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Philo of Alexandria on divine forgiveness

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3

**Philo's view on
the relationship
between God
and humans**

3.1 *Introduction*

In the previous chapter, I focused on Philo's view on the relationship between God and creation, and on the attribution of human characteristics to God. In this chapter, I zoom in on Philo's view on the relationship between God and humans, because divine forgiveness takes place between God and human beings. Having seen in the previous chapter how Philo held God to be connected to the whole of creation, the central question of this chapter can now be phrased as: how does Philo's view on God's relationship to the whole of creation in general translate to his view on the relationship between God and human beings in particular?

This issue will be tackled from two different angles in this chapter. In the first part, I will examine how Philo saw the whole of creation in general and humans in particular as connected to an 'image of God'. This notion will be explored through an analysis of sections from *De Opificio Mundi*, where Philo presents an interpretation of Gn. 1:26 according to which humans were created 'after the image of God'. I will show how this phrase represented for Philo both a general and a particular, even unique, way in which humans are connected to God. I will also discuss how Philo saw the general connection between God and humans as permanent, whereas the particular connection is conditional: whether it exists or not, depends on human choice.

The choice humans can make will be further explored in the second part of this chapter through an analysis of sections from *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*. Here the second angle of how Philo translated the overall connection between God and creation to the relationship between God and humans will be explored. This second angle is how, according to Philo, God's spirit can manifest itself in the whole of creation in general, and in human beings in particular. It will become apparent that God's spirit manifests itself in its purest form in human beings when they choose to act rationally. They then fulfil their purpose in becoming like God. However, if they choose irrationality, they miss that purpose. Instead of becoming like God, humans rather sink down to the level of irrational animals. The choice human beings have between rationality and irrationality will be shown to have fundamental consequences.

3.2 *Philo's view on humans as 'the image of God'*

3.2.1 *The relevance of De Opificio Mundi to this topic*

In *De Opificio Mundi*, Philo presents his interpretation of the creation account in Genesis. The structure of Philo's argumentation in this treatise was presented in the previous chapter.³⁰⁸ In that chapter, we have seen that Philo begins this

³⁰⁸ See pp. 54–56.

treatise in *Opif.* 1–12 with an explanation why the world must be created and why Moses provided the best account of creation.³⁰⁹ In *Opif.* 13–36a, Philo continues his interpretation of the creation account with a discussion of what he sees as the most fundamental part of creation, namely the intelligible world.³¹⁰ Next, in *Opif.* 36b–68, following the narrative of Gn. 1:6–31, he discusses what he sees as the creation of the material world on days two to six of creation, beginning with the visible heaven and ending with humans. Then, in *Opif.* 69–88, he elaborates on the unique qualities of human beings. We can expect an analysis of these sections to help us understand how Philo considered God and human beings were connected to each other, particularly because he interprets in these sections the phrase from Gn. 1:26–27 that human beings are created ‘after the image of God’ (κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ). Philo has quoted from Gn. 1:26–27 already earlier in the treatise, however. This quote occurs in *Opif.* 25, where Philo uses it as biblical support for his idea that the material world is created based upon the model of the intelligible world. Philo brings this idea forward in *Opif.* 16–25, which forms an important part of Philo’s description of the intelligible world’s creation (*Opif.* 13–36a). Therefore, *Opif.* 16–25 will also be analysed.

3.2.2 *Opif.* 16–25: Humans as models in the mind of God

3.2.2.1 *Paraphrase*

In *Opif.* 16–25, Philo explains why the material world must be created based upon an intelligible model. In the preceding sections (*Opif.* 13–15), Philo has discussed the special nature of day one in relation to the other days of creation, as it is dedicated to the creation of the intelligible world. In the subsequent sections (*Opif.* 26–36a), Philo will explain how the intelligible world was created first in order and not first in time because it exists outside the dimension of time, and he will discuss the creation of two concepts in particular, namely life-breath and intellectual light.

In *Opif.* 16, Philo first states the reason why God created the intelligible world. This reason is that the material world can only be beautiful if it is formed after an ideal archetype. He will elaborate on this necessity in *Opif.* 21–22, but first he discusses in *Opif.* 17–20 the question of where the intelligible world exists. Philo is certain that it must exist in God’s reason, using an analogy of how human architects build a city. Architects first create a plan, a conceptual city, in their mind for all the elements that will make up the city and then use this conceptual city as a model to create the tangible city. Philo explains that likewise, God first conceived in his reason the intelligible world – that is, the design and models that will be used to form the material world.

³⁰⁹ See also my analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12 on pp. 56–67.

³¹⁰ See also my analysis of this section on pp. 68–79.

Philo then argues (in *Opif.* 21–23, returning as it were to his statement in *Opif.* 16) that the intelligible world can only exist in its truest and fullest form within divine reason, because the material world is too weak to fully receive and contain all the elements of the intelligible world. The material world exists as the result of God, being good, giving to formless matter as much of the ideal forms as it is able to receive, granting it a share in existence. The imprints of the concepts give form and meaningful, actual existence to matter, creating all the objects of the material world. Matter itself is nothing, but can become anything. Through the imprint of the concepts matter becomes something definite, taking on form and quality, order and harmony – things Philo associates with beauty and goodness. Matter receives as much as it can of the beautiful and good concepts, but the concepts themselves exist in their pure and most beautiful form as imprints within divine reason.

In *Opif.* 24–25, Philo then draws the conclusion that the intelligible world can be nothing else than God's reason while he is planning to create the world, just as the conceptual city is identical to the reason of the architect while he is planning the creation of the city. Philo presents biblical support for his view, referring to the description of the creation of humans in Gn. 1:26–27. Philo argues that if each material human being is a copy of an image, then the whole material world must be a copy of an image. A copy, or imprint, is made with a seal. Philo concludes that it is clear that the original seal, also called the intelligible world, can only be the reason of God. With the paraphrase of *Opif.* 16–25 complete, I will turn to the analysis.

3.2.2.2 **Analysis**

What follows is an analysis of *Opif.* 16–25, focusing on what we can learn from these sections regarding how Philo saw the relationship between God and humans. As Philo declares in *Opif.* 25, quoting from Gn. 1:26–27, humans were created 'after the image of God' (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ). Philo uses this phrase in a double meaning. He explains the genitive in 'κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ' sometimes as a *genitivus possessivus*: 'after the image God has (in mind)', and in other instances as a *genitivus obiectivus*: 'based on the copy of (what) God (is)'.³¹¹ Each of these options will be analysed, to understand how Philo saw humans as being connected to God, both in a general and in a particular way. I will explore the particular way in the next section, with the analysis of *Opif.* 69–88. First, by analysing *Opif.* 16–25, I will focus on the more general meaning of 'image of God': humans exist, like anything else, as an original form in God's mind.

³¹¹ Bréhier describes how Philo oscillated between these two meanings of 'the human created after the image of God', in BRÉHIER, *Les idées*, pp. 121–122.

The relationship between God and humans will be explored here, in light of how Philo considered a copy to be related to its original form. The relationship between copy and original form will come into view by focusing on how Philo, in *Opif.* 16–25, compares the way God conceived the original forms in his divine reason, to the way a human architect creates a city.³¹² Philo describes in *Opif.* 17–18 how he believes the process of creating a city takes place. He writes how the architect first receives in his soul, like in wax, the imprints of every part of the city.³¹³ The architect next employs the power of his memory to press the imprints of the model for the city firmly into his mind. With the design for the city firmly settled in his mind, the architect uses the imprints (τύποι) of the parts of the conceptual city in his memory as a model (παράδειγμα) to build the material city. The metaphor of imprinting in wax used for the process of memory was a common intellectual notion, originally conceived by Plato and adopted and further developed by Aristotle and the Stoics.³¹⁴

In our context, the crucial element regarding this metaphor is how original forms and their imprints remain connected to each other. The original forms are imprinted twice: once into the mind of the architect, and then again into the materials used to build the tangible city. Thereby, what was first received as an imprint in the mind, becomes an original form used to make imprints into materials. Original forms and imprints remain intertwined, and an imprint can again become an original form, to be used for making other imprints. This intertwined nature is present in the Greek words used by Philo and in general for imprints: τύπος, σφραγίς, χαρακτήρ. They can all have a double meaning:

³¹² Philo in his comparison of God to a human architect identifies God as the creator of both the original model for the material world and the material world itself. As Niehoff describes (in NIEHOFF, *Biography*, pp. 100–101) Philo, under the influence of Stoicism, wanted to emphasise that there is one creator-God, different from Plato who presented the demiurge as a second god, who created the material world by looking at a given model. Niehoff (in the same section) also suggests that Chrysippus may have inspired Philo to compare God to an architect, as Chrysippus compared the world to a beautiful house created for humans to live in. Before Niehoff, Runia (RUNIA, *Timaeus*, pp. 168–169; and similar but with added references in RUNIA, 'Polis') has provided many references to various sources in Hellenistic philosophy, not only Stoic, that may have inspired Philo in using the architect metaphor for God's creation act.

³¹³ Philo used the metaphor of imprinting in wax throughout his works for various processes: memory (here in *Opif.* 17–21, and see also next note), matter receiving a form (*Spec.* I, 47), and sense-perception (*Opif.* 166; *Deus* 43). As will be explored in the analysis of *Opif.* 69–88 (see pp. 106–111), the process of sense-perception is actually a way for human beings to retrace the imprints to their original form, closing the circle between the two.

³¹⁴ As described by Runia (RUNIA, *Creation*, p. 139 and 141). Plato compared the process of memory in *Theaetetus* to that of seals imprinting in wax and also discussed the properties of the wax necessary for creating accurate impressions (see *Tht.* 191C–194C). Similarly, in *Mut.* 212 Philo writes that εικονές play an important part in the process of memory: the soul reproduces what it has received as images in his memory. In the same section Philo writes that the wax of the soul should be of a balanced nature, namely neither too soft, nor too solid. When they are too soft, the imprints will blur out quickly, and when too solid, the imprints are difficult to be made.

they can refer to the object making the imprint (seal, die, form), as well as to the imprint made with the object.

The interconnection of forms and imprints is part of the creation of the world as well, as Philo describes it in *Opif.* 19–25. First, when God conceived (ἐνενόησε, *Opif.* 19) the models for the material world, they were received and contained (δέξασθαι τε καὶ χωρῆσαι, *Opif.* 20) in his reason. It is important to note, however, that for Philo ‘conceiving’ (ἐννοέω) was probably the best verb to describe how the original forms were created by God, somewhat better suited than ‘receiving’ (δέχομαι), because the analogy between God and a human mind had limitations for Philo, since he did not consider God to have a passive mind that receives imprints like in wax.³¹⁵ In God’s mind the original concepts exist in their purest form, as immaterial images. The concepts conceived in God’s mind are then used as stamps to create the whole material world: they are imprinted upon formless matter, to create all the material objects, including human beings (*Opif.* 22 and 25).³¹⁶ The imprints existing in God’s reason transform into original forms to create imprints in matter.

Being aware of this transformation of imprint into original form and their interconnection helps to understand why Philo expresses a permanent connection between God and humans, when he writes in *Opif.* 25 that humans are created as an εἰκὼν εἰκόνοϋ. In this phrase, Philo uses the same word εἰκὼν twice, once for the original form and once for the copy, exploiting the double meaning εἰκὼν can have, similar to, for example, τύπος.³¹⁷ Εἰκὼν εἰκόνοϋ, here means ‘an imprint of an original form’.³¹⁸ The first εἰκὼν refers to an individual human being, who, like anything else in creation, comes into being as an imprint in matter of an original form. The second εἰκὼν refers to that original form – that is, the concept for human beings as it exists in God’s mind. Philo saw the interconnection of original form and imprint as an inseparable

³¹⁵ As will be discussed in the analysis of *Deus* 33–50, see especially pp. 124–138.

³¹⁶ As Philo writes in *Opif.* 25: ὁ σύμπας αἰσθητὸς οὗτοσι κόσμος, ὃ μείζον τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἐστίν, μίμημα θείας εἰκόνοϋ. I suggest translating εἰκὼν here as ‘model,’ for the context indicates that Philo means something like the image that exists in God’s mind, employed by God as a model to create the material objects. A translation of the whole phrase could be: ‘This whole world that is perceived by the senses (that is more than only the human copy), is a copy of a divine model.’

³¹⁷ For Philo’s use of εἰκὼν for original form see, for example, *Som.* I, 79, where he identifies the ἱερωτάται ἰδέαι with ἀσωμάτοι εἰκόνες. Tobin points out Philo’s double use of εἰκὼν (see TOBIN, *Creation*, p. 65, nt. 30); Tobin claims that Plato used the word εἰκὼν only for the copy of an original, not for the original itself (ibid., p. 64). Tobin refers to *Tim. Loc.* 99b and Plutarch *Quaest. Conv.* 718F as parallels for the use of εἰκὼν in the meaning of ‘original form’.

³¹⁸ Contra the interpretation that here εἰκὼν εἰκόνοϋ means that humans are an image of God’s logos, which in turn is the first image of God; as, for example, Runia interprets εἰκὼν εἰκόνοϋ, when he comments on *Opif.* 25, writing: ‘The Logos is God’s image, so humankind is created as an image of the image’ (RUNIA, *Creation*, p. 149).

connection. He held that imprints remain inseparably connected to their original form and therefore also held that each individual human being remains inseparably connected to God in a general way, because each individual has come into being as a copy based upon a model existing in God's mind.

3.2.2.3 **Results from the analysis of *Opif.* 16–25**

Philo's description of the creation of the intelligible world in *Opif.* 16–25 was analysed to see how Philo saw God and humans as connected in a general way. This general connection between God and humans takes the form of the model for human beings existing as an indestructible concept in God's mind. Each individual human being comes into being as a material copy based on an original form. This form was originally conceived (although not at a moment in time) in God's mind. Imprints and their original forms remain inseparably connected. All individual human beings are therefore in a general way inseparably connected to God, through the connection with the original template that defines them. Philo described this original template as an 'image of God', meaning an immaterial image – that is, a model – existing in the mind of God.

One meaning of 'image of God' is that it refers to the template for human beings as it exists in God's mind, implying a general connection between God and humans. But in the case of humans, 'image of God' for Philo means more. According to Philo, a similarity exists between God and humans. Such a similarity between God and humans is already implied when Philo compares God to a human architect. Apparently, Philo felt free to compare what happens in the human mind to what happens in God's reason. In the case of human beings, 'after the image of God' not only refers to an image existing in God's mind, but also to an actual similarity between God and humans. What is this similarity? This will be explored in the analysis of *Opif.* 69–88.

3.2.3 ***Opif.* 69–88: Humans as reflections of the mind of God**

3.2.3.1 **Paraphrase**

The passage *Opif.* 69–88 forms the last part of Philo's exposition on the creation of all the elements of the material world on days two to six (*Opif.* 13b–88, where Philo interprets Gn. 1:6–31). In the subsequent sections (*Opif.* 89–128) Philo, following the biblical narrative and reaching day seven (Gn. 2:1–4), discusses the special properties of the number seven. In the preceding sections he has described the hierarchic order in which all living creatures are created (*Opif.* 65–68), and Philo now returns to the topic that he introduced in *Opif.* 65: the creation of humans. In *Opif.* 69–88, he discusses three topics: in what way are humans 'like God', why were humans created by a 'we', and why were humans created last?

Philo first explains (in *Opif.* 69–71) how the similarity between God and humans is to be understood, as they are created ‘after the image and likeness of God’ (κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν, Gn. 1:26). The word ‘image’ (εἰκών) used in Gn. 1:26–27 offers Philo the chance to reflect on the similarity (ἐμφέρεια) between God and humans, and on what distinguishes them from all other earthly creatures. Philo decides that the similarity between God and humans must refer to the mind (νοῦς) which rules the soul (ψυχή). Each human being is endowed with mind. That mind is modelled (ἀπεικονίσθη) after God’s reason. With their mind, humans can gain knowledge, first of the material world, then of the intelligible world, and their mind is able to reach out even to apprehend God himself. Apprehending the nature of God is, however, beyond human understanding.

Philo next investigates (in *Opif.* 72–76) why a plural is used in the creation story when the creation of humans is described (Gn. 1:26). Philo’s educated guess, for he concedes that only God knows the true reason for this plural, is that humans were made by God and subordinate beings because the human mind is of a mixed nature. The human mind is home to thoughts both good and bad. Since God is the source of only good thoughts and actions, subordinate beings are made responsible for the creation of the human ability to think and do evil things. This ability for both good and evil is part of the human genus (*Opif.* 76).

The third and final question that Philo addresses is: why was humankind created last (*Opif.* 77–88)? Philo explains that in this way everything would be ready to receive humans. Philo sees this also as a moral lesson: everything is readily available for those who control the sensations. Philo furthermore sees a connection between what was created first and what was created last. He calls human beings a ‘miniature heaven’ (βραχύς οὐρανός). Heaven was created first and humans are created last, thus closing the circle. Human beings were also created last to impress the animals. And finally, last is no sign of ‘least’, of inferiority. Rather it proves that God has meant humans to rule the world. This completes the paraphrase, and I will now move to the analysis.

3.2.3.2 **Analysis**

Through the analysis of *Opif.* 16–25 in the previous section, it was shown how Philo maintained that humans and God are connected in a general way, because the model for humans exists in God’s mind. Now, the analysis of *Opif.* 69–88 will show how Philo considered human beings as connected to God in a particular way. However, as I will argue, whereas the general way in which God and humans are connected is unavoidable, the particular way is conditional: it depends upon a choice humans can make.

Before proceeding to examine how Philo held humans and God to be alike to each other, it is important to note that in *Opif.* 69–88 Philo is discussing aspects of the human species. In *Opif.* 69, the original form used to create human beings is called εἰκὼν. In *Opif.* 76, connected to *Opif.* 69 by the repetition of ‘most excellently’ (πάνυ καλῶς), Philo calls this model the species (τὸ γένος). Philo has explained earlier in *De Opificio Mundi* how all species of living creatures are created by God directly.³¹⁹ Each species is a concept belonging to the intelligible world, existing eternally.³²⁰ The species represents the template from which the individual members are created. The individual, material members of living creatures are not created by God directly, but are produced by natural growth from the elements in which they are at home (earth, air or sea), on the basis of the templates that exist in God’s mind.³²¹

Now, there is something that sets the template or species of humans apart from all other kinds of living creatures. As Philo writes in *Opif.* 69, the template from which individual human beings will take shape contains a similarity (ἐμφύρεια) to God himself. What aspect of human beings is similar to God?³²² Not the human body, Philo emphasises in *Opif.* 69: ‘neither is God anthropomorph, nor is the human body godlike.’ This leaves the soul (ψυχή) and more specifically the mind (νοῦς), the leading element of the soul, which makes humans similar to God, as Philo continues in *Opif.* 69.³²³ In what respect is the human mind similar to God?

In *Opif.* 69, Philo describes the mind in every individual human as an imprint, which has the mind of the universe as its singular archetype. The mind of the universe, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is God’s mind.³²⁴ God in his mind thinks the intelligible world, and by thinking these concepts he gives order and stability to the material world, bringing and keeping it in existence. So, Philo saw the human mind as an imprint of God’s mind while God is thinking the intelligible world. This imprint is not a faint copy, it retains a sameness with its original archetype. Because of the sameness between the

³¹⁹ Philo writes in *Opif.* 62 how God created the genera of all living creatures on the fifth day of creation.

³²⁰ As Philo emphasises in *Opif.* 134, where he explains what the fundamental difference is between the human created after the image and the human created from the earth; he writes: ‘(the human created) after the image is a kind of idea or genus or seal, conceptual, incorporeal, neither male nor female, of imperishable nature.’ Cf. also *Spec.* I, 76.

³²¹ See *Opif.* 63–64; see also *Opif.* 44 where the same applies to the plants; the process of ‘growth’ (φύσις) will be discussed on pp. 118–121.

³²² As Philo explains in *Opif.* 134, the individual human being is a composite being, consisting of body and soul.

³²³ Compare *Virt.* 204 where Philo writes of the first and earthborn man: οὐ τρόπον τινὰ γενόμενος εἰκὼν κατὰ τὸν ἡγεμόνα νοῦν ἐν ψυχῇ. See also *Det.* 83–84.

³²⁴ See Chapter 2, pp. 72–75.

imprint (the mind in an individual human being) and its original archetype (God's mind), Philo can describe the human mind as God dwelling inside a person.³²⁵

The human mind is like God dwelling inside someone because, as Philo further explains, the human mind is meant to do in humans what God does in the whole world: to think the concepts that sustain the world. In *Opif.* 70–71, Philo then describes how the human mind is supposed to accomplish that: by, as it were, tracing the connection between God and the material world back to God himself. God is connected to the material world, as we saw in the previous chapter, because he gives existence to the material world through the intelligible world.³²⁶ The way this connection works, is that God first created the concepts in his mind, and then used those concepts to create and sustain the material world. The connection between God and the material world 'flows', as it were, from God to the concepts and then from the concepts to the objects appearing in the material world. The human mind can perceive that 'flow', and trace it back to its source: the mind first discerns the material objects, then transcends them and grasps the concepts manifesting themselves in material objects, and next the human mind should be able to perceive the concepts in their true and immaterial form, as they exist in the intelligible world itself. Finally, the human mind could even almost see God as he truly is, but that is a sight beyond the limits of human understanding – at least for souls still connected to a human body.³²⁷

Philo describes the same process again in *Opif.* 82, but more condensed and with a notable difference. Instead of describing the human mind like an internal God, he describes the human mind as an internal heaven, filled with 'star-like natures' (φύσεις ἀστροειδεῖς).³²⁸ As a description of what these 'star-like natures'

³²⁵ Philo describes the human mind in *Opif.* 69 as 'in a way God to the one carrying it, carrying it like a holy image in his mind' (τρόπον τινὰ θεὸς ὦν τοῦ φέροντος καὶ ἀγαματοφοροῦντος αὐτόν). Philo here uses a verb that in our extant sources appear in his works for the first time: ἀγαματοφορέω. Runia describes it as 'perhaps the most remarkable of all the so-called *verba Philonica*' (RUNIA, *Creation*, p. 141); with *verba Philonica* Runia refers to composite words like ἀγαματοφορέω of which Philo is 'the first recorded author to use them' (ibid., p. 103). This verb contains ἄγαλμα which can mean 'image' in general, but also 'a statue in honour of a god' as used in temples. Philo will use that same verb in *Opif.* 137 where he describes the human body as a temple for the reasonable soul, 'the most God-like of all images' (ἀγαλμάτων τὸ θεοειδέστατον); he also uses it in *Opif.* 18 to describe how an architect has an image of the conceptual city in his mind. For an elaborate discussion of Philo's comparison of the human mind to God, including how such a view fits well within Philo's intellectual context see HELLEMAN, 'Deification', especially pp. 66–70.

³²⁶ See Chapter 2, pp. 75–79.

³²⁷ The limitations of human knowledge were discussed in the analysis of *Deus* 51–85 in the previous chapter, see pp. 90–95, and will be further explored in the analysis of the human ability to reason, see pp. 124–137.

³²⁸ In *Opif.* 82 Philo writes that humans within 'carry like holy images numerous star-like natures'

are, Philo summarises the exposition he gave in *Opif.* 70–71 as: ‘numerous skills and forms of knowledge and glorious songs of every virtue.’ Because humans can contain such star-like natures within themselves, Philo uses the phrase ‘miniature heaven’ (βραχὺς οὐρανός) to describe them.³²⁹ The difference between *Opif.* 69 and 82 is that, instead of being ‘like God,’ Philo now describes humans as being ‘like heaven.’

The difference is not as pronounced as it might seem, however. As discussed in the previous chapter, in heaven, divine reason provides stability and harmonic movement to the stars.³³⁰ The human mind is able, through its powers of reason, to identify the harmonic movements of the heavenly bodies.³³¹ Humans then think what God thinks, perceiving the order and stability God provides through his reason to creation. For humans, ‘becoming like God’ or ‘becoming like heaven’ is the same thing: in both cases it means that humans think what God thinks.³³² Humans then share, for as much as they are able, in the identity between God, his reason and what he thinks.³³³

The identity between God, his reason, what he thinks and what humans think, helps us understand a section in Philo’s works, where he uses the phrase ‘the human (created) after the image’ (ὁ κατ’ εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπος) as a name for ‘reason’ (ὁ λόγος). This is *Conf.* 146 where Philo designates ‘reason’ as ‘with many names’ (πολυώνυμος).³³⁴ Philo brings forward a few of the many names that are used

(πολλὰς ἐν αὐτῷ φύσεις ἀστροειδεῖς ἀγαματοφοροῦντα).

³²⁹ ‘Miniature heaven’ is reminiscent of the description of the human being as a microcosm that can be found both in Philo’s intellectual milieu and in his works. Runia provides background and sources for the depiction of the human being as a microcosm in *RUNIA, Creation*, p. 254, as well as references to Philo: *Post.* 58; *Her.* 155; *Mos.* II, 135, to which can be added *Plant.* 28. Cornelis A. van Peursen presents antecedents for the view that the build-up of the universe is a prototype for that of human beings in eastern and pre-Socratic thought, present also in the background of Plato’s thinking, see *VAN PEURSEN, Inleiding*, p. 43. As noted by Runia, however, microcosm is not quite the same as miniature heaven (*RUNIA, Creation*, p. 254). Moehring briefly discusses how Philo saw similarities between the human soul and heaven because both can be associated with the number seven, see *MOEHRING, ‘Arithmology’*, pp. 170–171.

³³⁰ See Chapter 2, pp. 57–59.

³³¹ See, for example, *Opif.* 54 where Philo describes discerning the harmonic movements of the heavenly bodies as the beginning of philosophy, ‘the greatest of all things good.’

³³² Comparable to Philo’s statement in *Dec.* 134 that of all living creatures a human being is because of his soul and mind closest to heaven and to God. In *LA* III, 104 Philo identifies reason itself with heaven, when he writes about ‘the highly elevated reason, brim-full of divine lights, that is also called “heaven”’.

³³³ The identity between God, his reason and what he thinks is discussed in the analysis of *Opif.* 13b–36, especially in light of Philo’s use of the term ‘monad’, see pp. 72–75. In *Her.* 233, Philo, while comparing the human soul to heaven, describes the ‘intellectual and reasoning natures’ (τὰς οὖν νοερὰς καὶ λογικὰς δύο φύσεις) of both as ‘whole and indivisible’ (ὁλοκλήρους καὶ ἀδιαρέτους).

³³⁴ Philo uses πολυώνυμος for the οὐράνιος σοφία in *LA* I, 43.

for reason: 'first principle; name of God; reason; the human after the image; the one who sees; Israel.' At first sight we could see this as an example of slipshod thinking on Philo's part: in *De Opificio Mundi* the phrase 'human (created) after the image' is used to identify the mind of human beings; in *De Confusione Linguarum* it is used to identify God's reason. However, Philo considered the human mind and God's reason to be one, because of their content; they are both employed to think the same thing: the concepts sustaining creation.

Philo indeed saw various meanings for 'the human (created) after the image': the phrase can refer to the template for human beings as it exists in God's mind, it can refer to the likeness to God contained in the template – namely the human mind – and it can refer to God's mind itself. These various meanings are interconnected, because of the identity between God, his reason, what he thinks and what humans can think.³³⁵ However, at first sight, Philo's use of the phrase 'human (created) after the image' might appear confused and inconsistent. A close reading of how he used the phrase, however, reveals that this is not the case. The reason why Philo decided to use the same description for what might appear as different matters is because he held them to be in their essence one and the same: God is one with what he thinks in his mind, and humans share in this unity, when they think what God thinks, namely the truly existing concepts.³³⁶

In *Opif.* 69–88, however, Philo emphasises that there is an important difference between God's mind and the human mind. Humans do not automatically think the truth. False opinions and wrong ideas can come into the human mind as well. As he puts it sharply in *Opif.* 72: 'mind and reason are like a home for vice

³³⁵ The interconnectedness between the various meanings of 'human after the image' is described by Philo in *Her.* 230–231: 'One is the archetype above us, the other is the copy (μίμημα) that exists in each of us. Moses calls the one above us "image of God", the one in each of us "cast of the image" (τῆς εἰκόνης ἐκμαγεῖον). For he says: "God made humans", not "an image of God", but "after an image". Thus, the mind in each of us, being of course in full and true sense "human", is the third impress (τύπον), when counted from the maker; the middle one [*that is, the mind that is part of the genus of humans, FJT*] is the model (παράδειγμα) for this one [*that is, the mind in each individual human being, FJT*], modelled (ἀπικόνισμα) after the other [*that is, the mind of God, FJT*]: Similarly in *LA* I, 22 and *LA* III, 96.

³³⁶ Compare *Gig.* 26–27. Philo writes that God's spirit is full of knowledge and wisdom, and that this knowledge and wisdom is one thing. It cannot be diminished when it is distributed over others. It remains always intact and full. Winston notes how Philo can describe the human mind as both a copy of God's reason and a part of God's reason, see WINSTON, *Logos*, p. 29. Zeller describes Philo's use of the concept of 'logos', which encompasses 'ein Spektrum von der göttlichen Idee der Ideen bis zum menschliche Vernunft prägenden ὁρθός λόγος' (ZELLER, *Studien*, pp. 125–126). I will return to the topic of the identity between what God thinks and what humans think when they are rational in the analysis of *Deus* 33–50, see especially pp. 124–137. For a discussion of the notion of 'becoming like God' in various philosophical traditions, see VAN DEN BERG, 'Becoming Like God' and LIU, *Homoiōsis theōi*.

and virtue, whose nature it is to dwell in them.' This is, as Philo writes in *Opif.* 73, what sets the human mind apart from that of the stars. The stars are wholly rational beings, they are not susceptible to thinking evil thoughts.³³⁷ This can be deduced from observing their behaviour: they never leave their appointed places, but always follow the course upon which God has put them. This, however, also means that they are not free.³³⁸ Human beings, however, are free to choose their own path – even if it leads them away from God and rationality, and consequently away from what is good and towards what is evil. Philo presents the possibility of evil thoughts entering the human mind as a probable explanation for the reason why God created the human species in cooperation with subordinate beings.³³⁹

3.2.3.3 **Results from the analysis of *Opif.* 69–88**

The analysis of *Opif.* 69–88 has shown how humans can become connected to God in a particular and very intimate sense. Humans not only exist as an image *in* the mind of God, but humans can also become an image, i.e., a reflection, *of* the mind of God. This happens when humans think what God thinks: the concepts underlying the material world, as they exist in their original form in the intelligible world. Because God, his mind and what he thinks are in essence one and the same, humans not only become *like* God when they think what God thinks, they also become *one* with God. When this happens, human beings truly become an image, a mirror-like reflection of God.

However, the unity of the human mind with God is not something that happens automatically or constantly. The human mind can just as easily become a home for evil thoughts. When it thinks evil thoughts, the human mind is no longer an image of God in the particular sense, it no longer reflects what God is thinking in his mind. Whether humans let their minds be filled with good and truthful thoughts, or evil and false, is a matter of choice, a choice only human beings – of all creatures – have.

3.2.4 **Conclusions: A general and a particular form of connection between God and humans**

How are God and humans connected to each other according to Philo? To find an answer to this question, I have analysed *Opif.* 16–25 and *Opif.* 69–88. We have seen that in each of these sections Philo brings forward different aspects of how human beings are created 'after the image of God'. One aspect represents the general way in which God is connected to humans, and the other a particular

³³⁷ In *Spec.* I, 66 Philo describes these wholly rational souls as angels. Compare 1 En. 21:6 where the stars are identified with angels.

³³⁸ *Cher.* 24.

³³⁹ This aspect of the human mind and the cooperation of 'others' in the creation of the human species, will be more elaborately discussed in the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 in Chapter 4, see pp. 171–177.

way. The general form of connection between God and humans is that the template for human beings is first conceived as a concept, an image, in the mind of God. Individual humans who appear in the material world come into existence based upon that template. Just as everything appearing in the material world comes into existence as imprints based upon original forms eternally existing in the mind of God. Because imprints remain inseparably connected to their original forms, the general way in which God and humans are connected is permanent. This permanency, however, does not apply to the particular way in which God and humans can become connected to each other.

The particular form of connection between God and humans is that, according to Philo, the human species not only exists as a mental image *in* the mind of God (as do the species of all living creatures and everything that exists), but also that the human species itself contains a reflection *of* the mind of God: humans can become like God. They can become like God through their ability to reason, which Philo saw as the defining element of the human species – that which sets humans apart from all other earthly creatures. He saw this ability to reason as a direct image, a reflection, of God's reason. With this ability humans are able to apprehend, albeit not in full, the divine concepts. When humans fill their minds with these divine concepts, their mind becomes as one with the mind of God, who also thinks these concepts.

The two meanings of 'image of God' can become entwined: the human mind, being a copy of the mind of God (meaning two of 'image of God') can perceive the concepts, the images, as they exist in the mind of God, including the concept of humankind (meaning one of 'image of God'). When this happens, when humans think what God thinks, Philo describes the human mind as becoming one with God, for as much as it can. However, the human mind does not automatically become one with God, nor does it always remain that way. Evil can abide in the human mind just as easily as virtue. Becoming like God involves an element of choice for humans. Rather than with divine wisdom, humans can allow their minds to be filled with irrational and evil thoughts. This particular aspect of the human mind will be explored further through an analysis of sections from *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*.

3.3 *Philo's view on humans as existing in a borderland*

3.3.1 *The relevance of Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis to this topic*

In the first part of this chapter we saw, through an analysis of sections from *De Opificio Mundi*, how Philo held humans to be permanently connected to God in a general way, and how both could become connected to each other in a particular way, depending on the choices human beings make. I will explore this conditional aspect of the particular connection between God and humans

in this second part of the chapter, through an analysis of sections from *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*. The structure of Philo's argumentation in this treatise was presented in the previous chapter.³⁴⁰ We have seen that he begins this treatise by presenting in *Deus* 1–19 what he sees as the main argument of Gn. 6:4–12, namely that human souls fare better when they are close to God instead of far removed from him. Philo then continues with an elaborate discussion of the anthropomorphic presentation of God in Gn. 6:5–7, by explaining first in *Deus* 20–32 that the statement that God 'bethought himself' (διενοήθη) does not mean that God changed his mind, because God is immutable.

The succeeding passage *Deus* 33–50 is especially important for our purpose, because here Philo elaborates on the relationship between God's mind and the whole of the material world, and in particular between God's mind and humans. The analysis of this passage will add important aspects to my previous analysis of *Opif.* 16–25 and 69–88. The general and particular way of the connection between God and humans is presented by Philo in *Deus* 33–50 as a continuum of God's mind manifesting itself in the material world in increasing steps of purity. According to Philo, God's mind is already present in everything in the material world, even in lifeless objects, but in an indirect form. Only in humans does it appear on earth in its purest form, namely as the ability of the human mind for rational thought. However, similar to what we encountered in *Opif.* 69–88, the presence in the human mind of this purest form of the manifestation of God's mind is not a given, but depends upon the choices humans make. As we will see, human choices have fundamental consequences for their soul.

3.3.2 *Deus* 33–50: God's mind in human beings³⁴¹

3.3.2.1 *Paraphrase*

In *Deus* 33–50, Philo investigates the meaning of Gn. 6:6, quoted by him in *Deus* 33: 'God considered (ἐνεθυμήθη) that he had made humans upon the earth and bethought himself (διενοήθη).' In the previous sections (*Deus* 20–32), Philo has explained what these words *do not* mean, namely that God, being immutable, does not change his mind. In the following passage *Deus* 51–85 Philo will explain that Moses employed such anthropomorphic descriptions of God to allow less sophisticated people to come to know God.³⁴² In *Deus* 33–50 Philo wants to explain what he believed the words of Gn. 6:6 *do* mean.

³⁴⁰ See pp. 81–84.

³⁴¹ Parts of this section were previously published as a paper in a multidisciplinary volume exploring the meaning of spirit in various settings of antiquity, namely as TIMMERS, 'Πνεῦμα'.

³⁴² *Deus* 51–85 is analysed in Chapter 2 (see pp. 84–95).

Right at the beginning in *Deus* 33–34, Philo explains that according to Gn. 6:6 God constantly considers and assesses everything he has created. Praise is reserved for those creatures that are obedient and conform to the order of creation. Punishment is reserved for those who rebel against that order. The latter introduces the fundamental question of how it is possible that some of God's creatures apparently are able to rebel against God, their creator.

To answer this question, Philo discusses the characteristics of all created things, dividing them (in *Deus* 35a) into four defining categories: form-giving force (ἔξις); growth (φύσις); life-giving force (ψυχή); and the ability to reason (λογικὴ ψυχή or διάνοια). Each category envelops the one before and adds something new and better. Each category also represents an increasing form of freedom of movement. Philo describes the characteristics of each category as follows:

- (a) Form-giving force (ἔξις) is an indestructible spirit circulating in lifeless objects, for example stones or blocks of wood, imparting form and qualities on them; it is the most enduring, but also the least flexible category (*Deus* 35b–36).
- (b) Growth (φύσις) represents several other abilities, more dynamic than that of the form-giving force: that of feeding, that of changing and that of increasing. Plants are an example of this category (*Deus* 37–40).
- (c) Life-giving force (ψυχή) is characterised by sensation, imagination and impulse. All animals have these three abilities, excelling plants in terms of dynamics, as it gives them the ability to move (*Deus* 41–44).
- (d) The ability to reason (λογικὴ ψυχή or διάνοια) is what makes humans excel all other earthly creatures. Humans share this ability with heavenly creatures, but different from them God has granted only humans the freedom of choice. Humans are able to deliberate their choices and anticipate the consequences that follow. This ability allows only them the freedom to consciously choose whether to obey God's order, or rebel against it (*Deus* 45–47a).

The implication of this freedom to choose is that only humans can be held accountable for their wrongful actions, because they alone can know better. Equally, only humans are praiseworthy if they choose to do good; for with them alone such a choice requires a deliberate decision. All other creatures are and do what they are and do because of necessity. Philo concludes: when God thinks about the nature of humans, he thinks about their ability to decide to do either good or bad. With the gift of the ability to reason, God has given the knowledge of what is right and wrong to humans and also the duty to choose to do good (*Deus* 47b–50).

3.3.2.2 **Analysis part 1: Four manifestations of God's mind**

In this part of the analysis, I will argue that Philo held that God's mind manifests itself in four categories, maintaining the order of everything he created. In the subsequent parts of the analysis each of these categories will

be explored separately. This exploration will aid us to further understand the general and particular way in which God and humans are connected to each other. We have already encountered these two forms of connection between God and humans in the first part of this chapter, but in this second part we will see how Philo thought they manifest themselves on the most fundamental level of existence.

In *Deus* 33–50, Philo discusses the nature of everything that exists in creation. He does so in light of how he believed God constantly assesses the whole of creation. According to Philo, God constantly considers whether everything in creation complies to the order (τάξις) he has installed in it.³⁴³ In the previous chapter we have seen that Philo held this order to be connected to God's mind.³⁴⁴ In *Deus* 33–50, Philo describes how this order is maintained through four categories that bind (ἐνδέω) physical bodies firmly together: form-giving force; growth; life-giving force; and the ability to reason.³⁴⁵ Philo presents the four categories in a hierarchic order. This hierarchy has two dimensions. Each dimension is related to the order of creation, but in a different way.

One dimension is the amount of freedom of movement in relation to the order of creation each category allows. Philo describes the range of this dimension by comparing the first and the last category to each other in *Deus* 35. The first category (form-giving force, ἔξις) represents very little freedom: it is 'the most powerful bond.' At the other end of the spectrum, however, the fourth category (the ability to reason, λογικὴ ψυχὴ or διάνοια) allows for a far-reaching form of freedom: it allows human beings freedom they can even use to rebel against the order in creation. The human ability to rebel against this order will be discussed in the next chapter.³⁴⁶ In the present chapter the inquiry is still focused on how human beings are related to God. The relationship between God and humans comes into view with the second dimension of the hierarchy of the four categories described in *Deus* 33–50.

The second dimension of the hierarchy of the four categories discussed in *Deus* 33–50 is connected to the mind of God. Each category represents a more direct and pure way in which God's mind manifests itself in creation. That is to say, in each category God's mind manifests itself more and more as itself. To

³⁴³ See *Deus* 34.

³⁴⁴ See my analysis of *Opif.* 6b–12 and 13–36 in Chapter 2, especially pp. 57–59 and 75–79.

³⁴⁵ Philo's use of the verb ἐνδέω, meaning (in medio-passive voice) 'to bind fast' (as if in chains), illustrates how the activity of these categories is to maintain order in creation. Philo uses the same verb in other instances to describe how the body can encase the soul (*Conf.* 106; *Her.* 274; *Som.* I, 138). Philo occasionally describes rational thought as being encased in the human soul, where it risks becoming overwhelmed by the input of the senses (*Som.* I, 111; *Spec.* IV, 188).

³⁴⁶ See my analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 in Chapter 4 (see pp. 177–184).

understand how these four categories were seen by Philo as manifestations of God's mind to sustain the order in creation, the philosophical antecedents will be briefly explored, beginning with Plato's philosophy.

Plato argues in *Tim.* 30A–B that order (τάξις), which makes the creation good and beautiful, is necessarily connected to mind (νοῦς). Plato reasons that God, being good, wants the created world to be good and beautiful. The world can only be good and beautiful if it has order. As Plato sees it, if the visible world is to become harmonious and ordered, and thus good and beautiful, an intelligent soul has to permeate that world. Therefore, God made an intelligent soul part of the whole of creation, to give it order and harmony.³⁴⁷

By Philo's time, Plato's argument had been developed into the idea that mind (νοῦς) manifested itself in the world as the four categories: form-giving force; growth; life-giving force; and most as itself in the ability to reason. The Stoics contributed in particular to this development, but it can be considered a common intellectual notion of Philo's time.³⁴⁸ Philo presents these categories as manifestations of νοῦς in sections of *Legum Allegoriae* II.³⁴⁹ He explains, as in *Deus* 33–50, that humans share the first three with other beings and that the ability of reason is unique to humans among earthly creatures. All four abilities are abilities of the mind, according to Philo, yet, of these four the ability of reason is most particular (ἰδίος) to the mind.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Plato reasons in *Tim.* 30B that the world requires a soul to be intelligent, for, as he writes: 'without a soul mind could be no part of it' (νοῦν δ' αὖ χωρὶς ψυχῆς ἀδύνατον παραγενέσθαι τῷ) (see also *Crat.* 400A–B; *Phil.* 30C). Plato concludes in *Tim.* 30B that 'this world came into being as a soulful, intelligent living creature' (ζῶον ἐμψυχον ἔννοον).

³⁴⁸ According to Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics believed that νοῦς manifests itself in every part of the world, albeit in varying degrees. In some parts it manifests itself only 'as a form-giving force' (ὡς ἐξίς), in other parts, specifically the leading part of the human soul, it manifests itself as itself, 'as mind' (ὡς νοῦς) (*DL* VII, 138–139). Seneca's distinction of four natures (that of the tree, that of animals, that of humans and that of the divine) in *Ep.* 124, 14 is somewhat comparable to this fourfold division. For this reason, the fourfold manifestation of νοῦς as a form-giving force, growth, a life-giving force and the ability to reason is said to be Stoic (for example by Colson in COLSON/WHITAKER, *Philo* vol. 1, p. 480, note on *LA* II, 22; and also in COLSON, *Philo* vol. 9, pp. 238–239, note a). It is likely, however, that the fourfold division itself was part of the common philosophical vocabulary of Philo's time. Plutarch, for example, presents this fourfold division as something on which he and his opponents agree (Plutarch, *Virt. Mor.*, 451B–452D); similarly, Sextus Empiricus cites three of the four as the opinion of all dogmatic philosophers (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* IX, 81).

³⁴⁹ In *LA* II, 19–30 Philo explores Gn. 2:21, specifically the meaning of the statement that God took one of Adam's ribs (μίαν τῶν πλευρῶν αὐτοῦ). Philo interprets the word for 'ribs' (πλευραί) to mean 'sides', which he then takes as referring to abilities of the mind (νοῦς) when it is not yet clothed in the body. The abilities of that mind are countless, Philo writes here, but he draws special attention to four: δύναμις ἐκτική, φυτική, ψυχική and διανοτική.

³⁵⁰ *LA* II, 23.

To sum up. In line with common philosophical notions of his time, Philo saw the world as endowed with a rational mind (νοῦς), giving it order and harmony by manifesting itself as a form-giving force, growth, a life-giving force and the ability to reason.³⁵¹ Through the discussion of the previous chapter, we know that Philo considered the rational mind of the universe to be identical with the intelligible world, which again is identical with God's mind.³⁵² We have also seen that, according to Philo, the intelligible world connects God to the material world. Now, the hierarchy of the four categories adds a new aspect to how God is connected to the material world: in each category God's mind manifests itself more and more as itself. On earth, God's mind manifests itself at its purest in human beings, as the ability of rational thought. As we will see by focusing on each category separately, the first three more indirect manifestations are always present in humans, whereas the fourth and purest, i.e., rationality, is a matter of choice with fundamental consequences.

3.3.2.3 *Analysis part 2: Form-giving force (ἔξις)*

In the following four parts of the analysis of *Deus* 33–50, I will focus on each of the four categories that define physical bodies (σώματα) separately. In *Deus* 35–36, Philo describes the first category with ἔξις. 'Form-giving force' as a translation for ἔξις best captures the implied combination of form and quality.³⁵³ How is this category connected to God's mind?

Philo describes ἔξις as a 'circulating spirit' (πνεῦμα ἀναστρέφον), which is indestructible (ἄφθαρτος).³⁵⁴ What Philo meant with this description can be brought to light by using passages where Plutarch describes Stoic thought. Plutarch claimed that, according to the Stoics, ἔξις is a form of ἀήρ which gives lifeless objects certain qualities – for example, it makes iron hard, stone solid and silver white.³⁵⁵ At first sight, air is something different from spirit. However, in Stoic fragments, πνεῦμα is defined as a combination of fire and air, a definition similar to that of Aristotle, who described πνεῦμα as θερμός ἀήρ.³⁵⁶ So the form of air that Plutarch mentions might very well refer to πνεῦμα. This

³⁵¹ In *Aet.* 75 Philo describes cohesion, growth, life and rationality as manifestations of τοῦ κόσμου φύσις.

³⁵² See pp. 68–80.

³⁵³ The word ἔξις is derived from the verb ἔχω. When ἔξις is used with the transitive sense of ἔχω in mind, it can mean 'having' and variants thereof. In light of an intransitive use of ἔχω, ἔξις can mean 'being in a certain state, a permanent condition' or variants thereof. Colson used 'cohesion' as a translation for ἔξις. As will be discussed in the following, however, ἔξις as Philo uses it in *Deus* 33–50 refers to the defining properties, the combination of the particular form and qualities of an object.

³⁵⁴ *Deus* 35–36. Other instances where ἔξις appears in this meaning are: *Her.* 242; *Praem.* 48; *Aet.* 125. In *Opif.* 131, πνεῦμα appears in the role of ἔξις, without ἔξις itself being mentioned.

³⁵⁵ Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.*, 1053F. In *Som.* I, 136 Philo describes ἔξις as a form of air.

³⁵⁶ SVF II, 310: καὶ γὰρ αἰέρος καὶ πυρὸς ὑφίστανται τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχειν τὸ πνεῦμα; see also LONG, *Stoic Studies*, p. 231. For Aristotle's description of πνεῦμα see *Gen. An.* II, 736a 2.

identification is strengthened by the fact that, according to Plutarch, the Stoics proposed that qualities in general are πνεύματα.³⁵⁷

Philo states in *Deus* 36 that the constant motion with which ἔξις is present throughout a material object is indestructible. This notion can be understood through seeing ἔξις as a form of πνεῦμα imparting qualities to objects. As we have seen in the previous chapter, for Philo quality (ποιότης) is something that belongs to things appearing in the material world, it is what defines the characteristics of an object.³⁵⁸ At the same time, these qualities exist as abstract concepts in the intelligible world. As such they are eternal, they cannot be destroyed.³⁵⁹ The solidness of stones provides an illustrative example. Even though an individual stone can be smashed to pieces, that which makes a stone a stone, its character, cannot be destroyed.

⋮ **To sum up.** According to Philo, God's mind manifests itself in everything that exists in the material world as 'form-giving force' (ἔξις). Philo describes it as a form of πνεῦμα that goes around within an object, imparting the defining qualities to every part of that object. These defining qualities of objects are indestructible. This is because qualities are part of the intelligible world, which exists in God's mind. 'Form-giving force' is a static, and therefore stable – even indestructible – manifestation of God's mind in the material world. The next level in which God's mind can manifest itself in the material world, namely as growth (φύσις), is more dynamic.

3.3.2.4 *Analysis part 3: Growth (φύσις)*

The second category defining material objects is 'growth' (φύσις). Philo describes the properties of φύσις in *Deus* 37–40. Here, he describes 'growth' as a recurring process, comparing it to an athlete participating in a contest. Just before, in *Deus* 36, Philo has similarly compared the way ἔξις imparts qualities to an object to the double course (δίαυλος) that athletes run at festivals. Both ἔξις and φύσις are described by Philo as recurring processes, and for this reason, Philo presents ἔξις as indestructible and φύσις as eternal.³⁶⁰ The eternal nature of φύσις connects it to the divine world of being.

This connection between φύσις and the divine becomes more evident by comparing *Deus* 37–40 to how Philo presented 'growth' in sections of *De Opificio Mundi*. As I will argue, in these sections Aristotelian and Stoic elements can

³⁵⁷ Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.*, 1054A. On Plutarch, also in comparison to Philo, see contributions in HIRSCH-LUIPOLD (ed.) *Plutarch*.

³⁵⁸ See the analysis of how God through the intelligible world gives existence to the material world, pp. 75–79.

³⁵⁹ See *Deus* 78, similarly in *Cher.* 86.

³⁶⁰ *Sacr.* 98; *Her.* 114.

be discerned in Philo's presentation. Retracing them will illuminate how Philo saw growth as much as a spiritual force linked to God's mind as the form-giving force.

As part of his analysis of the creation story in Genesis, Philo describes in *Opif.* 65–68 how all living beings grow from semen into their definite shape. In *Opif.* 67, Philo writes that φύσις shapes the living creature 'like a craftsman' (οἷα τεχνίτης). The term τεχνίτης used by Philo resembles a definition of φύσις that Diogenes Laertius presents in his overview of Stoic philosophy. Diogenes Laertius writes: "Growth" (φύσιν) they considered to be an artistic fire (πῦρ τεχνικόν), which essentially is a fiery and crafting spirit (πνεῦμα πυροειδές καὶ τεχνοειδές), that goes about methodically creating things.³⁶¹ The identification of 'growth' as a 'fiery and crafting spirit' is reminiscent of how Aristotle described in *De Generatione Animalium* that all living creatures grow from semen. There are several indicators that link Philo's exposition of the growth of living beings to that of Aristotle.³⁶² Aristotle's views shed further light on how Philo held that φύσις and God's mind are connected.

According to Aristotle, the semen from which every living being takes its beginning is a foam consisting of two parts.³⁶³ One part is a liquid substance, from the watery element. The other part is spirit (πνεῦμα), from the ethereal element.³⁶⁴ The watery part provides the raw material which then grows into a body.³⁶⁵ The spiritual part provides the generative heat, which has two functions.

³⁶¹ DL VII, 156. In SVF II, 1027 God is identified with πῦρ τεχνικόν.

³⁶² In *Opif.* 67, Philo writes that semen resembles foam, which was also the view of Aristotle. The clearest indicator that Philo for these sections was inspired by Aristotelian philosophy, is Philo's reference in the same section that the reasoning faculty (λογισμός) comes into the soul from the outside (θύραθεν) and is divine (θεῖος). This echoes Aristotle's claim in *Gen. An.* II, 736b 27–29, where the same qualifications are used for the reasoning faculty. Runia also notes these similarities between Philo and Aristotle in RUNIA, *Creation*, pp. 218–219. It is a matter of debate whether a) Philo has indeed read Aristotle himself, and uses his philosophical insights when it suits him, or b) Philo's thought appears as eclectic, because it arose in a philosophical milieu where various philosophical traditions (Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism, Scepticism) were integrated into one whole. I believe the latter to be the case, as argued in the discussion of Philo's method in Chapter 1, see pp. 29–34.

³⁶³ In *Gen. An.* II, 736a 1–3 Aristotle describes the nature of the semen from which all living creatures take their beginning. He determines that the characteristics of semen are that it is thick when it is hot and that it becomes more liquid when it cools down. Semen therefore must be a foam, for it is thick when hot and becomes more liquid when it cools down.

³⁶⁴ Aristotle defined spirit as hot air, see note 356. This heat is not the devouring heat of fire. Instead, it is a generative heat, the type of heat that Aristotle claims belongs to the stars. He determines that spirit must be made of the same element as the stars, namely ether, see *Gen. An.* II, 736b 35–39. For ether as the element of which the stars are made see *Cael.* I, 269a 30. I am indebted to Francis H. Sandbach for his comparison between Aristotelian, Stoic and Platonic views on the soul and the role of πνεῦμα, in SANDBACH, *Aristotle*, pp. 46–49.

³⁶⁵ *Gen. An.* II, 736b 20–35.

The first is to energise growth itself. The second is to determine the shape that the living being will take.³⁶⁶ Here we see the resemblance between Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius' description of 'growth' as a 'fiery and crafting spirit.' What happens, according to Aristotle, is that the heat of the spirit solidifies the watery element into the body, and simultaneously defines the shape of the living creature.³⁶⁷ The shape that the living being grows into has to correspond to the possibilities that the living being will have when it is fully grown: for example, if the living being is to be a walking animal, it will need legs to walk with.

Aristotle argued that the semen from which the living creature grows must contain a template of the full-grown creature. Aristotle rejected the idea that such a template existed in a metaphysical form and maintained that it was part of the spirit-element in the semen, which he considered to consist of ether – a very fine, but still material element. Philo, however, considered the templates to be immaterial. As we saw in the previous chapter, for Philo the templates that define the shape a living creature will grow into, had to be part of the immaterial intelligible world. He held that only if they were part of that realm of true existence could their continued existence be guaranteed. 'Growth' is a manifestation of God's mind in the sense that it establishes a link between the physical body and the immaterially existing template that defines the shape it will grow into.

To sum up. Φύσις is as much an eternal, indestructible spiritual force as ἔξις. It is linked to the divine in two ways. Because of its recurring nature it is linked to the eternal existence of the divine world. It is also linked to the divine because it represents the templates God used to generate each material individual of a species. Philo held that these templates existed as concepts in God's mind. 'Growth' guarantees the eternal recurrence of each successive generation of individuals within a species. These two aspects linking 'growth' to the divine can be illustrated with a quote from *Opif.* 44: 'For God determined that nature should run a long course, making the species perpetual and giving them a share in eternity.' Φύσις is also connected to the next category, namely the 'life-giving force' (ψυχή), as the template for a living creature not only defines the shape of the body it will grow into, but also the characteristics of its soul, as will become apparent in the next section, where the category 'life-giving force' will be examined.

³⁶⁶ *Gen. An.* II, 741b 37.

³⁶⁷ Aristotle claims that the spirit is provided by the male alone, and the raw material by the female and the male together. The male provides the crafter (τὸ δημιουργοῦν) of the raw material. The male is also the beginning (ἡ ἀρχή) and maker (τὸ ποιητικόν) of the soul, because he provides the spirit. See: *Gen. An.* II, 737a 29; 738b 20–25; 741a 14.

3.3.2.5 **Analysis part 4: Life-giving force (ψυχή)**

Philo discusses the third category defining physical bodies, 'life-giving force' (ψυχή), in *Deus* 41–44. In this section, I will translate ψυχή mainly as 'life-giving force', and only occasionally as 'soul', to avoid evoking the idea of a dichotomy between body and soul.

First, I will return briefly to *Opif.* 65–68 to see how the 'life-giving force' is an expression of God's mind, just as are 'growth' and the 'form-giving force'. In the previous section I discussed how, according to Aristotle, the body of a living creature grows out of the raw material provided by the watery element in semen, while the shape the body grows into is defined by the ethereal πνεῦμα-element of the semen. However, a body alone is not enough to form a living creature. According to Aristotle, the body requires something that animates it, and makes it a moving, living being. Returning to the example of walking (of the previous section), for a living being to walk, having legs alone will not be enough. To actually walk, the living being will need something that will move those legs. This something, according to Aristotle, was ψυχή: 'life-giving force' or 'soul'.

According to Aristotle, living beings exist as a κοινόν of body and soul.³⁶⁸ Aristotle saw this combination as inseparable: the soul cannot exist without the body.³⁶⁹ He rejected a dichotomy between body and soul. The body provides the material shape for the living being; the soul or life-giving force is what powers or animates this shape, it is what makes it alive. It was Aristotle's view that the potential to walk, and almost all other possibilities of living creatures (to grow, to procreate, to see, etc.) can only be realised through the κοινόν of a body and soul.³⁷⁰ A living creature needs the combination of both to be exactly that: a living creature.³⁷¹

The ethereal πνεῦμα-element of the semen provides the template for the combination of body and soul. For Aristotle, this template was not something metaphysical; for Philo, however, it was. He held, inspired by Plato, that the templates defining living creatures existed in God's mind. We now see how this template not only contains the shape of the body, it also contains the characteristics of the life-giving force or soul that will animate it. As Philo writes in *Opif.* 67, φύσις not only forms the shape of the body of a living creature,

³⁶⁸ For my understanding of Aristotle's view on the soul I am indebted to Bos, *The soul*.

³⁶⁹ *An.* II, 414a 19–20. Palmyre Oomen explains in her inaugural speech at the Eindhoven University of Technology in September 2003 how Aristotle held that everything that exists, exists as the inseparable combination of matter and form, and how Aristotle uses 'soul' as a designation for the form-aspect in living creatures (see OOMEN, 'Werkelijkheid', especially p. 4).

³⁷⁰ *An.* I, 408b 25–30, *An.* II, 414a 5–28.

³⁷¹ To put it in Greek terminology: a ζῶον is the combination of a σῶμα and a ψυχή (see *An.* II, 413a 1–5).

it also translates the πνεῦμα-element of the semen into ψυχή, specifically into functions of the soul that elsewhere in Philo's work appear as separate types of soul, namely the nutritive and sensory soul.³⁷² Philo considered these types of soul to be material. The template that defines their characteristics for a particular living creature, however, exists as an immaterial form in God's mind.

Having discussed how the category of 'the life-giving force' is connected to the mind of God, the specifics of this category can be considered. Even though every animal requires a form of life-giving force particular to the abilities of that creature, there are three abilities that this force gives to every animal, as Philo describes in *Deus* 41–44. These three are the sensory abilities, that differentiate animals from living creatures such as plants defined by 'growth' alone. The sensory abilities are: sensation (αἴσθησις); imagination (φαντασία); and impulse (ὁρμή).³⁷³ According to Philo, all animals have these three capacities. The statement that all animals share in the abilities associated with the life-giving force becomes quite fascinating, in light of how Philo describes each ability in *Deus* 41–44. In this description, the distinction between animals as irrational and humans as rational beings seems to become blurred. I will explore this apparent contradiction, because this exploration will bring the aspect of choice into view and prepares the way for the analysis of the fourth and final category that defines physical bodies, namely understanding (διάνοια).

The three sensory abilities are described by Philo as follows. He describes 'sensation' as what connects the mind (νοῦς) to the objects appearing in the material world. Next, 'imagination' stands for the process by which those objects create an impression in the mind. Finally, 'impulse' is the movement of the soul in response to an impression. Do these descriptions imply that Philo maintained that animals are intelligent beings, endowed with mind (νοῦς)? How can this be, when a little further in *Deus* 45 he describes 'mind' as that which sets human beings apart from animals?³⁷⁴ This seeming contradiction

³⁷² QG II, 59. The translation of the watery element into the body-aspect of a living creature, and of the ethereal element into the soul-aspect as brought forward by Aristotle, echoes in *Opif.* 67. Aristotle also distinguished between the nutritive, the sensory, and the reasoning soul (*Part. An.* II, 656a 7–8; *Gen. An.* II, 736a 35–36). The translation of πνεῦμα into ψυχή is also described by Plutarch, as an idea of Chrysippus. According to him the πνεῦμα at birth is cooled down and is changed into a living being. Hence the word ψυχή for soul, because it owes its existence to the ψύξις (cooling-down) of the πνεῦμα (Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.*, 1052F–1053A).

³⁷³ In *Som.* I, 136 Philo mentions φαντασία and ὁρμή as what differentiates 'life' from 'growth'.

³⁷⁴ Similarly, in *Opif.* 66. Philo's use of ψυχή and νοῦς can be somewhat confusing. He can use either one as a *totum pro parte* to designate the human ability to reason as a specific function of the human mind, which is again a part of the human soul, or even more generally in the sense of the 'life-giving force'. He can also use both ψυχή and νοῦς as a *pars pro toto* to describe the whole human soul, including the human mind and its ability to reason. For example, in *Her.* 55 Philo explains that he uses ψυχή as a designation for τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν μέρος of the soul, the part he also calls ψυχή ψυχῆς, a phrase that is applied to the mind (νοῦς) in *Opif.* 66.

becomes less acute when seen in light of Philo's discussion of whether animals can be rational in *De Animalibus*, in combination with a testimony from Stoic philosophy.

Philo discusses the question of whether animals should be considered as rational in *De Animalibus*.³⁷⁵ In this treatise, Philo first presents the arguments of an imagined opponent supporting the rationality of animals (in *Anim.* 10–71).³⁷⁶ He then brings forward his refutation of these arguments (in *Anim.* 72–100). His imagined opponent argues that 'nature has placed a sovereign mind in every soul,' not only in that of humans but in all animals.³⁷⁷ Philo then supports his opponent's case with many different examples of animals expressing rational behaviour.

Philo refutes his opponent's claims not by simply denying that animals have a sovereign mind in their soul. His argument is more subtle. He argues that animals may behave in ways that appear rational, but in truth these are no rational acts. Philo defines rationality as the ability to consciously choose one's actions through deliberation and articulation. Animals are not able to deliberate nor articulate decisions, they only activate the abilities nature has given them. They act out of instinct, and not out of insight.³⁷⁸ They have no insight into their own behaviour, let alone in abstract concepts or other divine things.³⁷⁹ Human children are like animals, Philo further explains – they too act without conscious deliberation. However, as humans mature, their rational abilities mature as well. The ability to learn and to become rational is what truly sets humans apart from animals.

A similar view to that of Philo can be found in Seneca's epistles.³⁸⁰ Seneca argued that animals do have a dominant part of the soul, observing that animals display intentional behaviour, for instance when moving their body to something edible. The process of the senses presenting something in the soul, which generates an impulse, on which the soul sets the body in motion, is common to animals and humans alike. The difference between adult humans and animals, is that the latter are irrational. Irrationality in this case means that

³⁷⁵ For a plausible argumentation for Philo's authorship of *De Animalibus* see TERIAN, *De Animalibus*, pp. 28–30.

³⁷⁶ Philo identifies his opponent as his nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander; for a discussion of the various speakers in *De Animalibus* see *ibid.*, pp. 25–28.

³⁷⁷ *Anim.* 29 (translation by A. Terian).

³⁷⁸ Compare *Anim.* 92; in *Anim.* 97 Philo concludes: 'Animals do nothing with foresight as a result of deliberate choice. Although some of their deeds are similar to man's, they are done without thought' (translation by A. Terian).

³⁷⁹ *Anim.* 85.

³⁸⁰ Seneca discusses whether animals can be considered as rational in *Ep.* 121.

understanding has no part in an animal's decision, so it cannot articulate its decision.³⁸¹ The same condition of irrationality applies to human children.³⁸² With human children the state of irrationality can be remedied through education, gradually producing rationality.

To sum up. Ψυχή is the third category that can define physical objects appearing in the material world. It is the 'life-giving force' that animates living creatures. The template existing in God's mind for each living creature defines not only the shape of the body of a creature, but also the characteristics of that which animates it, what we usually call the soul. The soul gives living creatures the abilities to interact with their environment: sensation; imagination; and impulse. According to Philo, all living creatures – animals and humans alike – have these abilities. As a consequence, Philo held that the soul-element of humans and animals are very much alike, so much so that both can be considered to be endowed with mind. There is, however, an essential difference between the quality of the human mind and that of animals: humans can become rational, whereas animals will always remain irrational. This essential difference brings us to the fourth and final category: the ability to reason (διάνοια).

3.3.2.6 *Analysis part 5: The ability to reason (διάνοια)*

The fourth and final category of defining physical bodies, is that which makes humans unique compared to all other earthly creatures, namely 'the ability to reason'. In *Deus* 35, Philo uses λογική ψυχή to describe this category, in *Deus* 45–50 he uses διάνοια. 'The ability to reason' allows humans to grasp the nature of everything that exists, of both material and intelligible things.³⁸³ It is the mind (νοῦς), illuminating the soul with its own special light, driving out ignorance. 'The ability to reason' is indestructible (ἄφθαρτος), because the substance (οὐσία) of this type of soul (τοῦτο τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ εἶδος) is not formed (διεπλάσθη)

³⁸¹ As Seneca explains in *Ep.* 121, 11, an animal uses its abilities, but does not understand them. This, according to Seneca, is the true difference between animals and human beings, namely that humans can gain understanding, whereas animals will remain in their state of irrationality. Plato in *Tht.* 186B–E ascribes consciousness to humans alone as well, when he states that humans and animals receive impressions from the outside world in similar fashion, whereas humans alone are able to contemplate and classify these impressions.

³⁸² Seneca, *Ep.* 121, 13. See also LONG, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, p. 173.

³⁸³ Philo used the combination of σώματα (bodies) and πράγματα (abstracts) to embrace everything that exists. He associated σώματα with the material world of sense-perception and πράγματα with the immaterial world of thinking (see, for example, *Her.* 242; *Som.* II, 101, 134) (as discussed by Colson in a note to *Her* 242, see COLSON, *Philo* vol. 4, p. 573). Philo can also associate σώματα with literal and concrete, and πράγματα with figurative and abstract (see *Mut.* 60, 179). For further background on Philo's use of the combination of σώματα and πράγματα see HARL, *Heres*, p. 330 and WINSTON/DILLON, *Two Treatises*, p. 298. See also the analysis of *Conf.* 60–82 in Chapter 4 (pp. 165–169).

from the same elements (στοιχείων) as the other types of soul.³⁸⁴ Instead, it consists of the same element as divine beings.³⁸⁵ Most significantly, it gives human beings freedom of choice, an ability they share with God only. Because of this freedom, human beings can be blamed for what they voluntarily do wrong, or praised when they choose to do something right.

The human ability to choose between right or wrong is an essential element in the exploration of divine forgiveness and because of its importance, the whole subsequent Chapter 4 is dedicated to it. However, before I explore this choice in ethical terms of right and wrong in the next chapter, I want to explore it on a more fundamental level in the current chapter. Here, I will first focus on how Philo presented this choice as a choice between rationality or irrationality, a choice with fundamental consequences. We will see how the choice between rationality or irrationality implies that humans can either associate themselves with God and other divine beings or remove themselves from God and associate themselves with the animals. For Philo, the choice between rationality or irrationality puts humans on a threshold between animals and divine beings, allowing humans to let themselves be defined by the nature of either one.

I will analyse Philo's description of 'the ability to reason' in *Deus* 45–50 extensively, because understanding Philo's view on the choice between rationality and irrationality prepares the way for understanding his view on the choice between good and evil, and the consequences that follow. I will start with a seeming contradiction between *Deus* 41–44 and 45–50 regarding Philo's use of 'mind' (νοῦς) and try to solve it with statements Philo gives in the first book of *Legum Allegoriae*. We will see how Philo held that humans have two types of minds. I will next use elements from Philo's intellectual context, in particular Plato's and Aristotle's philosophical ideas, to identify the properties of these two types of minds, specifically in relation to the ability to think rationally. Third and finally, I will explore two metaphors that Philo used to describe the process of thinking rationally, to grasp his view on the human ability to reason, and what he saw as the limitations of that ability. These three analytical steps will provide us with insight into Philo's view on the human ability to choose between rationality or irrationality and the consequences of that choice.

The first step of the analysis of Philo's presentation in *Deus* 45–50 of the human ability to reason is connected to what appears to us as a contradictory use by Philo of the term 'mind' (νοῦς). In the preceding analysis of the 'life-giving

³⁸⁴ According to QG II, 59 (and similarly in *Det.* 83–84), blood is the substance of the other parts of the soul, the nutritive and sense-perceptive parts. The substance of the rational part of the soul, however, is τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα. Philo adds that, for this reason, the rational part of the soul (ψυχὴ λογικὴ) is most properly (κατ' ἐξοχήν) called the soul.

³⁸⁵ As Philo describes in *Her.* 283, this element is the fifth element ether (cf. COLSON, *Philo* vol. 3, p. 485).

force', it was discussed how Philo considered humans and animals as both endowed with mind. In *Deus* 41–44 Philo presents 'mind' as part of the life-giving force animating all living beings, which allows both humans and animals alike to interact with the material world. Now, in *Deus* 45–46, Philo uses 'mind' as a synonym for 'the ability to reason', describing it as a type of soul that only humans share with divine beings. Is this an example of slipshod thinking on Philo's part? When discussing Philo's method in Chapter 1, I argued that such accusations should not be made too readily. Rather, as we will see in light of sections from the first book of *Legum Allegoriae*, Philo refers to two different types of mind in *Deus* 41–44 and 45–50. One type of mind connects humans to the earth, the other type connects humans to the divine.

In *Legum Allegoriae* I, Philo also distinguishes between two types of minds. One type he calls the 'earthly mind', the other the 'pure mind'. The earthly mind is created out of matter. Philo describes the earthly mind in *LA* I, 32 as 'mind at the verge of entering into a body'.³⁸⁶ He states:

This earthly mind (νοῦς γεώδης) is in reality also destructible (φθαρτός), were not God to breathe into it (ἐμπνεύσειεν) a power of real life (δύναμιν ἀληθινῆς ζωῆς). Because then it becomes a soul (γίνεται εἰς ψυχήν), no longer undergoing moulding (πλάττεται). Not an unproductive and imperfectly formed (ἀργὸν καὶ ἀδιατύπωτον) soul, but one that truly thinks and lives (εἰς νοεράν καὶ ζῶσαν ὄντως).

A little further, in *LA* I, 42 Philo describes the earthly mind as made out of matter (ὁ δὲ ἐκ τῆς ὕλης).

Philo contrasts the earthly mind with 'the heavenly human' (ὁ οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος).³⁸⁷ According to *LA* I, 31 this type of human is 'made after the image of God' (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ γεγωνός) and has nothing to do with earthly matter (φθαρτῆς καὶ συνόλως γεώδους οὐσίας ἀμέτοχος).³⁸⁸ Similarly, in *LA* I, 88, Philo

³⁸⁶ 'Mind at the verge of entering into a body' is an alternative translation for νοῦν εἰσκρινόμενον σώματι, οὕτω δ' εἰσσεκκριμένον (*LA* I, 32). Philo uses this phrase as an interpretation for 'the human made out of earth', as he is interpreting Gn. 2:7 in these sections. Colson translates νοῦν εἰσκρινόμενον σώματι, οὕτω δ' εἰσσεκκριμένον as 'mind mingling with, but not yet blended with, body.' The medio-passive voice of εἰσκρινω can mean 'enter into, penetrate'. I have combined the two occurrences of εἰσκρινομαι in Philo's phrase and have translated οὕτω in a positive sense. Note also that Philo speaks of νοῦς, not ψυχή in this section. In a summary of this section Wolfson substitutes soul for mind (see WOLFSON, 'Free Will', p. 132). Altogether, ψυχή and νοῦς appear intricately interwoven in Philo's works (see note 374).

³⁸⁷ Similarly, in *Her.* 230–231 Philo writes that the word 'human' (ἄνθρωπος) in its most accurate sense refers to 'mind' (νοῦς). Philo's interpretation of the phrase 'human after the image' is discussed in the first part of the current chapter (see pp. 100–112).

³⁸⁸ The properties of 'the human being (made) after the image' are discussed in the analysis of *Opif.*

writes:

“The human God made” differs from “the one formed”, as said before: for “the one formed” is the more earthly, “the one made” is the mind more immaterial, free from (ἀμέτοχος) perishable matter, having a more pure and simple composition.

The heavenly human is ‘pure mind’ (καθαρός νοῦς).³⁸⁹ This pure mind, as Philo describes a little further in *Legum Allegoriae* I, dwells among the virtues.³⁹⁰ As the virtues are part of the intelligible world, the pure mind can be seen as residing in the intelligible world.³⁹¹

In the sections from *Legum Allegoriae* I, Philo distinguishes explicitly between two types of minds, the ‘earthly mind’ and the ‘pure mind’. Is this distinction implicitly present in his discussion of various properties of the human mind in *Deus* 41–44 and 45–50? To see whether this is so, we need to take a second step in the analysis. This second step is to relate the distinction Philo makes between the earthly and the pure mind to elements from his intellectual context. Plato’s and Aristotle’s philosophical ideas in particular can shed light on Philo’s at first sight somewhat cryptic description of the earthly and pure mind.

First, I will consider Philo’s distinction between the earthly and pure mind in light of Plato’s philosophy. As we saw on the previous page, Philo describes the earthly mind in *LA* I, 32 as ‘mind on the verge of entering into body.’ ‘The mind on the verge of entering the body’ resembles what Plato describes as the immortal part of the soul encapsulated in the sensory part of the soul.³⁹² According to Plato, God has created the immortal part himself, whereas the sensory part (as well as the body) is moulded (πλάττειν) out of the four elements by the minor gods.³⁹³ The sensory part is irrational, and if through education it is not mastered and put to good use, it renders and keeps the immortal part of the soul irrational, leaving it ‘imperfect and irrational’ (ἀτελής καὶ ἀνόητος).³⁹⁴

69–88 (see pp. 106–111).

³⁸⁹ *LA* I, 89. In *Her.* 184, Philo similarly contrasts the pure (ἀκραιφνής) mind to the mixed mind, the mind connected to the senses.

³⁹⁰ *LA* I, 89, and similarly in *LA* I, 54.

³⁹¹ The connection between the intelligible world and the virtues is discussed in the analysis of *Opif.* 69–88 (see pp. 106–111).

³⁹² In *Tim.* 42D–44C.

³⁹³ *Tim.* 42D–43A, 90E–92C.

³⁹⁴ As Plato describes in *Tim.* 44B the soul first becomes irrational (ἄνοος) when it is bound to a body, because of the overwhelming input from the senses (Plato describes the chaotic and irrational movement of the senses in *Tim.* 43B–D). If the soul does not learn how to control that input, it returns to Hades ἀτελής καὶ ἀνόητος (*Tim.* 44C).

Plato further describes in *Timaeus* how souls, consisting of an immortal and mortal part, are created to populate all living creatures, ranging from the stars to the lowest of animals. This population happens through a series of reincarnations. These reincarnations depend upon the moral behaviour of souls, and their moral behaviour is an expression of rationality or irrationality. All souls, according to Plato, are first born into a star. They receive knowledge of everything that exists, and are the most God-fearing creatures. If, however, fate determines that they become attached to an earthly body, they have to learn how to master the irrational impulses to be able to live justly. If they do so successfully, they will return to the stars. If they fail to do so, they will be reborn first as women; and if they continue to live wickedly, they will return as animals, each time of lower order.³⁹⁵ As Plato concludes at the end of *Timaeus*: 'Living creatures keep passing into one another in all these ways, as they undergo transformation by the loss or by the gain of reason and unreason (νοοῦ καὶ ἀνοίας).'³⁹⁶

What can Plato's ideas tell us about Philo's distinction between the earthly and the pure mind? The earthly mind mentioned by Philo, seen in light of Plato's ideas, is a type of mind that is prepared to be connected to a material body. This mind is a combination of a rational immortal part, created by God directly, and an irrational part, created from matter by the lesser gods to prepare the soul for its connection to a body.³⁹⁷ According to Plato, the soul needs to learn how to control this irrational part, in order to reach perfection. If it fails to do so, it remains 'imperfect and irrational' (ἀτελής καὶ ἀνόητος), resembling Philo's phrase 'unproductive and imperfectly formed' (ἀργὸν καὶ ἀδιατύπων).

Conversely, what Philo calls 'pure mind' (καθαρὸς νοῦς) resembles the mind to which no irrational part is added, the mind which suffers no interference from the senses. It is a type of mind that has full knowledge of everything, acts fully virtuously and in complete harmony with God. The logical assumption would be that such a 'pure mind' can only exist when it is no longer connected to the body. A comparison with Aristotle's ideas will show that this was not necessarily the case for Philo.

Aristotle's works shed light on further aspects of what Philo calls the earthly and pure mind, in particular how both can exist while the soul is still connected to a body. Aristotle analysed what it means to think. He compared thinking to the

³⁹⁵ *Tim.* 41–42D.

³⁹⁶ *Tim.* 92C–D, translation by R.G. Bury; on the theme of reincarnation in Plato and possibly in Philo see also note 564 and 592.

³⁹⁷ This part is, according to Philo, what can make the human soul 'body-loving' (φιλοσώματος), as will be discussed in the analysis of *Conf.* 83–106 in Chapter 4 (see p. 174).

process of shaping formless matter (ύλη) into some physical object.³⁹⁸ Formless matter he saw as something passive with the potential (δύναμις) of becoming something definite. It becomes something definite by being acted upon by an active agent. 'Mind' (νοῦς), according to Aristotle, has properties resembling both passive matter and active agent. It is passive like matter, in the sense that it contains the potential to think every kind of thought.³⁹⁹ At the same time it is its own active agent shaping the actual thoughts when thinking.

Aristotle further argued that mind and content cannot be distinguished: the mind *is* what it thinks.⁴⁰⁰ Consequently, when the mind thinks nothing, it is also nothing.⁴⁰¹ As Aristotle saw it, the potential to think does not exist in the proper sense.⁴⁰² The mind only truly exists when an actual thought is formed in it.⁴⁰³ The activity of thought, as it were, destroys the passive mind, in the sense that the activity of thought replaces the passive mind, which did not truly exist in the first place. This is why, according to Aristotle, the passive mind in which the thoughts are formed is φθαρτός.⁴⁰⁴ Furthermore, when it is thinking, the mind at once is immortal and eternal.⁴⁰⁵ The idea that the activity of thinking renders the mind immortal is supported by the fact that Aristotle identified God as the fundamental activating agent of thinking – that is, the one bringing the mind to life.⁴⁰⁶

What can be learned regarding Philo's distinction between the earthly and the pure mind from Aristotle's philosophy? Can the pure mind indeed only exist when the human soul is no longer connected to the body? What Philo

³⁹⁸ Aristotle ponders the question of what the mind is in *De Anima* book three, chapters four and five.

³⁹⁹ See *An.* III, 429a 25–30, where Aristotle writes that the forms are potentially present in the mind. Compare *LA* I, 100, where Philo writes that all the τύποι are δυνάμει present in the soul; the imprints potentially present in the soul will be further explored in light of doing good or evil in the subsequent chapter (see pp. 171–177).

⁴⁰⁰ *An.* III, 430a 3–6.

⁴⁰¹ This brings to mind the discussion of the properties of matter in the previous chapter. As brought forward in the analysis of how God through the intelligible world gives existence to the material world (see pp. 75–79), Philo considered matter to exist only when it took some definite form; as the *potential* to become all things, it does not truly exist.

⁴⁰² *An.* III, 430a 21.

⁴⁰³ *An.* III, 429a 23–24: 'So, the part of the soul called "mind", and I call that whereby the soul thinks and judges "mind", is not actually any real thing (οὐθέν ἐστιν ἐνεργεῖα τῶν ὄντων) until it thinks.' See also 429b 30–32.

⁴⁰⁴ *An.* III, 430a 25.

⁴⁰⁵ *An.* III, 430a 23.

⁴⁰⁶ *Met.* XII, 1072b 25–30: 'The actuality of thought is life (ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή), and God is that actuality; and the essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal (ζωὴ ἀρίστη καὶ αἰδῖος)' (translation by H. Tredennick). Compare *Det.* 83 where Philo describes ὁ νοῦς καὶ λόγος as τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀριστον εἶδος.

presented as the earthly mind can be identified with what Aristotle described as the passive mind. This is the state of the mind when it thinks nothing yet. In that state mind is like matter: it can potentially become all things, but actually it is not anything yet. Such a potential does not exist in the proper sense. Furthermore, this state perishes as soon as the mind is actively thinking. According to Aristotle, the mind is what it thinks. When it is not thinking, it is nothing. When it is thinking, it is immortal and eternal. Only when it is actively thinking does the mind truly exist. What Philo calls the 'pure mind' can be identified with the active and truly existing mind.⁴⁰⁷ To be actively engaged in thinking is not something that can only be done when the soul is no longer connected to the body, it can also be done while a human is living on earth.

Let us take a step back for a moment: I have now completed two steps in the analysis of Philo's description of the ability to reason in *Deus* 45–50. We have seen, in light of sections from *Legum Allegoriae* I and of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy, how Philo with regard to humans distinguished between two types of minds, the earthly and the pure mind. The earthly mind is part of the human soul that is prepared to become connected to an earthly body. It is passive and matter-like, and needs to be activated to do what it is meant to do: think rational thoughts. Through thinking, the earthly mind can become the 'pure mind': rational, virtuous and in harmony with God. How does the activation of the earthly mind work according to Philo? We will examine this issue in the third and final step of the analysis of the ability to reason. I will explore two metaphors employed by Philo to describe the process of thinking: one of intellectual light projecting the truth into the human mind, another of God breathing wisdom into the mind.

The first metaphor Philo uses to describe the process of thinking in *Deus* 45–46 is that of enlightenment (περιλάμπω). Aristotle had already compared the process of thinking to that of light: when light falls on an object it activates the colours that were potentially present in the object.⁴⁰⁸ What Aristotle left unsaid (but can be deduced from this analogy) is that thinking is a process where the potential thoughts lying dormant in the mind in the passive sense are also brought to light – that is, are activated into actual thoughts. Philo frequently compared the activity of the mind to that of light.⁴⁰⁹ He saw God as the original

⁴⁰⁷ Compare Philo's statement in *Deus* 46, that the mind when it is in the state of understanding consists of the same substance (οὐσία) as divine natures, to Aristotle, *An.* I, 408b 19: ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἔοικεν ἐγγίνεσθαι οὐσία τις οὐσα, καὶ οὐ φθείρεσθαι; and *An.* II, 413b 25–28, where Aristotle writes that νοῦς seems to be ψυχῆς γένος ἕτερον, which as something eternal can be separated from what is decaying.

⁴⁰⁸ *An.* III, 430a 10–20.

⁴⁰⁹ He does so in the sections analysed here (*Deus* 45–46), and already in *Deus* 3, again in *Deus* 135; further also in *LA* III, 230; *Cher.* 96; *Det.* 118; *Post.* 57–58; *Abr.* 119; *Spec.* I, 288; *Virt.* 12.

source of what he described as an intellectual light.⁴¹⁰ Philo compared this light to the material light of the material heavenly bodies, such as the sun.⁴¹¹ This material light is a dimmer version of the original intellectual light, which belongs to the intelligible world.⁴¹² God generates his own light that existed before the creation of the material world.⁴¹³ This is a truly heavenly light in the sense that it shines forth from the concepts of the intelligible world and divine reason containing these concepts.⁴¹⁴

When this heavenly light shines into the mind, the concepts of truth and virtue are projected into the mind. What happens is that the divine intellectual light projects the concepts of truth into the mind, installing wisdom and preventing false opinions from entering into the mind.⁴¹⁵ Such a form of enlightenment is available to humans even when they are still connected to a body. There is an important limitation, however. Full understanding is not yet possible for the human mind while it resides on earth. While the soul is still connected to a body, the divine light will project the truth only for so much as the human mind can contain, as the divine light is too strong for the earthly human mind to fully receive it.⁴¹⁶ These limitations of human understanding will be seen to also be part of the second metaphor used by Philo to describe the process of thinking.

⁴¹⁰ Engberg-Pedersen seems to be unaware of this concept of intellectual light. He claims that Christ's pneumatic body is understood by Paul to be material, because Paul writes that it shines. 'The shining character is something that can be physically seen,' Engberg-Pedersen writes. 'Certainly *seen* in a bodily sense (though in the heart),' he adds. When this shining that Paul refers to is understood more in the sense of intellectual light (and the fact that the seeing is connected by Paul to the heart, which could be identified with intellectual apprehension by ancient authors, makes this likely) the claim for the physical understanding by Paul of Christ's pneumatic body becomes less pronounced (see ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, *Cosmology*, p. 57).

⁴¹¹ Compare *Opif.* 53, where Philo writes that the mind (νοῦς) needs knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), to understand the immaterial forms (ἀϊσώματα) just like the eye needs light, to apprehend material forms. Plato describes in *Rep.* VII, 527D–E how knowledge of the movements of the heavenly bodies leads to an apprehension of the truth.

⁴¹² *Opif.* 31, 55. Compare *Mut.* 4–5, where Philo writes that the light through which material objects appear to the material eyes is borrowed light, light from a different source, which functions as a medium. The intellectual concepts shine forth in the mind through a light of their own (see also *Deus* 46).

⁴¹³ *Cher.* 96; *Deus* 58; Plutarch mentions a similar notion of intellectual light in *Quaest. Conv.* 718E (see also *Sap. Sal.* 5:6; 18:4; *Sib. Or. Frag.* 1:29–31; 2:34).

⁴¹⁴ *LA* I, 18; III, 45, 171; *Det.* 118; *Deus* 96. Goodenough elaborately discussed Philo's use of the metaphor of light in GOODENOUGH, *Light*. More background on this metaphor can also be found in RUNIA, *Creation*, p. 167.

⁴¹⁵ *Deus* 3.

⁴¹⁶ *Opif.* 71; *Deus* 78. See also the analysis of *Deus* 51–85 in the previous chapter, where it is discussed how for Philo full understanding of the divine is possible only for souls no longer living in the earthly realm (see pp. 84–96). Deborah Forger compares this notion of Philo to the Platonic thought of 'to become like god so far as possible' (see FORGER, 'Embodiment', pp. 238–243).

Philo used 'light' as one metaphor to describe the process of gaining insight; another metaphor used by him in *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* is that of 'breath' (πνεῦμα). In the introduction to the treatise (in *Deus* 2–3), he uses the two metaphors of light and breath together.⁴¹⁷ Philo held, like Aristotle, that without an activating agent the passive mind did not truly exist and remained perishable (φθαρτός). According to both Aristotle and Philo, the active agent bringing the thoughts potentially present in the mind into actuality is God. Philo described the process of the mind's activation as God breathing into (ἐμπνεύσειεν) the earthly mind, granting it the power of real life. Philo is of course inspired by Gn. 2:7 to formulate the activation of the mind as a form of inbreathing. However, there is more to it, as a short recapitulation of the conclusions of the three previously discussed categories that define physical bodies shows. Each category is connected to God's breath or spirit (πνεῦμα) as well as to God's mind.

The 'form-giving force' (ἐξίς), as we have seen, is a circulating πνεῦμα which instils material objects with their defining qualities that exist as concepts in God's mind. 'Growth' (φύσις) gives living things (both plants and animals) their form. This form is contained in the πνεῦμα-element of the seed out of which everything grows and exists as a template in God's mind. The πνεῦμα-element in the semen of living creatures has two functions: apart from again containing the template as it exists in God's mind, it is also transformed into the 'life-giving force' (ψυχή) that will empower the living creature.

When God breathes wisdom into the human mind, humans are granted insight precisely into how concepts, contained in God's mind, manifest themselves in everything that exists as the πνεῦμα-element in them.⁴¹⁸ The fourth category of defining physical bodies is linked backwards, in a sense, to the other three. Through 'the ability to reason' (διάνοια), a rational being is able to recognise the other forms of ordering principles in the material world (form-giving force, growth and life-giving force) and more importantly, recognise them as manifestations of God's mind. This explains how for Philo, as already for Plato, this form of insight makes rational beings the most God-fearing of all creatures.

Through this insight humans look beyond the world of material things and reach into the intelligible world.⁴¹⁹ In 'the ability to reason', the πνεῦμα-element as it exists in God's mind manifests itself in its purest form, pure in the sense

⁴¹⁷ Compare also *Opif.* 30–31 where Philo emphasises the importance of the creation of the concepts of πνεῦμα and φῶς.

⁴¹⁸ As Philo explains in *LA* I, 36–38, the reason that God breathes into the human mind is for humans to obtain a notion of God (ἐννοίαν αὐτοῦ λάβωμεν, cf. *LA* I, 37) (see also FORGER, 'Embodiment', pp. 233–234). The notion that God's spirit permeates the whole of creation can also be found in *Sap. Sal.* 12:1 and *Sib. Or. Frag.* 1, 5.

⁴¹⁹ In *Det.* 84, Philo describes how the human mind can reach into heaven.

that it appears in the form that is closest to its actual, true existence. Philo identifies 'the ability to reason' as the divine spirit (τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα).⁴²⁰ The mind, then, no longer thinks the forms and ideas as they manifest themselves in the material realm, as the impressions that they have made in matter. Rather, when the mind thinks these forms and ideas, it perceives them as they really are.

When the ability to reason is activated by God's spirit the quality of the human mind is transformed. From material it is transformed into immaterial. From perishable it is transformed into eternal.⁴²¹ In 'the ability to reason' God's spirit manifests itself as wisdom (σοφία).⁴²² When God breathes his wisdom into the human mind, humans share in the eternal, immortal existence.⁴²³ Philo

⁴²⁰ Cf. *Deus* 2 and also *Det.* 83–84 and *QG* II, 59. It seems that Philo wished to draw a line between the true nature of πνεῦμα and the way it appears in the material realm, especially at the moment where the two are beginning to overlap each other. Isaacs writes that Philo is clearly inspired by the Stoic view on πνεῦμα, where it is seen as wholly material, although he also wanted to maintain that πνεῦμα is not part of the material realm (see ISAACS, *Spirit*, p. 44). A similar view is held by Levison. He argues that Philo's position on πνεῦμα develops from adoption of the Stoic view, as attested in *Opif.* 135 and *LA* III, 161; to adaptation of the Stoic view as seen in *Gig.* 27 and *Spec.* IV, 123; and, finally, explicit attack of the Stoic view in *Plant.* 18 (see LEVISON, *Spirit*, pp. 148–149).

⁴²¹ In *Opif.* 146, Philo uses the words 'cast' (ἐκμαγεῖον), 'fragment' (ἀπόσπασμα) and 'radiance' (ἀπαύγασμα) to characterise the relation between the human mind and divine reason (see also *Som.* I, 34 where Philo describes the human mind as 'a divine fragment', ἀπόσπασμα θεῖον). In these three terms the metaphors of 'light' and 'breath' meet. Runia gives background information for these three terms (RUNIA, *Creation*, p. 345). He writes that ἀπόσπασμα 'is a Stoic term, used to express the whole-part relation between the divine *pneuma* in its totality and the part located within the human being; cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.143 = *SVF* 2.633. Philo finds the term useful for describing the relation between the divine *pneuma* and what is inbreathed in the human being in *Gen* 2:7; cf. especially *Det.* 90, "how is it likely that the human intellect which is so small, contained in the small mass of brain or heart, should be able to contain the great size of heaven and universe, if it were not an inseparable fragment of that divine and flourishing soul." Martin P. Nilsson describes how Posidonius identified the sun with the νοῦς of the cosmos and saw the sun as a symbol for becoming one with the νοῦς of God and human thinking as a ἀπόσπασμα of the mind of the cosmos (see NILSSON, *Geschichte* vol. 2, p. 252). 'Radiance' (ἀπαύγασμα) provides an illustrative metaphor to describe how Philo saw the nature of the mind when it is thinking the concepts as they truly are. It is then a projection of divine reason, immaterial inasmuch as a shadow is not made of anything substantial.

⁴²² *Gig.* 26–27; *Deus* 2–3; *QG* I, 90. Similar to Philo, the metaphors of 'light' and 'breath' are used in the Wisdom of Solomon, to describe wisdom. In *Sap. Sal.* 7, 26 σοφία is described as a ἀπαύγασμα φωτὸς αἰδίου. In the same chapter, verse 22, it is described as having a πνεῦμα νοερὸν, ἅγιον. For an exploration of the role of πνεῦμα in the Wisdom of Solomon, see PHILIP, *Pauline Pneumatology*, pp. 90–100. Radice sees the Bible as Philo's inspiration for the idea that God breathes knowledge of the virtues into humans, which makes the first human a dweller in wisdom, and Radice also sees this as an exegetical invention of Philo (see RADICE, 'Freedom', pp. 149–150). However, I have shown how Philo may just as well have been inspired by Aristotle to see God as the activator of rational thought in humans, and the idea that the first human beings had innate knowledge of God's wisdom was an integral element of the Golden Age myth (briefly discussed in Chapter 1, see p. 37), widespread in Philo's intellectual context (see HOLLANDER, 'Human Hearts', p. 115).

⁴²³ In *Opif.* 135 πνεῦμα, ψυχή and διάνοια are all connected by Philo. He writes that the essence of the human soul is the divine spirit, which, because it provides the human being with understanding,

could describe the transformation of the human mind to true rationality as a form of human ecstasy (ἐνθουσία). It is this form of mind flash that strikes a person when everything is suddenly revealed, everything is in its right place, the divine order is perceived: the laws, the order, past, present and future – all understood.⁴²⁴

However, again Philo held there are limitations to how much of God's wisdom humans are able to receive while they live in the earthly realm. One limitation is that the ecstasy of reaching true understanding comes and goes. Humans cannot command nor control it. As Philo describes and apparently has experienced many times himself, true understanding does not last while one is living in the material realm. Not while the turmoil of the body and human life can drag down the mind from its state of insightful bliss.⁴²⁵ Rationality is not a permanent condition for human beings.⁴²⁶ Although the divine spirit in its more material and indirect manifestations is a constant factor in the lifetime of any creature, including human beings, the spirit of God in its true and pure sense, the wisdom and understanding that enables the human mind to reach into the intelligible world, does not dwell permanently in human beings.⁴²⁷

Another form of limitation is that, according to Philo, the human mind can be activated and therefore defined by different agents. It can be activated by material objects only, without progressing further and reaching into the intelligible world that lies behind these material objects.⁴²⁸ The human mind

gives an immortal aspect to human beings.

⁴²⁴ See *Opif.* 70–71 (as discussed on pp. 106–111).

⁴²⁵ Compare Philo's voiced frustration in *Spec.* III, 1–3, how daily political turmoil pulls him away from God-inspired speculation. Dillon refers to Plotinus (*Enn.* III, v, 9; VI, vii, 35) describing being rational and knowing God as a state of sober intoxication, see DILLON, 'Knowledge of God', p. 226.

⁴²⁶ This is something that Aristotle already noted: all human beings have the potential of becoming rational, yet few actually fulfil this potential (see *An.* I, 404b 1–7, as noted by Bos, *Soul*, p. 225).

⁴²⁷ As Philo writes in *Gig.* 19, 28, 53; *Deus* 2; *QG* I, 90. See also BRÉHIER, *Les idées*, p. 135 and compare ISAACS, *Spirit*, pp. 64–65: 'Indeed Philo's use of the term πνεῦμα is far from systematic. Whilst using it to assert both the immanence and transcendence of God, he does not resolve the philosophical difficulties that arise from trying to maintain both. Thus, πνεῦμα is seen as the principle of order and cohesion in the life of man and the cosmos. As such it is permanent and all-pervading. It is the principle of reason, which is the link between God and His creation. As conscience, it is the possession of all, necessary for the apprehension and attainment of truth. However, since Philo rejects Stoic pantheism, for him the πνεῦμα in man must also be spasmodic and transient, not man's by his unalienable right, but the gift of God possessed by only the few.' Based on the evidence presented in this analysis of *Deus* 33–50, Isaacs' statement can be refined. For Philo πνεῦμα in its purest form, as consciousness of divine wisdom, is spasmodic and transient in human beings. However, even when this conscious understanding of the divine wisdom is absent, this same divine wisdom is still present in its other manifestations: as the ordering principle which installs qualities, shape, growth and life.

⁴²⁸ In *Her.* 263–265, Philo refers to the human mind as a type of wisdom that does not reach beyond the

then remains unstable and perishable, as it is defined only by the ever-changing and perishable aspects of the material objects. Philo claims that if a human being aspires to true wisdom, he should leave this type of wisdom behind, understanding it to be untrustworthy.⁴²⁹ Instead, he should open his mind to the concepts that shine through the material objects. He should let his mind be defined by the light and breath of true divine wisdom, namely, the concepts that truly exist. The human mind then receives God's wisdom and becomes immortal, for God's wisdom is what truly exists. However, when the human mind is activated through the material objects only, it remains irrational, unstable and perishable.⁴³⁰

Philo can go as far as to write that the human mind needs to be 'banished' (ἐξουκίζω).⁴³¹ I argue that in such cases Philo refers to the earthly and passive mind activated by the wrong agent, namely the material world alone. The content and the source of that content determine for Philo what the quality or state of the mind is: whether it is to be regarded rational (and therefore heavenly and divine) or irrational (and merely earthly and animal-like). The *content* of the mind is the distinguishing feature, more than the mind itself. This makes sense, because, as Philo saw it, the mind of itself is nothing, it only becomes something when it thinks.⁴³² If God does not breathe his wisdom into the mind, it will remain irrational. Without rationality, the mind remains unstable and destructible, because rationality – the understanding of truth – is eternal and indestructible. The irrational mind is defined by the unstable and perishable nature of the material world only and needs to be replaced with a mind defined by God's wisdom.⁴³³

With the exploration of the metaphors of enlightenment and inbreathing for the process of active thinking we have completed the third step of the analysis

material objects into the intelligible world.

⁴²⁹ Human wisdom is achieved as the properties of things are revealed to the mind through the senses (see *Som.* I, 27), ultimately the senses only lead the mind into confusion, dizzying it with differences between objects (see *Ios.* 142). For Philo's opinion on the confusing nature of the senses, see also pp. 59–61 and pp. 148–162.

⁴³⁰ Compare *Conf.* 176, where Philo links rational to immortal, and irrational to mortal.

⁴³¹ As Philo writes in *Her.* 265; similarly, Philo writes in *LA* III, 29 that one should flee from one's own mind.

⁴³² Philo's presentation of the human intellect as mainly the potential to become rational differs from that of Plotinus. According to Plotinus, Zeus allows for the human souls to descend into earthly bodies only up until their middle part. That part takes care of the body. The intellect itself Zeus keeps in heaven (*Enn.* IV, iii, 12).

⁴³³ In *Mut.* 34, Philo describes the process of becoming wise as the destruction of the earthly element, when the mind is fully concentrated on God. Although he considers a somewhat less radical form of wisdom as also possible and valuable, namely if someone remains involved with being kind to fellow human beings (*Mut.* 39–42).

of Philo's presentation of the human 'ability to reason' in *Deus* 45–50. These metaphors illustrate how, for Philo, the earthly human mind can become 'pure mind' – that is, truly rational, but only to a certain degree. While the human mind is connected to a body it can receive the light of divine wisdom only for as much as it can contain. The intellectual light that grants true understanding is dimmed down, as it were, for the earthly mind to be able to receive it. Another limitation is that the spirit of God in its most pure form of true understanding does not remain permanently in the human mind while it is still connected to the body. The insight into the intelligible world that this divine spirit provides comes and goes.

The metaphors of light and breath share one further important limitation: ultimately, Philo maintained that human beings cannot reach divine wisdom by themselves. They are always dependent on God to cross the threshold separating irrationality from wisdom.⁴³⁴ There is one important contribution humans can make to be taken over that threshold: they can choose to prepare themselves to receive true wisdom.⁴³⁵ This preparation consists of two things: to leave behind earthly wisdom, and open the mind to divine wisdom.

⋮ **To sum up.** The fourth and final category of defining physical bodies, 'the ability to reason' (λογικὴ ψυχὴ or διάνοια), has led us to explore the quality of the human mind, as Philo saw it. We have followed quite a long path leading us from *Deus* 45–50, to sections from *Legum Allegoriae* I, and to Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy. This exploration showed how Philo held that humans represent a threshold or borderland, because their minds contain two potentials. The one potential (the earthly mind) connects humans to animals, to the earthly realm, the world of becoming, of change and decay. The other potential (the pure mind) connects humans to God and the divine beings, to heaven, the world of true existence, to stability and immortality. Existing on the threshold between these two very different realms is what makes humans unique among all other

⁴³⁴ See *LA* II, 31–32; *Deus* 92–93. The cooperation between the human mind and divine inspiration in Philo has been a matter of debate in Philonic scholarship. Sevenster has concluded that all man can contribute towards reaching true knowledge is his yearning for salvation (see also note 52). Isaacs (siding with Goodenough against Völker) writes that, for Philo, true knowledge is never the result of inferential learning (something a human being can reach on his own), but always of mystical experience – that is, true wisdom comes from a non-human, divine source and replaces human wisdom instead of cooperating with the human mind. See ISAACS, *Spirit*, pp. 49–50. Levison makes a more subtle distinction with regard to the cooperation between the human mind and divine inspiration in Philo. According to him, Philo holds that human wisdom is always based on conjecture. When the human mind does not take its lead from the divine spirit, this conjecture leads to nothing. When it allows itself to be led by the divine spirit, this conjecture is transformed into true wisdom. This transformation can be an ecstatic experience (see LEVISON, *Spirit*, pp. 175–176). My position is close to that of Levison. The nature of the divine activity in attaining wisdom will be further discussed in the analysis of *Conf.* 14–59 in Chapter 4 (see pp. 159–162).

⁴³⁵ Similar in SANDMEL, *Philo*, pp. 100–101.

creatures.⁴³⁶ Most importantly, humans have been given the freedom to choose between these two realms, to choose which of these natures, that of becoming and decay or that of being and immortality, will define them.

In the analysis of *Deus* 45–50, the choice humans have turned out as a choice between remaining irrational like the animals, or becoming rational like God.⁴³⁷ However, we saw how Philo, like Plato, presented the choice between rationality or irrationality as a choice between good or evil. The moral aspects of this choice will be further explored in the next chapter. In this section the intellectual aspects of this choice were discussed. We saw how Philo held that human beings are unable to become rational by their own abilities. What they can (and should) choose to do are two things. The first is to leave behind human wisdom, that is wisdom defined by input from the material realm only, since this type of wisdom is unstable and perishable. The other is to open up one's mind for God's intellectual light or divine spirit to enter it. True understanding comes only to the human mind when God breathes or projects his wisdom into that mind. The quality of the human mind is then transformed from unstable and perishable into eternal and immortal. The wisdom of God gives true life to the human mind.

3.3.2.7 **Results from the analysis of *Deus* 33–50**

Through the analysis of *Deus* 33–50 we have again seen that human beings in the earthly realm can be considered to be connected to God always in a general sense, and sometimes in a particular sense. In the analysis of *Opif.* 16–25 and 69–88, we saw how Philo related the general and particular ways of the connection between God and humans to different interpretations of 'humans created after the image of God'. We now have seen in the analysis of *Deus* 33–50 how Philo could also relate these two ways of connection between God and humans as a continuum of God's mind or spirit manifesting itself in the whole of creation in a general and permanent way, and in humans in a particular and conditional way.

⁴³⁶ Charles Kannengiesser describes how Philo saw humans as existing between the conceptual and the material world (KANNENGIESSER, 'Double création', p. 287), and are an 'image of God' in the sense that, like God's reason, humans form a bridge between those two worlds (ibid., p. 294). Runia describes how Philo saw humans as existing in the 'borderland' between the immortal and mortal, between God and the animals in RUNIA, *Timaeus*, p. 465 and 474 (cf. *Opif.* 135 and *Spec.* I, 116). Harm W. Hollander and J. Holleman illustrate how the idea that human beings occupy a unique position in the borderland between the animal and divine world fits well into Philo's intellectual context; they conclude: 'Philo's description of the first man reflects above all Greek philosophical concepts' (see HOLLEMAN/HOLLANDER, 'Death, Sin, and Law', p. 275).

⁴³⁷ Runia (in RUNIA, *Timaeus*, p. 474) sees Philo's thought that the potential for rationality, for θεωρία, is what sets humans apart in creation as an example of where 'Greek intellectualism triumphs.' That is to say that, according to Runia, here Philo's philosophical outlook directs his interpretation of a biblical passage.

In a general sense, God is connected to human beings as he is connected to everything in creation: as a spiritual force maintaining the order and harmony of everything that exists, manifesting itself in the form-giving force (ἔξις), growth (φύσις) and the life-giving force (ψυχή). When humans think and act rationally, however, humans and God become very closely connected to each other in a particular way. Humans are able with their minds to reach into the mind of God. Human beings alone, of the creatures living on the earth, are able to recognise the governing order present in the world. Philo maintained that when humans perceive the governing order of the world, God's wisdom, also named God's spirit, enters into their mind. A human being then becomes rational and gains true understanding. The *divine* spirit is then present in that human being. Philo uses the adjective *divine* to indicate that when humans are rational, God's spirit is present in them in its purest form. However, even without being rational, the divine spirit (referring to the whole of the intelligible world, which underlies and sustains the material world) is still present in humans, as it is present in the whole material world.

We have seen that, according to Philo, humans exist on a threshold because they have been given the potential to become rational, but also have been given the choice of whether they will actualise this potential, and consequently what will define their nature. Implicated in the human choice between irrationality or rationality is the choice for humans between remaining like the animals or becoming like God, between associating themselves with the material world of change and decay or sharing in the eternal and immortal existence of the divine. Furthermore, in *Deus* 33–50, Philo presented the choice between rationality or irrationality as a choice between good and evil. With this choice comes accountability: only humans can be blamed for their irrational behaviour, or praised if they choose to associate themselves with the divine. The consequences of this choice, especially the choice for evil, will be further explored in the next chapter.

3.3.3 **Conclusions: The human mind can choose its defining nature**

The aim of analysing *Deus* 33–50 was to understand what Philo's view was on the relationship between God and humans, and in particular on the choice human beings have to become one with the mind of God. Again, we had to start from the beginning, not by discussing moral questions, but by carefully looking at how Philo saw the nature of humans and its potentialities and abilities. According to Philo, God and human beings are always connected to each other in a general way, because in humans, as in everything in creation, God's mind or spirit manifests itself as a spiritual force giving form, growth and life. A connection between humans and God, necessary for forgiveness to happen between them, is possible and present, according to Philo.

However, the analysis of *Deus* 33–50 has brought us another important insight, resulting from the analysis of the particular way in which God and humans can become connected to each other. This particular way is the human ability to reason. We have already encountered this particular way in the first part of this chapter, as the ability of the human mind to become one with God. We also saw how Philo presented this ability as a matter of choice for humans. Similarly, in *Deus* 33–50, Philo presents the ability to reason as a potential that humans can choose to actualise or not.

An important new element that emerged from the analysis of *Deus* 33–50, is that the fundamental nature of the human mind, even the whole human soul, is dependent upon whether humans choose to actualise their potential for rationality or not: if humans choose rationality, the nature of their soul is defined by the divine realm of true existence; if they choose irrationality instead, their soul is defined by the perishable nature of the material realm. Human beings are furthermore dependent upon God to become rational; they cannot attain it on their own. What they can, and should, do is to choose to prepare their minds to receive God's wisdom and become rational.

Philo presented the freedom to choose between rationality or irrationality in a moral light: it is a choice between good or evil. What happens if humans choose evil over good, if they choose irrationality over rationality? We saw how Plato held that the consequence of such a choice is that the soul will reincarnate into increasingly lower life forms. Was this also Philo's view? And if so, is there a possibility for souls to redeem themselves, to turn back from evil? How could this be possible, however, if a choice for evil means becoming increasingly irrational? Is there a way out of this dilemma? Could divine pardon play a role in aiding humans to abandon their choice for evil and irrationality? All these aspects of the choice for evil and the consequences that follow will be further explored in the subsequent chapter. Before that, however, I will present the overall conclusions of the current chapter, relating what we have found regarding how Philo saw the relationship between God and humans to the topic of divine forgiveness.

3.4 *Conclusions to Chapter 3*

The central question of this chapter was how Philo saw the relationship between God and humans. The path I followed to find an answer to this question was to zoom in on how Philo translated the connection between God and the whole of creation to that between God and humans.

Philo saw God and humans as always connected in a general way. We have explored two ways of how Philo expressed this general connection. One way is that humans are connected to God because of the original template that

defines their form and characteristics. This template, the human species, is created by God directly and exists in his mind, as one of the countless concepts that God uses to create and sustain the material world. Even though individual human beings are not created by God directly, as they grow naturally from the earthly elements, they are always inseparably connected to God because of the inseparable connection between the original form and its imprint.

In light of the results from the previous chapter, this general way in which Philo saw God and humans to be connected can also be seen as an expression of God's mercy. The general way in which God and humans are connected is part of the general connection that exists between God and the whole of creation. In the previous chapter we saw how Philo defined this general connection as an expression of God's mercy. This mercy is a constant factor. The imperfect material world of becoming, of change and decay, could not subsist, unless God, being good and merciful, allowed it to remain and sustained it. God does so by connecting the material world to true existence, by means of the intelligible world. The general way in which humans are connected to God can similarly be seen as an expression of what humans experience as God's merciful nature.

As explored in the present chapter, the second way of how Philo presented the general and permanent connection between God and humans is how God's spirit pervades everything that exists in the material world. It does so in an indirect way by manifesting itself as a form-giving force, as growth and as a life-giving force. Each of these are always present in everything that exists, imparting the qualities on lifeless objects and defining the shape and characteristics of living things. In animals and humans alike, God's spirit manifests itself in a form of mind, enabling living creatures through their senses to interact with the world. However, different from animals, it is in humans that God's spirit can manifest itself in the most direct and pure way, which brings us to the particular way in which God and humans can be connected.

God's spirit can manifest itself in humans as wisdom. Humans gain wisdom when they think and act rationally. They can achieve this when they choose to abandon human forms of wisdom, and instead open their minds to receive God's wisdom. When they do so, they become one with God. They then think what God thinks, namely the eternally existing concepts. The human mind and God's mind become one, and through this the human mind shares in the immortal existence of the divine. However, while the human soul resides in the body, this state of insightful bliss is only transient. God's spirit in its purest form is not always present in humans.

More importantly, especially in light of divine forgiveness, the particular form of connection between humans and God, in becoming rational, is a matter of choice. Humans are free to choose whether to become rational or remain

irrational. Philo presented this choice in a moral light: because we are dealing with a matter involving a conscious decision, humans can be praised for their obedience when they choose to become rational, and blamed if they refuse to do so. With blame we enter a territory where forgiveness becomes relevant. For blame makes someone liable for punishment. And forgiveness again is an alternative for punishment. Could divine pardon be somehow associated to the particular form of connection between God and humans, a form of connection that involves human choice?

To see whether this is so, my next step is to focus on how Philo saw the human ability to choose evil and the consequences that follow from that choice. Why would any human being choose a path of irrationality and evil at all? Why would anyone allow wrong thoughts to come into their minds? What has happened? And what consequences would follow from such a choice for evil? This process, the road to human evil, will be further explored in the fourth chapter.

