imply that Philo has to be understood as simply belonging to the world of Greek philosophical debates. For a proper understanding of his thought, as well as his relation to the Jewish tradition, needs to be taken into account; see, e.g., Runia, “Eudaimonism”, 147–57, to whose remarks I fully subscribe.

⁴⁵ See Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l’Écriture*, 183–92, on this important point.

more perfect with all what follows for the problem of truth.⁴⁶ Philo, like his Therapeutae, found a more brilliant and viable solution by celebrating the power of researching more than finding. As he reveals when talking *in propria persona*, it was a life worth pursuing:

I feel no shame in describing my own experience, a thing I know from its having occurred numberless times. On occasion, after deciding to follow the standard procedure of writing on philosophical doctrines and knowing precisely the elements of my composition, I have found my understanding sterile and barren and have abandoned my project without results. [...] At other times I have come empty and have suddenly become full, the ideas descending like snow, so that under the impact of divine possession I had been filled with Corybantic frenzy and become ignorant of everything, place, people present, ideas, and enjoyment of light, sharp-sighted vision, exceedingly distinct clarity of objects, such as might occur through the eyes as the result of the clearest display. (*Migr.* 34–35)⁴⁷

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⁴⁶ See for instance Cicero, *Fin.* 3.74; Albinus, *Eis.* 149.13–14; Attic. Frag. 1 des Places with P. Donini, “Testi e commenti, manuali e insegnamento: la forma sistematica e i metodi della filosofia in età postellenistica”, in *ANRW* 2.36.7 (1994) 5027–100, esp. 5027–35.

⁴⁷ On this treatise, see M.R. Niehoff/R. Feldmeier (ed.), *Abrahams Aufbruch: Philon von Alexandria, De migratione Abrahami* (SAPER 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 12–13.

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What's in A Name Change? Neo-Pythagorean Arithmology and Middle-Platonic Namewrights in Philo's Orchard of Philosophy*

Michael B. Cover

In his 1988 flagship study of Hebrew names in the *corpus Philonicum*, Lester Grabbe famously commented that the Alexandrian's etymologies do not form “part of a larger theory of language, as among the Stoics”¹ and that “the Greek speculation on the origin and appropriateness of language – which <Philo> apparently was aware of – plays no productive part in his use of etymology”.² Three years later, in a volume of *The Studia Philonica Annual* dedicated to Earl Hilgert, David Winston offered a response, beginning with this very citation and framed as a kind of “nuancing and qualification” of Grabbe's view.³ In making his case for the presence of a coherent philosophy of language in undergirding Philo's writings, Winston had as an ally John Dillon, who in a short article published a decade before Grabbe's study in the *Liverpool Classical Monthly*, argued many of the same points.⁴ While admitting that Grabbe had rightly recognized certain departures from Stoic tradition in Philo's account of language,⁵ Winston sought to show that such differences were not evidence of Philo's jettisoning of philosophical discourse on language, but rather his reconfiguration of that discourse in light of his Jewish religion.

For example, Winston understood Philo's comments about Adam as the original name-giver in *Leg.* 2.15 not primarily as a polemic against the Stoic position on

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¹ L. Grabbe, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation: The Hebrew Names in Philo* (BJS 115; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 44 n. 1. Grabbe's study remains an indispensable tool for anyone interested in the Hebrew names in Philo.

² Grabbe, *Etymology*, 19.

³ D. Winston, “Aspects of Philo's Linguistic Theory”, [FS Earle Hilgert] *SPhiloA* 3 (1991) 109–25, at 109.

⁴ J. Dillon, “Philo Judaeus and the *Cratylus*”, *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 3 (1978) 37–42.

⁵ E.g., Philo, *Opif.* 127; *Cher.* 53–56; *Agr.* 1–2. Winston, “Aspects of Philo's Linguistic Theory”, 115.

language, which asserted an original multiplicity of wise name-givers,⁶ but as a Pythagorean-Platonist adaptation of the Stoic position to combat the Epicurean view,⁷ which held that human language was natural accident.⁸ To shore up this argument, Winston pointed to an important passage in the *Quaestiones in Genesin*, in which Abraham, as the inventor of wells, is also called their name-giver.⁹ By pitting Philo's view of language against that of irrational naturalists, like the Epicureans, Winston works to close the gap between Philo, the Stoics, and the Platonists. He concludes: "It is thus clear that Philo has a general theory of language, one that derives from Greek philosophical speculation but is nonetheless marked by various adaptations made in order to suit it toward the scriptural account."¹⁰

Numerous further studies have followed in the wake of Winston, confirming the overall thrust of his argument – most notably those of David Dawson, Maren Niehoff, Anthony Long, George Boys-Stones, David Runia, Harold Attridge, and most recently, Nadine Treu.¹¹ Despite this broad consensus, there remain a number of unresolved questions about the details of that theory;¹² its consistency between Philo's three commentary series; and the way that Philo might have adjusted his view over time.

⁶ Winston, "Aspects of Philo's Linguistic Theory", 111.

⁷ For a reappraisal of Philo's view of Epicurus and his followers, see the essay by Geert Roskam in the present volume.

⁸ Winston, "Aspects of Philo's Linguistic Theory", 109–11.

⁹ Philo, QG 4.194; cf. also *Opif.* 127.

¹⁰ Winston, "Aspects of Philo's Linguistic Theory", 117.

¹¹ D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); M.R. Niehoff, "What is in a Name? Philo's Mystical Philosophy of Language", *JSQ* 1995 (1995) 220–52; A.A. Long, "Allegory in Philo and Etymology in Stoicism: A Plea for Drawing Distinctions", *SPhiloA* 9 (1997) 198–210; G. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: a Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); D.T. Runia, "Etymology as an Allegorical Technique in Philo of Alexandria", *SPhiloA* 16 (2004) 101–21; H. Attridge, "Stoic and Platonic Reflections on Naming in Early Christian Circles: Or, What's in a Name?", in T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 277–95; N. Treu, *Das Sprachverständnis des Paulus im Rahmen des antiken Sprachdiskurses* (NET 26; Tübingen: Narr Franke Attempto, 2018) 76–178. See also the study of K. Otte, *Das Sprachverständnis bei Philo von Alexandrien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968).

¹² Returning to the works of Dillon and Winston, it is striking that both scholars are wary of pressing Philo too far on certain specifics; thus, Dillon ("Philo Judaeus and the *Cratylus*", 41–2) highlights Philo's comments on the superiority of Latin over Greek with regard to the word for "seven" (*septem* as superior to ἑπτα), but then adds that Philo may simply have borrowed this from Neo-Pythagorean tradition; he further notes that the Alexandrian conveniently "bows out" before explaining how the Greek verb σέβωμαι is more accurate than the Latin *veneror*, despite Latin's superiority and proximity to the *Ursprache* of Adam in other cases. Winston ("Aspects of Philo's Linguistic Theory", 120) for his part, cannot make sense of Philo's occasional Greek etymologies of Hebrew names – considering the theory that Moses intended such double derivations as a bridge too far "even for so ingenious an interpreter as Philo".

The present essay focuses on how Philo imagines the power or significance of a “thing” or “reality” (πραγμα) inherent in the scriptural “name” (ὄνομα). This question is one that Philo confronts on numerous occasions, especially in trying to explain and defend Moses’s narration of patriarchal and matriarchal name-changes in the Pentateuch. That God himself, the author of the realities, rather than a mere human being should be said to change the names of various protagonists – Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah – was a scriptural detail that required some explanation. This was all the more necessary for Jewish scholars working from the Septuagint, where God’s identical addition of the divine consonant “h” – the only letter doubled in the Tetragrammaton – to both names “Abram” and “Sara” in the Hebrew original had been obscured and replaced by the less-clearly theophanic addition of an “a” to Abram and a “p” to Sara.

Both the inherent interest and the potential complications such Pentateuchal name-changes, from the vantage point of Greek philosophy and literary criticism, can be illustrated from the discussion of language and its semiotic power in Plato’s *Cratylus*. On the one hand, Socrates expresses at least a mock interest in the difference, evoked in Homer, between divine and human language. “Do you not think it is a venerable (σέμνον) thing to know”, he asks Hermogenes, “in what way <Homer> holds that the name of the river is rightly (ὀρθως) ‘Xanthus’ – <the gods’ name for it> – rather than ‘Scamander,’ <which is what humans call it>?”¹³ From this vantage point, Moses’s narration of God’s changing names would seem, *a priori*, to provide a natural trigger for interpretation.

On the other hand, Socrates seems more earnest when he remarks a little later in the *Cratylus* that it really makes no difference how many syllables are used in a name. Thus, when “η”, “τ”, and “α” are added to the consonant “β” to make the name of the letter, the letter itself signified is in no way “harmed” by the addition of three extra characters.¹⁴ Similarly in the case of proper names for people and places:

Thus, perhaps the person who knows about names considers their power (τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν) and is not confused if some letter is added (πρόσκειται), transposed (μετάκειται), or subtracted (ἀφίηται), or even if the force of the name (ἡ τοῦ ὀνόματος δύναμις) is expressed in entirely different letters. For instance, in the names we were just discussing, Astyanax and Hector, none of the letters is the same except tau, but nevertheless, they signify the same <person> (ταυτόν σημαίνει).¹⁵

Given this Socratic ambivalence about the importance of names and the addition or subtraction of letters, it is little wonder that Philo’s attempt to derive significance

¹³ Plato, *Crat.* 392a.

¹⁴ Plato, *Crat.* 393e.

¹⁵ Plato, *Crat.* 394b.

out of the gift of single letters in the Pentateuch met with its share of mockery and derision from some of his philosophical colleagues. On more than one occasion, Philo recounts the scoffing of such “quarrelsome” exegetes, who take passages like Gen 17 as occasions to laugh not only at God, but also at Moses, who recorded such details. Philo’s remarks in the central fifth chapter of his allegorical treatise, *De mutatione nominum* (§§60–61), will illustrate the phenomenon:

(§60) For it is said that “Your name shall not be called Abram (Ἀβράμ), but your name will be Abraham (Ἀβραάμ)” (Gen 17:5). Now, some of quarrelsome, who always wish to attach blame to the blameless – not so much to the material things (σώμασι), as to the realities (πράγμασι) they represent – and who wage a truceless war against the saints, present for slander everything that seems unfit to be preserved in Scripture, (although these are symbols of Nature, who always loves to hide herself),¹⁶ disparaging them with “scrupulous” investigation. <They do this> with special vigor in the case of changes of names. (§61) Why, just recently I heard a godless and impious man, who scoffed and railed thus: “Great indeed and superabundant are the gifts that Moses says the Leader of the Universe extends. For <in Abram’s case>, by the addition of a letter, of the one alpha, [<God> causes him to abound by a letter]; and again, with another appendage of a rho, he thought that a marvelously great benefaction had been furnished ... insofar as he <re>named Abram’s wife Sara (Σάρα) Sarah (Σάρρα), doubling the rho.” And thus he went through many similar examples, stringing them together breathlessly and sneering.

Parallel descriptions of Philo’s antagonists can be found in QG 3.43 and QG 3.53. It seems that the critique had some staying power.

It is all the more intriguing, then, when one comes to study Philo’s defense of Moses in these passages, that the Alexandrian accents his argument using different philosophies of language.¹⁷ In the *Quaestiones in Genesis*, Philo seems to accept the scoffer’s claim, defending the gift of a letter as indeed, a great gift. In the Allegorical Commentary, by contrast, the series to which *De mutatione nominum* belongs, Philo gives up defending the letter, and in fact baldly states the opposite: that God’s gift is not the letter *per se*, but rather a change wrought in the soul. Philo’s argumentation, in other words, shifts between a defense of the “power” (αἰσθητικῆς) of the letter alpha in QG 3.43 to “the power” (δύναμις) in the soul according to *Mut.* 64. A synoptic outline of the topics in each passage will facilitate further discussion:

¹⁶ Heraclitus, D-K fr. 123.

¹⁷ This alternation in argumentative tack may result in part from Philo’s anthological mixture of literal and allegorical solutions common to the *Quaestiones* (see J.R. Roysse, “The Works of Philo” in A. Kamesar [ed.], *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009] 32–64, at 35), over and against his preference for the allegorical *solutio* in the Allegorical Commentary. On the other hand, if there is any historical or autobiographical basis for this criticism in Philo’s literary career, the shift of register in Philo’s answer is worthy of attention.

	Topic	QG 3.43	<i>Mut.</i> 60–76
A	Citation of Primary Lemma	QG 3.43a	§60a
B	Description and Rebuttal of the Certain Scoffers	QG 3.43b	§§60b–62
C1	Praise of the Power of the Letter Alpha (Ayb)	QG 3.43c	Missing
C2	Secondary Lemma (Gen 2:19) and Explication: That Adam, Rather than God, Bestows Names	∅	§§63–65a
D	Symbolic Allegoresis of Name Change: Transformation of the Soul	QG 3.43d	§65b
E	Allegoresis of the Etymologies of Abram and Abraham	QG 3.43e	§§66–71
F	Paraphrase of God's Appeal to the Abram Soul	∅	§§72–73
G1	<i>Peroratio</i> A: Second Rebuttal of the Scoffers, Including a Praise of the Letter Alpha (Ayb)	QG 3.43f	∅
G2	<i>Peroratio</i> B: The Orchard of Philosophy	∅	§§74–76

Table 1: Synopsis of QG 3.43 and *Mut.* 60–76

As the table shows, Philo twice in his *solutio* (sections C1 and G1) in QG 3.43 offers a defense of God's gift of a letter; these proofs are strikingly missing in *De mutatione nominum*, and replaced with the adduction and interpretation of a secondary biblical lemma (Gen 2:19). This does not preclude Philo's inclusion of an allegorical component to his *solutio* in QG 3.43e (E). Does Philo rely on different philosophies of language in these two passages? If there is a shift, can we trace a

development in Philo's use of philosophical discourse? Or are these simply two species of the same tradition, written for different commentary series and different rhetorical contexts? To answer these questions, it will be necessary to consider Q.G. 3.43 and *Mut.* 60–64 in closer detail.

I. The Power of the Letter (QG 3.43): Neo-Pythagorean Arithmology

I take first Philo's defense of God's change of the name "Abram" to "Abraham" in Gen 17:5 in QG 3.43. Here, we find a description of those who mock God and Moses, similar to that found in *Mut.* 60–62. It is followed, as in *Mut.* 65, by a symbolic allegoresis of names' etymologies: the Abram soul – symbol of the mind engaged in astronomy – becomes the Abraham soul – symbol of the mind which scrutinizes the divine image within itself and then, when it reaches the zenith of perfection, contemplates the One Who Is.

Between these two moments, however, in Philo's narration of the soul's journey toward perfection, and without parallel in *De mutatione nominum*, we find a most remarkable passage, in which Philo takes a moment to praise the Greek letter alpha – section C1 on the first table. Because of the difficulty and importance of this passage, I present it here in synoptic columns, in both its Armenian recension and my reworking of Marcus's English translation:

<p>¹ բայց սակայն եւ զպատրաստս զայս եւ զան ի ձեռն <զտասն>¹⁸, զոր սասացէ որ զիր շնորհել, զնախախնամութիւն ընդէր ոչ կարծէք, եւ զնա զոլ պատուական:</p>	<p>¹ But nevertheless, this <element> that is both ready and at hand, which someone <viz. Moses> says was given in writing¹⁹ – why do you not consider it to be <the work of> providence and worthy of praise?</p>
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¹⁸ Marcus (PLCLSup) supplies, in his English translation, the plural accusative noun <զսնուսնս> ("names"). However, unlike *Mut.* 60–62, in QG 3.43 Philo is not discussing the name changes of both Abram and Sarai, but only the former. Likewise, were the implied object here to be a plural, we might have expected the plural demonstrative *զայսս or զայսսիկ rather than the singular զայս. One could then supply the singular "name" (with near demonstrative) զսնուսն. It seems, however, that it is not the "name" but the "letter" or "element" which is being spoken of. Thus, taking a cue from Aucher ("*litteram* concessam"), I have supplied instead the singular (with near demonstrative) զսսսս, which according to the NBHL renders the Greek word *στοιχείον*. As an *exempli gratia* retroversion, I might supply *ἀλλ' ὅμως καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἐπιμον καὶ πρόχειρον <στοιχείον>* (reading the demonstrative suffix on *սսսսսսս* as a definite article in the *Vorlage*). I am grateful to Folker Siegert for discussing the Armenian of this passage with me at length. Abraham Terian also read the entire essay and made valuable comments on the translation. Any lingering mistakes are entirely my own.

¹⁹ "In writing"; or "<as> a letter" (զիր). The infinitive շնորհել might also be translated actively "<God> gave". Only in post-classical Armenian does the passive infinitival ending -ի emerge to distinguish the two voices.

² զի նախ առաջին տառ գրաւորական ձայնի է Այբն եւ կարգիւ եւ զաւրութեամբ:

³ եւ երկրորդ, զի եւ ձայնաւոր եւ ձայնաւորացն առաջին, իբրու գլխոյ իմն յարմարելոյ:

⁴ եւ երրորդ, զի ոչ է բուն ի յերկայնիցն, եւ ի բուն նուաղացն, այլ յայնցանէ յորս երկրորդն այտրիկ կան.

⁵ քանզի ձկտի յերկար, եւ դարձեալ անդրէն առ նոյն նուաղ ամփոփեալ լինի վասն դիւրութեանն զաւրէն մոմոյ ձեւանալով ի բազում իրս, եւ ձեւելով զբանն ըստ զանազան եւ բազմապատիկ տեսեանցն:

⁶ եւ պատճառ է, զի եղբայր է միակին յորմէ սկսանին եւ յոր վախճանի ամենայն ինչ.

⁷ եւ սպա զայսչափ գեղեցկութիւն, եւ այսպէս հարկաւոր ի դուրս բերեալ գտառն տեսեալ ոք, եւ կամ ոչ տեսեալ, բաղբաղէ՞:

² For first, the primary character of written sound, both in order and in power, is the alpha (ayb).

³ Second, <the letter is praiseworthy> because it is a vowel and the first of the vowels, fitted <to the others> as a kind of head.

⁴ Third, <the letter is praiseworthy> because it is not, at root, <one> of the long <vowels> nor, at root, <one> of the short <vowels>, but <one> of those in which both of these <quantities> exist.

⁵ For it is <first> extended long, and then it is contracted back again to its previous shortness, in virtue of its easy pliability, like wax, by being shaped into many forms and shaping the word according to diverse and manifold appearances.

⁶ This is the reason that <the alpha> is the brother of the number one,²⁰ from which everything begins and to which everything returns at the end.

⁷ And now, <if> someone has seen how great the beauty of this letter is, and that it has been demonstrated to be necessary, does he then pretend <as though> he has not seen <these things>?

There is much that could be said about this fascinating passage. Philo musters three distinct arguments for the praiseworthy nature of God's gift of an alpha. Firstly, alpha is the first letter in the alphabet. Secondly, it is the first vowel among vowels. Thirdly, it is a vowel capable of modulating its length (unlike epsilon, eta, omicron, or omega), neither simply long nor simply short. In human speech and pedagogy, it is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega – or to coin a merism appropriate to Philo's Platonizing eschatology, in which all things return to their starting point: “the alpha and the alpha”. Philo sees in these three features a kind of alphabetical primacy of both *τάξις* and *δύναμις*. In contrast to Plato's ambivalent attitude toward letters – insisting instead on the power of the name – Philo in the QG focuses on the power of the letter.

In searching for a philosophical background for this emphasis on the letter, one naturally reaches first to the linguistic theory of the Stoics, with their interest in

²⁰ Or, “the Monad”.

etymologies – as witnessed *inter alia* by Cornutus’s *Epidrome*²¹ – as well as their theories of euphonism. Stoic euphonists suggested that sounds, both speech and music, had an ethical impact on the soul. Unlike the Epicureans, who inveighed against such theories, Stoic euphonists held that all human sounds, including the basic building blocks of speech (first letters, then syllables), were inherently bodies and thus capable of influencing and swaying the moral life.²² In the *στοιχεῖα* of human speech one could behold the *στοιχεῖα* of the universe in microcosm.²³ Richard Janko, in his study of the Philodemus’s *On Poetry*, sees Philo espousing euphonist philosophical principles in his descriptions of grammar in the Allegorical Commentary – in *Congr.* 150 as well as *Somn.* 1.28–29. He thus concludes that “Crates was not the first Stoic euphonist”, with the tacit implication: Philo of Alexandria was.²⁴

In addition to Philo’s obvious engagement with Stoic euphonism in C1, there are also clues in this passage that Philo knows another tradition, which understood the change of Abram’s name and the gift of the alpha in terms of arithmological speculation about the values of letters, perhaps drawn from his acquaintance with Neo-Pythagorean writings. Such a tradition is hinted at in Philo’s remarkable phrase: <Այբն> եղբայր է միսակին: “The ayb [viz the alpha] is the brother of the number one, from which everything begins and to which everything returns at the end.”²⁵ This description readily fits the generative power attributed to the number one by Neo-Pythagorean authors, for whom the numbers become forms or causes.

Philo’s linkage of the alpha with the numerical value one raises the intriguing possibility that Philo knows an arithmological interpretation of the change of Abram’s name to Abraham, which plays on the similar Jewish practice of assigning numerical values to names. Philo himself offers such an arithmological interpretation of the Greek letters in the word *ἔν* in an Armenian fragment of his work *De numeris* – a text showing Neo-Pythagorean influence. Using the standard Greek alpha-numerical equivalents, Philo first calculates the standard value of the word *ἔν* (55) and then notes that this is also the value of the sum of the integers in a series from 1 to 10.²⁶

Approaching the problem of scriptural name change from this arithmological angle, if the gift of the letter alpha, according to *QG* 3.43, represents the addition of the

²¹ On this text, see G. Boys-Stones, *L. Annaeus Cornutus: Greek Theology, Fragments, and Testimonia* (WGRW 42; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2019); and H.-G. Nesselrath (ed.), *Die Griechischen Götter: ein Überblick über Namen, Bilder und Deutungen* (SAPER 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

²² R. Janko, *Philodemus: On Poems* (4 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000–2011) 1:178–9.

²³ Janko, *Philodemus*, 1:185.

²⁴ Janko, *Philodemus*, 1:179 n. 3.

²⁵ Philo (Marcus, PLCLSup 1), 235 n. b: “Alpha as a numeral letter = 1.”

²⁶ A. Terian, “A Philonic Fragment on the Decad”, in F.E. Greenspahn et al. (ed.), *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984) 173–82.

number one, can calculating the original value of Abram's name supply the second part of a symbolic equation? This procedure does not produce an immediately meaningful result. Adding up the standard numerical significances of the Greek names Ἀβράμ and Ἀβραάμ, one arrives at the numbers 144 and 145, respectively. It is hard, at least initially, to see how moving from a perfect square to a less easily divisible number might function as a symbol of patriarchal perfection.

There is, however, another way of reckoning the numerical values of Abraham's names, which warrants consideration: calculating the numerical value of the letters in Ἀβράμ and Ἀβραάμ not according to their absolute numerical value, but according to what modern mathematicians call their mod(ulus) 9 values. This practice is known in both pagan and Jewish arithmology in antiquity. It is known, to take a later example, in Hebrew gematria under the heading *mispar qatan*.

Put mathematically: the mod 9 value of any number is its remainder after being divided by nine. This modulus is specially designed for calculations using the decimal system admired by Pythagoras, Plato, and Philo. Put more simply – and perhaps this was the way later Jewish authors most frequently deployed it – the “small” value of a character string (or a name, read as a number) can be determined by treating each letter's arithmological equivalent individually and adding them together. Thus, the mod 9 value of 10 is 1 (1 + 0); the mod 9 value of 20 is 2 (2 + 0); the mod 9 value of 31 is 4 (3 + 1); and so on.

A good illustration of this way of reckoning the numerical value of names – albeit drawn from a later Jewish source – can be found in the 17th century ethical work by Rabbi Isaiah ben Abraham Horowitz, *Sheney Luhot ha-Berit* (or *The Two Tablets of the Covenant*), which aimed to harmonize earlier rabbinic legal tradition with Jewish mystical lore. In a very intriguing arithmological passage, Horowitz notes the numerical significance of the names of God and Israel, according to *mispar qatan*:

Elohay equals 10, according to *mispar qatan*. Similarly, *Yisrael* equals 10, in *mispar qatan*. And the *Shekinah* does not rest on fewer than ten Israelites. And all involves the secret of the *yod* (ten).²⁷

Here, we find an admittedly later but still illuminating example of a Jewish arithmological tradition, in which the altered name of a patriarch Jacob is understood to symbolize 10, the number of mystical perfection (related to *yod*, the first letter of the Tetragrammaton) as well as the number of men required in a *minyan* according to the Talmud Bavli (b. Sanh. 39b). I have set out the arithmological values of the respective Hebrew letters in Table 2, according to *mispar qatan*:

²⁷ I. Horowitz, *The Generations of Adam* (trans. Miles Krassen; CWS 85; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1996) 160.

Hebrew Letter	Value (mod 9)
י	1(0)
ש	3(00)
ך	2(00)
א	1
ל	3(0)
Total Value	10

Table 2: Numerical Value of ישראל according to *Mispar Qatan*

As the table shows, adding the mod 9 values of these five Hebrew letters yields a sum of ten – the absolute value of the *yod* and the number of the *minyān*. The use of a precursor to mod 9 calculation is known outside of these later Jewish texts. According to Thomas Heath, in his chapter on “Pythagorean Arithmetic”, the use of a calculation approximating mod 9 dates at least as early as Hippolytus and Pseudo-Iamblichus’s commentary on Nicomachus of Gerasa.²⁸ It is important that Abraham Terian links just this commentary (along with a third century CE arithmological fragment of Anatolius) with the Armenian fragment of Philo which he traces to *De numeris*.²⁹ How might this system work when applied to the names Abram and Abraham? Table 3 sets out the data:

Greek Letter	Value (mod 9)	Greek Letter	Value (mod 9)
α	1	α	1
β	2	β	2
ρ	1(00)	ρ	1(00)
α	1	α	1
μ	4(0)	α	1
		μ	4(0)
Total Value	9	Total Value	10

Table 3: Mod 9 Values of Ἀβράμ and Ἀβραάμ

The mod 9 values for the names Ἀβράμ and Ἀβραάμ are 9 and 10, respectively. Here, Philo’s insistence in QG 3.43 on the real value of the “gift” of the alpha – “the brother of the number one” – comes into clearer focus. By changing the name “Abram” to “Abraham” by the addition of a single alpha, God mathematically brings the value of the patriarch’s name to 10 – the Neo-Pythagorean number of perfection, and in Philo’s allegoresis, a symbol of Abraham’s ethical completion. Something

²⁸ T.L. Heath, *A History of Greek Mathematics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921) 114–15.

²⁹ Terian, “A Philonic Fragment on the Decad”, 177–8.

similar is signified elsewhere in Philonic Abrahamitic tradition by the patriarch's advancing one year from 99 to 100, at which year his soul gives birth to Isaac – joy, the best of the good emotions.³⁰

Returning to the absolute values of Abram and Abraham in Greek, 144 and 145, we also find that the above theory helps make sense of things. Following the more general practice of Pythagorean mathematicians, one notes that the sum of the individual digits in 144 is 9, and the sum of the individual digits in 145 is 10.³¹ Similarly, although neither Philo nor Anatolius articulates this calculation in the *De numeris* fragment in precisely this way,³² the secondary “synthesis” of the two digits in primary sum of ἕν [55], 5 + 5, is 10.³³ It seems likely that some version of a tradition linking the change of the name Abram to Abraham with the transformation of the number 9 to the number 10 underlies Philo's statement that the alpha, as brother of the number one, is a real and substantial gift.

It is worth noting, in closing this section, that such an arithmological schema works only in Greek: while the *mispar qatan* value of אברם is 9,³⁴ the value of the Hebrew letters אברהם comes to 14,³⁵ on account of God's giving Abram not an *aleph* but a *he*. In QG 3.43, we have what appears to be an exclusively Hellenophone Jewish tradition of ψήφισμα ἐν γράμμασιν,³⁶ which attempted to make sense of God's gift of a letter to Abram in the LXX by way of arithmological exegesis, once the original Hebrew symbolism had been lost in translation.

³⁰ See Philo, *Mut.* 1–2; cf. *Congr.* 81–120, esp. 91–106, for further scriptural speculation on the significance of the number 10.

³¹ Alternatively, one can reckon the mod 9 values of each part of the number: 1(00) + 4(0) + 4 = 9; 1(00) + 4(0) + 5 = 10.

³² It is worth noting that Armenian translator of *De numeris* uses a different noun for the word “sum” in three instances prior to the one at hand. Thus, in frag. *Num.* 1, 5, and 12, Terian's word “sum” renders the Armenian word շարադրութիւն, but in frag. *Num.* 20, discussing the arithmological value of ἕν, “sum” renders the near synonym բազմադրութիւն. The latter has a wider range of equivalents in Greek, including *συνθήκη* and *σύνδεσμος*. One wonders: is a different kind of “sum” indicated in the original Greek? More likely, both Armenian words are translations of the same Greek word *σύνθεσις*, as the NBHL and the parallel Anatolius fragment (though *not* the *Vorlage* of the Armenian, as Terian demonstrates) suggest. Cf. the Armenian text and the Anatolius fragment in Terian, “A Philonic Fragment on the Decad”, 173–4, 178.

³³ For the use of calculation by this kind of double sum in Ps.-Iamblicus, see Heath, *History of Greek Mathematics*, 115. He gives the example of a: 10 + 11 + 12 = 33; b: 3 + 3 = 6.

³⁴ 1 + 2 + 2(00) + 4(0).

³⁵ 1+2+2(00) + 5 + 4(0).

³⁶ See Anatolius 40.7–8, cited by Terian, “A Philonic Fragment on the Decad”, 178, for the phrase: ἐὰν ψήφισις τὸ ἕν ἐν γράμμασιν. I use it as shorthand for whatever kind of arithmology Philo practices in frag. *Num.* 20 and QG 3.43.

II. A Power in the Soul (*Mut.* 60–71): Middle-Platonic Namewrights and the *Deus Absconditus*

In section C1 of this tradition unit (QG 3.43), Philo defends God’s gift of the letter alpha on two philosophical grounds: that of Stoic euphonism and Neo-Pythagorean arithmology. Philo’s parallel rebuttal of the quarrelsome exegetes’ accusations against Moses in *Mut.* 63–65a – section C2 in the outline above, which stands in the place of section C1 in QG 3.43 – takes a noticeably different tack:

(§63) God, after all, does *not* bestow letters <upon his creatures>, whether consonants or vowels or names and appellations in their entirety. After he had created plants and then again animals, he called to the human being as to a leader, whom he had distinguished from all the other creatures by his knowledge, so that he might set the appropriate names upon each. For <Moses> says, “And whatever Adam called it, this was the name of the creature thus called” (Gen 2:19) (§64) So then, if at this point, God did not think it worthy <of his nature> to assign to himself the placement of names in their entirety, but turned this work over to a wise man, the founder of the human race, ought we suppose that <later> he himself appended or retrofitted portions of names, whether syllables or letters – and not vowels alone, but also consonants! – <and that he did these things> with the pretense of <giving> a gift or superabundant benefaction? (§65) It is not right to say this. (οὐκ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν). Rather, these sorts of <changes> are markers (χαρακτῆρες δυνάμεων) of capacities, small <indicators> of great <gifts>, perceptible <figures> of noetic <realities>, clear <tokens> of hidden <truths>. And these powers are discovered in the best doctrines, in guileless and pure conceptions, in improvements of the soul.

The gift, in other words, according to Philo of Gen 17:5 is not the letter itself, but the reality or the power that it signifies beyond the letter.³⁷ Here, Philo offers a vision quite compatible with Plato’s understanding in *Cratyl.* 394b,³⁸ wherein the power or reality behind the name is more important than the letters used to signify it (viz. Hector or Astyanax). Indeed, so different are Philo’s views in these two passages, that Ralph Marcus, commenting on the parallel locus in QG 3.43, opines:

we may well suspect either that the Greek *Vorlage* was corrupt or that the Armenian translator has misunderstood it. In the parallel, *De Mut. Nom.* 64, Philo says that it is impossible to suppose that God took credit for altering Abram’s name, since “He did

³⁷ Philo, *Mut.* 62–65 is given a short treatment in Runia, “Etymology as an Allegorical Technique”, 106–7.

³⁸ So also Runia, “Etymology as an Allegorical Technique”, 105.

not see fit to assign names even in their completed forms, but committed the task to a wise man (Adam)".³⁹

While Marcus rightly notes the tension between these two passages, his supposition that the Armenian text or its *Vorlage* is corrupt misses the deeper argumentative differences between the two passages, demonstrated in table one. Philo has not merely said something different about the Abram's change of name; he has likewise offered a completely different set of proofs from the philosophy of language to defend Moses's text. To demonstrate the philosophical differences between these two passages, further consideration of section C2, *Mut* 63–65a, is needed.

From the formal perspective, I would note first that Philo replaces his praise of the letter alpha in *QG* 3.43 with the adduction of a secondary biblical lemma. This is not, strictly speaking, simply a function of the genre of the Allegorical Commentary. As David Runia has shown, Philo does – albeit with less frequency – adduce secondary lemmas in the *Quaestiones* as well.⁴⁰ The adduction of *Gen* 2:19 in *Mut*. 63 marks an alternative strategy for defending *Gen* 17:5 from the quarrelsome exegetes. Rather than trying to make sense of the Abrahamic lemma on its own, Philo points away from the problematic verse toward one which is more central to his understanding of language. *Gen* 2:19 says that Adam was in charge of giving names; he was the first name-maker. Arguing *a minori ad maius*, Philo counters that if God thought it below his dignity to give entire names, surely he does not now decide to give single letters. The change of name is only the symbol of the gift (a symbol, as we will see, wrought by Moses), but not the gift itself. It points to a new power in the human soul.

Philo accomplishes several things by this change of argumentative tack. In the first place, Philo makes a methodological intervention by deploying a common Alexandrian critical technique, used by both Platonists and Alexandrian scholiasts: the clarification of an author through recourse to his own work – the oft-quoted interpretation of Homer by Homer,⁴¹ Moses by Moses. *Gen* 2:19 provides the key to unlocking the seemingly problematic *Gen* 17:5.⁴² Second, although making this

³⁹ Marcus, *PLCLSup* 1:234 n. j.

⁴⁰ D.T. Runia, "Secondary Texts in Philo's *Quaestiones*", in D.M. Hay (ed.), *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria's Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* (BJS 232; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 47–79.

⁴¹ See M.R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 11.

⁴² Runia ("Etymology as an Allegorical Technique", 106–7), following Grabbe, remains pessimistic about recovering the nuances of Philo's views on the origin of human language: "As far as I know ... Philo nowhere gives a theoretical explanation of the nature of the Hebrew proper names used in the LXX and how they might relate to any original Adamic language Contrary to many interpreters I do not think it is very profitable to speculate on Philo's views on the origin of the names in Scripture." My view here, following Winston, takes

exegetical move, Philo is careful not entirely to jettison the Stoic philosophy of language; his interest in etymologies is too strong. Rather, he shifts the emphasis from Stoic euphonism to the shared Platonist and Stoic interest in linguistic primitivism – the idea that language was invented by an initial sage or group of sages, who had some greater proximity to the truth than later generations. Both Dillon and Winston recognize Adamic primitivism as a fundamental aspect of Philo’s philosophy of language, present in all three of his commentary series.⁴³

Philo’s point is obviously not that Adam is responsible for patriarchal name changes. Moses and God are also namewrights and lawgivers. Philo’s argument is that if God’s economy of grace is consistent, he will not now himself *merely* change names – the creator imitating the creature’s, i.e., Adam’s, role. God will also bestow (in the same breath) a noetic and invisible gift or power, of which the added letter is the symbol. The power and the symbol are in some way distinct. This is completely in keeping with Plato’s understanding of the power of names in *Cratyl.* 394b.

While asserting the “divine convention” behind names, Philo simultaneously guards against the view that names are completely arbitrary, disconnected symbols. He has not suddenly become an Epicurean or a Hermogenean conventionalist. Philo would no doubt defend what Socrates says in *Cratyl.* 388e–389a: that using names rightly is a skill, practiced well only by the craftsman who has acquired it:

It does not belong to just any man, Hermogenes, to give a name, but to a certain “onomaturge” (ὀνοματουργός). This one is, as I think, the lawgiver (ὁ νομοθέτης),⁴⁴ indeed, the rarest of craftsmen among mortals.

Philo would agree that there are better and worse names – insofar as they point more or less clearly to the idea or the reality of the thing signified. But this connection depends not merely on an innate power in the letters, or even on the namewright’s skill, but also on the hearer’s ability to look from the sign to its signified. To understand the meaning of Scripture, Philo argues, it is not enough to understand how language works on a general level. One must become a pupil of the primary Lawgiver and “Onomaturge”, God, and his chief revelatory regent on the human plane, Moses. By reading Gen 17:5 in isolation, the quarrelsome exegete demonstrates his unwillingness to take the inspiration and sagacity of Moses seriously. He runs “breathlessly”, ἀπνευστί – in a “spiritless” and uninspired manner – from problem to

a more optimistic line, hoping to recover and reconstruct whatever we can from the admittedly fragmentary and disjointed data.

⁴³ See the studies cited in nn. 3 and 4 above.

⁴⁴ In identifying the namewright with the lawgiver, Plato clearly engages in paronomasia as well as political philosophy. The first three syllables of the arthrous form of “lawgiver” (ὁ νομοθ-) sounds suspiciously like the first three syllables of “onomaturge” (ὀνοματ-).

problem in the text, without searching for ways in which the lawgiver may clarify his own intention. To the contrary, by reading of Gen 17:5 in light of Gen 2:19 and interpreting Moses by Moses, Philo shows the reader how to attend more fully to the compositional habits of this “rare demiurge” and how better to understand his onomaturgic meanings.

In this sense, Grabbe was right to point out the special place that Moses’s writings hold within Philo’s hermeneutics, particularly in the Allegorical Commentary.⁴⁵ This does not, as mentioned above, require abandoning all Stoic philosophy of language. Philo still maintains a Stoicizing version of Adamic natural name-giving. In tandem with this, Philo presumes that Moses was inspired and that any name-change presented by Moses cannot fail to have significance. In a similar fashion, contemporary Alexandrian Platonists like Eudorus and the author of the *Anonymous Theaetetus Commentary*, like their later Neo-Platonist successors, would take the inspiration of Plato as a dogma, clarify the doctrines of the *Theaetetus* by way of the *Meno*, and search the “deep meanings” of Plato’s narrative prologues. As Philo argues in *Mut.* 63–65a, the truth and the power of language, and particularly of divine name-changes, reside not in the letter, but in the mind of the author, the namewright and lawgiver, who also has the power to make them effective signs.⁴⁶

How are these two aspects of Philo’s philosophy of language in the Allegorical Commentary, Adamic primitivism and Mosaic inspiration, held together in this passage from *De mutatione nominum*? We find a clue in remembering that Philo frames his interpretation in this section through the citation in *Mut.* 60 of what I would call a “secondary classical lemma” – in this instance, a maxim of the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus.⁴⁷ To buttress his argument that the quarrelsome exegetes need to go beyond the single verse and search the writings of Moses more broadly, Philo cites Heraclitus’s saying that “nature loves to hide herself”.⁴⁸ He hints at an idea that Origen will later make explicit: that the scriptures contain intentional difficulties, to cause the reader to search for God hidden within them.

Far from representing two entirely distinct orders of lawgiving or namemaking, Adam and Moses are for Philo two different kinds of namewright, at work in the same smithy of the Word. Adam depends upon his proximity to an original natural revelation in the forging of accurate names; Moses, by contrast, receives his true account through inspiration. The latter, however, is not dependent solely upon

⁴⁵ Grabbe, *Etymology*, 19.

⁴⁶ This is, in the first instance, Moses, but in a deeper and more fundamental sense, God himself (Philo, *Mut.* 126).

⁴⁷ See Philo, *Mut.* 60.

⁴⁸ Philo, *Mut.* 60: φύσις ἢ ἀεὶ κρύπτεσθαι φιλοῦσα. See Heraclitus, frag. 8 (Marcovitch); D-K frag. 123. For Philo’s use interpretation of Heraclitus, see L. Saudelli, *Eraclito ad Alessandria: studi e ricerche intorno alla testimonianza di Filone* (Monothéismes et philosophie; Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

supernatural *θέσις* or divine command. Rather, the inspired truths of Moses, presented in humble narrative guise, are nothing less than the truths of nature, those earlier perceived in part by Adam but more fully elaborated and wrapped by later lawgiver in concealing linguistic garments. Moses, in other words, has veiled the truths of nature and grace in symbols, in order to reveal that God the creator and savior of humanity is, in his very nature, the God who hides himself in order to reveal himself.

III. Inconsistencies and Itineraries in Philo's Philosophy of Language

Viewing Philo's two defenses of God's change of Abram's name synoptically, one witnesses different and only partially overlapping philosophical rationales. In *QG* 3.43, Philo depends upon Gen 17:5 alone, offering defenses drawn from Stoic euphonism and Neo-Pythagorean arithmology. In *Mut.* 60–71, by contrast, Philo looks far more like a Platonist, drawing deeply on the *Cratylus*, the exegetical methods of Platonist commentators, and on a pre-Socratic maxim of Heraclitus. The question naturally arises: what is the literary, historical, and rhetorical relationship between these two passages?

The problem of the relative chronology between the Allegorical Commentary and the *Quaestiones in Genesim et Exodum* is a longstanding *crux* in Philonic scholarship, which has been answered variously over the years.⁴⁹ Although I subscribe to the view that the *QGE* is earlier than the Allegorical Commentary, I do not propose in what follows to try and prove this broader position. My more modest aim is to construct a tradition history between Philo's two philosophical defenses of God's renaming of the patriarch and matriarch in Gen 17, in hopes that it might shed some light on his philosophical commitments. Such a task can be carried out without resolving the more global problem of sequence. Indeed, the clear interrelation between Philo's two defenses of Gen 17:5 and his similar categorization of his opponents in each passage, seems to invite speculation about which came first and which was his final word. In this case, the evidence does seem strong enough to venture a kind of progression –

⁴⁹ Important studies of the question of the sequence of the *Quaestiones* and the Allegorical Commentary include L. Cohn, "Einleitung und Chronologie der Schriften Philos", *Philologus* Supplement 7.3 (1899) 387–435; A. Terian, "The Priority of the *Quaestiones* in Philo's Biblical Commentaries", in Hay, *Both Literal and Allegorical*, 29–46; G.E. Sterling, "Philo's *Quaestiones*: Prolegomena or Afterthought?", in Hay, *Both Literal and Allegorical*, 99–123; M.R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (AYBRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). Intriguingly, R. Marcus (PLCLSup 1:x, n. a) suggests that the *Quaestiones* seem prior to the Allegorical Commentary on the basis of three passages (cf. Terian, "Priority"), but also indicated that Emil Schürer's position – that "the *Quaestiones* is partly earlier, partly later than the *Allegoriae*" – is also "possible".

if not of Philo's philosophy of language, then at least of his arrangement of the argument. Several considerations – narrative, exegetical, philosophical – suggest that Philo's first defense of Gen 17:5 is presented in the *Quaestiones*; and that his more mature and searching defense is presented in *De mutatione nominum*.

I would first like to make a narrative and rhetorical observation: in the QG 3.43, Philo pursues his defense of Gen 17:5, with the aim of convincing the quarrelsome exegetes to change their mind, with many direct asides. They are presented as his interlocutors; though “uninitiated” and “foolish”, they are not beyond correction. Indeed, the presence of Philo's final plea to this group in section G1, which is again without parallel in *De mutatione nominum*, suggests that something nearer the original and integral form of this deliberative oratory is represented in the *Quaestiones*. In *De mutatione nominum*, by contrast, Philo presents at least one member of this group as already beyond the pale of recovery. As he writes of this scoffer in *Mut.* 62:

By some small, chance circumstance, he came to hanging <himself>, so that this foul and ill-cleaned fellow did not end with a clean death. Worthily, then, lest another be snatched by the same errors, would we excise these suspicions, using natural reason to demonstrate that the things which have been said <by Moses> are worthy of all studious zeal.

Here, the crisis with the quarrelsome exegetes seems to have been at an end. Philo does not directly address the group, but offers a posthumous apology for the sake of posterity – much as Origen's refutation of the writings of Celsus was aimed at warding off the arguments of a deceased author by later generations. Philo's defense is no longer a species of deliberative rhetoric aimed at the conversion of an actual opponent, but an epideictic warning that those who reprise his attitude run the risk of divine vengeance.

This perception of the relative lateness of the tradition in *De mutatione nominum* is strengthened if we introduce additional exegetical and philosophical considerations. Exegetically, Philo's position in QG 3.43 seems more straightforward and instinctive: offended by the slight against Moses, Philo defends the letter at face value. “Of course God changed the name of Abram; this was a great good.” He will then go on to offer additional allegorical arguments. Philo's plain defense of Moses and the lack of exegetical complexity suggests that Philo composed the deliberative speech of QG 3.43 first, in the heat of the moment. The nature of the philosophical arguments that Philo adduces also support this conclusion. Drawing on a relatively in-vogue commonplace from Stoic euphonism and adding an esoteric allegory from Neo-Pythagorean arithmology, Philo presents an anthology of arguments for persuasive reasons, drawing on the revered traditions of Jewish exegetes and philosophers who came before him in Alexandria. In *De mutatione nominum*, by contrast, Philo

offers what initially looks to be a concession to the breathless scoffer – the *solutio difficilior*, if you like – which at face value appears to contradict the writing of Moses: “It only *seems* like God gave Abram a letter”, a free paraphrase of his argument might suggest, “but of course, that poor, misguided man was right: this can’t be the real gift. Don’t rush so quickly to mock Moses. Pay a little closer attention, not just to this verse, but to all the Pentateuch (as well as Heraclitus), and you will realize what that unclean man could not: that it would be the height of absurdity to defend the letter as the gift in its fullness. No, the truth is that the letter is just a small symbol of a great gift, an audible token of an invisible and bodiless power in the soul, by which Abraham reaches perfection.” Such a counterintuitive position, which accommodates parts of the opponent’s criticism and depends upon a deeper searching of the Pentateuch, comports well with Philo’s philosophy of language in *De mutatione nominum*.

Of course, Philo was not a systematic thinker. Nothing would *a priori* prohibit him from advancing a more literal, Stoic and Neo-Pythagorean answer to the problem of name-change in the *Quaestiones in Genesin*, and a more allegorical, Platonist one in the Allegorical Commentary. So much might be expected. The fact that Philo gives allegorical interpretations in *both* series, however; that the fate of the quarrelsome exegetes seems to change *between* the series; and that his alternative answers to the literal question (did God give a letter?) flatly contradict one another argue that, in this instance, we are not wrong to detect a change of position from the *Quaestiones in Genesin* to the Allegorical Commentary.

IV. Fruits from Philo’s Orchard; or, the End(s) of Philosophical Discourse

However one accounts for the differing ways that Philo answers the question, “What’s in a name change?” in the *Quaestiones* and the Allegorical Commentary, it is clear in both cases that he is laboring mightily to bring the fruits of philosophical discourse to work in the interest of defending the Jewish scriptures as a vehicle of revelation. Fittingly, both passages culminate in an explicit reflection on the purpose(s) of philosophy. Given this formal similarity, it also seems appropriate to end this study with a comparison and consideration of these Philonic perorations (G1 and G2).

I begin with the *Quaestiones*. In his second and final plea to the uninitiated scoffers in QG 3.43 (G1), Philo rounds out his explanatory proofs with a peroration that includes an encomium on the goods of philosophy. He appeals to his audience by way of *pathos* as well as *logos*. The gift of the divine letter alpha has made the Abraham soul “worthy of receiving the power of divine wisdom”:

Let us then no longer laugh at this gift, for one cannot find anything more perfect. For what is worse than wickedness or better than virtue? ... All philosophy comes into our lives like the healing of the soul, that it may give freedom from suffering and from sickness. And it belongs to a virtuous man to be a philosopher. That a wonderful skill should be precious is very fine (but) more precious is the end for the sake of which the skill exists.⁵⁰

Philo here asserts that just as the change of Abraham's name enabled his attainment of wisdom, so the practice of philosophy is aimed at the achievement of virtue. Whether or not one is moved by either the Stoic or Neo-Pythagorean defense of the letter, the deeper import of Abraham's name change – the power of ethical perfection – remains the final end. To be a philosopher “belongs” to the virtuous man's skill; but there is something more to be desired.

Philo's peroration to the reader of his commentary in *G2, Mut.* 73–76, makes many similar points. Rather than speaking of the soul's “healing”,⁵¹ however, Philo adopts the alternative model of imagining philosophical discourse as an orchard:

(§73) Just as there is no profit in trees, unless they bear fruit, in the same manner <there is no benefit> in the natural sciences, unless it will lead to the acquisition of virtue; for this is its fruit. (§74) Therefore, some of the ancients have likened philosophical discourse to a field. They liken the division of physics to the trees; logic, to the walls and fences; and ethics, to fruit. They presume, thereby, that the circular walls have been constructed by the owners for the sake of guarding the fruit, and that the trees were fashioned for the sake of producing it. (§75) Thus, they also say that in philosophy, the study of physics and logic is necessarily ordered toward ethics, by which the character is improved through its desire to possess and make use of virtue. (§76) These are the sort of things we have been taught concerning him whose name was changed in word, but who in deed has turned from the investigation of nature to ethical philosophy, and has arisen from speculation about the cosmos to knowledge of its Maker, from which <knowledge> piety, the greatest of possessions, is acquired.

Like the body of the speech, Philo's peroration in *De mutatione nominum* gives the impression of being more detailed and developed than the one he offers in *QG* 3.43. *Mut.* 73 states the same thesis as *QG* 3.43: that virtue is the end of philosophical reasoning – or, as we will find out later on, *one* of the ends of philosophy. To use Philo's metaphor, ethics is its primary fruit.

⁵⁰ Trans. Philo (Marcus, PLCLSup 1), lightly adapted.

⁵¹ Philo, *QG* 3.43 uses the word $\rho\delta\lambda\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\nu$, which Bedrossian renders “place of care, doctor's book, medical shop”. NBHL gives the Greek equivalent “*ἰατρεῖον; officina medici, vel chirurgi*”.

Philo repeats here a tradition that he has already related in *Agr.* 14: that the “three-fold” division of “philosophical discourse” (ὁ κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν λόγος)⁵² has been allegorized by “some of the ancients” according to the parts of a field or orchard. The ancients he refers to are probably the Stoics. A similar threefold division of philosophy is recorded in Aristotle, *Top.* 105b,⁵³ and likely goes back to the Old Academy or, as David Sedley has claimed, even the *Cratylus* itself.⁵⁴ Diogenes Laertius notes that the Stoic use of this division makes reference to the “all-productive field” (ἀγρῶν παμφόρῳ), which suggests Stoic discourse as Philo’s primary frame of reference.⁵⁵

According to most philosophical textbooks, the typical Stoic order of this three-fold division is logic (stage one, the wall), physics (stage two, the tree), ethics (stage three, the fruit).⁵⁶ In fact, the situation is not so clear. Critical analysis of the Stoic sources reveals that there were at least two Stoic sequences in circulation: (1) logic, physics, ethics; and (2) logic, ethics, physics.⁵⁷ In the first sequence – logic, physics, ethics – in keeping with one interpretation of the metaphor of the fruitful field or orchard, the initiate is led ever closer to the true food of the soul. Philo seems to imply this sequence in the present passage, although his list is curiously arranged with the “trees” of physics preceding the “walls” of logic. In the second sequence, by contrast – logic-ethics-physics – the student moves from basic propositions, to a study of the microcosm, to a study of the macrocosm, ascending through the cosmos according to increasing orders of magnitude, and ending with the contemplation not of human life, but of the cosmos. Stoic monism, it seems, does not necessarily have an ethical telos. Plutarch, moreover, criticized Chrysippus for inconsistently adopting both of these sequences.⁵⁸

Several aspects of Philo’s representation of the orchard of philosophy in *Mut.* 74 are odd, and suggest that he is not merely imitating one Stoic model, but reconfiguring it according to the exigencies of his allegory. Unlike either of the known Stoic sequences, physics (stage two, the trees) comes first. This is followed by logic (stage one, the walls) and ethics (stage three, the fruit and the true purpose of the field). A possible rationale for this inversion is that Philo wishes to depict the transformation of the Abram soul (focused on physics) into the Abraham soul (focused on ethics)

⁵² Philo, *Mut.* 74.

⁵³ Cited in Philo (Colson, PLCL) 1:477; see Aristotle, *Top.* 105b: “Ἔστι δ’ ὡς τύπῳ περιλαβεῖν τῶν προτάσεων καὶ τῶν προβλημάτων μέρη τρία· αἱ μὲν γὰρ ῥηθικαὶ προτάσεις εἰσὶν, αἱ δὲ φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ λογικαί.

⁵⁴ M. DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea’s Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy* (VCSup 103; Leiden: Brill, 2013) 63 n. 53.

⁵⁵ Diogenes Laertius 7.39–40; so A.C. Geljon/D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On Cultivation. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (PACS 4; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 107; Philo (Colson, PLCL) 3:490.

⁵⁶ Geljon/Runia, *On Agriculture*, 107.

⁵⁷ K. Ierodiakonou, “The Stoic Division of Philosophy”, *Phronesis* 38 (1993) 57–74, at 68–70.

⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1035a–f; Ierodiakonou, “The Stoic Division of Philosophy”, 68.

with the study of the words of scripture (logic and dialectic) forming the middle stage of that progression. This order better befits Philo's Platonist view of the inspired text as mediator of transformation in the Allegorical Commentary.

Additionally, both here and in *Agr.* 14, Philo eschews taking full ownership of this division of philosophical discourse, preferring to attribute it to "the ancients". This may be because the second category (physics) doesn't adequately account for Philo's Platonic ontology, which includes metaphysical and transcendental theological realities as well. Its usefulness in the present argument stems from the Stoic suggestion that everything is ordered toward ethics: particularly the natural sciences (physics), of which astronomy was one. This is the precisely the kind of conversion that Philo suggests God is producing in the Abram soul: a turn away from physics (the middle point of the journey) to ethics (the end of philosophy). This is also Philo's ending point in *QG* 3.43.

But Philo has more to say about the fruits in the orchard in *Mut.* 76. Here, he does not simply finish with ethics in general, as he does in *QG* 3.43, but specifies in an additional sentence that this means piety and the contemplation of God. It is εὐσέβεια and *divine* θεωρία, as well as φρόνησις, which are the end of philosophical discourse – and perhaps, are virtues not entirely attainable by it. Piety is, according to Philo, "the greatest of possessions"⁵⁹ and (in another text) "the queen of the virtues"⁶⁰ – linked intimately with the contemplative "knowledge of the Creator" (ἡ τοῦ πεποιηκότος ἐπιστήμη). There is, in other words, a kind of speculative and theological-epistemic component shaping Philo's image of perfected human virtue.⁶¹ In *Mut.* 76 he is depicted not as the generic virtuous man (*QG* 3.43), nor the philosopher, but the sage. For Philo, the point of laboring in the orchard of philosophy is not to become a φιλόσοφος but a σοφός, perfect (as far as humanly possible) in both knowledge of God and piety.⁶²

Philo's curious replanting of the Stoic orchard of philosophy – his engrafting of scriptural theological knowledge into the Stoic root-stock (i.e. the three-fold division of ὁ κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν λόγος,⁶³ with its ethical telos) lends to Philo's account a kind of final tension, not unlike that between politics and contemplation at the bookends

⁵⁹ Philo, *Mut.* 76.

⁶⁰ G.E. Sterling, "The Queen of the Virtues: Piety in Philo of Alexandria", *SphiloA* 18 (2006) 103–23; and more recently, N. Naveros Córdova, *Philo of Alexandria's Ethical Discourse: Living in the Power of Piety* (New York: Fortress Academic, 2018). For the Socratic basis of piety in Philo's thought, see the contribution of Sharon Weisser in the present volume.

⁶¹ For a study of the place of philosophical "contemplation" in Philo's thought, see further the contribution by Mauro Bonazzi ("Scepticism and Contemplation in Philo of Alexandria") in this volume.

⁶² Philo, *Mut.* 70.

⁶³ Ierodiakonou ("Stoic Division of Philosophy", 58) stresses that Stoics partitioned not "philosophy" but "the discourse concerning philosophy", perhaps wishing to separate imperfect human speech about wisdom from its more perfect love.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Philo does not reprise Seneca's scepticism about Platonist metaphysics,⁶⁴ but suggests that speculative and practical reason are in fact the twin fruits of the philosophical enterprise. In this, Philo couches his discussion of the philosophy of language and its therapeutic value within a larger philosophical and religious project. It's all in a name change: a new power in the soul, the perfection of virtue in piety, and the vision and contemplation of God.

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⁶⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 58.

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Philo of Alexandria on the Hebdomad: Neo-Pythagorean Arithmology and Jewish Tradition

Lutz Doering

I. Introduction: Philo and Neo-Pythagoreanism

When assessing Philo of Alexandria and his position in, as well as contribution to, philosophical discourse it is mainly his relation to Middle-Platonism, Stoicism, and also Scepticism and Cynicism that receive the lion's share of attention. However, it is also important to pay attention to aspects of Neo-Pythagorean teaching in Philo.¹ After all, Clement of Alexandria famously speaks of Philo twice as “the Pythagorean” (ὁ Πυθαγόρειος [*Strom.* 1.72.4; 2.100.3]). As David Runia has argued, such an epithet in Clement can hardly imply adherence to a philosophical school, for this can be excluded for Clement's parallel designation of the Alexandrian Torah interpreter Aristobulus as “Peripatetic” (*Strom.* 1.72.4), due to the incommensurability of some of his teachings with Aristotle's views (e.g., in claiming that God created the cosmos) and Aristobulus's self-identification with “our school” (ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς αἵρεσις [frag. 4, *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.12.8]), that is, the Jewish school of thought.² Rather, Runia argues, such a designation expresses the perception of a certain *affinity* of the earlier author with a particular school of thought, although for Aristobulus it is difficult to establish where Clement might have seen the affinity with the Peripatetic school to lie. For Philo, Runia proposes two possible explanations: either the title “the Pythagorean” has something to do with Philo's penchant for arithmology, or it is to be understood in a wider sense as designation for someone with affinities to Platonist thought, taking into consideration that Plato in antiquity was seen as “Pythagorizing”.³ While Runia, who calls the alternative a “difficult choice”, might be right that, pragmatically, the second explanation served Clement better in the

¹ See also the contribution by Michael Cover to the present volume.

² Cf. D.T. Runia, “Why Does Clement of Alexandria Call Philo ‘the Pythagorean?’”, *VC* 49 (1995) 1–22, at 8–10.

³ Πλάτων δὲ καὶ ἐν τούτοις πυθαγορίζει (Aëtius 2.6.6 Mansfeld-Runia), here with reference to the genesis of the cosmos; cf. Numenius Frg. 24.57 (Des Places); Apuleius, *Flor.* 15.

context of the occurrence of this designation, this can hardly be taken as evidence against the potential perception that Philo had affinities with the Pythagoreans also and particularly on account of his consideration of arithmology.⁴ After all, this consideration is most visible in treatises in which he closely engages Plato's *Timaeus*,⁵ and thus might be considered a particular case of "Platonical Pythagorizing".

Moving from Clement's perception of Philo to contemporary philosophical-historical assessment of Philo's engagement with Pythagorean philosophy and teaching, we note that Charles H. Kahn views Philo as an Alexandrian thinker exemplifying a Platonism that has absorbed other traditions, "with heavy Pythagorean overtones", which provides the background against which "we can comprehend the emergence of doctrinaire Neopythagoreanism" with Moderatus of Gades, Nicomachus of Gerasa, and Numenius of Apamea in the second century CE.⁶ Similarly, John Dillon treats Philo as a representative of the amalgam of Middle Platonism, for which Pythagorean influence has become "pervasive".⁷ A third voice is that of Carlos Lévy, who points to "strong Pythagorean influence" in Philo's works without overstating it.⁸

What evidence do we have for such an assessment? In the following, we shall begin with allusions to "Pythagorean" traditions, consider explicit references to "Pythagoras" or "Pythagoreans" as well as their teachings, and then focus on Philo's interaction with (Neo-) Pythagorean arithmology in general and the teaching on the hebdomad in particular.

⁴ Cf. J.C. Thom, "Pythagoras (Pythagoreer)", *RAC* 28 (2018) 496–522, at 501: "In der späteren Tradition wurde oft ein Interesse an Zahlensymbolik (Arithmologie) als ein ausreichendes Indiz dafür angesehen, jemanden als Pythagoreer zu betrachten."

⁵ This also applies to the fragment on the decad, presumably from Philo's lost treatise *De numeris*; cf. A. Terian, "A Philonic Fragment on the Decad", in F.E. Greenspahn et al. (ed.), *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (Scholars Press Homage Series 9; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984) 173–82.

⁶ C.H. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001) 99, 105.

⁷ J. Dillon, "Pythagoreanism in the Academic Tradition: The Early Academy to Numenius", in C.A. Huffman (ed.), *A History of Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 250–73, at 266 (see 263–6 overall on Philo). Cf. also C. Riedweg, *Pythagoras: Leben, Lehre, Nachwirkung. Eine Einführung* (2nd ed.; Munich: Beck, 2007) 163. That Neo-Pythagoreanism in the Imperial period is perceived as a variety of Platonism is also affirmed by I. Männlein-Robert, "Der Neopythagorismus", in C. Riedweg/C. Horn/D. Wyrwa (ed.), *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike* (Die Philosophie der Antike 5/1; Basel: Schwabe, 2018) 1:633–8, at 638.

⁸ C. Lévy, "The *Scala Naturae* and Music: Two Models in Philo's Thought", in F. Pelosi/F.M. Petrucci (ed.), *Music and Philosophy in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) 21–37, at 29. Cf. also idem, "La question de la dyade chez Philon d'Alexandrie", in M. Bonazzi/idem/C. Steel (ed.), *A Platonic Pythagoras: Platonism and Pythagoreanism in the Imperial Age* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007) 11–28; see further below.

Apart from allusions to “Pythagorean” traditions,⁹ Philo at times refers to “Pythagoras” or “the Pythagoreans” by name, as for example at *Prob.* 2, where he mentions “the saintly company of the Pythagoreans” (PLCL, τὸν μὲν οὖν τῶν Πυθαγορείων ἱερώτατον θίασον) and, while noting that they teach also “other excellent doctrines”, quotes the Pythagorean ἄκουσμα: “Walk not on the highways” (ταῖς λεωφόροις μὴ βαδίξιν ὁδοῖς).¹⁰ This, Philo explains, means “that in our words and deeds we should not follow popular and beaten tracks” (δημῶδεσι καὶ πεπατημένοις χρῆσθαι). Philo goes on to state that this maxim has been obeyed by “all genuine votaries of philosophy” (*Prob.* 3), thereby crediting it with wide and pertinent reception. At QG 1.17b, interpreting Gen 2:18, “It is not good that the man should be alone”, Philo according to the Greek fragment states that “friendship” (φιλία) consists of “the combination and firmest concord among habits” (κράσει καὶ συμφωνία βεβαιότατη ἡθῶν), corroborating this with the “saying of Pythagoras” that “a friend is indeed another ‘I’” (ἄρα ἐστὶ φίλος ἕτερός τις ἐγώ). Philo is one of the sources attesting that this saying, which occurs in similar form or spirit in several authors, most memorably in Aristotle,¹¹ ultimately derives from Pythagoras.¹² In addition, at QG 3.16, while discussing Gen 15:18, where Moses says that God made a covenant with Abraham, promising to him “this land from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates”, Philo relates the allegorical meaning of this statement to the concept of happiness in which psychic, corporeal, and external goods are perfected; this, he

⁹ See, for example, *Migr.* 128, where Philo weaves together the well-known Stoic maxim of “living in accordance with nature” (τὸ ἀκολουθῶς τῆ φύσει ζῆν) and the phrase “and follows god” (καὶ ἔπηται θεῷ), which evokes both Pythagoras’s saying on “following god”, according to Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 86–88, 137 (ἀκολουθεῖν τῷ θεῷ), and the Delphic maxim ἔπου θεῷ, which might stand behind the Pythagorean saying; see M.L. Gemelli Marciano, “The Pythagorean Way of Life and Pythagorean Ethics”, in C.A. Huffman (ed.), *A History of Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 131–48, at 136 with n. 23. However, Philo goes on to argue that it is precisely Moses who championed the goal of following God (τέλος οὖν ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸν ἱερώτατον Μωυσῆν τὸ ἔπεσθαι θεῷ), which must allegorically be taken to refer to the way the soul follows the divine ordinances (*Migr.* 131). Philo corroborates this with a quotation from Deut 13:4 and thus presents Moses as anticipating, as it were, the teaching commonly associated with Pythagoras (and/or the Delphic oracle). For further examples, cf. Dillon, “Pythagoreanism in the Academic Tradition”, 264–6.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Iamblichus, *Protr.* 21 (DK 58 C 6).

¹¹ See Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1166a31 (ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός: “for the friend is another self”; cf. also 1170b6).

¹² Cf. further Plato, *Lysis* 214a2–d7; Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1158b1–1159a12; Cicero, *Amic.* 16.56–17.61; also Acts 4:32. Philo himself presents the idea also at *Her.* 83, here with a quotation of Deut 13:6: “And in Moses’s view a friend is so near that he differs not a whit from one’s own soul, for he says, ‘the friend, who is equal to thy soul’” (PLCL). Cf. for a Pythagorean connection also Cicero, *Off.* 1.56: “the result is what Pythagoras desires in friendship, that one comes from many” (“ut unus fiat ex pluribus”). Cf. P. Vesely, *Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2019) 65–6; and with the claim of a Stoic stance on friendship for Philo, G.E. Sterling, “The Bond of Humanity: Friendship in Philo of Alexandria”, in J.T. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship* (RBS 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 203–23.

claims, was “praised by some of the philosophers who came afterward, (such as) Aristotle and the Peripatetics. Moreover this is said to have been also the legislation of Pythagoras”. Dillon has suggested that we might postulate here “some ‘Pythagorean’ treatise appropriating the Aristotelian ethical system for Pythagoras, such as that of ‘Hippodamus’ *On Happiness*”.¹³ And at QG 1.99 Philo refers, for the honorific designation of a person as “himself” (αὐτός), to the “Pythagorean principle”, “He himself has said it” (αὐτὸς ἔφα), when they speak about their teacher.

Speaking of the interaction of Philo with “Pythagoreanism” or “Pythagorean” teachings, a brief reflection on the history and unity (or not) of “Pythagoreanism” is called for. Following Walter Burkert, it has become customary to argue that, instead of the sharp hiatus earlier assumed by Eduard Zeller between the (old) Pythagoreans (according to Zeller, defunct shortly after the middle of the fourth century BCE) and the Neo-Pythagoreans (attested to from the first century BCE), there are reasons to assume a literary afterlife of the older Pythagoreanism in the Pseudo-Pythagorica until the Pythagoreans resurfaced as Neo-Pythagoreans writing under their own names.¹⁴ More recently, Leonid Zhmud has argued that matters were more complicated and that “Neo-Pythagoreans” drew on earlier Pythagoreanism only for a few names and ideas so that we cannot speak of an historically homogenous Pythagoreanism.¹⁵ The latter, however, would not be a necessary prerequisite for our endeavour in this chapter: it suffices that in Philo’s days certain teachings were *associated* with Pythagoras and/or Pythagoreans. In this sense, we base ourselves on what was perceived as “Pythagorean” in the early Empire.

II. Philo on (Neo-)Pythagorean Arithmology

One well-attested context in which Philo explicitly names the Pythagoreans is in relation to arithmology: he mentions them explicitly four times in this respect, as many times as he refers to them for other issues.¹⁶ We shall discuss the explicit references

¹³ Dillon, “Pythagoreanism in the Academic Tradition”, 265–6. For *On Happiness* see 94.7–7.15 (Thesleff).

¹⁴ As argued in detail in W. Burkert, “Hellenistische Pseudopythagorica”, *Philologus* 105 (1961) 16–43, 223–46.

¹⁵ Cf. L. Zhmud, “What is Pythagorean in the Pseudo-Pythagorean Literature?”, *Philologus* 163 (2019) 72–94. Cf. his earlier *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans* (trans. K. Windle/R. Ireland; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁶ See Philo, QG 3.49; 4.8; *Leg.* 1.15; *Opif.* 100, as compared with non-arithmological passages, QG 1.17, 99; 3.16; *Prob.* 2. Cf. also *Aet.* 12, where Philo mentions that a certain doctrine has been credited to “some of the Pythagoreans”, whereas he himself adduces a work by the Lucanian Ocellus for the doctrine on the indestructibility of the world, there discussed.

as far as they concern the hebdomad (*Leg.* 1.15; *Opif.* 100) in a separate section discussion below.

One mention of the Pythagoreans occurs in *QG* 4.8, when Philo discusses Gen 18:6, “And Abraam hurried over to the tent to Sarra and said to her, ‘Hurry, and mix three measures of flour and make loaves baked in ashes’” (trans. NETS). Philo makes a point about the three measures, “for in reality all things are measured by three, having a beginning, middle and end”. He corroborates this, first, by a quote from Homer, *Il.* 15.189, “All things are divided by three”, and immediately adds, “And the Pythagoreans assume that the triad among numbers, and the right-angled triangle among figures are the foundation of the knowledge of all things”. Both references, though separated by other material, are also given nearly verbatim by John Lydus (*Mens.* 2.8 [28 Wünsch]), who seems to have directly drawn on Philo here.¹⁷ The three measures, according to Philo (and John) are the one by which the incorporeal and intelligible world was constituted, the one by which the perceptible heaven was established in the fifth element, and the one by which sublunary things were made out of the four powers or elements of earth, water, air, and fire.¹⁸ Notably, for Philo, God alone, properly speaking, “is the measure of all things, both intelligible and sense-perceptible” (*QG* 4.8), and it is only due to human weakness that his oneness is likened to a triad.¹⁹

Another explicit reference to Pythagoreans in the context of arithmology is found at *QG* 3.49. Here, Philo comments on Gen 17:12, the commandment that circumcision be carried out on the eighth day. In a series of arithmological comments on the number eight (or the eighth digit) he explicitly refers to the Pythagorean notion of “homology”, that is, the observation that the addition of the first four odd and even numbers from one to eight yields 36: $1 + 3 + 5 + 7 + 2 + 4 + 6 + 8 = 36$. This, Philo says, is “a most productive number”, since it forms a square with six as its side (6^2), which is, in turn, “the first even-odd” number, as the product of two and three. Both qualifications are also attested by John Lydus, who mentions about the ogdoad that the Pythagoreans call it “agreement” because it forms a cube (length, breadth, and depth) and an agreement of the odd and even numbers (*Mens.* 4.111 [150 Wünsch]), and about the hexad that “the ancients called it ‘marriage’ and ‘harmony’” (*γάμον και ἁρμονίαν* [*Mens.* 2.11, 32 Wünsch]). However, Philo adds the remark that, by making use of the hexad, the creator of the universe “made the world, as the holy and wonderful writing of Moses relates” (*QG* 3.49). This is clearly a Jewish

¹⁷ Cf., e.g., R. Marcus (trans.), *Philo: Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* (PLCLSup 1–2; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953) 1:280.

¹⁸ Philo states also elsewhere that the perceptible heaven is made of a fifth element or substance, as opposed to the four elements, earth, water, air, and fire. See *QE* 2.73; *Her.* 283.

¹⁹ Cf. Philo, *Abr.* 123, where Abraham’s *threefold* vision (cf. *Abr.* 107, 122) represents only a “second-best voyage”, as compared with the vision of *one*, which is the divinely approved way, or the truth.

appropriation of arithmology – one that Philo maintains also in his presumably later writings, such as *De opificio mundi*, where the hexad is correlated with the creation of the cosmos (*Opif.* 13–14, 89; cf. *Leg.* 1.3–4, with an emphasis on six as indicating created things mortal).

It is clear that Philo draws on the “Pythagorean approach to numbers”²⁰ also elsewhere in his arithmological discourse, even when he does not explicitly name this school. Following the Pythagoreans,²¹ Philo focuses on the numbers from one to ten,²² although he accounts for special numbers arising from the Jewish Scriptures and tradition, such as twelve or fifty, which are, however, usually presented as derivative of the first ten integers.²³ This general indebtedness to arithmology eventually deriving from Pythagoreanism can be traced in all of Philo’s commentaries: the *Quaestiones*, the Allegorical Commentary, and the Exposition of the Law, although we should allow for some variation in its deployment.²⁴

It was the Pythagoreans who reflected on the relation of numbers in music, and it is here, too, that Philo implicitly picks up Pythagorean tradition. Thus, in several

²⁰ H. Weiss, “Philo on the Sabbath”, in D.T. Runia/D.M. Hay/D. Winston (ed.), *Heirs of the Septuagint: Philo, Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity [FS E. Hilgert]* (BJS 230 [= *SPhiloA* 3]; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 83–105, at 93. For Philo’s use of arithmology cf. also K. Staehle, *Die Zahlenmystik bei Philon von Alexandria* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931) (to be used cautiously); H.R. Moehring, “Arithmology as an Exegetical Tool in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria”, in J.P. Kenney (ed.), *The School of Moses: Studies in Philo and Hellenistic Religion in Memory of H. R. Moehring* (BSJ 304; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 141–76; the relevant sections in D.T. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (PACS 1; Leiden: Brill, 2001); and E. Filler, “Description of the Creation by Philo in the Light of the Neopythagorean Theory of Numbers”, *Daat* 62 (2008) 5–25 [Hebrew]; idem, “The Nature of Number Seven in Propensity Towards Number One in Philo”, *Daat* 63 (2008) 5–18 [Hebrew]. See Terian, “Decad”; cf. also, in a study otherwise focusing on early Christianity, J. Kalvesmaki, *The Theology of Arithmetic: Number Symbolism in Platonism and Early Christianity* (Hellenic Studies 59; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), esp. 7–25.

²¹ Cf. Aristotle, who, having introduced the Pythagoreans at *Metaph.* 985b23, ascribes to them the view that the decad “is considered to be a complete thing” (τέλειον ἢ δεκάς εἶναι δοκεῖ) and “to comprise the whole essential nature of the numerical system” (πᾶσαν περιελιγμένα τὴν τῶν ἀριθμῶν φύσιν [*Metaph.* 986a8–9]). Cf. also the Pythagorean notion of the τετρακτύς, the number ten resulting from the addition of the first four numbers; cf. Thom, “Pythagoras”, 501; and see Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 20; Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Logicos* 1.94–99 [= *Math.* 7.94–99].

²² Cf. Philo, *QG* 2.32; and *Congr.* 90 on the ten as perfect number and as limit for the numbers from one.

²³ Cf. Philo, *Decal.* 26–27 on the ten as the sum of numbers one to four (i.e., the τετρακτύς, see above) and the production of the higher numbers based on it on the level of decades and hundreds. Philo typically treats higher numbers as multiples of integers within the decad (e.g., *Opif.* 106, on 3, 4, and 7) or of equal proportion to that of numbers within the decad (e.g., *QG* 3.38, on 18:12 = 9:6). Even when he relates the number twelve to the zodiac, he may mention the subdivision of the latter into 4x3 signs (e.g., *Mos.* 2.124; *Spec.* 1.87); when he relates it to the number of months, he may refer to two sets of six (corresponding to the two piles of shewbread) separated by the equinoxes (e.g., *Spec.* 1.172). For “fifty”, cf., e.g., the “fiftieth day” (πεντηκοστή ἡμέρα) reckoned after “seven sevenths” (ἑπτὰ ἑβδομάσι [*Decal.* 160; *Spec.* 2.176]), and the Therapeutae’s festival δι’ ἑπτὰ ἑβδομάδων (*Contempl.* 65).

²⁴ See Michael Cover’s contribution to this volume.

passages of his works, and here particularly in his Exposition of the Law and his *De vita Mosis*, Philo speaks of the numerical proportions of the perfect fourth (4:3), fifth (3:2), octave (2:1), and double octave (4:1), which are again based on the first four real numbers (*Mos.* 1.115; cf. *Opif.* 48, 95–96; *Decal.* 22; *Spec.* 2.200). These ratios underly, for example, Philolaus’s theory of musical harmony (*ἀρμονία* [DK 44 B 6a]), which in recent scholarship is viewed as part of his cosmological philosophy, although Philo does not reflect the complexities of Philolaus’s philosophical theory.²⁵ Musical harmony is also taken up by Plato in *Tim.* 35a4–36b6 for the numerical relations at the creation of the cosmic soul. In his comparatively simple presentation of the material, Philo follows basic musicological knowledge “found in many arithmological accounts of the tetrad”.²⁶ It is knowledge that ultimately goes back to the Pythagoreans, though it was also mediated by Plato and his reception.

III. Philo on the Hebdomad

Philo discusses arithmology in particular in relation to the account of the six days of creation, followed by the seventh day. This is patently driven by Philo’s desire to demonstrate that the Mosaic creation account culminating in the seventh day appropriately references the cosmological structure of the universe, including its mathematical structure. Instead of discussing this approach as consisting of *either* Greek (viz. Hellenistic) *or* Jewish building blocks,²⁷ we should see it as an expression of cosmological, that is, philosophical structures by the Jewish author Philo, thus, as a “Jewish” instantiation of “Hellenism”. Philo reflects on the seven in relation to the creation account at several passages, in the *Quaestiones* particularly at QG 2.13 and QE 2.46, in the Allegorical Commentary at *Leg.* 1.8–15 and *Post.* 64–65, and several times in the Exposition of the Law, briefly at *Decal.* 101–105 and *Spec.* 2.56–59 (both in relation to the Sabbath commandment), and, much more detailed, in *Opif.* 89–128.²⁸ At *Post.* 64–65, Philo deals, in a manner differing somewhat from the other

²⁵ On which cf., e.g., A. Barker, *The Science of Harmonics in Classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 25–29, 263–286. On musical *harmonia* as part of Philolaus’s cosmological philosophy cf. L.R. Schluderer, “The World as Harmony: Philolaus’ Metaphysics of Harmonic Structures and the Hierarchy of Living Beings”, in V. Caston (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 56 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2019) 1–44.

²⁶ Thus Runia, *Creation*, 192, referring to Anatolius, *Decade* 32.17–28 (Heiberg); Theon of Smyrna, *Expositio rerum mathematicarum* 93.17–94.2 (Hiller at al.).

²⁷ Cf., e.g., Moehring, “Arithmology”, 154–5, who, for *Opif.* 89–128, contrasts “only three short passages of unmistakably Jewish content” with “the straightforward arithmological statements” and “a number of quotations from Greek authors”.

²⁸ Apart from the creation account, there are scattered reflections on the seven, e.g., in Philo, *Abr.* 28–30; *Fug.* 173–174, where seven is presented as a peaceful number, due to its being a prime number and not

passages, with the relation between the hebdomad and the monad, which is also best explained in the context of Pythagorean tradition and will be discussed further below.

Within the sections in *Legum allegoriae* 1 and *De opificio mundi*,²⁹ there is one explicit mention each of the Pythagoreans. Unfortunately, the content attributed to the Pythagoreans differs in each case, as a comparison between the passages shows.

Leg. 1.15: Whereas other numbers within the decade are either produced by or produce those within the decad and the decad itself, the number seven neither produces any of the numbers within the decad nor is produced by any. By reason of this *the Pythagoreans*, indulging in myth (μυθεύοντες), liken seven to the Ever-virgin and Motherless (τῇ ἀειπαρθένῳ καὶ ἀμήτορι αὐτὴν ἀπεικάζουσιν), because neither was she born of the womb nor shall she ever bear.”

Opif. 100: Only the seven, as I said, has the nature neither to generate nor be generated.

For this reason *the rest of the philosophers* (οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι φιλόσοφοι) liken this number to the motherless Victory and Maiden (τῇ ἀμήτορι Νίκῃ καὶ Παρθένῳ), who according to the account appeared out of the head of Zeus, but *the Pythagoreans* liken it to the Director of the universe. For that which neither generates nor is generated remains unchanged. <Generation> (γενέσις) involves change, since <both that which generates> (add. καὶ τὸ γεννῶν)³⁰ and that which is generated cannot do without change, in the one case so that it can generate, in the other case so that it can be generated. The only being who neither changes or is changed is the very ancient Ruler and Director, of whom the seven would fittingly be called an image. As witness for this account I call on Philolaus when he says: “There exists the Director and Ruler of

divisible, and due to the νοῦς standing, as the seventh power, opposite the six quarrelling powers in human beings, respectively. At QG 2.17, 45, 47, Philo comments on the coincidence that the seventh month of the autumnal calendar (Nisan) is the first month of the vernal calendar. At QG 2.12, Philo refers to the seven, being a prime number that cannot be multiplied within the decad, as virginal, unmixed, motherless, and not giving birth, being pure, in contrast to the dyad which is considered impure. This is closely related to the passages *Leg.* 1.15; *Opif.* 100 discussed below, though without mention of the Pythagoreans or other philosophers.

²⁹ It should be noted that *Leg.* 1 takes the “rest” of Gen 2:2 as its point of departure, whereas *Opif.* is commenting on the whole of Gen 2:2–3, including the sanctification of the seventh day.

³⁰ The conjecture γέννησις instead of γένεσις has been suggested by Runia, *Creation*, 274 in view of context and the parallel in John Lydus (see below). The addition of καὶ τὸ γεννῶν is necessary and has been included by Cohn.

all things, God who is one, always existent, abiding, unchanged, himself identical to himself and differing from all others.”

Both passages comment implicitly (“not to generate nor be generated”) on the feature of the seven as the only prime number which, multiplied by two, does not remain within the decad. However, whereas according to *Leg.* 1.15 it is the Pythagoreans who liken the hebdomad to the Ever-virgin and Motherless, that is, Athena, *Opif.* 100 assigns this view to “the rest of the philosophers”. In contrast, this passage attributes to the Pythagoreans the comparison of the hebdomad with the “Director of the universe”. The Pythagoreans may have referred this expression to Zeus, and Philo clearly identifies this figure with “God the supreme being and creator, who is recognized by all peoples”³¹ (cf. *Spec.* 1.32; 2.165; *Conf.* 170). However, a parallel in John Lydus, *Mens.* 2.12 (33–34 Wünsch) relates the “Director” to Apollo (trans. follows Runia, *Creation*, 299):

The Pythagoreans dedicate the seventh (day) (τὴν ἑβδόμην) to the Director of the universe, that is the One, and Orpheus is their witness when he says: “The seventh (day), which the accomplisher from afar, king Apollo, loves.” We said earlier (sc. *Mens.* 2.3 [21 Wünsch]) that the one who was called in a mystical fashion Apollo because he is apart from the many, that is, he is alone. Rightly, therefore, Philolaus has called the number seven “motherless”, for it alone has the nature neither to generate or be generated. That which neither generates nor is generated is unchanged. For generation involves change, in the one case so that it can generate, in the other case so that it can be generated. Of such a nature is the god, as the rhetor from Tarentum himself (καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ῥήτωρ ὁ Ταραντῖνος) indicates. He states as follows: “There is God the Director and Ruler of all things, who is one, the always existent god, abiding, unchanged, himself identical to himself.”

Philo seems to have had (at least, see below) two different traditions about the hebdomad, one comparing it with the “motherless” Athena,³² the other one, focussing on the oneness and on the “Director of the universe”. The former is attested also in a fragment ascribed to Aristotle, transmitted by Alexander of Aphrodisias³³ and later by the third-century CE writer Anatolius of Alexandria.³⁴ Lydus, in turn, connects Philolaus with “motherless” Athena and, provided “the rhetor from Tarentum” is

³¹ Runia, *Creation*, 274. The original reference to Zeus is also maintained by Staehle, *Zahlenmystik*, 37; Moehring, “Arithmology”, 157, 160.

³² Cf. also QG 2.12, where Philo, contrasting the hebdomad with the dyad, calls the former “virginal” and “motherless”, without mentioning the Pythagoreans or other philosophers.

³³ Arist. frg. 203 (Rose = Alex., *Metaph.* 39.4) διὰ τοῦτο καὶ Ἀθηναίων ἔλεγον αὐτόν.

³⁴ Anatolius, *De decade* 35.7–8 (Heiberg): διὸ καὶ καλεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν Πυθαγορείων παρθένος ἀμήτωρ.

the correct reading (whence Philolaus hails according to one tradition), *also* with “the Director of the universe”, while additionally mentioning that the Pythagoreans liken the seventh *day* to the “Director”, here identified with Apollo.

The relationship between Lydus’s comments and the passage in *De opificio mundi* is debated. Some scholars maintain the reading “Onetor” instead of “the rhetor” and thus claim that the quotation in Lydus is not from Philolaus but from a certain Onetor, who is credited with five books on *Arithmetical Proportion* in a scholion on Proclus’s *Commentary on the Republic* (2.378 Kroll). In this case, Philo would have got the attribution wrong.³⁵ However, whether this is indeed the *lectio difficilior*³⁶ is questionable, bearing in mind that Philolaus is not normally called “rhetor” and that at least Codex Barbarini (cod. Barb. gr. 194), on which this reading is based, also gives *αὐτός* – thereby clearly referring back to Philolaus mentioned earlier. Carl A. Huffman for example has suggested that Philo and Lydus draw on a common source, in which Philo misread “Onetor” as “the rhetor” and mistakenly related this to Philolaus. However, it should be noted that Lydus discusses “the seventh day of the *week*” (*τὴν ἑβδομήν*), and that the correlation with Apollo cannot have been in this hypothesized source because the day traditionally connected with Apollo is the seventh day of the *month*. Hence, it is possible that Lydus inserted this information from Philo, who, although he does not explicitly speak of the seventh day here, nevertheless deals with the hebdomad in the context of creation week, and he added the Orphic hymn.³⁷ However, Lydus additionally knows of the tradition that the heptad, being “unmingled and unmothered” (*ἀμιγῆς ἐστὶ καὶ ἀμήτωρ*), “neither generating nor being generated” (*μήτε γεννῶν μήτε γεννώμενος*), is dedicated by the Pythagoreans to Athena (*ὄθεν καὶ οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι Ἀθηνᾶ τὴν ἑπτάδα ἀνατίθενται* [*Mens.* 3.9, 43 Wünsch]). Thus, we find in both Philo and Lydus the ascription to the Pythagoreans of the correlation of seven (or the seventh day) with both Athena and the “Director of the universe”, however this figure is identified.

When we compare *Leg.* 1.15 and *Opif.* 100, it looks as if the former passage is the earlier of the two. It is more likely that, initially, Philo only knew that the Pythagoreans liken the seven to the “motherless” Athena, putting the focus on its being a prime number. Later on, he apparently also encountered the view that the Pythagoreans liken the seven to the “Director of the universe”, which led him to re-assign the former view, somewhat awkwardly, to “the rest of the philosophers”. In Lydus, these two ascriptions to the Pythagoreans stand side by side, albeit in different literary contexts, which is probably why they are not harmonized here. Moreover, Philo

³⁵ Thus C.A. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 337–9.

³⁶ As Huffman claims (*Philolaus*, 337).

³⁷ Cf. Runia, *Creation*, 300.

shows in QG 2.12 that he knows of an interpretation of the hebdomad as “pure, inasmuch as it is virginal and unmixed and unmothered, nor does it give birth nor is it born”, without assigning it to a group or school of philosophers and their relation of it to a mythic deity. Instead, he stresses its “likeness to the Eternal” (Marcus [PLCLSup] suggests τῷ ὄντι for the original Greek); for the following statements about the latter being “uncreated and unbegotten”, etc., it is difficult to secure the gender which is absent in Armenian, but the overall context seems to point to God (so also Marcus). If so, Philo himself here likens the hebdomad to the Eternal, which would then explain why he would assign its comparison with Athena to the Pythagoreans. This would work best if the *Quaestiones* were to be dated rather early in Philo’s oeuvre.³⁸ It is in the later Exposition, then, in which he would have re-ascribed this idea.

Moreover, there seem to be subtle terminological differences across Philo’s various writings. While the use of “ever-virgin” (ἀειπαρθενος) is largely limited to the *Quaestiones* and treatises of the Allegorical Commentary,³⁹ and briefly occurs in *Mos.* 2.210 and *Contempl.* 65, we find in treatises of the Exposition of the Law (and only here) references to “students of mathematics” (οἱ περὶ τὰ μαθήματα διατρίψαντες [*Decal.* 102]) or to “some” (οἱ μὲν ... οἱ δὲ αὐτοὶ καὶ [*Spec.* 2.56]), who call the seven “virgin” and “motherless”, and this is close to the more general attribution of the view in *Opif.* 100 (“the rest of the philosophers”).⁴⁰

The impression of the traditional priority of the passage on the hebdomad from *Legum allegoriae*⁴¹ is also maintained out of other considerations. First of all, as the synopsis below demonstrates (Table 1), the passage from *Leg.* 1 largely corresponds

³⁸ There is agreement in recent scholarship that the *Quaestiones* are earlier than the Exposition of the Law. For the view of their priority to the Allegorical Commentary, see A. Terian, “The Priority of the *Quaestiones* among Philo’s Exegetical Commentaries”, in D.M. Hay (ed.), *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria’s Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* (BJS 232; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 29–46; G.E. Sterling, “Philo’s *Quaestiones*: Prolegomena or Afterthought?”, in Hay, *Both Literal and Allegorical*, 99–123. For the view that they postdate the Allegorical Commentary, but not the Exposition, see M.R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (AYBRL; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018) 10; and Marcus, PLCLSup 1:x, who however (1:x n. a) deems Schürer’s view “possible” that the *Quaestiones* are “partly earlier, partly later” than the Allegorical Commentary. See also Michael Cover’s contribution to this volume.

³⁹ Regarding the hebdomad: *QE* 2.46; *Leg.* 1.15; *Her.* 170; in other contexts: *Congr.* 7; *Fug.* 50; *Mut.* 194, 196. In addition, in *Her.* 216, the hebdomad (with respect to the seven-branched candelabrum) is called “motherless”, similarly in QG 2.12 (see above, nn. 28, 32).

⁴⁰ In addition, in *Praem.* 153 the period of the seventh year is referenced by τὰς παρθένους ἑβδομάδας.

⁴¹ Contra Moehring, “Arithmology”, 159: “The shorter list of statements on the hebdomad in the *Legum allegoriae* is based upon the longer one in the *Opificio*.” Cf. also R.A. Kraft, “Philo’s Treatment of the Number Seven in *On Creation*”, in idem, *Exploring the Scripturesque: Jewish Texts and their Christian Contexts* (JSJSup 137; Leiden: Brill, 2010) 217–36, at 233–6, who probes different directions of dependence, emphasizing the less organized and developed form of the material in *Legum allegoriae* but being restrained by a (mistaken) tendency to assume the early date of *De opificio mundi*.

to *Opif.* 111–126 only, thus lacks most of the arithmetic, geometric, and harmonic contents of *Opif.* 92–110.⁴² Moreover, the only exceptions are the reference to the hebdomad as unbegotten and unbecoming and as motherless (*Opif.* 99–100), which is the last item in the passage from *Legum allegoriae* (1.15), and the reference to the hebdomad in the stages of human life (*Opif.* 103; *Leg.* 1.10), which is however very different in the latter composition, lacks the examples from Solon and Hippocrates, and comes at a later position.

<i>Opif.</i>		<i>Leg.</i> 1
92	hebdomad both square and cube	–
95	hebdomad and musical harmony	–
97	hebdomad and right-angled triangle	–
98	hebdomad and geometry / stereometry	–
99	hebdomad unbegotten and unbecoming	15
100	hebdomad motherless, like Athena	15
100	hebdomad like the Director of the universe	–
101	hebdomad in phases of the moon	8
102	all organic bodies with three dimensions and four limits	–
103	hebdomad in stages of human life – differences between <i>Opif.</i> and <i>Leg.</i>	10
104	ages of man: Solon's poem	–
105	ages of man: Hippocrates's saying	–
106	hebdomad both square and cube, also in multiplication by two	–
107–10	hebdomad and the arithmetic, geometric, and harmonic proportion	–
111	all parts of the world are philhebdomadic, namely ...	~ 8
112	seven heavenly circles	–
113	seven planets	8
114	seven stars in the Great Bear	8
115	seven stars in the Pleiades	–
116	the two equinoxes occur in a seventh month	–
117	hebdomad also in mortals depending on the things of heaven, namely ...	9
117	seven non-rational parts of the soul	11
118	seven external parts of the body	12*

⁴² Cf. Runia, *Creation*, 305–6.

118	seven internal parts of the body	12*
119	seven parts of the head	12
120	seven objects of sight	–
121	seven modulations of the voice	14
122	seven motions of the body	12
123	seven secretions of the body	13
124	Hippocrates on seven days of the formation of embryo	–
124	seven days of menstrual period	13
124	foetuses viable at seven months	9
125	crisis in illnesses on the seventh day	13
126	seven strings of the lyre in music	14*
126	seven vowels in grammar	14*
127	etymology of seven	–

* different order in *Leg.*

Table 1: Parallels between *Opif.* 92–127 and *Leg.* 1.8–15, following the order in *Opif.*⁴³

Possibly Philo takes recourse in both works to material in his lost treatise *De numeris*,⁴⁴ and that he draws on traditional material is shown by the parallels with a number of other arithmological sources, although only the third-century CE Anatolius, in his work *De decade*, presents extensive parallels to *Opif.* 92–98 and may have drawn on a list similar to the one that Philo used.⁴⁵ Generally, it is more likely that Philo added later (that is, in *Opif.*) the arithmetic, geometric, and harmonic materials, brought the stages of human life forward, enriched by quotes from Solon and Hippocrates, and added more examples (stars of the Pleiades, equinoxes each in a seventh month, objects of sight, Hippocrates’s saying on the embryo, and the etymology of seven) rather than dropping these from *Leg.*⁴⁶ There are also more general considerations that speak for the sequence *Leg.* → *Opif.*, the latter being part of, and in fact the beginning, of the Exposition of the Law, which likely was written later than the Allegorical Commentary,⁴⁷ with the (composition-historically wrong)

⁴³ Cf. also the overviews by Runia, *Creation*, 301–2; Kraft, “Number Seven”, 231–2.

⁴⁴ Cf. Runia, *Creation*, 264. For this, see Terian, “Decad”.

⁴⁵ Cf. Runia, *Creation*, 301–5, presenting the parallels from Varro (in Gellius or Censorinus or Favonius), Nicomachus of Gerasa (in Ps.-Iamblichus), Theon of Smyrna, Anatolius, Macrobius as well as Clement of Alexandria and John Lydus, and points out the particular proximity with Anatolius. A Neopythagorean source on arithmology or the number seven is assumed for Philo by Moehring, “Arithmology”, 159.

⁴⁶ I therefore correct my earlier statement that Philo in *Leg.* 1.8–16 provides an “epitome” of the compendium at *Opif.* 89–128: L. Doering, *Sabbat: Sabbathalacha und -praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum* (TSAJ 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) 366–7.

⁴⁷ This has been argued in strong terms by Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria*, 1–10, 93–108, and passim. While the specific “Roman” character of the Exposition claimed by Niehoff continues to be debated, the general

placement of *Opif.* at the beginning of modern editions of Philo misleadingly suggesting the treatise's priority.

In sum, it is thus clear that Philo depends heavily on Neo-Pythagorean arithmology in his discussion of numbers, and of the hebdomad specifically. Moreover, Philo's etymology of ἑπτὰ ("seven") from σεβασμός ("reverence") and σεμνότης ("dignity"), while philologically inaccurate, is similarly attested around 100 CE by Nichomachus of Gerasa (σεβασμοῦ φασιν ἀξίαν) and there ascribed to "the Pythagoreans", with "Prorus the Pythagorean" being adduced as witness that the Pythagoreans call seven "septad" (ἀμέλει σεπτάδα προσηγόρευον αὐτήν [Ps.-Iamblichus, *Theol. arith.* 57.13–16 de Falco]). However, we also note that Philo's occasion and reason for deploying arithmology, and for the emphases he makes, are rooted in his exegesis of the *Pentateuch*. Thus, the bulk of Philo's discussion of the hebdomad is where he deals with the account of creation within seven days (*Opif.* 1–128; cf. Gen 1:1–2:3) or the completion of creation on the sixth day (cf. Gen 2:2 LXX) and his resting on the seventh day (*Leg.* 1.1–18; *Post.* 64–65) or the ensuing Sabbath commandment (*Decal.* 102–105; *Spec.* 2.56–59; cf. Exod 20:8–11; Deut 5:12–15). In addition, he comments more briefly on the hebdomad with respect to the seven-branched candelabrum (*Her.* 215–216; cf. Exod 25:31–39; cf. 37:17–24 MT; 38:13–17 LXX).

In deploying arithmology in these thematic contexts, Philo gains insights for specific exegetical moves in the interpretation of the biblical text. Apart from the mark of dignity derived from the etymology of "seven" mentioned above, we note the following hermeneutical operations: First, Philo brings the hebdomad into the closest relationship with the monad.⁴⁸ It can be seen as "the same in some sort with the number one" (μονάδι κατά τινα λόγον ὁ αὐτός [*Leg.* 1.15]), "does not differ from the monad" (μηδὲν διαφέρουσα μονάδος [*Post.* 64; cf. *Decal.* 159: μονάδι ὁμοιουμένην; also *Deus* 11–12), and is "the closest bound to the monad and the beginning (sc. of numbers)" (ἡ μονάδος οικειοτάτη καὶ ἀρχῆς [*Decal.* 102]). This close relationship is already attested in Philo's predecessor Aristobulus, writing in the middle of the second century BCE, who states that the "seventh day" (ἑβδόμην ἡμέραν), which God "gave to us as rest" (δέδωκεν ἀνάπαυσιν ἡμῖν), and "which in the real sense might also be called first" (ἡ δὴ καὶ πρώτη φυσικῶς ἂν λέγοιτο), that is, "the beginning of light (φωτὸς γένεσις) through which all things are seen together in their entirety" (frag. 5, at Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.12.9). There is no good precedent for such a proximity of seven and one in Israelite or Judean writings preceding Aristobulus; in contrast, the cult of Apollo knows of the veneration of the god on the first and the seventh day of

claim about the sequence of the Allegorical Commentary and Exposition seems correct to me; see also above, n. 38.

⁴⁸ Cf. also Moehring, "Arithmology", 159–64; Filler, "Number Seven".

the month (*νουμενία* and *ἑβδόμη*), and this coincidence of one and seven seems to be reflected also in the likening of the seven or the seventh day with the Director of the universe (i.e., Apollo), who is also one god, as ascribed to the Pythagoreans and Philolaus in *Opif.* 100 (cf. John Lydus, *Mens.* 2.12). That Judaeans, not only in the Diaspora but also in the Land of Israel, drew on “Pythagorean” arithmology to bolster their exegetical claims might also be suggested by the evidence of the Book of Jubilees, composed around the same time as Aristobulus’s work, which in Jub. 2:3 emphasizes that God created “seven great works” on the first day of creation.⁴⁹ Philo might therefore participate in wider Judaeian tradition of using “Pythagorean” arithmology for the interpretation of the creation narrative. Philo makes particular use of the proximity of one and seven in his interpretation of Gen 2:2–4 LXX in *Post.* 65, where he assigns the complete verse of Gen 2:4 (according to historical-critical scholarship the beginning of the so-called Yahwistic creation account) to the preceding context:

After this he adds: “This is the book of the creation of heaven and earth, when it was created, in the day in which God made the heaven and the earth” (Gen 2:4). Now these things were created on the first day, so that the seventh day is referred back to One (*ὥστε τὴν ἑβδόμην εἰς μονάδα τὴν πρώτην καὶ ἀρχὴν τῶν ὄλων ἀναφέρεσθαι*), the first and starting point of all. (PLCL)

Thus, the seventh day refers back to the first. In fact, since Philo, in *Leg.* 1.5–6, 16, 18 – similar to Aristobulus (Frg. 5, at Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.12.11) – champions a transitive reading of *κατέπαυσεν* (Gen 2:2–3 LXX) “brought to rest”, he claims that God did not simply rest on the seventh day but “brought to an end the formation of mortal things” while beginning “the shaping of others more divine” (*Leg.* 1.5). In addition,⁵⁰ Philo makes use of the convergence of one and seven in order to solve the problem that Hannah, according to her song in 1 Sam 2:5, speaks of the barren one who “gave birth to seven children”, while at the place within the narrative Hannah herself has given birth to only one, Samuel (with the birth of his three brothers and two sisters mentioned later at 1 Sam 2:21). Philo resolves the problem by relating the seven to the monad: Hannah “holds the One to be the same as the Seven”, and Samuel, being “appointed to God alone ... has his being ordered in accordance with the One and the Monad” (*Deus* 11, PLCL). On the other hand, the convergence of

⁴⁹ Cf. J. Ben-Dov, “Time and Natural Law in Jewish-Hellenistic Writings”, in idem/L. Doering (ed.), *The Construction of Time in Antiquity: Ritual, Art and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 9–30, at 16–17. For the identification of the seven great works (heavens, earth, waters, spirits, depths, darkness/dawn, light/evening), cf. J. VanderKam, *Jubilees: A Commentary of the Book of Jubilees* (2 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018) 177–86.

⁵⁰ For the following cf. also Moehring, “Arithmology”, 160–3.

numbers implies the seven here, taken by Philo to refer to a “soul which rests in God” and “has thus left behind the Six” (*Deus* 12, PLCL). Moreover, Philo deploys the convergence of one and seven in the interpretation of the number of sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (*Spec.* 1.187; cf. Num 29:7–8: “one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs”), the declaration of the *first* and the *seventh* day of Massot as “holy” (*Spec.* 2.157; cf. Lev 23:7–8), and the statement about the even-branched candelabrum that it was made “of one solid piece of pure gold” (ἐξ ἑνὸς χρυσοῦ καθαροῦ [*Her.* 216; cf. Exod 25:31]).

As we have already seen in *Deus* 12, Philo also contrasts the seven with the six,⁵¹ the latter being second in rank; in contrast to the seven, it is the product of an even and an odd number, represents the mortal world (two being an image of matter, three, of solid bodies; *Leg.* 1.4, 16) and especially generative processes (two forming the female and three the male element; *Spec.* 2.58; cf. *Opif.* 13; QG 3.38). Philo also uses the relationship between six and seven for his notion of the seventh day as the “birthday of the world” (γενέθλιος τοῦ κόσμου).⁵² Philo explains this notion by stating that “seven reveals as completed (τελεσφορηθέντα ἐπεδείξατο) what six has produced (ἐγέννησεν), and therefore it may be quite rightly entitled the birthday of the world” (*Spec.* 2.59, PLCL). “Seven thus is not only the number of perfection, it is also the number through which this perfection is revealed.”⁵³

IV. Conclusion

A number of references to Pythagoreans and the adoption of Neo-Pythagorean teachings, especially those connected with arithmology, show that teachings related to this school formed part of the contemporary philosophical discourse in which Philo participated. Since numbers play an important role in the “biblical” writings, Neo-Pythagorean arithmology, and here especially the features and relations of the hebdomad, are brought to the interpretation of these writings and contribute to an enhanced understanding. As examples from Aristobulus and the Book of Jubilees suggest, some interaction with Pythagorean arithmology may be assumed for Jewish tradition prior to Philo, but the latter developed it much more fully, and deployed it to new uses.

⁵¹ Cf. the discussion in Weiss, “Philo on the Sabbath”, 95–9.

⁵² *Opif.* 89; *Spec.* 1.170; 2.59, 70; *Mos.* 1.207; 2.210; cf. QG 3.49; *Mos.* 2.263. Cf. already Aristobulus, frag. 5, at Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.12.16 (ἐβδόμη ἐστὶ γενέθλιη), in a verse ascribed to “Linus”, here however used of the seventh day of the month as the birthday of Apollo.

⁵³ Moehring, “Arithmology”, 167. Cf. also Philo, *Decal.* 105. The noetic function of the seventh day is already stated by Aristobulus, frag. 5, at Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.12.9: “the beginning of light through which all things are seen together (συνθεωρεῖται) in their entirety”.

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The Double Creation of the Human Being and Philosophical Soteriology

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This essay will explore how Philo interpreted the creation of the human being according to Scripture (the Septuagint) and in what sense we can speak of “double creation” for his theory. Closely related to Philo’s doctrine of creation is his soteriology. This investigation will therefore also address what salvation is for Philo; how it depends on philosophy and on piety (which I suspect, in his view, is part and parcel of philosophy); that it seems to concern only the soul and not the body, with the apparent exclusion of bodily resurrection; and how Philo’s concept of *apokatastasis* relates to this soteriology and refers back to his doctrine of creation. Philo’s understanding of salvation will be considered in light of the concept of salvation in philosophical texts, the main source for Philo’s thinking in addition to the Jewish Scriptures. Attention will be paid to Philo’s problematic stance towards the doctrine of *metensōmatōsis* and the questions it raises with respect to Philo’s thought, especially its relation to his theory of creation and philosophical soteriology.

I. The ἀρχή: Genesis, Plato, and the (Double) Creation of the Human Being

1. Philo

In this study of Philo’s relation to philosophical discourse in both his concepts of creation and salvation, it will be necessary to investigate, in the first instance, how Philo interpreted the creation of the human being according to the Septuagint, and in what sense we can speak of a “double creation” in Philo’s theory. Precisely because Philo held a theory of “double creation”, his soteriology, it will be argued, is also “double”.

Philo interpreted Scripture in light of Platonic philosophy. His thought includes many elements that are found in so-called “Middle Platonism” or imperial pre-

Plotinian Platonism.¹ It is interesting to compare Philo's library, which featured the LXX as the central book, but also philosophical texts, with philosophical libraries in his day.² Philo was a "philosophically minded exegete, and a philosopher imbued with the Bible",³ who intended to "explain and defend the traditions of his people, showing that if properly understood they were in fact superior to the cultures of the other ethnic groups in the city, including Greeks and Romans".⁴ Philo was committed to revealing the universal philosophical message of the Bible to the Gentiles, especially learned Greeks.⁵

The philosophy Philo professes is what he calls the "Mosaic philosophy"; accordingly, he identifies "us" as "the disciples of Moses", for instance in *Det.* 86 and many other passages. Philo praises Plato as "the great Plato" (ὁ μέγας Πλάτων [*Aet.* 52]) and "the most sacred Plato" (ὁ ἱερώτατος Πλάτων [*Prob.* 13]).⁶ The latter expression introduces a quotation from Plato's *Phaedrus* (247a7). His use of Plato is selective, focuses on the *Phaedrus* itself, the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Timaeus*, *Republic*, and *Laws*, and corresponds with widespread trends in early imperial Platonism. We might even state that "Philo's Judaism is simply an important variety of Middle Platonism".⁷ Philo's reading of Scripture from a Platonic perspective was mainly made possible by the allegorical interpretation that he applied to it.

Philo was first and foremost an exegete, and thence a theologian; but philosophy provided him with the method of allegorical interpretation that he applied to Scripture, and with many notions he attached to God, such as virtue (inspired by Platonism and Stoicism). Winston was correct, I believe, to remark that Philo "wish[ed] to link his Platonist views to the Biblical text in order to achieve his goal of preserving his ancestral tradition while yet filling it with a new philosophical content". Against this background, Philo can be described as "a thoroughly Hellenized Jew who has clearly been intellectually seduced by Platonic philosophy, but who nevertheless remained steadfastly loyal to his Jewish faith, and therefore felt compelled to bend every effort to the task of reconciling the two opposing passions that energized his

¹ See D.T. Runia, "Philon von Alexandrien", *RAC* 27 (2016) 605–27.

² See G.E. Sterling, "Philo's Library and the Libraries of Philosophical Schools" in the present volume.

³ P. Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria", in M. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT 2/2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984) 252–64, esp. 264.

⁴ D.T. Runia, "Philo and the Gentiles", in D. Sim/J. McLaren (ed.), *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2013) 28–45, esp. 29.

⁵ See V. Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: Son caractère et sa portée. Observations philologiques* (ALGHJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1977) 117–155; P. Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 140–57, 206–60.

⁶ Translations are generally mine, or adapted by me, unless otherwise stated.

⁷ D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Divinations; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) 115.

spiritual existence ... He chose to Platonize his Jewish heritage through the medium of Biblical commentary”.⁸ He could do so primarily thanks to philosophical exegesis.

Philo was surely inspired by Plato for his doctrine of “double creation”, which is closely interrelated to the creation of an “inner” and an “outer” human being: the former marks the first creation, the latter the second. The motif of the inner and outer human being was already present in Plato in the form of “inner human” (ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος [*Resp.* 9.589a]). Paul, shortly after Philo, used both expressions, “inner” and “outer human being”, opposing them in Rom 7:21–23: κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον (related “to the law of my mind” [τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου]) vs. “the law of my limbs”. In 2 Cor 4:16, he speaks of “our outer human being” (ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος), which is ruining, vs. “our inner human being” (ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν), which is renewed day by day.⁹ This opposition is not dissimilar from the one used by Philo in his “double creation” narrative, as we shall see.

In addition to Plato, pre-Philonic interpretations of the creation of the human being by Jewish exegetes, embedded in Philo’s account, have been explored by Thomas Tobin through a source-critical examination.¹⁰ He focused on Philo’s exegesis of human creation in Gen 1–3, especially in Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:7. Tobin investigated the exegetical traditions available to Philo and Philo’s own developments of such traditions. In order to establish which exegeses belong to Philo and which to his predecessors – the “pre-Philonic” interpretations – Tobin listed in the latter category the interpretations declared by Philo himself as belonging to someone else, and those which do not square with a theory or stance that is Philo’s own, in that it is present everywhere in Philo’s œuvre.¹¹ Pre-Philonic exegeses of the creation account intended to harmonize the Biblical account to the philosophy in vogue in their day. As Tobin observes, “these interpretations were attempts to be true both to the biblical text and to the best in the philosophical learning of the period”.¹² Sometimes, multiple traditions were involved. In one example, an earlier Stoic interpretation of Gen 2:7 was woven into a more general Platonic reading of the creation account.¹³ These interpreters, indeed, attempted to incorporate the work of their predecessors on certain points, rather than rejecting it, since they considered themselves heirs of a tradition. According to Tobin, the exegetes on whose tradition Philo builds worked

⁸ D. Winston, “Philo of Alexandria”, in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 1:235–57, at 235.

⁹ This use was followed by Eph 3:17 (εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον [“the inner human”], related to God’s πνεῦμα).

¹⁰ T.H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* (CBQMS 14; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983).

¹¹ For the methodology followed, see Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 1–19.

¹² Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 9.

¹³ According to Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 77–101.

in the Alexandrian synagogues, which paralleled philosophical/religious schools.¹⁴ The levels of interpretation detected by Tobin are “anti-anthropomorphic interpretations”, “the single creation of the human being”, “the double creation of the human being”, and “Philo and the allegory of the soul”.¹⁵

The most interesting interpretation in connection with the present investigation are those which Tobin labels “the single creation of man” and “the double creation of man”. The former line takes Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:7 as two references to the creation of one single human being. The latter, the “the double creation of man”, interprets these passages as two references to the creation of two human beings, or, as I argue below, two stages of that creation. Philo often sided with the latter interpretation, which is Platonizing, especially in the Allegorical Commentary. Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:7 describe the creation of two different humans, one heavenly, and one earthly. This distinction is paralleled by the distinction of two intellects, one heavenly, and one earthly.¹⁶ Thus, in *Leg.* 1.90 we find the description of the two intellects: ὁ γὰρ κατ’ εἰκόνα [νοῦς] οὐ γήϊνος, ἀλλ’ οὐράνιος (“the intellect that is in the image of God is not earthly, but heavenly”) – just as in *Leg.* 1.31 we encounter the distinction of the two human beings: γήϊνος vs. οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος (the “earthly” human being vs the “heavenly human being”).

In Tobin’s view, Philo introduced some personal elements which differ from the interpretation of his predecessors, even within the “double creation” theory.¹⁷ The main one is the “allegory of the soul”,¹⁸ which is omnipresent in Philo’s exegesis and theology, and helps ground his soteriological theory of *apokatastasis* or restoration. This applies to the soul alone, not the body: a “double” eschatology coherent with the “double creation” theory.

The allegory of the soul is a primary feature of Philo’s interpretation of Scripture and included the technical lexicon of allegory.¹⁹ Philo regularly applied it to the exegesis of Genesis. Indeed, “the allegory of the soul is essentially a method of interpretation in which the figures described in the text of Genesis as figures in the external world are internalized and taken to refer to internal, spiritual realities”.²⁰ Thus, in Philo’s exegesis of the Biblical account of human creation in the *Legum allegoriae* (1–3, esp. 2) the man becomes a symbol of the “intellect” (νοῦς), the woman of

¹⁴ Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 172–6.

¹⁵ Such “layers” are studied, respectively, in chapters 3–6.

¹⁶ Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 134–45. D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (PhA 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986) 334–6, indicates inconsistencies in Philo’s account of double creation, in the various works in which he offers his interpretation.

¹⁷ Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 145–61.

¹⁸ Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 135–76.

¹⁹ This connection is noted by Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 147.

²⁰ Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 34.

“sense-perception” (αἴσθησις), and the serpent of “pleasure” (ἡδονή). In this way, these three personages are interpreted as referring to the moral life of the human being – as a great many elements of the Bible do in Philo’s allegorical interpretation.

Philo’s exegesis is close to Middle-Platonic allegorical interpretations of the *Odyssey*,²¹ which in turn will form the basis of the tradition collected by Porphyry in *De antro Nympharum* (Numenius and Cronius were prominent sources thereof).²² Porphyry allegorized Homer’s cave and its two gates as a place to which the souls descend into genesis and from which they ascend to the intelligible realm; Odysseus’s travels represent the journey of the soul to its salvation. These interpretations, collected in *De antro Nympharum*, illustrate the travel of the soul from the sensible to the intelligible realm, and Philo’s “allegory of the soul” likewise contemplates the soul’s struggle to escape the sensible realm by liberating itself from the influence of pleasure (ἡδονή).

Plato’s *Timaeus* provided a source of inspiration for double creation accounts, including that of Philo: the “intellect” or “mind” (νοῦς), the superior part of the soul, is created by the Demiurge, the good God, but the inferior parts of the soul are produced by minor, “younger” deities. The reason for this double creation is theodicy, a primary concern for Plato, who in his myth of Er coined the main tenet of theodicy (a doctrine used by Philo, e.g., in *Mut.* 31, and overwhelmingly applied by his Patristic followers, primarily Origen): “God is not responsible” for evil (θεὸς ἀναίτιος [*Resp.* 10.617e]). In the double creation account, indeed, the superior God is not responsible for the creation of the faculties of the soul that are more directly involved with moral evil. Philo had this concern for theodicy in mind, when offering his own exegesis of the account of the creation of the human being, even if his exegesis was applied, not to Plato, but to Genesis – but Genesis read through the lens of Platonism. Likewise, his idea of God owes much to both Platonism and Scripture.²³

Philo’s doctrine of the creation of the human being can be classified as “double creation” in at least two senses (with the addition of a third sense, but applied to the creation of the world, as we shall see):

(1) because he contemplates the creative activity of both God and collaborators of God (an idea inspired by Plato’s *Timaeus*, as mentioned). On the basis of the

²¹ Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 150–4.

²² See H. Tarrant and M. Johnson, “Porphyry and ‘Neopythagorean’ Exegesis in *Cave of the Nymphs* and Elsewhere”, *Méthexis* 30.1 (2018) 154–74. On *De antro Nympharum*, see N. Akçay, *Porphyry’s On the Cave of the Nymphs in its Intellectual Context* (Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition 23; Leiden: Brill, 2019); T. Dorandi (ed.), *Porphyre: L’antré des Nymphes dans l’Odyssée* (Paris: Vrin, 2019).

²³ Both Philo and Origen on the one side assimilated, but on the other also distinguish, the God of the philosophers, especially the Platonic (and Aristotelian) concept of God, and the Jewish-Christian God. E. Koskenniemi, “The God of the Philosophers and the God of Israel”, in F. Alesse/L. De Luca (ed.), *Philo of Alexandria and Greek Myth: Narratives, Allegories, and Arguments* (SPhA 10; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 129–52.

plural in Gen 1:26, “let *us* create the human being”, which was later interpreted by Christian exegetes as a reference to the Trinity and relationality in God,²⁴ Philo hypothesizes a plurality of creators for the human being “in the image of God”. God himself created the intellect, but his collaborators – identified as angels, “powers” – created free will or self-determination (ἀυτεξούσιον), the faculty that can fall into evil and that determines the “intermediate” (μεθόριος) nature of the human being, between virtue and vice, immortality and mortality (*Opif.* 73–74; *Conf.* 179): hence it is evident, again, Philo’s concern for theodicy; and

(2) because Philo contemplates two stages in creation, the first superior and the second inferior. We have seen that Tobin thinks of a Platonizing tradition behind this sense of “double creation” as well. Philo posited a “double creation” in two (not chronologically) distinct stages in the creation of the human being: the intelligible creation and the sense-perceptible one. The former corresponds to the “human” created “in the image” of God (ἄνθρωπος κατ’εἰκόνα) in Gen 1:26–27,²⁵ the latter to the “molded” human in Gen 2:7. The former is the ideal prototype, the intelligible level of the creation in the Logos, or directly the “intellect” or “mind” (νοῦς), which is properly the bearer of the image of God;²⁶ the latter is the sense-perceptible human being (*Opif.* 134; cf. *Opif.* 66).

Philo thought of the Logos as the first image of God (*Conf.* 97) and that the human being was created as an “image” (εἰκών) of the Logos (*Opif.* 134 and 139), as a secondary image or “image of the image”. I suspect that Philo here, in his interpretation of Gen 1:26–27 and of the divine Logos, might have had in mind Plato’s characterisation of every human artefact as an “image of image”. Thus, the human being can be an image of God because it is an image of the Logos – of course in its νοῦς, and not in its body – who is the image of God.

The creation of the human being, according to Philo, was not double from the chronological viewpoint, but in principle.²⁷ The human who is said to be in the image and likeness of God is the noetic human, since the human being is an image of

²⁴ Sticking to the Hebrew Bible (not the LXX used by Philo), P. Niskanen, “The Poetics of Adam: The Creation of אָדָם in the Image of אֱלֹהִים”, *JBL* 128 (2009) 417–36.

²⁵ Later Valentinian authors would distinguish the actions of these two verses. See R. Auvinen, *Philo and the Valentinians* (SPhiloM 10; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2024).

²⁶ On this aspect of νοῦς in Philo, the NT, and early Christian thinkers, see I.L.E. Ramelli, “The Reception of Paul’s Nous in the Christian Platonism of Origen and Evagrius”, in J. Frey and M. Nägele (ed.), *Der Nous bei Paulus im Horizont griechischer und hellenistisch-jüdischer Anthropologie* (WUNT 464; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021) 279–316. Specifically on Philo, see M. Nägele, *Paulus und der Nous: Eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Anthropologie vor dem Hintergrund hellenistisch-jüdischer und griechisch-römischer Konzeptionen* (WUNT 2.586; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023) 143–220; G. Sterling, “When Intelligence is not Artificial: Nous in Philo of Alexandria”, in I.L.E. Ramelli et al. (ed.), *Human and Divine Nous from Ancient to Renaissance Philosophy: Key Themes, Intersections, and Developments* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

²⁷ *Opif.* 69–71; *Leg.* 1.31, 53, 88–90.

God, not in the body but in “the intellect, the hegemonic or ruling part of the soul” (*Opif.* 69). The human as an image of God is “an idea or genus” (ἰδέα τις ἢ γένος), “intelligible” (νοητός), incorporeal, neither male nor female, “immortal by nature” (ἄφθαρτος φύσει); the human being described in Gen 2:7 as “molded” (πλασθεῖς) is corporeal, “mortal by nature” (φύσει θνητός), “sense-perceptible” (αἰσθητός), composed of body and soul, and divided into genders. There is “a huge difference” between the two (*Opif.* 134). In *Leg.* 1.31 (cf. *Leg.* 2.4), Philo explains that there are two “genera” (γένη) of human beings: one is the “heavenly human” (οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος), the other is the “earthly one” (γῆϊνος). The heavenly is “in the image of God”; therefore, it does not participate in the “corruptible earthly substance.” The earthly is “something fashioned” (πλάσμα), not a creation or “offspring” (γέννημα).²⁸

The body derives from the earth, the soul from God, “from the Father and ruler of all” (*Opif.* 135; *Migr.* 3). In *Leg.* 1.53, Philo explains that God introduced “two human beings into Paradise: one, the fashioned human, and the other the human in the image of God: God received the latter, but threw out the former”. This explains the mortality of the body and the immortality of the mind – an important duplicity that is reflected in Philo’s soteriology. Sometimes, however, such as in *Leg.* 1.88–90, Philo speaks not so much of “mind” (νοῦς) as opposed to body, as of two kinds of νοῦς: one more earthly and the other more immaterial: “The fashioned one [πλασθεῖς] is an intellect that is more earthly [γεωδέστερος]; the created one [ποιηθείς] is a more immaterial intellect [ἀυλότερος], which does not participate in corruptible matter [φθαρτῆς ὕλης ἀμέτοχος], having received a purer and finer constitution.” Adam is “a terrestrial and corruptible intellect [γῆϊνος καὶ φθαρτὸς νοῦς], while the one that is in the image of God is not terrestrial, but heavenly”.

Philo provides a Platonizing account of “double creation” not only in the case of the human being, but also in the case of the world. In *Opif.* 15–35, the intelligible world was created on “day one”,²⁹ which is before time and distinct from the following sequence of numbers; the sense-perceptible world, instead, was created on days second to sixth. God created this second creation, “the corporeal world” (ὁ σωματικὸς κόσμος), by using the first world as “an incorporeal and more divine paradigm” (ἄσώματον καὶ θεοειδέστατον παράδειγμα). From the paradigm-archetype, God derived an imitation, the world:

²⁸ B. Schaller, “Adam und Christus bei Paulus. Oder: Über Brauch und Fehlbrauch von Philo in der neutestamentlichen Forschung”, in R. Deines/K.-W. Niebuhr (ed.), *Philo und das Neue Testament: Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen. I. Internationales Symposium zum Corpus Judaico-Hellenisticum 1.–4. Mai 2003, Eisenach/Jena* (WUNT 172, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 143–53, queries whether *Opif.* and *Leg.* really both treat of the same schema, and concludes in the negative.

²⁹ For this expression see G.E. Sterling, “‘Day One’: Platonizing Exegetical Traditions of Genesis 1:1–5 in John and Jewish Authors”, *SPhiloA* 17 (2005) 118–40.

God, qua God, foresaw that a beautiful imitation (μίμημα) would not appear without a beautiful paradigm, nor any of the sense-perceptible realities could appear in a blameless form unless it would be modelled after an archetype or noetic idea. God intended to create (δημιουργῆσαι) the visible cosmos and thus shaped in advance a noetic/intellectual (νοητός) cosmos, so that he might draw inspiration from an incorporeal (ἀσώματον) and absolutely divine paradigm for the completion of the corporeal world. The more recent creation [sc. the corporeal] is a copy of the more ancient [sc. the paradigmatic one] and includes as many sense-perceptible kinds as are the noetic/intelligible ones in the paradigmatic creation. (*Opif.* 16)

Thus, God first created “the world constituted by the Ideas”, that is, “the noetic cosmos” (ὁ ἐκ τῶν ἰδεῶν κόσμος ... κόσμος νοητός), then completed also the “sense-perceptible” (αἰσθητός) world. “God, having determined to found a mighty state, first of all conceived its form in his mind, according to which form he made a world perceptible only by the intellect, and then completed one visible to the external senses, using the former as a model” for the latter (*Opif.* 19).

Philo highlights the role of the divine Logos in the demiurgic activity: taking up the metaphor of the city-state, which in his exemplarism represents the noetic cosmos, he notes that, “as the city in the mind of the architect had no physical extension, being rather stamped on the craftsman’s soul, so would the cosmos of Ideas/Forms [τῶν ἰδεῶν] have no other place than the divine Logos [ὁ θεῖος λόγος], which ordered them” (*Opif.* 20). “The incorporeal world then was already completed, having its seat in the Divine Logos, and the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made on the model of it” (*Opif.* 36). For the Logos, the shadow of God, was used as an instrument and a pattern of all creation (*Leg.* 3.96). So does Philo appropriate Plato’s *Timaeus*.

According to Philo, the Logos converted unqualified, unshaped preexistent matter (as that of Plato’s *Timaeus*), which Philo describes as “destitute of arrangement, quality, animation, or distinctive character, and full of disorder and confusion” (*Opif.* 22). The Logos is the Divine Mind, the Form of Forms, the Idea of Ideas, or the sum total of Forms or Ideas (*Det.* 75–76). The Logos is an indestructible Form of wisdom. Interpreting the garment of the high priest (Exod 28:34, 36),³⁰ Philo states: “But the seal is an Idea of Ideas, according to which God fashioned the world, being an incorporeal Idea, comprehensible only by the intellect” (*Migr.* 103). This is Philo’s exemplarism, based on Plato’s *Timaeus*.

The Godhead is continuously ordering matter by its thought. Its thinking was not anterior to its creating activity and there was never a time when it did not create, the Ideas themselves having been with God from the beginning. For God’s will is not

³⁰ A. Conway-Jones, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Tabernacle Imagery in its Jewish and Christian Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and my review in *Journal of Religion* 97.1 (2017) 106–8.

posterior to the Divinity, but is always with it. By thinking, God creates, and provides sensible things with the principle of their existence, so that the ever-creating Divine Mind and the sense-perceptible things always exist (*Prov.* 1.7, preserved in Armenian).

2. Reception in Patristic Platonism: Continuities and Developments

From the methodological viewpoint, I remarked in the previous sub-section that Philo's reading of Scripture from a Platonic perspective was made possible by the allegorical interpretation that he applied to it. This is what Christian Platonic exegetes of the Bible such as Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius will also do – to the point that most of the important philosophical and theological doctrines that passed from Philo on to these Christian Platonists did so through specific *exegetical* points and strategies.³¹

I noted that Philo chose to Platonize his Jewish heritage through the medium of biblical commentary and could do so primarily thanks to philosophical exegesis. Looking at thinkers who were probably or certainly influenced by him, Philo's exegesis is structurally similar to that of Bardaisan of Edessa – especially in his interpretation of Genesis in the light of the *Timaeus* – and Origen of Alexandria (and partially to Athenagoras's Christian Platonic reception of the *Timaeus*).³² Origen overtly acknowledges his debt to Philo,³³ and Bardaisan is arguably an allegorical exegete as well;³⁴ in any case, he read Scripture in the light of philosophy. Like Philo, Origen

³¹ See I.L.E. Ramelli, "Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and Its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa", *SPhiloA* 20 (2008) 55–99.

³² For Bardaisan, see I.L.E. Ramelli, "Bardaisan: A Christian Middle Platonist from Edessa and his Reading of Scripture in the Light of Plato", in C. Horn/S.H. Griffith (ed.), *Biblical and Qur'anic Traditions in the Middle East* (Warwick, RI: Abelian Academic, 2016) 215–38; for Origen, I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen's Philosophical Exegesis of the Scripture Against the Backdrop of Ancient Philosophy (Stoicism, Platonism) and Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaism", *StPatr* 103 (2021) 13–58; for Athenagoras, I.L.E. Ramelli, "Plato's *Timaeus* in Athenagoras, Bardaisan, and Origen", in M. Boeri and I. Costa (ed.), *Plato's Timaeus and Its Reception*, forthcoming.

³³ I.L.E. Ramelli, "Philo as Origen's Declared Model. Allegorical and Historical Exegesis of Scripture", *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 7 (2012) 1–17, and my review of J. Otto, *Philo of Alexandria and the Construction of Jewishness in Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), *SPhiloA* 31 (2019) 325–9.

³⁴ As I suggest in *Bardaisan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation, also in the Light of Origen and the Porphyrian Fragments* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias 2009; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019) 172–254. I. Jurasz, "Bardesane et l'herméneutique des Écritures: l'étude des nouveaux témoignages", *VC* (2022) 1–27, at 7, thinks that the title *Book of Mysteries* cannot refer to allegorical, symbolic exegesis ("le titre de *Livre des Mystères* – ce qui rend difficile son interprétation comme allusion à l'exégèse allégorique"), but in fact *μυστήριον* (Syriac *razā*) is one of the key terms of the lexicon of allegoresis, precisely in the time of Bardaisan, for instance in Clement and Origen. The exegesis of the Bardaisanites in *The Dialogue of Adamantius* (from

applies an allegorical reading to the Bible as well as to Greek myths, especially philosophical myths more than literary myths.³⁵ Although Philo applied his exegesis not to Plato but to Genesis, this is Genesis read through the lens of Platonism.³⁶ In this respect as in many others related to exegesis and theology, Philo exerted an enormous influence on future patristic thinkers such as Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Bardaisan, and others.³⁷

On then to some specific parallels: Just as Philo maintained that the human being is in the image of the Logos, who is the proper image of God, so also did Origen think (appealing to Gen 1:26–27) that the human being was created as an image of God – more specifically of Christ-Logos, who is in turn the invisible image of God.³⁸ Gregory of Nyssa will expand on Philo’s (and Origen’s) notion of the human being as the image of the Logos (Christ) who is the image of God, within his theory of *apokatastasis*, which passes through the theology of the image supported by Origen. Christ,

who surpasses all knowledge and apprehension (ὁ ὑπερέκεινα πάσης γνώσεώς τε καὶ καταλήψεως), the ineffable, inexpressible, and inexplicable (ὁ ἄφραστος καὶ ἀνεκλάλητος καὶ ἀνεκδιήγητος), in order to restore you into the image of God (ἵνα σε ποιήσῃ πάλιν εἰκόνα θεοῦ), out of love for humankind,³⁹ became “image of the invisible

which Jurasz concludes that Bardaisan practiced a literal exegesis of the Bible) does not appear to be necessarily only literal, nor does it reflect Bardaisan’s own practice, but that of some followers. In general, what I hypothesised in the monograph above is not that Bardaisan’s exegesis was exclusively allegorical, but that it was *both* literal *and* allegorical, as Origen’s exegesis was; thus, Jurasz’ analysis in fact converges with my own. There is no fragment in which Bardaisan explicitly opposes allegory or allegorical interpretation, but he rather uses allegory himself, including in the symbolism with which he Christianised Plato’s *Timaeus*.

³⁵ On Philo see Ramelli, “Origen’s Philosophical Allegoresis of the Bible”. In addition, without consideration of Origen, see: G. Roskam, “Philo’s Reception of Greek Mythology”, in Alesse/De Luca, *Philo of Alexandria and Greek Myth*, 19–44 and F. Calabi, “Histoires grecques, récits bibliques: La lecture des mythes chez Philon d’Alexandrie”, in Alesse/De Luca, *Philo of Alexandria and Greek Myth*, 45–71; and C.J.P. Friesen, “Heracles and Philo of Alexandria: The Son of Zeus between Torah and Philosophy, Empire and Stage”, in Alesse/De Luca, *Philo of Alexandria and Greek Myth*, 176–99. Origen interpreted Plato’s myth of Poros, Penia, and Eros, probably the Atlantis myth in the *Timaeus*, and others. See I.L.E. Ramelli, “The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, ‘Pagan’ and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato”, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18 (2011) 335–71; eadem, “The Strategy and Functions of Philosophical Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria”, in J. Wallace/A. Despotis (ed.), *Greek and Byzantine Philosophical Exegesis* (Eastern Church Identities 5; Paderborn: Brill Schönningh, 2021) 109–45.

³⁶ See I.L.E. Ramelli, “The Logos/Nous One-Many between ‘Pagan’ and Christian Platonism”, *StPatr* 102 (2021) 11–44.

³⁷ There is a great deal of literature, also partial; for further bibliography and arguments, see I.L.E. Ramelli, “Philo as One of the Main Inspirers of Early Christian Hermeneutics and Apophatic Theology”, *Adamantius* 24 (2018) 276–92.

³⁸ E.g., Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 1.13; *Princ.* 1.2.6.

³⁹ Φιλανθρωπία: as Gregory states in his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, on the basis of Origen’s doctrine of the ἐπίνοιαί of Christ, this name has become “the very name of Christ” (GNO 6.107).

God” (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου Col 1:15]),⁴⁰ so as to be configured to you in the proper form that he took on (ὥστε τῇ ἰδίᾳ μορφῇ, ἣν ἀνέλαβεν, ἐν σοὶ μορφωθῆναι), and that, thanks to him, you might be again configured to the impression of his archetypal beauty (σὲ πάλιν δι’ ἑαυτοῦ πρὸς τὸν χαρακτῆρα τοῦ ἀρχετύπου συσχηματισθῆναι κάλλου), to become again what you were from the beginning (εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι ὅπερ ἦς ἐξ ἀρχῆς).⁴¹

This, through the theology of the image, is one of the main ways in which Gregory supported his doctrine of *apokatastasis*.

Alongside Origen’s retrieval of the anthropological “image of the image”, Philo’s exemplaristic idea of the Logos as *κόσμος νοητός* providing the paradigms of all creatures, like the architect’s project of a house, returns in very similar terms in Origen,⁴² with the critical difference that Origen rejects the notion of preexistent matter (if this was in fact supported by Philo).⁴³ Indeed, in the footsteps of Philo, Origen also thought that the paradigms of all things existed in God’s Logos-Wisdom from eternity, specifying that this was before their creation as substances (“substantialiter”).⁴⁴ This allowed Origen to rule out both substantial creatures’ coeternity with God

⁴⁰ A key biblical quotation for Origen, both in a fragment quoted by Athanasius (which I examined in “Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism” VC 63 [2009]: 217–63; eadem, “The Father in the Son, the Son in the Father in the Gospel of John: Sources and Reception of Dynamic Unity in Middle and Neoplatonism, ‘Pagan’ and Christian”, JBR 7 [2020] 31–66) and in his construction of the Trinitarian notion of Hypostasis: eadem, “Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis”, HTR 105 (2012) 302–50.

⁴¹ *Perf.* GNO 8/1. 194.14–195.5.

⁴² See Ramelli, “The Logos/Nous One-Many”.

⁴³ Origen argued for *creatio ex nihilo* especially in *Princ.* 2.9.2 and according to Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 7.20.1–9 (probably from his lost *Commentary on Genesis*, D3 Metzler): “Listen to Origen’s arguments!” (τῶν Ὀριγένους ἄκουε), Eusebius begins. Origen brings here the preexistence of matter *ad absurdum* (using indeed ἄλογον [*Praep. ev.* 7.20.8]) on philosophical bases, showing that it contradicts Plato’s *Timaeus* and its characterisation of God as “demiurge, Father, benefactor, and good” (*Praep. ev.* 7.20.3). In this way, Origen claims to be the one who best interpreted Plato. Origen differentiates between God, who can create all “without (preexistent) matter” (χωρὶς ὕλης), and an “artisan” (τεχνίτης), who cannot. “With respect to this problem, it is necessary to make an investigation into the power of God (ζητητέον περὶ δυνάμεως θεοῦ), whether the God-head, wanting to found whatever it likes (θελήσας ὑποστήσαι ὅτι βούλεται), if its will is not aporetic or enfeebled, it cannot found whatever it wants (οὐ δύναται ὑποστήσαι ὅ βούλεται)” (*Praep. ev.* 7.20.1). The full argument follows, for the rest of the nine subchapters (*Praep. ev.* 7.20.1–9). See Ramelli, “Matter in the Dialogue of Adamantius” and eadem, “Plato’s *Timaeus* in Athenagoras”.

⁴⁴ “Neque ingenitas et coaeternas Deo creaturas dicamus, neque rursus, cum nihil boni prius egerit Deus, in id ut ageret esse conversum, cum verus sit ... quia ‘Omnia in sapientia fecisti’. Et si utique in Sapientia omnia facta sunt, cum Sapientia semper fuerit, secundum praefigurationem et praeformationem semper erant in Sapientia ea, quae protinus etiam substantialiter facta sunt” (Origen, *Princ.* 1.4.5); also Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.22. The preexistence of all λογικά in Christ-Wisdom does not explain the possibility of their fall, which is accounted for not by their *praeformatio* in Wisdom, but by their subsequent creation as substances (“protinus ... substantialiter”), probably conceived by Origen as νόες endowed with spiritual bodies. These are the subjects of the fall.

(while their paradigms *are* coeternal) and a creation in time before which God was inactive. The latter would have implied the mutability of God, which Philo had already ruled out, thereby excluding a temporal creation entailing a change in God's nature (*Cher.* 90).

Not only the exemplaristic theory of the Logos as the Mind of God containing the paradigms of all creatures, and not only the notion of eternal creation (at least in a paradigmatic form), but also Philo's "double creation" is discernible in Origen⁴⁵ and later in Gregory of Nyssa,⁴⁶ albeit with different details. Although he was no less preoccupied with theodicy than Philo was, Origen rejected Philo's above-mentioned notion of "collaborators" of God in creation, keeping only the Logos – in his view identifiable with Christ – as the main agent of creation qua intelligible cosmos. He explained the plural in the sentence "let us create the human being" in Gen 1:26 as a reference to the three hypostases of the Trinity, not to other collaborators of God. However, Origen retained, to some extent, the idea of a first, intelligible creation of intellects and a second, sense-perceptible creation of heavy, mortal bodies and the material world such as we experience it.

Origen's theory was sophisticated. In his view, God created initially many intelligences, or *νόες*, very likely already equipped with spiritual bodies, since Origen is clear that only the Trinity is entirely incorporeal.⁴⁷ Originally, all these intelligences were equal and enjoyed harmony and unity among themselves and with God, but after sin, which came about as a result of a "cooling" of rational creatures' love for God, there was a disruption and dispersion of wills, and some creatures had their spiritual bodies turned into heavy, mortal bodies, and became humans, and others had their bodies transformed into "ridiculous", dark, and immortal, and became demons. Only those *νόες* who did not detach themselves from God, or did so only minimally, kept their spiritual, immortal bodies: the angels. Origen even speaks of Satan, the first sinner, as "the principle of the molding of the Lord", where *πλάσμα*, subsequent to sin, is opposed to the original "creation" (*κτίσις, ποίησις*).⁴⁸

Indeed, the same distinction between creating and fashioning that Philo makes in *Leg.* 1.31 (cf. 2.4), between the "heavenly human" (*οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος*) in the image of God, a "creation" or "offspring" (*γέννημα*), vs. the "earthly" (*γῆϊνος*) human that participates in the "corruptible earthly substance", and is "something fashioned"

⁴⁵ Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 1.13; *Princ.* 1.2.6; *Dial.* 15.28; *Hom. Jer.* 1.10; *Comm. Matt.* 14.16.

⁴⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Opif. hom.* 181ad.

⁴⁷ See I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen on the Unity of Soul and Body in the Earthly Life and Afterwards and His Impact on Gregory of Nyssa", in J. Ulrich/A. Usacheva/S. Bhayro (ed.), *The Unity of Soul and Body in Patristic and Byzantine Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2021) 38–77.

⁴⁸ Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.17.97–98; 20.22.182.

(πλάσμα), would be carefully kept by Origen, who made it a hallmark of his anthropology.⁴⁹

Origen, nevertheless, seems to have offered a weaker form of double creation than Philo had, or an enfeebled form, in that in his view rational creatures did not acquire bodies for the first time only after sin and as a consequence of sin, but had their original spiritual bodies – from the beginning of their existence as substances, not before – turned into heavier, worse bodies. Each rational creature has only one body, from creation to the eschatological τέλος (as Origen rejected *metensomatōsis*), but this body changes qualities in accordance with the spiritual advancement of the νοῦς. This is in fact the meaning of Origen's doctrine of *ensomatōsis* or “in-corporation” of a soul – that each rational creature has only one body, as opposed to “pagan” *metensomatōsis* or transmigration of souls, which holds that each soul enters many bodies one after another. Origen, as I argue extensively elsewhere,⁵⁰ did not have the embodiment depend on the fall, since the body was created before it, and the fall determined only its transformation (from angelic and spiritual to mortal or demonic).

Philo's theory of the double creation of the world passed on not only to Clement⁵¹ and Origen (particularly in *Hom. Gen.* 1.2 and in his lost *Commentary* on Genesis), but also to Eusebius (*Praep. ev.* 11.6.19) and Gregory of Nyssa, in both cases thanks to Origen's influence and probably a direct reading of Philo's writings. Gregory, the most insightful follower of Origen, distinguished the intelligible creation on the first day – what Philo called “day one” – as God's overarching plan, and the sense-perceptible creation as the development of the intelligible one into six days.⁵² Gregory presents traces of “double creation” not only in cosmology, but also in anthropology, although he too, like Origen, displays a mitigated kind of double creation. He explicitly speaks of “double creation” in *Opif. hom.* 16, offering an interpretation of the creation of the human being in the image and likeness of God. There was neither male nor female therein; this division is “a departure from the prototype”, since in Christ there is “neither male nor female” (Gregory cites here Gal 3:28).⁵³ Like Philo, Gregory also notes that what is in the image of God is the intellect, νοῦς, and not the mortal body: “Double is the creation of our nature, one which is assimilated to the divinity, and the other which is divided according to this division”, that into genders. The latter is alien to God; it rather belongs to animals. Passions arose in humans

⁴⁹ I.L.E. Ramelli, “Origen”, in S. Cartwright/A. Marmodoro (ed.), *A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 245–66.

⁵⁰ Ramelli, “Origen”, in Cartwright/Marmodoro, *A History of Mind and Body*.

⁵¹ Especially in Clement, *Strom.* 5.93.3–94.4.

⁵² Gregory of Nyssa, *Hexaëmeron* (PG 44.72).

⁵³ I.L.E. Ramelli, “Gal 3:28 and Aristotelian (and Jewish) Categories of Inferiority”, *Eirene* 55 (2019) 275–310.

after their fall, when these assumed, instead of the angelic life, the irrational life of animals (*Opif. hom.* 18), which consists in choosing good and evil rather than good alone (*Opif. hom.* 20). Thus, in its mortal corporeality, the part that is divided into genders, humanity is akin to brutes, whereas its νοῦς is in the image of God. “The priority belongs to the intellectual component” (προτερεύει τὸ νοερόν), whereas the association with irrationality came afterwards (*Opif. hom.* 17). Indeed, Scripture first speaks of the creation in the image of God, and only afterwards of “male and female”, which does not apply to God, but to beasts.

Creation in the image of God entails that the human being initially participated in the divine goods, since God is the supreme Good. Like Origen, Gregory also warns that in his interpretation he is not speaking dogmatically, but “by exercise”. Scripture uses the aorist when it states that God “made (ἐποίησε) the human being”, meaning that God created all humanity “once and for all” (ἅπαξ), “in the first creation or constitution” (ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ κατασκευῇ). Gregory observes that the intellect is present in all humans; gender difference “was created afterwards, as the last thing, added to the molded/shaped human being” (προσκατασκευάσθη τελευταῖον τῷ πλάσματι), in view of the fall (*Opif. hom.* 17). Like Philo and Origen, Gregory in his double creation model distinguishes the human being made in the image of God in Gen 1:26 from the human in Gen 2:7, “a thing fashioned” (πλάσμα) from the earth. Gregory seems to have thought of an initial union of intellectual soul and spiritual/angelic body,⁵⁴ a model which, like that of Origen, differs from that of the preexistence of bare souls and enfeebles the double creation theory. Nevertheless, he does speak of “double creation” and is probably aware of Philo’s – as well as Origen’s – model.

II. Soteriology and the (Double) τέλος that Mirrors the (Double) ἀρχή

1. A Twofold Destiny for the Intellectual Soul and the Body in Philo

Closely related to Philo’s doctrine of “double creation” is his soteriology and eschatology. Philo maintained that both creation and salvation are achieved through the same Logos.⁵⁵ In Philo’s view, just as the creation is double, intelligible and sense-

⁵⁴ This is confirmed by *Hom. ecl.* 1, where Gregory claims that the risen body is the same as that of the first creation: “The body was made and created by God’s hands exactly as the resurrection will reveal it in due course. For, just as you will see it after the resurrection, so was it created at the beginning.” Thus, the human being in the beginning was created with a spiritual, angelic body, which due to the fall was transformed into a mortal, gendered, and corruptible body. See I.L.E. Ramelli, “Gregory of Nyssa”, in Cartwright/Marmodoro, *A History of Mind and Body*, 283–305.

⁵⁵ R. Cox, *By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (BZNW 145; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).

perceptible, so will also the *τέλος* be double: restoration and salvation for the intellectual soul, if good, and destruction for the material body in any case. Salvation for Philo depends on philosophy, especially virtue ethics, and piety – the most “theological” of all virtues and the “queen” of all virtues in his theory. Salvation seems to concern only the soul and not the body, with the apparent exclusion of any bodily resurrection. Philo’s concept of *apokatastasis* or restoration relates to this soteriology, and likewise refers back to his doctrine of creation: the inner human being, the *νοῦς*, created in the image of God, will be restored, while the object of the second creation will not be restored.

Restoration and salvation are closely related in Philo, given that the former bears a sense that is strongly soteriological. In Philo the restoration or *apokatastasis* of the soul is essentially its restoration to virtue, and ultimately to God its creator. The human soul was created as *νοῦς* without the passions that besiege the soul, and its restoration – essentially a restoration to *νοῦς* that is common to Christian Platonists such as Bardaisan, Origen and Evagrius⁵⁶ – is to such a condition of *ἀπάθεια*. This theme is indicated with special clarity by the moral conception of slavery and freedom in Philo, which is similar to that of the Stoics: the worst kind of slavery is not juridical slavery, which is an indifferent thing (*ἀδιάφορον*), but moral slavery, namely the enslavement to passions.⁵⁷ The *apokatastasis* of the soul, on the contrary, entails its total liberation from passions.

Indeed, Philo’s position toward slavery proves to be pervasively impacted by Stoicism, which emphasized that real freedom is freedom from passions and real slavery is enslavement to passions.⁵⁸ Philo illustrates this via his description of the Therapeutae’s rejection of slavery both *de jure* and *de facto*, within an idealized account of this Jewish ascetic community in *De vita contemplativa*. This, however, does not mean that he shared their views – at least with respect to their applicability to non-ascetic society. Philo thought that the institution of slavery was “absolutely necessary” for the performance of menial tasks, in order to spare the owners such tasks.⁵⁹

In his evaluation of slavery, Philo seems closer to the Stoics, who regarded moral slavery as evil, but juridical slavery as an indifferent thing, and did not generally fight

⁵⁶ See I.L.E. Ramelli, “The Soul in Bardaisan, Origen, and Evagrius: Between Unfolding and Subsumption”, S. Rappe/D.A. Layne/C. Addey (ed.), *Soul Matters: Plato and Platonists on the Nature of the Soul [FS John Finamore]* (WGRWSup 22; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023) 415–62.

⁵⁷ On Philo’s main treatise in this connection, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, see I.L.E. Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 92–6, as well as the essays by Maren Niehoff and Troel Engberg-Pedersen in the present volume.

⁵⁸ On the Stoic moral theory of slavery and freedom: Ramelli, *Social Justice*, 45–60.

⁵⁹ Philo, *Spec.* 2.82, 123; See I.L.E. Ramelli, “Christian Slavery in Theology and Practice: Its Relation to God, Sin, and Justice”, in B.W Longenecker/D.E Wilhite (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) 586–612.

for its abolition, nor renounced keeping slaves themselves. Philo, who was a man of means, seems not to have renounced slave ownership, any more than Seneca did. Like Seneca, to be sure, Philo advocated a humane treatment of one's slaves, remarking that they should be provided with adequate food, care, clothes, and time for rest; in this way, they would also work better. Philo criticized masters who humiliated their slaves, who could well be morally nobler than their owners.⁶⁰ Philo, embracing the Stoic view, does not think with Aristotle that one can be a juridical slave "by nature", rightly destined to be so. People of the highest ethical and intellectual standard, the best of humanity, can be juridical slaves. Philo definitely aligns with Stoicism when he remarks about moral slavery: "Those people in whom anger or desire or any other passion prevails, or any insidious vice, are utterly enslaved, whereas all those whose life is regulated by the moral law are free."⁶¹ Animals, being deprived of reason, are by nature slaves of humans, while humans are not slaves by nature.⁶² This is the same principle that Philo also attributes to the Therapeutae, and is consistent with Stoic ideas about slavery, not to Aristotle's theory of natural slavery. Philo spells out this principle further by stating that slaves are such "by fortune", but they have "the same nature as their owners".⁶³

Philo appears to allude to Chrysippus when he states that "masters should treat their slaves, whom they have acquired with money, as hired workers (*ὡς μισθωτοῖς*), not as slaves by nature (*μὴ ὡς φύσει δούλοις*)."⁶⁴ Chrysippus had claimed that "a slave is a hired worker for life" (*viz.*, a *μισθωτός* or "mercenarius").⁶⁵ Not by chance, von Arnim included Philo's passage in his collection of ancient Stoic fragments and testimonia immediately before Chrysippus's passage.⁶⁶

That Philo had the Stoic theory in mind when dealing with the issue of moral slavery and legal slavery is confirmed by his explicit reference to Zeno in the *Probus*, and his alleged relation to the Jewish Scripture, in connection with the question of slavery. Philo maintains that Zeno drew inspiration from the Jewish Torah, in particular from the episode of Isaac's prayer to God that Esau might be the slave of his brother Jacob (Gen 27:40). This, because Esau was not wise, and being a slave of a wise man was the best for him.⁶⁷ Zeno, according to Philo, drew from this story the principle that every virtuous and wise person is free and every fool is a slave.

⁶⁰ Philo, *Spec.* 2.83, 90–91.

⁶¹ Philo, *Spec.* 2.45.

⁶² Philo, *Spec.* 2.69.

⁶³ Philo, *Spec.* 3.137.

⁶⁴ Philo, *Spec.* 2.122.

⁶⁵ *SVF* 3.352B.

⁶⁶ As *SVF* 3.352A.

⁶⁷ Philo, *Prob.* 57.

In other parts of his corpus as well, Philo finds the Bible to be the source of this philosophical doctrine. Thus, in his interpretation of an earlier part of the Isaac and Esau narrative in the *Legum allegoriae*, Philo uses allegorical exegesis to read the story along the lines of the Stoic doctrine of moral slavery and freedom.⁶⁸ After citing the divine decree in Gen 25:23, “The elder shall serve the younger”, Philo observes: “This is because in God’s judgment what is base and irrational is by nature a slave, while what is morally noble, endowed with reason, and better is royal and free.” Philo interprets this episode as the expression of the Stoic tenet that the virtuous person is morally free and the vicious is morally a slave. Only the former can attain salvation, and does so through theology and devotion to God. Indeed, the mother of Esau and Isaac, Rebecca, is “the soul who serves God”. Philo identifies Esau as the symbol of a foolish person, who is enslaved by passions: “You are a slave of harsh and unbearable masters dwelling inside you.”⁶⁹ From these masters – Plato’s and the Stoics’ “tyrants” – the soul must free itself with a view to its restoration and salvation.

The titles of Philo’s treatises devoted to slavery are in line with Stoic teaching on moral slavery (which is to be destroyed in the process of the *apokatastasis* of the soul): *Quod omnis probus liber sit* (*That Every Virtuous Person is Free*), which is preserved; and a lost treatise arguing the correlated thesis that “every bad person is a slave”. Philo’s ideas on moral slavery and freedom and other points reproduce the Stoic thought so exactly that many fragments from the third volume of von Arnim’s above-mentioned edition of the fragments from the old Stoics, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, on Stoic ethics, come from Philo’s works. Philo was not the only Jewish author to adopt this tenet. Already, the book of Sirach in the LXX, from the second century BCE, expressed a position concerning slavery that came close to the Stoic one: “Free citizens will serve a wise slave, and an intelligent person will not complain” (Sir 10:25). However, the Stoic influence on Philo’s ideas on slavery is wider⁷⁰ and is consistent with the impact that especially Stoic ethics exerted on Philo.

In *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, Philo makes a programmatic distinction between juridical slavery and freedom as pertaining to bodies and moral slavery and freedom as pertaining to souls.⁷¹ His analysis, as he announces, will be devoted only to the latter. The former are not the subject of philosophical investigation, because they depend on chance, that is to say, on extrinsic factors, not on a subject’s moral choices. The body-soul distinction on which Philo’s theory is based here is the same

⁶⁸ Philo, *Leg.* 3.88–104.

⁶⁹ Philo, *Leg.* 3.192–194.

⁷⁰ See also Prov 17:2: “A capable slave will dominate an incompetent son and share the inheritance with the brothers.” Sir 33:24–28 however advocates harshness toward slaves; likewise Sir 42:5. But see Sir 33:30–31: “If you have a servant, let him be as yourself, because you have bought him with blood. If you have a servant, treat him as a brother, for as your own soul you will need him”; similarly Sir 7:20–21.

⁷¹ Philo, *Prob.* 17.

that is at work in his doctrine of double creation, as seen above, and in his doctrine of salvation: only the intellectual soul will be restored to God, its creator. Such a restoration will include the attainment of *ἀπάθεια*, the liberation from passions which is the real enslavement. Thus, the doctrine of the *apokatastasis* of the soul speaks of its salvation in terms of its liberation from the enslavement to passions. Philo's notion of *apokatastasis* is based on the medical meaning of *ἀποκατάστασις* and *ἀποκαθίστημι*, as far as the restoration of the soul is concerned.⁷² Philo was aware not only of the Stoic doctrine of moral slavery, but also of Stoic allegoresis, which he applied to Scripture, and of the Stoic theory of *apokatastasis*. Indeed, besides showing the greatest affinities with Platonism, Philo also reveals good deal of familiarity with Stoicism and Pythagoreanism.⁷³ He could not receive Stoic immanence owing to the transcendence of the biblical God,⁷⁴ but Stoic ethics and physics had a large impact on his philosophical ideas.

In Stoicism, the doctrine of *apokatastasis* was the cosmological theory of the cyclical return of the universe to its original condition at the end of every great year. Eusebius attributes the term *ἀποκατάστασις* to this Stoic doctrine: "The common *logos*, that is, the common nature, becomes more and more abundant, and in the end dries up everything and resolves everything into itself. It returns to the first *logos* and the famous 'resurrection' [*ἀνάστασις*] that makes the great year, when the universal restoration [*ἀποκατάστασις*] takes place."⁷⁵ Eusebius describes the Stoic doctrine as a universal *apokatastasis*. This was interesting to him, who was in turn a supporter of universal *apokatastasis*, though not in the Stoic cosmological sense, but in the Christian (Origenian) sense.⁷⁶ The Stoics' cosmological doctrine of *apokatastasis*

⁷² For the basis of Philo's doctrine of *apokatastasis* in the LXX and in Greek philosophy (Stoicism primarily), see I.L.E. Ramelli, "Philo's Doctrine of *Apokatastasis*: Philosophical Sources, Exegetical Strategies, and Patristic Aftermath", *SPhiloA* 26 (2014) 29–55. Here it is also argued that Philo postulates the restoration of Israel in addition to that of the soul, but does not use the terminology of *apokatastasis* in this connection.

⁷³ See D.T. Runia, "The Rehabilitation of the Jackdaw: Philo of Alexandria and Ancient Philosophy", in R. Sorabji/R. Sharples (ed.), *Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BC-200 AD*, (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 2007) 483–500; Reprinted in idem, *Philo of Alexandria: Collected Studies 1997–2021* (TSAJ 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023) 117–34. E. Matusova, "Allegorical Interpretation of the Pentateuch in Alexandria: Inscribing Aristobulus and Philo in a Wider Literary Context", *SPhiloA* 22 (2010) 1–51, at 21, rejects the widespread hypothesis of the influence of Stoic allegoresis on Philo's allegorical method, rather pointing to Pythagorean allegorical criticism.

⁷⁴ This is emphasized, e.g., in Philo, *Abr.* 79–80; *Leg.* 3.36, where for this reason God is called *ἄπιος*; *Somn.* 1.67, where God is declared ineffable; *Mut.* 9–10, where God is said to be incomprehensible (*ἀκατάληπτος*), cf. *Post.* 15. See I.L.E. Ramelli, "The Divine as Inaccessible Epistemological Object in Ancient Platonism: A Common Philosophical Pattern across Religious Traditions", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75.2 (2014) 167–88.

⁷⁵ Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 15.19.1–3 = *SVF* 2.599.

⁷⁶ See I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen, Eusebius, and the Doctrine of *Apokatastasis*", in A. Johnson/J. Schott (ed.), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Traditions and Innovations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) 307–23.

was linked to the cosmologico-astronomical meaning of the term ἀποκατάστασις. This is especially evident from SVF 2.625, as preserved by Nemesius (*Nat. hom.* 38): “The Stoics maintain that the planets will return [ἀποκαθισταμένους] into the same constellation ... Universal restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] takes place not only once, but many times, or better the same things will continue to be repeated [ἀποκαθίστασθαι] indefinitely, without end.”

Stoic *apokatastasis* is in fact the unending repetitions of a cosmic cycle:⁷⁷ aeons or “great years” succeed to one another, identical or virtually identical to one another,⁷⁸ with the same persons making the same choices. In periodical conflagrations, all beings return to fire, which is aether, pneuma, Logos, and Zeus, the supreme, immanent deity. After that, this immanent principle constitutes again another “universe” (πᾶν, ὄλον). The noun ἀποκατάστασις and the verb ἀποκαθίστημι in reference to the full Stoic doctrine of *apokatastasis* are attested by Christian sources alone, such as Eusebius and Nemesius. Marcus Aurelius, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Simplicius⁷⁹ have παλιγγενεσία and πάλιν γίγνομαι, which signify a rebirth or renewal. Either ἀποκαθίστημι or καθίστημι is attested in a Greek fragment from Chrysippus’s *On Providence* on *apokatastasis* and preserved by another Christian author, Lactantius:⁸⁰ “This being the situation, it is clear that it is not at all impossible that we too, after our death, once given cycles of time have elapsed [περιόδων τινῶν εἰλημμένων χρόνου or περιόδω τινὶ χρόνου], are restored/reconstituted [καταστήσασθαι or ἀποκαταστήναι]⁸¹ into the structure [σχῆμα] that we presently have.”⁸² Within the issue of cosmic renovation (*innovatio mundi*), in this fragment the question seems to be the restoration of human beings after their death. Lactantius himself is dealing with the resurrection (called *anastasis*, the transliteration of Greek ἀνάστασις) and attempts to draw parallels with Stoic *apokatastasis*⁸³: “Since not only the prophets, but also ‘pagan’ poets and philosophers agree that there will be the resurrection of the dead (“anastasim mortuorum”), let nobody ask us how this will be possible, since it is impossible to account for the works of God: but if God in the beginning created

⁷⁷ See also SVF 2.599.

⁷⁸ See R. Salles, “Tiempos, objetos, y sucesos en la metafísica estoica”, *Diánoia* 47–49 (2002) 3–22; M. Boeri, “Incorpóreos, tiempo, e individuación en el estoicismo”, *Diánoia* 48–51 (2003) 181–93.

⁷⁹ Marcus Aurelius, *Ad seips.* 11.1.3; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Ar. Gen. et corr.* 314.13–15; Simplicius, *In Ar. Phys.* 886.12–13.

⁸⁰ Lactantius, *Inst.* 7.23 = SVF 2.623: “In libros quos de providentia scripsit, cum de innovatione mundi loqueretur”, where *innovatio* seems to render παλιγγενεσία.

⁸¹ Depending on the manuscript tradition: see S. Freund, “Chrysipp und die ἀποκατάστασις: Beobachtung zu Text, Zusammenhang, Überlieferungsgeschichte, und Rezeption von SVF II 623”, *Rheinisches Museum* 149 (2006) 51–64, esp. 53.

⁸² On this fragment see Freund, “Chrysipp”, 51–64.

⁸³ See J. Mansfeld, “Resurrection Added: The *Interpretatio Christiana* of a Stoic Doctrine”, *VC* 37 (1983) 218–33.

the human being in an ineffable way I do not know, let us believe that a human being can be restored (“restitui”) by the same God who created it from the very beginning, out of nothing” (*Inst.* 7.23.5). Here “restitui” corresponds to the passive of ἀποκαθίστημι. Notwithstanding Lactantius’s parallels, Stoic restoration differed from the Christian notion of resurrection. In the Stoic theory of cosmic *apokatastasis*, human beings will be restored in order to live again on earth the same life they had lived before, in the previous cosmic cycles, and they will live after, in the following, unending cycles. Such a theory was to be criticized by Origen, when he intended to build up his own, Christian theory of *apokatastasis*.⁸⁴

While the Stoics elaborated upon the astronomico-cosmological meaning of ἀποκατάστασις, Philo, as mentioned, took up mainly the medical meaning of ἀποκατάστασις, related to the notion of the illness of the soul and its recovery, equated with restoration. His focus was on psychagogy: the guidance of souls toward God by the Logos,⁸⁵ who spiritually enlighten the soul. This is a mystical act performed by a spiritual pedagogue and exemplar at the same time,⁸⁶ as explained particularly in *Sacr.* 8 and *Conf.* 145–147. In the former passage, Philo remarks that, “by the same Logos with which God has made the universe, God also leads the perfect person from earthly things up [ἀνάγει] to Himself”.⁸⁷ This is the link, guaranteed by the Logos of God, between creation and salvation.

Indeed, Philo’s doctrine of the *apokatastasis* of the soul was grounded not only in philosophy, but certainly also in Scripture (which in turn he allegorized philosophically). In the LXX, used by Philo, the agent of restoration is always God, and the verb expressing this restoration is ἀποκαθίστημι or ἀποκαθιστάνω. Philo uses the term ἀποκατάστασις, which in the LXX is unattested, whereas the corresponding verb ἀποκαθίστημι / ἀποκαθιστάνω is abundantly present therein. In Hellenistic Judaism, the noun ἀποκατάστασις is found in *Let. Aris.* 123, although not in the sense of restoration of the soul, but understood in its political meaning: the restoration of someone after an exile or reconstitution of someone into his or her original condition.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ See the argument in the introduction to I.L.E. Ramelli, *Tempo ed eternità in età antica e patristica* (Assisi: Cittadella, 2015).

⁸⁵ This emphasis on spiritual pedagogy is singled out by Paul Blowers as one of the most characteristic features of Philo’s thought in *Drama of the Divine Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 47.

⁸⁶ D. Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1985) 15–18, 43–58.

⁸⁷ On this passage see Cox, *By the Same Word*, 87–94.

⁸⁸ In the lexical work *De adfinitum vocabulorum differentia*, probably due to Ammonius the grammarian, at entry 71 a lexical distinction is drawn between the rendering of an object, which is indicated with ἀπόδοσις, and the reintegration or restoration of a person into his or her previous state, which is indicated by ἀποκατάστασις. On *Aristeas*, see now L.M. White/G.A. Keddie, *Jewish Fictional Letters from Hellenistic Egypt: The Epistle of Aristeas and Related Literature* (WGRW 37; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018).

Philo uses the noun ἀποκατάστασις with reference to the *apokatastasis* of the soul, meaning its restoration to health or recovery.⁸⁹ The noun ἀποκατάστασις occurs in *Her.* 293 to indicate the restoration of the soul to perfection. Here, he interprets Gen 15:16 according to the LXX: “at the fourth generation they will return here” (τετάρτη δὲ γενεᾷ ἀποστραφήσονται ὧδε). He reads this verse allegorically and observes that this return was mentioned “not only in order to point to the time in which they will inhabit the Holy Land, but also to indicate the perfect restoration of the soul (ὑπὲρ τοῦ τελείαν ἀποκατάστασιν ψυχῆς παραστήσαι)”. Philo joins thereby the idea of the restoration of Israel (called ἀποκατάστασις by Josephus but not by Philo himself)⁹⁰ to that of the restoration of the soul, which is its allegorical counterpart.

The perfect restoration of the soul is its restoration to its original perfection, namely the state in which it was still free from passions and vices/sins. As Philo explains in *Her.* 293–299, at the beginning the soul is like a wax tablet without any mark, but soon it starts to acquire “evils” (κακά), “sins” (ἁμαρτήματα), and “passions” (πάθη). Here, Philo cites Gen 8:21 to prop up his argument: “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” The superimposition of πάθη, that is, “evil passions” – Philo uses Stoic terminology – onto the soul demands the “therapeutic action of philosophy” (ιατρικὴ φιλοσοφία), to liberate the soul from such an enslavement. The intervention of philosophy, which is indispensable to the *apokatastasis* of the soul, unfolds itself into λόγοι (“arguments”, “reasoning”) that bring about health and salvation: λόγοις ὑγιεινοῖς καὶ σωτηρίοις. Philosophy has strength grow in the soul, so that the soul will remain stable “in all virtues”. Philosophy, qua virtue ethics, triggers the *apokatastasis* of the soul.

Related to the concept of restoration of the soul, understood as a return of the soul to its proper health, is another important theory in Philo, which is derived directly from his exegesis of Scripture in both the literal and the spiritual sense, and also owes much to his Middle Platonist frame of mind: the notion of the death of the

⁸⁹ There are of course other uses of this term, according to its Greek more general meaning. So, e.g., Philo, *Decal.* 164, concerns the literal “restoration” of land to families in the Jubilee year; and *Opif.* 101 regards the “restoration” of the full moon after its waxing from new, in the course of a month. So, there are echoes of political and cosmological *apokatastasis*, but not of the fully philosophical (mainly Stoic) kind. The same happens in Origen: many occurrences do not refer to philosophico-theological *apokatastasis*.

⁹⁰ Indeed, after Philo, Josephus in *A.J.* 11.63 will refer to the restoration of the Jewish people to their land, the promised Land: τῆς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀποκαταστάσεως.

rational soul.⁹¹ This motif is found in early imperial philosophy, in Philo, in the New Testament,⁹² and later in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.⁹³

According to Philo, the soul dies because it behaves unphilosophically: it adheres to vice rather than virtue, and rejects piety, which makes it immortal (QG 1.10; *Opif.* 154). This implies that an impious soul dies; vice-versa, virtue ethics – a branch of philosophy – and “piety” (εὐσέβεια) effect the *apokatastasis* of the soul. The impious are “really dead in their souls” (ὄντως ... τὰς ψυχὰς τεθνᾶσι [*Leg.* 1.345]); this is “the real death” (*Leg.* 1.105–108). Before and after the death of the body, the soul has ceased to exist, because with the rejection of virtue it inclined to matter, instead of the Logos of immortality (QG 3.1). This conception once again mirrors Philo’s doctrine of creation: “God called into existence what did not exist (τὰ μὴ ὄντα) by bestowing order (τάξις) out of disorder (ἔξ ἀταξίας) ... union and harmony from what was dispersed and discordant” (*Spec.* 4.187). If a soul chooses evil, which is non-being, disorder, and conflict, it regresses into non-being. This is the death of the soul.

Philo often uses θάνατος and related terms to indicate spiritual death, namely the death of the soul brought about by sin. In *Leg.* 2.77–78, Philo draws a clear distinction between the death of the body and that of the soul. He explains that “pleasures bring about death” (ἡδοναῖς ... θάνατον ἐπαγούσαις), not physical death, which is the “separation of the soul from the body” (χωρισμὸν ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος), but the death of the soul, namely, the destruction of the “soul by sin / evil” (ὕπὸ κακίας φθοράν). Philo interprets Num 21:6 allegorically and identifies the “death-giving serpents” (τοὺς ὄφεις τοὺς θανατοῦντας) there as immoderate passions. Thence he explains: “For really there is nothing that brings about death to the soul so much as immoderate passions” (ὄντως γὰρ οὐδὲν οὕτως θάνατον ἐπάγει ψυχῆ, ὡς ἀμετρία τῶν ἡδονῶν). From such passions the soul must free itself with a view to its restoration: otherwise, it perishes. Likewise, in *Congr.* 57, Philo remarks: “The true Hades – that

⁹¹ See D. Zeller, “The Life and Death of the Soul in Philo of Alexandria”, *SPhilo* 7 (1995) 19–56.

⁹² See E. Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7* (WUNT 2.256; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), and my “1 Tim 5:6 and the Notion and Terminology of Spiritual Death: Hellenistic Moral Philosophy in the Pastoral Epistles”, *Aevum* 84 (2010) 3–16. On the death of the soul in 1 Cor 11:30 see my “Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death in 1 Cor 11:30”, *JBL* 130 (2011) 145–63. On the issue of the death of the soul underlying Luke 22:45 see my “ΚΟΙΜΩΜΕΝΟΥΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΣ ΛΥΠΗΣ (Luke 22,45): A Deliberate Change”, *ZNW* 102 (2011) 59–76.

⁹³ J.T. Conroy, “Philo’s Death of the Soul: Is This Only a Metaphor?” *SPhA* 23 (2011) 23–40, views Philo’s notion of the death of the soul as ontological and not just metaphorical, although he does not take into account the close parallels that are to be found in ancient philosophy, especially Roman Stoicism, and the New Testament (Paul and the Pastoral Epistles, but also Luke), as well as in Origen, who after Philo probably made the most of the notions of the illness and death of the soul. Philo theorized about the death of the *rational* soul, with the corollary that impious and vicious people descend to the level of animals, having only their vital soul left. Origen was to develop this notion.

is to say, the true death – is the life of the wicked man.” A life led in vice is tantamount to death.

Correlatively, in *Fug.* 58, Philo describes virtuous life as a “good” (ἀγαθόν) and death produced by “wickedness” (κακία) as “evil” (κακόν). Philo is commenting on Deut 30:15: “I have set before your face life and death (τὴν ζωὴν καὶ τὸν θάνατον), good and evil (τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν).” Philo observes that “the good and virtue is life” (τὸ μὲν ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν ἡ ζωὴ) and “evil and vice are death” (τὸ δὲ κακὸν καὶ ἡ κακία ὁ θάνατος). The second verse that Philo interprets in this passage, referring it to the previous verse, is Deut 30:20: “This is your life and length of days: to love the Lord your God.” Philo again identifies life with virtue, in this case the love of God, as per the Biblical verse at stake: “The most beautiful definition of immortal life is this: to be taken by unleshly and incorporeal passion and love of God” (ὄρος ἀθανάτου βίου κάλλιστος οὗτος, ἔρωτι καὶ φιλίας θεοῦ ἀσάρκω καὶ ἀσωμάτῳ κατεσχῆσθαι). Likewise, in *Her.* 201, Philo interprets the “dead” as impious and foolish people. If a soul does not love God, this is the death of the soul. The restoration of a soul is obtained through virtue and love of God; the opposite leads to the death of the soul.

Philo claims that some people who are alive in their bodies can be dead in their souls (and after their bodily death they vanish altogether). This idea also appears in 1 Tim 5:6 and other early imperial texts, both philosophical and non-philosophical.⁹⁴ Philo declares that the life of the man full of vices is in fact death, while the opposite person, the wise, is dead to sin: “the wise person seems to be dead (τεθνηκέναι) to corruptible life, but she lives the incorruptible one; the bad or ordinary person,⁹⁵ instead (ὁ δὲ φαῦλος), is alive to the life according to vice, but is dead (τέθνηκε) to the happy life” (*Det.* 49). The latter is the death of the soul denounced in imperial literature and Origen; the resultative perfect τέθνηκε – the same as in 1 Tim 5:6 – describes the state of spiritual death of the depraved person. Philo is here appropriating the Stoic distinction between the “wise person” (σοφός) and the “bad person” (φαῦλος).

In *Her.* 293, Philo maintains again, with another resultative perfect (τετελευτηκότα), that the fool, as opposite to the wise, even if he is living in his body, is in fact already dead in his soul, since he is not leading a life of virtue: “According to the Legislator, only the wise enjoys a good old age and a very long life, whereas the bad (τὸν φαῦλον) has an extremely short life and is always learning to die (ἀποθνήσκειν αἰεὶ μανθάνοντα), or rather is already dead (τετελευτηκότα) to the life

⁹⁴ See I.L.E. Ramelli, “The Pastoral Epistles and Hellenistic Philosophy: 1 Tim 5:1-2, Hierocles, and the ‘Contraction of Circles’”, *CBQ* 73 (2011) 562–81.

⁹⁵ In the Stoic sense, the person who is not wise.

according to virtue.” A person may apparently live for a long time in spiritual death, even as long as his earthly life lasts:

People think that death is the culmination of punishments, but at God’s court of justice this is only the very beginning. Since the crime is extraordinary, it was necessary that an extraordinary punishment be found for it. Which? To be always dying while living (ζῆν ἀποθνήσκοντα ἀεί) and, in a way, to endure an undying and unending death (θάνατον ἀθάνατον ... ἀτελεύτερον). (*Praem.* 70a)

Philo explains further: “For the kinds of death are two: the first is to be dead (τεθνάναι = physical death), which is morally good or indifferent (ἀγαθὸν ἢ ἀδιάφορον); the other is to be dying (ἀποθνήσκειν = spiritual death), which is an evil, absolutely (κακὸν πάντως), and the more enduring, the heavier: and consider how this kind of death can endure together (συνδιαιωρίζει) with the sinner for an entire life.”⁹⁶ Note that the reference to spiritual death is to the present life, not the eschatological one. This is typical of Philo, who speaks of eschatology very little and elusively.

In *Fug.* 55 as well, Philo maintains that a person can be physically alive but dead in his soul. For wicked people, although they live long, are spiritually dead, while the wise and virtuous live forever, even if their life in the body may be short:

Some are dead (τεθνήκασι) although they are living, and live although they are dead (τεθνηκότες). The wicked, he said, even if they keep living into the most advanced old age, are dead (νεκρούς), in that they are deprived of the life according to virtue. The virtuous, instead, although they are separated from the company of the body, keep living forever, in that they have attained immortality.

The phrase ζῶντες τεθνήκασι in this passage corresponds to the singular ζῶσα τέθνηκε in 1 Tim 5:6. Both passages are describing a person who is physically alive but spiritually dead, on account of a life of sin. The real life of the soul, as Philo makes clear, is “life according to virtue”.

In Philo’s view, virtuous people, who live a philosophical life crowned by piety, are alive in their bodies and their soul in the present life, and after the death of the body they live forever in their souls. This soteriological dualism between body and (intellectual) soul perfectly reflects the dualism we have seen in Philo’s “double creation”. People who live in vice, instead, are alive in their bodies and dead in their souls in the present life, and after the death of the body they are dead in both components and do not exist any longer.

If Philo supported to some extent the doctrine of *metensōmatōsis*, as we shall discuss shortly, this would have offered an escape from the ontological death of the

⁹⁶ Philo, *Praem.* 70b.

soul, by means of repeated transmigrations of the soul itself. However, *metensōmatōsis* is never theorized systematically or explicitly professed by Philo (see below). If Philo stuck to the ontological death of the rational soul, this would in fact make *metensōmatōsis* difficult, unless one thinks of a soul's reincarnation in an animal (which has no rational soul).

Philo seems to think that eternal life is a privilege granted by God only to virtuous souls; the others appear to be doomed to perish altogether. For the rational soul alone is incorruptible and immortal, and only those who have exercised it will survive; the others, having renounced their own rational soul, will perish like irrational beings: "The soul quits its residence in its mortal body and returns to its homeland, which it had abandoned to come to this place ... another life without a body, which the soul of the wise alone will live" (QG 3.11).⁹⁷ This is because only a purified soul, in its rational component, is incorruptible: "The kind of soul that is perfectly purified is inextinguishable and immortal, and destined to a travel from here up to heaven, and not to the dissolution and corruption that death brings about" (*Her.* 276). Such a soul alone will escape death, not other souls – let alone bodies. Clearly, this double eschatology is consistent with the "double creation" theory.

Soteriology, according to Philo, is philosophical and religious together⁹⁸ and refers to the (intellectual) soul alone, which was created in the image of God: leading the philosophical life, through the disciplined practice of virtue (*Sacr.* 163) and reason, and the destruction (*διαφθείρω* [*Sacr.* 134]) of the passions, "the worst enemy of the soul" (*Sacr.* 16). The "invincible power of reason" weakens the impulses of irrational passions (*Sacr.* 80).

Soteriology and *apokatastasis* in Philo are to be seen in the light of Greek philosophical heritage (including the notion of God as savior in popular philosophy)⁹⁹ and the Septuagint and Jewish tradition. They depend on the soul's adhesion to virtues, including the queen of virtues, which is piety towards the Deity. After quoting Exod 14:13, Philo interprets: "salvation is effected, not by means of God, but by God

⁹⁷ Cf., e.g., Philo, *Cher.* 144; *Sacr.* 6; *Prob.* 117–18. See also L. Grabbe, "Eschatology in Philo and Josephus", in A. Avery-Peck/J. Neusner (ed.), *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (4 vols.; HdO 17; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 4:163–85; W. Eisele, *Ein unterschütterliches Reich: Die Mittelplatonische Umformung des Parusiedenkens im Hebräerbrief* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003) 160–240, according to whom Philo can be said to have an eschatology only to a limited extent: it is better to speak of human destiny in terms of aretology, in that, as I have demonstrated above, immortality for Philo depends on virtue. See also C. Noack, *Gottesbewußtsein: Exegetische Studien zur Soteriologie und Mystik bei Philon* (WUNT 2.116; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁹⁸ This is also the general drift of R. Cox, "Travelling the Royal Road: The Soteriology of Philo of Alexandria", in D.M. Gurtner (ed.), *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism* (Library of Second Temple Studies 74; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011) 167–80.

⁹⁹ J.C. Thom, "God the Saviour in Greco-Roman Popular Philosophy", in D. du Toit/C. Gerber/C. Zimmermann (ed.), *Sōtēria: Salvation in Early Christianity and Antiquity: Festschrift in Honour of Cilliers Breytenbach on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (NovTSup 175; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 86–100.

as the source” (οὐ διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ παρ’ αὐτοῦ ὡς αἰτίου τὸ σῶζεσθαι [Cher. 130]) of salvation itself. Philo considers God here as the source or cause of salvation, but not as the instrument of salvation in his exegesis of the Exodus text. When turning to Hebrews, this first-century early Christian author also presents his theological understanding of the source of salvation in Heb 5:7–9, but identifies the “Son” (Heb 5:8) now as the “eternal source of salvation” (αἰτίος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου [Heb 5:9]).¹⁰⁰ In Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 1 (heavenly bodies as αἰτίους ... τῆς σωτηρίας ὄλων) the meaning of σωτηρία is not “salvation” but “preservation” – a widespread meaning in the ancient world, including in Stoicism and “pagan” Platonism. The term has both meanings in Philo, who relied both on the Septuagint and on ancient philosophy.

According to Philo, living according to virtue brings about salvation and the life of the soul, as opposed to the death of the soul. God is “the Father” (ὁ πατήρ) who confers the “entire inheritance” upon those whose lives “progress toward the better” (*Sacr.* 42) and oppose themselves to the allures of pleasure (ἡδονή [*Sacr.* 22]). The concept of the death of the soul paves the way for annihilationism. Such a theory appears to me to stand in tension with *metensōmatōsis*, if Philo ever adopted it, at least esoterically (again, this appears uncertain or improbable).

2. Reception in Patristic Platonism: Continuities and Developments

The foregoing section demonstrated that Philo’s doctrine of “double creation” is closely related to his soteriology and eschatology. The same close relation is found in Origen. This interrelation is based on the principle of the similarity between ἀρχή and τέλος (which was also enunciated by Plotinus).¹⁰¹ Philo maintained that both creation and salvation are achieved through the same Logos, and Origen drew on this conception, with the difference that for him this Logos is Christ and that his double creation, as argued above, is very much enfeebled: this contributes toward making his soteriology also different from that of Philo.

In the foregoing section, we also saw that Philo’s doctrine of the *apokatastasis* of the soul is grounded not only in philosophy, but in Scripture, which in turn is often allegorized philosophically. In the LXX, the agent of restoration is always God, and the verb expressing this restoration is ἀποκαθίστημι or ἀποκαθιστάνω. Origen will

¹⁰⁰ See G.J. Steyn, “The ‘Source of Salvation’ (αἰτίος σωτηρίας) by Philo of Alexandria and in *Ad Hebraios*”, in du Toit et al., *Sōtēria*, 441–59.

¹⁰¹ Investigation in I.L.E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (VCSup 120; Leiden: Brill, 2013); eadem, “Apokatastasis and Epēktasis in *Hom. in Cant.*: The Relation between Two Core Doctrines in Gregory and Roots in Origen”, in G. Maspero/M. Brugarolas/I. Vigorelli (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa: In Canticum Cantorum. Commentary and Supporting Studies* (VCSup 150; Leiden: Brill, 2018) 312–39.

also use these biblical bases for his doctrine of *apokatastasis*, but will also employ passages with *ἐπιστρέφω* and *ἐπιστροφή* (terms which I revisit below).

Philo's notion of *ἀποκατάστασις* as the restoration of the soul, implying its attainment of perfection and beatitude, impacted Clement of Alexandria, who was familiar with Philo, and, even more deeply, Origen, who was also profoundly acquainted with Philo's ideas and developed a complete theory of the *apokatastasis* of rational creatures or *λογικά*.¹⁰² The perfect restoration of the soul according to Philo is its restoration to its original perfection, namely the state in which it was still free from passions and vices or sins. This exact notion of the restoration of the soul was to be taken over by Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius.

The impious are "really dead in their souls" (*Leg.* 1.345) according to Philo, and this is "the real death" (*Leg.* 1.105–108). Origen took up this notion when describing the death of the soul as "the real death" in his *Dialogus cum Heraclide* (*ὁ ὄντως θάνατος* [*Dial.* 26]). Philo identified the death of the soul with death to the life of virtue (*Leg.* 1.105–107). This does not imperil theodicy, since God "created (*ἐδημιούργησεν*) no soul barren of good" (*Leg.* 1.34) and the choice between the good or its opposite depends on the individual soul. Origen, also for the sake of theodicy, will support the same view in his theology of freedom.¹⁰³

That virtue is the life of the soul and vice its death is a tenet shared also by a disciple of both Plotinus and Origen, Porphyry, whose acquaintance with Philo's ideas would be very interesting to investigate (when he accused Origen of being the first to apply Greek allegoresis to Scripture, he was obviously bypassing Philo, as Celsus had done, most probably not out of ignorance, but polemically).¹⁰⁴ Porphyry posits two kinds of death, the death of the body and philosophical death to the body or detachment from the body in order for one to live a life of virtue. The latter is good and Origen classified this kind of death as "death to sin" (Rom 6:11), also declared to be good.¹⁰⁵ Philo declares that the life of the man full of vices is in fact death, while

¹⁰² See the chapters on Clement and Origen in Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*.

¹⁰³ On this point see I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation", *HTR* 102.2 (2009) 135–68 and on Origen's theology of freedom see C. Hengsternann, *Origenes und der Ursprung der Freiheitsmetaphysik* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2016) 143–288. A. Fürst, "Origen of Alexandria: Christian Philosophy of Freedom", in K. Seigneurie et al. (ed.), *A Companion to World Literature* (5 vols.; Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020) 1:255–66; I.L.E. Ramelli, "The Legacy of Origen in Gregory of Nyssa's Theology of Freedom", *Modern Theology* 38 (2022) 363–88.

¹⁰⁴ See Ramelli, "Philo as Origen's Declared Model", referred to by J. Kovacs, "Clement as Scriptural Exegete: Overview and History of Research", in V. Černuskova, J. Kovacs, and J. Platova (ed.), *Clement's Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 1–37 at 23; by J. Platova, "Comprehensive Bibliography on Clement's Scriptural Interpretation", in Černuskova et al., *Clement's Biblical Exegesis*, 38–52 at 50; and by J. Rogers, "Origen in the Likeness of Philo: Eusebius of Caesarea's Portrait", *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12.1 (2017) 1–13, at 10.

¹⁰⁵ Porphyry, *Sent.* 9 (pp. 4.3–6 Lamberz), commenting on Plato, *Phaed.* 64c: "Death is of two kinds: one is commonly recognized, when the body is disjoined from the soul; the other is typical of the philosophers,

the opposite person, the wise, is dead to sin, as seen above. Now, “death to sin” is the only positive kind of death which Origen was to postulate in *Dial.* 26 and elsewhere. Exactly like Origen in his *Dialogus cum Heraclide*, Porphyry takes soul to admit of death as well, since passions leading to vices are non-life (*Sent.* 23), but the soul is “the essence/being/substance whose existence is in life” (ἡ οὐσία ἧς ἐν ζωῇ τὸ εἶναι [*Sent.* 21]), as Origen also maintained.

If Philo stuck to the ontological death of the rational soul, this would in fact make *metensōmatōsis* difficult, unless one thinks of a soul’s reincarnation in an animal (which has no rational soul). The accusation of supporting *metensōmatōsis* was also levelled against Origen, who, however, only spoke of a moral death of the soul and explicitly ruled out its ontological death, which in his view would mean the defeat of the Creator.¹⁰⁶

Continuing, then with further traces of Philo’s philosophical discourse: the doctrine of the *apokatastasis* of the soul speaks of its salvation in terms of its liberation from enslavement to passions. Apokatastatic salvation, which only befalls the soul, is the regaining of freedom and the return, through virtue, to God the creator. Origen and Gregory of Nyssa will take over Philo’s doctrine of the *apokatastasis* of the soul, but will also develop the idea of *apokatastasis* as universal restoration, that is, the return of all human beings and all rational creatures to God, the supreme Good, after they have rejected evil and have been entirely purified. This implies the ultimate salvation of all rational creatures.¹⁰⁷ Philo, unlike his patristic followers, entertains a concept of *apokatastasis* that bears no relation to the doctrine of the eventual universal salvation, nor does his idea of restoration and salvation include the resurrection of the body. The issues of universality and the body are two major differences between Philo and the main Platonist patristic supporters of *apokatastasis*.

There is also a lexical difference, which can probably be explained on the basis of the development of philosophical doctrines and terminology between the time of Philo and that of Origen and beyond. While Philo mainly expresses the theory of *apokatastasis* through ἀποκατάστασις, ἀποκαθίστημι and ἀποκαθιστάνω, Origen and both Christian and pagan Neoplatonists after him, up to Proclus and Eriugena,¹⁰⁸

when the soul is disjoined from the body – and one kind does not at all follow from the other” (ὁ θάνατος διπλοῦς, ὁ μὲν οὖν συνεγνωσμένος λυομένου τοῦ σώματος ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς, ὁ δὲ τῶν φιλοσόφων λυομένης τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος· καὶ οὐ πάντως ὁ ἕτερος τῷ ἑτέρῳ ἐπιεται); “Nature looses the body from the soul, while the soul looses itself from the body” (Porphyry, *Sent.* 8). See also L. Alexidze, “Porphyry’s Definitions of Death and Their Interpretations in Georgian and Byzantine Tradition”, *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 18 (2015) 48–73, esp. 48–52.

¹⁰⁶ See Ramelli, “Philo’s Doctrine of Apokatastasis”.

¹⁰⁷ See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*.

¹⁰⁸ See I.L.E. Ramelli, “From God to God: Eriugena’s Protology and Eschatology against the Backdrop of His Platonic Patristic Sources”, in eadem (ed.), *Eriugena’s Christian Neoplatonism and its Sources in Patristic Philosophy and Ancient Philosophy* (Leuven: Peeters, 2021) 99–123. A systematic investigation is in the works.

used both ἀποκατάστασις – ἀποκαθίστημι – ἀποκαθιστάνω, and ἐπιστρέφω – ἐπιστροφή. The last two terms indicated the third Neoplatonic movement, that of reversion, after (im)manence and procession. Origen seems to have been the first to associate ἀποκατάστασις – ἀποκαθίστημι – ἀποκαθιστάνω and ἐπιστρέφω – ἐπιστροφή, finding the latter couple not only in Platonic terminology, but also in Scripture – and in his exegesis he consciously joined both terminologies.¹⁰⁹

3. Soteriological Differences between Philo and His Patristic Recipients Mirror the Differences with Respect to Creation

Both the doctrine of “double creation” and that of “double soteriology” witness pivotal similarities and differences between Philo and early Christian thinkers who were strongly influenced by Philo, especially Origen of Alexandria. I pointed out above that Origen and Gregory of Nyssa received the doctrine of “double creation”, even mentioning this phrase, but for theological reasons did so in an enfeebled form and rejected the notion of inferior agents in the creation of the human being, finding alternative ways to defend God’s goodness. In soteriology, likewise, Origen took over the theory of the death and restoration of the soul, both supported by Philo, but also displays important divergences, dictated by his theology (and shared by his followers). In particular:

- Origen rejected the ontological, irrecoverable death of the soul (whereas Philo seems to have supported it).
- Origen postulated a universal *apokatastasis* (whereas Philo posited the *apokatastasis* of the pious, philosophical soul and that of Israel).
- Origen’s restoration included both soul and body, duly transformed (whereas Philo included the soul alone and not the body, as a result of his stronger theory of “double creation”).
- Origen supported a well-defined eschatology (which is instead quite elusive in Philo).
- Origen overtly refuted *metensōmatōsis* or “transmigration of souls” into different bodies, opposing to it his own theory of *ensōmatōsis* or “in-corporation” of a soul in one body¹¹⁰ (while Philo might have been open to *metensōmatōsis* esoterically,

¹⁰⁹ Argument in I.L.E. Ramelli, “The Question of Origen’s Conversion, His Concept of Conversion, and Its Relevance to His Biblical Exegesis”, in J.B. Wallace/A. Despotis (ed.), *Greek and Byzantine Philosophical Exegesis* (Eastern Church Identities 5; Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2022) 61–108.

¹¹⁰ On the last point see Ramelli, “Origen”, in Cartwright/ Marmodoro, *A History of Mind and Body*; and eadem, “Origen on the Unity of Soul and Body”, in Ulrich/Usacheva/Bhayro, *The Unity of Soul and Body*.

although he never commits to it explicitly or uses it in philosophical arguments, as we shall see).

Soteriologically, both Philo's conception of the illness and death of the soul and that of the restoration of the soul had a considerable impact on Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. Philo's evanescent eschatological ideas, however, differ from those of Origen and Gregory, both of whom supported not only the restoration of individual souls, but also the restoration of all rational creatures. In their view, universal *apokatastasis* entailed a resurrection-restoration of all human beings in all of their components: they regarded the resurrection of the body as constitutive of the restoration, conceiving it essentially as a "spiritualisation" of the body – this will be crystal clear in Evagrius, who will posit the subsumption of body into soul and soul into intellect, and a resurrection of body, soul, and the intellect.¹¹¹ The resurrection-restoration will undo both the death of the body (by its vivification) and the death of the soul (by the attainment of *apatheia* by the lower soul and of knowledge by the intellectual soul). *Apokatastasis* according to Origen, Gregory, and Evagrius is the salvation of all rational creatures: angels, humans, and demons.¹¹² Philo, unlike his patristic followers, appears to be far removed from soteriological universalism.¹¹³

As I pointed out in the foregoing scheme concerning differences between Philo and Origen in matter of *apokatastasis*, Origen denied that any soul can ever perish ontologically; souls can be morally dead, but they will certainly rise again because their substance never vanishes, since it was created by God and as such it is good. To be sure, like Philo, Origen also claimed that the soul of a man who lives in vice perishes, because in his opinion the soul experiences mortality through the aforementioned "real death" (*ὁ ὄντως θάνατος*), that is, the death of the soul, brought about by sin and vice, as he declares in *Dial.* 26 and elsewhere. But Origen did not consider this perdition and state of "being lost" (*ἀπόλεια*) to be eternal. Jesus, indeed, has come to find and save the lost sheep, and Scripture proclaims everywhere the resurrection of those who have died (*Hom. Jer.* 11.16).¹¹⁴ In his *Homilies on Jeremiah*, Origen develops his twofold conception of resurrection, both of the body and of the soul – and within the soul one could further distinguish the irrational faculties and the rational soul or intellect, as Evagrius was to do in his above-mentioned threefold notion of resurrection-restoration.¹¹⁵ Such a layered conception is common to both

¹¹¹ Evagrius, *Cap. gnost.* 5.19, 22, 25. See Ramelli, "Gregory and Evagrius", *StPatr* 101 (2021) 177–206.

¹¹² See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 137–215.

¹¹³ Ramelli, "Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis", reviewed by J. van Oort, *VC* 69.5 (2015) 577.

¹¹⁴ See I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception", *Aug* 48 (2008) 59–78.

¹¹⁵ See above, n. 111.

Philo and Origen, but the latter did not admit of an ontological death of the soul, while the former probably did.¹¹⁶

The death of the soul in Philo's view appears to be an ontological destruction: this is why, when he speaks of the *apokatastasis* of the soul, he seems to mean a restoration from its illness, but not from its death, while Origen admits of the latter as well. Indeed, for Origen (and his followers such as Gregory of Nyssa) there can be no ontological destruction of any soul, since rational creatures were created by God in order for them to exist, and whatever God has created is good: as a consequence, it must be restored. If souls were destroyed ontologically, this would be the debacle of God the Creator.

This is why Origen explicitly rejected the substantial annihilation of the soul that chooses evil. Origen does state that, if one chooses evil, which is non-being, one ends up with non-being, and therefore dies: "the One who is Good, therefore, coincides with the One Who Is. On the contrary, evil and meanness are opposed to the Good and non-being to Being. As a consequence, meanness and evil are "non-being" (*οὐκ ἔν*)" (*Comm. Jo.* 2.133). Choosing evil means becoming "non-being", but this cannot mean a substantial annihilation of God's creatures: "As long as we adhere to God and stick to the One Who Truly Is, we also continue to be. But if we walk away from God, then, due to vice, we fall into the opposite of God (*sc.* evil, non-being). This, however, does not mean that the soul is destroyed or perishes ontologically."¹¹⁷ Origen here may have expressed his disagreement with Philo. An alternative to annihilation would have been *metensōmatōsis* or reincarnation, but Origen repeatedly denounced this theory as impious and in contradiction with the end of the world, as we shall see in the following section.

The annihilation of the wicked, therefore, is not ontological, but spiritual: God "reduces the sinners to nothing. Now, what God reduces to nothing in his heavenly city is the image of the earthly being, that is, of one's sins".¹¹⁸ Sinners will perish in the other world, but not ontologically: they will perish as sinners to live as saints, once purified from sins. This is a transformation of sinners into saints, a typical trait of Origen's doctrine of *apokatastasis*. What will perish ontologically is sin, which was not created by God. Note, again, the close connection between creation and

¹¹⁶ As suggested in Ramelli, "Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis"; and eadem, "Philo and Paul on Soteriology and Eschatology", *Eirene* 57 (2021) 317–52. If Philo supported a form of annihilationism for wicked souls, this would have been based on his aretology. This of course would not align well with Plato or Philo's possible doctrine of *metensōmatōsis* (which he knew and alluded to, but which he never deployed systematically).

¹¹⁷ "Donec adhaeremus Deo et inhaeremus ei qui vere est, etiam nos sumus. Sin autem abscesserimus a Deo ... vitio in contrarium decidimus. Non ergo per hoc substantialis animae designatur interitus" (Origen, *Hom. 2 Ps.* 38.12).

¹¹⁸ "Peccatores ad nihilum redigit: haec est ergo imago terreni id est peccatorum, quam ad nihilum redigit Deus in civitate sua" (Origen, *Hom. 2 Ps.* 38.1).

salvation. Rational creatures, who were created by God, and as such are good, will never perish ontologically.¹¹⁹ The destruction of the sinner in the next world will be the destruction of his sin, so that the sinner will be a righteous person.¹²⁰ For evil, when it is no longer chosen by anyone, will vanish according to its ontological non-subsistence.¹²¹ What the “otherworldly fire” (πῦρ αἰώνιον) will burn away is sinners’ “bad beliefs” (φᾶῦλα δόγματα), their “evil thoughts” (μοχθηροὶ λόγοι [*Comm. Matt.* 5.10.2]).

Therefore, Origen applied the death and destruction that Philo attributed to the soul itself as a consequence of its vice, to the destruction of evil and sin, which in Origen’s theory will result in the purification of sinners and their ultimate salvation. In Philo’s perspective, souls alone – and not bodies – will be saved, and only *some* souls (those of people who have led a philosophical and pious life). According to Origen, *all* souls, not only a few, will be restored and saved: “not only in few or in many, but *in all* God will be all, when there exists no more death, nor death’s sting,¹²² nor evil any more, absolutely: then God will truly be ‘all in all.’”¹²³ Moreover, all souls will have back their bodies as well, although transformed and spiritual.

Not only Philo’s concept of the restoration of the soul (and not of the body), within a theoretical schema in which double creation = double salvation, but also his idea of the restoration of Israel impacted subsequent Christian thought, and especially Origen, who based this very notion on both Philo and Paul, who both announced it. While Philo did not expressly use the term ἀποκατάστασις for the eschatological restoration of Israel, Origen did, and explicitly posited the *apokatastasis* of Israel. This was indeed taken by several Patristic thinkers, including Origen, to have been postulated by the apostle Paul.

The concept of the restoration of Israel includes an overlooked parallel between Philo and Paul that I noted and strikes me, however we want to explain it (probably with common thinking or sources, unless one should suggest that Paul was knowledgeable about Philo to some extent). When in *Praem.* 169–170 Philo warns the enemies of Israel that God has permitted them to take hold of Israel only “for the sake of giving an admonition” to the Israelites who “had forsaken their national and hereditary customs”, Philo’s words are impressively similar to Paul’s, when he warns the nations (the non-Israelites) that God has hardened Israel only for a while, for the sake of their own salvation, but will eventually restore Israel, so that, once “the

¹¹⁹ See also Origen, *Hom.* 5 Ps. 36.5.

¹²⁰ “Hoc enim etiam Dominus pollicetur, ut exterminet romphaeam, id est peccatum, ita ut ultra iam non sit peccator.”

¹²¹ “Non enim decidentia de homine vitia ad aliam aliquam substantiam congregantur, sed sibi abeunt, et in semet ipsa resoluta evanescent atque in nihilum rediguntur” (Origen, *Comm. Cant.* 4.1.13).

¹²² 1 Cor 15:55–56.

¹²³ 1 Cor 15:28; Origen, *Princ.* 3.6.2–3.

totality (πλήρωμα) of the nations has entered”, then “all (πᾶς) of Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:23–26, in which πλήρωμα arguably indicates the totality of non-Israelites alongside the Israelites).¹²⁴ For, “if their (viz., Israel’s) trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! ... If their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” (Rom 11:12, 15).

Paul’s passage was used by Origen in reference to the eventual *apokatastasis* of Israel and of all gentiles (which amounts to the whole of humanity). While Paul, here and elsewhere (including 1Cor 15:28), adopts a universalistic tone in his eschatological soteriology,¹²⁵ this is apparently not the case with Philo, who speaks of the *apokatastasis* of all Israel and of virtuous souls. Philo’s and Paul’s statements historically should be read in light of Jewish universalism in the first centuries.¹²⁶

The parallels I am pointing out between Philo and Paul about the restoration of Israel look impressive, and even include the simile of the tree that is cut away but can revive again, which is the selfsame in both Philo and Paul. Philo has in *Praem.* 172:

For as, when the trunk of a tree is cut down, if the roots are not taken away, new shoots spring up, by which the old trunk is again restored to life, as it were; in the very same manner, if there be only left in the soul ever so small a seed of virtue, when everything else is destroyed, still, nevertheless, from that little seed there spring up the most honourable and beautiful qualities among humans; by means of which, cities, which were formerly populous and flourishing, are again inhabited, and nations are led to become wealthy and powerful.

¹²⁴ See the discussion of this Pauline passage in Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 40–41, where I argue for the universalistic use of πλήρωμα in several LXX passages. This term will be later used by Gregory of Nyssa to speak of the *apokatastasis* of the totality of humanity. P.J. Bekken, *The Word Is Near You: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul’s Letter to the Romans in a Jewish Context* (BZBW 144; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007) 83–152, touches on Philo’s national eschatology in the Exposition of the Law; see also Ramelli, “Philo’s Doctrine of Apokatastasis”, 29–55.

¹²⁵ I.L.E. Ramelli, “Paul on Apokatastasis: 1 Cor 15:24–28 and the Use of Scripture”, in S. Porter/C. Land (ed.), *Paul and Scripture*, (PAST 10; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 212–32.

¹²⁶ G.E. Sterling, “A Law to Themselves: Limited Universalism in Philo and Paul”, *ZNW* 107 (2016) 30–47; chapter 1 in Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*; C. Elledge, “Resurrection and Immortality in Hellenistic Judaism”, in S. Porter/A. Pitts (ed.), *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) 101–33, esp. 104–7; M. Simkovich, *The Making of Jewish Universalism: From Exile to Alexandria* (Lanham: Lexington, 2017), who emphasizes that Jewish universalism in the time of Jesus and early Christianity did not require that the nations be naturalized into the Israelite covenant; they will rather actively worship God and participate in the Israelite cult. She rightly includes Philo within this universalistic trend (Ch. 4); and P. Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

Paul likewise speaks of the trunk from which some of the Jews have been broken off, but whom God will graft in again (Rom 11:16–24).

This image was to be interpreted in reference to the restoration of Israel especially by Origen. In *Comm. Rom.* 7.13, after noting that Paul offered himself as anathema – a cursed person – for the salvation of Israel, Origen declares that Paul’s prayer was received by the Lord and will be fulfilled in the very end, when “the totality of the nations will enter” and “all of Israel will be saved”. This prophecy of Paul’s is particularly important for Origen, who highlights it by means of its reiteration in many other places of his *Commentary on Romans* as well.¹²⁷ In *Comm. Cant.* 2.1.45 it is particularly evident that πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν (Vulg. “plenitudo gentium”) for Origen means the totality of the nations, which will enter the kingdom just before the salvation of all Israel, because he adds “omnis” (“all”): “Posteaquam intraverit omnis plenitudo gentium [...] venient etiam ipsi, et tunc omnis Israhel salvabitur.” The salvation of “all of Israel” – not simply the *verus Israel* as the Christians called themselves, as for instance in the case of Augustine, but “all of Israel” – is likewise evoked in many other passages in Origen’s homilies and commentaries.¹²⁸

Concerning a New Testament book traditionally attributed to Paul, Hebrews, Stefan Svendsen¹²⁹ thinks that Hebrews was inspired by Philo from the hermeneutic point of view. Hebrews left Philo’s Platonic framework and introduced an apocalyptic viewpoint. The possible dependence of Hebrews on Philo is a minority position, but worth considering. The critical difference, I would suggest, is that the general drift of Hebrews is eschatological, whereas Philo is not attracted by eschatology. Instead, the Christian Platonists, Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, and other patristic supporters of the doctrine of universal restoration, in so many other respects the heirs of Philo, had definite *eschatological* views, converging towards the “final restoration” (ἀποκατάστασις) and “deification” (θέωσις).¹³⁰ This dimension

¹²⁷ For instance in Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 8.1.1160: “in nouissimis, cum omnis Israhel saluus fiet”; 8.9.1185: “illorum enim uel in fine saeculi conuersio erit, tunc cum plenitudo gentium subintrauerit et omnis Israhel saluus fiet”; 8.12.1196: “si ergo pro eo ut introiuerit gentium plenitudo caecitas facta est in Israhel pro omnibus quae fecerunt, sine dubio, cum ingressa fuerit gentium plenitudo, caecitas cessat”; 8.9.1184: “uelum capiunt etiam ipsi [sc. Israhel] in nouissimis saltem temporibus ... gentium fides et conuersatio Israheli aemulationem conuersionis conferat et salutis.”

¹²⁸ See the chapter on Origen in Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*.

¹²⁹ S. Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed: The Appropriation of Philonic Hermeneutics in the Letter to the Hebrews* (WUNT 2.269; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). Important, potential connections between Philo and Hebrews are also explored in I.L.E. Ramelli, “Hebrews and Philo on *Hypostasis*: Intersecting Trajectories?” in ed. P.F. Beatrice/B. Pouderon (ed.), *Pascha nostrum Christus [FS Raniero Cantalamessa]* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2016) 27–49.

¹³⁰ See Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, with the reviews by A. Meredith, *IJPT* 8.2 (2014) 255–7; M. Edwards, *JThS* 65.2 (2014) 718–24; J. van Oort, *VC* 64 (2014) 352–3; C. De Wet, *JECH* 5.2 (2015) 1–3; S. Nemes, *Journal of Analytic Theology* 3 (2015) 226–33; G. Karamanolis, *IJPT* 10 (2016): 142–6; R. Parry, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18.3 (2016) 335–8.

would seem to be lacking in Philo, who appears to have entertained a rather elusive view of the end. For example, Philo tends to explicitly refer eschatological pictures to the moral life of the soul, thus de-eschatologizing them, including in his doctrine of the restoration of the soul. For instance, in *Congr.* 57, he identifies Hades with the life of the wicked person on earth. Even *De praemiis et poenis*, which could suggest an interest in eschatology, given that it focuses on the divine rewards or punishments, is striking for “its corporate, this-worldly aspects of eschatology”¹³¹ as opposed to otherworldly justice.

III. Philosophical Influences on Soteriology from the Theory of *Metensōmatōsis*?

1. Philo

The notion of the death of the rational soul, supported by Philo, would jeopardize the possibility of *metensōmatōsis* or the transmigration of souls, lest one think of a reincarnation of the (lower) soul in inferior beings (animals; perhaps plants). Philo seems to allude to the theory of *metensōmatōsis* in at least three passages of his oeuvre: *Somm.* 1.139; *Cher.* 114, and *QE* 2.40.¹³² Hypothesizing that Philo was sympathetic to some degree to the doctrine of the transmigration of souls at least in an esoterical and hypothetical sense, Sami Yli-Karjanmaa describes Philo’s individual eschatology as follows:¹³³ souls enjoy an incorporeal existence with God; they undergo incarnation, corporealization, and transgression; they continue to reincarnate until the prerequisites of salvation are met; finally, they are freed from the life in the body and attain the *telos*, the eternal incorporeal existence with God. This would make Philo’s scheme similar to that of “pagan” imperial Platonism and would open up the possibility of a universal return or restoration.

¹³¹ T.H. Tobin, “Reconfiguring Eschatological Imagery: The Examples of Philo of Alexandria and Paul of Tarsus”, in G.E. Sterling (ed.), *Studies in Philo in Honor of David Runia = SPhiloA* 27 (2016) 351–74, at 352.

¹³² Besides fr. 7.3 Harris. See S. Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria* (SPhiloM 7; Atlanta: SBL, 2015) 19, taking the cue from David Winston, who deemed it likely that Philo accepted some cycles of *metensōmatōsis* according to the deserts of each soul. In his review, G.E. Sterling, *RBL* 07/2017, is “inclined to think that the text [*Somm.* 1.137–139] represents Philo’s own views” (p.3). See also the chapter by Rainer Hirsch-Luipold in the present volume. Possibly Josephus, too, alludes to *metensōmatōsis*: see S. Yli-Karjanmaa, “The New Life of the Good Souls in Josephus: Resurrection or Reincarnation?”, *JSJ* 48 (2017) 503–30. On Clement, see S. Yli-Karjanmaa, “Clement of Alexandria’s Position on the Doctrine of Reincarnation and Some Comparisons with Philo”, *StPatr* 110 (2021) 75–90; and I.L.E. Ramelli, “Clement and Metensomatosis: Comments on Sami Yli-Karjanmaa’s Paper”, *StPatr* 110 (2021) 91–7.

¹³³ Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo*, 73, 242.

Now, in the (improbable) case that Philo did adopt the theory of the transmigration of souls, at least as an esoteric and unsystematic doctrine, this would square well with a view that does not contemplate the end of the world, and with the doctrine of the preexistence of souls. This is also the general scheme of “pagan” imperial Platonism, and it is also precisely the charge that some later readers levelled against Philo. In *Codex Monacensis Graecus* 459, one of the most important Philonic codices, an infrapaginal scholium on page 1 observes that Philo held “three doctrines opposed to the church: matter without beginning, preexistence of souls, and stars and air regarded as alive”.¹³⁴ The preexistence of disembodied souls was the necessary premise for the doctrine of *metensōmatōsis*. In the same manuscript, a passage from *Somn.* 1.137–139 concerning the preexistence of souls and *metensōmatōsis* was dropped, probably by an act of censorship towards these doctrines by later readers (parallel to manuscript censorship against Gregory of Nyssa’s doctrine of *apokatastasis*).¹³⁵ *Metensōmatōsis*, however, is not explicitly singled out here as a theory typical of Philo, nor does it appear theorized or at least deployed systematically in Philo’s oeuvre.

2. Philo and Patristic Platonism: Comparative Analysis

That *metensōmatōsis* implied the rejection of the end of the world was pointed out by Origen himself, who refused to uphold this theory exactly for this reason. Origen, unlike Philo, regarded the end of the world as a biblical doctrine. The end of the world as the reason for the rejection of *metensōmatōsis* is stressed by Origen more than once:

If indeed, according to the authority of Scripture, the end of the world will come soon (“consummatio imminet mundi”) and the present corruptible state will change into an incorruptible one, there seems to be no doubt that in the state of the present life it is impossible to return to a body for a second or third time. For, if one admits this, it will necessarily follow that, given the infinite successions of these passages, the world will have no end (“finem nesciat mundus”). (*Comm. Cant.* 2.5.24)

In a surely authentic work preserved in Greek, Origen likewise states: “If one supports *metensōmatōsis*, as a consequence one will have to maintain the incorruptibility of the world” (*Comm. Jo.* 6.86). But the incorruptibility of the world contradicts Scripture – at least on Origen’s reading, if not on that of Philo, possibly also because Origen included the Apocalypse of John in Scripture as inspired and thought of New

¹³⁴ See D.T. Runia, “Philo in Byzantium: An Exploration”, *VC* 70 (2016) 259–81, at 262.

¹³⁵ Examined in I.L.E. Ramelli, “Why Was St Gregory of Nyssa Never Condemned for His Doctrine of Apokatastasis?”, *Studia UBB Philosophia* 67.2 (2022) 135–57.

Testament prophecies about the end of the world. This is why Origen explicitly rejects the transmigration of souls in many passages.¹³⁶

I have already pointed out that one of the main divergences between Philo and his patristic followers in the Origenian line consists in the universality of *apokatastasis*, which Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, and other Origenians upheld up to Eriugena and beyond, but which seems to be ruled out by Philo.¹³⁷ The theory of *metensōmatōsis* would have theoretically allowed a deficient soul to attain *apokatastasis* and the knowledge of God thanks to a future reincarnation. However, as I have remarked, *metensōmatōsis* in his oeuvre is far from being deployed systematically and from being fully, explicitly, or organically developed, either because this was an esoteric doctrine, or because Philo was not interested in integrating it into his anthropology, ethics, and soteriology, let alone his almost nonexistent eschatology – or even just because he was handling this possibility hypothetically. *Metensōmatōsis* does not appear to have a very firm scriptural basis.¹³⁸

Although Origen criticized the doctrine of *metensōmatōsis* and opposed to it his own theory of *ensōmatōsis*, Philo's possible notion of allowing souls much more time beyond one single earthly life to attain perfection parallels Origen's idea of a long sequence of aeons aimed at allowing rational creatures to improve and attain perfection beyond their earthly life. Origen's conception was probably also influenced by Paul here: Sarah Harding's thesis that according to Paul the cosmos evolves through various aeons in a progression toward the *telos*¹³⁹ is precisely – I note – the philosophy of history that Origen will develop himself. The ultimate motivation of this theory about giving rational creatures enough time to improve seems to have been theodicy. The main differences here between the “pagan” Platonic doctrine of *metensōmatōsis* and Origen's doctrine of *ensōmatōsis* are expounded in the next paragraphs. Philo's position in each case (regarding the *τέλος*) will be discussed, also in relation to his “double creation” doctrine.

The first question is whether souls enter different bodies in a sequence, as the doctrine of *metensōmatōsis* presupposes, or whether they take on just one body. The latter is Origen's view: he thought that rational creatures have, from their substantial creation, one body each, which is initially spiritual, light and angelic, and later

¹³⁶ E.g., Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 10.20; 11.17; 13.1. In his *Commentary on John* Origen still presents *metensōmatōsis* as a hypothesis to be discussed (6.7; 85), but ultimately rejects it: John the Baptist is not a reincarnation of Elijah, but an angel sent onto earth (2.186). For further passages in which Origen rejects *metensōmatōsis*, see P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology* (VCSup 85; Leiden: Brill, 2007) 48–53.

¹³⁷ See Ramelli, “Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis.”

¹³⁸ As correctly noted by Winston, “Philo”, in *Cambridge History*, 249.

¹³⁹ *Paul's Eschatological Anthropology: The Dynamics of Human Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

changes according to the rational creatures' moral choices and advancements or regressions. Philo was certainly well acquainted with the doctrine of *metensōmatōsis* from philosophy, especially from Plato and imperial Platonism. *Metensōmatōsis* would follow well from Philo's own double creation theory, as outlined above, while it follows much less well from Origen's very attenuated double creation theory. Nevertheless, the main source of Philo's thought was not only philosophy, but also Scripture, which in turn, in the Septuagint, was already influenced by philosophy itself.¹⁴⁰ And Scripture does not support strongly the doctrine of *metensōmatōsis*, as noted above. Nevertheless, through philosophical reading it was possible to interpret biblical passages, such as the ladder of Jacob, in reference to *metensōmatōsis*.

The second issue concerns the rational souls of evil people, whether these will perish or not. As I discussed, Philo admits the death of evil souls, which do not follow philosophical virtue ethics and piety. Origen also supported the death of evil souls, explicitly maintained that the illness and death of the soul is not ontological ("substantialis") and such souls will be healed or resurrected (by the Logos) and attain salvation. I have noted that, if Philo embraced the doctrine of the death of the rational soul, this would have eliminated the possibility of *metensōmatōsis* (only reincarnations in non-rational beings would be possible). This is consistent with the lack of any systematic elaboration or explicit approval of this doctrine on the part of Philo.

The third question is cosmological and related to the philosophy of time. Pagan Platonism understood the sequence of aeons as infinite, while Origen deemed it finite.¹⁴¹ The consequence of this dichotomy bears on the theory of *apokatastasis*: in the former case, restoration is only temporary and occurs before another cycle, and so on forever (although in pagan Platonism there were attempts to posit an eternal escape from the cycles of *metensōmatōsis*, for some souls or for all). In the latter case, *apokatastasis* will be definitive and endure eternally, after the end of all aeons, as Origen posited.¹⁴² Now, Philo would appear to be closer to the former option: this sits well with his lack of interest in universal *apokatastasis*, and also with his interest in the restoration of the soul, but individually, already on earth, and without an eschatological framework. In *De aeternitate mundi* and *De Deo*,¹⁴³ it seems that Philo

¹⁴⁰ See the remarks in Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism".

¹⁴¹ I.L.E. Ramelli, "Proclus and Christian Neoplatonism: A Case Study", in M. Knežević (ed.), *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy* (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2015) 37–70.

¹⁴² See Ramelli, "Proclus of Constantinople and Apokatastasis", 95–122.

¹⁴³ Or *De visione trium angelorum ad Abraham*, according to the title coined by Abraham Terian in "Philonis *De visione trium angelorum ad Abraham*: A New Translation of the Mistitled *De Deo*", *SPhiloA* 28 (2016) 77–93.

deemed the world created and incorruptible,¹⁴⁴ not so much in itself as by divine will (*Aet.* 13–14; *Deo* 7), a position that he ascribes to both Plato (*Tim.* 41b) and Moses¹⁴⁵ (a typical convergence that Origen also found oftentimes between Plato and Scripture).

If the world is incorruptible, the cycles of aeons should be unlimited. However, Philo seems to reject the cyclical recurrences, at least as posited by Stoics such as Chrysippus, so he may not have espoused a view of a succession of aeons without end, as the Stoics as well as Proclus and other Platonists did (and as Origen also envisaged, albeit in a different manner and with the tenet of the end of the world).

Both Philo and his Patristic followers postulated a creation through the Logos and salvation through the Logos, with the main difference that, in both cases, creation and salvation depend on Christ, who is identified with the Logos by Philo's Patristic followers. (Of course, the salvific figure of the Messiah lurked in the thought of Philo as well;¹⁴⁶ Philo, however, does not identify this figure with Jesus of Nazareth.) The "invincible power of reason" in Philo's view weakens the impulses of irrational passions (*Sacr.* 80). The invincibility of the Logos would become a tenet of Origen's thought as well, who would make of it one of the buttresses of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*: "The Logos is more powerful than any evil that can exist in the soul (πάντων γὰρ τῶν ἐν ψυχῇ κακῶν δυνατώτερος ὁ λόγος); it applies the necessary therapy to every individual, according to God's will. And the ultimate end of all things will be the radical elimination of evil (τὸ τέλος τῶν πραγμάτων ἀναιρεθῆναι ἐστὶ τὴν κακίαν)" (*Cels.* 8.72).

¹⁴⁴ See G.E. Sterling, "The Most Perfect Work: The Role of Matter in Philo of Alexandria", in G. Anderson/M. Bockmuehl (ed.), *Creation Ex Nihilo: Origins, Developments, and Contemporary Challenges* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018) 99–118, focuses on Philo's *De opificio mundi*, which entertained two sources of being: God and matter. Philo rejected the eternity of the universe, albeit being ambivalent regarding matter. On day one God created the intelligible world and on the other days the sense-perceived world. Philo did not make clear whether God imposed the ideas on existing or created matter. In the *De providentia*, Philo professed that God created eternally, and in that sense matter is eternal, but subordinated to God. The same is the case with Bardaisan of Edessa (see Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa*).

¹⁴⁵ According to F. Calabi, there can be no doubt that for Philo the world is incorruptible: "Dio e l'ordine del mondo in Filone di Alessandria", *Études Platoniciennes* 5 (2008) 23–39, at 25. She suggests that when Philo, on the other hand, speaks of the world's corruptibility, this just refers to its ontological dependence on God. On the issues surrounding the authenticity of *De aeternitate mundi* and its relation to the rest of Philo's oeuvre see D.T. Runia, "Philo's *De aeternitate mundi*: The Problem of Its Interpretation", *VC* 35.2 (1981) 105–51. In this treatise Philo expounded the Peripatetic view that the world had neither beginning nor end, but what we have of this text drops at the beginning of Philo's refutation of this view. He also discussed the Stoic notion of conflagration, esp. at *Aet.* 48–51 and 76–107. In *Deo* 7 God is said to preserve the universe; even God's action of consuming matter is for the sake of conservation.

¹⁴⁶ On Messianic thinking in Philo, see P. Borgen, "There Shall Come Forth a Man': Reflections on Messianic Ideas in Philo", in J. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 341–61. On the difference lying in Christology see also Ramelli, "Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis".

IV. Conclusion: Double Creation and Double Soteriology

This essay has argued for the close relation between Philo's doctrine of "double creation" and his "double" soteriology. Creation and soteriology were also closely linked in Philo's main Platonic patristic follower, Origen, who postulated the similarity between the ἀρχή and the τέλος (as the "pagan" Platonist Plotinus also did). This investigation has therefore discussed what salvation is for Philo, how it depends on philosophy and on piety, how it refers only to the soul and not to the body and excludes bodily resurrection, and how Philo's concept of *apokatastasis* relates to his soteriology and refers back to his doctrine of creation. Attention has finally been paid to Philo's ambiguous stance towards the doctrine of *metensomatōsis* and its relation to his theory of creation and philosophical soteriology.

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